A Commentary on the Psalms from Primitive and Mediaeval Writers, volume 4 (Psalms 119–150) (part 1 of 2)

Neale and Littledale (Commentary on the Psalms) (1818–1866 and 1833–1890)

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Psalm 119

TITLE. LXX. and Vulgate: Alleluia.

Argument.
ARG. THOMAS. That CHRIST may instruct us with His precepts, statutes, and laws. The Voice of CHRIST to the FATHER, concerning the adversary, and the Jews, and His Advent, and Passion, and Resurrection. Of His judgment to come, and kingdom. Concerning advising one's neighbour. I. Aleph. A Psalm set out concerning mystical doctrine. II. Beth. The voice of the new people and of young men recently believing in GOD. III. Gimel. The voice of the Confessors. The voice of the Confessors and of Penitents turning themselves from ignorance. IV. Daleth. The voice of seculars believing in GOD. V. He. The voice of monks living apart. VI. Vau. The voice of ruling priests. VII. Zain. The voice of a holy man sent amongst the ungodly. VIII. Heth. The voice of the Doctors, proclaiming the Judgment of GOD, and keeping watch. IX. Thet (sic.) The voice of the Saints living in tribulation, who are tried in adversity. X. Jod. The voice of Prelates, Confessors, and Virgins, believing in GOD. XI. Caph. The vows of penitent men. XII. Lamech (sic). The voice of clerics entering on a new grade. XIII. Mem. The voice of the doctors bringing forth the Law. XIV. Nun. XV. Samech. The voice of the righteous in temptation. XVI. Ain. The prayer of the faithful at the end of his departure. XVII. Phe. Perceiving words, giving thanks to GOD. XVIII. Sade (sic.) The supplication of one fainting amidst sinners. XIX. Coph. The voice of a Confessor labouring from his youth. XX. Res. Supplication of the poor set in sorrows. XXI. Sin. XXII. Tau.

VEN. BEDE. The desirable Alleluia is prefixed to this festival Psalm, very full of the virtue of divine things, that the merit of the divine song may be recognised by the honour of the title. In the Hebrew letters it is set forth for the instruction of the unlearned and teachable peoples of CHRIST in such order that every set of eight verses B begins with one of each letter, wherein I think the mystery of the Resurrection and of true Circumcision is shown forth. Josephus in his books of Antiquities states that this Psalm, and the 144th (145) and the Song of Deuteronomy, were composed in elegiac metre: no doubt because the former verse consists of six feet, and the latter, less by one, ends in a pentameter. Throughout the whole

Psalm the universal choir of the Saints speaks, whether they be those who were from the beginning of the world, who are now, or are expected to be hereafter; amongst whom are found Apostles, Prophets, Martyrs, Confessors, those of the ecclesiastical order, and all who serve the LORD in holy chastity. Because then under each letter the things which follow should be understood according to its meaning, therefore the first letter Aleph is rightly interpreted Doctrine, wherein eternal blessedness is promised to the undefiled in the way of the LORD. Blessed are those that are undefiled in the way, &c.

SYRIAC PSALTER. Anonymous. A principal meditation upon the excellency that is in GOD. EUSEBIUS OF CÆSAREA. The rudiments of primary instruction according to GOD. S. ATHANASIUS. A Psalm proclaiming blessedness. Also, Describing a life endowed with holy virtue.

Various Uses.
Gregorian. Daily: Prime (vv. 1—32;) Terce (vv. 33—80;) Sext (vv. 81—128;) None (vv. 129—176.) Monastic. Sunday: Prime (vv. 1—32;) Terce (vv. 33—56;) Sext (vv. 57—80;) None (vv. 81—104.) Monday: Terce (vv. 105—128;) Sext (vv. 129—152;) None (vv. 153—176.) Parisian. Lyons. Quignon. } Sunday, divided as Gregorian. Ambrosian. Daily, as Gregorian. Saturday of Second Week: II. Nocturn (vv. 89—128,) III. Nocturn (vv. 129—176.) [Maundy Thursday, vv. 121—128. Easter Eve, vv. 153—160, vv. 25—32.] Eastern Church. Midnight, in three portions, vv. 1—72; 73—131; 132—176.

Antiphons.
The Antiphons vary for all festivals, and the ferial ones have no special features. The only noteworthy ones are the two Ambrosian for Holy Week. [Maundy Thursday: O give Me not over unto Mine oppressors. K. K. K. Easter Eve: I. He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before the shearer is dumb, so He opened not His mouth in lowliness. II. JESUS bowing His head, gave up the ghost, and the earth quaked.]

This ”Psalm of the Saints,” as it is especially called, most probably belongs to the very latest period of inspired Hebrew poetry. It is Post-Captivity in date and tone, and marks that period of the religious development of the Jewish nation when the spiritual character of their Law, apart from and above its ceremonial precepts, began to be recognised by the devouter believers as the chief glory of the chosen people. The Masoretic editors have pointed out that in every verse save one (122) there is a direct reference to the Law under some one of the ten names which stand in English as law, word, saying, statute, testimonies, way, precept, commandment, judgment, faithfulness, and are supposed to have a mystical reference to the Decalogue. It would seem that the Jewish editors ought rather to have fixed on verse 132 as the single exception to their rule, for it is perhaps possible to see an indirect allusion to the Law in verse 122, but none such is discoverable in 132. These terms

are not altogether interchangeable (though some of them are doubtless nearly synonymous) and the most obvious classification is as follows. Law is the generic phrase, including all the others, and taken for the whole scope of Divine revelation; Testimonies, are such precepts as are prohibitory, attesting GOD's holiness, protesting against man's sinfulness; Statutes, are positive enactments, ceremonial ordinances, and the like; Commandments, moral enactments; Judgments, formal decisions of duties as laid down in the Law; Precepts, are counsels recommended to individuals for their guidance and profit; Word is any verbal revelation of GOD's will; Saying, or rather promise, the declaration of blessings to follow on obedience; Way, the prescribed rule of conduct; Faithfulness, the abiding character and permanence of the Law.

There is not perfect uniformity in the two English renderings, either with the Hebrew or with one another, nor are the LXX. and Vulgate more precise. But in all there is a general adherence to the rule, and the deviations from the more discriminating terms are few and not important.

Cardinal Bellarmine suggests, not improbably, and in accordance with a Rabbinical tradition, that the great length of the Psalm was intended to fit it for use as a processional hymn for the caravans going up thrice a year to the great festivals in Jerusalem, followed as it is by those Gradual Psalms which marked the nearer approach of the pilgrims to the Temple. As to its profound spiritual import, which has made it the daily delight of Saints for so many ages, it will be enough to cite a few of the words in which the Gloss sums up the prefatory remarks of various Fathers: "This Psalm is the Teacher of the faithful, a paradise of all fruits, the storehouse of the HOLY GHOST, and just in proportion as it seems easier on the surface, so is it deeper in the abyss of its mysteries. Other Psalms shine a little, as lesser stars, but this one like the sun, glowing with the noonday heat of his full blaze, and glows with every kind of moral sweetness. And it has been compared to a tree of two and twenty branches, each with eight boughs, from which drops of sweetness continually fall. They observe further that the alphabetical arrangement, as noting the very rudiments of knowledge, implies that moral teaching in the first principles of life which the perfect need to give the unlearned that they may attain the palm of blessedness at last. And the grouping into octonaries of verses signifies on the one hand this blessedness, summed up in the eight beatitudes, while the day of the new creation is itself counted as the eighth, coming as it does after the recurring seven days of this present world."

Plutarch. Quæs. Sympos. i. 2. Here we have Aleph, the first letter. And some of the mediæval commentators, following S. Jerome, explain the meaning of this word to be doctrine, bidding us observe that we have in the various letters as it were a concise summary of the intent of the entire Psalm, divided under its two and twenty heads, and that doctrine, as the leading idea of the whole poem, is thus fitly placed

at the very beginning. In truth, the meaning of Aleph now most widely accepted, is that it signifies Ox, an interpretation given by Plutarch as the Phœnician one of his day. But this, in its recognised mystical sense, brings us back to the same idea, for the ox is the received type of laborious preachers, engaged in tilling the soil of the world for the reception of the Word, and in separating the grain from the straw. Wherefore fitly in Solomon's temple the great sea of brass, foreshadowing the laver of baptism, was borne up by twelve oxen, types of the Apostolic college.

1 Blessed are those that are undefiled in the way: and walk in the law of the LORD.
They are blessed who are in the way, not a way, any chance or uncertain road, but "the King's Highway," that path which the LORD Himself has declared to us, saying, "I am the Way." Nor is it enough to be in the way, unless we also walk in it, for a way is meant to lead us some whither, not to stand still in; and so long as we are only on the way, we do not attain that which we seek. Wherefore the Apostle saith, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of CHRIST JESUS. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of GOD in CHRIST JESUS." They who are truly in this way are undefiled, not by natural and inherent innocency, but by the remission of their sins, washed away in the Blood of the Lamb, Who is alone the Undefiled. It is part of the duty of Christians, as the royal priesthood of GOD, to keep themselves pure; as is well said by an Egyptian Father, "Every one is consecrated priest over his own body; not to exercise authority in matters of order and jurisdiction over others, but that ruling his passions, he may make his body the shrine and temple of chastity." The blessedness is twofold, for all

One of the meanings of the root rō is, he learnt, and in the Piel it signifies he taught, whence, most probably, this etymon. those who during their pilgrimage on earth have been undefiled by sin as they go towards their country, first the gladness of hope and then that of fruition. And on the connection of this latter and greater blessedness with the duty of walking in the Law of the LORD, the best comment is the LORD's own saying, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." Nor are the words of the Lord at the close of the verse superfluous, for there is another law, that of sin in our members, wherein too many walk, whereas the law of the Lord, while embracing all His commandments, is especially the law of love to Himself and to our neighbour, of which is written, "Walk in love, as CHRIST also hath loved us."

2 Blessed are they that keep his testimonies : and seek him with their whole heart.
For keep the Vulgate reads search out. How wonderful and beautiful, exclaims a Saint, is the order of the words, how full of teaching and grace! Observe that it is

not said first that they are blessed who search out His testimonies, but they who are undefiled in the way, because life should be sought before doctrine. For a good life, even though without any doctrinal learning, comes of grace; but learning without the life has no soundness. And therefore, to make it clear that no blessedness attaches to unspiritual study of Holy Writ, such as that of the scribes and lawyers in the days of CHRIST, or that of the sectaries and heretics who have since troubled His Church, it is added, and seek Him with their whole heart. They who seek otherwise shall fail in their quest, for it is written, ”They shall seek Me early, but they shall not find Me.” Here too we see the order of spiritual progress; first the active life, and then the contemplative, with GOD as the final goal of each. And the word Blessed is doubled, in order to assure us of the absolute certainty of GOD’s promise to His servants. The English version keep, which is also that of Aquila and Symmachus, is closer to the Hebrew, and teaches that there is a higher grade of spiritual advance than even walking in the law of the LORD, namely, the treasuring up every Divine precept as a precious deposit in the heart, and being ready to contend even to death for its safe retention. And in saying seek Him, the Psalmist warns us that man has lost sight of GOD through sin, for we do not seek for that which is not lost. How we are to seek Him is easily learnt; in repentance, in truth, in His own Word, for Himself only, and through His Only-Begotten Son.

A. Prov. i. 28.

3 For they who do no wickedness : walk in his ways.
The verse ought to run as an expansion of the idea in the A.

previous ones, thus: who do no wickedness, and walk in His ways; and not appear as a fresh statement. And if it be asked how such a character can be assigned to any living man, the answer is that to the doing of wickedness three things must unite: the purpose of sin, delight in sin, and continuance in it, whereas these three are not found united in God’s Saints, since their higher will resists the lower, and neither purposes sin, delights in it, nor abides in it. But the LXX. and Vulgate read conversely, For they who work wickedness, walk not in His ways. It is not said, ”They who have worked” wickedness, and have repented, since then no man would be excepted, but they who are working it, and continue therein. Nor is it said, ”They who are without sin,” for sin abideth in their mortal body, but they who do not actively set that natural sin in motion, rather saying with the Apostle: ”It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.” In His ways. In the first verse there was but one way named, here there are many. But all these many are but paths into that one high road. Wherefore the prophet Jeremiah saith: ”Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein.” And these are all the Prophets, Apostles, and preachers, who tell of CHRIST and lead us on to Him, and thus to that FATHER to Whom He is the only Way. Every precept of Holy Writ is also one of these ways of God, leading us, if we follow it to

the end, into the King's highway of eternal life. And there is the force of the word walk, for the Jews, though they are in the right way, stop short at Moses, and go not on to the end, which is CHRIST.

4 Thou hast charged: that we shall diligently keep thy commandments.

Not merely to keep them, but to keep them diligently; or, as the Vulgate has it, extremely (nimis). When was this command given? In Paradise God commanded Adam to keep the commandments, but it may be that there was no injunction added to keep them diligently; and that in this wise Adam fell, swayed by his wife's voice and deceived by the serpent, supposing that if he departed from the commandment in some one particular he would not be going altogether wrong; but in once quitting the path of the commandments, he abandoned the way entirely, stripped himself of everything, and left himself naked. Therefore the LORD, since he that was in Paradise fell, hath warned thee since that time by the Law, the Prophets, the Gospel, and the Apostles, to keep diligently the commandments of the LORD thy God. Of every idle word, saith He, that thou speakest, thou must give account. Do not try to hide the truth, not one jot nor one tittle passeth away from My commandment. Beware of quitting the way. If when walking in the way thou art scarcely safe from the robber, what wilt thou do if He find thee straying out of the way? Let Thy steps be guided, and if thou be too weak to guide them thyself, pray that the LORD may direct thy ways. For it is written, "Cursed be he that doeth the work of the LORD negligently." And some of them dwell on the word nimis, literally too much, reminding us that it denotes the absence of all hesitation in action, and urges us to go on even to the shedding of our blood. Too much for our own strength in this life, but not too much for the grace of GOD. And observe that the word commandments would be more strictly translated deposits, precious trusts committed by GOD to our safe keeping. Wherefore the Apostle saith, "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust."

5 O that my ways were made so direct : that I might keep thy statutes ! This was the motto chosen by S. Pius V. for his own. And that because, as the Prophet exclaims, "O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself : it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." In like manner the Wise Man adds, "A man's heart deviseth his way ; but the LORD directeth His steps." Wherefore it is a prayer to be delivered from the pride of our own free-will. Thou hast given me the Law, cries man to GOD, and I know it to be good, but if Thy grace help me not, that which is in itself good will work death in me when sin revives. These ways of ours are first our affections and desires, and then all the actions of our lives, each of which is a step on the road which brings us to our end. They need surely to be made direct, for of themselves they are apt to be tortuous and crooked, and to lead us far from our Country. Even good works, if done outside the bounds of charity, are also mere deviations from the way.

A. S. Bruno Carth. A. 6 So shall I not be confounded : while I have respect unto all thy commandments. Adam was ashamed and confounded, hiding himself from the face of GOD when he had sinned ; and as disobedience was the cause of his shame, so obedience through grace is the only refuge from it, since, as a great Saint declares, confusion is the fruit of rebellion. While I have respect. The LXX. and Vulgate, nearly agreeing with each other, have While I look at, and While I perceive, or look thoroughly at, (perspexero). And it is taken by the commentators in the sense of gazing in a mirror, upon which they quote the Apostle's words, "Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in A. S. James i.

his deed." All Thy commandments, not picking and choosing amongst them, for if a man look at his own face in a glass, and observe that all his features are comely and harmonious, he feels pleasure, but if he note one that is disfigured or disproportionate, he is ashamed; and so when testing his life by the law of God. Those who do part of God's will, and neglect the rest, are like a mere echo, which does not repeat the whole of a sentence, but only some of its words or sounds; and thus they do not bear in mind that saying, "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." Saul slew all the Amalekites, save one; and the single exception cost him his throne and life, and brought him under the displeasure of God. 7 I will thank thee with an unfeigned heart: when I shall have learned the judgments of thy righteousness.

For unfeigned heart, the A.V. has uprightness of heart, which is closer to the LXX. εὐθύτηνι καρδίας and the Vulgate directione cordis. And this is itself the first ground of thanksgiving, that God has by His grace made that heart which was perverse and crooked, straight and upright, so as to fit it for the study of the Divine judgments. And the word learned implies a teacher. The Psalmist would have us understand that he acquired his knowledge of the Divine law from God Himself as his instructor, and from the doctrine of his fathers, not inventing opinions for himself after the fashion of sectaries. There is a further stress in the word learned, as showing us that while on the one hand mere knowledge of God's law will not keep a depraved and crooked heart in the right way, so on the other that knowledge is necessary even to the pure and upright heart to enable it to obey God's will. And while all God's judgments are judgments of His righteousness, yet these words most fully refer to the final sentences at the Last Day pronounced severally to those on the right hand and those on the left. Well may those souls which have heard the Voice of the LORD say to them, "Come, ye blessed of My FATHER, inherit the kingdom," thank Him with an unfeigned heart.

8 I will keep thy ceremonies: O forsake me not utterly.

The Prayer Book version here gives the exact sense, in that the word here found, usually, and by the A.V. in this place, translated statutes, does refer to the ceremonies and other positive injunctions of the Mosaic Law. But the Vulgate reading, justificationes, leads most of the commentators to repetition of what they had already said concerning God's righteous decisions; though the Carmelite, following S. Ambrose, seeing here a reference first to the chief events of the Gospel history, and then to the sacraments of the Church, comes nearer to the original sense. There is more agreement in the latter clause, where they point out that the Psalmist, knowing in what wise God is pleased to try His Saints, and make them conscious of their own infirmity, that they may cast themselves the more on Him, does not ask that he may not be forsaken at all, or for a little time, but not utterly, that grace may return to help him in time of need, and above all, that he may be delivered from the sin of ascribing his diligence in keeping God's statutes to his own strength and merit. God did leave Judas utterly, but stretched out His hand to Peter when sinking in the waters. We should have been forsaken utterly, adds Gerhohus, had not the Son of God come Himself into the world to bring us medicine and salvation. Now, according to that prayer of CHRIST'S Body, He did not forsake it utterly, because "God was in CHRIST, reconciling the world unto Himself.

We may also understand the words as those of him who said in his prosperity, "I shall never be moved," as though trusting in his own strength, so that God, in order to show him that this strength was not of merit, but of the Divine Will, turned His Face from him, so that he was troubled. And thus, coming to himself, and no longer self-confident, he cries, O forsake me not utterly. Even if Thou hast forsaken me, that I might learn my weakness, do it not utterly, lest I perish.

Collects.

Forsake us not utterly, O LORD; and as Thou teachest us by trial, so, we beseech Thee, confirm us with Thine unconquerable might. (1.) O GOD, Who bestowest the palm of blessedness on the undefiled and on those who keep Thy law; grant that we may perseveringly seek out Thy statutes with an upright heart. (1.) Let our ways be made direct, O LORD, to keep Thy statutes, and as we strive to search out the hidden things of Thy law, grant that we may be led also into Thy rewards. (11.)

BETH.

Beth signifies a house; and as the first octonary Aleph taught us the blessedness of following the doctrine of CHRIST, so here we learn that the only sure safeguard of that doctrine and of ourselves is to abide in His house, the Church, in our appointed order, complying with the laws He has ordained for His family, and living in charity one with another. And thus Beda gives the argument of this section in these words: The faithful people explains what delights it enjoys in the words of the LORD, showing that it is itself the LORD's House, and the store of His commandments, which

mystery the second letter contains. 9 Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way : even by ruling himself after thy word. A.

A young man. We may take it literally, as denoting the age when the passions are strongest and the judgment weakest, and when having been thus hurried into sin, the culprit turns to thoughts of repentance and amendment. Or we may see here the younger son of the parable, who has wasted his substance in riotous living, and seized with the pangs of famine, bethinks himself of his father's house. Yet again, if we read the words as those of a Saint, desiring more perfect conformity to the will of GOD, the young man will fitly denote the Gentile Church, that spiritual and younger people, which is fashioned after the new man, not after the old, and which does and can cleanse its way only by ruling itself in all its outward sacraments and ordinances, in all its inward righteousness, according to the commands and after the example of the Incarnate Word of GOD, the LORD JESUS CHRIST Himself. The Vulgate, reading sermones in the plural instead of verbum in the singular, for word, has led the Latin commentators for the most part aside from this best and highest meaning; but they have come as near it as they can by explaining sermones to be the Gospel teaching, and especially the works and words of CHRIST. And reading further, as they do, keeping Thy word, they lay stress on the need of close and unremitting obedience to these Divine precepts. And so the Wise Man teaches, saying, "My son, gather instruction from thy youth up;

so shalt thou find wisdom till thine old age. Thus we, who are mere children in knowledge, and are carried about with every wind of doctrine so long as we walk by our own guidance, shall "come to a perfect Man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of CHRIST. And taking the verse in its more obvious and literal sense, they remind us that youth is prone to carnal vices which defile its path through life, and therefore that there is a special fitness in the word cleanse.

10 With my whole heart have I sought thee : O let me not go wrong out of thy commandments. Not in a half-hearted fashion, nor yet with a double heart, which proffers insincere devotion, but with the whole powers of mind and affections. And that, because GOD does not accept the negligent, saying of them, as to the Angel of the Laodiceans, "I would thou wert cold or hot; so then, because thou art neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of My mouth." It is not out of pride or boastfulness that the Psalmist says, With my whole heart, but through a deep sense of his own need and longing, and also in contrast with those who divide their attention with worldly cares and foolish pleasures. Let me not go wrong. The Vulgate uses a stronger phrase, Repel me not, that I be not driven from the Tree of Life by the flaming sword of the Cherubim, according to that threat: "Because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee." But the English reading is more exact, and comes in the end to the same meaning; since the prayer is in any case that GOD will not leave us undefended by His grace, which can alone keep us in the

right way. And therefore the penitent soul cries to Him, ”O LORD, why hast Thou made us to err from Thy ways, and hardened our heart from Thy fear? Return, for Thy servants’ sake, the tribes of Thine inheritance.”

11 Thy words have I hid within my heart: that I should not sin against thee. It is not merely storing the words of the LORD in the memory, albeit this is the primary sense on which they lay stress, but constantly and lovingly meditating on them. And that too in silence, for it is not well, by speaking too freely or too often of the deep mysteries of the Faith, to fall into Hezekiah’s error, when in his pride he showed the treasures of his house to the Babylonian ambassadors. ”Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak.” And that, remembering that the LORD hath told us that ”the Kingdom of Heaven is like treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth.” Thus S. Paul acted when he fed his converts with milk, as babes, and not with strong meat. That I should not sin against Thee, by transgressing Thine own precept, ”Give not that which is holy to the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine.” And this sin may take four different forms: We may commit it to curry favour, or to gain temporal advantages, or out of boastfulness, or again from immoderate love of talking. But the Saint will make his heart a casket, to keep his LORD’s treasure safe from robbers; he will make his heart a nest, in which the Divine words shall be cherished as eggs, till they wing their way, as devout meditations and prayers, up to Heaven itself. And thus it is written of the Mother of GOD: ”But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.”

S. James i. 19. 12 Blessed art thou, O LORD: O teach me thy statutes. The Jewish commentators explain this verse in two different ways. They take it either as a thanksgiving to GOD for having already taught, followed by a prayer for more teaching; or else as an act of direct worship, with a petition based on that act, thus: I confess that Thou art blessed and adorable, and because I prove myself in this wise to be Thy servant, reward me by teaching me. And if it be asked why the Psalmist intreats to be taught, when he has just before been declaring his knowledge, the answer is that he seeks instruction as to the practical working of those principles which he has learnt theoretically. He blesses GOD for His bounty, and then asks for information how he may best put out the loan with the money-changers, that when his LORD returns, He may receive His own again with usury, and find no cause of blame for sloth and negligence in His servant. And there is a further sense, according to which the first half of the verse is the reason of the other half. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, unspeakably wonderful, glorious, and loveable, and therefore union with Thee is the most priceless of all boons. That I may win it, O teach me Thy statutes. He asks of GOD to teach what man cannot teach. ”If this were practised now,” says a pious Bishop, ”to join prayer with hearing, that when we offer ourselves to be taught of men, we would therewith send up prayer to

GOD, before preaching, in time of preaching and after preaching, we would soon prove more learned and religious than we are."

13 With my lips have I been telling: of all the judgments of thy mouth. The Gloss. Above, he said that he kept GOD's words in his heart. But though "there is a time to keep silence," there is also a "time to speak;" and it is true of holy things that "it is a pleasant thing to keep them within thee, they shall withal be fitted in thy lips." And there is need of a right choice of time, which is the season of grace, of the right persons, who are those that will not spurn GOD's word, and of the right matter, which is here laid down, not as all the judgments GOD has decreed, but all the judgments of His mouth, that is, all which He has made verbally known by the writings and preachings of His Prophets and Apostles. All His judgments are an abyss too deep and vast for man's speech and understanding, so that even His great Apostle is forced to exclaim: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of GOD! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" It is well said, I have been telling, not I have been teaching, for all the preacher can do is to speak plainly all the judgments which GOD has declared in Holy Writ. He cannot be sure of teaching, of really touching the heart of a single hearer, but that does not lessen his duty of sowing the seed whenever he can.

14 I have had as great delight in the way of thy testimonies: as in all manner of riches.

The testimonies of GOD which delight the pious soul are the tokens of His tender love towards mankind, of His yearning for our salvation, of His methods of deliverance. And the Way of these testimonies is His own dear SON. It is therefore meditation upon the events of the Gospel story, the Incarnation, Nativity, Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension of CHRIST, which is an unfailing spring of gladness to the Saints of GOD. And this title of the Way of the Testimonies is given to CHRIST, because all the prophecies and types, all the sayings of Holy Writ lead up to Him, Who is the sure and unwearying Way to our Country. As in all manner of riches. That is, as they mostly take it, as much as worldly minds delight in temporal wealth; but others, reminding us that the true Saint treats this world's goods as dross, bid us see here the deep truth that all spiritual riches are found in CHRIST and in Him only, so that to delight in Him is to delight in all manner of riches. For in Him "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. And therefore the Apostle thanks GOD on behalf of his converts, saying, "In everything ye are enriched by Him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge, even as the testimony of CHRIST was confirmed in you.

And we too, having a like hope, entertain a like gladness, for "He that spared not His own SON, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall not He with Him also freely give us all things? If we take the words in the other sense of the precepts of Holy Scripture, there can be no greater proof of habitual innocency of life than

delight in them. For they are witnesses against us if we go wrong, witnesses of our good fight when we keep in the way; and as a guilty conscience fears the presence of witnesses, a pure one, on the contrary, either does not heed them or takes actual pleasure in their presence. And in this wise the examples of the Saints, that innumerable cloud of witnesses ever around us, serve, when we imitate them, to heap up riches for us, jewelling the crown which the LORD the Righteous Judge hath laid up for His servants: especially for those Martyrs of His who found the way of His testimonies pass through fierce tortures before bringing them to their home, and yet delighted in that painful road.

A. 1 Cor. i. 5. 15 I will talk of thy commandments: and have respect unto thy ways. S. Augustine, noting that this reading talk is found with two others, meditate and exercise, observes that the first holds good of the Church, when, without losing hold of inner devotion and practical action, she yet pits herself against false teachers in controversial disputations. But these are never safe, or other than hurtful to spiritual progress, save when carried on with respect to GOD's ways, which are mercy and truth in CHRIST, obliging us to be gentle even with heretics, A. and never to advance any argument which is not pellucidly true and fair. But meditate (as A.V.) or exercise (as Vulgate) gives a better sense, and on this let us hear S. Gregory: "What does he mean by these ways, save that he cared not to look upon the paths of human conversation? He saith, therefore, I will exercise in Thy commandments, and will consider Thy ways. It is as though he were openly promising and saying: 'What are mine I now refuse to look upon, because I burn to tread with my steps in the way of conduct which is imitative of Thee. For he who gainsays this present world, keeps before the eyes of his heart by the constant practice of love the ways of his Redeemer, so that his mind shuns prosperity, is ready for adversity, longs for no indulgences, fears nothing which may be thought able to affright, counts sorrow joy, and the joys of this life to be loss and sorrow, fears no loss from casting them away, but seeks in this fashion a place of abiding glory. These are the ways which the Truth Himself set before the eyes of His followers, when He said, If any man serve Me, let him follow Me.'"

16 My delight shall be in thy statutes : and I will not forget thy word. As the previous verse gave the promise of constant practice, so this one pledges the Psalmist to assiduous meditation and the exercise of memory in pondering the statutes of the LORD. And while the rendering above is delight, and that of the Vulgate brings in the word meditate again, they tell us that the two notions blend in the verse, and imply that the pleasure of a Saint in GOD's law is such that he continually recites or sings it, as it were, under his breath, as men do with snatches of favourite melodies. And the practical use of this is to counteract that forgetfulness which is part of the inherited weakness of human nature, often leading to far worse ills. Wherefore Moses gave a precept to the Jews, saying, "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy

children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates."

Collects.
Let us delight, O LORD, in the way of Thy testimonies, as in all manner of riches; lest we should lack anything when we know Thee to be with us. (1.) O GOD, Who by Thy safe keeping correctest the ways of youth, teachest righteousness, callest back from sins; grant that we may delight in Thy testimonies as in all manner of riches. (1.) We delight, O LORD, in the way of Thy testimonies as in all manner of riches, nor do we believe that we lack anything when we know that Thou art graciously near us. (11.)

GIMEL.
Gimel is explained by the old commentators to mean retribution, or else fulness, from the root , he repaid, or he dealt bountifully, and they interpret this section as being the prayer of the people that grace may be given as a reward to the Saints who dwell in the land, that grace which they lost in their first parent, and saying further that their persecutors shall likewise be rewarded for their deeds. And thus the third letter's name denotes both the reward of merit and the fulness of that righteous judgment, as also the fulness of life and knowledge GOD gives His suppliants. The modern interpretation of the word is camel, from the same root, in the sense of bearing a burden. The mystical sense of the Camel in Scripture is said to be the coming of Gentiles out of their crooked ways to the paths of CHRIST, a meaning drawn on the one hand from the form of the animal, and on the other from its bearing Rebecca to Isaac and the Magi to the manger at Bethlehem. This fits in with the prayer for enlightenment in verse 18, and with the declaration of being only a stranger and pilgrim, as in verse 19.

Gesenius in voce. 17 O do well unto thy servant: that I may live, and keep thy word. From the word , gemol, here used, the LXX. and Vulgate have repay, a perfectly legitimate rendering of the Hebrew, instead of do well, in the first clause. But how repay? Good for evil, grace for rebellion, life for capital offences. And so the Cluniac sings of the Saints in glory: A. Their one and only anthem, The fulness of His love, Who gives, instead of torment, Eternal joys above, Instead of torment, glory; Instead of death, that life Wherewith your happy country, True Israelites, is rife!

But many of them take the word Retribue practically as the A. V. deal bountifully. Give again and again, as payment to me Thy servant, if Thou wilt, for faithful service, which service Thou only hast made it possible for me to perform, give me life and obedience. Or, better, give me back again by grace that which I lost by sin,

that is, the true life of my soul. That I may live. We may take it in three ways, of prolongation of natural life; of quickening the feeble and dying soul into active holiness; of everlasting blessedness. It is to be noted throughout this Psalm how short a time the singer can abide without uttering a prayer. He has learned that prayer is the life of the soul, and that the soul can no more live without it than the body can without breathing. And his first petition is for life, but life to be spent in keeping God's law. And that because to a Saint even earthly life is a great benefit, as he goes on from election to glory by the way of sanctification, and does more good as long as he lives, to the glory of God, the good of others, and the confirmation of his own salvation; wrestling in prayer; conquering in temptations, persevering in well-doing; that is, in short, keeping God's word. So then we get, as the result of this, the most precious sense of all, that I may live as a citizen of Thy heavenly kingdom, and keep Thy Word, by ever gazing on, and never losing sight of, the glorious form of my once crucified Redeemer, amidst His rejoicing worshippers.

How can such joy as this want words to speak? And yet what words can speak such joy as this? Far from the world, that might their quiet break, Here the glad souls the Face of Beauty kiss, Poured out in pleasure on their beds of bliss; And drunk with nectar-torrents, ever hold Their eyes on Him, whose graces manifold, The more they do behold, the more they would behold. 18 Open thou mine eyes: that I may see the wondrous things of thy law. Better, with LXX., Vulgate, and A. V. margin, Reveal mine eyes; that is, take from me that veil of human weakness and ignorance which hides CHRIST from the eyes of my heart. Cardinal Hugo counts up for us the various ways in which the eyes of the soul are blinded; evil habits, carnal affections, as Samson, and care for temporal things, as Zedekiah; love of earthly goods; over-discussion; sloth and indolence; deliberate malice; the acceptance of gifts, carnal understanding, and that God's glory may be displayed, as in the healing of the blind man at the waters of Siloam. And then he goes on to say how God opens our eyes: by chastisement, by bringing our own weakness to our mind, by the bitterness of penitence, by the foretaste of inward sweetness, by prayer, either our own or another's, and by the infusion of grace.

Only this veyle which Thou hast broke, And must be broken yet in me, This veyle, I say, is all the cloke, And cloud which shadows me from Thee, This veyle Thy full-eyed love denies, And only gleams and fractions spies. O take it off! make no delay; But brush me with Thy light, that I May shine into a perfect day, And warm me at Thy glorious eye! O take it off! or till it flee, Though with no lilie, stay with me!

It is a prayer to be able to see wondrous things out of Thy law, the antitype in the type, the spirit shadowed in the letter, the Gospel in the Pentateuch, the Lamb of GOD in the Passover victim, the rest of heaven in the Sabbath, and so forth. So prayed the Psalmist centuries before the Messiah came, and yet we have still to echo S. Paul's words touching his nation, "But their minds were blinded; for until

this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament; which veil is done away in CHRIST. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. Nevertheless, when it shall turn to the LORD, the veil shall be taken away." With those who do turn towards Him, He deals as He did with Saul by the ministry of Ananias, when "there fell from his eyes as it had been scales, and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized." And the reason why it is said, Reveal mine eyes, instead of what we should expect, Reveal the wondrous things, &c., is because the eyes often contradict GOD's marvels, as in the mystery of the Eucharist; so that in order to understand such wondrous things, two revealings are needful, one of the wondrous things themselves, that the understanding may take cognizance of them; the other that of the eyes, that the sight may not contradict them. He says to each penitent soul which seeks Him, what the Power of Wisdom in the Greek poem says to a brave warrior:

The mist that was on them before, I have ta'en from off thine eyne, That thou mayest well know mortal man, and also God divine. And therefore S. Paul concludes that former saying of his touching the blindness of Israel, "But we all with unveiled (ἀνακεκαλυμμένῳ) face beholding as in a glass the glory of the LORD, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the SPIRIT of the LORD" 19 I am a stranger upon earth: O hide not thy commandments from me. C. A. Haymo. G. S. Ambros. 2 Cor. v. 6. S. Greg. Naz. Vit. S. Basil. A stranger, an exile on earth, from my true home in heaven, but not one of the citizens of Babylon, albeit sojourning there by constraint, and therefore I ask Thee to disclose to me those precepts which Thou hidest from them, Thine enemies. By calling himself a stranger on earth, he means that he renounces the pleasures and snares of this world, where he has no continuing city, and rather has his conversation in heaven, "knowing that whilst we are at home in the body we are absent from the LORD (for we walk by faith, not by sight): we are confident, and willing rather to be absent from the body and present with the LORD." And therefore S. Basil the Great, when threatened with banishment by Modestus, vicegerent of the Arian Emperor Valens, answered very well, "I have no fear of exile, knowing that men have but one country, Paradise, so that the whole earth is the common exile of nature."

O hide not Thy commandments. It is because he is a stranger, and knows not the true way to his own city, that he asks this question. But there is one noteworthy difference between the type and the antitype here. In any country on earth the people of the land can guide a stranger to the place where he would be; but the indwellers of the earth cannot show the way to heaven, and therefore the Psalmist seeks no guide among them, but prays the LORD to direct him. 20 My soul breaketh out for the very fervent desire: that it hath alway unto thy judgments. A.

Breaketh out. This phrase gives the notion of the bursting forth of a fountain, or the escape of a prisoner, either of which images expresses very forcibly the longing of

an eager soul. But it is not the sense of the Hebrew, which is simply is broken, that is, crushed, exhausted, and powerless with desire. The Chaldee, however, with the LXX. and Vulgate, renders it My soul hath desired to long. And the Doctor of Grace bids us note here the steps of advance in holiness. The temper of the unconverted mind is distaste and even loathing for divine things, and when this has passed away it by no means follows that appetite will at once take its place. Rather we have to begin to wish that we may love what is good, and proceed from this stage to a hearty longing to do so, and ascend thence into a real delight in the thought and practice of holiness. And this alway, because even unbelievers may like for a brief time that which is good, from caprice or novelty, but they soon become weary in well-doing. S. Hilary, dwelling on the word judgments, and the awful nature of Divine justice, observes that the Psalmist, knowing his own frailty, and how little he is himself able to abide that trial, dares not say that he desires GOD's judgments, but only that he longs to be able to desire them, to be so pure in heart and deed as to have no reason to fear the Great Doom. S. Augustine illustrates these meanings by the instance of a sick man who has no relish for food, which is nevertheless necessary for him, and who can get no further than to wish he had an appetite, for though his reasonable will is adequate, his bodily power will not come to its aid, and that this is the case of imperfect beginning in holiness.

But returning to what is the strict meaning of the verse, it may be asked, What is it that so breaks and crushes the heart? And the answer is a most blessed one, it is that "exceeding and eternal weight of glory," which is too much for our earthly imagination to bear, but not too much for our hopes to aim at. A. 21 Thou hast rebuked the proud : and cursed are they that do err from thy commandments.

God rebuked Satan, when in the beginning He cast him down from heaven for the sin of pride. He rebuked our first parents, and drove them out of Eden when in the pride of their self-will they ate of the forbidden fruit, and in like manner rebuked and punished, as well by threatenings of Scripture as by actual chastisement, Pharaoh, the Israelites in the wilderness, Saul, Ahab, Nebuchadnezzar, and others who lifted themselves up against His will. CHRIST has rebuked the proud by His parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, and by the judgments He has inflicted on the nation which was too haughty to take upon it the light yoke of the Carpenter's Son. And there is a stress on the word proud, because the sin of pride is that which brings man most frequently and most actively into opposition with the will of God. And so a Greek Father tersely says, "Pride is the mother of transgression, for it persuades to disobedience of God's commandments." Cursed. There is, probably, a primary reference herein to the closing words of the commination on Mount Ebal, "Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them." And note here two things, first, it is not said that they are cursed who do not fulfil the commandments, since that may be due to frailty, but those who wilfully turn aside from them, (ἐκκλίνοντες, declinant); and again, that the present tense,

not the past, is employed. It is not a threat of irreversible punishment against all who have ever sinned, but a simple statement of the actual condition of those who are continuing in sin, to warn them in time, lest at the Last Day they should hear that final sentence, ”Depart from Me, all ye workers of iniquity.”

A. A. 22 O turn from me shame and rebuke : for I have kept thy testimonies. It is the prayer of the choir of martyrs, suffering for the testimony of CHRIST, and beseeching that the insult and re- A. proach heaped on them may cease; not for their own sakes, since their feeling is that of the singer, If on my face for Thy dear Name, Shame and reproaches be, All hail reproach, and welcome shame, If Thou remember me. And they ask for the sake of their persecutors, that they may be turned from the utterance of blasphemies to the confession of CHRIST, and the keeping His testimonies. It is the prayer, not less, of the sinner, knowing as he does that his guilt deserves shame, and will too surely bring rebuke at the Last Day, but who appeals to GOD’s mercy on the ground of his own weakness. He declares himself no obstinate rebel, but one who has kept GOD’s testimonies, albeit having since fallen into sin, now repented of once more, and asks to be justified, and so delivered from shame, and glorified, and thus saved for ever from rebuke. Yet again, it is the cry of a feeble soul, dreading the trial of shame and ridicule, and fearing to be led into temptation from powerlessness to resist it, and therefore asking of GOD to be spared such a test, under which so many have succumbed. And it may also be taken as a prayer against sins of the tongue. Take from me the habit of slander and reviling, make me innocent and gentle of speech, that I, who am trying to keep Thy testimonies, may not bring discredit on my profession. For, as the Apostle saith: ”Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.”

23 Princes also did sit and speak against me: but thy servant is occupied in thy statutes.

This verse is employed as the Introit of the Missal on S. Stephen’s Day. It was true again and again of Prophets, Apostles, and Martyrs, when the great ones of the world sat in judgment upon them, when Jeremiah was cast into a dungeon; when Zechariah was slain betwixt temple and altar, when Daniel was cast into the den of lions, when Antiochus slew the Maccabees, Herod beheaded John Baptist, and Nero martyred the Princes of the Apostles; when Constantius, Julian, and Valens supported the Arians against the Consubstantial. Thy servant, marks the Psalmist’s humility, and is in contrast with the rank and title of his oppressors. They bear names of earthly dignity, he one of earthly contempt, but more glorious by far in reality. Is occupied, that is, mentally occupied, or, with A. V. meditates. The princes are speaking, but the servant of GOD is busy in devout thought, and is silent, wherefore we read, ”And when He was accused of the chief priests and elders, He answered nothing.” But the Vulgate reads exercised, and they take it then of

the sharp torments which the martyrs underwent for the statutes of GOD after sentence had been pronounced against them by the princes sitting in judgment. Again, the ”principalities and powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, the spiritual wickednesses in high places,” which war with our souls, speak against us by suggesting evil thoughts to our minds, and that sitting, implying the deliberation of the plot and the persistence of the siege which they lay against us. And the best weapon against them is to be occupied in GOD’s statutes, which they cannot resist. He who takes up their weapons, and returns accusation for accusation, and railing for railing, is in some peril, but not so he who confides in the Word of GOD and in prayer.

24 For thy testimonies are my delight : and my counsellors.
Alfonso the Wise once being asked, ”Who are the best counsellors?” replied, ”The dead,” meaning thereby books written by men no longer living, as they give advice without flattery or favour. But the Psalmist has better advisers even than these, namely, the words of the living GOD. To delight in these, and to practise them, is the best counsel for man. And observe that one council is here set against another; the council of princes pronouncing sentence against a martyr; the martyr in the midst of his council praying for the conversion of his persecutors and thus returning good for evil. And so even a heathen moralist may teach us: ”No man is good without GOD. Can any one rise above fortune, unless aided by Him? He it is Who gives noble and upright counsels.” And in the sense of the success of the Martyrs’ prayers, another saying of the same writer may be quoted, ”He who despises his own life is master of thine.” And if it be asked what testimonies of GOD are the delight of the holy soul, they answer that the chief proofs of CHRIST’s love for us are intended: namely, His Nativity, Passion, descent into Hell, Resurrection, Ascension, Mission of the Comforter, and Second Advent, and they are the seven seals of the Book which He alone could open.

De Muis. S. Ambros. A. Seneca, Ep. 41. Id. Ep. 4. Hugo Card. Rev. v. 5.

Collects.
O GOD, Who removest the darkness of sin, and makest us behold the wondrous things of Thy law, take away from us the shame of our sins, by the keeping of Thy commandments. (1.) O GOD, the revealer of all good things, reveal the wondrous things of Thy law to our minds, that we may consider them, and be exercised in Thy statutes and commandments, and find in them consolation both for this present life and for that which is to come. (1.) Let our soul, O LORD, long to desire Thy judgments at all times and that alone be strong in our affection which is made ready for us as an eternal gift. (11.) Open our eyes, O GOD, and grant us thereby to consider the greatness of Thy Name; lift up our lowly sojourning by the upraising of Thy commandments, and fulfil the desire of our soul, by putting spiritual longings

therein instead of what is now there, take from us shame and rebuke, and renew the hearts of Thy faithful people by the working of Thy mighty gifts. (11.)

Daleth.

The third letter, Daleth, means a door, and is explained by Beda as the opening of the door of the soul by poverty in this world, for the reception of true riches. But as the key-note of the section is a petition for help in time of trouble, it seems better to take the opposite notion, that of the LORD's closing the gateways of our soul and sense against the assaults of danger. So we read that when Noah had entered into the Ark "the LORD shut him in." And the door of the Ark is CHRIST. 25 My soul cleaveth unto the dust: O quicken thou me, according to thy word. This is the verse which the Emperor Theodosius the Great recited, as he lay prostrate on the floor of the great Church of Milan when doing penance for the massacre of Thessalonica.

The cleaving may be due either to misery or humility in prayer, and so voluntary or involuntary. And so too the dust may be taken to mean simply the ground,—as the LXX. and Vulgate, the latter of which reads pavement,—or it may be taken of near approach to the grave, the "dust of death." It is, say they, a confession of sin, of too eager clinging to things of this world, the floor or pavement of that great house of which the visible heaven is the roof. Or yet more ingeniously, and according more perfectly with the true meaning dust, My soul cleaveth to my body, by yielding consent to its appetites and desires. And this he says not as contradicting what he had said just before of his delight in GOD's testimonies, but as confessing with the Apostle, "I delight in the law of GOD after the inward man; but I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin." In this sense we may compare the Latin satirist:

A. The body, loaded With yesterday's excess, weighs down the mind, And pins to ground a part of breath divine. For when we yield to the wiles of the old serpent, we are no longer upright, and fed with divine food, but fall under the curse, "Upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat." And further, as the dust of the summer road blinds the eye, and obscures the prospect, so does this earthliness of soul darken our view of the SAVIOUR, dims the eye of faith, and hides the glorious prospect which, when beheld in the clear horizon, enlivens the weary pilgrim on his way. Quicken me. That is, give me spiritual life, for "man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of GOD." Quicken me, that I may not, like worldlings, continue to follow the serpent's example, crawling in the dust and eating of it, but rise to have my conversation in heaven. For after the resurrection, instead of the soul cleaving to the dust, the glorified body will cleave to the soul, and the soul to GOD. According to Thy word. That is, as S. Augustine reminds us, Thy promise, not Thy laws; or as another yet more deeply

says, according to Thy Christ, ”for as in Adam all die, even so in CHRIST shall all be made alive.”

A. Agellius. S. Matt. iv. 4. Bp. Cowper. Gen. iii. 14. A. 26 I have acknowledged my ways, and thou heardest me: O teach me thy statutes. Here we have the confession of sin, made in the dust, of those ways which are not GOD’s but my ways, and therefore paths of sin. And this open confession is a mark of grace, for the wicked neither will nor dare acknowledge the ways of GOD; because as an eye which is hurt dares not look to the light, so neither can the conscience of one who is doing evil dare look to the LORD. Whereas S. Ambrose tells us, he that accuses himself first, stops the mouth of the accuser who stands ready with his charge, prepared to heighten and exaggerate it: nay, turns evidence against the very accuser as being also the tempter to the sin now truly sorrowed for. And Thou heardest me. And here follows the reward of confession, for heardest means pardonedst. Then follows, O teach me Thy statutes; for confession is not sufficient unless we learn how to avoid falling into the same or similar sins again. Teach me, not merely to know Thy statutes, but to do them; that is, give me not only mercy, but grace.

A. A. 27 Make me to understand the way of thy commandments: and so shall I talk of thy wondrous works. Note the order here. In the previous verse the Psalmist prayed that God would teach him His statutes; that is, declare their name and import. Now he asks for detailed information, and for the way, that is, the regular order in which these commandments are to be observed. And not merely to know it, but to understand it, lest he should cling to the letter and miss the spirit, observe the type and fail to discern the mystery. So shall I talk. So the A.V. and S. Jerome, but it is better to take it as meditating, which is the force of the Vulgate exerebor. It is a promise to dwell in thought on those precepts of God which are wondrous, as surpassing the power of man to fulfil, or again on the inner and mystic sense of Scripture, and the great doctrines of the faith. Or if we keep to the rendering talk, he prays that he may so learn as to be able to teach others also.

28 My soul melteth away for very heaviness: comfort thou me according unto thy word. A. Melteth away, that is, dissolves into tears, as some take it; or loses strength and substance, as others, with more reason, prefer. But the LXX. and Vulgate have here the curious reading hath slumbered, and for heaviness read weariness, (ἀκηδίας, tædio.) Hence the Greek Fathers take the verse as a prayer against spiritual sloth and neglect of devout meditation. But some of the Latins see here only exhaustion from long vigils, and patient waiting for that teaching asked for in the previous verse, but delayed for His own wise purpose by God, and now almost despaired of by the watcher. The two notions of sleep and of tears lie very near one another, for we read that when the soul of the LORD JESUS had been melting away in the bloody sweat for very weariness, and ”when He rose up from prayer and was come to His disciples, He found them sleeping for sorrow.” Com-

fort Thou me according to Thy word. The LXX. and Vulgate have Stablish me in Thy words, that is, make me firm in faith and in observance of Thy commandments, and encourage me with the exhortations and blessings of Holy Writ. But the sense is rather Strengthen me according to Thy promise; or, more deeply, according to the might of CHRIST the Word of GOD, that I may say with the Apostle, "I can do all things through CHRIST which strengtheneth me."

29 Take from me the way of lying: and cause thou me to make much of thy law. The way of lying. Not false speech towards men, but ἐνώσταξεν, dormitavit. The LXX. reading is most probably an error of copyists for ἰσταξεν, which is exactly S. Jerome's de- stillavit, the accurate rendering of the Hebrew , or else for ἀστέναξεν. unfaithfulness and disloyalty towards God, is the meaning here, the sin of following and repeating errors in matters of faith or morals. The LXX. and Vulgate read the way of iniquity, but the meaning is the same, since iniquity is false and deceitful, and walking in it is to go out of the way, not along it. And observe that it is not said, Take me from the way of lying, but Take the way of lying from me, denoting that this way is now within me and part of my sinful self, so that it needs to be expelled by the powerful medicine of Divine grace.

And cause, &c. This is incorrect. The clause may be turned either as A.V., Grant me Thy law graciously, or else, With Thy law be gracious unto me, which is the LXX. and Vulgate rendering, save that they read be merciful. What law then is this wherein he asks mercy? What can it be save the law of faith? Hear the Apostle: "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay, but by the law of faith. This is the law of faith, whereby we believe and pray that we may be vouchsafed through grace to do that which we cannot fulfil of ourselves, lest ignorant of the righteousness of God, and going about to establish our own righteousness, we shall not be subject to the righteousness of God. So thus in the law of works there is the justice of God Who commandeth, but in the law of faith, the mercy of God Who helpeth. It is right therefore to ask for mercy where we know we cannot be loosed by the bonds of the law. And the words with Thy law be merciful, imply showing mercy with justice and wisdom, pardoning whatever may justly be pardoned, not dealing as one would who when showing mercy made himself punishable by the law, as was Saul's hap for sparing Agag. For there mercy was a fault, and led him into other faults later.

There is a curious interpretation of the Vulgate reading found in some of the commentators, who turn the words de lege as though meaning apart from the law, and say that the prayer is, Deal not with me according to the law. Give me not the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the spirit of adoption, whereby I may cry, Abba, Father. Lay not on me, O Thou true Elisha, Thou "Salvation of God," dead as I am, the dead staff of the law, which can smite the sinner, but not quicken him. Come to me Thy very self, and press Thy-self close to me, putting Thy mouth on my mouth,

and Thine eyes on mine eyes, and Thine hands upon mine hands, till I wax warm, and am quickened through Thy reviving grace.

And if we take the other rendering, Grant me Thy law graciously, it will not mean merely outward acquaintance with the precepts, of which the Psalmist cannot be supposed ignorant, but is a prayer that God's law may be so written on the fleshy tables of the heart as to be indelible in memory and will. A. C 30 I have chosen the way of truth : and Thy judgments have I laid before me.

The true doctrines of the faith are the ways and path of truth, for by them, as straight roads, we journey to GOD. And as CHRIST is the Way, and the Truth, He is also the way of truth, and a life guided according to the Gospel, as ordained by CHRIST, is here lauded in prophecy, while the judgments refer to the Gospel precepts and counsels. And the force of the word chosen lies in the freedom of our will, and in the great variety of false creeds and superstitions which compete with the Gospel, but which the faithful soul rejects in its favour. Nevertheless, we may not forget the LORD's own words, "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you," and must understand the words here as signifying that GOD first chose us, and then gave us grace to choose Him. I have not forgotten Thy judgments, is the LXX. and Vulgate reading of the next clause of the verse, but the Prayer Book rendering is closer to the Hebrew. Howbeit, the words before me are not in the original, and though they give the most probable sense, it is possible to fill the hiatus with the words before others. That is, I have not only kept the law before my eyes as a chart to guide me in the way of truth, but I have endeavoured, whether as teacher or judge, to make others also rule their lives by it. And observe, he says, I have chosen the way of truth as the road to run in. I have laid Thy commandments before me that I may be able to run at all; and therefore he continues:

31 I have stuck unto Thy testimonies : O LORD, confound me not. This is the manner in which I have run, and therefore I beseech Thee, O LORD, not to disappoint me, that I may go straight in my running, and attain whither I am going, for "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of GOD that showeth mercy." He is not unconscious nor unthankful for his advance in holiness. But just a while back he had said, My soul cleaveth to the dust; now he has risen from the dust, and is cleaving to GOD's testimonies. Yet he prays that he may not forget that this blessing has come to him by Divine grace, not by his own merit, and therefore asks that he may not lose it by security and carelessness. He who hath stuck unto GOD's testimonies renounces the world, forgets those things which are behind, and presses forward to those which are before, that he may attain the prize which is the badge of victory. And he is not confounded, since the lures of the world cannot snare him; he is not confounded, even if he have committed deeds to be blushed for, if only he ask CHRIST for pardon. For then the answer will be made him, "Thy sins are forgiven, S. Luke vii. go in peace." 48, 50.

32 I will run the way of thy commandments: when thou hast set my heart at liberty. The second clause should run, as in LXX., Vulgate, and A. V., when Thou shalt enlarge my heart. I could not run, if Thou didst not enlarge my heart. It is not as though I could do it of my own will, without needing Thy help, but only when Thou hast enlarged my heart. And that enlarging is delight in righteousness. It is the gift of GOD, that in obeying His precepts we should not be straitened with fear of punishment, but enlarged with love and delight for righteousness. This enlargement and breadth of His is promised in His saying, ”I will dwell in them, and walk in them.” How wide must be that place where GOD walks! In this wide place ”love is shed abroad in our hearts by the HOLY GHOST which is given unto us.” Wherefore it is also said, ”Let there be rivers of waters in the streets.”

And there is a further sense of enlarging the heart, that of making it wider in knowledge and understanding of wisdom, (as we read of Solomon, that ”GOD gave him wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart,”) so as not to take up narrow and inadequate notions concerning the mysteries of the Faith, for it is written, ”Wisdom crieth without, she uttereth her voice in the streets.” Under either interpretation, that is a deep saying of a Saint, ”Narrow is the way unto life, but no man can run in it save with widened heart.” The Prayer Book rendering set my heart at liberty is not a bad paraphrase, since the original meaning is that of giving a sense of cheerfulness and freedom, which lends vigour for the race. For that man does not run here in the way who is slow in forgiving or in bestowing, according to that fault censured by the Apostle, ”grudgingly, or of necessity.” He runs who giveth with simplicity, and showeth mercy with cheerfulness, from the very joy of a loving mind, looking for eternal things in return for temporal things, not tepidly, not sluggishly, but readily and promptly, with a good and ready will in charity which never faileth. But here we, too many of us, may stand and lament. Alas, we do not run with the Psalmist: would that we could even halt to Canaan with Jacob, or at least creep forward like children to our Father’s house. Many, instead of running, lie down, or go back, like carnal Israelites, to the flesh-pots of Egypt, for whom it had ”been better not to have known the way of righteousness,” than to refuse, in such fashion, to run therein. And we may sum up the whole force of the verse in a pithy saying of one commentator: That is a truly wide heart which has room enough in it for all, friends or enemies, alike.

A. Prov. i. 20. Remove from us, O LORD, the way of unrighteousness, and with Thy law have mercy on us, that Thou mayest take away the habit of sin, and grant us perseverance in living aright. (1.) O GOD, Who by the power of Thy Word loosest the soul which cleaveth to earthly things, we beseech Thee, let not the sleep of death press upon us, but rather arouse us Thy-self to the way of truth. (1.) Remove our goings, O LORD, from the way of unrighteousness, and appoint our course in the path of Thy commandments. Lift up, by Thine healing medicine, our soul which

cleaveth to the ground, and when Thou hast taught it with Thy statutes, quicken it by the might of Thy Word. (11.)

HE.

He, the fifth letter, is of uncertain meaning, but probably denotes a fissure or window; and may be so interpreted in explaining this section, which is a prayer for the light of grace and for guidance of the eyes (ver. 37); which latter are the windows through which the soul looks out upon the world; and again, a favourite allegory with mediæval writers is that the Prophets of the Old Testament are windows in the wall of the Law, giving glimpses of CHRIST, Whom that Law hides altogether under type and shadow; while our own powers of understanding are also windows to let spiritual light in on our souls; notions which both find their place in this section. 33 Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes: and I shall keep it unto the end.

"He who is his own pupil," remarks S. Bernard, "has a fool for his master. A soldier who enters on a march does not settle for himself the order of his going, nor begin the journey at his own will, nor yet choose pleasant short-cuts, lest he should fall out of rank, away from the standards, but gets the route from his general, and keeps to it; advances in a prescribed order, walks armed, and goes straight on to the end of his march, to find there the supplies provided by the commissariat. If he goes by any other road, he gets no rations, and finds no quarters ready, because the general's orders are that all things of this kind shall be prepared for those who follow him, and turn not aside to the right hand or the left. And thus he who follows his general does not break down, and that for good reasons; for the general consults not for his own convenience, but for the capability of his whole army. And this too is CHRIST's order of march, as He leads His great host out of the spiritual Egypt to the eternal Land of Promise. We need then to ask Him to teach us the way, and we need too to keep it unto the end, lest we should miss the Golden City at the last.

It is not then the old Law, with Moses as leader, that we ask for, but the new Law, of which is written, "Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the Word of the LORD from Jerusalem; that WORD Himself in flesh being the Captain of our salvation. And the LORD shall Himself tell us what is His answer to this prayer. "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; but this shall be My covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their GOD, and they shall be My people."

A. 34 Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law: yea, I shall keep it with my whole heart. We learn from this prayer that GOD's law is no easy matter to

comprehend, nor in the power of unassisted man, since we require GOD's direct aid to master it. For, as one of the profoundest intellects of old time observes: it is no easy nor trifling thing, but needs at once GOD's help and our own zeal, that we may draw from it practical utility and mental understanding, as well for active as for contemplative purposes. And therefore the Psalmist's prayer is for a knowledge of the spirit which quickeneth, to be had only from GOD's teaching, that he may add it to the knowledge of the letter that killeth, which he has been able to acquire for himself. This notion comes out further in the LXX. and Vulgate rendering, I will search out Thy law, endeavouring to penetrate into its deep and dark sayings, and to learn their mystical sense. And whereas in a previous verse he promised perseverance in the law, he now adds a promise of sincerity, saying, I will keep it with my whole heart. This pledge can be fulfilled in but one way, by keeping those two precepts on which hang all the Law and the Prophets. "Thou shalt love the LORD thy GOD with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind; and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." There are plenty of people, observes Cardinal Hugo, who keep the law in boxes and chests, but the heart is a better storehouse for it.

A. A. 35 Make me to go in the path of thy commandments: for therein is my desire. We are like the paralytic, impotent to go of ourselves, till CHRIST saith to any one of us, "Arise, take up thy bed, and Bridges. A. The Sequence, Zoma vetus expurgetur. A. Job i. 9. go unto thine house." But if I take Him for my strength, He will make my feet like hinds' feet, and He will make me to walk upon mine high places." Note, moreover, that it is no longer guidance in the way, but in the path which he asks. And this notes the narrowness of the road by which we must needs journey, for a path or track (LXX. τριβφ, Vulg. semita) is a much closer and narrower thing than a high-road. There is a further notion, going deeper yet, which is, that the Hebrew , here found, means a footpath, not a way for horses and carriages, and thus tells us that the way of God's commandments is not that of pomp and luxury, nor yet that of men "like horse and mule, which have no understanding," but is meant only for the humble and intelligent believer. And Origen bids us note that the word means a trodden way, so that we cannot plead its impassability or its unknown course as excuses for declining to enter on it, seeing that CHRIST and the Saints our example who followed Him, have traversed it from end to end and left their tracks full in our view. And thus Adam of S. Victor styles our LORD:

JESU, Victor, Life, and stay, JESU, life's well-trodden way. For therein is my desire. That is, it is not servile fear of punishment, but love for GOD and His way which leads me to seek Him. And so the Master of the Sentences lays down that under the Gospel law the only obedience which is meritorious is that which is voluntary. 36 Incline my heart unto thy testimonies: and not to covetousness. C. It is well said incline, for the head which is bowed forward in humility sees better than that which is flung back in pride. And note that this prayer, coming as it does after the

declaration in the previous verse of delight in GOD's law, is a confession of the insufficiency of man's will unless aided by Divine grace. It is the same cry as that of the father of the possessed child; "LORD, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief." And in saying Thy testimonies, and not covetousness, the Psalmist intreats that his service of GOD may be free and disinterested, not for the sake of temporal benefits to be obtained as the reward of piety. For in this wise we escape the sneer which the tempter directed against holy Job, saying, "Doth Job fear GOD for nought? Hast not Thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that

1 From the root , to tread under foot. See Gesenius in voce. he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth Thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse Thee to Thy face." And there is further a warning against covetousness in itself, an evil denounced alike by Prophets and Apostles; Jeremiah saying of sinful Israel, "From the least of them even unto the greatest of them every one is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely;" and S. Paul adds, "Mortify therefore covetousness, which is idolatry." They are careful to remind us that covetousness is not limited to greed of money, but that it equally extends to craving for rank, power, reputation, or other worldly gain, in contrast with our LORD's counsel, "Lay not up for yourselves treasure upon earth . . . but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven." There is, however, a further meaning in the Hebrew , which the commentators have missed, for it denotes unjust gain, or rapine, a natural result of greed. There is no sin, observes a shrewd Christian, which a covetous man will not commit for his gain. We should beware of all sins, but especially of mother-sins. Nor do they fail to remind us how the greatest sin the world has known, the betrayal of the Son of God into the hands of His enemies, sprang from this one vice.

37 O turn away mine eyes, lest they behold vanity : and quicken thou me in thy way. The primary meaning of the first clause here seems to be a prayer against any tampering with idolatry or heathen usages, a sense in which vanity occurs very frequently in Holy Writ. And there is much force then in the literal rendering, which is, Make mine eyes to pass on one side from seeing vanity, as contrasted with the steady look of the pilgrim towards the goal of his journey, whereas vanity, as has been aptly said, is the "mirage" of the desert which would lure him from the right way. There is a further sense of vanity, akin to that already named, which is false teaching in the Name of God, or religious delusions of any kind, which may mislead even Saints. But the force of the word extends much further even than this, and includes all things which are not of God, and are therefore unstable and unreal, and so to be shunned by those who desire the true riches. It is in this widest sense that the commentators prefer to take it, and warn us that the eyes are the windows by which death enters the soul. And therefore, because all things in this world are vanity, the Psalmist finds it impossible for him to turn his eyes himself

where they will see no vanity, but must needs pray to God to do it for him. It is well said then, against this peril, Quicken Thou me in Thy way; for he who is in God's way does not behold vanity. CHRIST

Anastatius. Deut. xxxii. 21. 1 Kings xvi. 13. 2 Kings xvii. 15. Isa. xli. 29; xliv. 9. Jer. ii. 5; x. 15; xvi. 19; xviii. 15; ii. 18, &c. Kay. Ezek. xiii. 6, 8, 9; xxi. 29, &c. Cocceius. A.

is the perfect way. How then can he who is in CHRIST behold vanities, seeing that CHRIST hath crucified in His flesh all the vanities of this world? It is vanity to look at wrestlers, for they strive for a crown of weeds. The true wrestlers are they who wrestle against the lures of the world. . . . CHRIST is before us, His prize is before us, to which he attaineth who hath not run uncertainly, nor recalled his course, but urged it on. Turn thine eyes unto Him, away from the shows and pomp of the world. Lift them to the skies, behold by night the jewelled constellations, the moon's fair orb, or the sun as he shines by day. Look out upon the sea, cast thy glances round the earth, let all creation wrought by the hand of GOD be thy food. What grace of form do very beasts display, what comeliness in men, what loveliness in birds! Gaze on these, and thou shalt not behold unrighteousness and strife in the city. Look at these, and death will not enter by the windows of thine eyes. For, as S. Athanasius teaches, Eyes were given to the body that we might with them look forth upon creation, and by its wondrous harmony recognise its Maker. But he who uses his bodily eye carelessly, will, not undeservedly, be blinded of his inward eye. Lest this should be my punishment, quicken Thou me in Thy way, which is CHRIST, for He hath said, "I am the Light of the world:

he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. Happy then are they who can say with a great penitent and Saint: "There was a great dark cloud of vanity before mine eyes, so that I could not see the Sun of Righteousness and the light of truth. I, being myself the sun of darkness, was wrapped in darkness: I loved my darkness, because I knew not Thy light. I was blind, and loved my blindness, and walked from darkness to darkness. But, O LORD, Thou art my GOD, Who hast led me out of darkness and the shadow of death: Who hast called me unto this glorious light, and behold, I see."

38 O stablish thy word in thy servant: that I may fear thee. This is not the exact meaning of the verse, which is somewhat obscure in construction. It may be either, (as A.V.,) Confirm Thy promise unto Thy servant, who fears Thee (literally, who is unto Thy fear), or else, Confirm unto Thy servant Thy promise which is for Thy fear, that is, either is meant only for GOD's dutiful servants, or has for its aim and object to implant holy fear in the soul. This latter explanation, not so probable as the former, practically coincides with the Prayer Book version. But the LXX. and Vulgate, reading the last clause in Thy fear, give rise to the comment that holy fear is the basis or pedestal upon which GOD erects the wisdom drawn from His law,

as a column in the temple of man's soul. Not merely upon it either, but rooted deeply into it, as a tree into the ground, so that it can never be shaken, according to that saying of the Wise Man, "The root of wisdom is to fear the LORD." But the deepest meaning is one which the word eloquium in the Vulgate prevented the Latin commentators from seeing, that the promise is indeed the WORD, the Deliverer promised from the beginning, that Rod of Jesse on Whom should rest, amongst other graces of the HOLY GHOST, "the spirit of the fear of the LORD," and that the verse is a cry for His appearing.

Ecclus. i. 20. 39 Take away the rebuke that I am afraid of: for Thy judgments are good.

That rebuke is the charge of falling away from the law of God, whether addressed to the backslider by God, or by evil spirits, or by men mocking and saying, "This man began, and was not able to finish; so that we have here a prayer for the grace of perseverance. Others take it as a petition to God to avert His chastisements, lest they should be turned to the Psalmist's reproach, and thus indirectly to the reproach of the God he served, as either powerless to defend him or neglectful of His worshipper. But most of the Latin commentators, misled by the structure of the Vulgate, which is, Take away from me my reproach, that I suspected, explain the words as a prayer against the infirmity of suspiciousness and harsh judgment of others. Yet S. Ambrose comes much nearer the full meaning of the passage by explaining the reproach to be sin, and taking the words I suspected as denoting the sense of uneasiness in the soul of one who, though not sure that he has sinned, is still less sure that he has not sinned, and therefore commits the matter to God's mercy, saying with the Apostle, "I am not conscious of anything in myself, yet am I not hereby justified: but He that judgeth me is the LORD. For it is to be marked that a godly man is more afraid for sins which he may do, than a wicked man is for sins which he has done:

and as he lives in a continual sorrow for sins begun, so also in a continual fear of sins wherein he may fall. And so it is added, For Thy judgments are good. Man's judgment is so perverse that I count it for nought. We know that he condemns often where Thou wilt absolve. That is a high thing many a time in man's eye, which is abomination unto Thee, but as to Thy rebuke, I know, LORD, it comes never undeserved, for Thy judgments are good. More than good, even sweet or pleasant, for it is said by the LORD Himself, "Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance."

A. C. 40 Behold, my delight is in thy commandments: O quicken me in thy righteousness. S. Matt. v. 6. A. Bp. Cowper. A. 1 Cor. i. 30. Even the wicked desire mercy, but the righteous desire also the way to mercy, not like Balaam, who wished to die the death of the righteous, but would not live his life. So here the Psalmist does not speak of his own fulfilling of God's commandments, but only of

his longing (A.V.) after them. Yet the saint knows that where desires of this kind go before, satisfaction quickly follows, for the LORD hath said, ”Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.” These commandments which God’s true servants most desire are the two great precepts of charity, love to God, and love to our neighbour. And lest this desire should prove a mere abortive birth, and fail to grow into action, he adds, Quicken me, who am of myself but dead. But how? In Thy righteousness, that is, ”in CHRIST JESUS, Who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the LORD.”

Collects.

Quicken us, O LORD, in Thy righteousness, incline our heart unto Thy testimonies, and not to covetousness, give us also understanding that we may know Thy law, and keep it with all our heart and with praiseworthy conversation. (1.) Turn away our eyes, O LORD, lest they behold vanity, and quicken us in Thy way, make us hate the world and love CHRIST. (11.) Make known Thy righteousness unto us, O LORD, and kindle our hearts with the glow of charity, that we may seek it out, give understanding to our minds, that we may be able to search out the hidden things of Thy law, grant us perfection of faith that we may be able to observe the order of Thy commandments, and in this wise be made both free from sin and heirs of the life of blessedness. (11.) Incline our heart, O LORD, unto Thy testimonies, and turn us from evil gazing after vanity, that Thou mayest separate us from earthly love and unite us to heavenly affection. (11.)

VAU.

Vau, the sixth letter, signifies a nail or hook. And as this section is, by the common agreement of the old commentators, an eager cry for the coming of the Messiah, we shall find the best explanation of the mystical intent in that prophecy which, applied first to Eliakim son of Hilkiah, found its full accomplishment only in JESUS the Son of David. ”He shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah. And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open. And I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place; and he shall be for a glorious throne to his father’s house. And they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father’s house, the offspring and the issue, all vessels of small quantity, from the vessels of cups, even to all the vessels of flagons.”

41 Let thy loving mercy come unto me, O LORD : I even thy salvation, according unto thy word. There can be no doubt Whom he prays to behold, in S. Ambros. Whom the fruit of mercy and salvation is to come, for CHRIST is the mercy and salvation of GOD. It is the prayer of Jews and Gentiles alike, going up daily through the ages till that day of the Purification when the aged Simeon declared that his

eyes had at last seen that Salvation they had so long desired, and that other day when the Wise Men laid their treasures at the feet of the Child. It is the prayer for CHRIST's Advent, for the cry is Come; it is a petition that He may come without more delay, for unto me is added; it intreats that He may not come only with bountiful gifts, as the loving mercy of GOD, but also as the strong Deliverer from present and future peril and woe, because He is GOD's salvation. To me, to the solitary sinner who needs His personal help, as well as to mankind in general. And this, according to Thy word, or promise, the pledge given of old time to Eve, and renewed to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David, and by the long line of Prophets from Moses to John the Baptist.

42 So shall I make answer unto my blasphemers : for my trust is in thy word.

It is well said answer, for it is not enough to have CHRIST in the heart if we have Him not in the mouth also, as it is written, "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. And it is our duty to answer those blasphemers who reproach us with worshipping a crucified malefactor, or a Being who is less than Very GOD, and not to keep silence in face of their crafty arguments, lest the worse cause should seem to prevail. Or my blasphemers may be taken in that other sense of those who reproach the Saint because of that very holiness of life which they hate. I will answer evil spirits with the words of my heart, refusing the consent of my will to them; to false teachers I will answer with the word of wisdom, defending the Faith; revilers with the word of patience, overcoming evil with good; slanderers with the word of action, living a godly life. And that because of perfect reliance on GOD's will and power to help in time of need. For my trust is in Thy word, that is, I believe what Holy Writ reveals concerning the LORD JESUS, and I find there too the promise for this life, "I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gain-say nor resist;

and the promise for the life to come, "Who-soever shall confess Me before men, him shall the Son of Man confess before the angels of God. And whereas the Hebrew runs, So shall I have a word, (or thing, ,) to answer, &c., or else So shall I have an answer for him who reproacheth me with a word, while the LXX. has λόγον, and the Vulgate Verbum, they take occasion to tell us that the Incarnate WORD, our crucified LORD, "unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness," is Himself, whichever way we read the sentence, the reproach made against His people, and the triumphant and all-sufficient answer to that reproach. For we can answer with the help of His Word either by prayer for our blasphemers, or by preaching to them, and he cannot feel a curse who possesseth that Word, nor retort the curse if he have that Word ever in his mouth. Wherefore is added

A. 1 Cor. i. 23. S. Ambros. 43 O take not the word of thy truth utterly out of my mouth : for my hope is in thy judgments. A. S. Luke xxii. 32. Let us never deny

Him, even for a moment, as S. Peter did, albeit he repented speedily with tears. It is the prayer of the whole Church of God, that in time of rebuke and blasphemy, when many fall away and become renegades to their LORD, or are deceived by false teaching, there may be some strong ones left to vindicate His honour. And so the LORD Himself spake to Peter, "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not;" that is, that the word of truth be not taken utterly out of thy mouth. This punishment falls upon us when our actions no longer square with our words, and begin by their unrighteousness to bring discredit on the teaching we have received. The word is taken out of our mouth when God saith to the sinner, "Why dost thou preach My laws?" Then eloquence itself grows dumb when the conscience is disordered. The birds of the air come and take the word out of thy mouth, as they carry away the seed of the Word from the rock, lest it should bear fruit.

S. Ambros. Ps. i. 16r It is also the cry of the martyrs, intreating that no extremity of torture may wring from them any concession dishonouring to their LORD, but that they may be victorious in their passion, by reason of their hope in God's judgments, in the love that suffereth them to be tortured, and that will crown them at the last. It is, moreover, a special warning to the preachers of the Church to live devout and godly lives, lest God should take from them the power of declaring His word, or refuse to give that word free course and its natural influence when coming from their lips. And there is a stress on the phrase word of truth, since there are many found who in their zeal for God, not according to knowledge, maintain for His sake the word of falsehood, and refuse to listen to better instructed Christians, or to receive correction at their hands. But a true humility will keep the word by hoping in God's judgments, remembering the saying of the Master: "I thank S. Matt. xi. Thee, O FATHER, LORD of heaven and earth, because Thou 25. hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes."

44 So shall I alway keep thy law: yea, for ever and ever. That must mean, observes S. Augustine, the highest law of all, whereof we read, "Love is the fulfilling of the law." For though alway, standing by itself, might mean only till the end of this world, the words for ever and ever cannot be so counted, but must extend unto the everlasting kingdom to come, where precepts, and sanctions, and sacraments and ordinances will all be swallowed up in the abyss of Divine love, when in the full light of the Beatific Vision we lose even the very power of sinning; because "charity never faileth." And it also holds as a promise to observe God's laws in all respects, and through all the stages of life, learning it in childhood, practising it in youth, ripening in it in age, and loving it always. A. Rom. xiii. 10.

45 And I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy commandments. At liberty. The LXX. and Vulgate give the literal sense, which is, in a wide place. That is, as they for the most part explain it, in the width of charity and love, which spreads out so as to give room for all. In a wide place, because he has no motive for concealing

his actions, but can do them frankly in the full light of day, beneath the gaze of any spectators. A wide place, because the true Saint does not need to be hemmed in, like the sinner, on each side by threats and terrors, to make him keep in the right way, but presses on directly forward, albeit untrammelled, because his eyes are riveted on the goal. And therefore it follows, for I seek Thy commandments. Were he looking for anything else, this liberty might prove a snare to him, but in searching for the will of God, he must needs look to heaven, and then he is safe, not only for his journey, but for his reward.

H. S. Ambros. A. Agellius. No restingplace we seek on earth, No loveliness we see, Our eyes are on the royal crown Prepared for us and Thee. And therefore the Wise Man saith: ”When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitened, and when thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble.” 46 I will speak of thy testimonies also, even before kings : and I will not be ashamed. A. S. Matt. x. 18.

It is the answer the martyrs of CHRIST make to Him in return for that His prophecy and promise : ”And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for My sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak : for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your FATHER which speaketh in you. Nor did the Apostles lack examples to tell them how to bear themselves before the great ones of the earth. Elijah, Micaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, and John Baptist, had shown them the way ; and countless thousands followed them in it, including tender maidens and little children. Will not be ashamed of the reproach of the Cross, nor ashamed later in the presence of the angels for having yielded and denied the LORD. Nor should we forget that other and primary meaning of the verse, of the difficulty and duty of maintaining the law of GOD as a standard before the eyes of princes who, without being active persecutors, as were the Pagan emperors, are yet unaccustomed to have their will contradicted by a higher law, and are tempted by the pomp and splendour of their courts to give themselves entirely to worldly things.

In such cases, the example of an Anselm at the court of Rufus, or that of a Louise de Bourbon in the circle of Louis XV., gives us as true a lesson as the patience of a martyr did to Christians in the earlier days of the Church. And in either case, it holds true that GOD’s champion shall not be ashamed, but that the shame will fall on them who ”were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit with which he spake. Note, moreover, the teaching which this verse gives against common faults of the priesthood and others whose duty it is to proclaim GOD’s will. I will speak. There is a protest against the untimely silence of those blind watchmen, ”dumb dogs that cannot bark. Next there is a contrary warning against vain prating, for the speaking is limited by the words of Thy testimonies. For, as a saint warns priests, ”Thou hast consecrated thy mouth to the Gospel, beware of opening it

with trifles or fables. Thirdly, there is a protest against cowardice. Before kings : as it is written, ”Seek not to be judge, being not able to take away iniquity ; lest at any time thou fear the person of the mighty, and lay a stumblingblock in the way of thine uprightness. Lastly, there is a rebuke of false shame : and will not be ashamed, for it is written in another place, ”The LORD GOD will help me ; therefore shall I not be confounded ;

therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed.”

47 And my delight shall be in thy commandments : which I have loved.

He promises here the service of the affections, as something higher and better than the external observance already pledged, because due to good-will and not to compulsion or fear. But the LXX. and Vulgate have, less forcibly, I meditated in Thy commandments. Nevertheless, the two notions combine, for it has been truly said by a great philosopher that the chief pleasure of man consists in contemplation. And the order of the words in this verse and the following one is admirable, that we should first meditate, and that our meditation on those commandments which we love should be habitual. For it is by diligent meditation on the divine statutes that the practice of good works grows into a habit; since as memory is the end of meditating on words, so practical action is the end or aim of meditation on heavenly precepts, and immediate action in their fulfilment, while no man can attain to this fulfilment unless he loves them, and that exceedingly. And this love can be tested in two ways; the degree of sorrow felt at leaving any commandment undone, which fixes the quantity of love; and the ready delight felt in fulfilling any of God’s commandments, which tests its quality. The Christian is like a steed which knows and loves its master, and not merely carries him gladly, but dislikes to be mounted by any other rider.

And as some horses will simply be less spirited and ready when feeling a stranger in the saddle, so some Christians will experience a sense of depression and sorrow at permitting sin to master them, while others, more loyal and more spirited, will cast the stranger to the ground and suffer no other hand than their master’s to guide them. Again, on the word loved, the Carmelite quotes two sayings of ancient philosophers, which he commends to the acceptance of those who have learnt the truer philosophy of the Gospel. The first is Aristotle’s answer to the question of what profit he had derived from philosophy: ”I have learnt to do without constraint that which others do from fear of the law. The second a very similar saying of Aristippus: ”If the laws were lost, all of us would live as we do now that they are in force. And for us the whole verse is summed up in the words of a greater Teacher than they: ”If a man love Me, he will keep My words.”

48 My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments, which I have loved : and my study shall be in thy statutes.

My hands, denotes action, the result of previous meditation and delight. Lift up, because God's commandments are not earthly, so that we should thrust down our hands to G. Ay. Lam. iii. 41. Exod. xvii. 12. I Tim. ii. 8. Agellius. Cocceius. Pseudo-Hieron. Genebrardus. Titelman. L. S. Ambros. S. John xv. 15. grasp them, but heavenly, and requiring that we should stretch upwards towards them. Lift up, because the rewards which God offers are not temporal but eternal blessings, so that we must also look upwards for them. Again, we lift up our hands in prayer, as the prophet counsels: "Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens;" as Moses did, supported by Aaron and Hur in the battle with Amalek in Rephidim, and as the LORD JESUS lifted up His hands in work and prayer together for us upon the Cross. Wherefore also the Apostle saith, "I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands." There is yet another sense in which we may take the words, that of stretching out our hands up towards heaven to receive from God the precious gift of His law, that we may embrace and treasure it. They assign various other reasons for lifting up the hands, such as in proof of innocency, showing that they are clean; swearing allegiance and loyalty to God; straining towards something which is above natural power; preparing to strike a vigorous blow in defence of the truth; or, summoning, as it were, the commandments of God to stand by us in our need. And that because we have loved them, and are ready to do His commandments with gladness and joy, not with sorrow and reluctance, because that which a slave does unwillingly, a friend does with good-will, and we shall strive to have it said to us, "Henceforth I call you not servants; but I have called you friends."

Collects.

MSS. Thomas. Let Thy mercy come upon us, O LORD, that wrath be not fierce against us; and let us have for our healing the SAVIOUR Whom we behold as our propitiation and Judge. (1.) Id. Let Thy mercies and Thy salvation come unto us, O LORD, according to Thy word, that we may alway keep Thy law, and taught by the word of truth, may be strengthened by the word of Thy salvation. (2.) Mozarabic. Let Thy salvation come upon us, O LORD, that the word of truth never fall away from our mouth, and that we be not confounded with the testimony of Thy word, but freely confess the wondrous things of Thy law. (11.) Mozarabic. Let Thy mercy come upon us, O LORD, as we beseech Thee; and let Thy salvation instruct our heart, and nourish our mind with the instruction of Thy speech, that we who put our trust in Thy sayings may in all things be comforted by Thy mighty power, and as our hope is devoted unto Thee, so the petition of our hope may be granted by Thee. (11.)

ZAIN.

The seventh letter, Zain, means a dart or missile weapon. This has a threefold mystical signification in Holy Scripture. If referred to GOD, or those acting in His Name, it denotes Divine chastisement for sin, as in the command for setting

bounds about Mount Sinai, ”if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be thrust through with a dart;” and as in the punishment of Zimri and Cozbi, when Phinehas thrust them through with a javelin. If to the Saints, the notion is that of defence by prayer, ”ejaculations,” javelin-throwings of the soul, wherefore we read of Hezekiah (”strength of the LORD,”) that he not only fortified the Holy City, but made ”darts and shields in abundance.” If of evil spirits, it means the piercing of the soul by sin, ”till a dart strike through the liver;” or, in the classical passage, ”all the fiery darts of the wicked,” it stands for temptations and afflictions of any kind. The key-note of this section takes in all three meanings, for the judgments of GOD are hinted at in verse 53, as threatening the ungodly; the nature of our defence in dangers appears in vv. 49 and 50, and the shafts of the wicked are implied in verse 51. And they note that whereas this is the seventh strophe of the Psalm, so there are seven godly resolutions found in it.

49 O think upon thy servant, as concerning thy word: wherein thou hast caused me to put my trust. The first words here should rather be, as in Vulgate and A.V., Remember. Not that GOD does or can forget, but that the delay appointed in His wisdom before He fulfils His promises to the godly, or His threats to the wicked, is often too much for man’s impatience; and the force of the word Remember is its marking our yearning and beseeching. As concerning Thy word. That is, as more than once already, Thy promise: and as the number seven is the Scriptural type of rest, so the choir of saints in this seventh strophe of the Psalms, declares its rest and trust in the promises of GOD, as the sure bulwark against all worldly troubles. What, then, is the special promise meant, which could give such confidence to the Jew? Doubtless that old pledge to Abraham that in his seed should all the families of the earth be blessed, which the Psalmist asks may be fulfilled, by GOD’s sending the WORD Himself. And for us, now that the WORD has come, the verse has another meaning: The LORD JESUS calls us to Himself, saying, ”Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.” We have then to follow Him away from earthly to heavenly things, and when we have done so, to say, Remember Thy word unto Thy servant. I have fought the fight, I ask the prize Thou hast promised me, and it is not unreasonably that I have hoped for it, because Thou madest me to hope. I am Thy servant, I look for nourishment from my Master, I am Thy soldier, I ask for my pay from my General, I am an invited guest, I call for the fulfilment of my Host’s pledge.

A. And observe that there are three reasons in the verse itself for this confident asking of an eternal reward. First, God’s own promise, according to Thy word; secondly, man’s obedience, unto Thy servant; thirdly, his perseverance, put my trust. For God is wont to fulfil that which He has promised, not remembering our iniquities, but bearing in mind His own promises. 50 The same is my comfort in my trouble: for thy word hath quickened me. A.

When men are sick with heavy diseases, earthly comforts, such as food, drink, and recreation arouse loathing when proffered, and the pleasures of sin instead of lessening trouble increase it; and thus we are thrown back on divine consolation as our one stay in time of distress. And therefore if there be persecution, danger, death, severe illness, attack of robbers, confiscation of goods, or any of those things which are counted as evils in this world, they are readily overcome if there be hope to comfort. For even if they do happen, they cannot be grievous to him who saith, ”I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” For trouble the Vulgate reads humility, and this is either explained as equivalent to affliction, (A.V.) or more specifically of the state of man after the fall, or any season of unusual temptation; or yet again of voluntary submission and lowliness like that of Blessed Mary, or of the penitent confessing his sins. For Thy word hath quickened me. That is, the word of God is the vital substance of the soul, whereby it is nourished, fed, and ruled. Nor is there aught else save God’s Word that can make the reasoning soul live. And just as the union of our body and soul is quickened and kept up by the breath of life, and nourished thereby, so our soul is quickened by the Word of God and by spiritual grace. He has quickened me, lying dead in sin, and raised me by the first resurrection, He hath quickened me by rousing and kindling my soul to good. And that because He is the life of the inward man, and hath said, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life.” And if there be such comfort and joy in the promise, what will the fulfilment be?

51 The proud have had me exceedingly in derision: yet have I not shrinked from thy law. And thus the Apostle counts amongst the sufferings of the Saints that ”they had trials of mockings,” since it was fitting that they should follow in the steps of their Master, Who was reviled and jeered at upon the Cross. The LXX. and Vulgate read in the first clause, The proud have dealt very wickedly, and do not include the notion of derision. The proud are, according to some, the heathen persecutors, who not merely tortured the martyrs and reviled them, but also endeavoured to bring about their apostasy. Others, carrying on the former reference to the sin of our first parents, hold that they are here intended, (a meaning which will of course not stand with the Hebrew text,) and that the intention is to declare in this verse the resistance of grace to the temptings of original and intentional sins.

A better interpretation, however, sees here any scornful transgression of the law, and adds the evil spirits to that gathering of the proud against the soul of the righteous. And this seems the sense of S. Ambrose in his comment on the passage: ”Pride is the greatest sin in man, because hence flowed the source of our faultiness. This is the first weapon wherewith the devil wounded and smote us. For had not man, led away by the luring of the serpent, wished to be as GOD, and to know good and evil, which he could not altogether distinguish by reason of human weakness, and broke through forbidden things through discontent at the bounds set him, the

heirloom of that fatal sin would never have passed to us. And why do I speak of man? The devil himself lost through pride his natural grace. For while he was saying, 'I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High,' he fell from the company of the Angels, and justly punished for that sin, he sought to make man a partaker in his guilt, to pass on to him a share of the same offence."

And as the Psalmist had stated what power of evil there is in pride, he was bound to teach us how it might be overcome; and so as a good physician he shows us the remedy, after speaking strongly about the bane. Hearken then how to cast out the poison of pride: I have not shrinked from Thy law. It is then GOD's law which can dilute the venom of pride, by teaching the devout man how to rule himself with due caution. For there are many persons, not only far from hostile to the faith, but who even seem to have tasted freely of Scriptural precepts, who are often tried by observing the prosperous success of the proud and ungodly, and the losses and troubles of the righteous, so that their mind becomes warped, and they think that GOD has somehow erred in His judgments, because they do not hold to that capital truth that it is not in this world, but the next, that GOD rewards good works.

52 For I remembered thine everlasting judgments, O LORD: and received comfort.
For I remembered. This is the reason why he did not shrink; since unless a man be taught and trained by the ex-S. Ambros. A. amples of the law, and so believe that God's judgments are always true, he shrinks quickly from that law. But he who reads the past, and ponders the order of history, learns that the sinner does not escape the punishment of his guilt, nor the righteous lose the reward of his goodness. For everlasting the A.V. reads of old, and this is the sense in which the Vulgate a sæculo is for the most part explained, as showing that the course of God's dealings with man has remained unaltered since the creation; whether in His punishment of the vessels of wrath or His correction of the vessels of grace. And whether we take the word judgment to denote rewards or chastisements, they are alike the source of comfort to the godly, as proving that God does not forget them, but is dealing with them as is best. So it is written in another Psalm, "Thy word and Thy staff comfort me." Whereby we understand that God's scourging and His support are alike wholesome and pleasant to the soul which loves and trusts Him.

53 I am horribly afraid : for the ungodly that forsake thy law.

The Psalmist's horror (A.V.) and grief is not for any contempt or injury of himself, but because God's law is forsaken, and his sorrow is for those who so forsake it, because they die to God. So an affectionate father of a delirious child, when abused, struck, and insulted by him, does not grieve for his own trouble, but the patient's, and so far as he laments the foul language, does so not because it is heaped on himself, but because the sick child knows not what he is doing in his frenzy. And in like manner a good man laments over a sinner as at the point of death, and

like one given over by the physicians, and stays by him just as a wise physician would do, heedless of any bad treatment he may receive from the patient, if only he may help him in his need, with knowledge as well as skill. Therefore a righteous man when ill-treated by a sinner, does not abandon him, but if injured, sets the act down to insanity, not to wickedness, and is zealous to apply some healing remedy to the wound, thinking that if his foe were in his right mind he would have acted very differently. And thus the Apostle speaks, ”I have great sorrow and continual weariness in my heart for my brethren.” It is as though the Psalmist, looking round on the sea of life, saw men rejecting the guidance of right reason, throwing the Divine Pilot overboard, and drifting rapidly with the tide of iniquity towards the rocks and sands, and as he gazes, the thick darkness of horror falls on him, and he faints away. The sinner looks on godliness as subject matter for amusement, but the godly man looks on sin as a frightful thing, because he foresees the terrible nature of its punishment; and we ought therefore to grieve over our erring brethren.

Again, the righteous man may well feel horror when he thinks on his own frailty, and bears in mind that he is even as his fellow men, as likely to sin, as open to be tempted as they. He listens to the Apostle’s warnings, ”Be not high-minded, but fear,” and ”Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” For that is a true saying of the wise man, ”Happy is the man that feareth alway.” And so it is told of one who had a zeal for God, though not according to knowledge, that one day seeing a malefactor led to execution, he exclaimed, ”But for the grace of God, there goes John Bradford.” Whether for oneself or for others, those words of S. Augustine hold good, ”Thou mournest for a dead man, mourn rather for the living. Hast thou no bowels of Christian pity that thou weepest for a corpse from which the soul has departed, and not for a soul whence God hath departed?” But in all such cases our prayer should be our Master’s, ”FATHER, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

A.

54 Thy statutes have been my songs : in the house of my pilgrimage.
If we do no more than read God’s statutes, we may so forget them when the Bible is out of our hands, that a fresh perusal does no more than remind us that the words are not new to us; but if we learn them because we delight in them, they will haunt our memories like snatches of music, and come back again and again before our thoughts. And there may very well be here a direct reference to psalmody, to the devotional use of religious poetry, and those psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs wherewith the saints make melody in their hearts to the LORD. Such singing as this is mighty as was David’s harp to drive away the evil spirit; nay, to invoke the presence of the HOLY SPIRIT Himself, as when the minstrel played before Elisha. The practical utility of song as a means of education approved itself to the wisest heathens. Thus Plato advises that the precepts of virtue and good citizenship

shall be written in verse and set to music in order that the young might learn them willingly, and remember them clearly. But in this he was not innovating, for his great pupil tells us that in the times before writing was common, it was the custom to sing the laws of the countries lest they should be forgotten. And another writer tells us that the Cretans were amongst those who enforced this rule on their children. Nor has the Christian Church been slow to follow so wise a precedent. France, Spain, and parts of Italy have had metrical catechisms, and S. Francis Xavier adopted the same plan to aid in his evangelization of India.

Probl. in 28. A. In the house of my pilgrimage. That is, our lowly sojourn in this place of mortality, where man journeys as a pilgrim, exiled from Paradise and from the heavenly Jerusalem, and going down to that Jericho on the road to which he fell among thieves; but having been delivered from them by the mercy of the Good Samaritan, he learns to sing in thankfulness the statutes of God, lightening the toil of the road with holy song, until the time comes for the purging of the threshing-floor. And we sing of God’s statutes, because we feel ourselves to be strangers upon earth, but not so in heaven; to be here foreigners and pilgrims by reason of our calling of faith, but there fellow-citizens and of the household of God. And further, he who sings is disengaged in thought, and banishes from him anxious cares and troubles, puts covetousness apart, and soothes himself not only with his bodily voice, but also with the liveliness of his mind. And thus the Psalmist, not saddened by any distress of poverty, but free from all bodily passions, saith in another place, ”Unto Thee will I sing upon the harp, O Thou Holy One of Israel. My lips will be fain when I sing unto Thee, and so will my soul whom Thou hast delivered.” In this sense the satirist’s line is true,

The empty traveller will sing before the robber’s face. And then there is a further meaning of the house of my pilgrimage. It denotes also the mortal body in which our soul tabernacles for a time, and the verse thus teaches us the duty of serving God with voice as well as heart, knowing that ”with the mouth confession is made unto salvation,” and we are bound to give thanks to Him Who hath delivered us from the enemy. Monsell. Therefore my songs, my SAVIOUR, E’en in this time of woe, Shall tell of all Thy goodness To suffering man below; Thy goodness and Thy favour, Which present from above, Rejoice those hearts, my SAVIOUR, That live in Thee and love. 55 I have thought upon thy Name, O Lord, in the night-season : and have kept thy law.

A. It is night in this lowly state of ours, amidst mortal cares; it is night amongst the proud and deriding, it is night in the house of those who forsake God’s law; finally, it is night in this house of pilgrimage, ”until the LORD come, Who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts. And therefore it is fitting to think upon His Name, ”that, according as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the LORD. And in the literal sense, too,

the saint will think of GOD'S Name by night as well as by day; remembering that night in its loneliness and inactivity, when the body is weighed down with food and sleep, is a time of special temptation from evil thoughts, which need to be driven away by invocation of the Holy Name. It was night when Judas betrayed JESUS, and Peter denied Him. We should keep the watches of the night about our souls, like shepherds guarding their flocks against wolves and robbers; like the master of a house taking care that his wall be not digged through; like the Bride, seeking her Beloved first on her bed, and then in the streets of the city. And so exhorts the Prophet: "Arise, cry out in the night; in the beginning of the watches pour out thine heart like water before the face of the LORD.

And if it be true that students of secular learning are obliged to stint themselves of sleep and to toil in the night-season in order to make sufficient progress; much more ought they who desire to derive wisdom of GOD, to pray, meditate, and wrestle in the night, whether that of literal darkness or of adversity and trouble. Either way, that is a wise counsel of S. Bernard, that when betaking ourselves to rest, we ought to have some thought in our mind and memory which may help us to fall asleep peacefully, and even so dream that the night will shine brightly as the day upon us. And another and earlier writer reminds us that thinking on GOD'S Name is the only means to keep us in the right road when we are wrapped in the night of the dark and secret plots of ungodly men. Yet a further point is, that the Psalmist here proves the sincerity of his love and obedience, since he thought of GOD not only in public, where desire for the praise of men might have swayed him, as it does hypocrites; but in the privacy of night, with no eye to see him. Wherefore the LORD Himself saith: "And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy FATHER which is in secret; and thy FATHER which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly."

56 This I had : because I kept thy commandments. They dispute what this denotes. Some will have it that it means the act of remembering GOD in the night; others think that the law itself is spoken of as the Psalmist's possession which he has kept; while a third view is, that the night is intended; meaning that GOD has given us the night 1 Cor. i. 31. of mortality and sorrow for our profit, or that man has persecuted us because of our keeping the Divine law. Once more, the ellipsis is supplied with different words: I had this comfort, in my trouble; or this special care, to keep Thy law; or this reward for my obedience; which last interpretation, as including all the spiritual blessings granted by the LORD to His faithful servants, seems on the whole to be best. And to add a super-commentary to this Jewish gloss, the Rabbins

were wont to say, ”The reward of a precept is a precept,” meaning thereby that the prize GOD grants for obedience to one command is grace to keep another and harder one; just as the most coveted token of proficiency in a good school is not the remission of tasks, but the advancement of a studious pupil into a higher grade, where the work is more difficult; and that is the sense of the words, Because I kept Thy commandments.

Collects.
O GOD, Who during this time of waiting comfortest us in lowliness with the hope of everlasting life, grant us always so to serve Thee in the house of our pilgrimage, that we may enjoy the blessedness of our eternal country. (1.) Let the hope which Thou hast given us, O LORD, be our comfort in our lowliness, and the fulness of glory in our joy. (11.) Grant, O LORD, that they who think in Thee in the night season may keep Thy law, and as they hold not their peace of Thee in trouble, let them never halt away from Thy words, but abide in Thee with steadfast perseverance.

CHETH.
The eighth letter, Cheth, means a hurdle or fence, which its shape in the Phœnician alphabet closely resembles. But S. Jerome explains it as meaning life, seemingly from the root , while another favourite interpretation is awe or terror, from ; which is the usual one with the mediævalists. One commentator unites these two latter meanings, explaining the section as a lesson how to attain life through reverential awe of GOD. If the Psalmist had the original meaning of the letter before his mind—and there is proof positive in two at least of the strophes that the sound of the initial guided the following verses—then it is not improbable that the notion of a sheepfold is shadowed in this stanza; the singer appearing as its wakeful guardian in ver. 62, and as one of the obedient sheep of the fold in ver. 63; a common Scripture metaphor. 57 Thou art my portion, O LORD: I have promised to keep thy law.

The story is well known how S. Bernard and his brothers, all but the youngest, having determined to enter the monastic life, went to the Castle of Fontaines to wish their father farewell, and to receive his blessing. Guy, the eldest of the band, addressed Nivard, the youngest of all: ”Farewell, my little brother Nivard, you will have all our lands and goods for your own. ”What,” answered the boy, ”will you take heaven for your own portion, and leave me only the earth? The division is too unequal. And he shortly followed their example. So too, S. Ambrose bids us note that we, who are a royal priesthood to the LORD, have for our pattern the tribe of Levi, whereof it is written, ”Levi hath no part nor inheritance with his brethren; the LORD is his inheritance, according as the LORD thy GOD promised him. GOD’s saints, then, have no earthly lot, that they may have a heavenly one; far richer in their service of faith and devotion than they who spread around them the ample space of their possessions. For he whose portion is GOD, is owner of all nature.

Instead of lands, he suffices for himself, having that good fruit which can never perish; instead of houses, he suffices for himself, that he should be a dwelling of the LORD, a temple of GOD, the most precious of all things. And thus it was that Peter spake: ”Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have, give I to thee.

In the Name of JESUS CHRIST of Nazareth, rise up and walk. As much as to say, I am rich and powerful in my own portion, and can give health and life out of it, for that is the patrimony of the portion I have chosen for my own. And the way he won it is told us in that other saying, ”Lo, we have left all, and followed Thee. Great is the heritage, great the portion of him who severs himself not from his father; to whom Thou, O FATHER, sayest, ”Son, thou art ever with Me, and all that I have is thine. And thus the Wise Man, after saying of Wisdom, ”I preferred her before seeptures and thrones, and esteemed riches as nothing in comparison of her: adds the reason a little later: ”All good things together came to me with her, and innumerable riches in her hands. Yes, heaven is fair to look upon, and earth is fair also, but He Who made them is fairer far. How, then, is the truth of this assertion, Thou art my portion, O Lord, to be tested? What is the proof, the title-deed? It follows: I have promised to keep Thy law. False Christians have but their tongue for their defence; if tried by the works of their hands, they prove no better than infidels; if even they begin to enter on religion hastily, they rarely persevere. And thus a set determination must precede all steady continuances in the right way, wherefore he saith, I have promised.

But as human weakness might fail to keep such a pledge, he follows up his holy resolve with prayer.

A. 58 I made my humble petition in thy presence IV. D with my whole heart : O be merciful unto me according to thy word. D. C. S. Luke i. 70. The word here translated presence, and in the A. V. favour, is literally face, as in A. V. margin, and is so rendered by LXX. and Vulgate. And they tell us that this intreating the Face of GOD is a prayer for the Incarnation and manifestation of CHRIST in this world; and for our own attaining to the Beatific Vision in that which is to come. And although the phrase is a usual Hebraism for humble suing for favour, there is deep thought in the Carthusian’s comment here that the word face teaches us of GOD’s presence everywhere, and His clear sight of all things, so that whatever we do or say must needs be under His eyes. And therefore it is well added with my whole heart, to warn us against merely pretended fervour of devotion, for it is written: ”Burning lips and a wicked heart are like a potsherd covered with silver dross.” According to Thy Word. ”As He spake by the mouth of His holy Prophets, which have been since the world began; that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant.” According to this word, I cry, Be merciful, asking only the fulfilment of Thine own pledge, and that I may obtain that mercy, I

ask it according to Thy Word, ending my petition thus: ”Through JESUS CHRIST, Thy SON, our LORD. Amen.”

59 I called mine own ways to remembrance : and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.

This is the regular order of conversion: first, examination of ourselves, dissatisfaction with our conduct and ways hitherto, turning away from them, considering what our future course shall be, and turning instead to GOD’s testimonies, a change noted by the words here used, which imply having been heretofore turned from GOD and His laws. Here, amidst the conflicting teachings and confused thoughts of this world, man is as it were like a traveller at a junction of roads, who is obliged to stop and ponder which of the divergent paths will bring him to his goal. We too, who seek the kingdom of heaven, must stand and think, remarking that all roads do not lead to Jerusalem above. And no itinerary to the heavenly City is simpler or fuller than the ready answer made by an English prelate to a scoffer who asked him the way to heaven: ”First turn to the right, and keep straight on.” The word ways may very well be applied to speech as well as to action, and give us counsel against any hasty and indiscreet utterance. And observe that it is not enough to have turned our feet once for all towards GOD’s testimonies; since we are always liable to stray from the right path even after we have truly entered on it. ”For who,” asks S. Bernard, ”hath so accurately cut away all needless things from himself as to leave nought that calls for pruning? Believe me, that which has been pruned sprouts again, that which has been driven off returns, that which has been quenched is rekindled.” We need then to be like mariners, always watching the compass, in order to make sure of our course, even though we be certain of the truth of its main direction. The needle of that compass is the Cross, the pole to which it ever points is JESUS, the haven to which it guides us, Jerusalem on high.

60 I made haste, and prolonged not the time : to keep thy commandments.

Here is the true weapon against Satan’s craft, repentance without delay. The tempter is too wily to declare that repentance is needless; he does but suggest putting it off for a more convenient season, till the unstanched wound mortifies, till the unquenched spark is a conflagration, till the unsalted meat putrefies. When Moses asked Pharaoh, ”When shall I intreat for thee?” the answer was, ”To-morrow.” And so when God asks man, ”When shall I have mercy on thee?” the reply is too often, ”Not till my old age.” And yet the only difference between the wise Virgins and the foolish ones was, that the one did that in time which the others would fain have done out of time, and could not. But when Matthew the publican was called from the receipt of custom by CHRIST, at once ”he rose up, left all, and followed Him;” when Zaccheus was bid to ”make haste, and come down, for to-day I must abide at thy house; he made haste, and came down, and received Him joyfully.” The LXX. and Vulgate, rather paraphrasing the verse, read

the first clause, I was ready, and not fturried; that is, the Saint had counted the cost and made up his mind, and felt no alarm at any peril, however unexpected, remembering that saying of the LORD, ”Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” S. Ambrose explains the verse at much length as denoting the calm tranquillity of a truly Christian spirit, unmoved by earthly wealth or troubles, and compares such a temper to a wise pilot, guiding his ship to its appointed haven through winds and waves, overcoming their rage by patience, courage, and skill. But the later commentators who follow the Vulgate agree substantially with the first explanation, that prompt obedience without delay is the purport of the verse.

61 The congregations of the ungodly have robbed me : but I have not forgotten thy law. The congregations, &c. This is the Chaldee rendering; Targum. but the other ancient Versions with one voice, followed by A. A.

modern critics, translate The cords of the ungodly have encompassed me. That is, all wiles, deceits, snares, and hindrances of spiritual and earthly foes, which are like a long rope fastened to the horns of a heifer, dragging it along to its death while it seems to be free. And in the twisted cords we see the close union of all our perverse and tortuous sins; singly, weak and brittle, but strong enough, when twined together into thick strands, to drag us to our ruin. And the chief of these cords are the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Again, the words may be explained of persecutors of the Faith, endeavouring to force Christians into apostasy. The great Portuguese preacher, dwelling on the utility of confession and absolution, reminds his hearers that no Emperors or Kings are empowered to loose these cords. Only priests may do it, as it was to Apostles the two commands were given, ”Loose him, and bring him unto Me; and again, of the dead Lazarus, ”Loose him, and let him go. The English rendering, which is tenable, and adopted by some Rabbins, is not very dissimilar in spiritual meaning: as it may be taken of those ghostly foes who despoil us of some of those graces which God bestows, albeit they are not able to force the one pearl of great price from our keeping;

as when in Bunyan’s allegory the three rogues, Faint-heart, Mistrust, and Guilt, set upon Little-faith, and robbed him of a bag of silver. But ”the place where his jewels were they never ransacked: so those he kept still. But, as I was told, the good man was much afflicted for his loss; for the thieves got most of his spending money. That which they got not, as I said, were jewels; also he had a little odd money left, but scarce enough to bring him to his journey’s end; nay, if I was not misinformed, he was forced to beg as he went, to keep himself alive, for his jewels he might not sell. But beg and do what he could, ’he went,’ as we say, ’with many a hungry belly,’ the most part of the rest of the way. And S. Augustine tells us what this may mean, explaining the verse of yielding as David did, to temptations of the flesh, while faith remains unshaken.

62 At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee: because of thy righteous judgments. This is one of those isolated texts of Scripture which have, by their own inherent force, powerfully moulded the habits and devotions of the Christian Church. We shall find another example later on in this same Psalm, but of this it suffices to say that the Nocturns of East and West alike, and the monastic use of rising at midnight to recite them, are drawn from its inspiration. In the East, moreover, this very Psalm is part of the midnight office, so that the verse is nightly chanted in the great monasteries of the Greek and Russian Churches, Mount Athos, Mount Sinai, Troitzka, and the rest. In the West, this verse occurs in the forenoon office of Terce, but the spirit of the midnight service is the same as that of the East; and the very Nocturn office itself testifies to the influence of the Psalm.

Pulsis procul torporibus Surgamus omnes ocyus, Et nocte quæramus Deum, Propheta sicut præcipit. Brev. Rom. The Hymn, Primo die, for Sunday Matins. Far drive we slumber from our eyes, And quickly all of us arise, To seek at dead of night the LORD, According to His Prophet's word. At midnight the avenger went out over the land of Egypt to slay the first-born; at midnight Samson, foreshowing the Resurrection, arose and took with him the doors of the gate of Gaza; at midnight there was a cry made, "Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet Him;" at midnight the prayers of Paul and Silas in the dungeon at Philippi opened its doors and loosed its chains; and thus, while it is the time of temptation and of fear, it is also that of victorious prayer and deliverance. God's silent, searching flight; When my LORD's head is filled with dew, and all His locks are wet with the clear drops of night; His still, soft call; His knocking true; the soul's dumb watch, When spirits their fair kindred catch.

Henry Vaughan, The Night. Besides this literal interpretation of the verse, there are also such explanations as prayer and thanksgiving in the time of persecution or other deep trouble and temptation. But in the strict construction there is no better comment than the hymn chanted in the Eastern Church after the Nicene Creed which follows the midnight recitation of this Psalm of the Saints: A. G. Behold, the Bridegroom cometh in the middle of the night. And blest is he whose loins are girt, whose lamp is burning bright; But woe to that dull servant, whom his Master shall surprise With lamp untrimmed, unburning, and with slumber in his eyes. Do thou, my soul, beware, beware lest thou in sleep sink down, Lest thou be given o'er to death, and lose the golden crown; But see that thou be sober, with watchful eye, and thus Cry—Holy, Holy, Holy GOD, have mercy upon us.

That day, the day of fear, shall come; my soul, slack not thy toil, But light the lamp, and feed it well, and make it bright with oil; Who knowest not how soon may sound the cry at eventide: Behold, the Bridegroom comes. Arise! Go forth to meet the Bride. Beware, my soul; take thou good heed, lest thou in slumber lie, And, like the five, remain without, and knock, and vainly cry; But watch, and bear thy lamp

undimmed, and CHRIST shall gird thee on His own bright Wedding Robe of Light—the Glory of the SON. 63 I am a companion of all them that fear thee: and keep thy commandments.

S. Ambros. Ps. xlv. 8. Deut. xviii. 15. In the beginning of this section the Psalmist declared that God was his portion, now he adds that all God's servants are his companions. There is no contradiction, because that God Who is the portion of the Saints has, by His incarnation, companions and fellows amongst men. Wherefore it is said, "God, even Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows. He is that Prophet of whom Moses spake, saying, "The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren. He has fellows in baptism, because He was baptized for us; fellows in righteousness, because He is Righteousness Himself, and hath granted us of that which is His own to have fellowship with Him; fellows in truth, because He is Himself the Truth, and hath willed that we should hold the truth; fellows in the resurrection, because He is the Resurrection; fellows in life immaculate, because He is Himself immaculate. And whoso walks in newness of life and keepeth to the way of righteousness is a partaker of CHRIST. He hath also partakers in His sufferings; and partakers of His burial, for whoso is "buried with Him by baptism unto death," is partaker of Him. He too is a partaker of CHRIST, who comforts the mourner with pitying tenderness, who baulks not the prisoner of personal service, who sits by the bed of the sick, who clothes the naked, who feeds the hungry.

If I hate a lie, I am a partaker of CHRIST, because CHRIST is the Truth; if I fly from iniquity, I am a partaker of CHRIST, for CHRIST is Righteousness. And note how modestly the Prophet saith, of all them that fear Thee. He does not say of Thee, nor even of them that imitate Thee, but that fear Thee, for "the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom. In his lowliness he ranks himself among the recruits, though he excels veterans in his devotions. And yet fear too belongs to holiness, for it is written, "O fear the LORD, ye that are His saints. And lest any should think that this is not holy fear (for there are some who cower with dastardly terror, and quiver with timid fright) he adds, and keep Thy commandments; showing thereby that he is not slothful in action, while devout in heart and religious in feeling. Of those who serve CHRIST in this wise it is true that "He is not ashamed to call them brethren," and we could not be made partakers of His Divinity, had He not first been made partaker of our mortality. And thus all who are in grace are one in CHRIST by the bond of charity, and seek not their own, but the wealth of others. By reason of the unity of the Head and members, that is, of CHRIST and Christians, the merits of CHRIST and of His Saints are imparted to us and work within us.

Each of us then, "given power to become the sons of GOD," and relying on the SAVIOUR's petition, "I pray that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one," can say to the saints his

fellows, like the Apostle in Patmos, ”I am your brother and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of JESUS CHRIST.”

S. John i. 12. Rev. i. 9.

64 The earth, O LORD, is full of thy mercy: O teach me thy statutes.
How is the earth full of GOD’s mercy, save by the Passion of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, whereby remission of sins is bestowed on us all? The natural sun is bidden to arise on every one, and does so every day. And that spiritual Sun of Righteousness arose on all, came to all, suffered for all, rose again for all; and suffered, moreover, that He might take away the sins of the world. If any one believe not in CHRIST he defrauds himself of the general benefit: just as if any one shuts up his windows to keep out the sunshine, it does not mean that the sun has failed to rise on all, if that one man has robbed himself of its warmth. So far as the sun is concerned, it keeps to its fixed rule; so far as the foolish man is concerned, he shuts out for himself the common blessing of light. It may be asked, why is it not said, The heaven is full of Thy mercy, seeing that there is ”spiritual wickedness in high places? Because they have no claim on the common right of GOD’s pardon, nor to the remission of sins, seeing that everlasting fire is reserved for them; and those heavenly beings which are powers and ministering spirits, albeit they are held up by GOD’s aid, yet do not need His mercy in such a degree as lower and earthly beings do, because they are not clad in that garment of flesh wherein is the enticement of frequent error.

And the earth is full of GOD’s mercy in another sense, because there is no land where the Christian faith is not proclaimed with its message of salvation, according to that prophecy, ”The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea. Every land, too, can show its saints, restored to grace by the LORD’s mercy, and even apart from the spiritual sense, the whole kingdom of nature, earth, air, and water, plants and insects, birds and fishes, animals and men, depends for its power, its beauty, its very existence, on the unfailing mercy of GOD. For it is written, ”After this the LORD looked upon the earth, and filled it with His blessings; with all manner of living things hath He covered the face thereof. There are two further senses in which they explain the words, of the Church militant here in earth, full of mercies, blessings and graces bestowed by God; and of that especial garden of the LORD, the Virgin Mother, whose hallowed womb was filled with Him Who is the very Mercy of God. And therefore is added, O teach me Thy statutes. Teach me, albeit I have been learning them already, for there is no end to searching out Thy ways, no satiety in knowledge of Thee. Teach me, for there is no other teacher like Thee, since earthly masters cannot tell me what they have not themselves seen. Teach me Thy justifications (Vulg. for Thou art Justice itself;

teach me what hath been said wisely, for Thou art Wisdom. Open Thou my heart, for Thou didst open the book. Open that gate which is in heaven, for Thou art the Door.

Collects.
Be Thou our portion, O LORD: grant that we may keep Thy law, to the end that Thou mayest be our heritage, and Thyself possess us without end. (1.) O GOD, Who hast willed to be the portion of them that keep Thy commandments, grant that we may not be entangled with the cords of sinners, but bound in the bonds of Thy statutes. (1.)

TETH.
The ninth letter, Teth, is usually explained by the mediæval commentators, following S. Jerome, as meaning good, while others take it as denoting exclusion; but the true signification, serpent (which the letter represents with its head lifted up, preparing for an attack) yields a much deeper mystical sense. For being the recognised emblem of evil, as subtle and venomous, it is the Scriptural type of Satan, and of his temptations. But the key-note of this section is the use of adversity, and the blessedness of affliction; and thus it teaches us that even the Tempter is but an instrument in the hand of a stronger than he, forced to subserve His purpose, to evolve a higher form of good by means of the conflict with evil, and to perfect the saints, as in the case of holy Job, by the trials and sorrows he is permitted to use against them.

65 O LORD, thou hast dealt graciously with thy servant: according unto thy word.

A. S. John viii. 35. S. Ambros. And that by making me a son instead of a servant, for ”the servant abideth not in the house for ever, but the son continueth ever.” Graciously, by teaching me to love good for its own sake, and not merely to do it through fear of punishment; graciously, too, in chastising me, that I might be turned in time from my sins; graciously, in giving me, Thy servant, that peace and cheerfulness of mind which I had not, when, nominally free and following my own will, I was in truth the captive of my lusts and slave of the world. And that because of those very chastisements, for whereas all worldly pleasures not merely pall, but hurt, and at best cannot be taken with us out of the world, and thus are not really good, that training which God gives us is to fit us for eternal gladness. Wherefore it is written, ”My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him: for whom the LORD loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. . . . Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby.” There is yet a further and higher way in which God has dealt graciously with His servants, by the Incarnation and Passion of His Only-Begotten Son. And that according to Thy word, in three-fold wise: the word of promise, fulfilling His pledge given to

the patriarchs and prophets; the word of inspiration, pouring into our hearts that Spirit of love, which is liberty and the truth that makes us free; and chiefest of all, the Eternal Word Himself, according to Whom, and through Whom, all divine blessings are vouchsafed to man.

66 O learn me true understanding and knowledge: for I have believed thy commandments. True understanding. The literal Hebrew is good taste, and the words may mean either the pleasant savour of God's law to His saints, or else, more probably, as the English version denotes, clear and delicate perception (A.V. good judgment) of the inward meaning of the law, joined with familiar knowledge of its outward letter. And note that it is said Teach me, not give me, because when God chooses to teach, He first gives His disciples the power of understanding, without which no man can learn Divine knowledge; whereas human teachers can at best only state such facts as they know, without any certainty that their pupils will be able to comprehend them. The LXX. and Vulgate make a noun of the adjective good, and read, goodness, and discipline, and knowledge; and this triad is variously explained. Teach me Thy mercy, Thy fear, and Thy mysteries, says S. Ambrose. Teach me, that is, inspire me with charity, with patience, with wisdom, exclaims the Doctor of Grace. Teach me personal holiness, self-restraint, and discernment between good and evil, comments another. Good works, obedience to the rules of the Church, and knowledge to uphold the Faith when attacked, is the gloss of a third. Teach me, says the last of the Fathers, in my dealings with others, goodwill

A. A. and compassion first, but then, lest it should be abused by unworthy persons, zeal for right and justice in the next place, and lastly, that these may be fitly combined and exercised, teach me discretion. Phil. i. 9. The Hebrew will bear either the Vulgate or the English construction, but there is a parallel passage in the New Testament which makes for the latter, "I pray that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent," for the word which is rendered "judgment" is αἰσθήσει, denoting perception by the senses, and thus answering to the Hebrew , here found. "This," says an old English commentator, "is a rare grace; for many by the judgment of light know what is good and what is evil, who know it not by the judgment of taste: for if by sense they felt the bitterness of sin and sweetness of righteousness, they would not so love the one, and set light by the other as they do." And further, the word tells us of a difference between this world and the next. Here we have but a taste, there we shall be filled. For I have believed, &c. S. Augustine raises the question why the verb is believed rather than obeyed, seeing the latter is the proper term for commandments and believed for promises. And he answers by saying that it means, I have believed that the commandments are Thine, and not man's, albeit they have come to me through man's intervention. And because my faith is such, it asks of Thee grace to fulfil these commandments, and therefore teach me, O LORD.

67 Before I was troubled, I went wrong: but now have I kept thy word.

If we take the first historical sense, we see how eminently true this verse has proved of the Jewish people. Before its first great national disaster, it was continually hankering after idolatry, superstition, and heathen accretions on the Mosaic code, and divided into the two hostile camps of Judah and Israel; but never since its return from the seventy years' captivity has it been other than one in fraternal feeling, and steadfast in its worship of the God of its fathers. This has held good of the Christian Church also, collectively in the days when the abuses and scandals which came of the entrance of hosts of half-converted Pagans into the fold were pruned away by the sharp steel of the Ten Persecutions, especially that under Decius; and in the case of national Churches by many other trials; the Mohammedan advances in the East, the Norman conquest of England; the Revolution in France, and the like. But the sense in which the words are truest of all is the original one of individual experience. "For if thou ascribed thy troubles to thy sins, thou turnest upon thyself whatever may happen thee, and beginnest to be righteous instead of guilty, in that thou condemnest thyself. And these troubles may be either such afflictions as GOD pleases to send for our correction, or even acts of sin themselves, which by breaking down self-confidence and spiritual pride, are often most salutary lessons in the school of humility and patience. But now have I kept Thy word.

For GOD says to us, "I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall; and we in turn say with Ephraim, "Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the rope; turn Thou me, so shall I be turned; for Thou art the LORD my GOD. Surely after I was turned, I repented. It is recorded that when Francis I. was captured after the disastrous fight of Pavia, his captors hurried him into the church of the Certosa during Terce, at the very moment when the choir was chanting this verse, which was accepted as a direct lesson from GOD by the bystanders.

68 Thou art good and gracious: O teach me thy statutes. And gracious. The A.V. more exactly, And doest good. GOD is not good in essence only, but in action; and if He were not, who could abide upon the earth? How good He is, we may conjecture from His works, for "a good tree bringeth forth good fruit." The holy angels, all righteous men, all the fair creation, testify the goodness and loveliness of Him Whose productions they are. The Vulgate reads, In Thy goodness teach me, &c. Not in dread and austerity, as Thou taughtest the old Law, but in tenderness and love. S. Augustine, reading Thou art sweet, O Lord, in Thy sweetness teach me, explains the words of the Blessed Sacrament; "Teachers drive their pupils to learn with stripes and rods, but Thou, O LORD, drawest me on to wisdom with abundant sweetness and with the gift of sweetest dainties. For as parents lure on their little children to learn their letters by giving them cakes and sweetmeats, so Thou in like manner, O sweetest FATHER, by giving us heavenly Bread drawest us on to drink

in the doctrines of CHRIST, and to endure all toils." Note, too, that the prayer with which the verse closes is based on the praise with which it begins, for, as the LORD Himself hath said to us: "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly FATHER give the HOLY SPIRIT to them that ask Him?"

69 The proud have imagined a lie against me: but I will keep thy commandments with my whole heart.

Theodoret. Coccelus. S. Ambros. G. D. C. S. Ambros. Ay. B. It is more than have imagined, for the strict Hebrew is have patched up, or sewn together, paraphrased by the A.V. forged, and denoting the choice of such varied materials as can be converted into slander, with the careful piecing of them together into one tissue of falsehood. And note that they who do this base and mean thing are the proud, just those whom we should suppose incapable of it. The reason is simple, because pride is a false estimate of our own worth and importance, leading first to an equally false depreciation of that of others, and then to an attempt at all risks to impose these two falsehoods upon men, which can be done only through the means of some third departure from truth. But the LXX. and Vulgate read, the iniquity of the proud hath been multiplied. And S. Ambrose explains it of conduct like that of Job's three friends, bringing accusations against the character and godliness of such as suffer trouble, which they declare to be merited punishment. It is however better interpreted by another commentator of open reviling or secret calumny, and a third adds that the lures and threats of evil spirits are included as well as those of haughty men. They are, says S. Ambrose, only the opponents whom every true athlete must challenge and overcome before he can win his crown. But I will keep Thy commandments.

It is the answer of Plato to a friend who told him of the slanders spread concerning him by his enemies: "I will so live that no one will believe them. It is the yet deeper and nobler reply of the martyr S. Vincent to Dacian: "Thou shalt see that I am stronger, by GOD's might, under torture, than thou who torturest me. So it is added, with my whole heart, for that heart is so enlarged with the love of GOD and man as not merely to keep GOD's laws in despite of all temptations to the contrary, but even to love those men who strive by force or fraud to make the saint break them.

70 Their heart is as fat as brawn: but my delight hath been in thy law.

Bp. Cowper. S. Ambros. As brawn. Rather, with A.V. as grease. The LXX. and Vulgate, with other ancient versions, following a different vowel pointing, read, curdled as milk. There is not much difference in the ideas suggested, which are: first, the abundance of their riches and luxury; and next, the effects of such things, a "fatty degeneration" of the heart, a disappearance of the sensitive heart of flesh,

and the substitution of one with no feeling. The heart of the Saints, comments one of the most earnest of themselves, is fluid (subtile,) the heart of the proud is curdled. For as milk is naturally pure, beautiful, and untainted, but sours by corruption, so the nature of man's mind and heart is pure, sincere, and transparent until it is soured by admixture of sins. When milk curdles, a kind of solid body is formed which has not its former sweetness nor pleasantness. And in like manner men who had been like milk in their thoughtfulness, pleasantness, and sweetness of their language, haunted by no envy, the moment they begin to be envious, their heart curdles with sin, and instead of the sweetness of friendship there is the sourness of envy. Others, not very dissimilarly, explain this verse of the contrast between milk and cheese, between a heart flowing with charity, and one hardened with selfishness. And on this S. Bernard observes, it was prophesied of CHRIST that He should eat "butter," but not cheese, as betokening that He took our nature upon Him without any admixture of the souring and curdling taint of sin. But my delight hath been in Thy law. Because whatever is hard and frozen in the heart softens and melts under the fire of GOD's love, and pours out in a stream of penitence and longing. "O happy heart, where piety affecteth, where humility subjecteth, where repentance correcteth, where obedience directeth, where perseverance perfecteth, where power protecteth, where devotion projecteth, where charity connecteth!"

Cassiodor.in Cant. v. 6. 71 It is good for me that I have been in trouble: that I may learn thy statutes. This confession makes a spiritual advance over the statement of the former verse, which said, "Before I was troubled, I went wrong." For there no more is alleged than the deterrent and corrective effect of chastisement, whereas here the penitent acknowledges not only the justice, but the mercy and love of his chastener. Affliction in its own nature is evil, being a punishment of sin; but the LORD, Who changed the waters of Marah, and made them sweet unto Israel, hath also changed to His children the nature of the Cross, that not only they find comfort in it, but also most happy effects are wrought by it. "In our health and clearer days," says the most eloquent of English preachers, "it is easy to talk of putting our trust in GOD; we readily trust Him for life, when we are in health; for provisions, when we have fair revenues; and for deliverance, when we are newly escaped: but let us come to sit upon the margent of our grave, and let a tyrant lean hard upon our fortunes, and dwell upon our wrong, let the storm arise, and the keels toss till the cordage crack, so that all our hopes bulge under us and descend into the hollowness of sad misfortunes; then can you believe, when you neither hear, nor see, nor feel anything but objections? This is the proper work of sickness: faith is then brought into the theatre, and so exercised, that if it abide but to the end of the contention, we may see the work of faith which GOD will largely crown. The same I say of hope, and of charity, and the love of GOD, and of patience, which is a grace produced from the mixture of all

A. these: they are virtues which are greedy of danger, and no man was ever honoured by any wise or discerning person for dining upon Persian carpets, nor rewarded with a crown for being at ease. It was the fire that did honour to Mutius Scævola; poverty made Fabricius famous; Rutilius was made excellent by banishment; Regulus by torments, Socrates by poison, Cato by his death. And God hath crowned the memory of Job with a wreath of glory because he sat upon his dunghill wisely and temperately, and his potsherd and his groans mingled with promises and justifications of God, pleased Him like an anthem sung by Angels on the morning of the Resurrection. God could not choose but be pleased with the delicious accents of martyrs, when in their tortures they cried out nothing but 'Holy JESUS,' and 'Blessed be God;' and they also themselves who, with a hearty resignation to the Divine pleasure, can delight in God's severe dispensation, will have the transportations of cherubim when they enter into the joys of God. If God be delicious to His servants when He smites them, He will be nothing but ravishments and ecstasies to their spirits when He refreshes them with the overflowings of joy in the day of recompenses." Such is the Saint's confidence in God's chastening hand;

Who guideth mortals to be wise, Making them grasp lore firmly through their pain. And trouble, mindful of woes, in their sleep Drops on the heart, and wisdom cometh so Even to the unwilling. A. That I may learn Thy statutes. Not only know them in a measure, but learn them. CHRIST knew sin in a certain sense, seeing that He taught men how to avoid it, and rebuked men for it, but it made no part of His habitual thought, which was righteousness only. And we, on the contrary, know righteousness as something external to ourselves, which we recognise when we see it, but have not learnt it so that it abides in our memory and shows in our action. That we may do so is the grace asked here, that the lesson taught by experience may not be forgotten when the chastening hand of God is withdrawn; for wicked men are somewhat good when they are in affliction; but so soon as they are delivered, they return to their old sins, as we see in Pharaoh. These are like iron, which is soft, and will bow at the workman's will when it is in the fire, but soon after it is drawn out, it returns to the old hardness. These men use repentance as worldlings do an old garment, which they put about them in time of a shower, but cast it away so soon as the weather becomes fair. Far otherwise is it with the godly, who say with holy Job: "The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away, blessed be the Name of the LORD;" who add with the Apostle: "We glory in tribulation also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope."

Job i. 20. Grant Thou this patience, O JESU, to me, Grant Thou Thy graces my safeguard to be, So that in all things Thy will may be mine, Bearing all troubles because they are Thine. Still let me study like Thee to appear,— Still let me seek to be crucified here; That if my anguish, like Thine, is increased, I may sit also with Thee at Thy Feast. The Hymn, O quam glorificum.

72 The law of thy mouth is dearer unto me : than thousands of gold and silver.

The law of Thy mouth. The old law, because ”GOD spake all these words, and said” them to Moses; the new law, because ”GOD, Who at sundry times, and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His SON,” Whose own lips uttered the Gospel message. Sometimes men look to the ministry of the Word, and not to the authority of it, and then it is no marvel that they disesteem it, even as Samuel ran to Eli when he should have run to GOD, because he thought the voice that called him had been but the voice of Eli. So many regard not the Word, because they take it to be the voice of man, and not of GOD. Than thousands of gold and silver. Shall we think it poverty if we be scant of gold and silver? Is an angel poor because he has no flocks of cattle? Or was S. Peter poor because he had no gold or silver to give the cripple? No, for he had grace which was more excellent than either; and we have to remember that they are not current money in Canaan, not accounted of in our heavenly country. ”O you sons of Adam,” exclaims S. Bernard, ”you covetous generation, what have you to do with earthly riches, which are neither true, nor yours? Gold and silver are mere earth, red and white, which only the error of man makes, or rather reputes, precious.

In short, if they be yours, carry them with you. There is a tradition of a Jewish Rabbi who was offered a very lucrative situation in a place where there was no synagogue, but who thinking on this verse refused it; an instructive example to Christians who readily go to places where there is a ”famine of the words of the LORD” in order to acquire worldly riches. For the saint, the laws of CHRIST’s mouth, the delight of

Heb. i. 1. S. Chrysost. in S. Matt. Hom. 9. standing with Him face to face, as a man talketh with his friend surpasses all such wealth, and rightly, for the place of that converse is in the golden City where The lukewarm Blood of this dear Lamb, being spilt, To rubies turned, whereof her posts were built; And what dropped down in a kind gelid gore, Did turn rich sapphires, and did pave her floor: The brighter flames, that from His eyeballs rayed, Grew chrysolites, whereof her walls were made: The milder glances sparkled on the ground, And groundsilled every door with diamond; But dying, darted upward, and did fix A battlement of purest sardonyx. Her streets with burnished gold are paved around; Stars lie like pebbles scattered on the ground, Pearl mixed with onyx and the jasper stone Made jewelled pathways to be trampled on. There shines no sun by day, no moon by night, The palace glory is, the palace light.

Collects.

Teach us goodness, and discipline, and knowledge, O LORD, that malice may not make us harsh, nor sloth remiss, nor folly ignorant. Through. (11.) O CHRIST our

GOD, Who didst bear the suffering of Thy Passion for us all, when Thou wast found peaceful among them that hated peace; and innocent wast crucified by the guilty, and so by Thy death dost transfix the death of mankind; Grant that the multiplied unrighteousness of the proud may not prevail against us, and that the meditation of Thy law may not depart from the affections of our heart; that as Thou only hast endured death and the grave for us, Thou mayest bestow the light and reward of eternal life upon them that believe in Thee. (11.)

IOD.

The tenth letter, Iod, means the outstretched hand, and its name in Æthiopic signifies the right hand, with which agrees the scope of the first verse, speaking as it does of the hand of GOD as the agent of man's creation, and using a word T, almost identical in sound with the letter's name. However, S. Jerome's explanation is beginning, or knowledge, or "beginning of knowledge," still bringing us back to Him Who is the Right Hand and Wisdom of GOD, and was with Him in the beginning. The usual account of the section, as given by the mediæval theologians, is that it is the prayer of man to be restored to his state of original innocence and wisdom by being conformed to the image of CHRIST. And this squares with the obvious meaning, which is partly a petition for divine grace, and partly an assertion that the example of piety and resignation in trouble is attractive enough to draw men's hearts on towards God, a truth set forth at once by the Passion and by the lives of all those saints who have tried to follow it.

73 Thy hands have made me and fashioned me : O give me understanding that I may learn thy commandments.

These hands of God are His wisdom and power; or, as others explain it, His Son and His Spirit, consubstantial with Himself, and partaking with Him the act of creation. And in the words made and fashioned they see the double formation of man's compound nature, the origin of the soul, and the shaping of the body. Or again, there may be here a reference to God's twofold operation in man; the original gift of existence, and the reshaping him by regeneration, after he had become through his sin and fall "without form and void; without form, because having lost his likeness to God; void, because stripped of the supernatural graces he once possessed. It is then as God's creature and child that man calls on Him for help; since even amongst men we find that they look with favour and tenderness on their own doings, and maintain things simply because they began them. And when man compares his own structure with that of the lower animals, he cannot but recognise that, made as he has been of clay, he is nevertheless a most choice and precious work of God. And his cause for wonder and thankfulness will be increased, if he look to his mental power rather than even to his bodily form, to the hope of eternity as well as to the enjoyment of this present world. For here in his

earthly lodging he has a heavenly tenant, so that he is at once a citizen of earth, and yet of kin to God.

A wondrous gift, did he but know himself, and a beginning of righteousness, to be born rather for the world than for himself. Pagan thinkers have forestalled this teaching of the Christian Saint: ”for since, as Plato has nobly written, we are not born for ourselves alone, but our country claims one part of our birth, our parents another, and our friends a third, and as the Stoics will have it, all things produced on earth are created for man’s use, but men themselves for men and for their mutual benefit, we ought to follow nature as our leader in this respect, and give what open help we can to the common weal. And this is in truth but the earthly shadow of the heavenly song: ”Thou art worthy, O LORD, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created.”

So it is well added, O give me understanding. Thou hast made the vessel, leave it not empty, but fill it with Thine own precious gifts. S. Ambrose, writing at a time when the A. Gen. i. 2. Cicero De Officis, i. S. Ambros. De Officiis. i. 26. S. Bernard. Serm. 14, in Cant. students of physical science thought, as they do in our own day, that their favourite pursuit was the highest of which man is capable, and that they, as its hierophants, were entitled to speak infallibly on all other topics which they had not studied, says: ”The Prophet asks for understanding, that he may know himself, and be able to comprehend the nature of his own being; but they who dispute about natural science, and survey the tracts of the heavens, though they are unable to know themselves, think that understanding can be given without the bounty of God.” In another place the same Father remarks, ”What can be so dull a thing as to be busy with astronomy, and to measure the vast spaces of the heavens, and yet to abandon the cause of salvation, and seek that of error?”. A little before he had pointed out that we give the names of animals in contempt to men who do not use, or who misuse their understanding, calling them such names as mule, fox, viper, and the like; whereby we may learn that what is truly noble and precious in us is not that outward form which we share with beasts, but the rational soul which makes us near to God. He will not punish what is like Himself, but if we cast away His likeness, we lose the very name of men as well as the grace given to men, and cannot claim His promises.

Note, too, the use to which the Prophet desires to put God’s gift of understanding: That I may learn Thy commandments. Not merely to learn what they are, but to master their inner meaning, delight in them, and practise them constantly. In saying, Thy hands have made me, the Psalmist rebukes the thankless, who do not recognise God’s bounty towards themselves; in adding, fashioned me, he rebukes the proud who forget the vileness of the material of which they are made, (wherefore the Church warneth us, saying, ”Remember, man, that thou art dust, and unto

dust thou shalt return;") in saying, O give me understanding, he is against those who trust in their own powers; and by ending with, that I may learn Thy commandments, he gainsays the prying and inquisitive, "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." 74 They that fear thee, will be glad when they see me: because I have put my trust in thy word.

"I myself," observes S. Bernard, "have often (as I am not ashamed to confess,) and chiefly in the beginning of my conversion, been cold and hard in heart, and seeking Him whom my soul desired to love (for it was not as yet able to love Him whom it had not hitherto found, or at any rate loved Him less than it wished to do, and for that reason sought to love Him more, since it would never have sought Him unless it loved Him a little first; when then I was seeking One in Whom my spirit might be warmed and refreshed, chill and numb as it was; and no one came to help it, through whose means the binding frost which held my inward feelings tight might be melted, and the spring-tide of spiritual sweetness and pleasantness might revive, then my soul languished more and more, and was weary and nodding with very weariness, sad and almost despairing, and muttering in itself that saying, 'Who is able to abide His frost?' when suddenly at the accost, or even at the sight of some spiritual and perfect man, sometimes even at the mere memory of one dead or absent, my spirit breathed again, and the waters flowed, and those tears were my bread day and night.

And what was that save the perfume of the unction wherewith he had been anointed?' It is because the Saint puts into action that precept of his LORD, Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your FATHER which is in heaven. S. Bernard might, had his inner experience been that of fierce struggles of the lower will for mastery over the higher, have added that the company of a good man is one of the surest means to bring peace, and allay such tumults of the soul, so that all divine graces within it rejoice in such an ally, and all the baser passions are rebuked and silenced at his presence. So the Latin poet may tell us in an allegory:

Ac veluti magno in populo quum sæpe coorta est Seditio, sævitque animis ignobile vulgus; Virg. Æn. i. 148. And as in some great nation oftentimes Tumults arise, and the coarse mob grows wild; Brands and stones fly at once, rage weapons lends; Then, if they chance to see some man of note For goodness and achievements, they are still, And pause to listen with attentive ears; He rules with speech their minds and soothes their breasts. It was not thus, however, that the Gergesenes greeted CHRIST when He suffered the devils to enter their swine, nor the way the Samaritans received Him when His face was as though He would go up to Jerusalem. Let it be our care, instead of repelling Him when He offers Himself, to seek Him out, as the sinful woman did in the Pharisee's house, fall at His feet, and bathe them with our tears. The Doctor of Grace expounds this verse as the words

of the personified Church, declaring what rejoicing her beauty and glory will cause to the Saints at the Last Day. Because I have put my trust in Thy Word. Hence we see that gladness at the presence of the Saint is not due to his outward aspect, nor his dress, nor his station, nor possessions, but because of that which is within him, that shining of holiness which begets

A. affection, since men love in others those virtues which they practise themselves. And this gives the Saint a fresh claim on God's bounty, since he can truly declare that whatever is bestowed on him from the treasures of divine grace, will rejoice and profit others also. Observe, too, that it is said, in the present tense, They that fear, and then in the future, they shall see (Heb., LXX., Vulg.); because fear belongs to the Saints in this life only, but the perfect joy that casteth out fear arrives when they reach the open vision of God in His kingdom. And we may take the words also in the sense of the joyous greeting given by the glorified Saints and Angels of God to the victorious Saint who presents himself at the gate of Paradise for admission. "Now, while they were thus drawing towards the gate, behold, a company of the shining host came out to meet them, to whom it was said by the shining ones: 'These are the men that have loved our LORD when they were in the world,' . . . . Then the heavenly host gave a great shout, saying, 'Blessed are they that are called to the marriage-supper of the Lamb.'"

What are these that glow from afar, These that lean over the golden bar, Strong as the lion, pure as the dove, With open arms, and hearts of love? They the blesséd ones gone before, They the blesséd for evermore: Out of great tribulation they went Home to their home of Heaven-content. What are these that fly as a cloud, With flashing heads, and faces bowed, In their mouths a victorious psalm, In their hands a robe and a palm? Welcoming Angels these that shine, Your own Angel, and yours, and mine; Who have hedged us, both day and night, On the left hand and on the right. For put my trust the Vulgate has supersperavi, that is, I have overhoped, or I have more than hoped, and they explain it on the one hand of man's insufficient deservings; and on the other, of God's superabundant rewardings. 75 I know, O LORD, that thy judgments are right: and that thou of very faithfulness hast caused me to be troubled.

H. The Psalmist is not speaking here of the everlasting judgments of God, of which he could not use the words I know, seeing that in another Psalm they are described as "like the great deep," and the Apostle tells us that they are "unsearchable." It is of judgments in this life that the verse teaches us, that all amidst which man finds himself is ordered by the judgment of GOD, all troubles, sorrows, losses, persecutions, are a fire to purge the dross out of our souls, and leave only pure metal to be fashioned for GOD's service. Of very faithfulness, that is, not merely that GOD's judgments are true and just, which is the usual comment here of those who follow the Vulgate in Thy truth, but that they are done in love, and for our salvation.

”Wherefore,” as the Prince of the Apostles saith, ”let them that suffer according to the will of GOD commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator.”

Yes, LORD, in memory’s fondest place I shrine those seasons sad, When, looking up, I saw Thy face In kind austereness clad. I would not miss one sigh or tear, Heart-pang, or throbbing brow; Sweet was the chastisement severe, And sweet its memory now. Yes! let the fragrant scars abide, Love-tokens in Thy stead, Faint shadows of the spear-pierced side, And thorn-encompassed Head. 76 O let thy merciful kindness be my comfort: according to thy word unto thy servant. He does not ask for the removal of GOD’s chastenings, which are meant for his purification, but only that he may be supported in and through them by the sense of divine love, that though the blast of the storm may continue to rage, he may have a shelter from it. ”And a man shall be as an abiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest;” for that merciful kindness is the SON of GOD, the only comfort of sorrowing humanity, promised long before to Abraham. According to Thy word, in another sense also, because men sometimes do obtain a measure of consolation in trouble from other sources than GOD, but it fails them soon, and they find that He alone can truly sustain them in the time of affliction.

Ah, my dear angry LORD, Since Thou dost love, yet strike; Cast down, yet help afford, Sure I will do the like. I will complain, yet praise, I will bewail, approve, And all my sour-sweet days I will lament, and love. 77 O let thy loving mercies come unto me, that I may live : for thy law is my delight.

A. It is of no earthly life that he speaks, but of that which is eternal and blessed, alone worthy to be called life, in comparison with which that existence which we lead here is rather to be called death than life. And the loving mercies which give us that life are the Gospel message and Apostolic teaching given us by the advent of the Word made flesh. This is the third prayer for mercy in the Psalm; the first being a cry for pardon, the second for comfort, and this for that true and higher life which knows no more sin. And it is the truest prayer of them all, since many are found to ask for the two former gifts from GOD, who do not care to ask for this, since they have no desire to forsake their sins. It is not without a deep wisdom, therefore, that they interpret the LXX. rendering παρακάλεσαι as meaning exhort as well as comfort. Great is the mercy of GOD, which not only grants remission of sins, but adds the spurs of exhortation to the combatants, lest they should shrink in unwarlike dread from the sufferings of the fight. It is not then mercy such as a yielding craven, asking for quarter, desires, that he asks, but that girt about with the confession of GOD, he may accomplish greater things when aided with such a gift. For Thy law is my delight. This is my one reason for desiring life, that I may serve Thee. It is rightly said delight, for if faith working by love were not the spirit moving the actions, it would be no way towards everlasting life. Committing

the whole of GOD's law to memory, pondering it oftentimes, making it our song, taking care not to keep silence about it; all this avails nothing, if we do not live as it enjoins, and that we never can do unless it be our delight.

78 Let the proud be confounded, for they go wickedly about to destroy me : but I will be occupied in thy commandments. S. Ambros. It is for the coming of a blush of shame and contrition, that is, for the conversion of his enemies, that the Psalmist prays, that they may cease to glory in their confusion, and be turned to the LORD. The second clause of the verse is not accurately rendered by the Prayer Book. It ought to run, as in A. V., which is much nearer to LXX. and Vulgate, For they dealt perversely with me without a cause. It is the cry of the Church, as it was of her Head, "That the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated Me without a cause;" and it is the cry also of every one who will live godly in this present world. The verse has also been explained as denoting the assaults of our ghostly enemies, and in that case the confusion prayed for to come upon them will mean their final discomfiture in the Day of Judgment; leaving the long-tried Saints of GOD thenceforward free to serve Him for ever, undisturbed by trial, by error, or by sin, occupied in His commandments.

79 Let such as fear thee, and have known thy testimonies: be turned unto me.

There is only One who has the right to say these words in the sense of being the example of all, the ensign to which the host of GOD are to seek. No mere man dare utter them, or could be listened to, were he bold enough to do so. He Who became partaker of our mortality, that we might be partakers of His divinity, here addresses His Heavenly FATHER. But there is another sense in which we sinners may utter them. We have alienated GOD's true servants from us by our sins, and they, knowing only our evil report, avoid our company: and rightly so. It is not unfitting then to pray to GOD that as He has received us back into His grace and favour, He may also make us to be accepted of His household. So we read of the great Apostle of the Gentiles, "When Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the Apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the LORD in the way. They come to be the friends and helpers of the new believer, who feels that the society of one person who fears GOD is to be preferred to that of thousands who know not His testimonies.

If we go back to the first meaning, the words may be those of the Church in union with her Head, praying for the return of those to her fold who have strayed through error and mistaken zeal, but not through wilfulness; and show by their life and conversation that they retain some measure of devotion and love of GOD, as the three thousand who believed at the preaching of Peter. They are to turn to her, because she keeps GOD's commandments, that they may become like her therein, and they shall know Thy testimonies.

80 O let my heart be sound in thy statutes: that I be not ashamed. Sound, that is, whole, entire; and it is thus a prayer against the half-heartedness of the wavering or the double-heartedness of the deceitful. The Vulgate rendering is immaculate, a prayer for deliverance from every taint of sin, venial as well as mortal. We may take the words as those of CHRIST Himself praying for His Body, the Church, that it may be pure in zeal and fervent in love, and that not in its own strength, but in GOD's statutes; or it may be the prayer of a Saint for his own purification, that his heart may be made A. A. a fit dwelling for his LORD to take up His abode. That I be not ashamed, while here upon earth, when exposed to mocking for Thy sake; that I be not ashamed later with the awful confusion of the Doom.

Collects.
We know, O LORD, that Thy judgment is just; but we beseech Thy mercy, that Thy compassions may come upon us, that we be not confounded with the proud nor condemned with the ungodly. (1.) Unto Thee, O LORD, do we lift up our eyes, for we are the work of Thy hands; give us understanding to learn Thy commandments, and fill them that fear Thee with gladness. Let Thy mercy come to comfort us, to deliver us from all evils, and to teach us to do works worthy of pleasing Thee. (11.) Grant us, O LORD, understanding to learn Thy commandments, instruct us with constant meditations, that sloth may not draw us away from any duty, but that Thy mercy may be to us for our comfort. (11.) Let our hearts, O LORD, be spotless in Thy statutes, that no corrupt thought may defile us, and no evil inclination confound us. (11.)

CAPH.
The eleventh letter, Caph, signifies the hollowed hand. The expositors, however, looking only to the meaning curved, which is but half of its import, explain the section as signifying the act of bowing down in penitence, or as noting that the Fathers of the Old Testament were like veteran soldiers, stooping with years and toil, and bowed down yet further by the heavy weight of the Law, only removable by that coming of CHRIST for which they prayed. Others extend the notion to the Saints of the Church, weighed down by the sorrows and cares of this life, and therefore desiring to be dissolved and be with CHRIST. The true meaning is to be sought in the full interpretation of the word; for the hand is hollowed either in order to retain something which actually lies in it, or to receive something about to be placed in it by another. Thus the hand may be GOD's, as the giver of bounty, or man's, as the receiver of it; and the whole scope of the section, as a prayer for speedy help, is that man holds out his hand as a beggar, supplicating the mercy of GOD.

81 My soul hath longed for thy salvation: and I have a good hope because of thy word.

Longed. It ought rather to be fainted, as A.V., agreeing with Vulg. defecit; and it denotes the weary waiting of the Saints of old for the coming of the Only-Begotten Son, the salvation of God, a waiting nevertheless made bearable by the good hope of that coming, which they derived from their trust in the promises made to them by the Prophets. Him only the Saint who fears God desires, longs for, strives towards with all his might, cherishes in the bosom of his soul, opens and pours forth himself to Him, and fears nothing save the loss of Him. It is a fainting which is also a strengthening, a progress of the soul, attended with a subduing of the body; it is a desire common to those Saints who before the Virgin's child-bearing longed for the Incarnation of CHRIST, and to those who since His Ascension have prayed for His manifestation as Judge of quick and dead, for they know that promise, "When CHRIST our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory. "They who grow strong in the love of their Maker, just as they acquire strength in that desired might of God, fail in their own strength, and the more vigorously they hunger for eternal things they grow weaker with a wholesome faintness at temporal things. The Psalmist, weary with the force of his love, said, My soul hath fainted for Thy salvation.

This he did in his spiritual advance, because, longing for eternal light, he was broken down from all confidence in the flesh, and gasping. So it is said in another place, 'My soul hath a desire and fainteth for the courts of the LORD.' It is well said first, 'desire,' and then 'fainteth;' for that must be a very small longing for divine things which is not speedily followed by fainting on our part. For he who is kindled to desire the everlasting halls, is rightly wearied out by love of this world, and grows as cold in his affection for it as he rises to greater warmth in the love of God; and if he succeeds in grasping this perfectly, he entirely abandons the world, and dies altogether to temporal things precisely as he is more deeply quickened by divine inspiration to the life above. Or you may take it that the soul, drawn entirely into the love of God, fails and wastes in its divine glow like the wax or oil which feeds a flame, or as molten gold is itself a consuming fire. It is an abandonment of self, as Jacob, inspired by God, becomes Israel, as Saul turns into Paul; and so too the soul, wrapt in divine contemplation, does as it were abandon the body, and leave it weak, tranced, unable to discharge its usual functions of sense and action, while the soul herself, soar as she may, is beaten down, enfeebled, and exhausted by the stupendous effort to attain and grasp the incomprehensible:

A. Where shall he rest his wing, where turn for flight? For all around is Light, Primal, essential, all-pervading Light! Nor eyes of angel bear Curse of E That glory unimaginably bright: The sun himself had seemed A speck of darkness there, Amid that Light of Light! And yet dazed, confounded, fainting, the soul has yet a good hope, because the salvation which is promised her is Very GOD, and she knows that "we have an Advocate with the FATHER, JESUS CHRIST the Righteous, and

He is the propitiation for our sins." 82 Mine eyes long sore for thy word : saying, O when wilt thou comfort me? A. S. Luke x. 23. Theodoret. S. Ambros.

Note the utter wistfulness of the verse. The eyes long so very sorely, that dumb as they are, their gaze becomes speech, the eager yearning of prayer. It is as the LORD said to His disciples: "Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see: for I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them." And therefore one interpretation which has found favour with some of the early commentators blends the literal and mystical meaning; taking the verse of the patient study given by the Fathers of the Old Covenant to the oracles of GOD, wearing their eyes out, as it were, (for fail is here, as in A.V. and Vulg., the true rendering, instead of long,) in diligent poring over the prophecies, in order to forecast the time when the Desire of all nations should come. We, remarks S. Ambrose, count ourselves idle if we appear to do nothing but study the Word, and we think more of those who are actively employed than of those who are busied in the study of learning divinity; just as though the student of the Word were not a worker, seeing that it is a far higher work than those other kinds. So when Martha was busied about her serving, and Mary was listening to the Word of the LORD, she who listened was counted worthy to be set above her who served.

But the majority of the commentators explain the verse of the inner eyes of the soul, and of their looking for the manifestation of CHRIST and the glory of the Kingdom of Heaven, anointed as they are here with the salve of tears, and yet praying for the time when GOD shall wipe away all tears. So the Cluniac: For thee, O dear, dear country, Mine eyes their vigils keep, For very love, beholding Thy happy name, they weep; The mention of thy glory Is unction to the breast, And medicine in sickness, And life, and love, and rest. S. Ambrose raises two questions here, first, why we have eyes in the plural, seeing that the one eye of the soul, not the two eyes of the body, (which cannot see CHRIST,) is meant; and he replies that the moral and mystical sense are thus denoted, of which the mystical is the keener, and the moral the softer. And next, he asks why we find after this plural, comfort me, instead of comfort us? and replies that in our glorified condition, when GOD gives us His comfort, the bodily eye and the spiritual eye become one, when flesh and soul no longer desire different things, but the one same thing, namely, CHRIST. And so S. Peter Damiani:

Fleshly wars they know no longer, since with blemish stained is none, The Rhythm, Ad perennis. For the spiritual body and the soul at last are one, Dwell they now in peace eternal, with all stumbling they have done. The more literal, but less beautiful explanation is that the eyes are but the instruments of the soul, which speaks through them, and is the me for which comfort is desired. 83 For I am become like a bottle in the smoke: yet do I not forget thy statutes.

A bottle, that is, a wine-skin. The metaphor is taken from the blackened and shrivelled appearance of a skin exposed to the fire. But one object amongst the ancients of such exposure was to mellow the wine by the gradual ascent of the heat and smoke from the fire over which the skin was suspended: and thus the words teach us the uses of affliction in ripening and improving the soul. For smoke the LXX. and Vulgate read frost, and the favourite interpretation based upon this is the result of bodily austerity and mortification in cooling the hot passions of the flesh. S. Ambrose, coming very near the fullest meaning of the passage, although adopting the version frost, observes, The righteous man, who hath mortified his body, is rightly called a wine-skin, seeing that he is found stripped, yet not naked, for a wine-skin is made of the spoils of a dead animal. Let us then die to sin, that we may live to GOD. Filled with the spirit of gladness and pleasantness of joy, we shall be spiritual spoils, free from bodily weakness, and holding within us in the unbroken folds of our soul that grace of divine mysteries which has been poured into us. Of these skins it is said that they put new wine into new bottles who wish to keep both the body and grace. Let not this skin of thine leak then, nor gape, nor grow decayed from lying on the ground, lest the new wine should burst the old skins, and grace be poured out where the skins are torn. Let them not dry up again with the sun of unrighteousness and the excessive force of heat, but rather let the various passions of the glowing flesh be calmed as though with the cold of snow, a snow which shines with the brightness of God's own word, which they who follow shall in the resurrection have raiment white as snow.

Again, taking snow as the type of earthly affliction due to sin, that "winter" which the LORD bid His disciples pray might not be the season of their flight; the Saint bids us note that we should be as insensible to the influence of sin as a dead skin is to that of cold; because we ought to bear about in our bodies the dying of the LORD JESUS. He then who chastises his body is a skin which maketh drunken not with wine but with the Spirit, in which there are no grapes of gall, no poison of dragons, no cruel venom of asps, but that inebriating cup which is so glorious. Others, reminding us of the heat of Eastern lands, suggest that the skin, whether containing water or wine, is placed in snow to cool its contents, on the one hand to prevent evaporation, and on the other to make them more grateful and cooling to the palate, which rejects tepid water with disgust and sickness, but delights in that which is cold. And this sense of affliction making that which is stored within us pleasanter to God and man, comes back to the literal meaning, albeit by a different road. The yet of the English versions, though not in the Hebrew, nevertheless seems required to complete the parallelism of the two strophes of the verse, and if we supply it, we must needs follow the translation smoke, and not frost. For too much heat would dry up and evaporate the contents of a skin; and so it is said, Despite the heat of my affliction, yet do I not forget Thy statutes, because Thou

art careful not to try me beyond my strength. But cold would leave the quantity of fluid undiminished, and is thus a less suggestive rendering.

84 How many are the days of thy servant: when wilt thou be avenged of them that persecute me? A.

He speaks of days, not years, to mark more forcibly the briefness of human life. Nevertheless, the time of the Saint's tarrying here on earth is counted by days, not by nights, because it is bright with the shining of holy deeds wrought in the light of divine grace. The question is too in another form the cry of the Martyrs under the golden altar in heaven: "How long, O LORD, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? The reason, in this sense of the verse, that the second question is added, is lest any should suppose that a time shall come when there will be no Church left on earth, for the import here is that the Church will abide till the judgment, and then behold the destruction of her foes. When wilt Thou be avenged? This is rather a paraphrase of the original, which runs, as in LXX., Vulgate, and A. V., When wilt Thou execute judgment? And observe that it is in effect the very question which the Apostles asked their Master after His Resurrection, only to receive the answer: "It is not for you to know the times or seasons which the FATHER hath put in His own power. And if we take the words as spoken by the Head of the Church Himself, then there will be a two-fold answer to each question. How many are the days of Thy servant?

Thirty years and three of obscurity and sorrow, ending in shame and death, on the one hand; and on the other, the answer is, "Thy throne, O GOD, is for ever and ever. When wilt Thou be avenged of them that persecute Me? First, when "having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in His Cross; next, "when the LORD JESUS shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not GOD, and that obey not the Gospel of our LORD JESUS CHRIST."

C. Alcuin. Acts i. 7. 2 Thess. i. 7. 85 The proud have digged pits for me: which are not after thy law.

The figure is drawn from the mode of snaring wild beasts in Eastern countries, by digging a deep pitfall in the animal's track, and covering it lightly over with brushwood and earth, so as to give way under the slightest tread. But such pitfalls were only for beasts of prey, and were not after the law in the case of domestic cattle, for it is written, "And if a man shall open a pit, or if a man shall dig a pit, and not cover it [rather, shall not fence it], and an ox or an ass fall therein, the owner of the pit shall make it good." Much more when a Saint of GOD, and not a brute animal, is in question, such snares are not after GOD's law. But the LXX. and Vulgate read, The ungodly narrated pratings (LXX,) or fablings (Vulg.) against me. But the notion is the same, because it is with their tongues that unbelievers

and sectaries ”digged a pit for the soul” of the righteous who is not on his guard against them, and strive to cast him headlong. Hence, the early commentators with one voice explain this verse of the wresting of Scripture by Jews and heretics, of the false doctrines of Gnostics, of the legends of the Talmud and Kabbala, and like perversions of truth. It is singular that they pass over the obvious reference to the plots of the Pharisees and Herodians against CHRIST, first lying in wait to entangle Him in His talk; and then, on the failure of this scheme, planning His death. They extend, however, the moral sense to all vain, frivolous, and worldly talk, which does indeed dig a pit for the soul. For, as a great Saint observes, the words of carnal persons oftentimes when they busily thrust themselves into our cars, beget a war of temptation in the heart, and although reason rejects, and tongue blames them, yet that requires toil to conquer within which

Ric. Cenoman. Jer. xviii. 20. Origen. S. Ambros. A. S. Hieron. L. is steadily condemned outwardly. Whence it is necessary that a thing which the watchful mind repels from access to thought should not even come to the ears. And therefore holy men, panting with desire for eternity, rise to such a high level of life, that they count even hearing worldly talk to be a heavy and depressing burden. For they count that a strange and unpleasant thing which utters no sound of that which they inwardly love. There is one deep comfort, however, to be drawn from this verse. The Psalmist says that the ungodly dug pits for him, but he does not say that he fell therein. 86 All thy commandments are true : they persecute me falsely ; O be thou my help. A. Ay. G. S. Ambros.

The firm truth of GOD’s commandments is in contrast to the treacherous pits dug by His enemies, fair-seeming, but false. Of no code but GOD’s can it be said that all its commandments are true ; but His merits this title in every particular,—in word, teaching, and life. And mark the advance from secret plots to open violence, noted by the word persecute, which signifies driving from one place of refuge to another, at the peril of life. But the Psalmist, like a valiant warrior, does not shrink from the wars and battles of the LORD ; contenting himself with faithfully and wisely asking for divine help. He makes no petition, therefore, that the persecutions may cease, but that he may be supported through them. For he knew that ”all that will live godly in CHRIST JESUS shall suffer persecution. Nor does he specify his persecutors, for they are many, visible and invisible, spiritual wickednesses and evil men. Whence there is a stress on the word falsely, for there is a persecution which is just and right, when we make war against injustice itself, when we punish the immoral, when we mulet the fraudulent. Suffering does not constitute in itself a title to help and reward from GOD, for that is a true saying of a Martyr Saint, ”The cause, not the pain, makes the martyr. Wherefore the Apostle teaches us : ”Let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil-doer, or as a busybody in other men’s matters.

Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed ; but let him glorify GOD on this behalf. O be Thou my help. Because Thy commandments are true ; and one of those commandments is a precept to obey Him who ”doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment. And as I obey Thy law, holding that all Thy commandments are true, while they openly violate it, I invoke my King against mine enemies, I appeal to my Judge against my wrongers.

87 They had almost made an end of me upon earth : but I forsook not thy commandments.

They, our spiritual foes, almost made an end of us on earth, when the two sole representatives of mankind were lured to the fall; when the blood of the second child born upon earth was shed by the first, when Noah and his family alone survived the ruin of the Flood, and yet in each case a seed of righteousness was preserved, and that terrible almost was not suffered to become altogether. And S. Augustine reminds us how again and again the fury of heathen persecution raged against the Church, and the vast slaughter of Christians swelled the whiterobed army of martyrs in the Church Triumphant, so that there seemed as though there would be no confessors left in the Church Militant here on earth. It is the cry of Elijah: ”They have forsaken Thy covenant, thrown down Thine altars, and slain Thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life to take it away.” And then comes God’s answer. ”I have left Me seven thousand in Israel.” And we may take the verse in another sense, of the believer struggling against the inducements of the world and the flesh. They had almost made an end of me upon earth, by entangling me in the love of earthly things, dragging me down from all thoughts of God and heaven, and thus destroying my soul. For if man end on earth, it is but a pitiful ending, seeing that he cannot then attain to eternal joys. But I forsook not Thy commandments; especially those which bid Thy servants strive manfully against their importunate foes with all perseverance; saying as to Joshua, ”Be strong, and of a good courage: be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed; for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest;” and as the LORD to His disciples, ”Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul.”

A. Josh. i. 9. 88 O quicken me after thy loving-kindness: and so shall I keep the testimonies of thy mouth. It is no marvel to find this prayer, O quicken me, so often in this Psalm, for it is spoken of the life of grace, which the petitioner nevertheless enjoyed; but he prays for increase and perseverance of that spiritual life, and that he might thus keep the testimonies of God to the very end. For all created things need the continual abiding presence and support of God, since, were that to cease for a moment of time, they would be annihilated. Whence it is clear that His continual conservation of life in us is a continual gift of life, and therefore a continual quickening. For the righteous man lives daily to God, and dies daily to

sin. And the verse may also be taken of the Martyrs—a notion forcibly suggested here by the LXX. μαρτύρια for testimonies—who pray that the bodily death they undergo for the love of God, may through that same love be their quickening to a higher and more blessed life. And the testimonies of Thy mouth are in especial

A. the Gospel precepts, declared to men by Him Who is the mouth, and right hand, and strength, and wisdom of GOD, even our LORD JESUS CHRIST, Who is blessed for ever.

Collects.
O GOD, Whose Word the eyes of the soul desire, and for Whose salvation they faint, help us in our days, that we fall not by the persecution of unrighteousness. (1.) Defend, O LORD, Thy Church from wicked assaults by the protection of Thy right hand, that our enemies being turned to flight, we may be filled with Thy holy benediction. (1.) Our soul, O LORD, fainteth for Thy salvation, let it then advance with more earnest longing through the gift of abounding grace, that it may receive consolation as its reward. (11.)

LAMED.
The twelfth letter, Lamed, means an ox-goad, and thus S. Jerome's explanation discipline is not very wide of the mark, since the signification of the goad in Scripture is correction and incitement in the path of duty. And as the chief idea in this strophe is the praise of the dignity of the Word of GOD, we may compare that saying, "The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd;" namely, that LORD JESUS CHRIST, the Good Shepherd, that nail of which we heard in the sixth strophe, Who is the Master and Teacher of His assembly (ἐκκλησία) the Church. Heart, or slave, is the interpretation of the mediævalists, for the most part following S. Ambrose. 89 O LORD, thy word : endureth for ever in heaven.

The Jewish commentators explain this verse very forcibly, saying, that it points not merely to the immutability of GOD's decrees; but to the continual immanence in creation of that Word whereby He made the heavens and the earth, as the sustaining force which is the life of all things. And thence two lessons are drawn; one the contrast of the shifting and uncertain condition of earthly persons and things with the unchanging steadfastness of GOD; and next, the witness which the heaven itself in its visible frame is of the truth of His word, seeing that He once commanded it to be, and it continues ever since in the unchanging revolution of the planets. But in a yet deeper and more solemn sense, we have here set before us the eternal generation of the Consubstantial WORD, so that the Psalmist all but bursts forth into that same glorious proclamation of His Godhead which opens the Gospel of S. John. "In the beginning was the WORD, and the WORD was with GOD, and the WORD was GOD." Hence S. Fulgentius takes occasion to point out that even

S. John i. 1. when the WORD became flesh, He in no wise quitted His throne in heaven. And it is worthy of notice that the Greek Fathers, contending against the Arians, argue from this verse for the Eternity of the SON, on the ground that a human word does not remain at all, but is dissipated into air in the very act of utterance, whereas "the SON abideth ever." JESUS is GOD! the glorious band Of golden Angels sing Songs of adoring praise to Him, Their Maker and their King. He was True GOD in Bethlehem's crib, On Calvary's Cross True GOD, He Who in heaven eternal reigned, In time on earth abode. JESUS is GOD! there never was A time when He was not: Boundless, eternal, merciful, The WORD the SIRE begot!' Backward our thoughts through ages stretch, Onward through endless bliss,— For there are two eternities, And both alike are His!

The interpretation which finds most favour with the Fathers is, however, a gloss on that clause of the Our FATHER, "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven;" that whereas man's falseness and rebellion make the abode of GOD's Word on earth precarious, yet in heaven, the perfect obedience of the Angelic powers, who faint not in their watches, makes it permanent there. Others extend the meaning to Saints of GOD even on earth, whose conversation is in heaven, and who abide, even as the Angels do, faithfully in the service of GOD, so that CHRIST the Word dwelleth in them alway, and they in Him. And because He is the aim and glory of all His Saints, the truth that He abideth in heaven points the meaning of His own saying: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Thy treasure then is faith, gentleness, mercy, thy treasure is CHRIST. And observe, that Satan too was once in heaven, but could not remain there. And if heaven was too narrow for him and the WORD of GOD to continue together in, how fancy you that your heart is large enough for a divided allegiance and habitation? So it has been well said, Man's heart is either the ark of GOD or of the devil; and if it would be GOD's ark, let it give itself to GOD's keeping.

A. Pet. Cellens. Tabern. Mosaic. i. 90 Thy truth also remaineth from one generation to another : thou hast laid the foundation of the earth, and it abideth. Eccles. i. 4. A. Some draw here a distinction between the for ever of the previous verse, applicable only to heaven, and the one generation to another of this, where the earth is spoken of, because while the angel-hosts remain always constituted of the same individuals, God's will has to be taught to successive births of men; for "one generation passeth away, and another generation cometh, but the earth abideth for ever." But the favourite interpretation of the commentators is to see here the LORD JESUS, the Truth of GOD, remaining from the one generation of the Fathers of the Old Covenant, as their promised Messiah, to the other generation of the Saints of the New Testament, who know Him as their manifested SAVIOUR. He

hath laid the foundation of the earth, whether we take that to denote the Church Militant or the faithful soul, on Himself, the chief corner-stone, and it abideth, because that basis is too firm to be shaken or removed, and on it Jews and Gentiles are ”builded together for a habitation of GOD through the Spirit.”

91 They continue this day according to thine ordinance : for all things serve thee. This is the interpretation of the verse according to the Rabbins and S. Jerome. And observe how that very sequence of natural law, which is to GOD’s saints amongst the surest evidences of His creative and sustaining power, is to His opponents or deniers an argument against the truth of revelation; for the scoffers say, ”Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.” The Heaven and the Earth of the Church, that is, the Head and King, Who is eternal in the heavens, the succession of Saints militant on earth from one generation to another, continue this day in despite of all snares and wiles of the enemy, all false Apostles and Prophets, all persecutions, and all coldness and falling away, and thus the existence and perennial vigour of the Church is the standing miracle and witness to GOD in a rebellious and gainsaying people. And the reason of that permanence of the Church, as contrasted with the rapid rise, fall, and disappearance of so many sects, heresies, and philosophies, is because all, Head and members alike, CHRIST in His Manhood, and all His servants, are Thy servants (A.V.) O heavenly FATHER.

But the great majority of the old versions read thus, The day abideth by Thine ordinance. And that, they tell us, means the one day of eternity, which hath no night, whose true sun is CHRIST, never setting. For whereas it is said in another Psalm, ”The day is Thine, and the night is Thine;” if the natural day were here intended, some mention of the night would follow; but this day abideth, changes not, and has no end. The words are also true of that light of faith and Gospel illumination in which we now walk who follow CHRIST, ”honestly, as in the day,” for He saith, ”I am the Light of the world; he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” Some commentators have therefore restricted the meaning of day, which they read in the plural, to those great Saints, whether angels or men, true ”children of light,” who always obey the will of GOD, and serve Him, for ”if any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of the world.” The literal sense of the orderly succession of day and night, as part of the system of the universe and a proof of GOD’s providence, is not forgotten, and they remind us how though time passes on in a perpetual flux, yet it so continues by continual reproduction that each to-morrow as it arrives becomes to-day, and so abides continually. Whence the Apostle uses the phrase as identical with this present life, saying, ”Exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day.” And that only by exhorting to persevere in ”JESUS CHRIST, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.”

For all things serve Thee. Here is a proof that the day of eternity must needs be intended, for it is only too true that all things do not as yet serve Him. It is only when CHRIST ”shall have delivered up the kingdom to GOD, even the FATHER,” that ”all things shall be subdued unto Him, that GOD may be all in all.” And a great medieval preacher bids us observe that CHRIST chose to be born into the world just as the days grow longer after the winter solstice, in order to teach us how the day of righteousness should increase in our hearts with the rising of that Sun. A Christian poet many centuries before had anticipated this interpretation: A. Wherefore doth the circling sun Cease the downward course to run? Is it that the CHRIST is born, Lengthening out the path of morn? Ah, how swift the hurrying day Seemed of late to fleet away! Almost might the torch appear Quenched, of the declining year.

Now the Heaven in livelier glow Flames o’er gladdening earth below, Mounting now the day-beam shines, Gradual on the former lines. Spring to light, all-lovely Child! Spring from Mother undefiled, Maid from sponsal contract free, Bearing GOD and Man in Thee. Prudentius, Hymnus in Natali Salvatoris. 92 If my delight had not been in thy law : I should have perished in my trouble. The Psalmist passes from the general to the particular statement. God’s Word and will are not only the life and support of all the universe, but of the individual soul, and that same power which is exercised in maintaining the fabric of creation is equally engaged in comforting and reviving a lonely sufferer in his affliction. And if any prefer to take the words of the consoling effect of Holy Scripture, S. Ambrose will help them, saying, When we are in a season of affliction, and are shaken by adversity, let our meditation be in the law, lest the storm of temptation burst on us unawares. No athlete attempts to enter a contest unless he have been first trained by the exercises of the gymnasium. Let us then anoint the arms of our soul with the oil of reading, let us have regular exercise day and night in that gymnasium of Holy Scripture, and let the wholesome diet of spiritual dainties strengthen the joints of our minds. And therefore, because Holy Scripture is such a storehouse of sweets, the literal Hebrew is fitly here, My delights, the plural marking the number and variety of the pleasures to be drawn from it by the faithful soul.

O Book! infinite sweetness, let my heart Suck every letter, and a honey gain, Precious for any gift in any part, To clear the breast, to mollify all pain. Thou art all health, health thriving, till it make A full eternity, thou art a mass Of strange delights, where we may wish and take. And our chief gladness and comfort therein is to learn the blessedness of those who suffer for righteousness’ sake, and follow the footsteps of CHRIST, abiding firm in temptation; as also the love and mercy of GOD towards penitent sinners. 93 I will never forget thy commandments : for with them thou hast quickened me. And so, in the sorrow of the Captivity, one was found to say of the teaching of Wisdom, ”This is the book of the commandments of GOD, and the law that endureth for ever: all they that keep it shall come to life,

but such as leave it shall die." And I was dead, says Gerhohus, and the staff of fear of the law laid upon me was of no avail, there was neither voice nor motion. But when the teaching of the Incarnation showed me how much Thou lovest me, Who gavest Thy SON to ransom the slave, at once, by the contact of His Body, our true Elisha, "GOD of salvation," as He cherished me, I began to live, as delivered from the bondage of sin and death, whose law it is that "the soul that sinneth, it shall die."

I will never forget, not even in Heaven. For as the children of Israel all through their sojourn in Canaan kept up the memory of their deliverance out of Egypt, so the ransomed Saints in glory will be mindful of all out of which they have been redeemed, and unceasingly praise God for His great salvation, in the everlasting Easter of the Land of Promise. The Vulgate word for commandments here is justificationes, and hereupon S. Ambrose, citing that teaching of the Apostle, "No man is justified by the law in the sight of God," points out that the term can be used here only by anticipation and shadow, looking forward to justification by faith in CHRIST. And in this sense a Greek Father comments: I shall have life in them, (Thy commandments,) as Thou hast Thyself said unto me: "Ye shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man do, he shall live in them." For only the righteous lives, even though he seem to be dead. The unrighteous, on the other hand, are dead, though they may seem to live. But the righteous have the nature of life within themselves, that is, righteousness, which righteousness is the LORD Himself, Who declares that He is Life, and that they who are not partakers of Him have no life in them, for in truth our SAVIOUR's death is not merely life, but the quickener of men, and undertaken to destroy death; whereas the others, not possessing this, are like inanimate things which cannot move themselves, but are affected by outward impact. And as a man who has been healed of a dangerous sickness bears in mind the kindness and skill of his physician, and the remedies which he employed, so the ransomed Saint, dwelling with the angels through eternity, will never forget how the LORD healed him of his sore disease and gave him life and health for ever.

Ye seed of Israel's chosen race, Ye ransomed from the Fall, Hail Him Who saves you by His grace, And crown Him LORD of all. Sinners, whose love can ne'er forget The wormwood and the gall, Go spread your trophies at His feet, And crown Him LORD of all. 94 I am thine, O save me: for I have sought thy commandments. I am Thine, O GOD the FATHER, by creation, for Thou Rie. Hamp. madest me; I am Thine, O GOD the SON, by redemption, for Thou savedst me; I am Thine, O GOD the HOLY GHOST, Hugo Card. by right of service, for Thou hast sanctified me, and made me the temple of Thine abode. I am Thine, for I serve Thee A.

only, and not two masters; I am Thine, for I am weary of being my own, through that first and greatest evil, disobedience, and now give myself to Thee, and take on me

Thy light burden and easy yoke. No worldling can say, I am Thine, for he has many masters. Lust comes, and says, Thou art mine, for thou desirest bodily pleasures, thou hast sold thyself to me for carnal love, and I have paid thy price. Avarice comes, and says, The gold and silver thou hast are the price of thy bondage; the possessions thou holdest have made thee sell thy freedom to buy thine ownership. Luxury comes: Thou art mine; one day's revel is the price of thy life; that outlay on banquets is the bidding for thy head, the sum of the bargain made for thee; and what is worse, thou art bought as so much flesh, cheaper than thy very food, since thy table for one day is more valuable to thee than a life for all time. I have purchased thee amongst thy wine-cups; I have acquired thee amidst thy feastings. Ambition comes and saith to thee: Surely thou art mine. Knowest thou not that I have made thee rule others, that thou mightest serve me? Dost thou not know that the prince of this world said to the LORD, the SAVIOUR Himself, when he showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, "All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me?

All the sins come, and each of them saith, Thou art mine. What a worthless slave is that whom so many claim at once! How then canst thou, who art of this sort, say to CHRIST, I am Thine? He will answer thee: "Not every one that saith unto Me, LORD, LORD, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; it is not every one who saith to Me, I am Thine, who is Mine. Thou art Mine if thy conscience does not convict thy voice; if thy mind or works do not refute thy language. I choose not to have a servant who serves many masters. He whom lust inflames is not Mine, for purity is Mine. He is none of Mine who is eager to rob the weak, for honesty is Mine. He is not Mine whom sudden anger rouses, for calmness is Mine. The drunkard, whether intoxicated with wine, with ambition, or with excitement in peril, is not Mine, for I am peace. Nor can one of a variable and shifting character call himself CHRIST's servant, for anger, or mournfulness, or hasty speech, can come forward and say, He was mine an hour ago, and will return to my service soon again. The sinner, therefore, who calls himself CHRIST's servant is a liar, and if he pleads at His tribunal to be received as His subject, Satan will come forward and say as of Judas, after entering into him, "He is not Thine, JESU, but mine; he thinks my thoughts, and ponders my suggestions in his heart;

he eats with Thee, but feeds with me; he takes Bread from Thee, and coin from me; he drinks with Thee, and sells Thy Blood to me; he is Thine Apostle, and my hireling. He who may justly put forward this plea, I am Thine, is he who can truly say with the Apostle, To me to live is CHRIST, and to die is gain," and "I live, yet Phil. i. 21. not I, but CHRIST that liveth in me; and who, though declaring himself the LORD's, is yet lowly enough not to feel certain of heaven, but cries O save me, here from folly, there by admission to everlasting blessedness, for I have sought Thy commandments. Others seek for honours, wealth, family ties, earthly joys; I seek only the priceless riches of Thy revealed will.

95 The ungodly laid wait for me to destroy me: but I will consider thy testimonies. The aim of Satan and his emissaries, whether spiritual or human, is to destroy the soul of man, by taking faith away from it, and against this form of attack the only sure defence is steadfast meditation on and perseverance in GOD's testimonies. S. Ambrose, writing when the memory of Julian's persecution was still recent, and when old men could remember the close of the fiercer storm under Diocletian, says that the verse aptly describes the passion of martyrdom, wherein the tortured Saint gives thanks to CHRIST, enabling him to triumph over his persecutors, and to feel that if the ungodly wait for him here on earth, the choirs of rejoicing angels are waiting also to be his escort into everlasting joy, the LORD JESUS is waiting for him to bestow his crown. Cassiodorus shrewdly observes that the term waited, here in the Vulgate expectaverunt, implies the use of persuasion and flattery in order gradually to draw away the Saint from his purpose, rather than of violent torture, which would be hastening, not waiting. For he adds, that is a heavier persecution which delays the crown of martyrdom and ceases not to recommend death to the soul. But the obvious literal sense of lying in ambush, to overcome by means of a sudden and unexpected onset as the unsuspecting wayfarer passes on, is also followed, and interpreted as pointing to the snares of heresy rather than to the open violence of Paganism.

Gerhohus comments at length on the verse, contrasting the fate of those who go down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fall among thieves, with that of such as go in procession with CHRIST from Olivet to Jerusalem, throwing their garments, that is, their bodily passions and appetites, under the feet of CHRIST, nay, giving their bodies themselves up to martyrdom, and carrying olive-branches, the rich and peaceful teachings gathered from the olive-yard of Holy Writ, steadily in their hands. In the twofold sense of escape from earthly and from spiritual foes, this verse is used as the Introit on the feasts of S. Agnes and S. Mary Magdalene. A. 96 I see that all things come to an end: but thy commandment is exceeding broad. A. A. This rendering, which does not practically differ from that of Symmachus and the Targum, signifies the contrast between the finite range of all created things and the boundless extent and duration of God's decrees. The same notion is brought out even more forcibly by the LXX. and A.V. I have seen the end of all perfection; noting that the strongest, most beautiful, and elaborate things pass on to decay and destruction, and however they may seem to prolong their existence, must perish at last; while the law of God abides for ever.

And there is also a possible construction of the sentence thus: I have seen that Thine exceeding broad commandment is the summit of all perfection. But the Vulgate reads, I have seen the end of all consummation, and the obscurity of this phrase has given rise to a great variety of treatment. S. Ambrose, noting that consummation means not only the end of anything, but also bringing anything, good or evil, to its highest possible point, tells us that either way that end of all consumma-

tion which the Psalmist saw is the LORD JESUS, the end of the most grievous sin, which He has taken away by His Cross, the end and perfection of all holiness, wisdom, righteousness, and power in His own person. S. Augustine, in a sense lower only than this, takes the words of striving to the death for truth, and bearing all evils for the sake of the highest good, so that the end of this consummation is glory in the unending kingdom of CHRIST. Not very different is the view that the words mean, I have seen what will be the last end of the man who perfectly keeps Thy commandments. S. Albert, however, by glossing consummation as that which can be or is brought to completion and bounded by fixed limits, takes it as equivalent to finite and mortal, and thus comes back by another road to the meaning of the Hebrew, agreeing with the first explanation given above. But Thy commandment is exceeding broad.

That commandment is the precept of charity, for what can be more broad than that which contains all the Law and the Prophets? what can be more broad than that which covers a multitude of sins? Nothing is broader than to admit all into the bosom of charity, and not to endure any of the narrowness of dislike. For charity is so wide that it can hold even enemies in the breadth of its good will. Whence it is commanded, "Love your enemies, do good unto them that hate you. God's commandment is exceeding broad, because it can give space and freedom to those who are in trouble and distress; because it affords the widest range to the intellectual powers of man; because it is easy and pleasant for all who undertake it cheerfully, and because it has no end whatsoever. To the Saint, therefore, it does not appear narrow, steep, and difficult, but pleasant, easy, and level, like a broad and even way which is convenient for the traveller; wherefore one of the Saints says:

And yet these paths, which this world's vain ones fear, As level roads to noble minds appear.

Collects.
O GOD, Whose truth and Word abideth in heaven; MSS. Whose light and day continueth, make us to abide stead-Thomas. fastly in Thy service, that we may be the children of light. (1.) Let Thy Word, O LORD, which abideth in heaven, alway Mozarabic. dwell in the temple of Thy Church, that through the presence of the Inhabitant, there may be unwavering light in our dwellings. (11.)

MEM.
The thirteenth letter, Mem, signifies water, and the mys-Gesenius. tical sense, therefore, of this sentence, which sets forth the Psalmist's love for the personal teaching of GOD, and his own consequent progress in advance of his former instructions, is the higher wisdom and dignity of Christians, washed in the laver of Baptism, over the Hebrew seers and prophets, and still more the Scribes and Rabbins of a later age, who saw only afar off, and in type or vision, what the Church sees face to face, and were therefore less than the least in the kingdom of heaven.

The majority of early commentators, following S. Ambrose in supposing the word to S. Ambros. mean bowels or inward parts, explain it as pointing to the language of strong affection found in the strophe. 97 LORD, what love have I unto thy law : all the day long is my study in it.

He might have said, How have I kept Thy Law? but since it is much better to do a thing through love than fear, he saith, what love have I. For the obedience of love differs much from the service of fear, nor has the action of necessity the attractiveness of free-will. Many keep the fasts to avoid censure. Many give money for the needy because they are afraid of being blamed for the irreligious and useless greed of their avarice. Many go to church, because they are ashamed to have remarks made on their absence and neglect. But it is not every one who loves what he Does. He who loves the LORD, loves His law, as Mary, loving her Son, kept all His sayings in her heart, with motherly tenderness. And because Peter said, ”LORD, Thou S. John xxi. knowest that I love Thee,” CHRIST committed to him the 15. feeding of His flock, and the doing of His will, for He acA.

knowledged his affection. The Jew who is ruled by fear, and studies only the bare letter of the law, not its spiritual meaning, cannot be said to love it, far less the heathen who either knows it not or scorns it, but to Christians only who with bold and trustful affection ponder and advance in its divine mysteries.

Yet the Christian too must ask himself what love it is he has to God’s law. For there may be a mercenary love, such as that of mere hireling preachers of the Word, ”supposing that gain is godliness,” priests who teach for hire, and prophets who divine for money; or there may be a mere philosophical love, of supplying material for interesting inquiry; or there may be that which springs from vanity, for ”knowledge puffeth up; and there may be the merely aesthetic pleasure in the literary beauty of Scripture, of which the Prophet saith, ”And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument, for they hear thy words, but do them not. And others again love only in pretence and outward show, like those sinners of Israel of whom God spake by Isaiah, ”They seek Me daily, and delight to know My ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinances of their God; while there are those who love it evilly and corruptly, as heretics do. But the true believer, with genuine love in his heart, studies God’s law all the day long in the clear brightness of a conscience which knows not the darkness of unbelief, a day not measured by the alternation of earthly morning and night, but enduring throughout the whole of his earthly pilgrimage, and continued in the endless glory of heaven.

All the day, too, because every holy thing which is done is a study of God’s law. And whereas those false lovers spoken of above have various causes for their pretended affection, so on the other hand God’s Saints love Him in more ways than one, according to that precept in Deuteronomy: ”Thou shalt love the Lord thy God

with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. He is to be loved with all the heart for His bounties, with all the soul for His promises, with all the might for His judgments, with all the mind for His precepts. And the test of this love is action. For merely reading or uttering the law is not enough without doing it; and he only who unites all these can truly say My study is in it. And that all the day; for just as one who is in love asks nothing better than to sit all day long beside the object of his affection, regardless of everything else, so the Saint of God is entirely busied in the one employment of doing His will. And having said so much, he proceeds in the following verses to show why the law is so dear to him, and what blessings it has conferred upon him.

98 Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies : for they are ever with me. Mine enemies, that is, rather, Thine enemies, for ”do I not hate them, O LORD, that hate Thee?” as they take the words of those who do not obey GOD’s commandments, whether Pagans, Jews or false Christians. He who worships the one true GOD in spirit and in truth is wiser than they who serve idols of metal, wood, or stone; he who enters into the spiritual sense of Holy Writ, is wiser than the Jew who clings to the outward letter, having zeal, but not according to knowledge; he who wills to be saved, and holds the Catholic faith whole and undefiled, is wiser than the heretics who mutilate and corrupt it. ”Who,” then, asks the Apostle, ”is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.” Our enemies are also the world, the flesh, and the devil, and we are wiser than they, if we keep to GOD’s law, because it is ever with us, and will profit us for all eternity; whereas, ”though the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light,” yet their ”wisdom is earthly, sensual, devilish,” and lusts only for this life and temporal things, for they are children of Hagar the bond-woman, and not of Jerusalem above which is free.

A. 99 I have more understanding than my teachers : for thy testimonies are my study. 100 I am wiser than the aged : because I keep Thy commandments. They agree here in seeing in the teachers the Pharisees and other doctors of the Law; and in the aged the whole Jewish Church, as compared with her youthful Gentile daughter; and especially those elders of that Church who again and again conspired against CHRIST and His Apostles. Nor do they forget to remind us how the LORD JESUS Himself, when He was twelve years old, astonished the doctors in whose midst He sat in the temple, by His understanding and answers. And as He is our Head, the Body can use these words, properly belonging to Him alone, and claim a wisdom which the Law could not give. And whereas Elihu saith, ”Great men are not wise, neither do the aged understand judgment,” Cardinal Hugo takes occasion to observe that simple priests, religious, or lay people, may be much further advanced in divine wisdom and knowledge than those bishops and other dignitaries who ought to be their teachers, but who are more busy in teaching their dogs to

bark and their hawks to fly than to train their flocks in holiness of life. With this agrees that weighty saying of the great mar-

A. S. Cyprian. Epist. i. 4. S. Ambros. Offic. i. 1. tyr Bishop of Carthage, "The laity who obey the LORD's precepts, and fear GOD, ought to withdraw from a sinful ruler, and not join in the sacrifices of a sacrilegious priest, seeing that in it is vested the chief power of either choosing worthy priests or rejecting unworthy ones." And that because, as another Saint sorrowfully observes: How many are powerful in speech and utterance, who are yet not seasoned with heavenly salt, and tell much concerning the dainties of the King's table, whereof they have never so much as tasted themselves! There is only one true Master, Who alone hath not learnt that which He teaches all; but let all others learn before they begin to teach, and receive from Him that which they are to deliver to others. They may well have more understanding than their teachers, if they seek to the Eternal Wisdom, the Source of all knowledge, for instruction, they may well be wiser than the aged, who are taught by the Ancient of Days.

101 I have refrained my feet from every evil way: that I may keep thy word. The word refrained warns us that we are naturally borne by our feet into the path of every kind of sin, and are hurried along it by the rush of human passions, so that even the wise and understanding need to check, recall, and retrace their steps, in order that they may keep GOD's word, and not become cast-aways. And further note that the Hebrew verb here translated refrained is even stronger in meaning, and denotes I fettered, or imprisoned, my feet, whereby we may learn that no light resistance is enough to prevent them from leading us astray; and hence the utility of austere bodily mortification, of fasts, vigils, and other means of subduing the flesh to the spirit. And this notion is further brought out by the reading of the former clause of the verse in the Illyrian Psalter, from every way of the valley, from the easy downward path, contrasting with the hard upward track which leads to the mount of GOD. There is no need to refrain our feet from pacing towards GOD's temple, from hastening to help the desolate, to prevent the ungodly, to trip up the deceitful; but the evil ways where we are apt to slip are many. There is the muddy path of luxury, where man loadeth himself with thick clay; there is the stony and thorny path of avarice; the hilly road of pride; so that it is not enough to avoid one such path without avoiding all. And amongst those evil ways is that of false doctrine, which cannot agree with keeping GOD's word, for S. Paul warns his disciples that "ye cannot drink the cup of the LORD, and the cup of devils, ye cannot be partakers of the LORD's table and the table of devils."

102 I have not shrunk from thy judgments: for thou teachest me. There are two judgments of GOD which come to all men, one particular, to each man at his death; the other general, at the Resurrection, and from neither of these does the righteous shrink, because of the trust and love he feels, and because the LORD JESUS teaches

him to say, ”FATHER, into Thy hands I commend my spirit.” And further, as all GOD’s precepts are judgments of His, the Psalmist here declares that he has not contented himself with negative abstention from evil, which is all that the previous verse alleges, but that he has readily entered on the way of salvation, in the course of discipline, which Thou hast taught me, that is the Gospel, so much dearer and better than the Law given by Moses, and commented on by the Prophets, since Thou, LORD JESU, hast Thyself come to teach it me.

103 O how sweet are thy words unto my throat : yea, sweeter than honey unto my mouth. The Psalmist speaks here of his throat and mouth, but not of his stomach, as meaning that GOD’s words check carnal appetite, but give inward delight to the palate of the heart by their sweetness. And one commentator bids us notice that there is a special force in the word throat, because literal honey or any other food, once it reaches the throat, gives no more pleasurable sensation to the palate, whereas the sweetness of the Divine words continues in meditation after the actual time of hearing or reading them. The Christian preacher, too, finds GOD’s words sweet to his throat in his own private study of them, and sweet to his mouth, when he utters them again publicly for the instruction of others. They may well be sweet, seeing they tell us of the remission of sins, the resurrection of the dead, the life everlasting. But only they know that sweetness who are in full enjoyment of their spiritual senses. For such as are of a weak stomach, and cannot digest their food, find even honey bitter. And yet this very sweetness in the mouth begets within us disgust at our own carnal desires, and at all worldly things, for it is written of the book which the angel gave S. John : ”It was in my mouth sweet as honey, and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter,” for peace with GOD is war with self and with the world.

104 Through thy commandments I get understanding : therefore I hate all evil ways. It is not here said, ”I understand Thy commandments,” but through Thy commandments I get understanding, because it is only by doing GOD’s will that man can attain to the understanding of those things which he desires to know. And so it is written, ”If thou desire wisdom, keep the com- A. Ecclus. i. 26. Prov. i. 10, 15.

mandments, and the LORD will give her unto thee. For the order cannot be inverted, so that he who has not the lowliness of obedience can attain at his will to the height of wisdom, therefore it is also written: ”Seek not out the things that are too hard for thee, neither search the things that are above thy strength; but what is commanded thee, think thereupon. But through such obedience there is more to be gained than familiarity with the commandments obeyed, since the whole faculty and scope of understanding itself is acquired by it; while the latter years of Solomon show us that even understanding itself will not abide with those who neglect obedience to those commandments. One of those commandments is, ”My son,

if sinners entice thee, walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path, for their feet run to evil. And whereas the Psalmist said above that he refrained his feet from every evil way, now he goes further, declaring that he did this not out of mere compulsion and necessity, but from the free exercise of his will, taking no pleasure in that which is forbidden by GOD, but rather hating it. So the faithful servant of GOD hates not only all evil, but all paths which may lead to evil, all occasions of sin, and dangerous companionship;

for the complaints of a flatterer are the way to vain-glory, the beauty of an evil woman is the way to profligacy, the desire of another's goods is the way to fraud and plunder, and so forth. But the understanding here spoken of must needs be practical, and not merely speculative, since the latter is itself in matter of religion and morals an evil way, for the Apostle warns us: "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin. I should not count that tree as keeping its fruitfulness, comments S. Ambrose, which ran entirely to foliage, giving no fruit, nor think land fertile which produced only ferns, and not corn, nor that shepherd able to keep his flock, who knew nothing of choosing their pasture, keeping off wolves, guarding his folds with dogs, and giving the sheep drink when they need it. And therefore a spiritual understanding of GOD's commandments, wherein the Jews, with all their daily readings of the Law, fail, is needful for every true servant of GOD. And accordingly when the prophet asks, "Whom shall He teach knowledge, and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? he answers his own question thus: "Them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts," who have been detached from carnal pleasures and inactive repose.

Collects.
Vouchsafe, O LORD, that we may so love Thy law, as to meditate on it alway in our heart, and ever to go onward in works that are acceptable unto Thee. (11.) Refrain our feet, O LORD, from every evil way, cause us to keep Thy word with all diligence, to depart from evil and to please Thee evermore. (11.) Make us be glad, O LORD, in Thy words, which are sweeter than honey and the comb, that they may lead us on through prayer to broad ways even in this world. (11.) Vouchsafe, O LORD, to pour the sweetness of Thy word into our throats, that we may be enabled to withdraw our footsteps from evil ways. (1.)

NUN.
The fourteenth letter, Nun, signifies a fish, and thus fitly follows Mem, or water. Beda takes it of the believer tossed about in the waves of this world, and desiring the light of life; but also gives and prefers S. Jerome's rendering, eternal; while S. Ambrose, giving two interpretations which are not capable of being traced to any Hebrew etymon, single, and their pastures, is followed by most of the commentators. Fish, however, is certainly the true meaning, and its mystical import goes deeper than Beda saw. In the first place, fish are the first living creatures

mentioned in the Book of Genesis as created and receiving a blessing; and they are thus the types of Christians, born again and blessed in the waters of Baptism. Wherefore it is written, "The beginning of life is water. And the storms of the ocean do not alarm the fish, nor destroy it, while out of the water it dies. So too, the Christian who abandons his baptismal vows perishes, but can swim unterrified and uninjured amongst the wildest billows of the world. Further, the Apostles were made "fishers of men," and the good and bad within the fold of the Church are compared to good and bad fishes, of which the latter will be cast away at the last; for the dumbness, and greediness of the fish, the density of the medium in which they live, and their devouring one another, makes them fit emblems of sinners.

And above all, the fish is the favourite symbol for CHRIST Himself amongst the ancient Fathers, because the Greek word ΙΧΘΥΣ is made up of the initial letters of the words, ΙΗΣΟΥΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ, ΘΕΟΥ ΤΙΟΣ, ΣΩΤΗΡ, JESUS CHRIST, SON of GOD, SAVIOUR, Who lived unharmed by sin amidst its tempests, as the fish swims securely in the midst of the ocean, while the fish twice miraculously multiplied to feed thousands, and that "broiled fish" of which the LORD partook after His Resurrection have constantly been taken as emblems of His Body given in the Holy Eucharist, so that the Latin Fathers commonly say, Piscis assus, Christus passus, "The fish thus broiled, is CHRIST Who toiled," as it may be rendered. That being so, we find on examining the strophe, that it is the cry of a Saint in trouble to the Light of the World for aid, that is of the individual baptized Christian, the "pisciculus," or "little fish,"

Gen. i. 20. ἀρχή, A.V. "chief." amidst the waters, (to use the phrase of an early Christian writer,) to the ἰχθός CHRIST Himself. 105 Thy word is a lantern unto my feet : and a light unto my paths. A. S. John v. 35; i. 4. A. 2 S. Pet. i. 19.

S. Basil the Great, interpreting the word as God's will revealed in Holy Scripture, observes that the Old Testament, and in especial the Law, was only a lantern (lamp or candle) because an artificial light, imperfectly illuminating the darkness, whereas the Gospel, given by the LORD JESUS Himself, is a light of the Sun of Righteousness, giving brightness to all things. S. Ambrose, going yet deeper, tells us that CHRIST is Himself both lamp and light. He, the Word of God, is a great light to some, to others He is a lamp. To me He is a lamp; to Angels a light. He was a light to Peter, when the Angel stood by him in the prison, and the light shined about him. He was a light to Paul when the light from heaven shined round about him; and he heard CHRIST saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me? And CHRIST is truly a lamp to me, when I speak of him with my mouth. He shineth in clay, He shineth in a potter's vessel: He, that treasure which we bear in earthen vessels. Pour in oil, that He fail thee not; no mere earthly oil, but that of heavenly mercy and grace, wherewith the prophets were anointed. CHRIST Himself was a lamp to the Jews according to the Law, and a lamp under a bushel, but according

to the Gospel He is a great light. Open then thy windows, that the light may shine in on thee.

Get ready thy candlestick, that the lamp may be set thereon by the LORD. And as we walk in darkness here towards the light, let us follow this lamp, for there are many pits, many rocks which escape notice in the gloom. He will be a lamp to my feet, and a light to my paths. A lamp is enough for the feet to walk by, it is not enough to enlighten the paths, but that same WORD of GOD is nevertheless both lamp to the feet and light to the paths, for He, the Only-Begotten SON, is the Advocate of the erring, the rewarder of the strong, the pardoner of sins, the lavisher of rewards. S. Augustine, on the other hand, reminds us of the distinction between S. John Baptist and CHRIST, one being a mere created lamp (λόγος) albeit a ”burning and shining” one, and the other the Uncreated Light (φῶς), argues that we must understand here not CHRIST Himself, but His revelation to the Fathers of the Old Covenant, and cites in proof S. Peter’s words: ”We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light (lamp, λόγος) that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts. But the other interpretation is the deeper, and S. Augustine’s difficulty is readily overcome, not only by the explanation of S. Ambrose, but by reference to our LORD’s created Humanity, hypostatically united to His uncreated Godhead.

CHRIST is a lantern to my feet, because He first arouses my affection, and implants in me the desire of going in the way of salvation, giving me at first just so much light as is needful to begin my journey, and then increasing this illumination as I advance, becoming a light to my paths, because they who fulfil the counsels of CHRIST are endowed with fuller light than they who merely obey the ordinary precepts. Hence it is well said, a lamp to my feet, because in the darkness and night of this world, we need guidance for every several step, lest we should err. But a lantern, to use the English rendering, is intended to be carried only to light a man home to his dwelling, and so we, when we reach our home, shall have no more need of a lantern, because our home is that City where ”they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the LORD GOD giveth them light. ”Here we see darkly, but there face to face. And therefore:

Lead, kindly light, amid the encircling gloom, Lead Thou me on! The night is dark, and I am far from home,— Lead Thou me on! Keep Thou my feet, I do not ask to see The distant scene,—one step enough for me. Only, however, ”quench not the Spirit;” for they who suffer this light to be extinguished in them, are as the foolish virgins who were shut out at the Coming of the Bridegroom; for it is written, ”The light of the righteous rejoiceth, but the lamp of the wicked shall be put out.” 106 I have sworn, and am steadfastly purposed: to keep thy righteous judgments. The Greek Fathers, holding to the literal construction of that saying of CHRIST, ”Swear not at all,” agree in expounding the word sworn here as merely equivalent

to the next phrase, steadfastly purposed. But a great Western Saint, observing that to swear is a token of knowledge and a witness of conscience, argues that our LORD addressed this precept not to the Apostles, who were strong, but to the multitudes, lest in their weakness they should perjure themselves; while the Saint, whose strength is in the LORD, can vow himself to His service with confidence; in accordance with the pledge of obedience which the children of Israel gave at the great sacrifice which followed the proclamation of the Decalogue. But for us there is a more special meaning, because every Christian vows himself to GOD in one or more of those holy rites termed sacraments, literally "military oaths," whether Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, or Holy Orders. Here the weak conscience will object, and say, If I swear, and

F afterwards fail, do I not increase my guiltiness? But to such it is answered, Shall we never resolve to do good, yea, and to confirm ourselves by an oath to do it, because we are infirm, and fail in many things, and cannot bring our good purposes to perfection? Or shall we think that every failure in our particular duties, against our resolution, our promise, yea, and against our oath, is always a falling away from the covenant which by our great oath in Baptism we once ratified? No: for the certainty and continuance of this covenant is not grounded on us, but upon God Himself. It falls not by our falling: but we rise again and stand by the stability thereof. Thirdly; albeit of infirmity there be many failures in performance of our promise and oath, yet is there any renouncing of it? God forbid! but these same sins whereinto we fall, make us the more ashamed of ourselves; the more afraid of our weakness, the more earnest to renew our former resolution, and the more careful to call upon God for grace to perform it. What comes of it when the Church in all her members keeps her vow to God, we may learn from that which came to pass in the days of Asa, when "all Judah rejoiced at the oath, for they had sworn with all their heart, and sought Him with their whole desire, and He was found of them." A partial failure to keep our covenant with God no more annuls it than a casual fault annuls the marriage bond on the part of husband or wife.

107 I am troubled above measure: quicken me, O LORD, according to thy word. A.

Brought near to death itself by affliction, the Prophet beseeches God to have mercy, and to revive him, and that not merely according to His word, wherein it is written, "Thou shalt keep therefore His statutes and His commandments, that it may go well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days upon earth; but with His word. And note herein, that which is the terror of the ungodly is the medicine and hope of the Saint, for whereas the children of Israel said to Moses, "If we hear the voice of the LORD our God any more, we shall die; here the Psalmist asks that this very same Voice may quicken him. They say, too, some of them, that the trouble here spoken of is persecution by the wicked because of the Saint's obedience to God's law, and that the verse is therefore a prayer for endurance and

victory. But the Vulgate reading, I have been exceedingly humbled, has given rise to another stream of interpretation, taking the words of the virtue of lowliness. He rejoices, comments S. Ambrose, that he has not merely been humbled, but exceedingly humbled. Happy is the man who boasts rather of his lowliness than of his power, for power deceiveth, but lowliness forsaketh not. And the words may be those of CHRIST Himself, Who was indeed troubled above measure, if we take the one version, and exceedingly humbled, following the other translation, "meek and lowly of heart," and found in the form of a servant.

"Wherefore GOD also hath highly exalted Him . . . that at the Name of JESUS every knee should bow. Dare I tell of the great things the LORD hath done, without having bent my knee to Him? But I have bent it, after He was humbled. For in this wise, by His lowliness, by His Cross, He gathered the Church together unto Himself when His FATHER quickened Him according to His word, and raised Him the third day from the dead.

108 Let the free-will offerings of my mouth please thee, O LORD : and teach me thy judgments.

The free-will offerings. That is, such as are made of love, and not of necessity; heartily, and not for advantage. For the offerings of the mouth, of the "calves of our lips" may be made in three several fashions: They may be extorted from reluctant lips, as in the case of the evil spirits, for "devils also came out of many, crying out, and saying, Thou art the Son of GOD. They may be hypocritical, "This people draw near Me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour Me, but have removed their heart far from Me. And there is the true free-will offering, pleasing to GOD, for "when the Prince shall prepare a voluntary burnt-offering or peace-offerings voluntarily unto the LORD, one shall then open him the gate that looketh towards the East. It is to be remembered that the free-will offerings of the Mosaic Law were such as were not enjoined upon any man, and whose omission involved no penalty for neglect or disobedience. They were additions spontaneously made as gifts, after the debt of the prescribed oblations had been acquitted; and on this let us hear the comment of an old Scottish writer: "It is a great grace, that the LORD should accept anything from us, if we consider these three things: first, Who the LORD is; next, what we are; thirdly, what it is we have to give unto Him. As for the LORD, He is all-sufficient, and stands in need of nothing we can give Him.

As for us, we are poor creatures, living by His liberality; yea, begging from all the rest of His creatures: from the sun and moon, from the air, the water, and the earth; from fowls and fishes; yea, from the worms; some give us light, some meat, some clothes, and are such beggars as we meet to give to a King? And thirdly, if we well consider, What is it that we give? Have we anything to give, but that which we have received from Him? and whereof we may say with David: 'All things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee?'"

Of my mouth. Some take the words in the narrowest sense, as referring to the vow of the previous verse: ”I have sworn.” The Greek Fathers, more happily, apply the words to the monastic vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, A. S. Albertus Magnus. Hosca xiv. 2. strictly free-will offerings, because, as S. Jerome observes, they are above and beyond nature, and therefore not enjoined, because too hard for most persons, but yet permitted and even encouraged by GOD, that man may have some voluntary tribute to lay at His feet. And the latter part of the verse fits in very aptly with this interpretation, Teach me Thy judgments, instruct me in the inner spirit of the rule I have adopted, the true nature of that life into which I have externally entered.

Nevertheless, the clear meaning of the verse points to certain acts of vocal praise and thanksgiving as primarily intended; and so taking it, we obtain a twofold lesson, one applying to the priesthood,—the other to the laity. In the former case the rule laid down by all the ancient Churches prescribes a fixed daily office to be recited by Ecclesiastics, which is a debt they are morally and religiously bound to pay. No freewill offering of the mouth can be made till this debt be acquitted, since it is not lawful to leave it unrecited on the plea of other clerical occupations, nor yet to substitute a different office, however beautiful and edifying in itself, for the appointed one. And therefore this duty is one on which the Canonists lay the greatest stress. The story, too, is well known how S. Francis de Sales gave a young priest, who was wont to celebrate the Holy Eucharist only on Sundays and great festivals, a costly box full of altar-breads, and said: ”You are a priest, GOD has summoned you to this calling, and further, to the cure of souls: would it be a right thing for an artisan, a magistrate, or a doctor, to shun the labours of his profession except once or twice a week? And on some excuses and arguments being tendered by the young man, the holy Bishop added, ”Besides, if a sense of unworthiness draws you back through humility, (a thing which happened to S.

Bonaventura,) and the custom is of less profit to yourself by reason of your lack of inclination, reflect that you are a public official, you, your parishioners, and your church have need of the daily Mass, the departed still more so, and above all, on the days when you abstain from it, you baulk GOD’s glory of increase and the angels of joy. As for the laity, they may be counselled in the language of a writer already cited: ”And such as have liberty to come to the holy assemblies, and offer not there the praises of their mouth to GOD, but sit as if they were dumb; as also they that offer naked words, without the willing heart, are here much more convinced. They were great beasts under the Law, that thought to please GOD by offering a beast unto Him, keeping back themselves; and they are greater beasts under the Gospel, that will give their heart to another, and think to please GOD, by giving some other gifts unto Him. ’Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body

for the sin of my soul?’ Is it such sacrifices will please the LORD? No, if thou wilt not offer thyself unto Him, He will have nothing that is thine.”

109 My soul is alway in my hand: yet do I not forget thy law.
The literal sense is, I am in constant peril of death, as it were carrying my own blood in my hands, and yet my danger has not made me so busy in thinking about myself as to forget Thee, and cause me to break Thy law. So David might have said when Saul pursued after him to slay him, and yet never provoked him to retaliation when full opportunity was afforded more than once. And so it may be taken of the Church in times of peril and bitter persecution, when public preaching of God’s law was interdicted by the State, and yet was secretly meditated and taught, for in such a case not to forget is victory. But a strict adherence to the Hebrew, which has and where we read yet, by making the two clauses of the verse parallel instead of contrasted, brings out two very beautiful meanings: My soul is alway in my hand, borne thereon as a continual offering to God, as it is written in another Psalm, ”Unto Thee, O LORD, will I lift up my soul. It is in my hand, ready to open unto the LORD, and give it to Him when He knocketh. And this is to be observed, that there is no trouble so ready to take away the life of God’s children as they are to give it. As Elijah came out of the mouth of his cave to meet with the LORD, and Abraham stood at the door of his tabernacle to speak to the angel;

so the soul of the godly stands ready in the door of the tabernacle of this body, to remove when the LORD shall command it, whereas the soul of the wicked lies back, hiding itself as Adam among the bushes; and is taken out of the body perforce: as was the soul of that worldling, ”This night do they require thy soul of thee: but the wicked never sacrifice their souls willingly to the LORD. My soul is alway in my hand, that is, in my actions, because I put my heart into my work; as the Wise Man teaches: ”Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might. And S. Bernard draws from the words the further lesson that Christians ought to imitate the Psalmist in solicitude about their spiritual needs; guarding the soul as though a lighted candle, with both hands of heart and body, lest it should be extinguished by our foes. ”For as we do not readily forget what we hold in our hands, so let us never forget the interests of our souls, and let that care be the chief thing to flourish in our hearts. Yet again, some of them explain that the soul, or spiritual understanding, is said to be in the hand of a Saint, as the weapon wherewith he defends himself against the enemies of God’s law. For the righteous man, though set in the midst of perils, saith to the LORD: For thy sake

A. S. Bernard. Serm. 3 in Vig. Nativ. I die daily, I am daily in peril, in peril by him who lieth in wait, in peril by the reviler, in peril by those whom I dispute with, whom I refute, in peril for truth and righteousness, and yet I do not forget Thy law. H. S. Ambros. A. But some of the copyists of the LXX., not understanding the Hebrew idiom, My soul is in my hands, substituted Thy for my, and this is

the reading followed by SS. Ambrose and Augustine, Theodoret, and many others. Their comments may be summed up in two of the texts which they cite. As regards this world, "the king's heart is in the hand of God," since every one who subdues his passions and rules over them is a king, and his heart is where his treasure is, with God. As regards the life to come, it is written in another place: "The souls of the righteous are in the hands of God, and there shall no torment touch them."

110 The ungodly have laid a snare for me: but yet I swerved not from thy commandments. A saying worthy of one who forsakes this world, because he escapes the nets of the persecutors and the snares of the liers in wait. A saying worthy of the martyrs, before whom many punishments were set, many rewards offered, that they might be recalled from their zeal for martyrdom either by dread of pain and horror of a cruel death, or by the enticement of rewards. A snare is a secret thing, but he who walks in the light of God's law can see clearly enough to shun it, especially when bearing in mind that it never can be laid in the straight road where it is his duty to walk, but always a little on one side of it; as it is written in another place, "They have spread a net by the wayside." It is all fair enough, quaintly comments S. Hilary, to lay nets for birds, since they ought to be in their own place, the free air of heaven, and it is their own fault if they touch the ground where the snare lies; and so too God's servant should abide in his own element of heavenly things, having renounced the world, and been given the wings of a dove, of the HOLY SPIRIT Himself, that he may flee away and be at rest, instead of returning to the earth because he hungers after the miserable dainty with which the snare is baited. Translated to heaven with Enoch, borne aloft in the chariot of Elijah, caught up to Paradise with Paul, what hast thou, CHRIST's servant, bought with the Cross, to do with earth's temptations?

G. Ps. cxl. 6, A.V. H. The Greek copyists should have known better, for the phrase is found in their own poetry: Xenarchus, ap. Athen. xiii. 3: ἀεὶ δὲ τετρεμαίνοντά τε φοβούμενον, δεδιότα ἐν τῇ χειρὶ τὴν ψυχὴν ἔχοντα. Ever trembling, ever fearing, Soul in hand with terror bearing. 111 Thy testimonies have I claimed as mine heritage for ever: and why? they are the very joy of my heart. It is a great deal more than claimed, it is taken (A.V.,) or acquired (Vulg.) The LXX., not quite so vigorously, has I have inherited Thy testimonies. Once we were the heirs of a sinner, now we are the heirs of CHRIST. The one was the heritage of guilt, but this is the heritage of holiness; that one bound us, this looses us; that delivered us over, indebted with the usury of offences, to our enemy, this wins us for CHRIST, ransomed with the title of the LORD's Passion. The evil succession to Eve devoured all mankind, the glorious heritage of CHRIST delivered all mankind. Not for one heir, truly, nor for a few, did JESUS write His testament, but for all. We are all set down as heirs, not for a portion, but for the entire. The testament is in common, the right of all, the possession of every one, and yet the entire property of individuals. One by one men claim under this New Testament, and all take possession, nor does that which

fellow-heirs claim lessen the portion of any one heir. The property remains entire, and the share of each becomes larger, in proportion as there are more to acquire it. And so S. Peter Damiani:

And though each for divers merits there hath won a various throne, Yet their love for one another maketh what each loves his own, Every prize to all is common, yet belongs to each alone. The Rhythm, Ad perennis. They lay a special stress on the Greek word here, μαρτόρια, martyria, for testimonies, as denoting martyrdom itself, so eagerly desired by Saints of old, and the lesser martyrdom of bearing poverty, insult, and bodily mortification, so as to make the Saint a fit witness to CHRIST's Passion. For ever. And therefore let the Christian, when solicited to yield up this his hope for any earthly good, answer with Naboth, "The LORD forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee." And why? they are the very joy of my heart. So the Apostles felt it, when they were beaten, and "departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His Name." Rightly, too, for as S. Bernard says, what are the riches of salvation, what are the delights of the heart, what the true and prudent security of the soul, save the LORD's testimonies? For besides the present comfort this inheritance renders unto us, it is the Charter sealed and confirmed by GOD, by sacraments sealed, by the oath of GOD ratified, with the Blood of CHRIST subscribed; whereby we are made sure of our heavenly inheritance. But, alas! by the most

A. Serm. in Cant. 57. Bp. Cowper. part of men it is not regarded, they prefer their trifles before it. Take from them a foot-breadth of their earthly inheritance, they show such a carnal zeal as stirs them up to hazard their lives in defence of it: take from them the comfort of God's word, they regard not, neither are they any more touched therewith, than if it did not concern them. And all the cause hereof proceeds from this, that they never found it possible to say, They are the very joy of my heart. 112 I have applied my heart to fulfil thy statutes alway: even unto the end.

Applied. Rather, with LXX., Vulg., and A.V., inclined. The notion is taken from a balance, and the mind which has got the mastery over its passions, depresses the scale in favour of God's statutes. It is well said inclined, as telling us that when we have once bowed ourselves down towards what is lowly and level, we shall not find the path of God's commandments steep and difficult. The Psalmist had said to God earlier: "Incline mine heart;" here he says, "I have inclined," showing us clearly that this inclination is not of his own will, but of divine grace. It is God's work, by prevenient grace, it is mine by free-will consenting to the operation of that grace; not that even that consent is of myself, but of Thee, since did I claim it as my very own, I should have not an inclined heart, but a lofty one, and merit wrath rather than grace. Even unto the end. Because, as a Saint has truly said,

He runs swiftly in vain, who breaks down before reaching the goal. But the LXX. and Vulgate, following a possible sense of the Hebrew, read because of retribution instead of unto the end, and the commentators agree in taking it of the hope of eternal blessedness promised to him that overcometh. Yet it is reasonably objected by one of them that this is but a servile and selfish motive for perseverance, and therefore that the other rendering is to be preferred.

Collects.
Let Thy Word, O LORD, be a lamp unto our feet, and a light to our paths, that it may teach us to understand, and show us whither we are hastening. (1.) O GOD, Who hast made Thy Word a light to our paths, so vouchsafe to rule our soul, that it may trust in the heritage of Thy retribution. (1.) Show us Thy light, O LORD, in the knowledge of Thy law, that by Thine help we may be lifted up from our falls in slippery places, and readily hasten in Thy light to the foreordained joys of Thine heritage. (11.) The fifteenth letter, Samech, denotes a prop or pillar, and this agrees well with the subject-matter of the strophe, in which God is twice implored to uphold His servant; while the utter destruction of those who make light of His law, or encourage scepticism regarding it, may be compared to the fate of the Philistine lords on whom Samson brought down the roof of the house where they were making merry, by overthrowing the pillars which supported it. S. Ambrose, though preferring another interpretation, gives also the sense of firmament, implying a solid basis, to Samech, which is sufficiently close to the true purport, and nearer than S. Jerome's help, which Beda follows.

113 I hate them that imagine evil things: but thy law do I love. Neither this version, which agrees with the Targum, nor the LXX. and Vulgate, I hate the unrighteous, (παρανόμοις, iniquos,) nor yet the A.V., I hate vain thoughts, accurately represents the full sense of the original. The word may apply to either thoughts or persons, but it contains the notion of double-mindedness, halting between two opinions, wavering, or being sceptical. The verse is thus another form of the appeal of Elijah to the people just before the miracle on Carmel, "How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be GOD, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." And another comment on it may be found in the words of the Apostle: "He that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he will receive anything from the LORD. A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways." One commentator, albeit unaware of the literal sense, yet penetrates its meaning so far as to observe that the whole strophe has to do, not with open enemies and persecutors of God's word, but with crafty heretics, undermining it by secret arts and misrepresentations. And he applies it specially to the outbreak of Arianism, supported as it was by emperors and kings, and by external violence, while the one help and hope of the Church was her trust in Thy Word, Consubstantial with the FATHER.

Some of the early commentators argue that the whole tone of the saintly mind is so alien to hate of men that we ought to take the reference here to be to abhorrence of unrighteous thoughts or words, and discard the other interpretation; while others, recalling the LORD's own saying, "If any man S. James i. 6. It is noteworthy that the noun , opinions, found in this verse, is from the same root , divided, as the word in the Psalm. S. Luke xiv. 26. come to Me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple," quote also the words of the Preacher, "A time to love, and a time to hate;" and tell us that the former holds good of any evil done to ourselves, which we are not to repay save with good, but in time of martyrdom we are to treat all those who would draw us away, even in the gentlest fashion, from the confession of CHRIST, as His enemies and ours.

D. C. The Carthusian discusses at length the proofs from the Old Testament which prove the falsehood of the Jewish opinion that it is lawful to hate one's enemies, but his argument may be summed up in the pithy saying of S. Prosper, "In wicked men we rightly hate the evil, but love the creature." 114 Thou art my defence and shield : and my trust is in thy word. A. For defence (rather hiding-place, A.V.) and shield, the Vulgate has helper and taker-up, on which they say that GOD is our helper in doing good, our taker-up to lift us out of danger from evil; that He was our helper under the Law, our taker-up under the Gospel, when He took our nature upon Him; He is our helper in the strife of this world, our taker-up into perfect rest at the end of the struggle. But the literal sense yields as deep a meaning. GOD is our hiding-place in the passive state of our souls, in the beginning of our conflict with sin, when the most we are able for is merely to avoid its attacks, like the children of Israel in fear of the Philistines, when "the people did hide themselves in caves, and in thickets, and in rocks, and in high places, and in pits." He is our shield, when with more strength and courage we go forth boldly to do battle with our foes, like Jonathan smiting the garrison at Michmash. And my trust is in Thy Word. I have not trusted in the Law, nor in the Prophets, but in Thy Word, in Thy coming, LORD JESU, that Thou shouldest come and receive sinners, pardon offences, and, Good Shepherd, carry Thy weary sheep upon Thy shoulders on the Cross.

115 Away from me, ye wicked : I will keep the commandments of my GOD. Arnobius. It may be spoken, as one will have it, to the evil spirits which tempt the soul. Hearken to the angels calling to thee, as they did to Lot. See to thy soul, look not backwards, do what thou art about, for if thou even standest still, then recollect the advance thou hast made. Or again, it may be addressed to our own inward tempters, "for out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies;" and finally, in the most obvious and literal sense, to wicked men, whether workers of moral or of physical evil, and in particular, as they agree, teachers of false doctrine. One commentator reminds us of the great need of quiet retirement for those who desire to repent of their

sins, and yet may be induced to remain in them through the influence of worldly, even if not pronouncedly evil, companionship. And with this accords the gloss of S. Augustine on the Vulgate reading in the last clause, I will search out the commandments of my God, for he observes that though evil persons train the Saints in doing God's commandments, yet their society and conversation is incompatible with quiet and patient study thereof, and ought consequently to be avoided. And it is told of S. Gregory the Great, that when he entered his cell to read his Bible, he always prefaced his studies with the recitation of this verse.

A. 116 O stablish me according to thy word, that I may live: and let me not be disappointed of my hope. The sense is more exactly, Prop me up with Thy word, as with a staff on which I may securely and firmly lean, that I fall not, since it will not bend or break like a reed. The Vulgate has, less correctly, Take me up, that is, as they severally interpret it, Send Thy Word to take my nature upon Him, by His Incarnation, and so raise it to new dignity, higher than that from which it fell; take me up out of the mire and the snares of this world, that even here I may be safe from mine enemies, and have my conversation in heaven; take me up in the Resurrection to everlasting bliss, that I may live, long after the death of my mortal body, in everlasting life. For if he liveth who is in the bosom of the Patriarch Abraham, like Lazarus the beggar, how much more doth he live who is taken up by CHRIST? How can he but live for ever whom Life Everlasting hath taken up, whom CHRIST hath claimed as entirely His own, who belongeth altogether to the WORD, whose life is hidden in CHRIST JESUS, who is taken up in the arms of His boundless loving-kindness?

A. S. Ambros. Coming back to the literal sense of the Hebrew, Stablish or prop me, note that even the godly are subject to a twofold instability; the first being a wavering from constant belief of God's promises, which is instability of faith; for it may truly be said that he never knew what it is to believe who knows not what it is to wrestle with unbelief; the other being an instability of love and obedience; so that we need not only the grace of conversion, but also of confirmation and perseverance. According to Thy word. That is, as already noted, according to CHRIST JESUS, the WORD of the FATHER, and also according to Thy promise; the only manner in which the Saints pray. There are others who do otherwise, not looking to God's promise, nor yet leaning on the top of His Word, as their staff, in prayer. And others there are who pray contrary to God's promise, by asking His help to prosper them in evil, which is offering strange fire, an abomination, to Him. That I may live. Not with the mere vegetable life, in which trees far excel men, nor yet with the sensitive life, wherein many beasts surpass him, nor even in the natural life, which many reprobates have, all which are a mere shadow of life, which those who have are dead while living; but the life of grace in the soul, which continues to all eternity. Let me not be disappointed of my hope. Or, as it may also be translated, as in A.V., ashamed of my hope. Our hope is everlasting

life, our hope is the Kingdom of God, the fellowship of the Angels, the blessings of the Spirit. Hope daily, hope even in trouble, for ”hope maketh not ashamed.”

117 Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe: yea, my delight shall be ever in thy statutes. Since God’s help is twofold, inward and outward, so too there is a twofold stablishing of the body, outwardly with a staff or prop, and inwardly with food and drink, and both these may be spoken of in the same terms, and accordingly this verse is the complement of the preceding one, and asks for the inward feeding of the faint and hungry soul, as the previous entreaty was for outward assistance with grace. The prayer is repeated, because the help already given is not enough, for we need God’s incessant aid while we are here, where at most we look forward to that future, saying, I shall be safe. We cannot say here, I am safe; that will be only when we have reached the fellowship of the elect angels. My delight, &c. This is at once a promise of grateful service, and a declaration of the necessary result of being held up by God. Ever, in all the course of this life; ever in the perpetual glory and delight of heaven.

118 Thou hast trodden down all them that depart from thy statutes: for they imagine but deceit. Trodden down. The Vulgate has sprevisti, that is, spurned with the foot, while S. Jerome has abjecisti, Thou hast cast away. The literal meaning of the word is, Thou hast lifted up, as a very light and trifling thing, ascending in the scale of a balance, and hence, Thou hast made light of. All these meanings are combined in the notion here implied, that God forcibly removes the ungodly from being stumbling-blocks in the way of His saints, just as a wayfarer kicks stones and other obstacles out of his path, that they may not trip him up, nor those who come after him. S. Bruno lays stress on the word all, as teaching Christians who lead ungodly lives that they cannot comfort themselves by thinking that God’s anger will fall only on Jews, heathens, and heretics, since no exception is here made, nor in the succeeding verse, under which they can be sheltered. And the next portion of the verse shows that alienation from God is the sinner’s act, and his only. It is the prodigal son who takes his journey into a far country, not his father who forces him to go, or withdraws himself from him.

For they imagine but deceit. The A.V. is more literal, For their deceit is falsehood, that is, they are not merely wily and cunning, but add positive lying to gain their ends; or with a yet fuller sense, Their deceit is vain, it deceives themselves, but no one else (so Symmachus, μaraía); they tell a lie and get no profit by it. The LXX. and Vulgate agree in reading, less forcibly, For their thought is unjust. 119 Thou puttest away all the ungodly of the earth like dross: therefore I love thy testimonies. The fire of CHRIST’s judgments, when He sits as a refiner and purifier of silver, tests and purges His Saints, of whom He saith, ”I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried.” My faultless breast the furnace is, the fuel wounding thorns; Love is the fire, and sighs

the smoke, the ashes shame and scorns; The fuel Justice layeth on, and Mercy blows the coals, The metal in this furnace wrought are men's defiled souls; For which, as now on fire I am, to work them to their good, So will I melt into a bath, to wash them in My Blood.

Robert Southwell, The Burning Babe. But on the other hand, the very process which brings the Saints forth in richness and beauty is the punishment and destruction of the ungodly, as it is written in another place: "Son of man, the house of Israel is to Me become dross: all they are brass, and tin, and iron, and lead, in the midst of the furnace; they are even the dross of silver. Therefore thus saith the LORD GOD; Because ye are all become dross, behold, therefore I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem. As they gather silver, and brass, and iron, and lead, and tin, into the midst of the furnace, to blow the fire upon it, to melt it; so will I gather you in Mine anger and in My fury, and I will leave you there, and melt you. Yea, I will gather you, and blow upon you in the fire of My wrath, and

The verbs in Isaiah lxiii. 3 are different from that found here, both in Hebrew and LXX., and the notion implied is quite another. ye shall be melted in the midst thereof. As silver is melted in the midst of the furnace, so shall ye be melted in the midst thereof; and ye shall know that I the LORD have poured out My fury upon you." And therefore the Saint will love God's testimonies, recognising the mercy and the justice blended in them, in that He destroys sinners with and by their own works, as we read that the Swedes once dealt with some Russian merchants who passed off a quantity of base coin upon them. The dross was melted, and the deceivers flung into the midst of the molten metal. A. Rom. iv. 15. But the LXX. and Vulgate follow a different reading, and translate the first clause: I have counted all sinners of the earth as transgressors, (παραβαίνοντας, prævaricatores,) that is, although there can in strictness be no transgressors where there is no law, yet as the sinners amongst Gentiles have a natural law by the light of which they are bound to walk, such of them as transgress it are as guilty as Jews who violate the Mosaic code. Or it may be taken conversely, I have counted all transgressors as sinners of the earth, that is, as guilty of coarse and grovelling sins, or as doomed to destruction, according to that saying of the Prophet, "O LORD, the hope of Israel, all they that forsake Thee shall be ashamed, and they that depart from me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living waters."

120 My flesh trembleth for fear of thee : and I am afraid of thy judgments. Trembleth. The notion is exactly given by Symmachus and S. Jerome, (ὀρθοτριχεῖ, horripilavit,) My flesh bristles, the hair stands up with fright. But the LXX. has a singular version, Nail my flesh with Thy fear, followed, less forcibly, by the Vulgate, Pierce (confige) my flesh. And it is no wonder that they see here a reference to the Passion, and to its influence on those Saints whom it crucifies to the world, who

bear in their bodies the marks of the LORD JESUS. But why is it said my flesh, and not my spirit? Because, answers a Greek Father, while I read of Thy judgments I am chastened by fear in my mind, but my body does not suffer in like manner. Therefore pierce it also with this fear, that it may no longer be hurried away into immoderate desires or unseemly works. Force me back into the right path, as an ox is goaded when he swerves from the furrow. Fasten me in a sure place that my body may have no more

for , and for . This rendering of the LXX. is because , to shudder, in Chaldee and Arabic denotes to nail, and was taken as the imperative in Kal and Piel. Aquila has ἠλώθη. power to sin. I am afraid of Thy judgments, both of that special one of my death, and the general doom of all. Fasten me then with the nails of chaste and holy fear, not that of dreading chastisement, but of anxiety lest I should lose grace, and fasten me also with the other nail of love, that I may cling to Thee always. S. Bernard puts the same notion in another form: The Saint, when in his prayer he saith "Pierce my flesh with Thy fear," wisely entreats to be wholesomely shot at and wounded. Fear is that best of arrows which pierces and slays the desires of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved.

S. Bernard, Serm. in Cant. 29. The order of God's dealings with the Church, "the pillar and ground of the truth," is clearly set forth in this strophe. The first verse tells of God's teachings, and the separation between faithful Christians and the wavering Judaizers or imperfect converts; the second, the encouragement and confidence of the Church in beginning her missionary career; the third, the attempts made by Pagans and Gnostics to seduce the Church from her allegiance; the fourth is a prayer for the steadfastness of new converts tempted to fall away; the fifth a prayer for the support of the Church itself in time of persecution by unbelievers or apostates; the sixth, the overthrow of these apostates and persecutors; seventhly, the purging of the Church from all dross; and eighthly, the Last Judgment.

Collects.

O GOD, Who commandest us alway to love our enemies, and to keep Thy law, enlighten the eyes of our heart, that by Thy constant help we may obey Thee, and be delivered from evil works. (1.) Grant us help, O LORD, to avoid the hate of the ungodly, and to overcome the deceit of the transgressors. Be the defender of them that trust in Thy Word, and receive the lowly according to Thy promise, that we may be enabled to keep Thy statutes, to fear Thy judgments, and to obtain pardon for our offences. (11.) Help us, O LORD, and we shall be safe, for if Thou leave off, it is destruction, and if Thou be near, fulness of life. (11.) We beseech Thee, O LORD, that pierced with Thy fear, and with the lamp of Thy holy light going before us, we may be loosed from the cords of sin, and made Thy portion, be strong enough to walk in that way which delivers us from the punishment of the wicked and makes us co-heirs with the Angels. (1.)

AIN.

The sixteenth letter, Ain, denotes the eye, and then, by a metaphor, a fountain, as an eye shining in the face of the earth. Both these meanings were known to S. Ambrose, and through him to the mediæval commentators, so there is no departure from the true significance of the Hebrew in their glosses. The strophe, observes Beda, is a prayer for the Incarnation of CHRIST, that the divine power may be manifested in the destruction of GOD's enemies. CHRIST is the Living fountain, which is sought, He is that pure eye which seeks. And in the lower sense, applying the strophe to one of CHRIST's members, the Saint has the inward eye of faith and judgment enlightened, and has also obtained that promise of the LORD, "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." They who drink not of this fountain, ever thirst, and they who are not enlightened by this eye, are never delivered from the darkness of error. Both ideas are visible in the strophe, which asks on the one hand for the continuous flow of GOD's mercies in granting steadfastness and perseverance, and on the other, for clear and right judgment in matters of faith.

121 I deal with the thing that is lawful and right: O give me not over unto mine oppressors.

Lawful and right. Rather, with LXX., Vulgate, and A.V., judgment and justice. Justice, observes S. Ambrose, is the end of judgment, the one is the keeper of truth, the other, the fruit of equity. And at the first glance it seems as though there were a certain arrogance and spiritual pride in the words, but the close of the verse takes away this charge; since no reward is asked on the ground of innocency, but merely the averting of a terrible punishment. It is a speech like S. Peter's: "Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed Thee, what shall we have therefore? A simple statement of fact, which the LORD would have rebuked had it been dictated by vanity, or overweening estimate of personal merit, but which He was pleased to answer with the promise of a great reward. Socrates, when accused, and asked of what punishment he deemed himself worthy, answered that he should be banqueted daily at the public cost in the Prytaneum, but the Psalmist, far from claiming honour in this fashion, does but humbly intreat for the removal of trouble. For there can be no greater humility than that one who is conscious of having held by judgment and justice should fear to be delivered over to the power of Satan. The man who examines himself, weighs his own faults, and passes sentence on them by confession, does judgment; if he punishes them by penance, and walks thenceforward in the right way, he does justice; "For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.

Judgment, then, enables us to discern between good and evil, justice to refuse the evil and choose the good. And under the head of judgment, CHRIST bids us include mercy and faith, as amongst the weightier matters of the Law, while in an-

other Psalm we have almsgiving classed under justice, ”He hath dispersed abroad and given to the poor; and his righteousness remaineth for ever. For oppressors, the Vulgate reads slanderers; and it is taken first of the evil spirits, accusers of the brethren, and then of all the human enemies of the Church of GOD or of individual believers, chiefly heathens, infidels, and heretics. The prayer, then, not to be delivered over to the wicked, is a prayer that GOD may not abandon His suppliant. For every one in whom there is the will to sin, is empty of GOD, and where GOD is not, the devil has his place, and lying in wait and laying siege, will take possession on the first opportunity of the empty house which is given over to him when GOD leaves it: even if there be no formal delivery of possession, as there was when S. Paul delivered over the sinful Corinthian, and also Hymenæus and Alexander to Satan, that they might learn not to blaspheme.

122 Make thou thy servant to delight in that which is good : that the proud do me no wrong.

The first clause here is a mistranslation, and ought to run, as in Aquila, Theodotion, S. Jerome, and A. V., Be surety for Thy servant unto good. It is the prayer of Hezekiah in his trouble, ”O LORD, I am oppressed, undertake for me;” it is the prayer of Job for a ”daysman” to stand between him and GOD; it is the cry of the Church before the Incarnation for the appearance of a Divine Mediator; it is the confidence of every faithful soul since that blessed time in the perpetual intercession of our Great High Priest in heaven, which is to us the pledge of future blessedness. The Gloss gives this sense, by interpreting the Vulgate suscipe, take up, as the act of a patron (in Roman law) undertaking the cause of his client, but the commentators for the most part generalize the notion as implying GOD’s taking up His servant into the arms of His mercy, to keep him from falling when thrust at by the arm of the enemy. In the latter clause the Vulgate has Lest the proud slander me; and they agree in taking the words as primarily referring to Satan and his angels, but only secondarily to evil men. Let us flee then, exclaims S. Ambrose, from those evil slanderers, who work sin in us, and then themselves weave slanders against us with the most hostile accusation, reproaching us with what they have done. Lo, the LORD’s Hand is ready to protect and guard thee as thou fleest. Pharaoh, proud and cruel, held thee in bondage, thou fleddest from him, the LORD’s hand took thee up, and rescued thee from peril. Pharaoh would never have let thee go, hadst thou not fled for refuge to the LORD. Pharaoh said, ”I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go.” Seest thou how proud he was? He then is

A. G. 1 Cor. v. 5. 1 Tim. i. 20. truly said to be taken up for good, who hath fled from evil. God does not suffer us to remain in evil, He takes us up for good, and permits not His servants to underlie calumny. 123 Mine eyes are wasted away with looking for thy health : and for the word of thy righteousness. A. Numb. xxi. 9. Health ought to be, as in A. V. salvation, and the verse is the repetition

of the thought already expressed, Mine eyes long sore for Thy Word : watching and longing eagerly for the Coming of CHRIST, and for that Gospel which is His word of righteousness. Both the eyes of the soul, that of the affections and that of the understanding, fail when looking for these, partly from the sorrow of delay, and partly from the boundless extent of that ocean of Divine wisdom, power, and love, across which man strives to strain his vision. And S. Ambrose bids us note that the longing began to be satisfied when at Ænon (the "fountains" or "eyes") of Jordan, CHRIST's ministry began with His baptism by S. John the Forerunner. And as the Israelites suffering from the bite of the fiery serpents turned their eager gaze towards that brazen serpent which Moses lifted up, so the eyes of sufferers here looked forward once, as they look backward now, with intense and eager straining towards the saving Cross, listening to that word of His righteousness, "It is finished."

124 O deal with thy servant according unto thy loving mercy : and teach me thy statutes. Deal is a bold word, comments S. Hilary, and marks the faith and confidence of the Psalmist in God. But it is not too bold, since the humble title of servant follows immediately to qualify it. And although the Psalmist has just said that he dealt with judgment and justice, yet he asks for God's mercy first, as knowing his own sinfulness, and that if God gave him His statutes first, they would condemn him. It is, therefore, another mode of saying, "Enter not into judgment with Thy servant," since whatever good I may have done, I nevertheless owe Thee more as Thy servant, for service is not fully acquitted by one action. And though I am Thy servant, cheerfully obeying Thee of mine own free-will, yet teach me Thy statutes, enlightening my soul that I may know that all the grace and power of serving Thee is not mine own, but Thy gift to me. And if CHRIST, in answer to our prayer, "O deal with Thy servant," should deign to answer, "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?" what can the sinner in turn reply save, "LORD, that I may receive my sight?" Enlighten the eyes of my affections with Thy mercy, and that of my understanding with Thy statutes. And therefore it follows :

125 I am thy servant, O grant me understanding: that I may know thy testimonies. It is the part of a master, on acquiring a new servant, to explain to him the duties which he will have to fulfil, and the rules of the household which he will have to obey, as otherwise he cannot reasonably count on having the work done as he would desire. Accordingly, the Psalmist, having given himself over to the service of GOD, asks with S. Paul, when JESUS subdued him, "LORD, what wilt Thou have me to do?" And though all good things ought to be sought from GOD, yet there is a special fitness in praying constantly for a right understanding of Holy Writ, seeing that the clearer is the perception of it, the sweeter it becomes to devout minds. And therefore know does not here signify a mere general impression, but such a mastery of the subject as enables it to abide firmly in the memory after once being confided to it. And note that whereas he had said before, "I have more

understanding than the aged," yet it is still for understanding that he asks, because the fountain is exhaustless and his thirst increases with each draught from it. It is the prayer of Moses: "O LORD GOD, Thou hast begun to show Thy servant Thy greatness and Thy mighty hand: I pray Thee, let me go over, and see the good land." That good land which he desires is spiritual understanding, and because it is GOD's gift only, it is here asked of Him. No stranger, but a servant, the Psalmist asks for his wages. Because he is the LORD's servant, he cannot be the servant of sin, and therefore asks for understanding, that he may avoid sin. Some understanding he had, but not what he thought abundant enough for him, so he prays for more.

126 It is time for thee, LORD, to lay to thine hand: for they have destroyed thy law. To lay to Thine hand. The A. V., more tersely and exactly, to work. S. Hilary's interpretation has great beauty and force in it. The Jews, Thine own people, have destroyed Thy law, and made it void through their traditions, through their rejection of Thy SON, sent to collect the rent of the vineyard from its defaulting husbandmen. It is time for Thee, O LORD, to work Thy promised work amongst the Gentiles, and to bring them into Thy fold, "behold, now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." S. Ambrose, developing and amplifying S. Hilary, as he constantly does in his exposition of this Psalm, comments: It is time to work, just as when the attack of some illness is becoming more severe, you hurry to the physician, that he may come more quickly, lest he should later be unable to do any good. So when the Prophet saw in the HOLY SPIRIT the rebellion of Isa. i. 6.

A. Gal. iv. 4. Ps. lxxviii. 42, A.V.

the people, their luxury, pleasures, deceits, frauds, avarice, drunkenness, he runs, for our help, to CHRIST, Whom he knew to be alone able to remedy such sins, implores Him to come, and admits of no delay. It is time, saith he, to work, O Lord: that is, for Thee to ascend the Cross for us and undergo death. The whole world is in deadly peril. Come, and take away the sin of the world. Let life come unto the dying, the resurrection to the buried. The whole blinded nation knew not its own Creator; the world was lame, and wavered with the stumbling slip of faith. There was no one to apply ointment, or oil, or bandage. That woman of the Gospels, who was the type of all Gentile mankind, had spent all her living on physicians, but none of the physicians of this world could check the flow of her blood, and the deadly issue of her chronic disease. Wherefore the Prophet saith to CHRIST, It is time for Thee, Lord, to work, not to order, but to work, because no ambassador or messenger, but the LORD Himself must needs save His people. And He knew the time Himself, but we did not know when His help would best be rendered; but "when the fulness of time was come, GOD sent His SON. And observe that there are three senses in which man can be said to destroy GOD's law, albeit in itself indestructible and eternal; by putting a false interpretation on it, like Jews and heretics;

by refusing to receive it at all, like Pagans and infidels; by transgressing it, like evil Christians. And this last sense is for us the most important, because of that very phrase time to work. Under the old Law, it was the time to command, but the precepts were such as neither we nor our fathers could bear; but now it is for us too, time to work, because grace sufficient for the purpose has been given us, according to that saying of the LORD JESUS Himself, ”I must work the work of Him that sent Me while it is day; the night cometh, when no man can work. And that night is foreshadowed here, looking forward to that great destroying of GOD’s law which shall be in the time of Antichrist, when, above all other times that the Church has known, she will need to make this prayer. Never is it so much the duty of GOD’s servants to work as when His enemies are active. It is no time for Peter to be sleeping when Judas is afoot. How is it that the Psalmist ventures on prescribing a time to GOD? Is not this the sin of the Jews reproved in another place, ”They limited the Holy One of Israel? The answer is, that GOD Himself fixes a time for the fulfilment of some of His promises, as for the Exodus, the deliverance from Babylon, and for the Incarnation of CHRIST;

so that it was reasonable, as the appointed season drew on, to call on Him for the fulfilment of His pledge, as Simeon did, Other promises He makes without fixing a time for their performance, as when He put Noah into the Ark, and sent Joseph and Mary into Egypt; and when it is thus, we should do as they did, and patiently bear our Cross, not bargaining with GOD as to the time of our deliverance, not sinning like Saul by overhastiness, when after waiting seven days for Samuel, he would tarry no longer, but offered sacrifice. Nevertheless, in time of great troubles of the Church, it is no limitation of GOD to call on Him for immediate help, because His own honour, and not our private advantage, is then concerned. There is a further interpretation of the verse which some commentators give: Though it is time to work for the LORD, and to serve Him, yet ungodly men choose this very opportunity to be more rebellious than ever, and to employ the time of woe and terror in mad revelry: as the Prophet testifies: ”And in that day did the LORD GOD of Hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth: And behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine: let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we shall die; a portent observed again and again in time of pestilence and other scourges sent on men for their sins.

And finally, there is the sense most commonly followed by the Greek Fathers, that it is time for GOD to take vengeance on those who disobey His law, so that the verse which in the mouth of the Psalmist was a prayer for the first Advent of CHRIST, is now a petition for His second coming to judgment.

127 For I love thy commandments: above gold and precious stone. For. It ought to be, as in LXX., Vulg., and A.V. Therefore. It is exactly because others have destroyed GOD’s law that the Saint loves and cherishes it, all the more devoutly and

fervently. Among the faithless, faithful only he: His loyalty he kept, his love, his zeal, Nor number, nor example with him wrought To swerve from both, or change his constant mind, Above gold and precious stone; for under the carnal law earthly prosperity was the promised reward of obedience, whereas the love which is entertained for the spiritual law free and unbought, attracted only by the perfect loveliness of CHRIST, and "we love Him, because He first loved us." Then why, O blessèd JESU CHRIST, Should I not love Thee well? Not for the hope of winning heaven, Nor of escaping hell: Not with the hope of gaining aught, Not seeking a reward,

But as Thyself hast loved me, O ever-loving LORD. The Hymn, O Deus, ego amo te. Precious stone. So most of the old versions, but Symmachus agrees with A.V. and modern critics in translating, fine gold. The LXX., Vulgate, and S. Jerome, however, have here topaz, and on this stone, which is not the topaz of modern jewelry, but the chrysolite, the commentators, following S. Ambrose, have a great deal to say, more fanciful than instructive. The most noteworthy comment is Ayguan's, who tells us that the gold and topaz signify the creation of heaven and earth, and that the Prophet declares that the works of redemption are greater and more beautiful than all the visible wonders of the universe; and adds that another signification is that gold is the type of intellectual faith, and that the topaz, which imbibes as it were into a vessel the beams of the sun, and stores them up, denotes the Catholic Church, in which are treasured the rays of the Sun of Righteousness. But CHRIST alone is dearer to the Saint than even wisdom and the Church. A yet further interpretation sees in gold those Saints who have been tried by active temptations in this world, and in the topaz the Saints of the contemplative life. So Marbod of Rennes:

The Hymn, Cives Cælestis Patriæ. Beyond all gems the topaz rare, Hath value therefore past compare; It shines, albeit of colour grey, Clear as a fine ethereal ray, And notes the part of them that live The solid life contemplative. But CHRIST Himself, the King of the Saints, the Incarnate Wisdom of GOD, is more precious by far than even the holiest of His servants. And thus the best comment on the verse is that noble passage of Job: "But where shall Wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding? Man knoweth not the price thereof; neither is it found in the land of the living. The depth saith, It is not in me: and the sea saith, It is not with me. It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof. It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire. The gold and the crystal cannot equal it: and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold. No mention shall be made of coral, or of pearls: for the price of wisdom is above rubies. The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it, neither shall it be valued with pure gold."

128 Therefore hold I straight all thy commandments: and all false ways I utterly abhor. This rendering, though pretty close to the LXX. and Vulgate, I was directed

to Thy commandments, i.e. put in the straight road towards obeying them, does not quite give the sense of the Hebrew, which is rather, I hold all Thy commandments to be straight, or just. S. Ambrose bids us note the stress on all in both clauses of the verse; because it is so very common to find men ready enough to condemn some particular fault or faults, whilst freely giving way to others where their own temptation lies; and ends by remarking that it comes to very much the same thing in the end whether a man stays away from church because he is attracted by the amusements of the city or the repose of the country. It is well said all false ways; for there are many of them, but only one Way to our country, even He who hath said, "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life."

Collects.

Teach us, O LORD, to do judgment and justice, that we be not given over unto our enemies, nor be put under unrighteous slanderers, but loving Thy words with steadfast minds, may be delivered from all evil snares. (1.) O GOD, Who freely givest right judgment and justice, grant unto Thy servants that by Thy help and pity, they may ever meditate on such things as are pleasing unto Thee. (1.) Teach us, O LORD, to do judgment and justice, that we may be able to tread under foot the slanders of the proud, receive Thy servants for good, who hope in Thy salvation, and grant that they whose inward eyes watch for the kingdom of Thy CHRIST, may have a share in the fellowship of the elect. (11.)

PE.

The seventeenth letter, Pe, denotes the mouth, and, as Beda observes, here denotes the twofold employment of that organ by GOD's servants, the utterance of prayer and praise to Him, and the drinking in His precepts. They also remind us that CHRIST, as the Eternal Word, is also the Mouth of His FATHER, the means by which He utters His words to mankind, according to that saying of the Bride in the Canticles: "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth." 129 Thy testimonies are wonderful : therefore doth my soul keep them. Gerhohus bids us look forth on creation, and contemplate the marvellous order which reigns throughout it, from the loftiest archangel to the meanest worm, the courses of the stars, the motions of the waters, and so forth; and thence draw some faint image of the power, wisdom, and goodness of GOD, whence we may turn to the yet more wonderful proofs of His spiritual excellency, manifested in all His dealings with the children of Israel, and with us, their Gentile offspring, since. They raise a question here, as to whether Hugo Card. S. Mark i. 27.

there be not a contradiction in this verse of that passage in another place where it is said that God's "commandment is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off," where hidden is in the Hebrew wonderful. And they answer that the literal sense of the Law in its ceremonial, judicial, moral, and other legal provisions is easy and simple enough, but that the mystical import is often very obscure; and that there

is thus a wide distinction between the plain and brief statements of the Decalogue, and the intricate symbolism of the Book of Leviticus with its well-nigh countless ritual details. And so, too, the moral precepts of the Gospel are plain to all understandings, but the mysteries of the Creed surpass the intellect of man. Cardinal Hugo observes that the epithet wonderful is given to the testimonies of Holy Writ for several reasons: for their novelty: "What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth He even the unclean spirits, and they do obey Him;" for their depth: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God:" for their number: "I have written to him My many laws:" for their suitability to every one, young and old alike: "I have drunk my wine with my milk:" their teaching power: "the testimony of the LORD is sure, and giveth wisdom unto the simple:" and their power of working miracles: "The same works which I do, bear witness of Me." Therefore doth my soul keep them. It is, in another form, that great saying of Tertullian: "The Son of God was crucified, it shames me not, because it was shameful; and the Son of God died, it is credible, because it is foolish; He was buried and rose again, it is certain, because it is impossible."

130 When thy word goeth forth: it giveth light and understanding unto the simple. Goeth forth. The literal Hebrew is The opening (that is, the disclosing or revelation, LXX. δήλωσις, Vulg. declaratio) of Thy words; whence the erroneous A.V. rendering, entrance, following the ἡ πόλη of Symmachus, and the ostium of S. Jerome. The interpretation given of this version by the Rabbins is that the entrance or beginning of God's words is the prefatory sentence of the Decalogue, "I am the LORD thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt: thou shalt have none other gods but Me," which gave light to the uninstructed Jews, but newly rescued from contact with idolatry, and gave them understanding of the unity of God. Hence those who follow this gloss, remark, If the very entrance and first rudiments of God's word are so mighty for enlightenment, what will be the full revelation of His glory? But the other rendering is to be preferred. And the first and highest sense for us is the manner in which the preaching of the Gospel by the LORD JESUS gave understanding of all the hidden mysteries of the Law and the Prophets to the unlearned and ignorant men; the poor fishers of Galilee whom He chose for His Apostles. So the Holy Eastern Church sings at Pentecost:

Incomprehensible is Deity, For He hath given words to unlearned men, And made them equal to the wise in speech, And with the SPIRIT's lightning, He hath brought The ignorant from out of deepest night. And therefore the LORD Himself saith in the Gospel, "I thank Thee, O FATHER, LORD of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." What was true then holds good still, for He reveals Himself to the lowly, but as for the proud, He beholdeth them afar off. Hence the custom of the Church in publicly reading the Holy Scriptures to all comers, however unlearned and dull; for as a Saint of the Primitive Church remarks, All the Scriptures, both of the

Prophets and the Gospels, are open, and plain, and may be heard of all men; and Lactantius replies to possible objectors, ”Is it to be fancied that GOD, Who is the Maker of the mind, and the tongue, and the voice, cannot speak plainly Himself? Nay, rather, with the greatest providence He hath willed that those things which be divine should be free from all adulteration, that all might understand what He speaks to all.”

S. Irenæus, Adv. Hær. ii. 46. 131 I opened my mouth, and drew in my breath: for my delight was in thy commandments. And drew in my breath. The A.V. has panted, taking it as though the Psalmist described himself as running eagerly after GOD’s commandments, or else as overcome with heat and thirst, and so seeking the refreshment of a cooling air. We find in the Gospel that the LORD JESUS ”opened His mouth,” when He uttered the Beatitudes. But He opened His mouth to give the Spirit, the Psalmist did so to receive it. It is JESUS Who saith, ”Receive the HOLY SPIRIT;” it is JESUS Who saith, ”Open thy mouth wide, and I shall fill it;” this He saith to man, for CHRIST is fulness itself. And thus it is not my spirit which I am to draw in to refresh and strengthen me, but His, for the second my is not in the Hebrew. Accordingly, S. Chrysostom explains the verse of the Apostles waiting with earnest prayer in the upper chamber for the descent of the HOLY GHOST. And S. Gregory the Great applies it to those whose duty it is to preach the Word of GOD, who unless they open their mouth to teach others, will never increase in spiritual growth themselves; and further, it may be noted that the preacher is like the organ,

S. Chrysost. Hom. in Pent. S. Greg. Mag. Hom. in Ezek. iv. G which without first taking in a full volume of air, cannot give forth a clear and powerful note. Every Christian must open his mouth in three ways, to confess his own sins, to receive the food of Divine consolation, and to praise the LORD. He must not open his mouth for any other breath than that of the LORD, for the knowledge which puffeth up, for it is written: ”Should a wise man utter vain knowledge, and fill his belly with the east wind? Should he reason with unprofitable talk? or with speeches wherewith he can do no good.” No man can keep GOD’s commandments, which is holiness of life, without prayer. Prayer is the breath of holy life, and it is as impossible to keep GOD’s commandments without prayer, as to live without breathing. And this is the reason of the Psalmist’s words here, agreeing with that teaching of the LORD Himself, that men ought always to pray and not faint.

132 O look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me: as thou usest to do unto those that love thy Name. Job i. 21.

It is well added after look, be merciful, for GOD looks upon man at times in His wrath, as when He ”looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians. Look on me, as Thou didst on the sacrifice of Abel, shine on me, O Sun of Righteousness, with Thy bright and genial rays, enlightening and warming my dark, cold heart. Be merciful unto

me, bestowing on me the riches of holiness, not as Thou gavest the kingdom to Saul, soon to be rent from him again, but according to the oath Thou swarest unto Abraham, to make all his faithful children as the stars of heaven, steadfast in faith, shining in righteousness. Deal with me as with those that love Thy Name, because they are Thy sons, not Thy mere servants; for "as a father pitieth his own children, even so is the LORD merciful unto them that fear Him. Let it be with me as it is with them, who receive mercies in this world to fit them for that which is to come, for whom all things work together unto good, whether their course is to be run through plenty or through dearth, through glory or through dishonour, through good report or evil report, through ease or trouble, since in all cases they forget what is behind, and reach forward to that which is before.

Look on me, stripped and naked like Adam, in whom, as we all have sinned, we all come naked into this world, as righteous Job complains, saying, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb. Let me not have to say, "Naked shall I return thither," as they did who died before they could put on the marriage-garment of the Incarnation, dyed purple in the Blood of the LORD's Passion; but be merciful unto me, clothing me not, as Thou didst the first Adam, in a coat of skin, which groweth old, but like the Second Adam in a seamless and untearable robe; that clad in the garment of CHRIST, I may be found to be clothed with CHRIST Himself, in their fellowship to whom Thine Apostle saith, "As many of you as have been baptized into CHRIST have put on CHRIST."

Look on me stripped by thieves of my virtues, and then wounded with sins, and be merciful unto me, showing compassion on me, taking care of me in the inn of the Church Universal, that I fall not again among thieves, nor be harmed by the wolves which howl about this fold, but dare not enter in. Look on me, no longer worthy to be called Thy son, and be merciful unto me, not as the jealous elder brother would treat me, but let me join the glad song and banquet of them that love Thy Name. Look on me, the publican, standing afar off in Thy temple the Church, and be merciful unto me, not after the Pharisee's judgment, but as Thou usest to do unto them that love Thy Name, which is the Gracious GOD. Look on me as on weeping Peter, and be merciful unto me as Thou wast to him, who so loved Thy Name as by his triple confession of love to wash out his threefold denial, saying, "LORD, Thou knowest that I love Thee." Look on me as on the sinful woman, penitent and weeping, and be merciful unto me, not according to the judgment of the Pharisee who murmured at her, as Judas who was indignant at her, but forgiving me as Thou didst her, "because she loved much," telling me also, "Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace."

133 Order my steps in thy word : and so shall no wickedness have dominion over me.

It is for us to choose the good way of our own free-will, and to begin our course

thereon; it is GOD's part so to order our steps that we stumble not, neither wander out of the right path. Order both those inward motions and affections of my mind which are the steps to action, and also those actions themselves which should be steps in the way of holiness: wherefore it is said of the holy soul, "How beautiful are thy steps in shoes, O prince's daughter; because, as it is written in another place, "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be; for to those who have their feet thus "shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace," the LORD saith, "Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. And so shall no wickedness have dominion over me. The Psalmist, knowing the need of temptation and trial for the perfecting of the Saints, does not ask that he may encounter no evil on his road, but that it may not overcome him; or rather, obtain a tyrannous empire over him, bowing him under its heavy yoke, and forcing him to do its will. He that prays for mercy only to forgive the guilt of sin, does not seek to avoid offending GOD by sin, but only that he may sin without hurting himself;

whereas he who asks to be delivered from the power of sin, seeks not only a benefit to himself, but also grace to serve and please the LORD his GOD. And truly he never knew what it was to seek for mercy for sin past, who therewith sought not also grace to keep him from sin to come. These benefits cannot be divided, he who hath not the second (however he flatter himself) may be assured that he hath not gotten the first. We may well then pray for guidance and help in our spiritual journey home, in those words which the Western Church puts into the mouth of her priests when they travel: "O GOD, Who leddest Abraham Thy servant out of Ur of the Chaldees, and preservedst him unhurt throughout the days of his pilgrimage; we beseech Thee to take us Thy servants under Thy protection: be unto us, O LORD, our helper as we gird ourselves for the journey, our comfort in the way, our shade in heat, our covering in rain and cold, our carriage in weariness, our safeguard in adversity, our staff in slippery places, our haven in shipwreck, that Thou being our ruler and guide, we may prosperously reach the place to which we are bound, and at length return in safety to our Home, through JESUS CHRIST our LORD. Amen."

134 O deliver me from the wrongful dealings of men: and so shall I keep thy commandments. A. Wrongful dealings. The term properly denotes unrighteous judgment in a court of law, but is taken here in the wider sense of any oppression. Some Jewish commentators explain it thus, from that which oppresses man, that is, the guilt and contagion of original sin. But the LXX. and Vulgate read, from the calumnies of men, and on this phrase most of the patristic and mediæval commentators lay their chief stress. The especial grievousness of calumny, observes S. Ambrose, is that it is not content, like detraction, with bringing false charges, but it gives a false colour to acts which have been done aright, as we see in the case of Joseph, where the very movement whereby he fled from temptation was converted into a proof of his crime. Why should the prayer be made at all? asks S. Augustine, for

if the charges be true, they are no calumnies, and if they be false, they do no hurt, seeing that GOD, and not man, is the Judge. And he answers his own question by saying that the fear of being slandered may often lead a believer into timid compliance with evil, and that the petition is therefore for courage and patience. The LXX. and Vulgate word for deliver is redeem, λύτρωσαι με, redime, whence they take occasion to remind us that we have here a prayer for the coming of Him Who redeemed us with His most precious Blood, saving us from the wrongful dealings of men, our old conversation amongst the Gentiles, and giving us both teaching and help to keep His commandments.

135 Show the light of thy countenance upon thy servant : and teach me thy statutes.

That Light of GOD'S Countenance is the same that the Psalmist again and again celebrates, desiring the presence of Him Who is the express image of the FATHER in glory. The prayer was first made for the Incarnation; now it is for the second coming of CHRIST, that we may look on Him, and because seeing Him, see the FATHER also. Of old He shone upon the face of Moses with the brightness of the Old Law, whose radiance was too dazzling for the Jews to look upon; but now He has done much more, shining on the hearts of the nations in the face of JESUS CHRIST, and by His Advent, according to that saying of the Apostle: "For GOD, Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of GOD in the face of JESUS CHRIST," Who does not teach us with a veil over His face, as Moses taught the Jews, but in the full manifestation of His countenance. For thus the true servant of GOD will not cease to pray, that the light which has come with the loving and merciful face of a gracious GOD to himself, may shine into all the dark places of the earth, till no nation and no one heart has been left any longer in the gloom.

"For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake will I not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. Richard of S. Victor, in a long and fervid exposition of this verse, amidst much else that is devout and beautiful, bids us note that the countenance having close to it the organs of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and the power of touch besides, teaches us that in GOD all these senses of ours are primal and essential light and knowledge, one and indivisible, not fivefold and separate, as with us. Show me then Thy sight, Thy wisdom, that I err not; reveal to me Thine hearing, Thy mercy, that I despair not; teach me Thy smelling, Thy justice, which discerns between the sweet savour of holiness and the evil savour of sin, that I presume not; let Thy taste, the goodness whereby Thou delightest in the glory of Thy Saints, become known to me; let Thy touch, that compassionate help wherewith Thou stretchedest out Thine hand to the needy, be familiar to me, that I yield not in time of trouble. Show the light of Thy countenance, before which neither night nor winter can hold their ground, upon Thy servant, that the darkness of ignorance,

the frozen torpor of neglect, may pass away from his soul in that warm radiance. It would not be enough, as Absalom said falsely, but as GOD'S Saints feel truly, to dwell

Heb. i. 3. in Jerusalem itself, if there we might not see the face of the King. Better to be back in our exile, than be so near, and yet behold Him not. O quando, facies toto spectabilis orbe, Quando tuo dabitur lumine posse frui? Scilicet ut gravis est terris absentia Phœbi, Squallet et obscurus sole latente dies: Nec color est hortis, nec amœnis gratia sylvis, Jamque silent homines, jamque siletis aves: Mox ubi purpureo roseum caput extulit ore, Læta micat radiis, luce nitente, dies; Et suus est hortis color, et sua gratia sylvis, Jamque strepunt homines, jamque loquuntur aves. Sic ego te viso moriens, mea vita, resurgo, Vivaque non viso protinus emorior. O when, thou Face in all the world most fair, When shall I win enjoyment of Thy light? As the sun's absence is the earth's despair, And while he hides, the wan day sinks in night: Flowers have no dyes, the pleasant woods no grace, Men hold their peace, the birds their singing hush; Soon, when his rose-wreathed head uplifts its face, Day laughs in brightness at the purple blush; Woods regain grace, the flowers resume their dyes, Men stir again, and birds their singing give; So, seeing Thee, my Life, I, dying, rise, Seeing Thee not, I die, e'en though I live.

136 Mine eyes gush out with water : because men keep not thy law. The latter clause should run, as in A.V., because they keep not Thy law. And because of the ambiguity of this phrase, there are two distinct currents of interpretation of the verse; the former of which agrees with the Prayer Book rendering, and explains the words of zeal for God's honour, and consequent sorrow for the guilt of other men in disobeying His law, in contrast to the conduct of the ungodly, who rejoice in seeing their own wickedness rivalled or surpassed. But the other view is much more widely followed, and understands they as referring to the eyes; so that the verse will be at once a confession of failure in obedience on the Psalmist's part, and also a declaration of bitter penitence. Mine eyes, which are as it were the outer gates of that city of God, my soul; and which ought therefore to have been duly shut, that the law of God might remain safe and unstained within my heart, have been carelessly opened to the enemy, and therefore, like Peter, and like the sinful woman, I have springs of water (Vulg.) running down mine eyes; as I cry with Jeremiah, "O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night." Richard of S. Victor, dwelling on the literal construction of the Vulgate, Mine eyes have led down springs of water, compares wholesome sorrow for sin, in its influence on a dry and sterile heart, to the irrigating channels bringing water from the heights, and cut by husbandmen to water the fields, that they may bring forth an abundant crop. But he knows not how to weep who goes on committing deeds to be wept for, and himself a most tearful object, hath no tears for his own sin.

Collects.
Our eyes, O LORD, which transgress Thy law by desiring forbidden things, have brought down streams of water; let us then wash away our guilt with the instruments of our sin. (1.) O GOD, Who givest the light and understanding of Thy words to the simple, grant that our hearts may be open to receive the HOLY SPIRIT, the Comforter. (1.) Show the light of Thy countenance upon us, O LORD, that the declaration of Thy words may enlighten our hearts and understanding, and nourish the breasts of the simple, that whilst we desire Thy commandments, we may with open heart take in the Spirit of wisdom and understanding. (11.)

Tsaddi.
The eighteenth letter, Tsaddi, denotes a fish-hook or fish-spear, and the meaning sickle has also been suggested for it. The mystical sense given to the fish-hook by the mediæval interpreters is very curious. It is used to signify the God-head of CHRIST, employed to snare and draw out Leviathan, by the means of CHRIST's Manhood, serving as a bait to lure the monster. So, amongst several others, Hildebert of Tours: Fisher the FATHER is: this world, the sea; CHRIST's Flesh the bait, the hook His Deity, The line His generation. Satan took The offered bait; and perished by the hook. A further interpretation is that GOD draws sinners out of the mire of this world with the hook of trouble and the line of righteousness. But S. Jerome, whom most of the mediævalists follow, explains Tsaddi as meaning justice or righteousness, which, however, is , tsedek. But he is so far right that there is a play in this strophe on the sound of the initial letter, as in the case of Gemol, for the very first word, righteous, is , tsaddik, and the whole scope of the strophe is the strong grasp which even the young and inexperienced soul can have of righteousness amidst the troubles of the world, a notion wherein the barb of the fish-hook finds a place.

137 Righteous art thou, O LORD : and true is thy judgment. 138 The testimonies that thou hast commanded : are exceeding righteous and true. H. S. Hilary and S. Augustine, representing two distinct schools of Christian thought, comment very differently on these verses. They are, says the elder Father, a confession of unwavering faith in GOD's perfect goodness, that He will not be unjust to His own creatures, that He has made us not for our hurt or sorrow, and that if we suffer, it is of His goodness, and for our benefit, that it comes to pass. He delights in seeing Satan overcome by the strength of our patience, and ourselves tried and tested by grief, mourning, and suffering; so that, common as murmuring is against troubles, it is a sin, because nothing short of an accusation A. against the justice and love of GOD. S. Augustine, on the other hand, draws hence the lesson that the sinner must fear, and may well shed rivers of water from his eyes, since if he perish, he must needs do so confessing that his damnation is just. GOD's judgments are often hidden, but they are never unrighteous; nor does He command anything which is not in itself truth and righteousness, and thus man has no excuse

B. Cowper. for disobedience. For here we see how the Law of GOD expresses to us His image, since from His righteous nature flow His righteous judgments. And therefore sin is a fearful evil, because in transgressing a perfectly true and righteous law it is a direct impugning and violating of the Divine nature, so far as a creature can do so. The laws of earthly kings may be broken without injury to their persons, far less any violation of their nature, since they often themselves desire the evil things which their laws forbid; even if those laws be not themselves, as they often are, unrighteous and false; but GOD and His laws are so closely united that we cannot break them without rebelling against Him. But the

S. Ambros. righteous man, even if he have sinned, puts his hope, rather than his fear, in GOD's righteousness. If chastened, he confesses in the very beginning of his words that he suffers justly, and thus proclaims the LORD's righteousness, whence he hopes for pardon. For He, the Righteous One, is not always wroth; but as He is the chastiser of guilt, so also is He the mitigator of punishment; as He is the avenger of sin, so is He the rewarder of holiness and of all the best deservings of man. He who chooses to give the prize, ought to behold the contest, since no one without a contest is crowned. Therefore He suffers us often to be tempted, desirous of justly giving the prize to the wrestler, not to the slumberer. And He is righteous too in His mercy, keeping His promise of pardon to penitent sinners, that He may be justified in His sayings and clear when He is judged. Blessed sayings are they: "I desire not the death of a sinner;" "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool;" and many another like these; not only exceeding righteous, but also exceeding true, so that there will be no refusal of amnesty to any rebel who accepts God's easy and bountiful conditions.

The hundred and thirty-seventh verse, like the twenty-fifth, is associated with the sorrows of an Imperial penitent. When the deposed and captive Emperor Maurice was led out for execution by the usurper Phocas, his five sons were previously murdered one by one in his presence; and at each fatal blow he patiently exclaimed, "Righteous art Thou, O LORD, and true is Thy judgment." And so firm was his own attachment to truth and justice that he himself revealed to the soldiers the kindly deceit of a nurse who offered her own child to death to save an Imperial infant. 139 My zeal hath even consumed me: because mine enemies have forgotten thy words.

There is a zeal unto life, and there is also a zeal unto death. Zeal unto life is to keep the divine precepts and to observe God's commandments for love of Him, as Phinehas did. It is part of human nature, when we see resistance made to the wishes of those we love, to be fired with zeal for the person disregarded. What grief then we feel when we see one of the people of God becoming a servant of the world, a hireling of the devil, a vessel of death, a brand for the burning? We

read that the Apostles took note of this sort of zeal when the LORD entered the Temple and drove out with a scourge of cords them that bought and sold therein, remembering that it is written, ”The zeal of Thine house hath eaten Me up.” We ourselves are sometimes the temple of God, or a house of merchandise, or a den of thieves. For our bodies which are sanctified in CHRIST are, according to the Apostle, the temples of God. These same bodies we turn into dens of thieves when we ponder and execute debauchery, murder, robberies, falsehoods, frauds; and when we busy ourselves anxiously in worldly concerns and in buying and selling, we make the house of God a house of merchandise instead of a place of prayer. And the LORD is moved with zeal to drive such as these out of His temple. Here, therefore, it is zeal for God, not zeal for himself, that the Psalmist speaks of, saying like the Apostle, ”I am jealous with godly jealousy,” because mine enemies have forgotten Thy words. Here is the test by which a true servant of God will know his enemies. He is to bear no malice for private in-

Isa. i. 18. Decline and A. Ricard. Victor. in Cant. i. 9. juries, but to regard as the direst enemy of all men him who wrongs the Creator of all. For that is a false zeal if we aim rather at avenging our own wrong than God’s, and if we are hot against those who have been unthankful or unkind to us. Yet even in God’s cause it behoves us to be careful, for there are many of the faithful who are kindled with zeal not according to knowledge, and often when attacking others as heretics, invent heresies themselves, whereas they ought to consider the weakness of their opponents, and conciliate them by reason and gentleness. 140 Thy word is tried to the uttermost : and thy servant loveth it.

The meaning which these words present at first sight, that the very persecution of the truth makes it dearer to the Saint, though a very beautiful and true one, is not the sense of the Hebrew, which is, Thy words are very pure, that is, refined as gold in the furnace; as we have it in another Psalm, ”The words of the LORD are pure words: even as the silver, which from the earth is tried, and purified seven times in the fire. Hence the LXX. and Vulgate have the epithet fired (πεπυρωμένον, ignitum,) in this place. And the commentators take it rather of the consuming power of God’s Word than of its perfect purity, as though it were that fire which CHRIST came to send upon the earth; the Word which is sharper than any two-edged sword. That is a good fire which makes our heart burn within us while He opens to us the Scriptures, which warms, but scorches up nothing except sins. This is the fire by which the gold laid on the Apostle’s foundation is tried, this is the fire by which the silver of good works is tested, this is the fire which makes the precious stones to sparkle and glow, but burns up the hay and stubble. This fire purges the mind, and consumes error, wherefore the LORD saith, ”Now ye are clean, through the word which I have spoken unto you. This is the fire which burneth before the LORD;

for no one who fails to be kindled with the flame of devotion can enjoy the LORD's presence. Kindle then this fire in thy mind, that the light of CHRIST may shine on thee; it is the same which burnt in the bush which yet was unconsumed. For the Word of God burns, that it may purge the sinner's conscience, but does not burn it up for its destruction. The two meanings do not clash, "for our God is a consuming fire," and therefore His words, as they come fresh from Himself, are not only most pure, so that no tittle of them can pass away, but also glowing with incandescent heat, wherefore it is written, "From His right hand went a fiery law for them; and the LORD Himself saith by His Prophet, "Is not My Word like as a fire, and as a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces? And Thy servant loveth it. What shall be the test? "His Word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay. The preacher who knows that God's words are pure, and who feels them to be as a fire within him, will be like him of whom it is written, "Then stood up Elias the Prophet as fire, and his word burned like a lamp;

where we may note that fervour is not enough without knowledge, for the true herald of the Word must not merely rouse and excite the tumult of his hearers' emotion, but teach them plainly also to see and follow the will of God.

141 I am small, and of no reputation : yet do I not forget thy commandments. The words befit the Early Gentile Church, few in numbers, lowly in rank, and despised (LXX., Vulg., A. V.) by Jews and Pagans alike, and young (LXX. and Vulg.) in comparison with the hoary Synagogue, but honoured by God with His Sacraments, and given CHRIST Himself for food and drink. They also befit individual Christians, when they learn humility; confessing themselves young in the knowledge of God, receiving the kingdom of heaven as little children, being lowly as Jeremiah was when he said, "Ah! LORD GOD! behold, I cannot speak; for I am a child." Yet because he did not forget God's commandments, the answer to his humble excuse was: "Say not, I am a child, for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee, thou shalt speak." Cardinal Hugo, taking this verse in connection with the previous one, and explaining it of a youthful priest excusing himself from preaching the Word on the ground of insufficient capacity, or on that of immaturity in years, knowledge, or spiritual life ("for the child shall die an hundred years old,") pithily concludes with S. Paul's counsel to Timothy: "These things command and teach. Let no man despise thy youth."

Jer. i. 6, 7. 142 Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness: and thy law is the truth. This verse differs from the first of the strophe by declaring that God's righteousness is everlasting. And therefore it is impossible for us to obey that righteousness by fits and starts, or by persevering for a time and then giving up our efforts, or again by choosing some righteous things to do and neglecting others. It will not avail that we are strictly honest, if we be also parsimonious, nor yet to give

the poor a share of wealth which has been unjustly acquired. It is an everlasting righteousness in the further sense that the principles it lays down do not vary, and that the rewards and punishments it decrees do not terminate in a given time, like those of an earthly judge, but last through eternity; and further, taking the words in particular of the Gospel dispensation, they mark the difference between it and the righteousness of the Law, which being a mere figure and type, was destined to vanish away, whereas that law which is the truth abideth for ever, and is everlasting in its constant support, comfort, and joyfulness to the faithful, because the everlasting righteousness of God is JESUS CHRIST Himself, "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

143 Trouble and heaviness have taken hold upon me : yet is my delight in thy commandments. H. It is the brief sum of the early years of that younger people, which was not merely despised by the world, but persecuted in every land with confiscations, exiles, dungeons, stakes, and swords, till the throngs of confessors and martyrs ennobled every country. And whereas the literal rendering of taken hold is as in the Vulgate, found, S. Ambrose bids us note that trouble and distress seek for the righteous man, sometimes finding him, and sometimes not. He who is to have a crown, is found; he who is not thought strong enough for a contest is not found. And therefore trouble is a favour from God. Trouble and heaviness, remarks another holy writer, are great blessings to good men, because they know that when they are put under the press of their weight, their sins are forced out, and they are themselves fitted to hasten on to unending joys, and therefore their delight is in those very commandments of God which cause them to suffer, and they draw from thence their support and consolation, as so many martyrs did upon the rack or in the arena.

144 The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting : O grant me understanding, and I shall live. C. Trouble and heaviness are only for a time, and therefore here the Psalmist beautifully sets over against them the everlasting righteousness of God's testimonies and promises, which give courage and patience to bear up under adversity. And further he adds, O give me understanding, that he who was of late small and despised, now, wiser than the aged, may learn the wisdom that leads to the life unending, and live, if need be, by the death of martyrdom, if only he may therefore rejoice for ever.

Collects.

Make us Thy servants, O LORD, to love Thy fiery word, to drive out the filth of our sins with its heat, and to kindle in us the light of knowledge. (1.) Righteous art Thou, O LORD, and true is Thy judgment; deliver us Thine humble servants from all trouble and heaviness, that we may become blessed by meditating on Thy commandments. (1.) Grant us, O LORD, to take in with more eager understanding the righteousness of Thy testimonies, that what folly slays within us, wisdom sent by

Thee may quicken again. (11.) Righteous art Thou, O LORD, Who though innocent wast unjustly condemned for our sakes, and therefore we beseech Thee that Thou, Who wast punished without any fault of Thine, wouldst absolve us from the guilt of our sins. (11.)

KOPH.

The nineteenth letter, Koph, seems most probably, by comparison with Chaldee and Arabic, and with the form of the obsolete Greek letter koppa, to mean the socket of an axe, into which the handle fits. In that case, we obtain at once, according to the mediævalists, two mystical senses. The "axe laid to the root of the tree," is a symbol of CHRIST, the sharp metallic cutting blade being His Godhead, the weaker wooden helve His Manhood, and the orifice which serves to join the two into one weapon will denote the Hypostatic union of the two Natures. Not very dissimilarly, the axe is also taken to signify the intellectual powers of man, chiefly as used in rebuke of sin, and in cutting away abuses, while the wooden handle is the physical nature wherewith these powers are wielded. And the socket will then mean the union of active and reflective, or physical and spiritual faculties in the compound nature of man. If the conjecture of Gesenius, that koph means the back of the head, be followed, we then find that as the face or front of the head is used in allegory to denote active and fixed attention to a teacher and drinking in his instructions, so the back of the head will denote passive reflection afterwards on the subject-matter of the lesson. These two latter senses agree well with the reference to quiet thought in the night, found in vv. 147, 148, while the first one applies also to the expression of trust in the Incarnate Word which is found in the same verses.

145 I call with my whole heart: hear me, O LORD, I will keep thy statutes; 146 Yea, even unto thee do I call: help me, and I shall keep thy testimonies.

Silence and quietness in prayer, observes S. Hilary, is one of the many precepts of the Gospel teaching given us by the LORD, that our souls should be more audible than our voice, since GOD can hear in secret, and has no need of loud petitions. Wherefore the Psalmist here declares that his cry is not that of uplifted voice, nor for bodily ears, but the cry of faith, and of the soul, to be borne up to the throne of GOD, not by the exertion of the voice, but by the spirit of faith. For he cries to GOD with his whole heart, who asks great gifts from Him, who prays for heavenly blessings, who hopes for eternal bliss, who lives in the exercise of innocent reverence. So the blood of Abel silently cried to GOD from the earth, so, when Pharaoh's horses and chariots were pressing on terrified Israel, caught as it were in a net up to the passage of the Red Sea; Moses stood, outwardly sad and silent, for Scripture records no uttered prayer of his, but yet crying secretly with the prayer of faith in his heart, until the LORD replied, "Wherefore criest thou unto Me? The people cried aloud, but was not heard; Moses was silent, and was listened to, as the only

one who truly cried to GOD. And the Apostle knew well of this cry of the Spirit with faithful men, when he said, ”GOD hath sent forth the Spirit of His SON into your hearts, crying, Abba, FATHER;

a silent cry which reaches the ears of GOD. And note the order in which the Psalmist modestly puts his prayer. He does not expect salvation to come at once as the answer to his very earnest cry. Rather, he first prays for grace to keep GOD’s statutes, and then in the second place cries, Save me, (LXX., Vulg., A. V.,) showing that obedience to GOD’s will, and not our own advantage, ought to be the first desire of our hearts, though if we give Him the first, He will surely give us the second. Only our cry must be with our whole heart, not with divided attention, and attempting to carry on another train of thought while we are in prayer to GOD. I call, then, like a beleaguered warrior to my liege Lord, for aid; like a sick man to my Physician, for advice; like a babe to my nurse, for food. When thou prayest, therefore, pray for great things, that is, things everlasting. Pray not for money, for it is rust; pray not for gold, for it is lifeless metal; pray not for landed possessions, since they are but earth. Prayer of that kind does not reach GOD, for He hears no petitions save those which He counts deserving of His bounty, and thus He always hears the living voice of devotion and grace. Our prayers are seed, sown not in the earth, but in the heaven; we cast them into the bosom of GOD. He that sows sparingly shall reap sparingly;

if we look for a plentiful harvest, let us sow more abundantly in the seed-time; for every prayer fervently and in faith sent up to GOD, either presently returns with some good, or there lays food up in store for us, which we shall enjoy hereafter.

147 Early in the morning do I cry unto thee : for in thy word is my trust. 148 Mine eyes prevent the night watches : that I might be occupied in thy words.

Early, &c. The A.V. gives the sense much more forcibly, I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried. The oldest commentators pass at once over the literal sense of early rising for prayer, and apply the words to the seeking of God in the time of youth, before the approach of old age, which often is free from the commission of sin, not because of any real conversion to God, but because the chill and weakness of advancing years take away the bodily power of continuing in the vices of youth. The Greek word here is ἀωρίῳ, that is, at an untimely hour, meaning earlier than the time at which men engaged in secular callings go to their work. And S. Ambrose, asking how such a phrase can be reconciled with that other saying: There is ”a time for every purpose under heaven,” answers that the LORD JESUS is above the heavens, and not bounded by time in any wise, so that every time is good for calling on Him, wherefore the Apostle saith, ”Pray without ceasing. And both verses together express the waiting and crying of the Church by the mouth of the prophets, while still in the darkness of the Old Covenant, before the arising of the Sun of Righteousness, the Incarnate WORD, which we have since beheld rising

with glory in the early morning (diluculo, Vulg. of the Resurrection. Coming to the literal sense, S.

Ambrose says, "It is a grievous thing if the ray of the rising sun find thee lazy and unashamed in thy bed, and the bright light strike on eyes still weighed down with slumbering sloth. Knowest thou not, O man, that thou owest the daily firstfruits of thy heart and voice to God? Thou hast a daily harvest, a daily revenue. The LORD JESUS remained all night in prayer, not that He needed its help, but putting an example before thee to imitate. He spent the night in prayer for thee, that thou mightest learn how to ask for thyself. Give Him again, therefore, what He paid for thee. And thus the English rendering, Mine eyes prevented the night watches, brings out forcibly the zeal of the Psalmist, carrying out by anticipation the precept of CHRIST, "Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the Master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning; lest coming suddenly, He find you sleeping. And what I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch: and anticipating by his vigilance the arousing call of the guards as they change the watch at the time of relief. At the very least, counsels S.

Ambrose at the end of his comment on this verse, divide thy time between God and the world, and when thou canst not publicly engage in this world's affairs, and the shades of night hinder thee, give thy leisure to God, devote thyself to prayers, and that thou mayest not be overcome by sleep, say psalms. Hasten early in the morning and bring the firstfruits of thy pious resolutions to church, and afterwards if worldly business call thee away, thou art not hindered from saying, Early in the morning do I cry unto Thee, and thou canst go at ease to thy employments. How pleasant it is to begin the day with hymns and prayers and the Beatitudes which thou readest in the Gospels! And what a good thing for thyself that CHRIST's word should bless thee, and that thou shouldst be inspired with zeal for some virtue while chanting the LORD's blessings, so as to recognise in thyself the power of the divine benediction!

149 Hear my voice, O LORD, according unto thy lovingkindness: quicken me, according as thou art wont. A. A man, let him be ever so righteous and holy, ought always to pray that GOD would hear him according to His mercy, not according to deservings for any good thing, because virtue is rare, and sins are many: and then according to His judgment (as A.V. has here correctly instead of wont) that promise which binds Him to help the weak. GOD's mercy is shown in His remitting the punishment due to sin, and then His judgment in giving life eternal to the righteous. We have then here the prayer of the half-dead wayfarer lying between Jerusalem and Jericho, imploring the aid of the good Samaritan. Were he quite dead, he could not ask, for it is written, "Thanksgiving perisheth from the dead," and thus he uses his small remnant of spiritual life in a cry for the oil to heal him, and the wine to

gladden his heart, that restored and comforted he may cry yet again: ”My song shall be of mercy and judgment; unto Thee, O LORD, will I sing.”

150 They draw nigh that of malice persecute me: and are far from thy law. The A.V. rendering is more exact: They draw nigh that follow after mischief: while the verse is thus expressed by the Vulgate: My persecutors have drawn nigh to iniquity, whence the lesson is pointed that to follow after mischief, or to draw nigh to iniquity, involves being far from GOD’s law; that the nearer we are to one, the further we must needs be from the other, and therefore we have merely to keep close by CHRIST to be certain of being unharmed by our enemies, who, by the very act of sinning, go to a distance from Him. Thus, if those enemies be such as kill the body with the tortures of martyrdom, they cannot hurt the soul, and if they be those evil spirits who aim at the soul, they dare not come near him who is sheltered under the wings of CHRIST. Wherefore it follows:

151 Be thou nigh at hand, O LORD: for all thy commandments are true. The Prayer Book version, by turning the first words into a petition, has lost the noble contrast exhibited by the A.V. as by LXX. and Vulgate. They are drawing near, they are coming to attack me. Be it so, let them come and do their worst, for Thou, Lord, art nigh. Thou art here beside me, true commandant of the beleaguered city, ready to appear in glory on the walls to drive the enemy back in terror, as on the battlements of Nisibis when the prayer of the Bishop S. James routed the armies of the heathen Sapor. And when the solemn and deep church bell Entreats the soul to pray, The midnight phantoms feel the spell, The shadows sweep away. Longfellow, The Beleaguered City. Down the broad vale of tears afar The spectral camp is fled, Faith shineth as a morning star, Our ghastly fears are dead.

”I am a GOD at hand, saith the LORD, and not a GOD afar off;” present everywhere by virtue of Divine essence, present everywhere by virtue, too, of universal government and providence; whereof the sun, enlightening all the world with his rays, is a faint and imperfect type. We then should throw open all our windows to admit the rays of the Sun of Righteousness, should open our eyes to behold His rising in His beauty, for though He be nigh to all, yet He specially warms and cherishes those who draw near to Him. The Christian may say to GOD, Thou art nigh, O Lord, in a sense impossible to the Jew, because of the difference between the types and figures of the old Law and the realities they were intended to foreshadow; the interval between circumcision and the grace of the HOLY SPIRIT given in Baptism, the unlikeness of the sacrifices of oxen and sheep to that Eucharistic oblation in which the very Body and Blood of CHRIST are given to His faithful people. And Thou art not only nigh to me, the Christian can add, as a shield and defender, but nigh to mine enemies too, for their destruction, since all Thy commandments are true, so that their sins cannot escape Thine avenging hand, nor can I fail of Thy promised help.

152 As concerning thy testimonies, I have known long since: that thou hast grounded them for ever. Long since, from the very beginning, man has known in the Church of GOD's testimonies, known how Adam was created free, how Eve was formed, how the curse fell upon the serpent, how Paradise was closed by the flaming sword of the Cherubim, how Abel's blood cried for vengeance, how Enoch was translated, and Noah delivered, how Melchizedek C. A. 1 Cor. iii. 11. was hallowed as a priest, how Abraham was chosen, Isaac promised, Jacob preferred, Joseph sold, Moses nourished up, taught, and made a Lawgiver, Joshua set to divide the inheritance of the Promised Land. All these testimonies which I have known long since, Thou hast grounded for ever upon Him of Whom all the types and prophecies teach, the sole ground of all the Church's teaching, for other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, CHRIST JESUS; whence it is easier that heaven and earth should pass away, than that any of GOD'S revelations in His Incarnate Word should fail, or that the Church, built on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, with JESUS CHRIST as the chief corner-stone, should fail and vanish like earthly kingdoms, or like the synagogue.

S. Baring-Gould, The Hymn, Onward, Christian soldiers. What the Saints established That I hold for true, What the Saints believed That believe I too. Long as earth endureth Men that Faith will hold, Kingdoms, nations, empires, In destruction rolled. Crowns and thrones may perish, Kingdoms rise and wane, But the Church of JESUS Constant will remain; Gates of hell can never 'Gainst that Church prevail, We have CHRIST'S own promise, And that cannot fail.

Collects.

Hear our voice, O LORD, according to Thy plenteous mercy, and condemn us not as the guilty, but in Thy love and mercifulness reward us as the blessed. (1.) O GOD, Who graciously hearest them which call upon Thee with their whole heart, be mindful of Thy mercy, and hearken unto our early prayers. (1.) We cry unto Thee, O LORD, that Thou mayest hear us, and suffer our eyes bent down towards the ground to approach Thee, that Thy calm brightness may shine upon us, and we ever abide in the light. (11.)

RESH.

The twentieth letter, Resh, denotes the head, and it will be sufficient for its mystical exposition to cite part of the eloquent comment of S. Ambrose, in this instance, as in one or two others, correctly informed of the Hebrew meaning. After pointing out that the head is the centre of the nervous organisation of the body, the vigour of the physical or intellectual life, and the crown of its beauty, he adds: CHRIST is the mystical Head, "He is before all things, and by Him all things exist, and He is the Head of the Body, the Church. Whoso loseth this Head, hath no more faculty of life, for hereby alone we differ from the brutes, formed by His power after the image of GOD and the likeness of virtues. He is the Head, too, of all our thought

and action, of our employment, our hope, our strength. He is the whole sum of our thought, that we may be lowly, and follow the truth, since whoso does not is "vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, not holding the Head, from which all the body . . . . increaseth with the increase of GOD. And in the book of Isaiah, the LORD saith by the Prophet, "The LORD will cut off from Israel the head and the tail. This Head which Israel had, she lost, because she received not JESUS her LORD. Where there is faith, there we have both the beginning and the end. Where there is no faith, there is neither beginning nor end.

The Church, in having CHRIST, hath the beginning; for CHRIST is the beginning of the Church, "the firstborn from the dead. She hath the end too, for He is the First and the Last. He is the end of the law for righteousness unto every one that believeth. The Synagogue hath neither the beginning nor the end, because she found not in the beginning what to follow, nor in the end what to hope. Puffed up, therefore, she holdeth not the Head, that is, that humility of CHRIST whereby He descended to the Cross, descended to the grave. Therefore the Jew believed not, because he despised Him who said, "Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly of heart. This humility is the head of all virtues, which does as it were nourish the whole body of our actions. A brief examination of this strophe will show a close resemblance between it and those Messianic Psalms, such as xxxv., lvii., and lxix., which foreshadow the Passion and Resurrection of CHRIST, so that the whole section is capable of being explained in the same manner, and of being applied to any member of the Body who is conformed to the sufferings of the Head.

Col. i. 17. Col. i. 18. Rev. i. 17. 153 O consider mine adversity, and deliver me: for I do not forget thy law. The LXX. and Vulgate read humility in the first clause, but the earliest commentators are agreed in taking it as meaning affliction, brought on by the attacks of enemies, spiritual or human. And accordingly S. Ambrose bids us see here not a boaster of his own lowliness, but an athlete of CHRIST, anointed with the oil of heavenly precepts, and summoned by his LORD to engage in various contests, for the offered prize of divers crowns. Now, worn out with countless struggles, and resisting with sorely exhausted strength, A. S. Luke i. 48.

oppressed by the imminence of his peril, and seeing that the fight is not only against flesh and blood, but against spiritual wickednesses in heavenly places; he cries out to his LORD, the spectator and judge of the combat, to aid him in his strife, to require no more such terrible contests from his worn and wounded body, but to give the promised crown of righteousness for this fulfilling of the unforgotten law. And the cry specially befits a martyr, tortured again and again, remanded to a gloomy dungeon, weighed down with ponderous fetters, strained in the stocks which confine his limbs, ruptured on the rack, torn with hooks, scorched with glowing plates of metal, and though persevering in his faith, yet wearying sorely because death, which brings his promised crown, is so long delayed. S. Augustine and several fol-

lowing him, however, take the word humility literally, and note that the law which the Psalmist does not forget is "Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted;" so that the verse is in this wise a prayer to CHRIST, from a servant of His who has learnt the lesson of His lowliness, Who washed His disciples' feet, and bore all the shame and sorrow of the Passion for our salvation, and knows that "before honour is humility." God looks upon or considers man in various ways, and for different ends: to give him light; for "as JESUS passed by, He saw a man which was blind from his birth:" to convert him; "He saw a man named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom, and He saith unto him, Follow Me;" "And the LORD turned, and looked on Peter:" to deliver him; "I have surely seen the affliction of My people which are in Egypt:" to advance him; "He hath regarded the lowliness of His handmaiden:" and to reward; "The LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering."

154 Avenge thou my cause, and deliver me: quicken me, according to thy word. It ought rather to be, as in A.V., Plead Thou my cause. If we take the words as those of the Head, it is the prayer of Him Who was silent before Caiaphas, Pilate, and Herod, making no attempt to defend Himself, that His Heavenly FATHER will do for Him what He did not on His own behalf, will grant Him victory in the conflict of the Cross, and quicken Him, after death, in the glory of the Resurrection. If the words are those of one of His members, then the Head is asked to act as the Patron of Roman days and the feudal superior of the Middle Ages were bound to do, take up the cause of His client or vassal, and defend it against all opponents, especially our spiritual foes. We ask Him of right to plead our cause, even when we know that we are guilty, for "if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the FATHER, JESUS CHRIST the Righteous, and He is the propitiation for our sins," so as to deliver us from bondage to them, (whence we have redeem here in the LXX. and Vulgate,) and to quicken us, by His own Resurrection, in newness of life. CHRIST pleads the cause of His servants also in another way, by putting into their mouths, by the inspiration of His SPIRIT, arguments against their opponents. And so He counselled His disciples: "But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak; for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the SPIRIT of your FATHER which speaketh in you."

But the LXX. and Vulgate read: Judge Thou my judgment. It is the voice of a noble and tranquil conscience, to ask to have our judgment judged, to have one's own decision and pleasure tested by divine examination. He who can say, "I have determined (Ἰκρίνα, judicavi) not to know anything among you save JESUS CHRIST, and Him crucified," has no reason to fear the judgment of his judgment; for he hastens, in consciousness of innocence, to present himself before One who is not only a merciful Judge, but his own Redeemer, hoping to find acquittal there. It is Satan's lot to have his judgment deferred, to be ever in the position of one charged with penal crimes, to be bound in the chains of his own guiltiness, to be ever passing

sentence on himself, to be tortured with perpetual fear, to feel never safe. But those "whom the LORD loveth, He chasteneth," and that quickly, wherefore He spake to the avenging angel by the mouth of Ezekiel: "Begin at My sanctuary; and it is written in another place: "Judgment must begin at the House of GOD; punishing them in this world, that their souls may be saved in the day of the LORD. There is yet another deep lesson to be drawn from this verse. There is a Final Court of Appeal for all causes tried on earth, not biassed, temporising, corrupt, and lawless, as such courts of man's constitution may prove to be, but righteous and unerring.

A heavier sentence will be recorded there against judges who have decided unjustly than against the accused whom they have been set to try; and therefore it behoves every one who is called to sit in judgment on his fellows, to refer every cause to GOD, saying to Him, Judge Thou my judgment, O LORD, guide me that my sentence may be Thine, that I fall not at Thy tribunal under that sentence, "With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged."

155 Health is far from the ungodly: for they regard not thy statutes. This rendering is defective in two respects: Health ought to be salvation, and regard should be seek. There is no pardon, observes S. Hilary, for wilful ignorance, because to be ignorant amidst opportunity of knowing involves the charge of rejecting, rather than of failing to find the truth. Salvation is thus far from the ungodly, because they do not seek God's statutes, which have been committed to writing precisely that they may be easy of access to all. But God draws those near to Him who were far from salvation through no fault of their own, for "now in JESUS CHRIST ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the Blood of CHRIST." It is clear that those who perish do so because they flee from salvation, not because it flees from them, "for the Son of Man"—Who is Salvation—"is come to seek and to save that which was lost," and when He came to His own nation, they cried, "Not this Man, but Barabbas." And if we would know how far salvation is from the ungodly, the LORD Himself will tell us by His prophet: "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts." And there are two methods by which they can make it far from them: by disbelieving that it has come in the first Advent of CHRIST, or that it will come in the second.

156 Great is thy mercy, O LORD: quicken me, as thou art wont. Although salvation be far from the ungodly, yet no one need despair, because many (LXX., Vulg., A.V. marg.) are Thy mercies, and they who are perishing in their own sin are delivered by Thy compassion, Who didst appear to them that sought Thee not, didst call them that fled from Thee, didst gather together them that knew Thee not, and gavest Thyself on behalf of all up to Thy Passion. Man's mercy is to his near neighbour, God's mercy is over all flesh, that all flesh may ascend to the LORD, through the

gift of His pitying kindness. And because His mercies are many, the Psalmist prays Him: Quicken me, according to Thy judgments (A.V., Aquila, S. Hieron.) in Thy manifold capacity of Judge, Shepherd, Advocate, King; help me by all these titles, and by Thy judgments of love and mercy. That is all we can cast ourselves upon, for we cannot pay God the debt we owe for our creation, salvation, and grace, we can give nothing to Him from Whom all things come, and can but pray that He will do as He is wont, and quicken His frail creatures into everlasting life, the one prayer of His Saints in all ages, from righteous Abel to the present day.

157 Many there are that trouble me, and persecute me: yet do I not swerve from thy testimonies. It is no great boast not to swerve from God's testimonies when no one persecutes or troubles us, for it is easy to be grateful for an unbroken sequence of abundant prosperity; but then the sneer may be repeated, "Doth Job fear GOD for nought? Hast Thou not made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth Thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse Thee face to face."

Yet when the Saint was tried by loss of children and wealth, he did not swerve from his worship and love of GOD. Here there is mention not of one persecutor, but of many. But that is no cause for alarm, since "through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of GOD. If there be many persecutors, there are many trials; there are many contests, where there are many crowns; therefore it is for thy profit that there are many persecutions, that amongst so many persecutions thou mayest more readily find some way of being crowned. Who can expect to be exempt when the LORD Himself underwent persecutions? The devil has many agents to send against us, worse than any mortal foes,—avarice, pride, ambition, luxury, uncleanness; nay, there are many who resisted the human enemy, who were publicly crowned in the public persecutions, that nevertheless yielded in private to these more terrible foes, these more cruel tyrants; and they who boldly resist them are the daily hidden martyrs of JESUS CHRIST. S. Augustine, looking more to the literal text than his great teacher, reminds us here of the fierceness and unanimity of the Pagan attacks on the Faith, how every land had its crowds of martyrs, whose glorious memories, then fresh in the minds of men, told how very many their persecutors had been. Cardinal Hugo sums up the many persecutors of the Church of individual Christians in his day as nine in number, enforcing each example with texts of Holy Scripture: they are, the flesh; the world;

the devil; irreligious kindred; tyrants who plunder and oppress the Church; heretics who corrupt the faith of the Church, and harass confessors; false brethren, who corrupt the Church's life by their evil example; lawyers who trouble the Church with ecclesiastical suits; and bishops, who import their own relations into their dioceses, and give them the best livings. And in addition to all these,

there are the evil spirits. Nevertheless, ”there is no restraint to the LORD to save by many or by few; and ”they that be with us are more than they that be with them.”

Job i. 9. A. 158 It grieveth me when I see the transgressors: because they keep not thy law. Although the particular form which the guilt of the trans- It will be observed that there are many points of resemblance between the thirteenth century and the nineteenth. gressors took was persecution of the Psalmist, yet he declares here that his grief was not for this, his private wrong, but for the breach of God’s law involved in it. So a brave soldier would regret any advantage gained by the enemy more than any wounds or hardships he might himself undergo in a campaign, and would even cheerfully expose himself to both rather than suffer the capture of a flag, because representing to him the cause of his country. Gerhohus takes the words of the distress of the Church, or of any loyal son of hers, at seeing faith transgressed by sectaries, or morals by professing Catholics, citing those words of the Apostle, ”Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?” And we may take the verse in the deepest sense as the lamentation of our Head over the Jews who rejected Him, or those Christians who denied Him through fear of death in the stress of persecution. What befitteth Him, as the great Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, also befits all Bishops and Pastors who find amongst their flocks those who refuse to serve the LORD. Grief, and not anger, ought to be their feeling, that they may learn how to bring back the wanderers to the fold, instead of driving them further afield by unwise harshness.

159 Consider, O LORD, how I love thy commandments : O quicken me, according to thy loving-kindness. No man saith Consider, unless he think that he will be looked on with pleasure when he is considered and seen. It is well said, See, and according to the Law, for the Law ordained that every male should present himself thrice a year before the LORD. The Saint presents himself daily, daily makes his appearance, and comes not empty, for no one is empty who hath received of God’s fulness. Now observe what it is he asks God to see,—not his outward doings, but his hidden thoughts. This is what thou shouldst offer to CHRIST, ”and thy FATHER, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly” for thy faithful love. He does not say, I have not denied Thy commandments, nor yet, I have kept them, but I have loved them, because though the Martyrs refused to deny them under torture, yet that denial was not the noblest thing in their passion, since the Apostle has said, ”Though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing;” because it is possible to obey God’s commandments through mere servile dread, without any true zeal for Him. Wherefore under the Law it was ordained that everything given for the construction and adornment of the Tabernacle was to be a free-will offering, and not a compulsory tribute. And if I feel sorrow for those who transgress Thy law, it is meet that Thou shouldst in turn look on me who love and keep it, and quicken me. Yet not after my

A. S. Matt. vi. 6. deservings, seeing that however my will may be set to obey Bp. Cowper. Thy commandments, my performance fails constantly, but according to Thy loving-kindness and Thy free mercy and compassion. G. 160 Thy word is true from everlasting : all the judgments of thy righteousness endure for evermore.

The A.V. has in the first clause, from the beginning, and gives in the margin the literal rendering, which is that of LXX. and Vulgate, The beginning of Thy words is true. That is, either, All Thy words have been true from the very outset, there never has been a time when they were false or doubtful; or else, The scope and object of Thy words, the motive with which Thou spakest them, is absolute truth; or yet again, All Thy words proceed from truth as their sole fount and origin, so that even in the beginning of their utterance their truth is manifest; or, best of all, The sum of Thy words is true. But many of the commentators have sought for some more concrete and precise meaning for the beginning of God's words. Some will have it that the work of creation, "In the beginning God made the heaven and the earth," is meant; or that His first pact with Adam is intended; another holds that the promises made to Abraham, which were the beginning of the Hebrew nation, are denoted; a fourth view is that there is an allusion to the opening words of the Law, "Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God is one LORD." But all are best summed up in the one reference to that Word which was in the beginning, and which was, in that beginning, with God. All words spoken by God to man through Him are true, and will be true for evermore, for He is the Beginning, and the Word, and the Truth, the Righteousness of the LORD, and the Judge of men, Who is over all, God blessed for ever.

C. Gen. i. 1. Haymo. Theodoret. Deut. vi. 4. S. John i. 1. P.

Collects.

O GOD, Who hast put the salvation of the faithful far MSS. from sinners, be mindful of Thy mercies, and protect our Thomas. lowliness from the assaults of the ungodly. Let Thy many mercies, O LORD, blot out our countless Mozarabic. sins, and bring us, by cleansing, into Thy pardon. (11.) Consider our lowliness, O LORD, and deliver us, for if Mozarabic. Thou hast respect unto us, though we be cast down, we are lifted up again, and are received by Thee, Who holdest us up that we fall not. (11.)

SCHIN.

The twenty-first letter, Schin, is believed to mean teeth, from , he whetted, whence the word , tooth. The H S. Greg. Nyss. in Cant. iv. 2. S. Augustine in loc. S. Albert. Mag. in Ps. iii. 7. Ricard. Victor. in Cant.

mystical sense of tooth in Holy Writ is twofold, a bad and a good one. In the first place, teeth are used, because of their crushing and cutting power, to signify persecutors, spiritual or human, as more than once in the Book of Job: "He teareth me in

his wrath who hateth me, he gnasheth upon me with his teeth;" again, "I brake the jaws of the wicked, and plucked the spoil out of his teeth;" and of Leviathan, "His teeth are terrible round about;" while the same notion reappears in the Psalter, "Break their teeth, O GOD, in their mouths." Next, the teeth are taken in a good sense to denote the preachers of the Church, and especially the Apostles, because as the teeth chew and prepare the food which is to be swallowed and digested by the body, so the Doctors of the Church grind, as it were, the hard dogmas and sayings of the Faith to fit them for reception by the general body of Christians; and also cut away their converts from their former superstitions, as the teeth bite a piece of food away from the whole mass. The marks of good preachers accord with those of good teeth: they are white with innocence, joined together in charity, even in justice, firm in constancy, living in vigour, biting into sin with doctrine and truth. And S. Bernard works out the metaphor further as a type of the Religious Life with much beauty and ingenuity. Another form of this interpretation takes the teeth to mean the inward operation of the soul, whereby it gradually assimilates divine truth, transmitting its thoughts to memory to be there retained and digested. It will be seen that these meanings are shadowed in the present strophe, wherein the main idea is the perseverance of the Saints in meditation of the Law in despite of their persecutors.

161 Princes have persecuted me without a cause: but my heart standeth in awe of thy word. A. We know, comments S. Augustine, what persecutions the Body of CHRIST, that is, Holy Church, hath suffered from the kings of the earth. What wrong did Christians do to earthly kingdoms, albeit their own King had promised them the Kingdom of Heaven? Did their King ever forbid His soldiers to pay and discharge their duty to earthly kings? Did He not say to the Jews when they were plotting calumny against Him on this very point, "Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto GOD the things that are GOD's?" Did He not pay tribute out of the fish's mouth Himself? Did not His Forerunner reply, when asked by this world's soldiers what they should do to gain eternal salvation, "Do violence to no man, neither accuse falsely, and be content with your wages?" He never said, Loose your belts, cast down your arms, desert your king, that you may be the LORD's soldiers. Did not one of His soldiers and dearest officers say to his fellow-soldiers, so to speak, the provincial troops of CHRIST, "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers?" and a little further on, "Render therefore to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour." "Owe no man anything, but to love one another?" And did he not enjoin that the Church should make supplication for kings?

How then did Christians offend them? what debt did they fail to pay? in what particular did Christians disobey earthly kings? Therefore the kings of the earth persecuted Christians without a cause. But note what is added: But my heart standeth in awe of Thy word. They too had threatening words, I exile, proscribe,

slay, torture with hooks, roast with fire, expose to wild beasts, rend the limbs. But Thy words awed me more: ”Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” My heart standeth in awe of those words, and therefore I overcame man my persecutor and Satan my tempter. ”Would that I might be like this,” exclaims S. Ambrose, after a vivid picture of a martyrdom, ”that if the persecutor should increase his rage, I might not count the bitterness of my sufferings, not measure my torments and pains, but esteem them all as trifles; and yet be in awe lest CHRIST should deny me, lest CHRIST should shut out. Rather let Him look on me, shaken indeed with the terror of bodily pangs, but more in awe of judgment to come. And if He should say to me, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?” let Him nevertheless stretch out His right hand, and stablish me, as I am affrighted with the huge rising billows of this world, in faithful steadfastness of mind.

And there are also princes of this world, rulers of darkness, who strive to oppress thee in thy heart, and inflict the cruelties of persecution within thee, promising thee earthly kingdoms, honours, and riches, if thou yield with feeble mind, and think thyself obliged to obey their behests. These princes sometimes persecute without a cause, and sometimes not so. They persecute him without a cause in whom they find nothing that is theirs, and strive to subdue him; but it is not without a cause that they persecute him who gives himself up to their power, and thoroughly enters into the possession of the world, for they justly claim to rule over their own subjects, and exact from them the price of their guilt. And against such persecutors as this the one bulwark is the fear of the LORD. Our Head hath said of Himself, ”They hated Me without a cause,” and when He was brought by reason of their hate before Pilate, the verdict of the judge was, ”I find in Him no fault at all.” If His members obey Him and follow His example, they then may take this verse as their own.

162 I am as glad of thy word : as one that findeth great spoils.

Just now the Psalmist spoke of his fear of yielding in the contest, but now he speaks of finding spoils, which is the language of a conqueror, as to yield spoils is certainly the act of the vanquished. For he knows from the Gospel that the strong man hath been bound in his palace, stripped of the armour and his power wherein he trusted, and forced to give up his spoils to be divided by the faithful. S. Ambrose, amongst several other comments on this verse, aptly takes the words of the delight of the Gentile Church in those books of Holy Scripture which were taken by CHRIST from the Jews and handed over to more faithful custodians; who have thus, under a greater than Moses, spoiled the Hebrews of their precious jewels, even as they had spoiled the Egyptians, save that in that case the booty was mere earthly gold, whereas in this the true spiritual riches have passed from one holder to another, according to those words of the LORD, ”The kingdom of GOD shall be taken from

you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." Given, yes, but how? As a victorious general gives up a conquered city to be pillaged by the troops which have shared in the dangers of the siege and assault, for it is written, "The Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by storm." And therefore great will be the rejoicing of the triumphant army in that day, in Thy presence, O Captain of our salvation; "they joy before Thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil." So runs that noble old chant of triumph at the storm of the earthly Jerusalem by the crusading host under King Godfrey, a cento from whose numerous stanzas follows here.

Urbs regia, gaudeto, Corde resulta læto, Et secura maneto, Jerusalem, exulta! This prize the King bestoweth, His very self He showeth To him whose valour gloweth, Jerusalem, be joyful! We then, His creatures purely, Should we not fight securely, With such reward fixed surely? Jerusalem, be joyful! O royal City, sounding With joy, and with heart's bounding, Abide with peace surrounding, Jerusalem, be joyful! The King commands the nations With arms and acclamations To seek thy habitations, Jerusalem, be joyful! In that safe march proceeding, The Cross-decked hosts are speeding, Where Heaven's own King is leading, Jerusalem, be joyful! O hosts of CHRIST's allegiance, On your side are the regions Of Heaven with all their legions, Jerusalem, be joyful! The King our storm is heading, None therefore death is dreading, Which smites but those back-treading, Jerusalem, be joyful! The City's ta'en, and ours! Seek we at once her bowers, And sing with all our powers, Jerusalem, be joyful!

163 As for lies, I hate and abhor them : but thy law do I love. A Jewish interpretation of this verse is that lies denotes all acts prohibited by the negative precepts of the Mosaic code, while the law signifies the positive precepts enjoining other actions. And this accords sufficiently well with the LXX. and Vulgate rendering in the first clause, iniquity. It is no marvel that love and hate should be close together in one heart, for the LORD Himself hath taught us, saying, "No man can serve two masters, for he will hate the one, and love the other," and of Himself the Psalmist saith, "Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity." There are some who hate iniquity, not for its own sake, but for the punishment which follows on it. These are imperfect, for they do good out of servile fear, which has no meritorious character, though it may be useful in preparing the soul for the grace of holy fear. Others hate iniquity because of its ugliness and deformity; and this is an advance on the former. But the perfect hate it because they love GOD, and know that it displeases, dishonours, and offends Him, whom we are bound to love, honour, and obey as our LORD and FATHER, for else He will say to us, "A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if I then be a Father, where is Mine honour? and if I be a Master, where is My fear?"

Mal. i. 6. 164 Seven times a day do I praise thee : because of thy righteous judgments. This is one of the classical passages in the Psalter which has either originated or else helped to establish the usage, common to East and West alike, of dividing the Daily Office into the Seven Canonical Hours, a custom which was gradually developed out of the three stated times of prayer which, in compliance with Jewish custom as set by the Prophet Daniel, were adopted by the Early Christians, and seems to have been known at the time when the Apostolical Constitutions were compiled, and certainly at the period when the Ambrosian hymns were written, since one of them runs thus: The Hymn, Bis ternas horas explicane, for Sext. That truly seven times a day With psalms and prayer in glad accord, Our bounden duty we may pay, By singing praises to the LORD.

L. They delight in finding mystical reasons for the choice of the number seven; and tell us how the Breviary, with its seven hours, is the seven-branched candlestick of the Church, ever burning in honour of God, how man's seven times of prayer are his thanksgivings to God for the seven Sacraments and the seven gifts of the HOLY GHOST, how they are his weapons against the seven more wicked spirits of the deadly sins, his risings after the seven daily falls of the just man, how they answer to the seven stages of man's own life, to the seven petitions of the LORD'S Prayer, to the recurring seven days into which all earthly time is distributed (whence the Greek Fathers, almost unanimously, agreeing with S. Augustine and many of the Latins, teach here that seven is not to be taken exclusively, as a limit to the seasons of prayer, but as equivalent to constantly, unfailingly, though especially at the Church's own times;) but above all, to the seven stages of the LORD'S Passion on Good Friday, seized at Matins, led before Pilate at Prime, demanded for Crucifixion at Terce, Crucified at Sext, giving up the ghost at None, taken down from the Cross at Vespers, buried at Compline. And whereas there are actually eight separate offices, albeit Matins and Lauds are practically said together to make the number seven, they cite those words of the Wise Man, "Give a portion to seven, and also to eight."

A. Cf. the Hymn, Patris 165 Great is the peace that they have, who love thy law : and they are not offended at it. Not external peace, for that does not lie in our power, nor does God promise it to us, but peace which dwells in our thoughts, when they are free from passion and disturbance, for this gift we receive from God as the pledge of the mutual love He and we have plighted; and "being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our LORD JESUS CHRIST," that peace which He bequeathed to His disciples as a parting gift, saying, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth, give I unto you." It is great peace, but not full and perfect peace here below, but it will be so in the world to come, where it has no end. And so the Cluniac:

The peace of all the faithful, The calm of all the blest, Inviolate, unvaried, Divinest, sweetest, best. That peace—but who may claim it? The guileless in their way, Who keep the ranks of battle, Who mean the thing they say. 'Tis fury, ill, and scandal, And peaceless peace below; Peace endless, strifeless, ageless, The halls of Sion know. The Rhythm, Ad perennis. A. Hugo Card. Phil. iii. 21. And they are not offended at it. More exactly, with A. V. margin, And they shall have no stumbling-block. That is, either as the Prayer Book implies, they shall find none of those difficulties in the Bible or in the doctrines of the Church which uninstructed and unspiritual persons do, (for it is written, "The LORD of Hosts shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel,") or they themselves shall walk void of all offence in their ways, held up by the Angels of GOD, so as not to hurt their foot against any stone; in such wise that any who take offence at them prove themselves thereby to be Pharisees and no true believers. But this again is reserved in its fulness for the quiet rest of heaven, as S. Peter Damiani sings:

Dwell they now in peace eternal, with all stumbling they have done. And this because "the Son of Man shall send forth His Angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend." 166 LORD, I have looked for thy saving health: and done after thy commandments. The best comment on this verse is one passage of the Gospels: "And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simcon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel: and the HOLY GHOST was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the HOLY GHOST that he should not see death till he had seen the LORD'S CHRIST." The verse holds also of the Saints of the New Testament as well as those of the Old, for "we look for the SAVIOUR, the LORD JESUS CHRIST, Who shall change our vile body that it may become like unto His glorious Body."

167 My soul hath kept thy testimonies: and loved them exceedingly.

It is a better thing to love than to keep, because keeping is sometimes a matter of necessity or of fear, but love is of affection. For which reason CHRIST the LORD called not His disciples servants, but friends, to teach them freewill obedience by love instead of compulsory service. It is only a reasonable return to GOD, for the FATHER loved me so exceedingly as not to spare His own SON, but to give Him up for me; and the SON loved me so exceedingly that He gave Himself to me, and gave me back to myself when I was lost in my sins, original and actual. And although love is here put in the second place, it is the first in the spiritual order, as the reason and means of keeping the testimonies of GOD. For love works great things, and if it refuse to work, it is not love. Wherefore the LORD saith: "He that loveth Me not, keepeth not My sayings. And His Apostle tells us further: "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour, therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. There are three things, observes the Carmelite, which chiefly hinder wayfarers in accomplishing a

journey; a heavy burden, burning heat, and pressure of hunger. And so in going the way of GOD'S Commandments, the burden of sin, the passions and desires of the heart, and the lack of divine nourishment are the Christian's difficulties;

and therefore the three things which are profitable as remedies, are confession of sins, to unload the burden of the soul, active employment in holy actions, which are as it were a shelter to the head against the heat, and constant reception of that most sacred nutriment whereby CHRIST is ministered to us, and which is rightly called the Viaticum, or travellers' food. And because proof of all these matters pertaining to salvation is to be found in the words of Holy Writ; "therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard lest at any time we should let them slip," rather striving to keep them in tenacious memory and in praiseworthy holiness of life.

168 I have kept thy commandments and testimonies: for all my ways are before thee. Happy is the man who can say to GOD, All my ways are before Thee, who has no wish to hide any of his thoughts and actions. Adam tried to hide his way, Eve hid herself after her fault, Cain hid his brother's murder. We have the will to hide, but not the power. The bad faith of the hider is complete, albeit there is no concealment with GOD. And though GOD sees all the secrets of the heart, yet it is a good thing for every one to open and spread out his soul before Him, and go to meet His light and heat. Wherefore His own command to Abraham was, "Walk before Me, and be thou perfect." Courtiers are careful about their conduct in the presence of their sovereign. What reason we have then to walk carefully and reverently before GOD our Judge! For he who misconducts himself in the presence of a judge who forbids him, exhibits the greatest contempt of court. So we, who know that GOD beholds all our acts, most grievously dishonour Him, if we have our conversation in His presence without diligent warding of our heart. Therefore Boethius said very well, "There is a great need laid upon you of uprightness, if you have no wish to dissemble, because ye do all before the eyes of a Judge Who seeth everything." And then, there is another sense, for he who has opened all the ways of his heart to GOD, and walked before Him faithfully in this life, shall have the Golden City for his very own, and can call her streets my ways, since he is free to go where he will along them, and they are all before GOD, since He is in the midst of that City, and its Light.

Hildebert, The Rhythm, Alpha et O, Magne Deus. Grant me, with the happy nation, In those streets to find a station; There with Moses and Elias Chanting endless Alleluias.

Collects.
Great is the peace of them that love Thy law, O LORD, and there is no stumbling in them. Grant that they who have never preferred anything in this world to Thy love may not ever be troubled in their thoughts. (1.) Grant us, O LORD, who rejoice

in Thy words, to make our boast for ever in Thy praise, that preserved in the love of Thy peace, we may not fear the threats of princes. (1.) Let there be peace in Thy love, O GOD, unto them that love Thee, and as Thou delightest in the blessing of peace, refresh us with the gift of Thy peace, and by the bestowal of love take stumbling away from us, that we may overcome hate through Thy peace, and cover the multitude of our sins with charity, and so keep Thy commandments, that we may be led by the sweetness of charity to the glorious vision of Thyself. (11.)

TAU.

The twenty-second and last letter of the Hebrew alphabet, Tau, signifies a mark, and especially a mark in the form of a Cross, as this very letter actually was in the Samaritan alphabet in S. Jerome's time. There are two very remarkable texts in Holy Scripture where it is used in this sense: one is Job xxxi. 35, where the A. V. reads, Behold my desire is that the Almighty would answer me," and the margin gives sign as an alternative rendering; the true sense being "My signature or subscription, in the form of a Cross, is &c.," allusion being made to the extremely ancient custom, still surviving amongst the illiterate in our own day, of subscribing documents in this fashion. The other is yet more significant. It is Ezek. ix. 4, where the mark to be set on the foreheads of such as were to be spared by the destroying Angel is a Tau or Cross, a mystical type on which it is needless to dilate here; though a curious illustration of it may be adduced by noting that a cross or a T prefixed to the name of a Roman soldier on the muster-roll signified that he was alive and able for service. The position of the Cross at the end of the Hebrew alphabet, and therefore of this alphabetical Psalm, teaches in mystery that the whole scope of the Law and Prophets, the whole divine education of the Jewish people, was to lead up to the Atonement and Sacrifice of CHRIST, while on the other hand, the ancient Christian usage of prefixing a cross to the alphabet in the horn-books intended for children (whence the name of "CHRIST-Cross row" given to the first line of letters,) teaches us that we must begin where they left off.

169 Let my complaint come before thee, O LORD : ♪ give me understanding according to thy word.

The Prayer Book version here omits a word necessary to the full sense, which the A. V. supplies, come NEAR before Thee, and so the LXX. ἐγγυπάτω and the Vulgate appropinquet. At the beginning, when the Psalmist was as it were learning the first letters of his spiritual alphabet, he was walking towards GOD, and no more. But now, at the close of his lesson, he intreats that his prayer may draw near to GOD, and reach Him. He is not as yet perfect enough to draw near in person, but his prayer goes before him as an ambassador to solicit peace. So we read of the LORD's command to Israel, "Worship ye afar off; and Moses alone shall come near the LORD, but they shall not come nigh." 2. But if Israel could thus approach GOD through Moses, much more can we draw near to Him, through JESUS CHRIST, if

we believe Him to be righteousness, truth, wisdom, the resurrection and the true life, since without these, and without peace, to keep our hearts and minds, which is also CHRIST JESUS, we cannot draw near to GOD. A holy life causes prayer to fly, and gives spiritual wings to petitions, whereby the prayer of the Saints is borne up to GOD, therefore the Psalmist earlier in the Psalm asked for a lantern for his feet, lest he should go astray while walking in this earthly pilgrimage. But now at the end and accomplishment, having finished his allotted journey, he soars altogether.

He directs his prayer to the heavenly places, he sends it into the presence of the LORD the SAVIOUR, giving it blasts of righteousness, breaths of wisdom, oarage of devotion and faith, aids of innocence and purity, for sin makes prayer heavy, and keeps it far from GOD. Let us consider further what we mean by coming near in our ordinary speech. Take the case of a teacher and his pupil. If the pupil by attention to his studies takes in the whole of his teacher's instructions and gives his mind to his directions, so that he seems to attain close likeness to his works and teaching, do we not say that he has come near his master? Show thyself then an imitator of CHRIST, as he did who said, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of CHRIST," for if thou have nothing to do with guile, hate falsehood, follow truth, keep to righteousness, and love purity, thou hast come near to CHRIST, and through CHRIST to GOD. For He, Who is ever with the FATHER, is the way by which we come to the FATHER. So then, we have learnt what it is for prayer to come near; that is, it must be lifted up by our actions. If you lift up your acts, you lift up your prayer, for he who knows how to lift up his hands, directeth his prayer into the presence of God.

And therefore, in order to be able to abandon the Egypt of earth and ascend to the Canaan of heaven, the Psalmist prays, Give me understanding, according to Thy word. Not the understanding and knowledge of this world, not that which philosophers, scientists, lawyers, artists, can teach me; but the divine understanding of Thy Word, Who is the foundation of all true wisdom and holy works.

170 Let my supplication come before thee : deliver me according to thy word.

Observe the order of the words here and in the preceding verse. First we had, "Let my cry come near; then "Give me understanding," and that "according to Thy Word," and now we have Let my prayer enter in (LXX., Syr., Arab., Vulg. before Thee. Just so, if you wish for an interview with a man of very high rank, first you come near his house, then you ask for information and instruction as to his intentions, then you ask permission to enter, lest you should be driven away and refused admittance. Knock therefore at the door of the heavenly palace, knock, not with your bodily hand, but with the right hand of prayer. For the voice can knock as well as the hand, as it is written, "It is the voice of my Beloved that knocketh. And when you have knocked, see how you go in, lest after entering you should not get the sight of the King. For there are many who make their way into palaces, and do

not at once get an audience of an earthly sovereign, but have to watch constantly to obtain an interview at last. Nor have they the choice of the opportunity, they come when they are sent for, and then present their petition, if they wish to be favourably received. And the first care in addressing the sovereign is to avoid any slip or offence. How much more ought we to intreat God that our prayer may enter the door of His mercy!

And the kind of prayers which enter into God's presence are such as you offer up for widows and orphans, for a merciful, devout and faithful person, or in time of trouble or sorrow, and if you are moved yourself, when praying, with a sense of grief, then your prayer enters into God's favour, and enters His house if the Church make her supplication with thee, if all the people intreat, that it may obtain the favour of the LORD. Deliver me according to Thy word. I do not ask either to be rescued from evils or to enjoy blessings save in accordance with Thy Word, whereby we are first invited to drink the cup of the LORD's Passion, that we may be fitted to drink the new wine in the kingdom of God.

171 My lips shall speak of thy praise : when thou hast taught me thy statutes. Shall speak. It should rather be shall pour forth, as a fountain, which is the way S. Jerome and the Arabic version take the word. And though a very beautiful meaning, that of the unceasing praise of GOD by His Saints in Heaven, after they have learnt all that GOD means to teach them, and are at last face to face with essential Wisdom, may be drawn from the turn given here, (as by LXX. and Vulgate,) to the latter clause, yet the words ought to run thus: Because Thou teachest me Thy statutes. The delight and thankfulness of the Psalmist because of GOD's instructions are the cause and occasion of his song of praise. And therefore the highest sense to us is that whereas under the Old Covenant mere human teachers held, and too often withheld, the key of knowledge, the Christian Church has the LORD JESUS, the Eternal WORD Himself, for her teacher, and therefore pours forth His praise in an unceasing fountain of glad laudation. No one can pour forth a hymn of praise till he have first learnt GOD's statutes, and from GOD Himself as the teacher. "For One is your Master, even CHRIST;" nor can any one sing who is in a state of fear and dread of punishment, since they who are captive to the law of sin are forced to say, "How shall we sing the LORD's song in a strange land?"

Mine onely schoole shall be Mount Calvarie; The pulpit but the Cross; and teacher none But the mere Crucifix to mortifle; No letters but Thy blessed wounds alone; No commaes but Thy stripes, no periods But Thy nailes, crown of thorns, speare, whips, and rods. None other booke but Thy unclasped side, Wherein's contained all skils angelical: None other lesson but CHRIST crucified Will I e'er learne, for that is all in all: Matter to please the most displeased mind. 172 Yea, my tongue shall sing of thy word: for all thy commandments are righteous.

Sing of should rather be respond to, and the sense may be either the utterance of an assenting ”Amen,” or the echoing and repeating the promises of GOD, a meaning which may with very little pressure be taken as fulfilled in the anti-phonah chants of the Christian Church; the most ancient form of which was that the officiant began each verse, while the people sang the close of it; a practice ascribed to the teaching of S. Ignatius of Antioch, the pupil of S. John the Divine. But the LXX. and Vulgate have, My tongue shall pronounce Thy word, and several of the commentators hence observe that as praise is referred to in the previous verse, so A. preaching is indicated here. The word, as translated by G. LXX. and Vulgate, φθέγξαιτο, pronuntiabit, signifies loud and clear utterance, and this, if explained of preaching, denotes the boldness and plainness with which the preacher of God’s Word should discharge his office; or, if it be taken of singing, will depict the Psalmist as precenting the praise of God in a great congregation, whose responses swell the tide of resonant harmony. Whichever of these interpretations S. Ambros. be adopted, the comment of S. Ambrose will equally apply: He who hath learnt God’s statutes, speaks the word of God, and he who speaks the word of God, speaks no idle word. An idle word is speaking of men’s works. Therefore the Saint saith that God hath given him grace that his mouth should not speak the works of men;

since that is an idle word, and not merely idle, but even perilous, since we shall have to give account for it. It is no light peril, when you have so many words of God and works of God which He did in the books of the Old Testament and in the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles, to pass them by, to speak and hear S. Chrysost. the things of the world. For all Thy commandments are righteous, whereas, S. Chrysostom observes, much of the talk and songs of the world is made up of licentiousness, 1 S. Pet. iv. jesting, frivolity, slander, lying, and such like, for which

11. heavy punishment is reserved; wherefore ”if any man speak, Phil. iv. 8. let him speak as the oracles of God,” ”whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.” 173 Let thine hand help me : for I have chosen thy commandments.

S. Ambros. It is a prayer for the Advent of the LORD, for CHRIST is the Hand of GOD; and in a lower sense, the armies of heaven Anon. Græc. and all the angelic powers are His hand too, whereby He executes His pleasure, wherefore He is here besought to send them to the help of His servant. And CHRIST, Whose Hands saved us on the Cross, does become our Helper and SAVIOUR daily, by forgiving our sins, and conferring spiritual Grace upon us. Thus GOD answers that old prayer of His waiting Church, ”Glorify Thy hand and Thy right arm, that they may set forth Thy wondrous works.” This is that right hand of Moses, which appeared leprous when taken out of his bosom, and whole again when thrust back into his bosom once

more; as the SON of GOD was counted as a leper and outcast by the Jews when He appeared on earth out of the bosom of the FATHER by His Incarnation, and is adored by His faithful people as the Most Holy One, returned to the FATHER's bosom by His Ascension, and to be manifested as such in His second appearing to judge the world. The words, for I have chosen Thy commandments, make this prayer especially suitable to the Martyrs, and to all preachers of righteousness, against whom the world rages through hate of their message. It ought to be the prayer of all preachers still, who should bear in mind how Peter toiled all the night in fishing, and caught nothing, till he cast in his net in the Name of the LORD.

174 I have longed for thy saving health, O LORD : and in thy law is my delight. There are many men who desire saving health, yet not God's, but that of the body, in this world. They wish for long life, and to extend their span to the utmost limit of extreme old age; while others are broken down with bodily infirmity, and count it happiness to enjoy good health, seeking, like Asa, "not to the LORD, but to the physicians," whose prescriptions are often apt to be unlike those enjoined on such as are desirous of Divine knowledge, for physicians forbid fasting, studying, and intense thought, and thus he who gives himself up to physicians, denies himself to himself. But he who seeks God's saving health follows CHRIST, Who is the salvation of God, and looks not for such things as concern the body, but things eternal, even while he is here in the body, making his constant delight and meditation in the law of the LORD; looking, under the Old Law, for the Incarnation, and under the New, for the Second Advent of the SAVIOUR.

A. Z. 175 O let my soul live, and it shall praise thee : and thy judgments shall help me. The words may of course be taken in the literal sense as a prayer for prolongation of life in this world, but they prefer to take it of that truer and higher life with CHRIST in heaven, where our soul shall praise Him. And the Saint can truly say to GOD, Thy judgments shall help me to this end, because weak and sinful though I be, and therefore in awe of GOD's judgments because of my conscience of sins, yet as they humble and chasten me, they help forward that purging and sanctifying of my soul which enables me to look forward to the judgment with rejoicing hope. 176 I have gone astray like a sheep that is lost : O seek thy servant, for I do not forget thy commandments.

Although this Psalm contains many various speakers, at one time the most faithful Saints of the Old Testament, at another the elect of the new regeneration, some of them enduring martyrdom, others constant in their steadfast meditation in the law of the LORD, yet that the whole Catholic Church speaks in her members is made clear by this language at the close. For it is man in general that speaks, gone astray in Adam by the law of sin, and unable to return of himself to the LORD's fold, because he had lost that gift of wisdom he once possessed. O seek Thy servant: Come then, LORD JESU, seek Thy servant, seek Thy weary sheep, come, O my

Shepherd, seek me as Joseph did his sheep. Thy sheep has gone astray while Thou lingerest, while Thou art among the mountains. Leave Thy ninety-and-nine, and come to seek the one which is lost. Come without dogs, come without evil servants, come without the hireling, who knoweth not how to enter by the door, come without any helper, without any messenger, I have long been waiting for Thy coming. I know that Thou wilt come, for I do not forget Thy commandments. Come then, not with a rod, but in love, and the spirit of meekness. Seek me, that I may seek Thee, seek me till Thou findest me, and till I find Thee.

Seek me, exposed as I am to the wolves, nay, already torn and so weakened by them that I have no strength to seek Thee, and must wait for Thee to seek me first, that finding me, Thou mayest say to Thy blessed angels all gathered together, ”Rejoice with Me, for I have found My sheep which was lost. And what is His answer to such a prayer? ”Behold I, even I, will both search My sheep, and seek them out; as a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered, so will I seek out My sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the dark and cloudy day. ”O LORD,” exclaims one of His true Saints, ”these promises were made to be made good to some, and why not to me? I hunger, I need, I thirst, I wait. Here is Thy handwriting in Thy word, and in the last Sacrament I had Thy seal affixed to it.

I resolve to be as importunate till I obtain, and as thankful afterwards, as I shall be enabled to be through Thy grace, being sure that I am altogether lost and undone unless Thou hear the desires of the lowly, and if Thou shouldst hear and grant, I know myself and my heart so well, that I have of my own nothing to glory in, but I shall wholly glory in the LORD, and I determine and believe that I shall to all eternity praise and magnify the riches of Thy grace.”

The Hymn, Jesu dulcissime e throno gloriæ. JESU, most loving One, Who from Thy glory’s throne, Camest to seek the sheep roaming astray, JESU, Thou sweetest Guest, JESU, Thou Shepherd best, Draw my heart after Thee, now, and for aye. I who have lost my way, I am that sheep astray, Save me, CHRIST JESU, from peril of hell, And in the gushing flood of Thine own precious Blood Wash me, that cleansed I may cherish Thee well. Comfort of weeping eyes, Thou the soul’s sweetest prize, Fount of grace, love, and sole gladness below, SAVIOUR, with Whom is rest, JESU, Thou Shepherd best, After death save me, and guard from the foe. JESU, Thou fairest here, Bridegroom most true and dear, Brighter than sunshine, than honey more sweet, Grant me, O LORD, Thy grace, give Thy lost sheep a place When life is ended, in joy at Thy feet. Amen.

”So far as I could, and as I have been helped by the LORD, I have handled and explained this great Psalm. Assuredly wiser and more learned persons than I have done it better, and will do so hereafter; yet that is no reason why my service should be lacking to it, especially as my brethren, for whom I am bound to discharge this

office, have asked it earnestly of me." And now: Glory be to the FATHER, Who is good and gracious; Glory be to the SON, the Word that endureth for ever in heaven; Glory be to the HOLY GHOST, Who giveth light and understanding unto the simple. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world without end. Amen.

Collects.

Let our prayer, O LORD, enter into the presence of Thy MSS. Majesty, and as Thou hast recalled us like lost sheep from Thomas. our former errors, so grant that, taught by the preaching of Thy statutes, we may attain to the full grace of Thy lovingkindness. (1.) O GOD, the Palm of all blessedness, Who as a healthful provider teachest Thy faithful ones to walk in Thy law, to search out Thy testimonies, and to keep Thy commandments; grant that we may with all our hearts seek Thy statutes, understand Thy words, and proclaim Thy wondrous works, that we who hitherto have been wandering like lost sheep, may rejoice in being borne back to Paradise on Thy loving shoulders. Who livest. We humbly beseech Thee, O LORD, that made to be doers of Thy judgments, keepers of Thy commandments, and searchers of Thy testimonies, we may rejoice in that Thou hast found the lost sheep, and by Thy diligence as the Good Shepherd hast brought it back to the fold of the Church, bearing it on Thy sacred shoulders, and thus united us to the fellowship of Thy Holy Angels. To Thee be glory with the eternal FATHER and the HOLY GHOST for ever and ever.

Make us, O LORD, to walk in Thy law holy and undefiled in the way of this life, diligently to keep Thy commandments, and leave us not ever alone in the keeping of Thy statutes. (1.) A.

Psalm 120

Argument.
ARG. THOMAS. That CHRIST may bestow on us a dart wherewith to confound unrighteous tongues. The Voice of CHRIST in the Passion. The Voice of CHRIST to the FATHER touching the Jews. A stranger among aliens prophesies trouble. These fifteen degrees are the progresses of souls, whereby ascending from the desire of a holy life to better things they are perfectly delivered in Heaven from the trouble and perils of this present life.

VEN. BEDE. Songs of Degrees are songs of ascensions, whence the more significant Greek name is Songs of goings-up, because they lead only towards heavenly things; as though one had fallen into a pit, and a ladder were set that he might be able to ascend. So when the people of Israel had come into the pit of captivity, and in its trouble called upon the LORD, it was heard, and was brought back to its country, so that it could say on the restoration of the city and temple, Behold, now, praise the Lord, all ye servants of the Lord, ye that stand in the house of the Lord. After this example, whoso falls into the pit of sin, has need of degrees of humility whereby he may return above. And these Degrees or Steps are said to be numbered fifteen in the Psalter or in Solomon's temple, to teach that we can rise again to heavenly things by the septenary of the Law and the octave of the LORD's Resurrection, and can in no other way escape the prince of this world, unless the repose of the soul after the flesh be granted, as though in the seventh age, and the resurrection of the flesh at the end be created, as on the octave.

By reason of these fifteen Degrees, that is, the knowledge of both Testaments, it is recorded that the water of the Flood, which rose vastly above the hollows of the valleys and the level of the plains, was fifteen cubits higher than the tops of the loftiest mountains; because the faith of the Church, hallowed by the waters of Baptism, not only readily surpasses the moral code of the Gentiles, but by its height of virtue exceeds the mightiest intellects of philosophers, because it knows how to live rightly in the world, and to believe, hope, and love the everlasting life of the soul with the resurrection of the body in the world to come.

Throughout the Psalm the Prophet speaks. In the first part he calls unto the LORD, to be delivered from lying lips and a deceitful tongue. When I was in trouble I called upon the Lord. In the second he is grievously afflicted, because abiding long in this life, he is worn out with bearing the faults of others, and with association amongst evil men. Woe is me that I am constrained to dwell. EUSEBIUS OF CESAREA. Concerning dwelling. SYRIAC PSALTER. Anonymous. The first song of going-up. The people captive in Babylon pray for deliverance. And we in like manner pray to be delivered from evil spirits.

There is some difference of opinion as to the exact meaning of the title Songs of Degrees or Gradual Psalms, prefixed to the fifteen poems which follow the great Song of the Law, and which, from their completeness in themselves, have been aptly styled, "The Little Psalter. One ancient Jewish view is that they were intended to be liturgically used in processions to the Temple, one upon each of the fifteen steps leading up from the court of the women to the great portal of the inner court of the men, or "Court of Israel. The fact that there was some ascent is certain from the phrase "go up" used of Hezekiah's visit of thanksgiving; the probability that the steps were fifteen in number is inferred from the double mention in Ezekiel of two flights of stairs in the temple of his vision, one of which had seven steps and the other eight. But the most ancient Christian tradition, without being inconsistent with this one, is more probable, that they are originally pilgrim-songs, for going up to Jerusalem, and their title is derived from the same root as the verb used to denote the going up of Israel out of Egypt, and the going up of the Jews with Ezra and Nehemiah out of Babylon to Jerusalem.

It is then probable enough that, first written as expressions of longing for a delayed blessing, and perhaps marking a series of events connected with the end of the captivity, as Origen believes, they came to be used later by the caravans of Hebrew pilgrims going up to Jerusalem at the three yearly festivals. And, so explained, a remarkable order is manifest in them. Psalm cxx. expresses weariness of heathen companionship and surroundings; cxxi., the first sight of the mountain girdle of Palestine by the pilgrim, now fairly on his way, and trusting in GOD to keep him safe on his road; cxxii., the concourse of pilgrims as every cross-road sends its single travellers to swell the great caravan of the main highway; cxxiii., a prayer in peril of an attack by banditti; cxxiv., thanksgiving for deliverance from that danger; cxxv., the first sight of the mountains round Jerusalem; cxxvi., happy and peaceful talk with sympathising hosts sheltering and feeding their pilgrim countrymen; cxxvii. brings them in sight of the peaceful City itself, and therewith recalls how it was once compassed by war as a punishment for neglecting its Keeper, the true Builder of the glorious House, the one sure Watchman of its formidable walls; cxxviii. is the greeting to the citizens who come out of the houses to meet and welcome the approaching pilgrims; cxxix. is the thankful expression of security uttered by those who are now safe within the fortifications; cxxx.

brings them in sight of the Temple, and breathes mingled tones of penitence, longing, and hope, uttered from the valley, "out of the deep," as the pilgrims prepare to ascend to Mount Moriah; cxxxi. is the hush of reverence on near approach to GOD's House of Prayer; cxxxii. brings the pilgrims in full view of its pomp and beauty, which causes them to break out into eager words of praise and blessing, recalling the memories of David's zeal for the Tabernacle; cxxxiii. is caused by the sight of the anointed priests, visible on the steps and in the outer court; cxxxiv. brings the happy pilgrims within the sacred precincts, and is their greeting to the priests whom they had seen at a little distance just before; while the closing words of all, being the priestly benediction uttered upon the travellers, fitly end the pilgrimage, and are the final reply to the first utterance of the series, "When I was in trouble I called upon the LORD," an-

Exod. xiii. 18. Ezra i. 3, 5, vii. 9. Neh. ii. 15, vii. 5, &c. Neale, Sermons in a Religious House, xvii. A. Delitzsch. Sifri.

swered by "The LORD that made heaven and earth, bless thee out of Sion. Whatever their first occasion and their subsequent employment may have been, at any rate there is no doubt of the religious fitness of the old Jewish comment on this Jacob's ladder of prayer and praise, that each Psalm of the series is a "Song on the steps on which GOD leads the righteous up to a happy hereafter. This notion has been worked out in detail by several of the Christian commentators, beginning with S. Hilary, and they are for the most part careful to point out that while the Latin word gradus may imply steps for descending (whence some few have spoken here of the degrees of humility,) yet the Greek ἀναβαθμῶν must mean goings-up, and therefore that we are obliged to limit the meaning to progress in the higher walks of faith. The great Carmelite expositor alleges that the fifteen Psalms were divided by the Jews into three portions of five, with prayers intercalated, much as the Gregorian division of Matins into three Nocturns; and that each of the three grades of advance in the spiritual life is betokened by each quinary; the beginners, the progressors, and the perfect; or, in other terms, those who are severally in the purgative, the illuminative, and the unitive way. And thus it will be noticed that in Pss. cxx.—cxxiv. there is constant reference to trouble and danger; in cxxv.—cxxix. to confidence in GOD; in cxxx.—cxxxiv. to direct communion with Him in His house.

And a later commentator defines the fifteen degrees of going up out of the valley of weeping to the presence of GOD to be (1) affliction, (2) looking to GOD, (3) joy in communion, (4) invocation, (5) thanksgiving, (6) confidence, (7) patient waiting for deliverance, (8) GOD's grace and favour, (9) fear of the LORD, (10) martyrdom, (11) hatred of sins, (12) humility, (13) desire for the coming of CHRIST, (14) concord and charity, (15) constant blessing of GOD. The Gradual Psalms are called by the Greek Church Proskyria, from the opening words in the LXX. Version of Psalm cxx., and they are said, all but the last, at Vespers in the fifteen weeks before

Christmas, cxxxvi. being substituted for cxxxiv., already occurring in Nocturns, and they are also used on weekdays in Lent. In the West, they were anciently recited daily throughout Lent, but are now restricted to the Wednesdays of that season, and appointed to be said in choir before Matins. They are broken up into three quinaries, with intervening versicles and prayers.

Various Uses.
Gregorian. Monday: Vespers. [Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Commemoration of Passion, Five Wounds, Office of the Dead: Vespers. Little Office of B.V.M.: Terce.]

Antiphons.
Gregorian. I called, * and He heard me. [Maundy Thursday, &c.: With those that hate peace, I was peaceful, when I spake unto them, they assailed me without cause. Office of the Dead: Woe is me, that I am constrained to dwell with Mesech.] Monastic. As Ferial Gregorian. Ambrosian. O LORD, deliver * my soul. Parisian. My soul was made a sojourner, O LORD, * with them that hate peace I was peaceful. [Maundy Thursday: All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way, and the LORD hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.] Lyons. As Gregorian.

1 When I was in trouble I called upon the LORD: and he heard me.
Seest thou the gain of affliction, seest thou the readiness of mercy? the gain of affliction, in that it brings men to pour forth holy prayers; the readiness of mercy, granted at once when they call. For if the prophet Elisha would not allow his servant to send away the woman who came to him, saying, ”Let her alone, for her soul is vexed within her: that is, he would say, she has her affliction itself as her chief defence and excuse; much more will GOD be sure not to repel any who comes to Him with sorrowful soul. Therefore CHRIST declares that they are blessed who mourn. If then thou wouldst ascend these steps, cut away whatever is luxurious and relaxed in thy life, gird thyself with diligent conduct, and withdraw from earthly things. This is the first going-up. For it is not, it is not possible at once to ascend a ladder and to keep hold of earth. Seest thou how high the heaven is? Knowest thou the shortness of time? Knowest thou the uncertainty of thy departure? Delay not, therefore, nor put off, but with great alacrity begin this migration, that in one day thou mayest ascend two, and three, and ten, and twenty steps. Even one step upwards is leaving earth; and lowly as the place is, it is not the less the first elevation. Note, too, the admirable order of the words.

First comes trouble, then a cry, lastly a hearing, to make us know that the prayers of the faithful reach the LORD in an appointed order. The trouble against which the Saints call on GOD is not such as the world fears, peril of death, loss of goods, pain or loneliness, all which are trifles or even blessings to them, as bringing them nearer to GOD; but the snares of sin in all its forms, whether tempting to ambition, to bodily indulgence, to erroneous belief, or any other thing displeasing to the

LORD; lest they should subdue our weak natures, and drag us down to the depths of evil. And all true prayer for deliverance must unite in itself the three marks of this one; necessity, when I was in trouble; devotion, I called; direction in the right way, upon the Lord.

2 Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips : and from a deceitful tongue. A.

The moment a man begins to go up, that is, thinks of advancing in spiritual things, and of despising the world that he may cling to GOD alone, he begins to suffer from the tongues of adversaries, and what is more grievous, of those who are for turning him away from salvation, and he who does not suffer these, is not even trying to advance. The whole scope of the Psalm seems to imply that the false teaching of the idolatrous nations amongst whom the exiled Israelites were dwelling is the primary notion of this verse, and therefore the earliest Christian gloss explains the words similarly of erroneous doctrine; though they may be taken in a wider sense, as including such enemies as Haman and Sanballat, and their later representatives amongst the foes of the Church. The Latin rendering, unrighteous lips, has led to a distinction being drawn between this phrase and the last clause of the verse. Unrighteousness is shameless, open in its daring, open in its efforts, open in its execution. Unrighteous lips are those who, denying GOD, declare that there is no room in human life for progress in GOD’s religion, but that the only good is to live for luxury and bodily enjoyment; taking away, as they do, belief in GOD’s oversight, providence, and will, and power. But the work of the deceitful tongue is treacherous, and mischievous by reason of dissembling, because it aims at overthrowing religion under the name of religion, and bends down to death with the hope of life.

The people who say, ”Surely you are not going to do this? nobody does it, and you are not the only Christian in the world; are the deceitful tongue. And if proof be given that others have done the thing in question, and the passage of the Gospel where the LORD commanded it be read, what do they say with their deceitful tongue? ”You cannot possibly fulfil it, it is a great thing even to make the attempt; some of them deter by telling you not to do the thing, others do even more harm by praising up those who have done it as so superior to every one else that there is no use in trying to imitate them. It is the old fraud before which our first parents fell. The unrighteous lips said, ”Eat,” the deceitful tongue added, ”Ye shall be as gods, ye shall not surely die. Yet it is not only from the wicked lips and tongue of others that the disciple of CHRIST needs to be delivered, but from his own; from all boastfulness, spiritual pride, and glorying in his own merits.

A deceitful tongue, observes a great mediæval theologian, is a fraudulent temptation, a false opinion, a vainglorying, whenever thou gloriest in thine own merits, either in open speech or in silent thought. Thou hearest, unknowingly, the deceitful tongue. Sometimes the vainglorying arises from man’s opinions, sometimes from

the prompting of the devil, but in each case it is from unrighteous lips and a deceitful tongue. And if thou listen with pleasure to a tongue of this sort, thou art acting not only foolishly, but unrighteously. ”For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?” Think thou how unrighteous a thing it is to be ungrateful to One Who giveth freely, nay, even to commit robbery against Him. For He saith, ”My glory will I not give to another.” And the warning against one’s own tongue extends to all faults of gossip, detraction, murmuring, and the like.

Isa. xlii. 8. S. August. Serm. ad Fratres in eremo. 3 What reward shall be given or done unto thee, thou false tongue: even mighty and sharp arrows, with hot burning coals.

Simple as this verse looks at first sight, so rendered, it is in truth one of no little obscurity and difficulty. It is quite possible to take it as here given; but it is by no means certain what is the force of given, whether it be taken in a good or a bad sense, nor what is the subject of the thee in the first clause; which may refer to GOD, to the Psalmist, to the lying tongue, or to some indefinite person. Nor is it clear, in the second clause, whether the words are intended to describe the sharp and burning language of the evil tongue itself or the punishments awaiting it. The Vulgate reads, What shall be given thee, or what shall be added to thee, unto the deceitful tongue? That is, what weapons of defence shall be given thee to defend thyself against evil speakers? in which case the latter clause of the verse supplies the answer, that only the sharp, powerful, and burning Word of GOD avails to overcome them. S. Augustine, agreeing that the arrows are GOD’s words, takes the coals as denoting the fervid examples of those sinners, once cold and black, but now converted to GOD and glowing with His love; though others, dwelling on the adjective desolating here found in the Vulgate coupled with coals, think that if sinners are here intended, it is as awful warnings from the destruction that attends their deeds and awaits themselves; and therefore prefer to interpret the coals as fervent prayer, and to compare the touching of Isaiah’s lips by a coal from the altar. Another rendering is, addressed to the sinner, What gain or advantage will thy false tongue be to thee? and the reply comes as before, Thou canst only wound and burn with it; or else the last clause may be taken, as suggested above, What is the fit punishment of a tongue which is like sharp

A. A misconception of the LXX. ἄνθραξι τοῖς ἐρημικοῖς, meaning simply ”coals of the desert,” i.e. charcoal made from shrubs growing in the wilderness. arrows and hot coals? On the whole the English rendering seems preferable, and the only thing necessary to add is that hot burning coals ought rather to be coals of the broom-plants (), well known to the Arabs as making a very hot and durable fire, of which the Rabbins fable that it has been known to burn unrenewed for a whole

year. Vieyra, who follows the interpretation of the Prayer Book Version, notes that the arrows at most take away life, and may be the cause of glory, as to the martyrs, but the coals brand where they touch, and add dishonour to death. 4 Woe is me that I am constrained to dwell with Mesech: and to have my habitation among the tents of Kedar.

H. Phil. i. 2 Rom. viii. 9. A. Mesech, mentioned twice before in Holy Scripture, appears to denote the Moschi, a barbarous tribe of the Caucasus, far to the north of Canaan, probably one of those whence the mixed Samaritan race was sprung. while Kedar undoubtedly stands for one of the Bedouin tribes of the south, descended from one of the sons of Ishmael, a warrior clan, famous and dreaded as archers. The word Meshech means possession, from the root , while Kedar is black; and the mystical import will then be the weariness the Saints feel of all worldly goods and of contact with the works of darkness. But the LXX. and Vulgate do not take Mesech as a proper name at all, interpreting it as a verb, and translate, My sojourning is prolonged, I have dwelt with the dwellers of Kedar, from which rendering, however, an almost identical meaning is deduced, that the Saint longs to depart and be with CHRIST, and that the body is the dark tent in which the soul is prisoned. S. Hilary lays stress further on the Latin rendering with the tents of Kedar, as being something different from in the tents of Kedar, and denoting that albeit the Saints are living in the flesh, yet if the arms of their warfare be not carnal, but the power of GOD, they do not inhabit the tents of Kedar, but only dwell beside them (which is in fact the true rendering of the Hebrew,) and ”are not in the flesh, but in the spirit.” S. Augustine, rendering longinquans, that is, distant, instead of prolongatus, comments thus: Sojourning is a pilgrimage. He who dwells in a foreign land, not in his own State, is called a sojourner. My sojourning, he saith, is

Not juniper, as S. Jerome and A.V. erroneously. In favour of the tongue being described as like arrows and coals are the similar passages, Ps. lvii. 5, lix. 7, and S. James iii. 6. Against it is the literal rendering of ”mighty and sharp arrows,” which should be ”sharp arrows of the Mighty One.” Reading , or else . distant. How so? Sometimes, brethren, when a man is abroad, he is living amongst better people than in his own country; but that is not the case when we are away from the Heavenly Jerusalem. For a man changes his country, and is sometimes well off in his sojourning, and finds on his travels faithful friends whom he could not find in his own country. He had enemies who drove him out of it, and he found abroad what he had not at home. Not such is that country Jerusalem, where all are good; whoso is away from it is amongst the evil, nor can be withdrawn from the evil till he returns to the fellowship of the angels, and is in the place whence he set out. That is a mighty fatherland, and hapless are they who are absent from it, for the stateliest palaces of earthly monarchs, in comparison with the Golden City, are but as the rough tents of the wandering Arab.

For all earth's glories fade Against that City's light, The streets with gold inlaid, The walls with jasper dight, And all earth's pomps die out Before the throne of GOD, Her songs before the shout Heaven's armies send abroad. Not with the tents of Kedar, not with the children of the bondwoman, ought the Church, even here on earth, to be in her camp of warfare. Rather she must "cast out the bondwoman and her son," and march with the "tents of Shem" (promised as the tabernacles for the Gentile descendants of Japhet) on to the goal of pilgrimage, Jerusalem which is above, the free mother of us all. 5 My soul hath long dwelt among them: that are enemies unto peace. 6 I labour for peace, but when I speak unto them thereof: they make them ready to battle. The patristic and mediæval commentators, though not compelled by any grammatical reason, divide these words differently. They take the first clause thus: My soul hath been long a sojourner; and then construe the remaining clause of verse 5 with the succeeding words: With them that hate peace I was peaceful; when I spake unto them, they assailed me without cause. It is said, Long a sojourner. And yet threescore and ten years is no very long sojourn, still it is not the duration of time, but the weariness and trouble of sorrow that is meant. On the latter portion of the passage, S. Augustine teaches that we have here the voice of the Catholic Church protesting against any unwise attempt to narrow her limits, to break her unity, to rend her fellowship,

I A. on the ground that within her pale are found many whose lives and doctrines are in contradiction to her code. Patience, be peaceable and loving now, GOD will judge and separate hereafter. In this world the precept for Christians is, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." For it is a part of Christian perfection to be peaceful, even with them that hate peace, in the hope of amending them, not through assent to their evil ways.

The Yorkshire hermit explains the words of those who labour for the Reunion of Christendom, and are ridiculed and opposed by those who prefer to rend the Church still further. But the deepest sense of all is to take them of our Head. And in doing so, a more exact rendering of the Hebrew will help us: Full long has My soul dwelt beside him that hateth peace. I am Peace, but when I speak, they are for war. It was full long, that sorrowful three and thirty years in the midst of a disobedient and gainsaying people. It was full long, that forty days in the wilderness beside him that hateth peace, that spiritual Goliath who challenges the hosts of Israel to battle. CHRIST is Peace, the Prince of Peace, the true Solomon of His elect Israel, and when He spake to carnal Israel as never man spake, they tried to cast Him headlong, then to stone Him, and at last cried out, "Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him." Not less does the earlier part tell us of Him Who cried unto His FATHER all night in prayer, and in the Garden, and on the Cross, Who was heard, and raised again, and exalted; after He had been made the mark for lying lips and a deceitful tongue; Who bids us follow His example, Who is the SON of the Most High GOD, the King of the Heavenly Jerusalem; and Who has taught

us, saying, ”Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of GOD.”

Glory be to the FATHER, Who heard me in trouble; glory be to the SON, Who is Peace; glory be to the HOLY GHOST, Who vouchsafes to dwell amongst us. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world without end. Amen.

Collects.
O GOD, merciful softener of our trouble, deliver the souls of the faithful far from the lips of the ungodly slanderers, that defended by spiritual aids, they may not be overthrown by any attacks. (1.) We cry unto Thee, O LORD, when we are in trouble: that Thou mayest deliver us from unrighteous lips, and preserve us from a deceitful tongue, nor suffer us to be brought down by those who flatter us to commit unrighteousness, nor yet suffer our consent to be bowed down to those who counsel departure from the truth. (11.) O CHRIST, true Sun of Righteousness, draw forth from Mozarabic the darkness of sins our soul, which has long been sojourning in the tabernacles of Kedar, and shed around it the light of Thy holy brightness, that in this world we may be peaceful with them that hate peace, and in the world to come may be blessed and joined in holy concord with the sons of Jerusalem. (11.)

Psalm 121

TITLE. A Song of Degrees. ARG. THOMAS. That CHRIST, unsleeping, may overshadow and guard Jerusalem. The Voice of the Church to the Apostles. The Voice of the Church concerning the Prophets or the peoples to CHRIST. VEN. BEDE. At the first step the Prophet, set in trouble, after the example of that publican who beat his breast and dared not lift up his eyes to heaven, besought that he might be delivered from unrighteous lips and a deceitful tongue. But now, taking breath on the second step, he lifted up his eyes unto the hills; that is, to the interceding Saints, by whose prayers he hoped to attain heavenly gifts. The Prophet speaks thus in his own person, being nevertheless himself a mountain and a wondrous patriarch, but for that very reason he has narrated how he successfully climbed up by these steps, to show us in clear recital the kinds of heavenly virtues of which we are ignorant.

The Prophet, as we have said, ascending to the heavenly Jerusalem, in the first clause saith that he hath lifted up his eyes to the merits of the Saints, that he might be helped by their prayers; lest his soul should give way to the attack of the enemy. I have lifted up mine eyes. In the second place he undoubtedly promises himself what he knows he has fittingly asked for; teaching us that what good things soever we ask for with a steady heart, we are to believe without doubt will be given to us. The Lord is my keeper, &c. EUSEBIUS OF CÆSAREA. The Return from Babylon and from the dispersion. SYRIAC PSALTER. Anonymous. One of the songs of the going-up from Babylon, and promises of good things. S. ATHANASIUS. A Psalm of thanksgiving. Gregorian. Monday: Vespers. [Prayer on Mount of Olives: II. Noct. Office of Dead: Vespers. Little Office B.V.M.: Terce.] Monastic. Week-days: Terce. Ambrosian. Monday: Vespers.

Antiphons.
Gregorian. Whence shall come my help? [Prayer on Mount of Olives: It came to pass in those days that JESUS went up into a mountain to pray, and was all night in prayer to GOD. Office of Dead: The LORD shall keep thee from all evil yea it is even the LORD that shall keep thy soul.] Monastic. As Psalm cxx. Ambrosian. Thy right hand shall help us, O LORD. Parisian. I have lifted up mine eyes unto the

hills * my help is from the LORD. [Maundy Thursday: He was offered, because He willed it, and He will bear the sin of many.] Lyons. } My help is from the LORD * Who hath made Mozarabic. } heaven and earth. 1 I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills: from whence cometh my help. 2 My help cometh even from the LORD: who hath made heaven and earth.

This Psalm, as already noted, is a song for the march of the caravan of pilgrims to Jerusalem, as they lift their eyes from the plains of Babylon to the mountain-ranges which gird their native land. The meaning of the two verses is best brought out by reading the latter clause of the first verse as an interrogation; and the force will then be, I will make the needful effort to reach my home, I will survey the mountains which are interposed between it and me, looking round for aid, and will breast and climb them from the valley below, be they never so high and steep, till I find a pass, and reach the other side. But the task is a hard one, Whence shall come my help to fulfil it? And then the second verse supplies the answer. The mountains thus denote the kingdoms and mighty ones of this world, attempting to bar the way of the Church, or of the individual Saint, but doomed

to be made low in order to prepare the way of the LORD. And so it is written, ”Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the LORD of Hosts. Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain. Or the mountains may be looked at not in the light of obstacles, but refer to the hills about Jerusalem itself, including Zion and Moriah; and the verses will then allude indirectly to the Temple, out of which, on its mountain site, the help of GOD will come to the aid of His servant. And in this second sense the mystical import will be given us by the words of the Apostle, ”Seek those things which are above, where CHRIST sitteth on the right hand of GOD,” and by the words of the Priest in the beginning of the Canon in the Liturgy, ”Lift up your hearts,” whereupon we answer, in the spirit of the Psalmist, ”We lift them up unto the LORD. S. Hilary takes the mountains in two senses: of the books of prophecy, or, as a later writer will have it, the two Testaments, with their lofty and difficult secrets, admirably fitted to raise the soul from earth, and likened to rich veins of precious metal, for which men toil eagerly; and of the holy angels, as subjects for thought and imitation in their purity and obedience; but adds that not even from these, as mere ministers of another’s will, does our help come, but from the LORD Himself. S.

Augustine, on the other hand, takes the mountains as the Apostles, and explains that help did come from them, on whom the light of heaven shone first, to those in the valleys below them, by their preaching of the Gospel, itself sent directly from GOD to them, that GOD who made those Apostolic heavens themselves, whence the refreshing rains of doctrine came down upon the parched and sterile earth of the Gentile world below, not less the work of His hands. The far inferior sense of confidence in the intercession of the Saints, as the secondary sources of our help,

given by Venerable Bede, is followed by several of the mediæval commentators; though Richard of Hampole is careful to add, after saying that the Psalmist lifts up his eyes to contemplate that glory of the Saints which he yearns to share, ”But it is not from these mountains that my help shall come, since my hope is not to be placed in them, for my help is from the Lord, the Mountain of mountains Himself, from Whom alone comes the light which shines on those lofty summits, dark without Him, the True Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world,” Who hath made heaven to be the reward of His valiant soldiers, and earth to be the lists for their combat.

A. Ric. Hamp. A. S. John i. 9. 3 He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: and he that keepeth thee will not sleep. 4 Behold, he that keepeth Israel: shall neither slumber nor sleep. As the foot is that member of the body which carries it about to the scenes of its actions, so its spiritual signification is the motions and advances of the mind. And pride was the motion which moved Satan from heaven and man from Paradise. GOD keeps the feet of His Saints safe from this, but gives them the motion of love, that instead of falling they may walk, advance, and go up in the right way. He kept the feet of His Apostles, that no toils or terrors might daunt them from preaching His Gospel in all lands. He that keepeth thee will not sleep. As in the previous clause there is probably a reference to GOD’s guidance of the pilgrim in the right road to Jerusalem, so here is the night-

A. watch around the sleeping caravan. GOD does not slumber, as one fatigued, nor sleep, as needing, like man, nightly rest and refreshment of the frame. Spiritually, they tell us that GOD sleeps in the heart of His servants when their faith grows cold and languid, and that we have here the promise of the HOLY SPIRIT that no such calamity shall come upon the steadfast pilgrim. And in the next clause we have the Godhead and Resurrection of the LORD JESUS shadowed out. He, the true Keeper of Israel, did indeed sleep in the grave, but He did not remain sleeping, but arose again, waking in the morn of the Resurrection, so that ”death hath no more dominion over Him.” And not only so, but even when the Manhood slept in that brief slumber, the ever-wakeful Godhead kept watch over Israel still. There is thus a peculiar fitness in the embodiment of the idea of this verse in the Compline Hymn of the Western Church at Eastertide:

The Hymn, Jesu, salvator sæculi. JESU, Redeemer of the earth, Eternal WORD of GOD most High, Light which from Light Unseen hast birth, Our Keeper of unsleeping eye: Thou Who the universe hast made, Who rulest change of time and tide, Our toil-worn, weary bodies aid, And peaceful rest by night provide. That whilst in earthly forms below A little time our stay we make, Our flesh may take its slumber so That unto CHRIST the soul may wake. S. Bernard, in Qui habitat, Serm. 11. ”It is necessary,” observes S. Bernard, ”that He who keepeth Israel should neither slumber nor sleep, for he who assails Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps. And as

the One is anxious about us, so is the other to slay and destroy us, and his one care is that he who has once been turned aside may never come back." There is a stress, they remind us, on Israel, to whom alone this unceasing ward is given, teaching us that it is he who sees GOD, and wrestles with Him in prayer, who may surely look for His protection. "And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and on the Israel of GOD."

5 The Lord himself is thy keeper: the Lord is thy defence upon thy right hand; 6 So that the sun shall not burn thee by day: neither the moon by night.

The force and beauty of the connection between these two verses is obscured by the rendering defence, which ought to be shade, and the mention of the right hand points to the geographical sense of that term in the Old Testament, where it denotes the south, the quarter from which the burning rays of the midday sun pour their heat and glare. The full force of these words can only be known by those who have had to make forced marches across a bare Syrian plain in the midst of the summer heats. Some, however, separate the two clauses, and treat them independently, The Lord is thy shade, and the Lord is at thy right hand as a defence, but the continued reference to the sun and moon disposes of this view, since sun-stroke, with its frequent result of death, and moon-stroke, often credited in the East with causing ophthalmia and madness, keep before the mind the thought of the need of shelter, and do not bring in any other idea. God's standing at the right hand, to the apparent exclusion of the left, is variously explained of His strengthening our power of action, and therefore of resistance in spiritual combat against the enemies of our soul, or to His gift of things eternal, denoted by the right hand, while the left holds only the temporal bounties of this life. Of the next clause S.

Hilary remarks that it is impossible to take it literally, because so long as our bodies continue what they are, and the laws of nature remain unchangeable as we see them, the sun and moon will produce their usual effects upon us; and that we must therefore look forward to the blessedness of that heavenly country, wherein there will be no bodily infirmity, no cold or heat, no night and change, but perpetual mildness under the rays of the Sun of Righteousness, typified of old by the pillar of fire and cloud which tempered severally the heat of day and the darkness of night. S. Augustine, more boldly, tells us that the Sun is CHRIST's Godhead, the moon, the Church, deriving all its light from Him, and waxing and waning here, while the night is that Flesh of CHRIST wherein the Sun is hid, and wherein the Moon shines, because faith in the Incarnation is the very life and sphere of the Church; so that the verse is a promise to the faithful that they shall not be offended either in CHRIST or in the Church; in CHRIST by making difficulties, as heretics do, in accepting the true doctrine of His Person; or in the Church, as schismatics do, by refusing to acknowledge her unity or obey her precepts. Several commentators,

however, prefer to understand the moon in the night as CHRIST's bodily presence in the world, and explain these words therefore of doubt as to His being Very Man;

while others again follow the more obvious allegory of protection amidst the prosperity and adversity of mortal life.

7 The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: yea, it is even he that shall keep thy soul. It is no promise, comments S. Hilary, of warding off the common evils of the body, want, weakness, death, since were that so, we should not read of Abel's slaughter, of Job's suf- H. A. H. A. Hugo Card. ferings, of Peter's lack of silver and gold for alms. But these are no real evils, and it is the faithful soul which the LORD will keep, that the moth of the evil one may not corrupt it, the thief not creep upon it, the wolf not tear it, the bear not rage against it, the leopard not spring upon it, the tiger not fly at it, the lion not destroy it. For all these are instruments of the evil one, all these are works of his in this life, to eat the soul away with sin, to creep upon it with flattery, to tear it with allurements, to spring upon it with ambition, to fly upon it with lusts, to destroy it with all his power. It is against evils such as these that we are to look for defence from GOD. Thus it was that again and again He kept the souls of His martyrs safe, while suffering their bodies to be the prey of the torturer. And GOD's ways of keeping are fourfold; as a watchman, seeing that no enemy approaches the city which He guards; as a defender, standing with shield and sword in the battle at the right hand of His warriors; as a porter, opening the gate of mercy to every one that knocks; as a physician, tending and binding up the wounds of a sufferer.

8 The LORD shall preserve thy going out, and thy coming in : from this time forth for evermore. GOD keeps the going out of His Saints from sin, or from bondage, in an enemy's country, as He kept Abraham in his quitting the heathen land of Haran, and Abraham's distant posterity in their exodus from Egypt, and also keeps their coming in to the Land of Promise. And therefore the words may be most truly taken of His protection of the soul in its hour of departure from the prison of this world, and in its happy entrance into the Paradise of rest. "Therefore," prays the Western Church over her dying children, "as thy soul goeth forth from the body, let the bright host of angels meet thee; let the Apostles who shall judge the world come unto thee; let the conquering army of white-robed martyrs welcome thee; let the lily-crowned band of shining Confessors compass thee; let the choir of rejoicing Virgins greet thee; let the Patriarchs receive thee to rest happily in their bosom; let CHRIST JESUS look upon thee in gentleness and joy, and set thee for ever amongst them who stand before Him." Yet another sense of going out and coming in, very frequent in Scripture, is the march of a hostile expedition into an enemy's country, and the safe return of the army home; so that the meaning in that case will be GOD's aid in enabling us to overcome temptations boldly, and to avoid the faults of pride or dangerous security after the victory and the quiet which follows it.

G. S. Hieron. in Ezek. xxxiv. A.

The Vulgate inverts the order of the words, putting coming in first and going out last, and this has occasioned some difference in the mode of interpretation. Coming in, they tell us, is entering into battle in the Church Militant, going out, returning from it into the Church Triumphant, and GOD keeps our coming in when He takes care that we are not exposed to a temptation too powerful for us to overcome, (for it is written, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation,") and our going out by granting us perseverance and means of escape, for "GOD is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation make a way to escape, (ἐκβασιν, exitum,) that ye may be able to bear it. He kept the coming in of His martyrs when they were brought for His sake before kings and governors, giving them boldness and speech which their enemies could not gainsay or resist; He kept their going out when they were led to their death, and continued in the confession of the faith to the very end. He keeps the first beginnings of our yet weak faith when we are entering in to a knowledge of Him, and preserves it to the close, that at our going out of the world we may die as true subjects of His, in the confession of His Name.

And the words have also a special meaning for those who take upon them any office in the Church, and hearken to that saying of the LORD, "I am the door; by Me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. Entering in to thy closet, and shutting the door, in prayer thou wilt find pasture, the affection and influence of prayer itself, when thy FATHER which heareth in secret will give thee unspeakable consolations for thine unspeakable groans; and then going out for the discharge of any ministry, whether thou teachest with doctrine, or rulest with diligence, or showest mercy with cheerfulness, or givest with simplicity, thou wilt find pasture in such goings out, namely, such effects of thy ministry, that men seeing thee will glorify the FATHER in Heaven, the glorifying of whose Name, not praise for thyself, nor human favour, nor any desire of gain or honour, is the true food of thy soul.

Glory be to the FATHER, Who made heaven and earth; Glory be to the SON, Who is the shade upon our right hand; Glory be to the HOLY GHOST, Who shall keep our soul. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be; world without end. Amen.

Collects.
O LORD GOD, Keeper of Israel, Who neither slumberest nor sleepest, keep Thy people, and that we be not burned by day, defend us from the scandals of this world. (1.) Unwearied Keeper of Israel, GOD, Who neither slumberest nor sleepest, be, we beseech Thee, O LORD, our constant protection, keeping us from all evil, and ordering the coming in of our faith and the going out of our life for evermore. (1.)

Psalm 122

TITLE. A Song of Degrees, of David. LXX. and Vulgate: A Song of Degrees.

Argument.
ARG. THOMAS. That CHRIST sitteth . . . . that He makes seats for sitting in judgment to judge. The Voice of the Church to the Apostles. The Voice of CHRIST to the Church. VEN. BEDE. We have just heard of a step; we are to understand that he has gone up to higher things; but that ascent is firm which is preserved by the LORD's keeping. So now the Prophet is lifted to the third degree, reaching higher than the second; and is declared to have made a beginning of the Psalm in his very gladness. In the first part the Prophet rejoices that he has been counselled to come to the heavenly Jerusalem, where the Saints abide even now in sure prosperity, and shall judge together with the LORD, of His bounteous mercy. I was glad, &c. In the second place, he speaks to the citizens of Jerusalem, wishing them abundance of peace, which he saith that he hath invoked through affection for the brethren and love of GOD. O pray for the peace, &c.

SYRIAC PSALTER. David's. One of the Psalms of going-up. When Cyrus commanded that the captivity should go up. Spiritually, it is the promise of good things. EUSEBIUS OF CÆSAREA. A glad messenger of good things. S. ATHANASIUS. A Psalm of thanksgiving.

Various Uses.
Gregorian. Thursday: Vespers. [Circumcision. Comm. B.V.M. Comm. Virg.: Vespers. Little Office B.V.M.: Terce.]

Antiphons.
Gregorian. We will go gladly into the House of the LORD. [Circumcision: In the bush which Moses saw unconsumed, we recognize the preservation of thy praiseworthy Virginity. Mother of GOD, intercede for us. Comm. B.V.M. and Virg.: I am black, but comely, O daughters of Jerusalem, therefore the King loved me, and brought me into His chamber.] Monastic. As cxx. Ambrosian. Be there peace * in Thy might, O LORD. Parisian. For my brethren and companions' sakes, I spake

peace of thee, O Jerusalem. Lyons. As Gregorian. Mozarabic. Peace be within thy walls * and plenteousness within thy towers.

There are some difficulties at the outset of the Psalm. It is here included in a group of post-captivity poems, and yet is ascribed to David, and the only material argument against the title is the language of verse 5, which seems to speak of a long-settled dynasty. This may be, however, satisfactorily accounted for in two ways, either that the Psalm is a recasting of one which actually was David's, (of which the Psalter supplies other probable examples) or that it is a Song of a Prince of the House of David, Zerubbabel, for example; according to a usage already noted more than once in the case of the Songs of Asaph. The other difficulty is as to the occasion of the Psalm. The Syriac Psalter treats it as a thanksgiving for the decree of Cyrus; but the second verse, which is incorrectly translated in the future tense by the English versions, denotes presence in Jerusalem, while the first, third, and seventh verses clearly imply the existence of the Temple and the strength of the city's walls; neither of which facts agrees with the state of things at the time of Cyrus. Some modern critics, taking the Psalm as a Pilgrim song, argue from the second verse that it is one uttered at the very gate of Jerusalem itself, while the caravan awaits the welcoming deputation of citizens;

while others treat this same verse as purely retrospective, explaining the whole Psalm as a blessing spoken on the departing caravan by an aged exile, too feeble to join the march himself, but remembering well when his own feet used to stand in the gates of the Holy City before its ruinous fall. The order of arrangement of the Gradual Psalms, which may most reasonably be supposed intentional, and designed for yearly use by the pilgrims, is against the former hypothesis, since it puts the end of the journey too early in the series; and the joyous tone of the whole poem is inconsistent with the expression of regretful memories and of exhausted strength. The easiest explanation is that it is the expression of willingness to undertake the pilgrimage once more, uttered by those who have already made the journey successfully. They are glad to receive a fresh summons for the march, because, having once seen and stood within the gates of Jerusalem, their ardour has been kindled to revisit the House of GOD, and to keep the law which bade all the males present themselves there thrice a year at the great festivals. This view puts the Psalm later than Nehemiah, when the city was fully restored and fortified, and the annual pilgrimage re-organized.

1 I was glad when they said unto me: We will go into the house of the LORD.

In the first and literal sense, the words are most probably those of a Hebrew in a foreign land, whose friends and neighbours propose to join in pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and who rejoices in the opportunity thus afforded to himself. Others explain they as the Prophets, especially Jeremiah, Daniel, Haggai, and Zechariah, who declared to the exiled people the certainty of their return and the restoration of their tem-

ple and city. But even the Talmudists declare that the higher sense is that to be followed here, and that it is the heavenly Jerusalem, of which the Prophets tell us, which is meant. Who are they, then, who say these words to us? The Three Persons of the Most Blessed Trinity, and especially the HOLY SPIRIT Himself, speaking to us by the Prophets, Apostles, Doctors, and Saints, and saying, not "Go," but We will go, and be your guides and companions on the road to that house which admits the righteous only, which is the house of the Angels, and has the blessedness of beholding the Creator of all things, that desirable dwelling, that house built up of living stones, of which is said in another Psalm, "One thing have I desired of the LORD, which I will require, even that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the fair beauty of the LORD, and to visit His temple. In that they say it to me, the unity of the Church, the individuality of the promises, is denoted;

in that it is added, we will go, the multitude of them that are of one heart and mind is shown forth. There are four Houses of GOD, moreover, into which the faithful soul must needs go, First is that lower House of His, the Church Militant here on earth, of which is written, "My House shall be called the house of prayer; next, the outer House of Scripture; the inner house of conscience and secret meditations; the upper house of the Church Triumphant, where there are many mansions. Nor need we have any doubt as to our welcome, for when we ask the question, "Master, where dwellest Thou? He saith unto us, "Come and see. Happy they of whom it is added: "They came and saw where He dwelt, and abode with Him that day. How are we to go? On the two feet of charity, answers a Saint, love of GOD and love of our neighbour. S. Gregory Nazianzen relates that his father, a Pagan, who had long held out against the prayers and counsels of his Christian wife, dreamt one night that he recited this verse, and conceived therewith a desire to embrace the faith, which he accordingly did speedily afterwards. Richard of S. Victor allegorizes the verse at length, saying that it is the fallen Adam and Eve, the reason and the affection of men, rejoicing in the good news of recall from exile, and return to Paradise. It is said, we will go, because neither the hand nor the heart alone suffices for that pilgrimage.

It is not a very praiseworthy thing for Adam to desire entrance without Eve, for knowledge of divine things without love of them is unprofitable; it is altogether impossible for Eve to enter without Adam, for if we know nothing of divine things, we shall not love them at all. And, lastly, it is taken of the gladness of Saints at entering into their rest through the gate of death, while the Angels round their beds bid them welcome into their fellowship, and urge them to speedy departure.

S. John i. 38. A. Orat. xix. 2 Our feet shall stand in thy gates : O Jerusalem. The words should be in the historical tense, as in the Vulgate; Our feet were standing, which may imply either a past or a still continuing state of things. The very sign

and cause of our hope that we shall go into the House of the LORD is that our feet are, even now, already standing in the gates of Jerusalem, that is, that our desires and contemplations are fixed and stablished in the mansions of the kingdom of heaven, because our conversation is in heaven, and accordingly the Apostle speaks in similar language to those still on pilgrimage, "Ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the Living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." He stands there who delights himself in God, but he whose delight is in himself, cannot stand, but must fall through his pride, as Lucifer did. Note too that it is not said at thy gates, but in thy gates, because the gates of the Church, Militant or Triumphant, are open to all, and are shut neither by day nor by night; for CHRIST is Himself the one Door of the heavenly City, albeit its twelve minor gates are set on every side of the walls, that we may learn how there is a welcome there for every tribe, from every quarter of the world.

A.

3 Jerusalem is built as a city : that is at unity in itself.
Or, with A. V., that is compact together. There may be a reference here to the topography of Jerusalem, girdled and hemmed in on all sides by mountains and ravines, forming a great series of natural bastions and entrenchments; or we may understand the words of the repairs executed just after the return from exile, when the gaps and waste places were rebuilt, and the walls completed and dedicated; or, lastly, the Psalm may here express the admiration of a dweller in tents or scattered villages for the stately, numerous, and continuous houses and palaces of the capital city. A further meaning, that Jerusalem is here regarded as the federal capital of all the tribes, which having each local synagogues and courts of their own, here met in one common temple and submitted to one supreme tribunal, may be fairly got out of the Hebrew, and is the plainest sense of Symmachus, συνάφειαν ἔχουσαν ὁμοῦ, borne out, moreover, by the two following verses.

Note, first, that, in speaking of the earthly Jerusalem, the Psalmist does not say that it is a city; but only that it is built as a city; because it is at best but the faint and shadowy type of the only true Jerusalem, the City made without hands, eternal in the heavens. And that Jerusalem, too, is building, stone by stone, nor will it be completed till the fulness of the Gentiles be come in, and then shall the remnant of Israel be saved. It is being built of living stones, and therefore is in the truest sense a city, because that is the term for the place where a great concourse of men, citizens, are assembled, while the same place, as a mere collection of empty dwellings, would be no more than a town. The Latin Rom. xi. 25. A.

runs on: Cujus participatio ejus in idipsum, a sentence difficult to render into English, but lending itself most readily to the last explanation of the Hebrew given above; to wit, the solidarity of the inhabitants, united in harmonious fellowship, an interpretation given in fact by several of the commentators, who see in this very

union and concord a fresh proof that it is no earthly city which is intended, but that one whose citizens all seek and share the same thing, that is, GOD. But with a patient minuteness of construing, some of them, notably S. Augustine, get a further notion out of the words, taking ejus not as a mere redundant iteration of cujus, but as bringing in a fresh idea: Whose participation is of Him Who is the same, "yesterday, to-day, and for ever," JESUS CHRIST our LORD; unwearying might, unchangeable power, self-existent substance, powerful to effect all that He wills, Who is I AM THAT I AM. S. Augustine, in another place, quoting Cicero's definition of a city or state, that it is a multitude of men living in harmony under a common code of laws and for mutual advantage, held together by a traditional bond of moral habit, declares that Rome never answered to this description; and it is equally true, observes Parez, that it never can have applied to the earthly Jerusalem, in which strife, injustice, selfishness, and departure from the law of GOD, had always found a place. The heavenly Jerusalem, too, is built as a city;

it has its points of likeness to the towns of earth; its "many mansions; its one municipal law, that of love; its one King, CHRIST; its fountain, His pure Mother; its twelve gates, the glorious company of the Apostles; its citizens, the Saints and Angels; its walls and bulwarks, salvation, that is, CHRIST; "from Whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying (building-up) of itself in love."

The Hymn, Astant An- In quâ summa tranquillitas, Lux et pax in cunctis finibus! O how illustrious is that Land, And how magnificent the band Of angels and mankind! O glorious City, where is found Supremest rest, in every bound Both light and peace combined! 4 For thither the tribes go up, even the tribes of the LORD: to testify unto Israel, to give thanks unto the Name of the LORD. To testify unto Israel, rather, a testimony or ordinance unto Israel, namely, the law which ordained that all males should present themselves thrice a year before the LORD, to attest their loyalty to Him, and to claim the consequent privileges of the Covenant. The tribes of the Lord. It is not, as we might expect, the tribes of Israel who go up, a testimony unto the Gentiles, showing them the way of righteousness; but the Gentile tribes of the Lord who go up, and thus testify unto Israel, saying, "Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the GOD of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the Word of the LORD from Jerusalem." To give thanks unto the Name of the LORD. Since, as it is written in another Psalm, "Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house, they will be alway praising Thee," for "the streets of Jerusalem shall be paved with beryl and carbuncle, and stones of Ophir; and all her streets shall say, Alleluia; and they shall praise Him, saying, Blessed be GOD, which hath extolled it for ever."

5 For there is the seat of judgment: even the seat of the house of David. Here is the third glory of Jerusalem, that it is not merely stately and strong in beauty, and the gathering-place of all the tribes, but also the seat of kingly power and justice, and also of the supreme tribunal in matters of religion. It is therefore rightly said thrones of judgment, in the plural, (A.V., LXX., Vulg., &c.) as denoting the appeal in civil and criminal causes to the King, and in religious ones to the High Priest, both of them sitting in judgment at Jerusalem. So, as it is added, thrones for (A. V.) the house of David, that is, for a line of Sovereigns sprung from the Shepherd-King; it is no marvel that all the Christian commentators with one voice see here the fulfilment of those two sayings of the Gospel, "The FATHER judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the SON;" and again, "Ye shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." The Vulgate reading, over the house of David, draws from the commentators here a note of the priority of the Apostles in the Church, as co-assessors of the High Priest and King to Whom is committed the judgment of quick and dead.

6 O pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. 7 Peace be within thy walls: and plenteousness within thy palaces. The welfare and security of every earthly city consists in two things; first, in the strength of its walls and towers; A. next, in the abundance of its citizens and provisions. And the Church Militant here on earth, besieged as it is incessantly by spiritual foes, needs the same helps too; wherefore all Saints of GOD, angels and faithful departed, as well as living men, are besought to join in prayer that the walls of faith, hope, and charity, manned by the Doctors and Martyrs, may be firm and unshattered; that the citizens may be many and zealous, and that abundant store of graces, in Sacraments and prayer, may be provided for their support, that no want or famine may be found there. Gerhohus, reminding us how we have revolted against GOD, how the Church Militant, Jerusalem on earth, has failed to do GOD's will as it is done in heaven, Jerusalem above, notes that we have deep reason to send an embassy to our King to desire conditions of peace, before He comes against us with twenty thousand, to sit in judgment on our deeds and words and hidden thoughts; to ask Him not only for pardon, but for plenteousness. For walls and palaces the Vulgate reads strength and towers, and these terms are variously explained of divers virtues and graces, especially of charity and faith; but a deeper exposition takes the strength of Jerusalem to be the Passion of CHRIST, and her towers the heights of celestial grace and glory attained by those who love Him. What the peace, what the plenteousness there are, let a German poet tell us:

City of GOD, whose adamantine wall Nought of foes storming recks: No tyrant in thee, no despotic thrall, Can thy free burghers vex; It is noteworthy that the phrase in the Psalm and the Gospel is nearly identical. Here Truth only, Light and Rightness Bear up thy Monarch's throne, And brightness more than brightness Shines round His Kingly Son. City, whose ways are of translucent gold, Whose

bulwarks marble fair, The shining stream, which through thy streets is rolled, Pours silvery waters there. And crystal rivers flowing By royal gardens glide, The Tree of Life is throwing Its shade on each glad side. 8 For my brethren and companions' sakes : I will wish thee prosperity.

There are two literal ways of interpreting this verse, each Agellius. of which lends itself to a deep mystical sense. I will wish thee prosperity, because I recognize all thy citizens as my own brothers and friends, and thus have a personal and domestic interest in thy welfare; or, I will wish thee prosperity, that all my brothers and friends, now in exile and poverty, may be brought home to their own city, and be enriched with the abundance of her palaces, "not seeking mine own profit, 1 Cor. x. 33. but the profit of many, that they may be saved." One gives us the rejoicing sense of fellowship in the Communion of Saints, the Catholic Church; the other the eager yearning of all devout and compassionate souls for those who have gone astray and are in captivity to sin, suffering a famine of the Word of God. The last words of the verse are more literally, I will speak peace within thee, that is, will utter the greeting, "Peace be unto thee." And then we get a further meaning besides that correctly enough given by the Prayer Book version; namely, that he who has at heart the interests of the Church will preach in her the unity of the Faith, wherein alone is true peace, and not merely try to cover over real divisions by specious words of agreement with all parties. Some commentators take these words as those of CHRIST Himself, promising present blessings and future glory to the Church on earth, "for both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren."

9 Yea, because of the house of the LORD our GOD : I will seek to do thee good. It is not unworthy of notice that the English version, by its alliteration of pray, peace, prosper, plenteousness, and prosperity, reproduces a peculiarity of the original, where , , and , follow close upon one another in these two verses. The outward splendour, the temporal polity of Jerusalem is dear to her true citizens only as encompassing and shrining the House of GOD. The descent of the blessing of peace on the brethren and companions of the Psalmist constitutes them into the City of GOD, as when JESUS returning to His yet infant Church, while it mourned for His death, said, "Peace be unto you:" and now the whole City, learning what is the dignity and beauty of the House of the LORD, desires to be that House itself, that GOD may dwell not only within its limits, but throughout it, in the heart of every one within its walls, saying to her citizens, "Ye are the temple of GOD, and the Spirit of GOD dwelleth in you." I will seek to do thee good is more than I will wish thee prosperity, for it carries goodwill into action; firstly, that of earnest wrestling in prayer that GOD may grant His City all desirable blessings; and next, diligent seeking out of good things to increase the power and wealth of that City, new converts, to be soon full citizens, fresh stores of song, art, devotion, beauty, holiness, to be cast into the treasury of the LORD.

And so: Glory be to the FATHER, the Maker and Builder of the heavenly Jerusalem; glory be to the SON, the Prince of the House of David, Who sitteth on the Throne of Judgment; glory be to the HOLY GHOST, Who hath told us by the Prophets and Apostles that we shall go into the House of the LORD. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world without end. Amen.

Collects.

Almighty GOD, vouchsafe to bestow plenteousness of peace on them that walk in the courts of Thine house, that while we give thanks unto Thee with all the eagerness of our hearts, we may attain Thy good things in heavenly places. (1.) O GOD, the artificer of all things which be, cause our feet to stand in Thy courts, build up within us Jerusalem which is above, let us have unbroken peace in Thy might, that we may always devoutly seek the good of that sure City, and find it by Thine aid. (1.)

Psalm 123

TITLE. A Song of Degrees.

Argument.
ARG. THOMAS. That CHRIST, having pity on us, may deliver us from the contempt of the proud. The Voice of CHRIST to the FATHER, or of the Church to CHRIST, which, like a good servant, seeks the mercy of her LORD. The first step then is Faith, the second Hope, the third Charity; and here now the fourth declares the perseverance of him that prayeth. VEN. BEDE. He who previously lifted his eyes up unto the hills, now hath raised his heart's eyes to the LORD Himself. The Prophet, fearing to lose what he held, and cautious in the very place where he had advanced, in the first part devoutly engages in persevering prayers, that he may retain the gifts he has acquired by Divine bounty. Unto Thee lift I up mine eyes. In the second place, he beseeches the LORD to give him mercy, because he has been suffering many troubles from those who insult him at the instigation of the devil, in order that as they have been unable to defile him by their fellowship, they may at any rate defile him with their haughty despisings.

SYRIAC PSALTER. Of David, one of the Psalms of going-up. And it is spoken in the person of Zerubbabel, Prince of the Captivity, and is a prayer of supplication. EUSEBIUS OF CÆSAREA. Of prayer. S. ATHANASIUS. A Psalm in solitary address.

Various Uses.
Gregorian. Tuesday: Vespers. [Little Office of B.V.M.: Sext.]

Antiphons.
Gregorian. Monastic. Ambrosian. Lyons. Parisian. Mozarabic. } Thou that dwellest * in the heavens, have mercy upon us. } Our eyes are unto the LORD our GOD, till He have mercy upon us. 1 Unto thee lift I up mine eyes: O thou that dwellest in the heavens. There is a great spiritual advance made in this Psalm, since from merely lifting up the eyes unto the hills, the singer raises them to GOD Himself. Captivity and the ruin of the Temple had taught this lesson, that it was not needful to turn to Zion or Moriah in order to find GOD, but that He could and would hear the cry of a suppliant directed to Him from any quarter. A Greek commentator

understands this whole Psalm of the weariness of the returning exiles, worn out with the toil of their long journey, and exposed to the ridicule of the heathen tribes amongst which they had to pass to their home. It is probable, also, as noted before, that peril of attack from banditti is here expressed and prayed against. They tell us that the two eyes which the faithful soul lifts up to God are the contemplative and the active functions of it, the first to learn His will, the second to do it; and are further careful to note that the words dwellest in the heavens do not imply any localisation of God, as though limited by place, but mean that He is immanent in all holy persons, especially the heavenly powers. "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also:" and therefore the Saint, whose treasure is JESUS, will look up to heaven, where He is at the right hand of God, and thus "wisdom is before him which hath understanding, but the eyes of a fool are in the ends of the earth."

I would I were some bird, or star, Fluttering in woods or lifted far Above this inn, And road of sin! Then either star or bird should be Shining or singing still to Thee!
2 Behold, even as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress: even so our eyes wait upon the LORD our GOD, until he have mercy upon us.

The image is taken from the usual attitude of Eastern slaves when in attendance, ranged as they are at the end of the room in which their master is, standing with hands crossed upon the breast, and with their eyes fixed on him, to await the slightest gesture. Slaves, too, depending on their owners for food, look to their hand, that is, their bounty, when in need of bread, as we depend on God for nourishment. They look, moreover, wistfully and imploringly when they are being chastised for their faults, that further punishment may be remitted; and besides, if wrong have been done to them by others, they are not empowered to avenge themselves, but must needs appeal to their masters to obtain redress for them. They assign various reasons for the double simile of men-servants and a maiden. First, literally, that the share of both sexes in the duties and rewards of faithful service may be asserted; then to teach that the strong and the weak are alike called on, and that diligent fidelity and faithfulness in bringing forth the offspring of good works, severally typified by the two sexes, are expected from every Christian soul.

And finally, whereas servants are spoken of in the plural, and the maiden in the singular, we are taught that all the various mighty nations of the world, with all their masculine vigour, are to be united in that one single Church which is the handmaid, before being the Bride, of the Lamb, and is chastened by Him that she may be made pure. It is added, Until He have mercy upon us, but that does not mean that we are to cease looking unto Him when He has shown us His pity. The phrase until is used here, as in other places of Scripture, not to denote that there is any change subsequent to the time named, but that there is no change before

it. Rather the Church, our mistress, will command her servants to look always, in earth or heaven, to the eyes of her and their Master, as the Latin dramatist has it:

A. C. Ps. cx. 1. S. Matt. i. 25. Ut hujus oculos in oculis habeas tuis, Quoquo hic spectabit, et tu spectato simul. I give thee charge That thou keep His eyes in those eyes of thine, Whereso He looks, look thou too at that time. And if we do, He will see His image in our eyes, and we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is, and behold our own likeness in His glorious face; never removing from it our adoring gaze. Even here on earth we may look to His hand, by seeking to know His will by careful and assiduous study of those Holy Scriptures which He has given for our learning, that guiding our conduct thereby we may please Him and obtain His mercy. 3 Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us: for we are utterly despised. 4 Our soul is filled with the scornful reproof of the wealthy: and with the despitefulness of the proud.

When Israel returned from exile, with all the hope and gladness inspired by the deliverance, and with the great promises of future glory in the Messianic prophecies to buoy them up; what really lay before them was the scorn and ridicule of Samaritans and Arabians, to be followed, before very long, by the savage persecution under the Seleucid kings. When the LORD came back to His Apostles from the grave, they looked for a speedy restoration of the kingdom to Israel, yet almost their first experience after the Ascension was the imprisonment and scourging of two of their chiefs; while several years later the great Apostle of the Gentiles, writing when two centuries and a half more of persecution awaited the followers of the Nazarene, said, ”I think that GOD hath set forth us the Apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men: we are made as the filth of the earth, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day,” the mark for scorn and oppression from Jews and Gentiles, kings and mobs, pursued with insults, stripes, fire, steel, and every other engine of malice. Well might the Church in that long three hundred years of suffering, cry again and again, ”Have mercy upon us, O LORD, have mercy upon us, for we are exceedingly filled with contempt. (A.V.

And what was true of the collective Church holds good also of individual Saints, for men of a devout and contemplative temper have no care either to win or to retain earthly riches, and are thus for the most part poor; and are looked down on as dreamy and unpractical by pushing, busy, money-making men; thus incurring the scornful reproof of the wealthy; and as in like manner they have no ambition to attain rank and dignity, they move for the most part in obscure spheres, and are humble and peaceable, whence they are subject to the despitefulness of the proud, who contemn them as sluggish and feeble, and as poor in spirit, not considering that this last reproach is in truth their title-deed to the kingdom of heaven.

Glory be to the FATHER, Who dwelleth in the heavens; glory be to the SON, the Hand of the LORD; glory be to the HOLY GHOST, Who hath mercy on the despised. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world without end. Amen.

Collects.

O GOD, dweller in the heavens, unto Thee do we lift up our eyes in prayer, that Thou mayest put to silence the reproaches of the proud, and graciously bestow on us Thy wonted mercy. (1.) Unto Thee, O LORD, we lift up our eyes, Whom we confess to dwell in the heavenly places, and to uphold by Thy might the fabric of the earth. Have mercy on us, therefore, O LORD, have mercy, and pardon our sins, by reason of which we fear Thee, that Thou mayest look with merciful loving-kindness on the contempt wherein we are held, and by Thy right hand of power deliver us from the reproach of wickedness. (11.) As the eyes of servants look unto the hands of their masters, so do ours unto Thee, O LORD, until Thou pardon the guilt of us sinners, and minister the stripes of the chastised, grant food to the needy, and bestow healing on the wounded. (11.)

Have mercy on us, O LORD, bestow the help we have sought upon us who wait for it, that we who are filled with the contempt of the proud, may be defended by the aid of Thy defence. (11.) O LORD our GOD, Who dwellest in the heavens, we Thy servants lift up our eyes unto Thee; have mercy upon us, and deliver us from the reproach and from the everlasting destruction of the proud. (1.)

Psalm 124

TITLE. A Song of Degrees of David. LXX.: A Song of Degrees.

Argument.
ARG. THOMAS. That CHRIST, breaking the snare of death, delivered us by the help of His Name. The Voice of the Apostles and remaining believers. Here is the fifth step. It pronounces the voices of the Apostles and Martyrs. The Voice of the Apostles concerning the ungodly Jews, and unbelievers who walk in sins. The Voice of the Apostles and Martyrs. VEN. BEDE. Because one single Church and countless members of hers man by man ascend these steps together, sometimes the Psalmist speaks in them in the singular, sometimes in the plural number. The Holy Confessors, remembering how many perils, like a rushing torrent, they have escaped through the mercy of the LORD, at the very beginning confess that they have been delivered from so many troubles by GOD's mercy alone. If the Lord Himself, &c. In the second part, they give thanks, because they have not been deceived by their persecutors, but contrariwise have been rescued from their broken snares. Blessed be the Lord Who hath not given us, &c.

SYRIAC PSALTER. Anonymous. A Thanksgiving. A going-up. EUSEBIUS OF CÆSAREA. Of thanksgiving. S. ATHANASIUS. A Psalm of thanksgiving.

Various Uses.
Gregorian. Tuesday: Vespers. [Little Office of B.V.M.: Sext.]

Antiphons.
Gregorian. Our help * is in the Name of the LORD. Monastic. As Psalm cxxiii. Ambrosian. As Gregorian. Parisian. Our help is in the Name of the LORD * Who hath made heaven and earth. [Good Friday: When JESUS saw His Mother, and the disciple standing by, whom He loved, He saith unto His Mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith He to the disciple, Behold thy Mother!] Lyons. As Gregorian. Mozarabic. The snare is broken, * and we are delivered. 1 If the LORD himself had not been on our side, now may Israel say: if the LORD himself had not been on our side, when men rose up against us; 2 They had swallowed us up quick: when they were so wrathfully displeased at us. Hugo Card. A. The view of Ori-

gen and Theodoret, which has much to commend it, is that this Psalm expresses thankfulness for deliverance from the various tribes which had settled in or around Palestine, and harassed the returning exiles, as we read in the Book of Nehemiah. According to the theory advanced in the remarks prefixed to Psalm cxx., its place here in the Pilgrim-ritual denotes the escape of the caravan, either by successful avoidance or successful battle, from the roving bands of the desert. From a very early time its appropriateness to the sufferings of the Church in her martyrs has been noted. The words on our side represent one Hebrew vocable, , which may be translated either for us, or, as

by LXX., Vulg., and Arabic, in us, or among us. This is something more and nearer than even being at our side. Taken of the Church, it is as when Israel went out of Egypt, "the shout of a King is among them; taken of the individual Christian, it recalls the words of the LORD, "The kingdom of GOD is within you. When GOD is the possessor and inhabitant of our heart, then, and then only, are we safe from every foe. In us, as a Pilot of a storm-tossed ship; in us, as Captain of an army in battle; in us, as head and heart to the body, directing its thoughts and affections; and it is said in us, not in me, because as the Pilgrims go up, they sing at times one by one, and at other times in chorus; because the many are one, since CHRIST is One, and the members of CHRIST are one in Him. They had swallowed us up quick, that is, alive, a metaphor taken from the fiercer beasts of prey, rending and devouring their victims almost before death; and the explanation given of it is that alive here means conscious, in that the persecuted believers were fully aware of the heinousness of the sin of idolatry into which their enemies tried to force them, and therefore if they did give way, they could not plead ignorance, but only fear; so that they first shut GOD out of their hearts, and when He was no longer within them, yielded and offered sacrifice.

Had they really believed, as Pagans themselves did, that the idols were true objects of worship, then they would have been swallowed up dead. Believing and resisting, they could not be swallowed up at all, for even the slaying of the body did but free the soul. And the later commentators, living in an age far removed from the era of martyrdom, take the verse of any yielding to what is known to be sin.

3 Yea, the waters had drowned us: and the stream had gone over our soul. 4 The deep waters of the proud: had gone even over our soul.

The LXX. attaches the first clause of verse 3 to the end of the preceding; and inverts the construction of the remainder, translating, Our soul passed over the torrent, surely our soul passed over the irresistible water; thus taking the whole clause, not as a description of the peril, but of the escape from it; understanding the passage in the sense of that place in Isaiah where we read: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee. The Vulgate, agreeing for the most part, alters the last phrase thus: Perchance

our soul would have had to pass through water unbearable: that is, We did indeed escape over the river, but we should have found it unfordable, had not GOD helped us; a sense which comes back close to the true meaning of the verse. Our safety is because the Lord is among us, and He Himself drank of "the brook in the way," and paused not then, but lifted up His head in the Resurrection, and pursued after His enemies to overcome them. As usual in Holy Scripture, waters stand for nations, formed, like the winter-torrents, from many separate rills rushing in one headlong stream, foul and discoloured with the earth they carry down, and sweeping away everything not built upon a Rock, which attempts to bar their way; but, with all their fierce violence, they last but a little time, as did the persecutions which fell upon the Church in Pagan days.

This sense is apparently enforced by the version found above, deep waters of the proud, but the words ought to run, as in A.V., the proud waters, that is, the angry, swollen torrent, precisely the ὄβριστὴς ποταμός of the Greek tragic poet. How many were swept away by it in the course of the long Passion of the Church, especially under Decius and in the Arian troubles, no man can tell, yet however individuals fell away, the Church emerged safely, and therefore it follows:

5 But praised be the LORD: who hath not given us over for a prey unto their teeth. The best comment on the verse is that saying of the Prince of the Apostles, "Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." But he has K A. A. his allies and instruments amongst men too, of whom is written: "There is a generation whose teeth are as swords, and their jaw-teeth as knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men." These "bite and devour one another" and the Saints too, with slander and detraction, and endeavour to make their prey as evil as themselves, by incorporating them into their own body, as the natural teeth prepare food for digestion by the stomach. 6 Our soul is escaped even as a bird out of the snare of the fowler: the snare is broken, and we are delivered.

A. H. Ay. A. S. Bruno Carth. S. Ambros. in S. Lucam. A snare needs to be baited, and the devil's bait for the souls of men is usually the pleasure of life. He hides it in some unsuspected place, not on the highway, where it may be soon detected and destroyed, but in some place near to it; he masks it carefully with grass or leaves, he puts ease, wealth, self-indulgence over it to tempt us. And as men who know of a trap, shout loudly to scare away any man, or bird, or beast which they wish to save from falling into it, so God calls aloud with His warnings and threats in our souls lest we should give way to the tempter. He cries to us, as He cried to many of His martyrs when on the point of yielding: "O silly bird, set thy feet upon the rock, go not near the snare. Thou wilt be taken, devoured, destroyed. Let the LORD be in thee, and He will deliver thee from yet greater perils, out of the snare of the fowlers." It is no caution and wariness on the part of the bird itself (as some

of the commentators inaptly suggest) that saves it. Nothing is more helpless than a bird once entangled in a net or snare, and therefore it is added, The snare is broken. When? What time CHRIST broke the power of Satan, and laid him low, so that ever since he has power over none but cowards. The weakest of men can overcome a sleeper, but the same act that weakened Satan strengthened thee, and thou art mightier now than he is. Why fearest thou? Knowest thou not Who is thine Helper? Yes, answer CHRIST's true soldiers, we know well it is not our own strength or skill which has saved us, we have not broken the net ourselves.

7 Our help is in the Name of the LORD: who hath made heaven and earth. He hath made the earth where the snare lies, so that He can destroy that snare of right, as laid unlawfully in His domain, He hath made the heaven, the true sphere for the soaring wings of those souls which He has delivered, so that they may fly upwards from their late prison, rejoicing. He came down to earth Himself, that LORD JESUS in Whose Name is our help, that He might break the snare; He returned to heaven, that we might "fly as the doves to their windows," following where He showed the way. And therefore: Glory be to the FATHER, Who hath made heaven and earth; glory be to the SON, Who hath broken the snare of the fowlers; glory be to the HOLY GHOST, Who is within us when men rise up against us.

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world without end. Amen.

Collects.
Shut, O LORD, the gaping mouths of the wicked, who attempt to devour us with the cruel teeth of slander, that we, who trust not in our own strength, may be defended by the help of Thy Name. (1.) Be in us, O LORD GOD of Israel, and drive away from us the attack of the wicked, lest we be devoured, and check their hurtful indignation, lest we be swallowed up; and let the torrent of Thy pleasures so overflow within us that our soul may rejoice in safely crossing the torrent of sins; and let us not be rent with the teeth of our enemies, but rejoice in being delivered from the snare of the hunters. And do Thou, our Helper, give us a heritage of an eternal possession, Who with the co-operation of Thy WORD and HOLY SPIRIT, madest heaven and earth. (11.) Our help is in Thy Name, O LORD, grant that we may hate the enticement of the world; and avoid the snare of the pleasures which hunt after us; that Thou mayest destroy him that lieth in wait; Thyself strengthen and defend him that trusteth in Thee. (11.)

Turn aside, O LORD, the snares which they lay for us who strive to hunt after our souls, and by the help of Thine aid confound the plots of our adversaries; since if Thou be not within us, the opposing power is able to devour and swallow us up. Be Thou the guard and guide of Thy servants, that they may not fall in with the snares of spiritual wickednesses, but may urge with all their vigour the flight whereby they strive to come to Thee. (11.) Grant, O LORD, that our soul may pass over the

torrent of sins, break by Thy might the snare of the devil’s fraud, that we may be delivered for evermore by Thy help. (1.)

Psalm 125

TITLE. A Song of Degrees.

Argument.
ARG. THOMAS. That CHRIST may defend us with His help, lest the rod, that is, the tyranny of sin, should be upon us. The Voice of the Church. This is the sixth step, of them that hold out and are unmoved amidst their suffering; over whom, who stretch not out their hands to unrighteousness, the peace of Israel will abide. VEN. BEDE. In the sixth step the Prophet cries to us to put our trust in the LORD, lest we labour in vain. In the first counselling, for the sake of the faithful people, he makes firm assertion, saying that they who put their trust in the LORD can in no wise be moved, assigning the reason why He does not suffer sinners to increase over the lot of the righteous. They who trust in the Lord. In the second part he prays that prosperity may come unto the good, and vengeance to the bad: Do well, O Lord, unto them that are good.

EUSEBIUS OF CÆSARÆA. Of restoration to the former state. S. ATHANASIUS. A psalm describing a life endowed with holy virtue.

Various Uses. — Antiphons.
Gregorian. Do well * O LORD, unto them that are good and true of heart. Monastic. As Psalm cxxiii. Ambrosian. As Gregorian. Lyons. Mozarabic. } As Gregorian. 1 They that put their trust in the LORD shall be even as the mount Sion: which may not be removed, but standeth fast for ever. 2 The hills stand about Jerusalem: even so standeth the LORD round about his people, from this time forth for evermore.

In the literal topography of Jerusalem, the City is not girt about with mountains as with an encircling wall. On the contrary, it is only on the eastern side that its own heights are dominated by Mount Olivet, (itself but slightly loftier than Zion,) which pushes out its spurs to the north-east and south-east in a curve about the city. From all other points of view Jerusalem appears higher than all the neighbouring hills. Yet those very hills are near and high enough to be a defence, especially on the borders of Moab, and put obstacles in the way of invaders, not easily to be surmounted. Hence we get a mystical sense of great beauty. Zion, the royal

fortress, the citadel of Jerusalem, the City of David, is continually taken (as we have had many occasions to note), as the type of the Church Militant on earth. She has many a valiant champion, many a strong defender, but she herself is higher, mightier, nobler than all save One, Who rises above her and stands to the East, for Olivet, with its rivers of oil, denotes that "unction from the Holy One," which, descending upon the Church and her children, anoints them as athletes for the combat, and makes them strong for the battle against all besiegers. Sion does more than stand fast, for the Hebrew implies more absolute fixity than this. They who do but stand fast must needs become weary soon, but she sitteth (), she is throned as a Queen by the King whose Bride she is.

Further, the second verse in the original suggests contrast rather than parallel. It runs thus, literally, Jerusalem, mountains are about her, and the Lord is about His people. "For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy upon thee; and it is written in another place, "Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls, for the multitude of men and cattle therein: for I, saith the LORD, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her. So, it is not the special glory of the Church Triumphant that the great mountains of the Apostles, Martyrs and Doctors are clustered there, but that the glory of God lightens it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.

But the LXX. and Vulgate divide and translate these two verses in a different fashion: They that trust in the Lord are as Mount Sion, he shall not be moved for ever who dwelleth in Jerusalem. The mountains are round about her, &c. S. Hilary utters an eloquent protest against the dead literalism which insists on understanding the Psalm in its surface meaning, pointing out how much nobler it is to be a rational human being than a rock or a mountain, and how little either of holiness or stability was found in the earthly capital of Judea; the scene of so many crimes against religion, the theatre of so many terrible vengeances of capture, slaughter and destruction; and that we must choose between the mystical sense, or condemn the Psalm as idle, Stanley, Sinai and Palestine.

A. and its singer, the Prophet, as a lying seer. Search Jerusalem now, remarks S. Augustine, writing at the beginning of the fifth century, and you will not find one Jew there. Its old inhabitants were moved away from it first in their heart and then by exile; meet punishment for the rejection, expulsion, and crucifixion of their King. For they cast Him out of their city and crucified Him without its walls. And He hath cast them outside His city, the everlasting Jerusalem, the mother of us all, which is in heaven. They who trust in the Lord shall be even as the Mount Sion, shall have in themselves individually all the grace and strength stored up in the Church of God. Most of the commentators here, however, depart from this usual interpretation,

and explain Sion here to mean CHRIST, as the great ”Mountain of the LORD’S House, established on the top of the mountains, and exalted above all hills,” on Whom the Church is built, as a ”City set on a hill,” while he ”whose conversation is in heaven,” that is, he who dwelleth in Jerusalem, the heavenly city, shall never be moved. No siege, no capture, no exile, no fall need be dreaded. Enemies dare not approach it from without, and within there is ”the blessed necessity of sinlessness. The hills are round about her. And this they interpret as the Angels, watching and defending, in their capacity as guardians, the Sion of expectant souls on earth, compassing about the heavenly City with their shining ranks above.

But while these Angels have the charge of those imperfect souls who put their trust in the LORD because they fear Him (as it is written, ”The Angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear Him”) a stronger defender, a more blessed gift, is for them who truly dwell in Jerusalem, submitting themselves to all its laws, for the Lord is round about His people. Wherefore Moses, when the LORD, wroth with the children of Israel because they had made the calf, said, ”I will send an Angel before thee . . . . for I will not go up in the midst of thee; answered, ”If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.”

3 For the rod of the ungodly cometh not into the lot of the righteous : lest the righteous put their hand unto wickedness. R. By the rod we are to understand the sceptre of authority and power, of which it is the symbol. Moses had a rod, whereby he was enabled to do all his works, and Aaron had one also. But so had Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar. Therefore the LORD stands round about us in order that the rod of the ungodly shall not rest upon (A.V.) our lot. Troubles come, no doubt, but they do not abide; persecutions come, but they do not continue; there are many who strive to reduce into captivity the liberty of our faith, but no one has the mastery over our confession which we have in CHRIST.

For the rod of the ungodly shall not be left upon our lot, lest conquered and overcome by the tyranny of that rod, we stretch forth our hands unto unrighteousness. If the rod does fall upon us, it will be taken away again, and when the sinner oppresses us, he shall not be suffered to abide. Our suffering at the hands of GOD’s adversaries is brief, and it wins the reward of victory, albeit it involves no long toil of battle. The LORD is at hand. The time will come when one GOD shall be acknowledged; the time will come, when CHRIST appearing in His glory shall gather together all nations before Him, and divide them as a shepherd divideth the goats from the sheep. He shall set the sheep on His right hand, the goats on His left. And thou shalt see there many slaves amongst the sheep, and many masters amongst the goats. And again many masters amongst the sheep, and many slaves amongst the goats. For it does not follow, though we speak such words of comfort as the former to slaves, that all slaves are good, nor because we speak in this wise of the pride of masters, that all masters are bad. There are good and faithful masters,

and bad ones, just as there are good and faithful slaves, and bad ones. But so long as good servants obey bad masters, let them fear not, since it is only for a time.

The lot of the righteous, here used in the primary sense of the inheritance of Israel in the Holy Land (over which, nevertheless, the rod of Syrian, Roman, and Mohammedan oppressors was suffered to rest for the sins of the people), means for us the Christian Church, made up of GOD's elect and righteous themselves, whom He does not permit to be continually afflicted, however He may chastise them for a season. Their hands may bear wickedness, but not do it, as Christian soldiers cheerfully obeyed Julian the Apostate, till he commanded them to sacrifice to idols, whereupon they recognised no master but CHRIST in matters of faith, and refused to obey the edict, choosing rather to bear the punishment of martyrdom.

A. A. 4 Do well, O LORD : unto them that are good and true of heart. Good refers to continual purity in action, true of heart to soundness of faith in doctrine; and further to the inward consent of the will to the external uprightness; since it is possible to be good so far as outward blamelessness goes, by reason of fear of punishment, or in order to gain the applause of men, neither of which is acceptable unto GOD. But to those who serve Him from true love He is asked to do well, that is, to bestow on them increase of grace on the way, and the largess of blessedness in their country. 5 As for such as turn back unto their own wickedness : the LORD shall lead them forth with the evil-doers, but peace shall be upon Israel. Ay. G. Rom. i. 32, marg.

Back unto their own wickedness. The sense is better given by A.V., As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways (literally, bend their crooked ways, that is, make the straight crooked), and the meaning is here that of compromising the truth, and adopting worldly or tortuous policy, while not openly going over to the side of GOD's enemies. And this is the sense for the most part drawn from the Vulgate, such as turn aside unto bonds, or as the LXX. very forcibly has it, chokings. For turn aside denotes going out of the King's highway, and ceasing to obey His precepts, while bonds imply the sins in which we thereby become entangled, and the very suffocation of our spiritual life. It is here spoken of those who, under the pressure of the rod of the ungodly, stretch out their hands unto wickedness, and obey, with whatever secret repugnance, the dictates of unbelieving power, and who are offended, that is, stumble in their walk, at seeing the prosperity of the evil, and the sufferings of the righteous, and thus, little by little, yield themselves unto bonds, and walk in crooked ways, bringing themselves under the Apostle's sentence as they "who knowing the judgment of GOD, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but consort with them that do them. "Therefore thus saith the LORD GOD of Hosts, O My people that dwellest in Zion, be not afraid of the Assyrian:

he shall smite thee with a rod, and shall lift up his staff against thee, after the manner of Egypt; for yet a little while, and the indignation shall cease, and Mine anger in their destruction. And then will follow the fulfilment of the promise Peace shall be upon Israel. ”For Thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian; and instead thereof ”there shall come forth a Rod out of the stem of Jesse,” ”a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel,” the Rod of GOD’S SON, ”which contemneth every tree,” and this Man shall be the Peace, ”when the Assyrian shall come into our land; and will feed His people Israel with His rod, the flock of His heritage, ”for He is our Peace, who hath made both one,” Jews and Gentiles alike, into one Israel, even JESUS CHRIST our LORD.

Glory be to the FATHER, Who standeth round about His people; glory be to the SON, the Peace upon Israel; glory be to the HOLY GHOST, Who doeth well unto those that are good and true of heart. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Drive away, O LORD, from the lot of the righteous, the wickedness of the evil who arise against it, that they who trust in Thee with their whole heart, may not be shaken with any rains of temptations. (1.) Do well, O LORD, unto them that are good and true of heart: bestow on them the ruling of salvation, be ever wakeful for the protection of Thy people, and bridle the rage of the wicked with Thy right hand. (11.) Grant us, O LORD, so firmly to trust in Thee, that the whirlwind of the enemy may not move us; stablish our faith in Mount Sion. Vouchsafe ever to be round about Thy people, lest the multitude of the redeemed should desire to put its hands unto wickedness, and let them so despise the pleasures of the world as to break in Thy might all hurtful bonds, and receive Thy bounty and Thy holy light. (11.)

O CHRIST, Mount of Strength, keep us, we beseech Thee, in all places by Thy safeguard, be round about Thy people, suffer not the rod of the ungodly to bear rule over the lot of Thy servants, do well unto us, and grant us times of prosperity and peace. (5.)

Psalm 126

TITLE. A Song of Degrees.

Argument.
ARG. THOMAS. That CHRIST may fill us with the joy of eternal gladness. The Voice of the Apostles to the LORD concerning the ungodly Jews. This, the seventh step, contains the consolation of the Martyrs, who bearing tears here for a time, shall reap and eat of eternal joys. VEN. BEDE. After captivity to all sins, how sweetly are the voices of the blessed offered as they go up to the heavenly Jerusalem; that engaged as they are in a toilsome journey, they may solace themselves with holy song. These most holy men, delivered by divine pity, in the first part of the Psalm give thanks, because they have been received with so much grace after most painful exposure to sin, so that they are accounted praiseworthy among the Gentiles. When the Lord turned. In the second part they make their prayer that their captivity may be turned into joy, adding that true and wonderful saying: They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.

SYRIAC PSALTER. One of the Psalms of Degrees. Anonymous. It is spoken of Haggai and Zechariah who went up from Babylon along with the Captivity. Spiritually it is the expectation of good things to come. EUSEBIUS OF CÆSAREA. Concerning expectation of things to come. S. ATHANASIUS. A Psalm of thanksgiving.

Various Uses. — Antiphons.
Gregorian. Then were we like * unto them that dream. [Comm. Apost.: Going they went, and wept, casting their seeds.] Ambrosian. Turn, O LORD, * our captivity, as a torrent in the south. Parisian. The LORD hath done great things for us, we are made glad. Lyons. We were made * as the comforted. Mozarabic. As Parisian. 1 When the LORD turned again the captivity of Sion: then were we like unto them that dream. So Livy tells us that when the Greeks heard at the Isthmian games after the defeat of the Macedonians by T. Q. Flamininus, the proclamation of the herald that they should, by the free gift of the Roman people, retain their liberty, ”the joy was too great for men to take it all in. None could well believe that he had heard aright, and they looked on one another in wonder, like the empty show of a dream; and as for each person singly, having no confidence in their own ears, they all

questioned those standing nearest to them. The herald, called back, because every one was anxious not only to hear but to see the messenger of freedom, repeated the proclamation. Then, when they knew that the good news was certain, such applause and shouting was raised and renewed again and again, that it was easy to see that of all good things nothing is dearer to the people than liberty. The games were then hurriedly gone through, because no one's mind or attention was bent on the sight at all; to such a degree had that one joy taken up the room of every other pleasure."

Archdeacon Barbour, The Bruce, I. 225. A! fredome is a noble thing! Fredome mayss man to haiff liking; Fredome all solace to man giffis; He levys at ess that frely levys! A noble hart may haiff nane ess, Na ellys nocht that may him pless, Gyff fredome failyhe; for fre liking Is yharnyt our all othir thing. Na he, that ay has levyt fre, May nocht knaw weill the propyrté, The angyr, na the wrechyd dome, That is cowplyt to foule thyldome. But gyff he had assayit it, Than all perquer he suld it wyt; And suld think fredom mar to pryse Than all the gold in wurld that is. The LXX. and Vulgate lose the notion of the joyful unexpectedness expressed by the word dream, translating, as they do, like unto them that are comforted; which is like the tame paraphrase of the Chaldee, "We were like unto sick men who have recovered." Jerusalem above is free, in the bliss of the Angels, but Sion here below is captive in the sins of men. When the LORD turned its captivity by proclaiming the remission of sins, then were we as men comforted. Not altogether comforted, but only like it, because comfort implies sorrow, and tears, which belong to our exile here, not to be wiped away till we are again at home.

In another sense, they take the verse as telling of the wondering and hesitating joy of the Apostles in the Resurrection, after CHRIST had indeed turned the captivity of Sion by harrowing hell, and bringing the waiting Patriarchs away with Him into the joy of Paradise; and still more when He ascended on high, leading captivity captive. And it has, moreover, an historical application to the great peace of the Christian Church when it emerged into permanent freedom from Pagan oppression at the end of the tenth persecution; and a tropological one to the coming of each ransomed soul out of the spiritual Babylon of sin into the grace and glorious liberty of the children of GOD. 2 Then was our mouth filled with laughter: and our tongue with joy. The word laughter recalls how that child of Abraham was named, in whose supernatural birth the types of the coming Messiah may be said to begin, for Isaac is laughter. Thus, looking to the Easter fulfilment of the verse, we shall see the apt comment on it in the great Paschal Sequence of Adam:

Now let the praise of GOD most High And voices shouting victory, Break forth in triumph free; This is the day the LORD hath made, This day hath all our grief repaid, The day of Jubilee. A. Adam Victorin. The Sequence, Zyma vetus expurgetur. Yea, that Child, our mystic Laughter, For whose sake the ram fell after, Signifies the

Joy of Life, Joseph from the prison goeth; CHRIST, by Resurrection, showeth, He hath conquered in the strife. And if we turn to the story of the deliverance under Constantine, we can do no better than cite some passages from a contemporary writer's burst of exultation, "The souls of all of us triumphed with a divine and heavenly gladness, when we saw every place which a little before had been razed by the crime and impiety of tyrants revive again after long and fatal desolation, and churches which had been levelled to the ground built up to loftier heights from the very foundations, and adorned with far greater splendour and erected of far vaster size than those which had been destroyed . . . . Then a glorious sight, welcome and longed for by us all, was set before the public eyes, that is, the dedication festivals of the churches in every city, the hallowings of the newly-erected temples. One was the might and power of the HOLY GHOST, flowing through all the members of the Church, one the mind and feeling of all, one and the same zeal and eagerness in the Faith, one consenting praise of Deity from the mouths of all; crowds of every sex and age, with all their powers of thought, with glad spirit and exulting soul, with prayers and thanksgivings worshipped GOD, the Giver of all good things."

And in the personal application of the Psalm, we learn somewhat here of that inward consolation and gladness which comes to those souls which GOD delivers from the bonds of sin, and suffers to break out into rejoicing praise. Therefore shall ye draw with joy Water from Salvation's well; Praise shall your glad tongues employ, While His streaming grace ye feel. Each to each ye then shall say, "Sinners, call upon His Name; O rejoice to see His day; See it, and His praise proclaim." Glory to His Name belongs, Great, and marvellous, and high, Sing unto the LORD your songs, Cry to every nation, cry! G. Yes, for when crying, in this wise, was heard from the Apostles, speaking with divers tongues in the joy of Pentecost: It will not be forgotten how the gladness of the greatest of Church festivals, sometimes passing the bounds of moderation, gave rise to the phrase Risus Paschales, "Easter laughter."

3 Then said they among the heathen : The LORD hath done great things for them.

For when those who had been collected at Jerusalem from many lands returned to their own countries, the first news they spread at home was of certain Galileans, who had spoken to them of the wonderful works of GOD in the several languages of "Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judæa, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Cretes and Arabians. It is to be noted that the tense of said in the original is future, although by a usual Hebrew idiom, the future is treated as a past tense when coupled with , then; nevertheless, the wording gives a prophetic cast to this part of the Psalm, as noting what will yet come to pass, as well as what happened when the Gentile tribes which had settled in Palestine saw with wonder the return of the Captivity, and when many

of them consequently flocked as proselytes to the victorious Faith. It is not written, Then shall the Gentiles say, but, Then shall they say among the Gentiles, because neither at the first, nor at the LORD's coming, nor in time to come did or will all the Gentiles accept the truth, but only certain among them, who were moved by the holiness of life and the wonderful works of believers.

So it proved when the Roman Empire bowed before the Cross, for though very many of the heathens submitted to the new religion, yet Pagan idolatry held its ground for a long time, sullenly resisting, and yielding by only slow degrees before the advance of the Gospel. Great things. Not only in the miraculous powers conferred upon the Apostles and other early preachers of the Word, and the valiant endurance of the Martyrs under the fiercest tortures, but more than all, the obedience of soul and body to GOD, the heavenly conversation of those truly turned to Him.

A. 4 Yea, the LORD hath done great things for us already : whereof we rejoice. It is the thankful acknowledgment made by GOD's rescued children of the truth just uttered by the wondering Gentiles; confessing as they do that the work was entirely GOD's, and contrary at once to their own deservings and expectations. The great things which the LORD did for His Church in her early days were four; preservation of her existence amidst the fiercest persecutions, so that the faithful did not fall away, nor converts cease to come in; evident judgment on the rebellious and gainsaying Jewish people; overthrow of Paganism in the Empire; and deliverance of the Church from Arianism and other dangerous heresies which threatened her very life. Gerhohus will have it that these words apply most fitly to the faithful departed, now at rest, delivered out of the Babylon of this world with all its confusion of tongues, and made citizens of that happy country, Jerusalem above, where there is but one language, that of the one Faith taught by the HOLY GHOST. But they without us cannot be made perfect, and therefore follows:

5 Turn our captivity, O LORD: as the rivers in the south. A. Cant. iv. 16. A.

The primary sense here is obviously that the return of the exiles was not complete; and it is most probable that the date of the Psalm is hereby fixed as that of the first migration under Zerubbabel, after the decree of Cyrus; and that the first colony, now safe at Jerusalem, joins its prayers to those of the yet distant exiles, that they may be soon united together in their own land and city and temple. And therefore the citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, and we who are on pilgrimage in the Babylon of this world, having the first-fruits of the Spirit, pray for our deliverance out of bondage, and for the conversion of all heathens and unbelievers to the Faith. As the rivers in the south. The south, as the region most exposed to the scorching heats of summer, naturally has its water-courses dried up very rapidly, so that the whole land through which they pass becomes parched and arid. The simile is then that of the sudden flooding of these channels by the streams descending from the northern heights when swollen with the winter rain. The LXX., however,

have here translated south as south-wind, and consequently the whole current of ancient exposition sees here the melting of a river frozen up by the north-wind, and now set free by the genial breezes of the south to pour down in a rapid torrent; so that the imagery of the Psalm is quite unaffected, and the same idea of flood and fertilizing refreshment is presented to us.

This South-wind, they tell us, is the HOLY GHOST Himself, of Whom is written in the Canticles: ”Come, thou South, blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. And the HOLY GHOST comes only by mission from the SON, though He proceeds from the FATHER, for it is written of the Almighty, ”He sendeth out His Word, and melteth them: He bloweth with His wind, and the waters flow. What that means, the Son of Sirach will tell us: ”Thy sins also shall melt away, as the ice in the fire and warm weather. Whither then shall the torrent flow? All rivers properly flow towards and into the sea, and therefore our cry to the LORD when He has roused us from our wintry sleep is, Direct the channel of our waters in the one true course,

Come near and bless us when we wake, Ere through the world our way we take; Till in the ocean of Thy love We lose ourselves in heaven above. 6 They that sow in tears : shall reap in joy. 7 He that now goeth on his way weeping, and beareth forth good seed : shall doubtless come again with joy, and bring his sheaves with him. The first fulfilment of the verse in its historical sense is found by comparing the account of the foundation of the Second Temple, where we read that ”many of the priests and the Levites and chief of the fathers, ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice;” whereas ”the children of Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity, kept the dedication of this house of God with joy.” The spiritual meaning is, that whereas there are two sowings, to the flesh and to the spirit; and the fruit of the one is adultery, fornication, idolatry, hatred, variance, heresies, envyings, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; that of the other is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; each man shall reap what he sows. And therefore, as the best sacrifice to God is a broken spirit, and they who mourn are blessed, because they shall be comforted, it is well that we should with penitent tears of confession water, as with rain, the seed we sow, that we may rejoice, and that with shouting (Heb.), in bringing forth good fruit to be garnered by the LORD at the judgment. For us in this sense the words of the Latin dramatist are most true:

Tibi aras, tibi occas, tibi seris, tibi eidem et metis, Tibi denique iste pariet latitiam labor. For thyself thou ploughest, for thyself thou harrowest, for thyself thou sowest, for thyself too thou reapest, and that toil will at last bring forth gladness for thyself.

So the LORD Himself has taught us, saying, ”Ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. Before CHRIST’s coming, before He consecrated weeping by His own strong crying and tears, nothing but salt drops of bitter water flowed from the eyes of men, but now they are costly pearls, dear and precious in GOD’s sight. Our tears are fivefold, penitence for sin, fear of judgment, in weariness of exile, compassion for sinful friends, longing for our country, and the tears of the LORD are the joys of the world. So too the sorrowful persecution, endured by the Apostles and Martyrs, the blood they shed were, as Tertullian forcibly says, the seed of Christians, and the countless millions of believers who have sprung from the teaching of the persecuted Twelve, who will be their crown of rejoicing in the day of the LORD, point the use of this Psalm in the Common of Apostles. ”Let us then sow good example for men by our outward works, let us sow great joy for the Angels by our hidden sighs. Sow ye, too, because so many have sown before you, bring forth fruit, because they sowed for you. O race of Adam, how many have been sowing in thee, and what precious seed! How terribly wilt thou perish, and how deservedly, if such seed, and the toil of the sowers at the same time should perish in thee!

The whole Trinity sowed in our land, the Angels and the Apostles sowed together, the Martyrs, Confessors, and Virgins, sowed too. The FATHER sowed Bread from heaven, the Son truth, the HOLY GHOST charity. The Apostles went forth, and wept casting their seeds, but coming again they shall come with great joy, bearing their sheaves. Two are those sheaves which thou seekest, honour and rest. They who sow toil and lowliness, shall reap honour and rest together. But again and again all the commentators return to the dearest meaning of all, the abundant reward and gladness of the righteous in the manifestation of the Son of Man, when the Sower Who sowed the good seed of the Word in the field of this world triumphs finally over the secret enemy who sowed the tares, when the sorrow of exile here shall be compensated by the joy of restoration to our country. Here it is now the wintry, tearful seed-time,

We that are here in banishment Continually do moan, We sigh and sob, we weep and wail, Perpetually we groan. Our sweet is mixed with bitter gall, Our pleasure is but pain, Our joys scarce last the looking on, Our sorrows still remain. But there they live in such delight, Such pleasure and such play, As that to them a thousand years Doth seem as yesterday. And in the glad summer harvest-festival of the LORD JESUS, ”the redeemed of the LORD shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away;” ”they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the LORD, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock and of the herd: and their soul shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more at all.”

Glory be to the FATHER, Who turned the captivity of Sion; glory be to the SON, the Sower of good seed; glory be to the HOLY GHOST, the Joy of the ransomed people of GOD. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world without end. Amen.

Collects.
Comfort Thy people, O LORD, and deliver us from the evil captivity of sin, that what we sow here in tears, we may reap in joy through Thy bounty. (1.) Turn our captivity, O LORD, redeeming us from the luring seductions of the enemy, and fill us, whom Thou seest to be sorrowful for the guilt we have committed, with the comfort of pardon; grant, we beseech Thee, that we may seek the lowliness of a contrite heart and wash away with floods of tears the stains which defile us, and in such wise sow in tears the remedies of confession that we may reap with joy the fruits of pardon. (11.) Fill our mouth with joy, O LORD, and enrich our tongue with rejoicing, that we who sow in tears the Word of Life, may reap in joy the fruit of righteousness. (11.) Crying unto Thee in trouble, let us lift up our mind's eye unto Thee, O LORD, our Helper, that Thou mayest deliver us from the cruel teeth of the wicked, take away from us the rod of unrighteous tyranny, and bestowing on us Thy wonted compassion, let us, while being loosed from the captivity of sin, be counted as living stones in the building of the heavenly Jerusalem. (1.)

Purge us, O LORD, from sins; build up for Thyself within us a house to dwell in, that Thou abiding in us, and we in Thee, we may become heirs of the heavenly kingdom, together with Thy beloved, when Thou givest us the sleep of death. (1.)

Psalm 127

TITLE. Hebrew, Vulgate, and A.V.: A Song of Degrees of (or for) Solomon. LXX.: A Song of Degrees.

Argument.
ARG. THOMAS. That CHRIST may build up what is good in us, and does build it up unto Himself. The Voice of CHRIST to the coming Church, which built upon number eight of the steps, that is, on CHRIST's Resurrection, is proved to overtop them who uselessly build up the Synagogue. The Voice of the Church. VEN. BEDE. This Psalm has Solomon's name prefixed to the title, for the purpose that the very builder of the Temple may teach that he availed nothing to build it without the help of the LORD. Mystically Solomon, which is, by interpretation, the Peaceful, signifies CHRIST, of Whom the Apostle saith, "He is our Peace, Who hath made both one," that is, united the circumcision and the uncircumcision in one faith. Whence, most fitly, because of the distinction between the two Testaments, Solomon's name is placed here after seven steps, and at the head of the eight remaining; and it is known that it is also placed above after seventy Psalms at the head of the eighty following.

The Prophet, rejoicing in having foreseen by the Spirit the grace of the New Testament, teaches at the beginning (lest any hurtful presumptuousness because of so great a gift should seize on thee) that no one should ascribe any good result to his own powers, since all things are placed under GOD'S authority, nor desire to outrun the time appointed by the ordinance of the LORD. Except the Lord build the house. In the second part, he speaks of the LORD Himself and His Apostles, or whosoever fulfils His commandments. Lo, the heritage of the Lord. SYRIAC PSALTER. One of the Songs of Degrees. Uttered by David concerning Solomon. Uttered also concerning Haggai and Zechariah, who pressed on the building of the Temple. EUSEBIUS OF CÆSAREA. Concerning the building of the Church. S. AUGUSTINE. A narrative Psalm.

Various Uses.
Gregorian. Wednesday: Vespers. [Little Office of B.V.M.: Nones. Common of

B.V.M., Common of Virg.: Vespers.] Ambrosian. Parisian. Lyons. } Wednesday: Vespers. [Ambrosian. Good Friday: I. Nocturn.]

Antiphons.
Gregorian. He shall not be confounded when he speaketh with his enemies in the gate. [Comm. of B.V.M.: The winter is past, the rain is over and gone, arise, My fair one, and come away. Comm. of Virg.: Come, My chosen one, and I will set up My throne in thee.] Monastic. As Psalm cxxvi. Ambrosian. Except Thou, O LORD,* keep us, our eyes wake in vain. [Good Friday: Simon, sleepest thou? couldest thou not watch with Me one hour?] Parisian. Blessed is the man who hath fulfilled his desire, * he shall not be ashamed when he speaketh with his enemies. Lyons. Except the LORD * keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. The date and occasion of this Psalm are quite unsettled, nor are there any adequate means for coming to a conclusion about them. The sententious and didactic tone, resembling many passages in Proverbs, a reference seen in the first verse to the building of the

The reference is to the LXX. and Vulgate numbering of Ps. lxxii. Temple, and an allusion to Solomon's own name of "Jedidiah" in the "beloved," , of the third verse, have led some critics to accept that rendering of the title which assigns the authorship to Solomon himself, while others take it as one of the very latest of David's Psalms, intended for his son's instruction. On the other hand, the true scope of the Psalm seems to point to a private dwelling, not to the Temple, in the first verse, and the place assigned to the poem here in the Pilgrim-ritual would argue a much later date; and Ewald's conjecture is that the occasion of it was the haste of the people to erect their own houses in Jerusalem before rebuilding the Temple, as condemned by the prophet Haggai; a view which fits in suitably enough with the group in which it is found, and which S. Hilary mentions as older than his own time; while Origen, still earlier, ascribes many of the Psalms to the time of Zerubbabel, as Solomon's representative and heir.

Hag. i. 4.

1 Except the LORD build the house : their labour is but lost that build it.
They who in primæval times journeyed from the East, and said in the plain of Shinar, "Go to, let us build a city and tower," built in vain, because the LORD did not build with them; and had Jerusalem been built, either at first or afterwards, with Him, it could not have been overthrown. But the true house which the LORD builds is that temple of GOD which is made up of ourselves, living stones, wherein the SPIRIT is pleased to dwell. No human skill can rear it, nor is it planned by worldly art. It is not built upon the earth, nor begun in the shifting sand, but its foundation must be laid upon the Apostles and Prophets, JESUS CHRIST Himself being the chief corner-stone, and the whole building the work of GOD alone, albeit He employed under Him those skilled workmen, the Apostles, who laboured not in vain, because

He was with them. The LORD has come to us. He has ransomed us from captivity, and the House and City are being built up, but they who go up thither must learn and remember that He alone is the Builder and Keeper, and that future exaltation will not come until after present humiliation. Unless He co-operate with preachers and ministers of the Sacraments, who endeavour to build up the house, their speech will be in vain; "So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth, but GOD that giveth the increase. Nor can any man build up even the single dwelling of his own conscience;

and, as a great Saint teaches, Almighty GOD pulls down the human heart when He leaves it, builds it up when He fills it. It is not by making war against the mind of man that He destroys it, but by departing from it; and when this is so, and sin has dominion, the heart of a hearer is vainly counselled by a preacher, because every mouth is dumb, if He, Who alone inspires words which can be heard, does not cry aloud in the heart.

2 Except the LORD keep the city : the watchman waketh but in vain. A. Haymo. Hugo Card. Isa. ixii. 6. Here we are taught that even building up, no matter how solid and lofty, is insufficient for the protection of the house or city; and what is even more important, that the fact of being within the city, with its numerous houses, dense population, and strong walls, does not secure the safety of one single dwelling; which teaches us that mere membership of the Church of GOD is not to be made a matter of boasting; since all its sacraments, its hierarchy, its pastors, and even the very guardian angels themselves, all labouring together, cannot protect one human soul, unless the LORD Himself be the Captain of the watch. And if so, how little can the soul of man avail to guard itself! The watchman waketh, for woe betide the Bishops and Priests of the Church if they allow GOD's enemies, either of unbelief or immorality, to enter the city without sounding an alarm; for it is written, "I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night." Nevertheless, human frailty is such, and human insight into the hearts of others so imperfect, that the most zealous overseers of the flock of GOD may be deceived by their crafty foes, and therefore it is needful that they should have recourse to GOD for His external help. And note, that whereas it is said in the first verse, "Except the LORD build," yet it is not here said, "Except the LORD wake," (since He that keepeth Israel neither slumbereth nor sleepeth,) but Except the Lord keep, there can be no doubt of His power, and only our own wilful sins can oppose His good-will.

3 It is but lost labour that ye haste to rise up early, and so late take rest, and eat the bread of carefulness : for so he giveth his beloved sleep.

There is probably enough, as a Greek Father suggests, a reference here to the toilsome watch and labour of the builders of the wall of Jerusalem, working with one hand and holding a weapon with the other, and keeping guard both day and

night. The last clause in this verse may mean that GOD gives His beloved, as it were in their sleep, that bread for which those who do not put their trust in Him toil wearily and anxiously. That is, true confidence in GOD removes the sense of care from His faithful servants, for they know that He is working for them even when they cannot do so for themselves, and therefore they can wait His good time as patiently and peacefully as if slumbering, "as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. Or it may be: His beloved know that they can take their natural rest, and do so, with childlike confidence in His care, feeling assured that the ceaseless toil in which those weary themselves who do not trust in God's help is unnecessary. Or, lastly: He blesseth His beloved in their sleep, as He did when He granted Solomon wisdom, power, and riches in a vision; or as He does when He grants happy dreams to sleepers.

Under each and all of these interpretations, the teaching of the verse is that of the Sermon on the Mount, "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body what ye shall put on . . . for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things; but seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. The LXX. and Vulgate render the verse a little differently: It is vain for you to arise at dawn (LXX. or, before the light (Vulg.,) ye rise after ye have been sitting [up late, A.V. ye who eat the bread of sorrow, when He gives His beloved sleep. There is no use in rising, that is, in being proud and self-reliant, before the Light, which is CHRIST, arises on our souls. It is good to rise after Him, not before Him; that is, not to set our own will before His, as James and John did when they asked for the chief seats in His kingdom; as Peter did, when he strove to dissuade Him from His Passion, and was bid to get behind Him. After we have been sitting in lowliness at the Master's feet, it will be time enough for us to rise, when we have eaten of that bread of sorrow which it is His will to give us. Then we may begin to ascend out of the valley of weeping by these fifteen ascents;

when the Lord giveth His beloved sleep, that peaceful sleep of a holy death whose waking shall be in the resurrection of the just. It is to be noted that while it is vain to rise early for the toils of mere worldly success, there is a blessing in seeking to the LORD before the morning watch, and therefore the Western Church in the Invitatory for the Midnight Office of the four first Sundays in Lent tells her children, "Let it not be in vain that ye rise early before the light; for the LORD hath promised a crown unto them that watch."

4 Lo, children and the fruit of the womb: are an heritage and gift that cometh of the LORD. Because a childless house is no heritage or possession at all, and only offspring can give stability to a family, therefore this especial way of God's building up a house is here set down. And it was Israel itself, the nation, not Canaan, the

land in which it once dwelt, which was in very truth the heritage of the LORD. Here the words have for us a mys- A. tical sense, that the living stones of the spiritual temple, those children born to the Church of water and the HOLY GHOST, are all GOD's gift, not acquired by any human agency, since they are born "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of GOD." There is great beauty in the way the LXX. and Vulgate read the verse, coupling with it the closing words of the previous one, thus, "When He giveth His beloved sleep, behold the heritage of the Lord, sons." That is, the LORD's own special heritage are those Saints who have fallen asleep in JESUS, the payment of the fruit of the womb (Vulg.) of Mary, the purchased possession for which the Incarnation and Passion were the price. This beautiful exposition is not borne out by the Hebrew, wherein it is clear that the fruit and gift are the same thing, and are both in the nominative case; but one scarcely inferior in loveliness will stand with the grammatical construction. Sons, born of water and the HOLY GHOST, are the LORD's heritage; and the gift, the reward, the priceless possession bestowed on these sons, is Himself Who is the fruit of the Virgin's womb.

5 Like as the arrows in the hand of the giant: even so are the young children. The literal meaning of this verse is clear, as denoting the promise of strength and protection to the fortunes of a house where children rise to be the helpers and defenders of their parents in their age; and it is well illustrated by a Chinese proverb, "When a son is born into a family, a bow and arrow are hung before the gate." Young children ought rather to be children of youth, that is, born of still youthful and vigorous parents, and therefore likely to grow up stalwart and active. But the LXX., followed by the Vulgate, translate curiously, children of the shaken (ἐκτετιναγμένων, excussorum,) and the word is variously explained as meaning shaken out, rejected, or again, looking to one force of the Latin word, shot swiftly from the bow. Either way, they explain the shaken to mean the Apostles themselves, shot as mighty arrows from the bow of CHRIST, the Mighty One (Heb., LXX., Vulg., A.V.) to pierce the hearts of the nations, and the children to mean the generation of teachers whom they reared and taught, such as S. Luke, S. Mark, S. Timothy, and others similar, of all whom it is written,

So Aquila, best of the versions here, νίοι ἐφηβειῶν. Taking as a passive participle in Kal from , to pour out or disperse. There is a third sense, tak- ing the word to be excussor, when the usual explanation is that the Prophets are the shaking or terrifying (or with another rendering, the disclosing) ancestors of the Apostles. "I have bent Judah for Me, filled the bow with Ephraim, and raised up thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece, and made thee as the sword of a mighty man. And the LORD shall be seen over them, and His arrow shall go forth as the lightning." If we take the true rendering of the passage, sons of youth, we shall not lose the allegory, but will rather have the lesson taught that the most successful missionaries of CHRIST were those in the earliest days of the Church. Cardinal Hugo sums up

the qualities in which holy preachers of the word resemble arrows, saying that they are shapely because humble; slender, for they are poor; straight, in their charity; smooth, in equity; long, as long-suffering, feathered with divers virtues, headed with the steel of firm patience, sharp in keenness of intellect, piercing in their zeal for righteousness, swift in their readiness of obedience, yet motionless of themselves, and unless shot forth by Him in Whose hands they are, when they go straight and surely to the mark.

6 Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them : they shall not be ashamed when they speak with their enemies in the gate. The Targum explains this verse, coupled with the former one, of spiritual children. ”Blessed is the man who fills his school with them, they shall not be confounded when they contend with their adversaries in the gate of the house of judgment.” The literal sense is that a family, parleying with the heralds of a hostile army, or threatened with a lawsuit, to be adjudged at the city-gate, is in little danger of seeing its right overborne by might, when there are strong sons to take care that their father is not wronged. They, in this sense, includes both father and sons, but the LXX. and Vulgate translate in the singular, He shall not be ashamed, when he speaks, &c., and they further translate , his quiver, as his desire. The meaning is not hereby affected, for it obviously denotes the sense as, He who has as many children as he wishes to have, and then we shall come back to the Chaldee exposition, taking it of the blessedness of those Doctors of the Church whose happiness it has been to train

This notion appears in Sophocles : For this cause men desire to be-get And rear obedient children in their homes, That they may pay back evils to their foe, And honour friends even as their father’s self. A. P. a school of pupils able to hold their ground against the current unbelief and heresy of any age of the Church. Above all, they apply the verse in this sense to CHRIST Himself, being justified in His sayings and clear when He is judged, and having no reason to be ashamed of His disciples whom He has brought to the mark of His high calling, when the Accuser stands to plead against them before the Throne, but fails, and is cast down for ever. Again, it may be taken in another sense, that the man who has taken to himself, put in his quiver, or filled his desire with—it matters not—the teaching of the Apostles, will feel no shame or confusion at openly contending with the teachers of false doctrine, in the gate, that is in the matter of CHRIST Himself, by boldly declaring the truth concerning Him, as the Apostles themselves did when brought before kings and governors. They who stand on His side, are in the gate; they who are against Him, are shut outside it, and may not enter into the City, until they have confessed Him in Whose Name, not in their own, faithful preachers of righteousness bid them knock and ask for admittance.

Glory be to the FATHER, the Builder and Keeper of His house and City; glory be to the SON, the fruit of the Virgin’s womb, His reward for His beloved; glory be to

the HOLY GHOST, of Whom the children of the Heavenly Jerusalem are born again in the laver of regeneration. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world without end. Amen.

Collect.
O GOD, the Builder of spiritual houses, we beseech Thee to keep us, and that Thou mayest vouchsafe to unite us unto Thine elect, fill our desire and will with Thy love. (1.)

Psalm 128

TITLE. A Song of Degrees.

Argument.
ARG. THOMAS. That CHRIST bestows eternal blessedness on them that fear Him. The Voice of the Prophet touching CHRIST and the Church. This, the ninth step, declares that all who fear the LORD, under the type of a wife, flourish about the table of the Altar or of the Holy Scripture, and that they see children's children of their own doctrine and example, and peace upon Israel in heaven is their end. The Prophet speaks to the Church concerning CHRIST. The Voice of all that fear GOD. VEN. BEDE. How noble the ninth step is, the very number declares, which, extended to a triple ternary, shows us the holy majesty of the Trinity. Rightly, therefore, in such a step as this, and everywhere, is the fear of the LORD urged on us, to whom it is shown to be a necessary protector. In the first paragraph the prophet, under certain figures, counts up the blessings of them that fear the LORD; that he may kindle the minds of the devout with the fire of heavenly reward. Blessed are all they that fear the Lord. In the second part, he blesses them, that they may receive eternal joys; lest every one should be afraid of this most sweet fear. The Lord from out of Sion shall so bless thee, &c.

SYRIAC PSALTER. Anonymous. One of the Songs of Degrees. It is uttered concerning Zerubbabel, Prince of Judah, and of his furtherance of the building. It implies also the calling of the Gentiles. EUSEBIUS OF CÆSAREA. The calling of the Gentiles. S. ATHANASIUS. A Psalm declaring blessedness.

Various Uses. — Antiphons.
Gregorian. Blessed are all they * that fear the LORD. [Corpus CHRISTI: Like the olive-branches are the children of the Church round about the table of the LORD.] Ambrosian. As Gregorian. Parisian. First verse. [Maundy Thursday: By one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.] Lyons. As Gregorian. Mozarabic. Thou shalt eat the labours of thy fruits; O well is thee, and happy shalt thou be. 1 Blessed are all they that fear the LORD: and walk in his ways. The Jewish expositors take the two members of this verse as severally denoting those who avoid acts forbidden by the negative precepts, and those who fulfil such as are

prescribed by the positive ones. There is a stress on all, teaching that no disparity of sex or condition, of rank or wealth, affects the degree of happiness granted by GOD to every one of His true servants in their several stations. It is to be observed, further, that whenever the fear of the LORD is mentioned in Holy Writ, it is never set by itself, as though sufficient for

L the consummation of our faith, but always has something added or prefixed, by which to estimate its due proportion of perfection, according as it is stated by Solomon in the Proverbs, ”If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures: then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD. It is not spoken of that common timidity of human weakness, fearing to suffer something which it is unwilling should happen. This comes to us of itself, from our natural feebleness, and is not a matter of teaching and study. But of the fear of the LORD it is written, ”Come, ye children, hearken unto me, I will teach you the fear of the LORD. Therefore it is a thing we ought to learn, because it has nothing to do with affright, but with reasonable instruction, and is to be entered upon not with physical alarm, but with obedience to precepts, with the works of a blameless life, and with the knowledge of the truth. For if the only reason of fearing GOD is because many places have been struck and fired by thunder and lightning, have fallen and been swallowed up by earthquakes, there is nothing of the merit of faith in our fear, since it is merely roused by dread of something happening. Nor is it fear of the world, nor yet servile fear, neither of which is holy or profitable.

But all our fear of GOD is pure and filial, and is in our love of Him, perfect love is the consummation of that awe; a love which makes us walk in His ways. For it is quite possible to hold the Faith quite correctly, and yet live an evil life; as many do, who are the most wretched of beings. And though there be only one way, CHRIST Himself, yet here many ways are spoken of, to show us that entrance is easy, and not limited to any particular calling or mode of serving GOD. Nevertheless, all these subordinate ways are reducible to two, ”for all the ways of the LORD are mercy and truth; both of which must be followed together, because mercy without truth leads to laxity, and truth without mercy degenerates into sternness.

2 For thou shalt eat the labours of thine hands: O well is thee, and happy shalt thou be.

There is a fourfold literal sense here: Thou shalt live by honest, peaceful labour, not by rapine and violence on that produced by the toil of others, nor yet indolently and luxuriously; thou shalt eat, and not penuriously stint thyself and others; thy crops shall not be blighted, but shall bring forth abundantly; and no enemy shall destroy or carry off thy harvest. And these two latter interpretations accord best with the converse punishments threatened to the disobedient by Moses. Thou shalt eat the labours of thy hands. But he who hates labour, does not eat of it, nor can he say,

”My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work. On the other hand, he to whom such labour is a delight, does not merely look forward in hope to the future fruits or rewards of labour, but even here and now finds sustenance and pleasure in toiling for GOD; so that it is well with him in this world, even amidst all its cares and troubles, and he shall be happy in that which is to come, whence sorrow is banished for ever, as it is written in the Gospel: ”Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of heaven; on which the Apostle’s words serve as a warning gloss, ”If any would not work, neither should he eat.

The whole passage is applied by some of the commentators to the LORD JESUS Himself, who, according to His manhood, did fear His heavenly FATHER and walk in all His ways, and Who had His reward in the virtues of His Militant Church on earth and the glories of His triumphant Church in heaven. And a mystical reference to the first institution of the Holy Eucharist, and to CHRIST’s perpetual action as the true Consecrator and celebrating Priest at every renewal thereof, may be found here. For that holy Sacrament does come indeed from the labours of those Hands which were nailed on the Cross for our salvation, and He is the Head of that mystical Body which eats and drinks of Him daily therein; as He will be, in another fashion, the Food of His elect in Heaven; and then shall be fulfilled that prophecy which Isaiah spake of Him: ”He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.”

3 Thy wife shall be as the fruitful vine : upon the walls of thine house.
Two things are noted here as the qualities of a good wife, fertility, at once in good works, and in childbearing; and homekeeping, denoted by the phrase upon the walls of thine house, which ought rather to be the inner courts of thine house, literally the sides of the interior court or quadrangle, where the women’s apartments were situate, thus marking off the habits of a good wife from those of the idle gossip, of whom the Wise Man writes that ”She sitteth at the door of her house, on a seat in the high places of the city.” Further, the dutiful affection of a good wife to her husband is signified by the vine, which does not stand alone, but desires to be trained against some stronger support, which it adorns with its foliage and enriches with its fruit. The whole figure is taken of the Church, as the Bride of CHRIST, an interpretation enforced by His styling Himself, in His capacity of Head of the Body, the Vine. Close to Him, to His sides, the sacred walls of His Human Body, His Bride clings, and then only can flourish and bring forth fruit. And turning from the Head to His members, two streams of interpretation are found side by side. According to one, the wife here is the bodily frame, subjected with all

A. its affections, and passions to the reason; and bearing (as it is trained against the walls of thought and action within the recesses of the mind, towards each of the four cardinal points, prudence, justice, temperance and fortitude) abundant fruit of holy aspirations and good works. The other view is that Wisdom is meant,

as we read, ”I loved her, and sought her out from my youth, I desired to make her my spouse, and I was a lover of her beauty,” and the remainder of the gloss agrees with that just given. 4 Thy children like the olive-branches : round about thy table. A.

Not branches, but with A. V. plants, for the figure is here different from that of the one spreading vine, and points rather to separate growth and vigour. The olive is chosen as a type of prosperity, because evergreen, strong, and fruitful; and the children of the servant of God are in no fear of being led away captive, like those of rebels against His commands, but are round about his table, clustering at his modest board; like young trees planted round the sides of the very court whose walls are mantled by the leafy vine. Round about, as all in their father’s sight, and as being ready to wait on him for any service. These earthly children are figures of the spiritual children of the Church; fruitful, peaceful, gathered round God’s altar to feed there (whence this verse is the Antiphon to the Psalm on Corpus CHRISTI), gathered about the table of Holy Scripture to taste of the sweets which it furnishes to them. And observe that we have here in the inner courts of the mystical house both the vine and the olive, because oil and wine are needful to be poured into the wounds of those whom the Good Samaritan brings to be tended there; the strength and severity of the Old Testament, the softness and tenderness of the New. So too, in those good works of ours which are as it were our children, justice and mercy shall meet, and they should be gathered round Him Who is Himself the Table of the LORD’s House, looking to Him only, and waiting to minister to His wishes.

5 Lo, thus shall the man be blessed : that feareth the LORD. 6 The LORD from out of Sion shall so bless thee : that thou shalt see Jerusalem in prosperity all thy life long. The purport of the first verse is repeated, to impress the lesson that only those who fear the LORD can reasonably look for His blessing. And then, to show that there is much more to come, not yet named in the enumeration of good things, unspoken, because unspeakable, blessings of GOD are invoked and promised. Out of Sion, in the literal sense, from the Temple, as the centre of Jewish hope and worship (since though actually on Mount Moriah, it was within the limits of the region of the city named from Mount Zion), whence the benediction of the LORD diffused itself over and through the whole of Jerusalem; keeping her safe from the approach of foes so long as He was obeyed and honoured. In the mystical sense we have here, as so often, the contrast and yet connection between the Church Militant and the Church Triumphant; and the thought is, GOD shall so help thee with the grace and strength stored up in His Church below,—that Zion where David’s armoury was—that thou shalt overcome all enemies and obstacles in thy way, and attain to the unending joys of Jerusalem which is above.

7 Yea, that thou shalt see thy children’s children: and peace upon Israel.
In one sense, the words may be spoken to the Synagogue, which did see her chil-

dren's children, the Gentile converts of her own sons, the Apostles, and the peace which passeth all understanding won by that true Israel, prevalent with GOD. Spoken of the Christian Church, it tells of the long succession of rulers and teachers raised up in the spiritual posterity of the Apostles; applied to preachers of righteousness, we have the promise of imitators of their doctrine; and of the individual Christian, the gladness of seeing the fruit of his own good works. And peace upon Israel, the crowning joy of the Beatific Vision, when, after we have ceased to wrestle as Jacob, and have become the Israel of GOD, we shall see Him, Who is our Peace, face to face. Glory be to the FATHER, Who blesseth us out of Zion; glory be to the SON, Who feeds His wife and children round His table; glory be to the HOLY GHOST, Who is the giver of peace upon Israel.

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world without end. Amen.

Collects.

Vouchsafe, O LORD, everlasting blessedness unto those that fear Thy Name, that our life and conduct may be such as to win high reward in heaven for good fruits. (1.) O GOD, Who by the voice of the Prophet declaredst them blessed that fear Thee, grant us such well-pleasing reverence of Thy fear, that we may walk henceforth in Thy ways. Let our labour be, under Thy guidance, pleasing in Thy sight, and let its fruit be most sweet unto Thee in the day of reward, and let the labour itself be so done heartily in love, that the produce thereof may be stored up in blessedness. (11.) D. C. Bless us, O LORD, who fear Thee, and make us to walk continually in Thy ways, bless us with Thy holy benediction, that we may behold the everlasting joys of Jerusalem. (1.)

Psalm 129

TITLE. A Song of Degrees.

Argument.
ARG. THOMAS. That CHRIST routs those who fight against us, lest we should be hurt by them. The Voice of the Church. This tenth step contains the Voice of CHRIST against the Jews, who fighting against Him on the Cross, are shown to have done Him no hurt, because it is proved that He rose again from the dead. The Voice of CHRIST against the Jews. VEN. BEDE. Because they who labour in the LORD's vineyard are rewarded with the penny (denario) of the everlasting Kingdom, endurance of suffering is counselled in the tenth step, where the constant affliction of the Church is recorded. In the first paragraph the Prophet counsels Jerusalem to say what conflicts and fights she has endured from her enemies, lest any of the faithful should despair because of his own troubles. Many a time have they fought against me. In the second part he prays in parables against the enemies of the Church, that there may come upon them that which he knows will arrive in the future judgment. Let them be confounded and turned backward.

SYRIAC PSALTER. One of the Songs of Degrees. Anonymous. Concerning the suffering of the nation. As regards us, it implies the victory and triumph of worshippers. EUSEBIUS OF CÆSAREA. The Victories of GOD'S host. The Sufferings of CHRIST. S. ATHANASIUS. A Psalm of thanksgiving.

Various Uses. — Antiphons.
Gregorian. Monastic. Lyons. } Many a time * have they fought against me from my youth up. Ambrosian. The blessing of the LORD be upon you we have blessed you in the Name of the LORD. [Easter Eve: I gave my back to the smiters, I hid not my face from shame and spitting.] Parisian. Sinners wrought upon my back * and prolonged their unrighteousness. [Good Friday: It was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour, and the sun was darkened.] Mozarabic. As Ambrosian. 1 Many a time have they fought against me from my youth up : may Israel now say. 2 Yea, many a time have they vexed me from my youth up: but they have not prevailed against me. It is the brief summary of all the trials and sufferings the chosen nation endured from its first

existence as a people in Egypt until the return from the Captivity and the revival of its national being. The Egyptian period is definitely named twice at least in Scripture as the time of Israel's childhood, "As in the days of her youth, and as in the days when she came up out of the land of Egypt;" and again, "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called My son out of Egypt." Fought against would be more exactly translated straitened, hemmed me round, and it is not unlikely that there is a hidden allusion in the use of the verb

from the root , he compressed (whence we have , a narrow place) to Mizraim, , Egypt, literally, the narrowed lands, from the cognate root, , he shut in. The reference is, however, not limited to Egypt, but extends through the long history of Canaanite, Philistine, Ammonite, Syrian, and Babylonian wars, to the failure of the confederacy to prevent the rebuilding of Jerusalem by Nehemiah, to the renewal of the kingdom under the Maccabee revolters from Greek oppression. It is no marvel that the Christian commentators apply the words to the spiritual Israel of the Church, in her protracted struggle against sin from the fall of man, yet in his early youth, from the days of righteous Abel; and later against the whole power of the Synagogue and of the Pagan Empire: and S. Hilary appositely takes the sufferings of the great Teacher of the Gentiles, from the time when the young man named Saul, newly converted, began to preach CHRIST in Damascus, till the aged Apostle Paul laid down his life gladly for His sake, as a personified type of what the whole Christian body endured. And it is as true of the Head as it was of His members, sought for as He, the King of Israel, was by Herod to slay

A. Him in His cradle, and driven by necessity, as His forefathers were, into Egypt; and how they fought against Him often after that, the incessant plots of Pharisees, Sadducees and Herodians against Him, till the final result, may tell. It holds too, of every Saint who, having put off the old man with his works, and put on the new man, has begun in this wise a spiritual youth, and at once becomes the mark for the enmity of the adversaries of righteousness. And therefore it is well said Many a time: because the Tempter, when once overcome, does not thereupon leave us, but returns, as he did to the LORD JESUS, and assays again and again to conquer. One battle, nay, one campaign is not enough for us in such a war. But they have not prevailed against me, for wings are given to the Church that she may flee away from her persecutors, the wing of wisdom against words of reproach, the wing of patience against stripes and blows. "And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" "If GOD be for us, who can be against us?"

3 The plowers plowed upon my back: and made long furrows.
A.

The figure is taken from the cruel scourging of slaves, but it is not unlikely that there may be a literal reference to the fulfilment of the prophecy, "Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps. It was

true of our Head, Who gave His back to the smiters, when ”Pilate therefore took JESUS, and scourged Him,” and when He was forced to bear that heavy Cross on His scourged back; it was true of many and many a martyr of His, first lashed with the terrible ”scorpion” and loaded whips; and then, as they hung on the Little Horse, torn with the hooked rake, which literally dug deep, long furrows in their bleeding and quivering flesh. The LXX. and Vulgate however, translate somewhat differently, Sinners wrought upon my back and prolonged their iniquity. And the figure which the commentators have seen in the words is a mass of precious metal lying on the anvil, and beaten out into greater breadth and length by the hammers of the smiths, until a costly vessel is produced by their labour. Some will have it that the mention of the back implies what does not show itself before the face, and thus secret injury, slander and detraction; but the sense of consciously bearing a burden, which others prefer, suits better with the mention of open violence in the preceding verses;

and further agrees with that other passage, where the enemies of Jerusalem are described as they ”which have said to thy soul, Bow down, that we may go over: and thou hast laid thy body as the ground, and as the street to them that went over. Into these furrows of the plowers, observes one of the later expositors, the enemies of the Martyrs, all unknowingly, cast seed, which sprang up in a glorious harvest for the garners of God. And, having their faces towards God, while their backs were turned to the world, the martyrs recked little of all their enemies could do to the body, since they looked only to what was before, and forgot that which was behind.

4 But the righteous LORD : hath hewn the snares of the ungodly in pieces. Snares is inexact, for that word denotes craft, whereas open violence is the suffering here named ; and the A.V. cords gives the true meaning. The sense is, most probably, While they were plowing on my back, God came suddenly and cut the harness of the oxen asunder, so that they could no longer draw the plow ; and then release was mine also. That is, He deprived the enemies of Israel of the instruments necessary for their evil purpose. Or the cords may be those with which the sufferer was bound in his place of torture, now broken, so that he is freed. But the LXX. and Vulgate for snares or cords translate necks, and the general current of the exposition sees here the punishment of the proud and stiffnecked enemies of God’s Church, who refuse to bear His yoke, being easy, but who loudly justify themselves when charged with any fault.

A. 5 Let them be confounded and turned backward : as many as have evil will at Sion. Here, as so often, two opposing schools of interpretation meet us ; the one taking the words in their sterner, literal sense of sinful chastisement in this world and doom in the judgment to come ; the other, more gently and more deeply, of the salutary confusion of penitence, of that turning backward from the broad

way of destruction, to get behind the LORD, and follow Him instead of opposing Him, as Peter did after receiving His rebuke ; to swell the ranks of His army, albeit marching in its rear, like those messengers of Joram whom Jehu (”the LORD is He”) made to turn behind him, as he went forward to execute the LORD’s judgment on the idolatrous king. 6 Let them be even as the grass growing upon the house-tops : which withereth afore it be plucked up ;

7 Whereof the mower filleth not his hand : neither he that bindeth up the sheaves his bosom. Grass, remarks S. Gregory the Great, grows on the roofs S. Greg. Mor. viii. 28. Reading instead of . of houses, but has no firm root, and similarly a hypocrite, (and as others add, the proud) makes a show of doing the very highest things, but he is not stablished in tender sincerity of heart. And as grass of this kind withers before it can be plucked up, so too when a hypocrite has set himself to do good things without any set determination of a right conscience, he loses them, and shows that he was flourishing without a root. It would be wiser, pithily observes S. Augustine, to grow lower down and thrive better. Such as these, proud, violent, and hypocrites, unlike those sheaves which shall be brought with joy to God’s granaries at the great harvest-home, shall not be taken from the field nor borne in the bosom of the Angel reapers: since being carnal, they have brought forth no spiritual fruit, and are utterly worthless. But the righteous who have led active lives of good shall be led by the reapers’ hands, and those who have served God in devout contemplation shall be carried in the bosom of the Angels to their rest in Heaven.

8 So that they who go by say not so much as, The LORD prosper you: we wish you good luck in the name of the LORD.

A. That is, as there will be no reapers for the worthless grass upon the housetops, there will be nothing to attract the attention of passers-by, so as to draw from them the customary greeting to those engaged in getting in the harvest: of which an example is recorded for us in the mutual benediction of Boaz and his reapers at Bethlehem. They explain the passers-by to be those who are on pilgrimage through this world, and seeking a better country, so that they do no more than briefly sojourn here where they have no continuing city, and it is especially taken of the Prophets and Apostles, who do not bless those whom they see aiming at high places in the world, and destitute of the root of charity. So the Prophets of the Old Testament have no blessings, but only terrible warnings and threats for their nation if they should reject their King, and have evil will at Sion, the Church of His foundation: as for example when Jeremiah foretells ”They have belied the LORD, and said, It is not He,” there follows the threat of the Roman conquest, with all its terrible devastation. And Parez works out the whole Psalm as a prophecy of the rejection of the Synagogue, especially comparing its ceremonial system, withering away and producing no fruit, to grass upon the house-tops, dried up for the want of

the moisture of grace, and from not being planted on the rich soil of the foundation, which is CHRIST JESUS.

And this author, as well as many much earlier, notes that the Psalm refers to heretics and other false Christians as well as Jews; while S. Ambrose, writing when the memory of the Arian troublers of Sion and of the aid they derived from successive Emperors was still recent, takes the reference to the house-tops as marking the Court intrigues and reliance on powerful secular aid which specially characterized the leaders of that particular form of unbelief. To none such can the preachers of the Church say The Lord bless you (A.V. &c.), for they are rebels against Him; nor can they even say We bless you in the Name of the Lord, to any one who abideth not in the doctrine of CHRIST, "for he that biddeth him GOD speed 2 S. John is partaker of his evil deeds. Let us then sow profitably, 11. counsels a Saint at the end of his gloss on this Psalm, that we may make our labours ready for filling both hands and bosom, and become partakers of that blessing of GOD which is in CHRIST JESUS our LORD.

Glory be to the FATHER, the LORD GOD of Israel; glory be to the SON, on Whose back the plowers made long furrows: glory be to the HOLY GHOST, the righteous LORD, Who blesseth His people. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world without end. Amen.

Collects.

Defend Thy Church, O LORD, with the protection of Thy right hand from all wickedness of them that war against her, that when her enemies are turned backward, she may be filled by Thee with holy benediction. (1.) O LORD JESU CHRIST, Who to procure our salvation didst endure intercourse with the ungodly, defend us by the help of Thine aid against the mischief of our adversaries, and lest the burden of sin should weigh down our back, place on our shoulders the sweet weight of the Gospel precepts, whereby Thou mayest destroy the workmanship of sin, and build us up with the sacred fastenings of holiness. (11.) Behold, O LORD, the burdensome unrighteousness of haughty sinners hath wrought upon the back of Thy Church, and they, incurable in their ways, sorely vex Thy members; grant us therefore so to be stayed up by the grace of endurance, that we may carry back in safety with us to the heavenly stalls those whom we carry on our backs to be cured; and that receiving along with them one and the same penny, we may derive gain from our preaching, and they with us obtain an eternal reward for their obedience. (11.)

Grant, O LORD, that the Church, vexed from her youth up with the war and terror of spiritual wickedness, may so mightily triumph over her enemies, that when their necks are brought low, she may obtain of Thee joy and gladness for evermore. (1.)

Psalm 130

TITLE. A Psalm of Degrees.

Argument.
ARG. THOMAS. That CHRIST may grant us propitiation for our sins, without marking our iniquities. The Voice of CHRIST and the Church. This Psalm is to be read with the lesson of the Prophet Jonah. Wherefore this eleventh step denotes the voice of blessed Peter weeping bitterly after his third denial, and of all who imitate him here. The Voice of the Church. The Voice of the Apostle Peter. VEN. BEDE. The Prophet, placed on the eleventh step, prostrates himself to fulfil his penance, because not even any Saint, so long as he is in the flesh, can be entirely free from sin. And this too is to be said, that every sin belongs as it were to the number eleven, because it overpasses the perfection of the Ten Commandments. The Prophet cries to the LORD, that by the goodness of the righteous Judge he may be delivered out of the deep of sin, and from the troubles he experiences. Without delay, he comes to the joys of thanksgiving that penitents may understand with what favour they will be received, and how swift is the remedy bestowed on them. Out of the deep have I called, and Before the morning watch.

SYRIAC PSALTER. One of the Songs of Degrees. It is spoken of Nehemiah the Priest. And it implies in him the prayer of the Martyrs. EUSEBIUS OF CÆSARRA. The prayer of the Martyrs. S. ATHANASIUS. A Psalm of solitary address.

Various Uses.
Gregorian. Wednesday: Vespers. [Christmas Day: II. Vespers. Sacred Heart: Vespers. Office of Dead: Vespers. Preces of Lauds in ferials of Advent, Lent, and Ember-tide, Little Office of B.V.M.: Compline.] Monastic. Tuesday: Vespers. [Christmas-tide, alternately with Ps. cxxxii.: Vespers.]

Antiphons.
Gregorian. Monastic. Lyons. Ferial: Out of the deep * have I called unto Thee, O LORD. [Christmas Day and Sacred Heart: With the LORD there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption. Office of Dead: If Thou, LORD, wilt mark what is done amiss, O LORD, who may abide it?] Ambrosian. O let Thine ears consider

well the voice of my complaint. Parisian. My soul hath waited on His word, * my soul hath hoped in the LORD. Mozarabic. From the morning watch until the night * let Israel hope in the LORD. 1 Out of the deep have I called unto thee, O LORD : LORD, hear my voice. This Psalm, eleventh in number of the Graduals, sixth of the Penitentials, and consisting of eight verses, is meant to teach us, they say, that no man can so live throughout the perfect time of his working life here, denoted by the six week-days of creation, as not to transgress the moral law of GOD laid down in the Decalogue, and so to pass on to eleven, the symbol of evil; but that by persevering in penitential supplication to GOD, the sinner may reach at last that octave of the Resurrection, when CHRIST shall redeem Israel from all his sins.

It is spoken, in the first historical sense, by the Hebrew people, out of the deep of their captivity in Babylon, imploring pardon and obedience from GOD, and not obscurely intreating for the Advent of the promised Messiah. For us it is the cry of any one striving to ascend out of the abyss of sin; even as Jonah cried unto the LORD out of the belly of the fish. The deep in which we find ourselves is this mortal life, and every one who thoroughly understands that he is in the deep, cries, groans, and sighs, till he be delivered out of it, and come to Him Who sitteth over all the depths, and upon the Cherubim. Whence then does the cry come? Out of the deep. Who is it that cries? A sinner. And with what hope does he cry? Because He, Who came to loose the bonds of sin, hath also given hope even to a sinner in the deep. Man must needs call too out of the deep of humility, since GOD beholdeth the proud afar off, and out of the deep of his heart, not honouring the LORD with his lips only while his heart is far from Him. Out of the deep, moreover, of his present misery, and above all, out of the deep of GOD's infinite compassion and mercy.

Note, too, that it is said, I have called, not "I am calling," teaching us not to leave off our prayer if it seem at first to be unheard, but to persevere till it has been answered. GOD loves to be asked, to be constrained, to be overcome, as it were, by our importunity. And therefore He saith to us, "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by storm. That is a righteous violence, wherewith GOD is not offended, but pleased; especially when, as here, the eager repetition of His holy Name marks the loving affection of His petitioner, and confidence in His goodwill and power. The use of the Psalm in the Western Church at burials, and in the Office

A. Hugo Card. A. of the Dead, points to another sense of it, the prayer of all expectant souls, whether of martyrs under the altar or others further from their consummation, that they may be taken up by the LORD out of their state of waiting, into the bliss of His Presence. It has been well said that the verse puts before us six conditions of true prayer: it is lowly, out of the deep; fervent, have I called; direct to GOD Himself, unto Thee; reverent, O Lord; awed, Lord is again said; one's very own, hear my voice. 2 O let thine ears consider well: the voice of my complaint.

It is not enough to cry with a loud voice in order to be heard; for it is also needful that the person called upon may give heed. For it often happens that one is so buried in thought about something else as not to attend to the voice of another speaking to him; and in that case the sound of the words strikes in vain on his ears. It is true that GOD sees and hears everything, but when He does not perform what we ask, He appears as though not attending to the voice of the petitioners, but thinking of something else, and therefore the Psalmist is not satisfied with crying loudly, but further prays that GOD will consider, that is, accept his prayers, and give him what is asked. GOD is said to bow down His ears, that is, His readiness and mercy, to us, but we, on the other hand, to lift up ours to Him. And it is to be noted that the form of the human ear teaches three silent lessons. It is always open, unlike the eyes, closed with lids, and the mouth, with lips; signifying that we should be more ready to hear than either to see or to speak; it is small, unlike that of the ass and other lower animals, warning us to "take heed how 'we' hear," and not to receive everything which is spoken; it is erect, unlike the hanging ears of dogs, because we ought to listen for words which come from heaven, rather than to those uttered from earth below.

3 If thou, LORD, wilt be extreme to mark what is done amiss: O LORD, who may abide it? S. Cyprian. Ep 52. S. Ambros. De Pœnit. 1. A. This verse is one of the great texts used by the Catholics in the controversy against the Novatians, who in an unwise zeal for the purity of the Church, denied all power of returning, even after severe penance, to those who had fallen away under the stress of persecution. For, as they note, the Psalmist does not say, "I cannot abide it," but who may abide it? seeing that no man is safe from sins which howl around him, none is of perfectly spotless conscience, none pure in heart because of his own righteousness. Abide it, or, literally, with an idiom common to English and Hebrew, stand. That is, either endure it without being flung down in prostrate ruin, or stand, as an accused before a tribunal, to make any plea in defence. For "if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Wherefore we beseech God not to act as Judge only, but to exert, as King, His prerogative of mercy, and add:

Agellius. Gerson. 1 S. John i. 8. Genebrardus. 4 For there is mercy with thee: therefore shalt thou be feared. 5 I look for the LORD; Therefore, &c. Or, more literally, with A.V., that Thou mayest be feared. For if Thou wert to be strict in judgment, no one could abide it, all would perish in the severity of such a trial, and there would be no subjects left to serve, fear, and thankfully love Thee. Therefore, if Thou desirest to be feared, forgive; and drive not miserable sinners into the gulf of despair, wherein they cease to fear, because they have lost all. Thou wilt forgive, for there is forgiveness with Thee, since He Who was in the beginning with God, is now, as Man, at Thy right hand, and "He is the propitiation (Vulg.) for our sins;" the Sacrifice once offered to take away the guilt of the world. The LXX. and the Vulgate read the latter clause of the verse differently: For Thy Name's sake I have

waited for Thee, O Lord, (LXX.:) Because of Thy law I have waited for Thee, O Lord, (Vulg.) The exposition of the Greek reading is: Albeit I could not of myself abide Thy judgment, nevertheless, I wait patiently, knowing that Thine honour is concerned in delivering Thy servant, despite of my sins, lest those who are not Thy servants should think Thee too feeble or too indifferent to protect Thy worshippers. It is exactly the argument of Moses when God threatened to consume the Israelites in a moment for their worship of the golden calf: "Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did He bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth?"

The Latin version is explained as referring to God's law of mercy and love, in confidence of which the Psalmist awaits the LORD's coming, although well aware of his own unworthiness to abide it. The Apostle has said, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of CHRIST." And as CHRIST binds Himself by His own law, we can wait for Him, patiently expecting till He come to remove the heavy fardel of sin from our shoulders, and transfer it to His own, giving us renewed life and strength thereby. Or, as others will have it, I endured Thee, I bore uncomplainingly all Thy chastisements, because of Thy law, knowing that Thou wast doing not only what was perfectly righteous, but also what was perfectly merciful, and that mercy, freedom, and righteousness would come in due time to me from Thy hands. Agellius. Origen. A. S. John i. 1. 1 S. John ii. 2.

A. G. my soul doth wait for him : in his word is my trust. 6 My soul fleeth unto the LORD : before the morning watch, I say, before the morning watch. 7 O Israel, trust in the LORD; A. C.

These verses are divided so differently in the Vulgate from the Masoretic punctuation, that it is necessary to group them together in this fashion. And first, the remainder of the fifth verse appears thus: My soul hath waited in His word : on which follows: My soul hath hoped in the Lord. That is, GOD has promised mercy, through the Incarnation and sacrifice of the WORD, His Only-begotten SON, and the Psalmist declares that he has been patiently waiting for the fulfilment of GOD's promise, knowing that it cannot fail (as man's pledges might do,) and therefore gives as the reason for his unruffled expectation, that it is the LORD, not in any one less than He, that his soul has hoped. The Hebrew pointing, however, gives the sentence as marked in the sixth verse above, which is not quite exactly rendered by the Prayer Book. It ought to run, My soul is unto the Lord, more than they which watch for the morning. That is, my yearning for the coming of CHRIST is greater than the longing wherewith they who have to wake all night (whether as sentinels or as invalids) look for the welcome break of day. It is in this sense, coupled with the previous reference to the forgiveness or propitiation that is with GOD, that the Psalm finds its place in the Vespers of Christmas Day. But the whole clause runs in the Vulgate, From the morning watch until night, let Israel hope in the Lord. S.

Augustine, taking at once the Messianic interpretation, explains this of the trust of CHRIST's spiritual Israel in Him from the early morning of His Resurrection (or as some prefer, of the Nativity) until that night cometh when no man can work, to be followed by that other Resurrection morning for us all. Others, applying the words to the individual soul, explain it of a Christian's confidence in GOD from the first dawnings of faith in the heart, (whether in baptism, in early youth, or in the time before we have fallen into deadly sin) till the very close of life; working, as a great Father reminds us, in GOD's vineyard from the early morning, through all the burden and heat of the day, until the evening of dismissal and reward has come.

A. Arnobius. S. John ix. 4. Origen. S. Bruno Carth. Hugo Card. for with the LORD there is mercy : and with him is plenteous redemption. 8 And he shall redeem Israel : from all his sins.

C. Here is the wondrous reason for Israel to hope in the LORD, because in His hand is mercy which can make the sinner righteous, the weak immortal, the fleshly like unto the Angels; and there is also plenteous redemption, because that Precious Blood was so copious in its abundance as to redeem the sins of the whole world, Jews and Gentiles alike, and wash the entire globe from its defilement with a flood of salvation. Nay, seeing that it was the Blood of GOD, Who is infinite, it far excelled the value of all that it redeemed, and would have sufficed for a million worlds. Nor is the power of that Blood exhausted, CHRIST not only has redeemed, but shall redeem, shall go on daily ransoming sinners from the curse, feeding them with His own Body and Blood, leading a continual exodus out of the Egyptian bondage of sin, original and actual, venial and mortal, into the Canaan of a renewed and holy life. This mercy and redemption were with the Lord, in His secret counsels, long before the Incarnation of the WORD, but now they are not only with the LORD, but with us, and the earth is full of His mercy; even since the word came to Joseph in a dream, "Thou shalt call His Name JESUS, for He shall save His people from their sins.

And that He did with plenteous redemption, pouring out all His precious life-Blood upon the Cross, to the last few roseate drops, and sparing none of it, so that He was red in His apparel, and stained all His raiment. From all his sins. Not from temporal captivity and suffering, but from the sorer bondage of evil; and as they tell us, not the younger and spiritual Israel alone is here meant, but that elder people which rejected and crucified Him, shall be cleansed from its crowning guilt by His plenteous redemption, and joined in one rejoicing fellowship with the servants of the Cross.

Glory be to the FATHER, unto Whom we call from the deep; glory be to the SON, His WORD, mercy, and redemption, Who redeems Israel from all his sins; glory be to the HOLY GHOST, Who considers well the voice of our complaint. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world without end. Amen.

Collects.

Let Thy merciful ears attend, we beseech Thee, O LORD, to the prayer of Thy humble servants, because with Thee there is propitiation of sins; that Thou mayest not mark our iniquities, but vouchsafe us Thy mercies. Let Thine ears, O LORD, unto which our cry and petition is directed, be open unto our prayers, that they may graciously hear us and mercifully answer our petitions. And since there are many mercies with Thee, we pray Thee, O GOD, condemn us not according to the multitude of our iniquities, but quicken with Thy plenteous compassion those who confess and return unto Thee, so as to receive our cry S. Matt. i. out of the deep, and delivering us from worldly things, receive us in Thy courts into the joy of perpetual gladness. (11.) D. C. O GOD, with Whom is mercy and plenteous redemption, redeem us from our sins, and grant that we may ever obey Thy commandments, in the fulness of holy devotion. (1.)

Psalm 131

TITLE. A Song of Degrees of David. LXX.: A Song of Degrees.

Argument.
ARG. THOMAS. That CHRIST teaches us not to be lifted up in pride. The Voice of S. Mary. The Voice of CHRIST to the FATHER, and of the Church to CHRIST. This twelfth step is understood to refer to the Blessed Ever Virgin Mary, Mother of CHRIST the LORD, and to every soul that rendereth not evil for evil, nor cursing for cursing, but contrariwise blesseth. The Voice of the reigning Church. VEN. BEDE. After the toils of penitence passes on to us the sweet food of songs, singing, to wit, the whole of this Psalm concerning meekness and humility, that the sweetness of glorious devotion may refresh them whom the toil of previous confession hath wearied. In the first portion the Prophet, teaching the Christian people meekness and humility by his own example, appoints a very heavy punishment for himself, in case of his not receiving the LORD'S commands with the greatest humility. Lord, I am not highminded. In the second part, he turns and exhorteth Israel to hope in the LORD alway, to the end that strengthened by such a hope, it may be able to endure all the adversities of the world. O Israel, trust in the Lord.

SYRIAC PSALTER. Of David. One of the Songs of Degrees. And it is uttered concerning Joshua the son of Josedech, the High Priest. And concerning humility. EUSEBIUS OF CÆSAREA. Of humility of mind. S. ATHANASIUS. A Psalm in solitary address.

Various Uses.
Gregorian. Monastic. Parisian. Lyons. Ambrosian. Let Israel trust in the LORD. for evermore. K. K. K. Mozarabic. As Ambrosian. This beautiful Psalm, if David's, as the title asserts, may fitly be taken in close connection with its immediate successor, which recalls the bringing up of the Ark into the sanctuary in Zion; and be regarded as the expansion of that saying of the Prophet-King, when rebuked by Queen Michal for lowering himself by laying aside his royal robes and assuming the garb of a mere chorister: "I will yet be more vile than thus, and will be base in mine own sight." The Jewish commentators, however, and some Christian expositors, understand the occasion of the Psalm to be the pestilence sent after the

census taken by Joab at David's orders. If, as seems on the whole more probable, it is a Post-Captivity Psalm, then its intention undoubtedly is to act as a warning to the newly restored nation, lest the joy of their deliverance should prove too much for them, and hurry them into spiritual pride or into unrestrained revelling. Its place in the Pilgrim-ritual probably was, as already suggested, intended to mark the time of near approach to the Temple, after the city gates had been passed by the caravan, and to check, by its tone of hushed reverence, the overflow of excited spirits likely to break out so near the final goal of a long and perilous journey.

1 LORD, I am not high-minded: I have no proud looks.

The parallel of the wording in the two clauses is much better brought out by the A. V. which, in exact agreement with LXX. and Vulgate, has: LORD, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty. It is a common saying, observes Arnobius, that a household is modelled on the conduct of its master; and if this opinion held good between Christian and Christian, as it does between masters and slaves, we might then be justly called servants of CHRIST. For He, albeit LORD of heaven and earth, "thought it not robbery to be equal with GOD, but humbled Himself and took upon Him the form of a servant," saying, LORD, My heart is not haughty. Come then, servant after the pattern of the LORD, why art thou, lowly by nature, lifted up? He, the Judge, is declared to be lowly, but we are proud; He boasted not Himself, but we are boastful. There is, in these opening words of the Psalm, a confession that only GOD's grace, not man's inherent strength, has enabled him to climb so far as this degree of ascent from the valley of weeping; there is at once a check put on inward thoughts of pride in the heart, and outward tokens of that pride shown by the uplifted glances and proud A. looks of the eyes. And in saying, My heart is not haughty, the Psalmist says less than he means, for his intent is to declare that his heart is humbled and lowly, and therefore a sacrifice acceptable to God.

2 I do not exercise myself in great matters: which are too high for me.

A. That is, I have not sought for fame and influence amongst the ignorant by engaging in studies and pursuits above my powers, in order to gratify my pride; or, again, I have not aimed at rank and station imposing on me responsibilities too great for me to undertake, words which may be applied to the manner in which the kingdom came, unsought, to David. The literal rendering, which is that of LXX. and Vulgate, is, I do not walk in great things, nor in things too wonderful for me. It is a very perilous thing, remarks S. Hilary, for us to be content with walking in moderate things, and not to dwell amidst wonderful things. For God's words are great, and He is wonderful in the highest, and how then can it be a good thing that the Prophet declares that he has not been walking in great and wonderful things? But the words above me show how we must understand it, and God's commandments are not beyond our comprehension, for He hath said, "This commandment which I command thee this day is not too wonderful for thee. Pilate walked in great things, when he

said to the SAVIOUR, ”Knowest Thou not that I have power to crucify Thee, and have power to release Thee? Simon Magus walked in things too wonderful for him, when he so misunderstood the gift of the SPIRIT as to think it might be purchased with money, and was merely a variety of the magic he professed himself.

The Greek Fathers for the most part take great here to mean great men, persons eminent for rank, power, and wealth, and explain it of the preference felt by the Psalmist for the company of the poor; a gloss which, though not borne out by the Hebrew, is very apposite when we explain the whole Psalm of that LORD Who chose the nobles of His kingdom from the peasants and fishers of Galilee. But as there is no question of the true meaning of the sentence, it is better to take it as denoting the acquiescent faith with which a true servant of God accepts the truth of those mysteries of religion which are inexplicable by human reason, not because they contradict it, but because they are too vast for it to grasp.

3 But I refrain my soul, and keep it low, like as a child that is weaned from his mother: yea, my soul is even as a weaned child. I refrain, rather, I have levelled my soul, made it even and calm, and quieted it, lulling it, as it were to sleep, and that as a weaned child, upon (Heb., LXX., Vulg.) his mother: That is, weariness and disappointment have brought me back to GOD, to lean upon Him in utter trust, even after He has taken from me that which I chiefly looked to for comfort. The figure is taken from a baby’s first real sorrow, when he not merely feels pain, but is allowed no access to that which was his solace hitherto. He moans, and frets, and sobs, but at last quiets himself, and rests in trustful love on his mother’s bosom, feeling sure that he may confide in her, although it is she who has denied him what he desired. One of our own poets has with his own quaint beauty expressed this idea of disappointment bringing the soul to GOD under the very same image, though not worked out in detail:

When GOD at first made man Having a glass of blessings standing by; Let Us, said He, pour on him all We can: Let the world’s riches, which dispersed lie, Contract into a span. So strength first made a way: Then beauty flowed, then wisdom, honour, pleasure: When almost all was out, GOD made a stay, Perceiving that alone, of all His treasure, Rest in the bottom lay. For if I should, said He, Bestow this jewel also on My creature, He would adore My gifts instead of Me, And rest in Nature, not the GOD of Nature, So both should losers be. Yet let him keep the rest, But keep them with repining restlessness: Let him be rich and weary, that at least, If goodness lead him not, then weariness May toss him to My breast. George Herbert, The Pulley. So, the Lamb of GOD Himself, (Who had been as a babe on His Mother’s bosom, and as a weaned child had put His hand on the cockatrice’ den,) when the breasts of the Divine consolations were withdrawn from Him upon the Cross, nevertheless, after one cry of human agony forced from Him at being forsaken, laid Himself patiently to rest on the bosom of GOD, saying, ”FATHER, into

Thy hands I commend My spirit." The structure of the verse in LXX. and Vulgate differs from this, as they read, If I have not thought humbly, but have uplifted my soul,—as a weaned child is upon his mother, so be retribution upon my soul. Some of the commentators, beginning with Origen, explain this in substantial agreement with the gloss just given, taking the verse as a foreshadowing of the Gospel maxim, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Others take the latter half of the Isa. xi. 8. Bp. Horne. S.Luke xxiii. 46. Origen. S. Matt. xviii. 3.

G. verse as a punishment invoked by the Psalmist on himself. If I have been proud, let GOD withdraw nourishment from my soul, till it becomes weak as an infant refused the breast, and unable to take any other food; or, as it is also taken, Let vengeance cling to me, and lie as closely upon me as a babe does on its mother's breast. But the other interpretation is deeper and truer, that GOD makes the sorrows and disappointments of this world the school of training for His servants, so that whereas the Apostle saith to his yet imperfect converts, "I have fed you with milk, and not with meat, for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither are ye now able, for ye are yet carnal;" the Prophet asks, "Whom shall He teach knowledge? and whom shall He make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts." So the Cluniac:

In hope we struggle onward, While here we must be fed With milk, as tender infants, But there with living Bread. Ay. Because, here we, newly born in faith, must be nourished with the milk of CHRIST's Manhood, before we are able to receive the Bread of His Godhead, and see Him face to face, a truth symbolized by the ancient Church giving, as a nursing mother, milk and honey to the newly-baptized, before admitting them to eat at the LORD's Table. 4 O Israel, trust in the LORD: from this time forth for evermore. Bellarmine. This ending of the Psalm tells us whither true humility tends. The Psalmist, preaching the duty of holiness to the people, does not tell them to look to himself, to follow his teaching, to mould themselves to his will, but to trust in the Lord, and that not for a time only, nor at intervals, but through the whole of life on earth, and through the endless years of eternity.

Glory be to the FATHER, the GOD of Israel; glory be to the SON, Who lay as a weaned child on the breast of Blessed Mary; glory be to the HOLY GHOST, Who feedeth us with the sincere milk of the Word. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world without end. Amen.

Collects.

Lu. Almighty FATHER, suffer us not to be lifted up with worldly pride; but Thou Who art meek and lowly of heart, teach us to agree in that holy conduct which is pleasing unto Thee. Who livest. Grant, O LORD, that we, stayed up by the power of Thy holy Majesty, may not be haughty of heart, nor proud of eyes, nor walk in

things too great and wonderful for us, but alway be lowly in thought, that we may please Thee throughout the ages evermore. (1.)

Psalm 132

TITLE. A Song of Degrees.

Argument.
ARG. THOMAS. That CHRIST prepares tabernacles for us who are clad in priestly righteousness. The Prophet speaks to the FATHER concerning CHRIST. And the Voice of the FATHER saying unto David, Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy seat. The thirteenth step commemorates the giving of the Ten Commandments by the Trinity of One Godhead. VEN. BEDE. This step describes the system of the LORD'S Incarnation; for it was fitting that after the twelvefold number of the Apostles, He, as Head of them all, should come as the thirteenth; for it is not possible that the lowly person who had been crying hitherto from the deep could suddenly rise to such praise of himself. But David in this place is to be understood as CHRIST. In the first part the Prophet gives us the words of CHRIST, wherein He promised the FATHER never to take any rest till He had poured love for true religion into the hearts of men. Lord, remember David. In the second part, he says that it is known that this promise given by CHRIST was true; adding his own prayer that He may come as soon as possible to save the world. Lo, we heard of the same. In the third part he mentions that the promise made by the FATHER to Him is to be fulfilled, that the fruit of the Virgin's womb may sit on the throne of the Kingdom for evermore, in order to bless His Church, feed the poor, glorify the priests; extend His own power; and cover His enemies with confusion; and then upon Him the hallowing of everlasting righteousness may flourish.

SYRIAC PSALTER. One of the Songs of Degrees. Anonymous. When they desired to build a house for the LORD of Hosts. And a prayer of David. And a revelation of CHRIST. EUSEBIUS OF CÆSAREA. A prayer of David, and the appearing of CHRIST. S. ATHANASIUS. A Psalm or prayer.

Various Uses.
Gregorian. Thursday: Vespers. [Christmas Day: II. Vespers. Common of Confessor Bishops: II. Vespers.] Monastic. Tuesday: Vespers. [Vespers of Christmas-tide, alternating with Ps. cxxx. Com. Conf. Bp.: II. Vespers.]

Antiphons.
Gregorian. { And all * his weakness. [Christmas Day: Of Monastic. { the fruit * of thy body shall I set upon thy seat. Com. Conf. Bp.: Servant good * and faithful, enter thou into the joy of thy LORD.] Ambrosian. First verse. [Easter Eve: Arise, O LORD * into Thy resting-place, Thou, and the ark of Thy strength.] Parisian. First portion: Arise, O LORD, into Thy restingplace, and let Thy saints rejoice. Second portion: Sion shall be My rest for ever, her saints shall rejoice and sing. Lyons. The LORD hath chosen Sion, He hath chosen her for an habitation for Himself. Mozarabic. First portion: First verse. Second portion: (vv. 11—19) I have ordained an habitation for Mine household.

There is no very distinct indication in this Psalm of its date and occasion. The Rabbinical view, accepted by S. Jerome, is that it is by David himself, composed either at the bringing up of the Ark, or after the cessation of the pestilence, and the purchase of the threshing-floor of Araunah as a site for the future temple. But this seems excluded by the manner in which David is apparently referred to, as dead already. Another, somewhat more probable, ascribes it to Solomon, or a Psalmist of his reign, at the dedication of the Temple; a theory to some extent supported by the citation of some verses (the first, eighth, ninth, and tenth) in the account of that ceremony as given in the Chronicles, which establishes at least that the compiler of that part of the historical books believed the Psalm to have been used on that occasion, if not actually written for it. Another theory is that the Psalm belongs to a somewhat later day, perhaps to the great Passover of Hezekiah or Josiah, when there was a special fitness in putting the claims of the House of David prominently forward. The Greek Fathers bring the composition down still later, and take the Psalm as a prayer of the captives in Babylon for the restoration of the Kingdom and religion of Judah; and modern critics have generally agreed that it is a Post-Captivity Psalm, referring either to Zerubbabel or to some later prince of the Davidic race, and to the revival of the Temple-worship.

The objection to this last view is that there is not any note of contrast between the past and present state of the royal house, such as occurs in Ps. lxxxix., and that the whole Psalm breathes a spirit of confident thankfulness which agrees very well, no doubt, with the religious side of the return from exile, but does not harmonize with its civil aspect, in which the influence of the royal house flickers but for a moment in the person of Zerubbabel (himself no more than a satrap of the Persian king) and then dies down practically till long after the fall of the Second Temple. The choice seems thus restricted to either the second or third view; while the insertion of the Psalm in the Pilgrim-ritual proves that the Post-Captivity Rabbins applied it in the sense of the last hypothesis, as a song of thanksgiving for Bellarmine. the restoration of the Temple.

1 Lord, remember David : and all his trouble ; 2 How he sware unto the Lord : and vowed a vow unto the Almighty God of Jacob. If the Jew could rightly appeal to God to show mercy to his Church and nation for the sake of that shepherd youth whom He had advanced to the Kingdom, much more shall we justly plead our cause in the Name of David's Son (called David four times in the Prophets), and of all His trouble, all the sorrows of His birth and infancy, His ministry, and Passion and death, which He bore as a consequence of His self-dedication to His FATHER'S will, when His Priesthood, foreordained from all eternity, was confirmed with an oath ("for those [Levitical] priests were made without [swearing] an oath, but this with an oath by Him that said unto Him, The LORD sware and will not repent, Thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.")

For trouble (A.V. and S. Jerome, affliction) the LXX. and Vulgate have meekness, and the commentators refer it to David's conduct towards Saul, and others of his enemies, but Cassiodorus observes that the one matter of Uriah is enough to tell us that in that case we must refer the Psalm to another and greater David than the son of Jesse; the One Who said of Himself, "I am meek and lowly of heart," and to Whom the Evangelist applies the prophecy of Isaiah, "Behold My servant, whom I have chosen, My beloved, in whom My soul is well pleased; He shall not strive nor cry; neither shall any man hear His voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench, till He send forth judgment to victory." 3 I will not come within the tabernacle of mine house: nor climb up into my bed; 4 I will not suffer mine eyes to sleep, nor mine eye-lids to slumber: neither the temples of mine head to take any rest; 5 Until I find out a place for the temple of the Lord: an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob.

The Jewish literalists here contend, on the one part, that this vow was exactly carried out to the letter; while others understand it as meaning only that the King abstained from entering the state apartments of his cedar palace, contenting , from the Pual of , be either in meekness, humility, meaning bowed down, which may or affliction. M A.

himself with a more modest lodging; and that further, he denied himself the usual noonday siesta, in order to give more time to the plans for the Temple. But the idea implied seems no more than the incessant care and anxiety the proposed construction caused him, so that he could not rest day or night till it was in process of accomplishment, feeling a voice saying to him, as Haggai did to the Jews of a later day, "Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste?" so that he in turn spake to Nathan the prophet, "See now, I dwell in an house of cedar, but the Ark of God dwelleth within curtains." But the early Christian commentators take the words first in the strongest literal sense, to show that the endurance promised is more than human nature could possibly perform, and then show us their true accomplishment in the Incarnation. The LORD JESUS, humbling

Himself, and taking upon Him the form of a servant, coming down to earth, and abiding here, came no more within those heavens which He has spread out like the curtains of a tent; climbed not up by Ascension to His place of rest in the bosom of the FATHER, continued long nights waking in prayer, laid Himself not down in the sleep of death, gave no rest to His temples against the rugged pillow of the Cross, till He had made a temple for the Spirit of God in the hearts and bodies of men, His Apostles and other disciples; till He had founded the Church Militant here on earth; fit habitation for Him Who is the God of all that wrestle in prayer against their sins. And so it was prophesied of Him, "Behold the Man whose name is The Branch, and He shall grow out of His place, and He shall build the temple of the LORD."

Hag. i. 4. 2 Sam. vii. 2. H. Ps. civ. 2. C. S. Bruno Carth. Ezek. vi. 12. Hugo Card. 1 Cor. xi. 26. Hagg. i. 9. 2 Sam. xi. 11. Hugo Card. 1 They tell us, too, how all this part of the Psalm belongs to CHRIST's members, and to every soul of the righteous, as well as to their Head. They too, in prayer and Eucharist, make their requests known to God through the merits of their Shepherd King, through the memorial of His affliction, shown forth daily till He come. They too swear unto the LORD and vow themselves to Him, in Baptism, in Confirmation, in Eucharist, to give themselves no rest in this world till they raise each of them a place in their own hearts for Him to dwell in, till they can bring others to submit to His sway. And the first step towards this is self-renunciation, I will not come within the tabernacle of mine house; whereas it is written of those who are selfishly intent on their private interests, "Mine house is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house. Next follows the subjugation of the flesh, I will not climb up into my bed. "And Uriah said unto David, The ark, and Israel, and Judah, abide in tents; and my lord Joab, and the servants of my lord, are encamped in the open fields; shall I then go into mine house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife?

as thou livest, and as thy soul liveth, I will not do this thing. I will give up thoughts of mere worldly things, for I will not suffer mine eyes to sleep, nor dream of blessings which do not last, but vanish away, as it is written of those worldlings who make war against the Church of GOD: "And the multitude of all the nations that fight against Ariel, even all that fight against her and her munition, and that distress her, shall be as a dream of a night vision. It shall even be as when an hungry man dreameth, and, behold, he eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty: or as when a thirsty man dreameth, and, behold, he drinketh; but he awaketh, and, behold, he is faint, and his soul hath appetite: so shall the multitude of all the nations be, that fight against mount Zion. I will be steadfast and constant, I will not suffer mine eyelids to slumber, by being wakeful and zealous only for a time, and then relapsing into languor and indifference. Neither the temples of my head to take any rest, for I will not be slothful, but will watch and pray, and that until I find, not until I make, a place for the temple of the Lord, that is, a permanent abode in contemplation, and

a tabernacle for the God of Jacob, a moving tent of active warfare on GOD's side in the battle of life.

A. Hugo Card.

6 Lo, we heard of the same at Ephrata : and found it in the wood.
That is, we heard tidings at Ephrata (which is Bethlehem) that the Ark was very near us, hidden in the wood, in the "forest-town" of Kirjath-jearim, the city of the descendants of Ephratah, wife of Caleb. It is said found, for it is clear that the very existence of the Ark was well nigh forgotten by the generation that grew up after its capture and restoration by the Philistines, "For we inquired not at it in the days of Saul." But only the commentators of a later age pause any time on this primary literalism. The earlier ones, hasting to seek for CHRIST, pass at once to the glorious fulfilment of Micah's prophecy: "But thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." The Jews heard of Him, the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD, in Ephratah, what time the Angel brought the glad tidings to the shepherds abiding in the field; and when the chief priests and scribes of the people answered the question of Herod as to Messiah's birth-place; but if they would fain find Him now, they must seek Him in the wood, shrined in the midst of those Gentile nations once wild and uncultured, given over to idolatry, and devastated by Satan, the "wild boar out of the

These words are not in the LXX. possibly found them in present Hebrew text. The their copies. wood," but now, more than ever Jewry was, the vineyard of the LORD of Hosts, for while the Jew "threw a pearl away, Richer than all his tribe," we have sought for and found that pearl of great price, and given ourselves, our souls, and bodies, to possess it: crying, with the Holy Eastern Church at Christmas-tide: S. Romanus the Melodist. Bethlehem hath opened Eden, Come! let us behold: Sweetness we have found, once hidden, Pearl of price untold, Gifts of Paradise, all precious, Stored within the cave, refresh us. A. It is not enough to find, for that which is found is GOD, and claims our homage, wherefore it follows: 7 We will go into his tabernacle: and fall low on our knees before his footstool.

"And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the LORD hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger." We will go into His tabernacle, because we love Him, and by entering in, we are ourselves made part of that tabernacle, grafted into His Body, made members thereof, built as living stones into that temple, and become ourselves thereby the dwelling of GOD. We enter too, at our Baptism, into that tabernacle of His, the warrior-tent of the Church Militant; and that in order to worship on our knees at His footstool,

the Human Nature in and on which His Godhead is throned, for it is to no purpose to call ourselves members of the Church, and yet refuse supreme adoration to the SON of GOD, or continue to hold communion in religious things with those who deny Him the honour and worship which are His due. For footstool the LXX. and Vulgate paraphrase the place where His feet have stood; and these words (which literally refer to the mercy-seat over the Ark) are explained of compliance with the precepts laid down by the Apostles, who are as it were the feet which bore CHRIST into many lands, as it is written, ”How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace!” But in this case the Christian Church has, contrary to her wont in dealing with the Psalter, delighted to take the Greek and Latin rendering of the verse in its most literal sense, and to go on pilgrimage to

A. C. D. C. B. Isa. iii. 7. the scenes of the life and death of JESUS, and especially to the spot where His feet rested last on earth at Bethany ere He ascended into heaven. 8 Arise, O LORD, into thy resting-place : thou, and the ark of thy strength.

These words, used in the first instance, so far as we know, at the ceremony of bringing up the Ark into the Holy of holies of Solomon’s temple, as a prayer that GOD’s actual abiding Presence might accompany that which was its symbol, have a nobler application under the New Covenant; being an address to the LORD, as He lies sleeping in the grave, to arise, and then to ascend into His resting-place, where death hath no more dominion over Him; that the Ark of His strength (or as LXX. and Vulgate prefer to take the word, His sanctification), His Church, containing, like the Ark of Noah, His elect saved from the flood of sin, His precepts, His Kingdom and priesthood, and Sacraments, (as the Ark of the Covenant had the Tables of the Law, the rod of Aaron, and the vase of manna. may arise and ascend with Him; for no members of the Body would dare to hope for the resurrection of the flesh, had not the Head risen first; but now, ”if we believe that JESUS died and rose again, even so them also that sleep in JESUS will GOD bring with Him. And there is another sense in which they delight to take these words; explaining them of the falling asleep here on earth of that most pure and hallowed shrine of the LORD, His own dear Mother, that she might wake in heaven.

”Today,” exclaims the last great Doctor of the Eastern Church, preaching on that festival with which East and West alike commemorate the event, ”that sacred and animate Ark of the Living GOD, which conceived her Creator in her womb, resteth in the temple of the LORD built without hands, and David her ancestor rejoices, and together with him Angels lead the choir, Archangels celebrate the feast, Powers applaud, Principalities rejoice, Dominations are glad, Thrones keep festival, Cherubim praise, Seraphim proclaim her glory, Eden receives to-day the living Paradise of the new Adam, wherein condemnation was loosed, wherein the Tree of Life was planted, wherein our nakedness was covered.”

A. They laid her down, all womanhood's crown, with holy Mass and prayer, And they carved the sign of the Cross divine above her with loving care, They deemed she would lie till the trumpet-cry shall waken the dead from gloom: But He who in fight hath quelled Death's might, hath opened His Mother's tomb. From the dwelling of Obed-Edom, Midst those who serve below, Unto David's City of freedom, The Ark of GOD must go: Must go with shouting and gladness, With the King Himself before, Till it pass from the land of sadness Through the open heavenly door. * The Heavens are ringing With musical tones Of Archangels singing, Of Virtues and Thrones: More intense grows the hymn Of the rapt Seraphim, For she on whose bosom their Monarch lay Is welcomed home by her Son to-day. 9 Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness: and let thy saints sing with joyfulness.

A. This verse is one of those most frequently recited by the Church. Divided into a Versicle and Response, it forms part of the Ferial Preces of Lauds, and formerly of Vespers too, in the Breviary, whence it has been transferred to the Matins and Evensong of the Book of Common Prayer; and it appears also in various other forms, such as the Præparatio ad Missam, &c. S. Augustine takes the two members of the verse to mean the same thing, the whole royal priesthood of Christians, who daily sacrifice themselves to GOD, robed in the white ephod of holiness, that is clothed with faith; the whole company of the elect, enriched with gifts of the HOLY GHOST, and "rejoicing in hope" of the Resurrection. But the more usual explanation follows the literal meaning, whereby the sons of Aaron and the subordinate Levites are severally denoted; and distinguishes the persons named as the prelates and clergy of the Church on the one hand, and the faithful laity on the other. And they enter into much detail on the symbolical meaning of the official dress of the Jewish priesthood, in order to show that each part of it denoted some grace or virtue which ought to be found in the service of GOD, so that the very raiment itself cried to them, "Be ye clean, ye that bear the vessels of the LORD." The Psalmist does not say, Let the priests clothe themselves with righteousness, for this dress of honour must be the King's gift, and put on them with the King's own hands, as we read of Joshua the High Priest: "Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel.

Obed-Edom means servant of Edom, and Edom is identical with Adam, "red [earth]." And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment. And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head. So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments." And if this was needful under the Law, much more does holiness of life befit those who handle those sacred mysteries of which the Mosaic oblations were but the type and shadow. If the guest who came unto the King's marriage feast without a wedding garment was cast out and punished, much more will a priest be judged, seeing that he is

not a mere guest, but the Bridegroom's friend and groomsman, if he enter with soiled and worldly vesture into the sanctuary. For as S. Augustine reminds us, the Sacrament of Orders alone, without righteousness, does not make a true Priest, since he who is merely ordained, and not holy in life, is a priest after the fashion of Caiaphas, who persecuted the one true High Priest. And thus they remind us how Christian priests, like the Jewish ones, are taught their duty by their official garb, intended to bring their Master to their mind. So the verses run:

Tu quicunque voles Missam celebrare Sacerdos, Sis memor, et totâ devotus mente revolvas, Qualia sit CHRISTUS pro te certamina passus. Velatum capite, et derisum signet Amictus : Linea vestis item quod sit despectus in Alba : Vincula significant fera tortaque Zona, Maniplus : Est Stola imago crucis, quam humeris gestat IESUS. Cernis Amictu, atque inde quater tu cernis in Alba, Signa terebrati Capitis, manuumque, pedumque : Purpureæ, spectans Casulam, vestis memor esto, Ut rubro fuerit perfusus Sanguine CHRISTUS. Cumque Sacerdotem ad aram cernis properantem Tunc volvas animo memori, ut conscenderit ultro Calvariæ montem moriturus de Cruce pro te. Priest, whensoe'er thou celebratest Mass, Remember, and devoutly bear in mind, What conflicts for thy sake CHRIST hath endured. The Amice marks Him blindfolded and mocked, The linen vest Him in white robe despised, The Zone and Maniple are His cruel bonds, The Stole the image of the Cross He bore. The marks of wounded Head, pierced hands and feet, See in the Amice, four times in the Alb ; Chasuble brings to mind the purple robe, How CHRIST was covered with His ruddy gore. And as the Priest unto the altar hastes, Think in a grateful mind how CHRIST went up To Calvary's mount, to die on Cross for thee.

10 For thy servant David's sake : turn not away the presence of thine Anointed. A. That is, in the literal sense, reject not the worship offered to Thee by king or priest, nor refuse the petition which either of them makes to Thee. The Rabbinical expositors take the words as a prayer on behalf of Solomon, and add a curious legend that when Solomon had reached the thirteenth step of the stairs leading up to the Temple, the great gates closed in his face of their own accord, and could not be opened till he had recited these words, when they flew open again as suddenly and mysteriously as they had closed. The most usual Christian exposition is that of S. Augustine, that the words are to be taken by us as a prayer of the Church to GOD the FATHER, that for CHRIST's sake, He will not utterly abandon the Jewish nation, away from which the SAVIOUR has turned His Face towards the Gentiles; and they add that the prayer was heard in that the Apostles and others of the most famous Saints and Doctors of the Church in her earliest days were of the Hebrew race; and that it will yet be heard even more fully. Others, however, take it as a prayer of the Church for her own members, her priests and saints, that the light of CHRIST's countenance and grace may never be turned away from them, that, as this was originally a petition for His first Advent, lest it should be delayed, so we may plead it for the hastening of His kingdom now.

11 The LORD hath made a faithful oath unto David : and he shall not shrink from it ; 12 Of the fruit of thy body : shall I set upon thy seat. S. Irenæus, iii. 27. Here is the answer to the prayer in the preceding verse : There is no likelihood that GOD will turn away the face of His Anointed, because He has pledged Himself to the contrary by the most solemn promise, when He declared to David by the mouth of Nathan that the establishment of the kingdom in the person of David's offspring should be perpetual, and without any condition of forfeiture whatsoever, a prophecy which has obviously failed if the literal sense be followed. But we have an inspired gloss on the passage, from the Prince of the Apostles himself, in his great Pentecostal address to the Jewish nation, where he saith of David : "Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that GOD had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up CHRIST to sit on his throne : he seeing this before spake of the resurrection of CHRIST, that His soul was not left in hell, neither His flesh did see corruption." And whereas the expression "fruit of the loins," denoting the father's relationship, is used by S.

Peter, some of the commentators observe that the literal Hebrew in the Psalm here, as exactly rendered by LXX. and Vulgate, is fruit of the womb, which in strictness applies only to the mother (although used of both parents, according to the suffix, in Hebrew,) and therefore shadows out the Virgin-birth of CHRIST, born of no human father. Cassiodorus, followed by several others, taking David to mean CHRIST throughout, explains fruit of the body here to mean the true disciples of the LORD, sprung as it were from Him by spiritual generation, and understands the promise in the sense of that saying in the Apocalypse: "To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My FATHER in His throne." Tertull. Adv. Marcion. iii. 20. A. 13 If thy children will keep my covenant, and my testimonies that I shall learn them: their children also shall sit upon thy seat for evermore.

Here, whatever question may be raised as to the spiritual meaning of the previous verse, there is no doubt that the Apostles and their successors in the Faith are designated. The condition is annexed to the promise, lest we should boast ourselves in that, and omit our part of the compact. No degenerate person retains the right to call himself a son of David, and the LORD Himself hath said plainly: "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. My covenant refers to the moral law of the Old Testament, My testimonies that I shall learn them, to the further precepts delivered in the New. And it is said I, for there were other testimonies added to the Law by the Pharisees, mere traditions of men, keeping which was of no avail in GOD's sight, since He did not give nor teach them Himself, whereas the WORD of GOD was the Teacher of the Gospel. And to those who did keep His covenant and testimonies, so taught, He said, "Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations, and I appoint unto you a kingdom, as My

FATHER hath appointed unto Me: that ye may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

And the pledge extends not only to those first disciples, but to all who imitate their faith and works to the end of time, each of them being crowned as king by divine right to rule over his passions and affections, and bring them into subjection to CHRIST. There is a further interpretation of the words as applying to any faithful soul. That which we do not possess ourselves, but which we look for as the future inheritance of our children, is matter of hope; and therefore, S. Augustine tells us, Hope is the child, the son of our faith, and the children of that son are holy works done for the love of GOD, in sure expectation of reward, and works of this kind shall abide for ever.

C. A. A. 14 For the LORD hath chosen Sion to be a habitation for himself : he hath longed for her. 15 This shall be my rest for ever : here will I dwell, for I have a delight therein. It is the establishment of the Church Militant, that great military order of which CHRIST is Founder and Sovereign. It is well said chosen, for He spake to His Apostles : ”Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain.” It is to be a habitation for Himself, for He hath said also, ”Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them;” and again : ”If a man love Me, he will keep My words; and My FATHER will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.” He hath longed for her, (or with A.V., desired her,) as it is written of that special bond of union He established with His people, ”With desire have I desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer;” it shall be His rest for ever, for He hath said, ”Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” And in that it is added, I have a delight therein, we are taught the tender love of GOD for us, that He desires more to dwell in our hearts, than we to open them to such a Guest. And when it is said that GOD rests in us, the meaning is that we shall rest perfectly in Him, when the pilgrim Church reaches the end of her toilsome journey, and is united to the Church triumphant in heaven.

16 I will bless her victuals with increase : and will satisfy her poor with bread. Here is the promise of abundant grace to be stored up in the City of GOD. Her victuals, all her provisions (ἐπισιτισμόν, Aquila,) all the produce of her chase (ὄῆραν, LXX.,) all the converts of her fisher Apostles, shall be more abundant than of old, that is, the means of grace and the aids to devotion in the Christian Church will be more than the Jewish Synagogue ever possessed; while for all who hunger after righteousness, all the poor in spirit, there will be a living Bread in the most holy Sacrament of the Altar. The Latin rendering here is her widow. And they explain it of any soul which has ceased to be joined to the world, or still better, as the Church

or any faithful believer who mourns as a widow here for the absent Bridegroom. And whereas the LXX. and Vulgate read breads or loaves in the plural, they tell us

Most probably from a misreading, χῆραν for the ὄῆραν of the LXX., or perhaps viduam written for victum. G. S. John xv. 16. S. Matt. xviii. 20. S. John xiv. 23. S. Luke xxii. 15. A. S. Matt. xxviii. 20. A. G. Hugo Card. that GOD will feed His poor in more ways than one. There are the two loaves of Old and New Testament, the three loaves of the parable, faith, hope, and charity; the five loaves of the miracle in the wilderness, first, that of penitence, (”I have eaten ashes as it were bread,”) typified by the cake baken on the coals for Elijah, secondly, that of teaching, ”with the bread of understanding shall she feed him;” thirdly, with the Bread of the Holy Eucharist; fourthly, with the bread of Grace, for which we pray daily in the Our FATHER; and fifthly, the bread of glory; whereof is written, ”Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of GOD.”

17 I will deck her priests with health: and her saints shall rejoice and sing. Here GOD answers the prayer of the Psalmist in ver. 9, and according to His wont, gives more than He is asked for. The petition was that the priests might be clothed with righteousness; the answer is that He will clothe them with salvation, (A.V., LXX., Vulg.,) that is, that so many of them as shall be baptized into CHRIST, shall put on CHRIST, if we take the words of the whole royal priesthood of Christians; and if we limit the clause to the teaching body in the Church, then it speaks of them as so replenished with the doctrine of CHRIST that they can teach others fully of His ways. And we are clothed with CHRIST in a twofold time and fashion; here by conforming ourselves to the pattern of His life, when we ”put on the new Man, which after GOD is created in righteousness and true holiness,” and in the world to come by being vested in His glory, when Sion’s saints shall rejoice and sing, saying, ”I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my GOD, for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with jewels.”

L. A. 18 There shall I make the horn of David to flourish: I have ordained a lantern for mine Anointed. That is, in the literal sense, I shall make the dynasty of David’s race firm, the royal power shall continue in his lineage; and in the darkest time of chastisement and sorrow, and even of death, the House of David shall have some light, some lineal representative. The two senses of the latter clause are well brought out in other passages: ”Unto his son will I give one tribe, that David My servant may have a lamp alway before Me in Jerusalem,” spoken of the continuance of the kingdom, albeit of dimmer glory than it was; and again, ”Nevertheless for David’s sake did the LORD his S. Luke i. 69. S. John i. R. Kimchi. R. Saadias Gaon. A. S. John v. 35. Hugo Card. Ay. 2 S. Pet. i. 19.

God give him a lamp in Jerusalem, to set up his son after him, and to establish Jerusalem. There are thus two distinct notions suggested by the lantern, its shining in the dark, and the kindling of a fresh lamp as the previous one wanes to extinction. So we find in the Gospels the two figures of this verse meet in CHRIST, of Whom Zacharias prophesied, ”He hath raised up an horn of salvation for us, in the house of His servant David; and of Whom the Beloved disciple adds, that ”the Light shineth in darkness. Even the Rabbins saw thus much. ”The Horn of David is the Messiah,” is the confession of one; ”the Lamp is the King Who giveth light unto the nations,” is the like acknowledgment of the others. The horn of David shall flourish, not only because CHRIST’s Manhood shall be exalted, but because the Church of God, wherein is the royal dignity and power of CHRIST, (taking the horn either as a type of strength, or, with S. Hilary, as the vessel of coronation oil,) will go on increasing and waxing stronger through the ages; there will be always a lamp for the Anointed, because even in the darkest ages of coldness and reaction in the Church, there will always be true Saints to shine before men; and because their succession will be unbroken. Another sense of the latter clause is to take it of S.

John Baptist, that ”burning and shining light,” which was a lantern to show the way before the advancing steps of CHRIST. And they mention a symbolical usage of the Church bearing on this interpretation, that on ordinary days, only one lighted taper was borne before the Gospel, as a type of the Forerunner; but on festivals two, since after John’s preaching, when CHRIST Himself came, He sent His Apostles two and two before Him. And whereas the Vulgate rendering is I will extend, or lengthen out, the horn, &c., they take it, not only in the sense already assigned, but in that of the judicial power over quick and dead to be entrusted to the LORD JESUS, and further, explaining the horn as those Priests and Saints in whom He is pleased to manifest His power, it is said I will extend, will bring them unto conformity and likeness to their Head, ”unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of CHRIST,” and will make them lanterns also, that is, vessels having no light of themselves, but radiant with the shining of Him Who is in the midst of them, that Treasure which they have in the earthen vessels of their hearts, whose brightness is kept alive by the unction of the HOLY GHOST. In yet another sense, Holy Scripture is the lantern ordained for God’s anointed, as shedding light prospectively in the Law and Prophets, and retrospectively in the Gospels and Epistles, on the one central Figure of all time.

And of this the Apostle saith: ”We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do dwell that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts.”

19 As for his enemies, I shall clothe them with shame : but upon himself shall his crown flourish. The first clause is spoken of the judgments on the rebellious Hebrew nation in this world for the rejection of their Messiah, and also of the final

sentence on the wicked at the Last Day, if we take it in the harsher sense, and of the salutary shame of repentance, if the gentler school of exposition be followed. Upon Himself shall His crown flourish. The word for crown here is 12, which is used of the mitre of the High Priest in some places, and of the diadem of a king in others, so that it fitly stands for the union of the two offices in CHRIST, ever unfading in their blooming strength and beauty. But the LXX. and Vulgate, instead of this, read My sanctification, and the general consent of the commentators sees in the word the saints whom GOD has sanctified in CHRIST, and made a royal crown for Him, Who is already diademed with the hallowing of Godhead, and Whose new crown of Saints will blossom out of the earth in the Resurrection.

Glory be to the FATHER, the Almighty GOD of Jacob; glory be to the SON, His Anointed, Who was found at Ephrata; glory be to the HOLY GHOST, Who clothes His royal priesthood with righteousness and salvation. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be : world without end. Amen.

Collects.
Remember us, Almighty GOD, in all our goings-in, and clothe us with priestly righteousness, that we may be fit to be brought into Thine everlasting tabernacles. (1.) Arise, O LORD, and let our hearts be made ready as a resting-place for Thee, let the hallowing of Thine Ark be within each of us, and CHRIST our LORD be our holy meditation, and the lantern of our works, that as He makes them ready, we may be filled with the fruit of righteousness unto grace, and be preserved unto glory by the word of life. (11.) Grant us, we beseech Thee, of Thy loving-kindness, O LORD, so to watch alway unto the pursuit of good works, that we may find a place for Thee, LORD, in our hearts, that Thy presence may alway be our defence, and that our enemies may be put to confusion, and Thy sanctification ever flourish upon us. (1.)

The word does properly mean ”consecration,” from the root 12, whence also Nazarite. 2 Sam. i. 10.

Psalm 133

TITLE. A Song of Degrees of David. LXX.: A Song of Degrees.

Argument.
ARG. THOMAS. That CHRIST hallows us, anointed with ointment flowing from the head of the Apostle. The Voice of the Church counselling that they who are by the grace of the LORD, brethren of JESUS, the FATHER'S SON, may unite in one Catholic faith, receiving the dew of eternal blessing. The fourteenth step contains the Decalogue of the Old Testament, and the Sacraments of the Four Gospels of the New. The Voice of the Church that Catholics should agree in one. At the coming-together of brethren. VEN. BEDE. After that most holy preaching of the preceding Psalm, the Prophet, set in the fourteenth step, preaches to the people the blessing of unity, that they who bind themselves with the Christian religion, may persevere in one fellowship of charity. This Psalm, like the hundred and sixteenth (117) admits of no division; and that rightly, because that one exhorts all nations and people to the praises of GOD, and this one to the unity of brotherly love. Behold, how good and joyful, &c.

SYRIAC PSALTER. Of David. One of the Songs of Degrees. It is uttered of Moses and Aaron living in a tent in the house of the LORD. And he refers in it to the perfect people. EUSEBIUS OF CÆSARRA. Concerning the perfect people. S. ATHANASIUS. A Psalm describing a life endowed with holy virtue.

Various Uses. — Antiphons.
- Gregorian, &c. First verse of Psalm. - Ambrosian. It is good and pleasant * to praise the LORD. - Mozarabic. As the dew of Hermon, which fell upon the hill of Sion. Whether this Psalm belongs to David, as the title alleges, and thus refers to the time when all the tribes finally accepted his sway; or, as the Greek Fathers prefer, to the time when, first since the revolt of Jeroboam, the return from exile found the Jews united in one state and polity and worship, the spiritual teaching contained in it is clear enough. In favour of the second view of the occasion is the prominence of the religious idea, and the absence of any reference to the civil aspect of the nation, which would almost certainly meet us in a Psalm belonging

to the early period of the kingdom. But, in truth, there is no internal evidence whatever as to the date.

1 Behold, how good and joyful a thing it is: brethren, to dwell together in unity!

Behold, invites the hearer to see for himself in a plain and evident truth that which the speaker finds too great a thing for him to describe. There are many things which are good, but which are not joyful; and others again are pleasant, but have nothing good about them, for it is not easy to combine the two qualities. But in the subject-matter here, they both converge, pleasantness and the highest good; for Love has this as its chief characteristic, that while it is practically useful, it gives at the same time ease and pleasure. It is not enough to dwell together, if we add not in unity. And these words of the Psalter, this sweet sound and pleasant melody, as delightful in song as in meaning, has been the parent of the monastic life. This sound roused brothers who desired to dwell together in unity; this verse was their trumpet. It rang throughout the whole world, and they who had been separated were gathered together. The cry of GOD, the cry of the HOLY GHOST, the cry of the Prophets, was not heard in Judea, but was heard in all the rest of the world. They amongst whom this song was sung were deaf to it, and they (of whom it is said, ”That which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider,”) were found with open ears.

The words hold good of all Christians who are joined together in the unity of the faith, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life, even though they may not inhabit the same place under one head and rule, for we read that those first disciples in Judea, who brought all they had, and laid it at the Apostles’ feet, ”were of one heart and one soul. And in this connection it is noteworthy that the LXX. rendering of the words in unity is ἐπὶ τὸ ἀπὸ, which is the precise phrase used in the Acts of the Apostles to denote the one place where the Twelve were assembled when the fiery tongues descended on the Day of Pentecost. And now, rich and poor, noble and churl, emperor and beggar, daily say with one voice, ”Our FATHER, Which art in heaven,” and show themselves thereby to be brethren, and sons of one Father. The better a man is, the nobler is he, and there are many serfs here who will be lords in that other life, and contrariwise, many lords here who will be bound in hard bondage there. It is possible to dwell together, and yet not be at unity, as we see in Cain and Abel, in the herdsmen of Abraham and Lot, in the lives of Esau and Jacob. They who are anxious about worldly possessions and selfish interests will quarrel over them; they who rise to spiritual things and have a common hope, will be at unity.

And this is typified for us in Abraham’s sacrifice, whereof

We read that ”he took with him all these, [a heifer, a she-goat, a ram, a turtle-dove, and a young pigeon,] and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another; but the birds divided he not,” because they who are earthly are divided, and they who soar aloft in heavenly contemplation are at one. It is good to dwell together in unity, as it is written, ”Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up. Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone? And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken. It is joyful, for as even a heathen moralist has said: ”There is no pleasure in possessing anything without companionship,” and the Son of Sirach depicts Wisdom as saying, ”In three things I was beautified, and stood up beautiful before God and men: the unity of brethren, the love of neighbours, a man and a wife that agree together. And all these sayings have their truest fulfilment in the Church of God, as the Apostle writes: ”For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is CHRIST.

For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. A liturgical use of this verse has much beauty in it. It forms part of the last Responsory at Matins in the Common of Many Martyrs, when the commemorated Saints happen to be brothers, and similarly in the Gradual of the Mass; as for example, SS. Cosmas and Damian, SS. John and Paul, &c.

Finally; the most literal English of the Hebrew is not dwell but sit, and this sitting together implies mutual affection, joint study for mutual advantage, desire of assembling to receive the corporate benefits of the Church, equality, and common session in the school of the same Master. And as a great teacher tells us, To be together in place, and not in mind, is punishment; to be together in mind, and not in place, is goodness; to be together in mind and place, is happiness. 2 It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down unto the beard: even unto Aaron’s beard, and went down to the skirts of his clothing. The last verse of the preceding Psalm showed us CHRIST the verse itself in his line, ’.

wearing His two-fold crown as King and Priest; this verse shows us how His royal and sacerdotal office affects His people; and in this connection a Rabbinical gloss on the first verse of this Psalm is very suggestive. The brethren referred to in it are the chiefs of the State and the Church, and ”especially King Messiah and the High Priest,” which is probably what the Targum means by the names Sion and Jerusalem which it inserts in its paraphrase, and the primary notion is that of the grace and power transmitted downwards from the High Priest to the subordinate Priests and the Levites, and from the King to his various officers and subjects. The

precious ointment was composed of pure myrrh, sweet cinnamon, sweet calamus, and cassia, blended with olive oil. The mystical sense of these is as follows: Pure myrrh, that is, myrrh which flows of itself, and is not obtained by incisions in the tree, denotes voluntary penitence and austerity, the overflowing of a softened heart showing naturally and freely out under the warm rays of the Sun of Righteousness; cinnamon, ashy-coloured outside, and brown within, denotes external lowliness and obedience joined with inner warmth of devotion; calamus, upright, hard in bark, and sweet in perfume (whence its use as an ingredient of incense) denotes justice, outward strictness, and inward gentleness in contemplation; cassia is a variety of cinnamon, of coarser quality, thus typifying the holiness of secular life, as the other does that of religion; and olive oil signifies the rich grace of the Holy Spirit.

All these virtues blend in the oil of hallowing for our Great High Priest and King. Upon the head, of Him Who is our Head; and observe that the manner in which the Jews anointed the head of their High Priest was in the form of a S. Andrew's Cross, X, on the crown and also on the forehead, foreshadowing the Altar on which the one true High Priest should offer the Great Atonement, and also that letter of His title in Greek as the Anointed Χριστός, which was to be borne as the chief standard of the Empire in times to come. That ran down unto the beard. The beard, lower than the head, yet closely united to it, and the symbol of manly vigour, is the first to receive the flow of oil from the consecrated temples, and signifies to us the Apostles and early Martyrs, clinging closely to their Master, bold and manly in their active toil and passive sufferings, and communicating the grace received from Him to those next below them. Even unto Aaron's beard. This limits and qualifies what went before. It is not every costly ointment, nor any common head, which serves to bestow and communicate the blessing of hallowed unity. The oil must be the holy oil of anointing; the head must be that of the first High Priest, that Aaron whose name means "The Shining One.

Moreover, though every Priest was anointed, yet only the High Priest was anointed on the head, and there is a tradition that this rite was omitted after the Captivity, so

Cassiodor. in Cant. iv. A.

that there is a special stress on the name of Aaron. And went down to the skirts of his clothing. The word is rather edge (literally mouth) than skirts, and S. Augustine, followed by many critics, understands it to mean the upper border of the robe, where was the aperture for the head, rather than the lower edge or skirt. In any case, the hallowing oil was communicated from the beard to the robe, consecrating the whole of it by touching any part. And, as has been noted, the place where it did so touch the robe was just over the embroidered breastplate bearing the twelve gems engraved with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, so that the unction

symbolically reached and flowed over them all. The clothing of our Aaron is the seamless robe of His Church, which He will present one day to His FATHER, ”not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. The High Priest’s clothing was of four colours, fair white linen, blue, purple, and scarlet, being blended in it. Josephus takes these to denote GOD’s sovereignty over the four elements, because the flax of the fine linen grows out of the earth, blue is the colour of the sky, purple comes from a shell-fish out of the sea, and scarlet is the colour of fire. And taken of the LORD JESUS, the four colours claim for Him not only the throne of the universe;

but the fine linen is His spotless righteousness, the blue His heavenly origin, the purple, His Kingly dignity, the scarlet, His bloody Passion, all inextricably woven into the texture of that Church which is His Body. Those who accept the rendering skirts explain the word as denoting that the grace of CHRIST descends to the very humblest members of His Body, and continues to the very end of the world, so that the last believers who shall be born into it will have the same blessings that the first disciples enjoyed. But others, adhering to the stricter sense, tell us that the edge is where the garment is finished or perfected, and that the Saints who are nearest to the beard are followers of the Apostles even as they were of CHRIST JESUS, (especially the Martyrs,) and are the next to receive the grace descending from the Head. The symbolical meaning of this verse has prompted the Western use of the Psalm at the Consecration of Bishops and Benediction of Abbats.

3 Like as the dew of Hermon: which fell upon the hill of Sion. Ed. Hermon, a great mountain with three summits, lying east of Jordan, and covered with perpetual snow, the crown of the hills of Lebanon, and the source whence the Jordan flows to water the southern plain, which cools the vapours of the air, and condenses them into refreshing clouds, to be borne by the northern winds down to cool the ”parched” land around the lowlier height of Sion, means, according as one or other etymon is followed, Lofty or Accursed. And the symbolism is this, CHRIST, the Man Whose Name is the East, Who has passed beyond the river which we too shall have to cross, Who is One Person of the Trinity in Unity, He it is Who from the majestic dignity of the great white throne, where He is now Most High Who was made a curse for us and hung on the once accursed Tree, sends plenteous rain on His weary inheritance of thirsty Sion, the Church of Expectation here below. Gerhohus takes the same ideas in a somewhat different sense: with him, Hermon, the accursed, beyond the limits of Canaan, denotes the Gentiles, on whom now the very same dew of the HOLY GHOST has been rained that once fell upon the Apostles in Sion: but the literal sense clearly implies that the relation of Hermon to Sion in the transmission of dew is the same as that of the head to the beard and robe in shedding the oil downward; and this is the sense, accordingly, in which most of the mediæval commentators, though generally explaining Hermon as ”exalted light,” take the passage: one at least of them taking Hermon, in the sense of accursed,

as denoting the Apostles, excommunicated and anathematized by the Jews, and turning then to the expectant Gentiles with the message of salvation.

4 For there the LORD promised his blessing: and life for evermore. There, that is, in Zion, itself naturally dry, as its name signifies, but watered by the grace of GOD, the LORD commanded (A.V., LXX., Vulg.) His blessing, namely, CHRIST the LORD; as S. Paul confesses, saying, ”Blessed be the GOD and FATHER of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in CHRIST.” And that literally, by the manifestation of the LORD in the earthly Jerusalem, as well as spiritually by His indwelling in the Church. There, in brotherly love and concord, in true fellowship and unity, so that a twofold blessing is there, GOD’s blessing of grace to man, and man’s blessing of praise and service to GOD. In such an assembly as this is, GOD commandeth His blessing, for those who are at discord are not worthy to praise Him. The divine language of this Psalm exhorts us to an inviolable bond of brotherly love, to peaceful dwelling together, to sharing with one another. For without charity no virtue hath merit. It is the beginning, middle, and end of spiritual improvement. It makes a paradise of the cloister, and angels of monks. But hatred

More exactly it is Lonely, from the verb , to be desolate. From the Hiphil , devoted by curse to destruction, of , he shut up or dedicated. Eph. i. 3. makes the cloister a hell and monks devils. He who advanceth not in charity, advanceth in nothing, and without advance in charity bodily exercise profiteth nothing. Solitude, silence, abstinence, discipline, hair-cloth, enclosure, watching, hard couches, are of no avail unto everlasting life without the presence of charity. Wherefore the Apostle saith, ”I show unto you a more excellent way: Though I speak with the tongue of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.” And hence it is written in the Epistle of Peter, ”Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing,” and be united in the Church on earth, till the refreshing dews have done their work, till the divided brethren of Jews and Gentiles and the separated communities of Christians are dwelling in unity, and the harvest is reaped in Jerusalem above, even life for evermore.

And therefore: Glory be to the FATHER, Who promised us His blessing, even His Only-Begotten SON; glory be to the SON, our Anointed High Priest; glory be to the HOLY GHOST, the precious unction of the Saints. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world without end. Amen.

Collects.
Pour, O LORD, upon Thy Church the charity of brotherly love and peace amongst us, that sprinkled with the dew of spiritual anointing, we may rejoice in the grace

of Thy blessing. (1.) CHRIST the LORD, Whose holy Name is as ointment poured out; grant, we beseech Thee, that the ointment of Thy head may be poured down by Thee, so as to descend on the beard of Thy people, and come to the very edge of the garment of this mortal life which they put on. (5.) Bestow on us, O LORD, the gift of Thy grace, that we may dwell together in unity, joined in love, that so being of a sweet savour unto Thee, we may obtain Thy blessing and life for evermore. (1.)

Psalm 134

TITLE. A Song of Degrees.

Argument.
ARG. THOMAS. That CHRIST constitutes the house of the heavenly dwelling, wherein we may alway bless Him. The Voice of the future Church, or of the Apostles. The voice of them counselling that men lifting up pure works of their hands, without anger of heart, or discordance of voice and work, standing in the courts of the present Church or in the future house of the LORD, should bless Him. Finally, the fifteenth step unites those who are busied with righteous works throughout the six ages of life to the nine orders of angels, in order to restore the tenth order. The Voice of the Saints. The Voice of the Church in time to come. For blessing. VEN. BEDE. After the counsels of natural affection he now in due order advises that a happy combination to praise the LORD should be stirred up with the most burning zeal of love. In the first part, the Prophet invites to bless the LORD, when he addresses the aforesaid people in the plural number. Behold now, praise the Lord. Then he blesses the people singly, because holy unity is the beauty and strength of the Church. The Lord bless thee out of Sion.

It is well to describe in what way these steps or degrees attain to Jerusalem above. In the first step he describes horror of the world, after which haste is made to the pursuit of all virtues. In the second, the power of divine protection is explained, and it is shown that nothing can oppose it. Thirdly, it is said to be a great joy to dwell in GOD'S Church with a pure mind. Fourthly, he teaches that amidst whatsoever troubles, we ought constantly to trust in the LORD, until He hear us in pity. Fifthly, he warns us that when delivered from dangers, we ought not to ascribe anything to ourselves, but all to the power of the LORD. Sixthly, the confidence of the truly faithful Christian is compared to the strongest mountain. Seventhly, it is said what plenteous fruits they reap who sow in tears. Eighthly, it is said that nothing which any one does of his own will abides, but that those things only are very strong which are built up by the LORD. Ninthly, man is declared to be made happy by the fear of the LORD, and all things profitable to be granted unto him. Tenthly, he pours patience, recommended by the words of the Church, into the devout. Eleventhly, he

calls out of the deep to the LORD, that it may be felt how great is the divine power in rescuing man. Twelfthly, the virtue of meekness and lowliness is set forth.

Thirteenthly, the promise of the holy Incarnation, and the truth of the sayings [concerning it] is established. Fourteenthly, union is urged on spiritual brethren, over whom the LORD'S blessing and eternal life are shown to hover. Fifteenthly, that perfect love is stirred up to the praises of the LORD, beyond which love there is nothing greater to be said nor more glorious to be found, as the Apostle testifies, for "GOD is love. This number also includes this mystery, that when the five bodily senses, whereby frail humanity contracts all its sin, are overcome by the might of the blessed and undivided Unity, that brings us to the top of the fifteen gradual Psalms.

SYRIAC PSALTER. Of David. Concerning the Priests whom he appointed to busy themselves by night in the ministry of the LORD. Spiritually, it is the doctrine of life. EUSEBIUS OF CÆSARRA. Of the people to come.

Various Uses.
Gregorian. Monastic. Ambrosian. Parisian. Lyons. Quignon. Wednesday: Compline. Eastern Church. Nocturns and Compline. The Antiphons in such Uses as employ them vary with all the seasons. 1 Behold now, praise the Lord: all ye servants of the Lord. 2 Ye that by night stand in the house of the Lord: even in the courts of the house of our God. Targum. It is plain from the second verse that the words in the first one, all ye servants of the Lord, mean only the Priests and Levites vowed to the service of the Temple. And the Chaldee Paraphrase explains that the night-watch kept in the Temple courts is here referred to. This watch, consisting of Priests and doorkeepers, was divided into two companies, starting from the same spot in the inner court, going severally east and west to compass the court, and meeting at the bake-house where the altar-breads were made. While the watch went its rounds, the rest of the Priests in residence arose, bathed, vested, and assembled in the hall of the Sanhedrim, and there received their list of duties for the next day, distributed to them by lot. It is agreed that this Psalm is a dialogue, but the question as to the speakers is unsettled. It may be spoken by one half of the watch to the other, or by the relieving guard to that going off duty, or again, by the congregation to the Priests and Levites. The objection to this last theory is twofold, that the words, in the courts of the house of the Lord, which might describe the lay part of the Temple, are not in the Hebrew, but added from Psalm cxxxv. by the LXX., and further that there is no evidence of a night office for the congregation in the Temple at all.

H. Behold now, tells us that the long climb has been at last achieved, and they who have advanced and ascended may now utter words of blessing. The LORD is to be blessed, because He hath raised us up on high, because He has lifted us by the steps of faith to the lofty site of His house. The mouth of a sinner is unworthy to

praise GOD, and therefore the Psalmist saith, all ye servants of the Lord; since it is not every one whose praise is acceptable to GOD, nor can any person at haphazard think to please Him. To do so is only for GOD's servant, not for the servant of sin, or of the world. Nor does it befit even His servant who is so only in name, but who dallies and wavers and is carried about with the uncertain wind of faith, whose thought and will go wandering in memory of sins and in desire for pleasure. And therefore it is added, Ye that stand in the house of the Lord. He who stands, moves not from his place. He has been running, he has been climbing, now he remains immovable, and greedily drinks in that blessed saying of the Prophet, "He hath set my feet upon a rock," and will hear said to him as was said to Moses, "But as for thee, stand thou here by Me. But of sinners we read thus: "They have loved to wander, they have not refrained their feet.

And they stand as waiting to execute the LORD's commands. When the centurion asked CHRIST to heal his servant, he said, "LORD, my servant lieth sick of a palsy. He was right in saying my servant, since had he been CHRIST's servant, he would have been standing, not lying. And as there are many mansions with the FATHER, not only they bless the LORD who stand in His house, but also in His courts. The court is the entering-in of the house, and thus those who are beginning and those who have advanced to the inner dwelling are yet in one Church, partakers of one grace, although in different degrees. But even those who do but enter must needs be in the courts, wide and spacious, in the amplitude of charity, not in the narrowness of personal selfishness. Bless Him now, in this present life, without delay, bless Him by night, in all the night of this mortal life, and especially in all time of darkness and sorrow. The Christian use of this Psalm at Compline, both in East and West, is meant to remind those religious who recite it at the time when others are going to rest until the next working-day begin, that they as GOD's servants have not ended their service, but still have, later on in the night, to stand in His house and praise Him in the midnight office of Nocturns and Lauds. So runs the hymn at the Matins of Wednesday:

A. We lift our hearts, we lift our hands By night-time, as with his commands The Prophet urgeth us to do, And Paul's example taught us too.

3 Lift up your hands in the sanctuary : and praise the LORD.
The LXX. and Vulgate division couples the words by night with this verse, but the whole meaning is not affected by the transfer. To lift up the hands is more than to pray, it is to busy ourselves in works for GOD's glory, to clothe the naked, feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, comfort the afflicted, help the oppressed, show love to all. This is our true evening sacrifice at the close of this world's day. And note that whereas the Psalmist specifies the sanctuary as the one place for lifting up the hands, now the LORD's saying to the woman of Samaria has come to pass, the special sanctity of Jerusalem has vanished, and the Apostle's teaching, wider

than the Psalmist's, is, "I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands." And if they do this in secret, and their alms also, so doing it by night, they do well. It is added, and bless the Lord, because prayer should follow on works as well as precede them, for as it was necessary to strengthen us for their performance, so it is needful to prevent our ascribing their merit to ourselves when they have been done, and to teach us that our whole life should in word and action be an unceasing hymn of praise to GOD.

4 The LORD that made heaven and earth : give thee blessing out of Sion.
A. A. Although the speakers in the first part of the Psalm were plural, yet here the answer of the Priest in blessing them is made in the singular, because the brethren dwelling together in unity are counted as one body, and so addressed. In like manner, the blessing commanded by GOD to be pronounced over the whole multitude of the children of Israel by Aaron and his sons, is worded in the singular, "saying unto them, the LORD bless thee." He can bless thee, for He made heaven and earth, and therefore has in His power all good things that they contain, He will bless thee, for He came out of Sion as a Man, and loves His brethren, and He blesses them out of Sion too because His graces and bounties come to His people through the ministry of His visible Church. He will bless out of His heavenly dwelling at the last. He will bless thee, every one who will climb the flight of steps to His house. The blessing is spoken to one person. Be that one person, and the blessing will come to thee.

And so : Glory be to the FATHER, Who hath made heaven and earth; glory be to the SON, Who giveth us blessing out of Sion; glory be to the HOLY GHOST, Himself the blessing given out of Sion to the servants of the LORD. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world without end. Amen.

Collects.
All we Thy servants, O LORD, blessing Thee, make our prayer, that Thou wouldest vouchsafe to enlighten us, shrouded in the night of this world, that while we lift up our hands in good works, we may obtain abundant blessing from Thee. (1.) We lift up our hands unto Thee, O LORD, by night, that Mozarabic. Thou mayest make us steadfast in Thy Church; and grant that while we are weighed down by worldly burdens, Thou mayest be praised by our conduct. (11.) Grant, O LORD, that ascending all the steps of perfection, Alcuin. we may praise Thee in the summit of virtues, and standing in Thy house and in Thy courts we may lift up our hands by night and day to bless Thee, and receive blessing from Thee the LORD and SAVIOUR of heaven and earth. (1.) O LORD, grant that we, in holy devotion during the nights of this world, may stand in Thy house and in Thy courts, serve and bless Thee, and as we bless Thee, mercifully bless us, O LORD, out of Sion. (1.)

N the Psalms As Used in the Sacraments and Rites of the Church.
BESIDES the primary use of the Psalter in its integrity as the staple of the worship

of the Christian Church in the Canonical Hours, which is in truth but an adaptation of Hebrew custom; there is a subsidiary mode of employing it, scarcely less important, to enrich and gem, as it were, a great variety of other offices, especially the crowning one of all, the Holy Eucharist. The Western Church is far more varied and abundant than the Eastern in this mode of dealing with the Psalms, but the principle has been common to both from the very earliest times. There are three principal varieties in the manner of weaving the Psalter into the rites of the Church, which are: first, citing a Psalm either entire or in a copious extract; second, breaking up portions of different Psalms into versicles and responses; third, introducing phrases from the Psalms into the course of collects and orisons, not by way of quotation, but as integral portions of the matter.

The examples which follow are not intended to be exhaustive of a necessarily wide subject, but to be sufficiently numerous and striking for adequate illustration of the intimate manner in which the Psalter has been blended with the whole sacramental and ritual organism of the Christian Church.

I. Holy Baptism and Confirmation.

As these two Sacraments were anciently conjoined, as they still are throughout the Oriental communions, it is more convenient to consider them together than separately.

A. Orthodox Church of the East.

1. The Priest, immediately before immersing the catechumen, anoints him thrice with holy oil, saying, "The servant of God is anointed with the oil of gladness (Ps. xlv. 8,) in the Name," &c. 2. After the trine immersion Ps. xxxii. Beati quorum, is sung thrice. 3. Then follows the Troparion, "Grant me the garment of light, Thou Who art clothed with light as with a garment, (Ps. civ. 2,) O most merciful CHRIST our GOD." 4. After the anointing with Chrism is sung the Prokeimenon or Prelude, "The LORD is my Light and my salvation: whom then shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life, of whom then shall I be afraid?" Ps. xxvii. 1.

B. Alexandrine Jacobites.

1. At the preliminary anointing, the Priest says, "I anoint thee, N., with the oil of gladness, (Ps. xlv. 8,) as a bulwark against all the works of the wicked enemy, that thou mayest be graffed into the root of the rich olive-tree, which is the Holy and Apostolic Church of GOD. Amen." 2. In a prayer which follows almost immediately, Ps. xci. 5, 6, is imbedded. 3. Ps. xxxii. is sung just before the Gospel. 4. In the blessing of the font there is a cento of Scripture texts, of which one is, "The waters saw Thee, O GOD, the waters saw Thee, and were afraid: the depths also were troubled." Ps. lxxvii. 16. 5. After chrism has been poured into the water, the Priest recites the following verses, intercalating Alleluias, Ps. xxix. 3, 4; xxxiv. 6; lxvi. 11; li. 7—10; cxxxii. 14, and just afterwards, the whole of Ps. cl, for which another Coptic rite substitutes Ps. cxxi.

6. A procession of the newly baptized follows, begun by intoning "O praise the LORD with me, and let us magnify His Name together." Ps. xxxiv. 3.

C. Syro-Jacobite.
1. Ps. li. Miserere mei, is used at the beginning of the Office. 2. After a brief prayer follows Ps. xxix. as an Anthem. 3. Ps. lxxvii. 16, is sung as an Antiphon to the Gospel. 4. The prayer of anointing with the "oil of gladness" (Ps. xlv. 8,) occurs. 1. Ps. li. is sung at the beginning, between the strophes of a long anthem. 2. A cento from Ps. xxix. follows, intercalated with Alleluias. 3. Ps. lxxvii. 16 and cxiv. 3, 5, are sung after the Prayer of the Incense.

b. ANOTHER FORM FOR GIRLS.
1. Ps. li. Miserere, as before. 2. Ps. xlv. 1—4, with Alleluia. 3. Cento from Ps. xxix. after the Prayer of Incense.

E. Maronite.
The same Psalms as the Edessene, but with Ps. xciii. 1, 2, recited after the first anointing.

F. ARMENIAN. a.
1. Pss. xxv., xxvi. and li. are said at the beginning of the Office. 2. After the Catechumen has recited the Creed, and before he is suffered to enter the Church, Ps. cxviii. 1—20, is said.

ARMENIAN. b.
1. Pss. li. 1, cxxxi., xxv., and xxvii. are the opening Psalms.

G. Nestorian.
1. Ps. cxxxii. 1—4, as part of an Anthem. 2. Ps. xxix., as in other rites. 3. Ps. xcv. 1—7, a little before the close of the Office.

H. Roman Church.
1. No Psalms for Infant Baptism. Pss. viii., xxix., and xlii. begin that of Adults. 2. In Confirmation, Ps. lxviii. 28, 29, "Stablish the thing, O GOD, which Thou hast wrought in us; for Thy temple's sake at Jerusalem," is read while the Bishop cleanses his hands from the oil. 3. Ps. cxxviii. 5, 6, are the closing words of the Confirmation Office.

Ii. Penance. — A. Orthodox Church of the East.
1. Ps. xcv. 6—11 and li.

B. Syro-Jacobite.
1. Pss. li., xxii., and xix., each with a Responsory. 1. No Psalms in private Confession. 2. In the public Expulsion of Penitents on Ash Wednesday, the Seven Penitential Psalms are recited. 3. In the Reconciliation of Penitents on Maundy Thursday,

Pss. xxxiv., li., lvi., and lvii. are used. 4. In the Absolution of an excommunicate person, Pss. li. and lxiii. are said.

Iii. Holy Eucharist. — A. Orthodox Eastern Church. Liturgy of S. Chrysostom.

Psalms are introduced in the course of the Mass in the following places: 1. At the outset of the Office, like the Western Introit, but styled Antiphons, three in number, and varying according to the season or festival. 2. The Eisodicon (εἰσοδικόν), an Anthem at the Little Entrance. 3. During the Trisagion the Priest, as he goes towards the altar, recites, "Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the LORD." Ps. cxviii. 26. 4. Before the Epistle, a short Anthem, consisting of a verse and response, usually, but not always, taken from the Psalms, and varying for every festival. 5. After the censing which follows the Cherubic Hymn, Ps. li. is recited by the Deacon and Priest together. 6. When the Priest lays the chalice and veil on the Deacon's shoulder, he repeats Ps. cxxxiv. 3, "Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and praise the LORD." 7. At the veiling of the elements, the Priest, as he censes them, repeats, "Then shall they offer young bullocks upon Thine Altar." Ps. li. 19.

8. Just before the Nicene Creed, the Priest says secretly Ps. xviii. 1, "I will love Thee, O LORD, my strength, the LORD is my stony rock and my defence." 9. In the course of the Prayer of Consecration, Ps. li. 10, 11 is recited by the Priests and Deacons. 10. After the "Holy things for holy persons," the Koinonikon or Communio, usually from the Psalms, and variable, is sung. 11. After the people have received, the Priest blesses them, repeating Ps. xxviii. 10, "O GOD, save Thy people, and bless Thine heritage;" and immediately afterwards, returning to the Altar, says secretly Ps. lvii. 6, "Set up Thyself, O GOD, above the heavens, and Thy glory above all the earth." 1. The Priest recites Ps. li. after the vesting and before the Introit. 2. He repeats Ps. xliii. 4, "I will go unto the altar of God, even God Who rejoiceth my youth," as he goes up to his place.

3. And thereupon adds Ps. cxviii. 27, "Bind, O LORD, the sacrifice with cords, unto the horns of the altar." 4. The Deacon lights a taper at the right of the altar, saying "Alleluia, in Thy light shall we see light." Ps. xxxvi. 9. 5. On veiling the Paten, the Priest says, "The LORD is King, and hath put on glorious apparel." Ps. xciii. 1. And as he takes the Chalice adds, "I will receive the cup of salvation, I will call upon the Name of the LORD, and will pay my vows unto the LORD." Ps. cxvi. 12, 13. 6. Veiling the Chalice, he continues, "The LORD hath put on His apparel and girded Himself with strength, He hath made the round world so sure that it cannot be moved." Ps. xciii. 1, 2. 7. Censing the altar, he recites Ps. xcv. 1-6. 8. After the expulsion of the Catechumens, Ps. xciii. 1, 2, and 6 occurs in the course of a responsory between the Priest and Deacon.

9. At the close of the Nicene Creed the Priest washes his fingers, and recites the Lavabo, Ps. xxvi. 6, 7. 10. During the ablutions at the end of the office, he repeats Ps. xxxvi. 8, and the whole of Pss. xxvi. and xxix.

C. Coptic Church. Liturgy of S. Basil.
1. Ps. cxvii. is recited at the beginning of the office. 2. A variable Psalm, like the Roman Gradual, before the Gospel.

D. Armenian Church.
1. In the sacristy, before vesting, the Priest and Deacons recite Ps. cxxxii. 2. At the Lavabo, they recite Ps. xxvi. 3. After the Confiteor, Ps. c. 4. Ascending to the Altar, Ps. xliii. 5. Veiling the Chalice, Ps. xciii. 6. Three variable Psalms, or portions of Psalms, with three Antiphons, before the Little Entrance. 7. At the second Lavabo, after the Great Entrance, Ps. xxvi. 6-12. 8. Ps. xxxiv. is recited during the distribution of the Antidoron, at the close of the office. 1. At the beginning of the office, on all ferial days, Pss. xv., cl., and cxvii. are recited. On Sundays and festivals the Psalms vary. 2. A variable Anthem succeeds after one or two brief prayers. 3. The variable Prokeimenon or Prelude before the Epistle. 4. As the Priest takes the paten and chalice from the sacristy, he recites Ps. xxii. 26. "The poor shall eat and be satisfied."

5. Before the Prayer of the Incense, Ps. li. 1—14 and cxxiii. 1—4 are sung. 6. After the Communion is over, and just before the blessing, Pss. cxlviii. and cl. are sung by the priests.

F. Roman Church.
The quantity of matter from the Psalms varies according as the Mass is musical or plain, the former being much the fuller. 1. The Introit, varying for every Sunday and festival, anciently an entire Psalm, now one or more verses, sometimes taken in part from other portions of Scripture. 2. Ps. xliii. recited alternately by the Priest and Server. 3. The Gradual or Tract, also variable, consisting of one or two verses sung after the Epistle. 4. The Offertory, a single verse sung at the oblation of the bread and wine. 5. At censing the Altar, Ps. cxli. 2, 3, 4 is recited secretly by the Priest. 6. The Lavabo, Ps. xxvi. 6—12. 7. "Blessed be He that cometh in the Name of the LORD," Ps. cxviii. 26, after the Sanctus. 8. The words of Ps. cxvi. 12 are said by the Priest as he communicates himself with the Chalice.

9. The Communio, an anthem of a single verse, is sung.

G. Ambrosian Rite.
1. Ingressa, or Introit, variable. 2. Antiphon and Responses by Priest and Server. Ps. xliii. 1 and Ps. cxviii. 1. 3. Psalmellus after the Epistle. 4. Anthem before the Gospel, often, but not always taken from the Psalter. 5. Anthem after the Gospel; ditto. 7. At censing the Altar, Ps. cxli. 2, 3, 4. 8. The Confractio, a short anthem at the breaking of the Host, sometimes from the Psalter, but very frequently from

other books. 9. At the Priest's Communion, Ps. exvi. 12, as in Roman rite. 10. The Transitorium, an anthem after the Communion; variable, and not always from the Psalter. 11. At the ablution, Ps. lxviii. 28, 29. "Stablish . . . Jerusalem."

H. Mozarabic Rite.

1. Officium ad Missam, or Introit, variable. 2. Ps. xliii. recited by Priest and Server. 3. Spreading the Corporal, the Priest says Ps. xxiv. 7-10. "Lift up . . . King of glory." 4. Psallendo, or Tract, an anthem after the Prophecy. 5. Lauda, an anthem after the Gospel. 6. Sacrificium, answering to the Roman offertory, but only occasionally from the Psalter. 7. At the fraction there is a short anthem, often from the Psalms. 8. At the Priest's Communion, the Choir chants Ps. xxxiv. 8, 1, 22. 9. An anthem ad accedentes, as the people are invited to draw near, and an 10. Anthem at the Communion, are taken from the Psalter as well as from other parts of Scripture. The manner in which the variable anthems from the Psalms are adapted to the different festivals is often exceedingly striking and beautiful, while the comparison of the several rites with one another yields a depth of Scriptural teaching which can hardly be apprehended by those who have not given special attention to the subject. Space does not permit the insertion of examples here, but it is quite worth while to examine the chief festivals of the year in the three great Western Liturgies along with the principal Eastern use, that of S. Chrysostom, in order to see the light they cast on each other, and on the whole mystical and typical teaching of Holy Writ.

Iv. Matrimony. — A. Eastern Orthodox Church.

1. No Psalm in the Espousals. At the coronation of the wedded pair, 1. Ps. cxxviii. in procession, with a responsory to every verse. 2. Prokeimenon of the Epistle. Ps. xxi. 3, 4, 6 in the plural.

B. Syro-Jacobite of Edessa.

1. Ps. xlv. 1—4 as an anthem early in the office. 2. Responsory to Epistle. Ps. xlv. 14.

C. Coptic Church.

1. Antiphon to Gospel of Espousals. Ps. lxxxv. 10, 11. 2. Antiphon to Gospel of Coronation. Ps. xviii. 5. "As a bridegroom," &c. Ps. cxxviii. 3. 3. At the unction of the Bride. Ps. xxiii. 5, 6. "Thou hast anointed . . . . my life." 4. Ps. xlv. 11, 12 in Responsory at close of rite.

D. Nestorians.

1. An anthem is made, with certain verbal changes, from Ps. cxv. 9—18, at the beginning of the office. 2. A second anthem follows, each verse of which begins with a phrase from the Psalms; thus: Ps. xcviii. 5, xxix. 10, cxi. 9, cvii. 38, lxxx. 7, cxxiv. 7, cxviii. 19, x. 18, lxxxv. 8, &c. 3. A third anthem, at the blessing of the bridal robes, begins with Ps. xciii. 1. 4. A fourth anthem, on the same model as No.

2, with a cento of phrases from the Psalms. 6. At setting up the bridal chamber, an anthem of centos with responsory.

E. Armenian Church.
1. Antiphon to Gospel. Ps. cxxviii. 7, 1. 2. Responsory to Prophecy. Ps. xlv. 15. 3. At the actual espousals the Priest says Ps. xxi. 1 over the bridegroom, and Ps. xlv. 15 over the bride. 4. Pss. xciii. and xxi. are recited in the course of the succeeding prayers. 5. Ps. xlv. 10 is the Antiphon to the Gospel of Coronation.

V. Unction of the Sick. — A. Eastern Orthodox Church.
1. Ps. cxliii. at the beginning of the Office. 2. Ps. vi. 1, 2, as a Prokeimenon. 4. Prokeimenon to First Epistle. Ps. xxxiii. 21, 1. 5. Antiphon of First Gospel. Ps. ci. 1. 6. Prokeimenon of Second Epistle. Ps. cxviii. 14, 18. 7. Antiphon to Second Gospel. Ps. lxxxix. 1. 8. Prokeimenon of Third Epistle. Ps. xxvii. 1. 9. Antiphon to Third Gospel. Ps. xxxi. 1. 10. Prokeimenon of Fourth Epistle. Ps. cxli. 1. 11. Antiphon to Fourth Gospel. Ps. xl. 1. 12. Prokeimenon of Fifth Epistle. Ps. xii. 8, 1. 13. Antiphon to Fifth Gospel. Ps. lxxxix. 1. 14. Prokeimenon of Sixth Epistle. Ps. li. 1, 10. 15. Antiphon to Sixth Gospel. Ps. cxii. 1. 16. Prokeimenon of Seventh Epistle. Ps. vi. 1, 2. 17. Antiphon to Seventh Gospel. Ps. xx. 1.

B. Syro-Jacobites.
2. Antiphon to First Gospel. Ps. li. 1. 4. Antiphon to Second Gospel. Ps. xxxiii. 2. 6. Antiphon to Third Gospel. Ps. xxv. 15. 8. Antiphon to Fourth Gospel. Ps. xl. 1. 10. Antiphon to Fifth Gospel. Ps. cxviii. 18.

C. Coptic Church.
1. Ps. vi. 1, 2, as Antiphon to First Gospel. 8. Cento from several Psalms as an Anthem.

D. Armenian Church.
2. Antiphon to First and Second Epistle. Ps. lxviii. 35, 26. 3. Antiphon to First Gospel. Ps. cxxxiii. 1. No Psalms in the Office of Unction, but the following may be used in the Visitation of the Sick: vi., xxxii., xxxviii., li., xci., xvi., xx., lxxxvi.

Vi. Burial of the Dead. — A. Holy Eastern Church.
a. Burial of Laity. 1. Ps. cxix., in three portions. 3. Prokeimenon of the Epistle. Ps. xxv. 1. 4. Antiphon to Gospel. Ps. lxv. 4. 5. When earth is cast on the coffin. Ps. xxiv. 1. b. Burial of Priests. 1. Prokeimenon of Epistle. Ps. cxvi. 7. 2. Antiphon to Gospel. Ps. lxv. 4. 3. Ps. xxiii., with Alleluia, Alleluia, after each verse.

B. Roman Church.
a. Adults. 1. Ps. cxxx., before the procession starts. 3. One or more Gradual Psalms, or Psalms from the Office of the Dead, during the procession. 4. The Psalms of the Office of the Dead, all three Nocturns and Lauds, said in the Church. 3. Ps. cl., with Antiphon, Ps. cxlviii. 12. These examples will suffice to show in

what manner the Psalter is interwoven with the texture of the most important rites of the Church, (with the singular exception of Holy Orders, save that in the Roman rite for Consecration of Bishops, Ps. 84 may be, and Ps. 133 is used,) and Psalms, or portions of Psalms as versicles, are freely introduced into a multitude of minor offices which have not been set down here, but which the student may readily find for himself in the great collections of Assemani and other liturgiologists.

Source. English translation by J. M. Neale and R. F. Littledale, from *A Commentary on the Psalms: from Primitive and Mediaeval Writers; and from the various Office-books and Hymns of the Roman, Mozarabic, Ambrosian, Gallican, Greek, Coptic, Armenian, and Syrian Rites*, by J. M. Neale and R. F. Littledale (London: Joseph Masters, 1869–74); public domain. The text was read by machine (Mistral OCR) from a scan of the 1874 volume at the Internet Archive and has not been proofread against the printed book. SermonIndex has removed running heads and page numbers, joined words split across lines, and divided the text into chapters and short sections; the wording is the translator's own. Footnotes and the editor's introduction are left out. The introductory dissertations, the lists of the psalms used in the old offices and the indexes are also left out, and so are the names of the writers quoted, which the printed book gives in the margin; check the book for who is speaking. No original-language text is shown beside it, and no modern English version has been made.

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