

THE AGES DIGITAL LIBRARY
COMMENTARY

**DARBY'S SYNOPSIS OF THE
BOOKS OF THE BIBLE
OLD TESTAMENT**

by John Nelson Darby

Books For The Ages
AGES Software • Albany, OR USA
Version 1.0 © 1997

SYNOPSIS
OF THE
BOOKS OF THE BIBLE
BY
JOHN NELSON DARBY
OLD TESTAMENT

INTRODUCTION:

JOB PROVERBS ECCLESIASTES SONG OF SOLOMON

The Chetubim, or Hagiographa, in which I do not now comprehend Daniel (though his book has a character distinct from the other prophets) form a very distinct and interesting part of divine revelation. None of them suppose an accomplished and known redemption, in the New Testament sense of the word, though like every blessing all is founded on it. In Job a single passage gives a particular application of the term: "I have found a ransom" (Copher). The Psalms recount we know, prophetically, the sorrows and sufferings in which it was accomplished.

But redemption by blood is known by faith, when accomplished, whether by the Jew or the Christian. Isaiah prophesies of Israel's recognition of it fully. There were also, as we know, shadows of it under the law. But the knowledge of eternal redemption is Christian knowledge, or that of the Jews when they look on Him whom they pierced. Till Christ's death, the veil was unrent, the holiest unapproachable. There was knowledge more or less clear of a Redeemer of a personal Redeemer to come; of God's favor towards those that walked with Him, and the confidence of faith in Him and in His promises. But there was no such knowledge of sin as led, God being revealed, to the consciousness of exclusion from His presence as a present state, nor of such a putting of it away as reconciled us fully and for ever to God by its efficacy, and brought us to Him.

The books we are treating of are not prophecies of God's dealings or actings, save as the Psalms express future deliverance by power and by God's judgments; but they are the divinely given expression of man's thoughts and feelings under the government of God,* and the explanatory revelation of God before redemption is fully known. This process has mainly gone on in Israel; and hence they are in the main the various expression of God's ways with Israel. Still, what was carried out there, under revealed conditions and prophetic communications in direct government, was what was in principle true of God's ways everywhere, though there specially displayed (the question of man's positive righteousness being raised too there by the law, the perfect rule of life for the sons of Adam).

[*And these pass into what Christ's were in His humiliation and sufferings, and thus become prophecies of His sufferings, but in the form of His feelings under them, and this of infinite price to us.]

The Book of Job affords us the example of the relationship of a godly man outside and doubtless before Israel, and God's dealings with men for good in this world of evil; but then it runs up, I doubt not, into a clear type of Israel in result. Those ways are fully displayed in that people. And it is to be remarked that, when Job practically feels the impossibility of man's being righteous with God, he complains of fear and having no daysman between them; and Elihu, who takes up this ground in God's stead, explains not redemption but chastising and government. These things God wrought oftentimes with man (chap. 33, 36).

Ecclesiastes estimates this world under the same government, in its present fallen state, and raises the question whether by any means man can find happiness and rest there, with no trace of the knowledge of redemption. Nor is there any recognized relationship with God. It is always Elohim (God), never Jehovah, fearing God and keeping His commandments being the whole duty of man as such.

The Song of Solomon affords direct relationship with the Lord, the Son of David, the ardent affections which belong to the relationship with Christ; Proverbs, a guidance through the mixed and entangled scene, and here all is on the ground of relationship with Jehovah, God (Elohim) being only once or twice mentioned in a way which does not affect this (see more fully note to page 24). But none place themselves on the ground of known redemption. They do look for redemption by power. Hence, on the contrary, Romans begins with the revelation of wrath from heaven, not government, against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness where truth was, against Gentile and Jew,* and brings in redemption, personal justification, and righteousness God's righteousness. The case of Gentile and Jew is fully gone into, and brought out as before God Himself, and wrath from heaven the necessary consequence; complete redemption by blood for heaven, and sovereign grace reigning through righteousness and giving us a place with the Second Adam, the Lord from heaven, together with the result for Israel hereafter. All is made clear in the light as God is in the light His eternal redemption, and heavenly places, though finally earth will be blessed. But we are pilgrims and strangers here. This is our place by redemption itself. To the Abrahams and Davids it was so, by getting nothing of what was promised, or else persecution under the government of God upon the earth; so that under that order of things it was after all a puzzle to both, though the final inheritance of the land, the heir, and the judgment of the wicked, known by revelation, met the puzzle in their minds.

[*And note here ³⁹⁴⁰Psalm 14, which he quotes as proof of sin in the Jew, and ³⁸⁰¹Isaiah 59, both end in deliverance in Jerusalem by power. In Romans it is met by present justification by blood.]

But in Job, Psalms, Ecclesiastes, which express men's feelings under it, this puzzle is fully manifested. Faith and confidence in God may get over it, or persevere through it; prophetic testimonies may meet it; but it is there, and this earth is the scene of the reply of God, even if their faith might be sometimes forced to rise above it, nourished by personal confidence in God. But a present fixed eternal relationship with God even our Father through redemption, in a wholly new scene into which we are brought by that precious blood, whose shedding has glorified God Himself, and reconciled us to Him, though yet in an unredeemed body, that was unknown. Much was learned, learned as to God, and this was most precious. But the actual result for Job was more camels and sheep, and fairer daughters; in the Psalms, judgment of enemies, and deliverance through mercy that endured for ever, and an earth set free under heaven's judicial rule; in Ecclesiastes, as to the perception of the present effect of government, that man must fear God, keep His commandments, and leave it there. Present known redemption is nowhere found. And oh what a difference, an unbounded difference, this makes! "As he is, so are we in this world." He who redeemed us is gone to His Father and our Father, His God and our God. Proverbs and the Song of Solomon have, as I have said, another character, though referring to the same scene: Proverbs, not man's feelings in the scene, but God's guidance through it by the experience and wisdom of divinely instructed authority;* and the Song of Solomon, the carrying the heart quite out of it all, though still in it, not by known redemption, but by devoted affection to Messiah, and of Messiah to Israel, by the revelation He makes of Himself, indeed of His love to them to beget it in Israel's heart.

[*It will much help the reader as to the character of this book and Ecclesiastes to remark, that in Proverbs the name Jehovah is always employed, save in chapter ³⁸¹⁸25:2, where it is "Elohim," and "her God," chapter ³¹⁰⁷2:17. But this is not an exception: that is, it is recognized relationship with the revealed God of Israel. Whereas in Ecclesiastes Jehovah is never found. It is always Elohim, the abstract name of God without any idea of relationship: God as such in contrast with man and every creature, and man having to find out experimentally his we place and happiness as such, without special revealed relationship with God. In Job the editor, if I may so speak, or historian who gives the dialogues, always uses Jehovah; but in the body of the book Job, unless at any late once as to the government of God (chap. 12:9), and Elihu constantly, use the name of Almighty, the Abrahamic name of God, or simply God. The friends generally use God, or particularly Eliphaz the Almighty, sometimes it is only, He.

Zophar, I think, uses no name. The dialogue is characterized by God or Almighty.]

These exercises of heart have their place in us now, for we are in the world; but in the consciousness of accomplished redemption and the present care of a holy Father, the perfection of whose ways, as seen in Christ, is the model of our conduct. We can take joyfully the spoiling of our goods, knowing in ourselves that we have in heaven a better and an enduring substance; and glory in tribulation, because it works its needed end, and the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given to us. This is another case, and a blessed one it is.

I think these general remarks will help us to understand the books which are now about to occupy us. I turn to the books themselves.

JOB

After what I have said, the Book of Job will not require a long examination not that it fails in interest, but because when the general idea is once laid hold of, it is the detail which is interesting, and detail is not our present object.

In the Book of Job we have one portion of those exercises of heart which this division of the holy book supplies. These are not joyful exercises, but those of a heart which, journeying through a world in which the power of evil is found, and not being dead to the flesh, not having that divine knowledge which the gospel furnishes, not dead as to one's self with Christ nor possessing Christ in resurrection, is not capable of enjoying in peace, whatever its own conflicts may be, the fruit of God's perfect love; but which struggles with the evil or with the non-enjoyment of the only real good, even while desiring to possess it; while, by the means of these very revelations, the light of Christ is cast upon these exercises, and the sympathy and entering of His Spirit in grace into them practically is touchingly developed. What is learned in them is what we are not committed sins; that was not Job's case, but the soul itself is put before God.

In Job we have man put to the test; we might say, with our present knowledge, man renewed by grace, an upright man and righteous in his ways, in order to show whether he can stand before God in presence of the power of evil, whether he can be righteous in his own person before God. On the other hand we find the dealings of God, by which He searches the heart and gives it the consciousness of its true state before Him.

All this is so much the more instructive, from its being set before us independent of all dispensations, of all especial revelation on God's part. It is the godly man, such as one of Noah's descendants would be, who had not lost the knowledge of the true God, when sin was again spreading in the world and idolatry was setting in; but the Judge was there to punish it. Job was encompassed with blessings and possessed real piety. Satan, the accuser of the servants of God, goes to and fro in the earth seeking occasion for evil, and presents himself before Jehovah among His mighty angels, the "Bene-Elohim": and God states the case of Job, the subject of His government in blessing, faithful in his walk.

It is carefully to be remarked here, that the spring and source of all these dealings is not Satan's accusations, but God Himself. God knew what His

servant Job needed, and Himself brings forward his case and sets all in movement. If He demands of Satan if he had considered His servant Job, it is because He Himself had. Satan is but an instrument, and an ignorant though subtle instrument, to bring about God's purposes of grace. His accusations result really in nothing as against Job, save to disprove their truth by what he is allowed to do; but, for Job's good, he is left to his will up to a certain point, for the purpose of bringing Job to a knowledge of his own heart, and thus to a deeper ground of practical relationship with God. How blessed and perfect are God's ways! How vain in result the efforts of Satan against those that are His!

Satan attributes the piety of Job to God's manifest favor and to his prosperity, to the hedge He had put around him. God gives all this into the hands of Satan, who speedily excites the cupidity of Job's enemies; and they attack him and carry off all his possessions. His children perish through the effects of a storm which Satan is allowed to raise. But Job, dwelling neither on the instruments employed nor on Satan, receives this bitter cup from the hand of God without murmuring. Satan suggests again that man will, in fact, give up everything if he can preserve himself. God leaves everything to Satan except the life of His servant. Satan smites Job with a dreadful disease; but Job bows under the hand of God, fully recognizing His sovereignty. Satan had exhausted his means of injuring Job, and we hear nothing more of him; but it is beautiful to see that God has hereby completely justified Job from the accusation of Satan. Job was no hypocrite. He had lost all to which Satan traced his piety, and it shone forth brighter than ever. Satan can trace the motives which work in flesh, the evil in man's heart which he excites; but grace in God, His uncaused love, and grace in man which trusts in and leans on it, he cannot measure, nor know the power of.

But the depths of Job's heart were not yet reached, and to do this was the purpose of God, whatever Satan's thoughts may have been. Job did not know himself, and up to this time, with all his piety, he had never been in the presence of God. How often it is the case that even throughout a long life of piety the conscience has never been really set before God! Hence peace, such peace as cannot be shaken, and real liberty, are not known as yet. There is a desire after God, there is the new nature; the attraction of His grace has been felt: nevertheless God and His love, as it really is, are not known. If Satan is foiled (the grace of God having kept Job's heart from murmuring) God has yet His own work to accomplish. That which the tempest that Satan had raised against Job failed in doing, is brought about by the sympathy of his friends. Poor heart of man! The uprightness and even the patience of Job had been manifested, and Satan had no more to

say. But God alone can search out what the heart really is before Him; and the absence of all self-will, perfect agreement with the will of God, absolute submission like that of Christ, these things God alone could test, and thus lay bare the nothingness of man's heart before Him. God did this with Job; revealing at the same time that He acts in grace in these cases for the good of the soul which He loves.

If we compare the language of the Spirit of Christ in the Psalms, we shall often find the appreciation of circumstances expressed in almost identical terms; but instead of bitter complaints and reproaches addressed to God, we find the submission of a heart which acknowledges that God is perfect in all His ways. Job was upright, but he began to make this his righteousness; which evidently proves that he had never been really in the presence of God. The consequence of this was that, although he reasoned more correctly than his friends, and showed a heart that felt really far more than they what God was, he attributed injustice to God and a desire to harass him without cause (see chap. 19; ~~1820~~23:3, 13; ~~1835~~13:15, 18; ~~1862~~16:12). We find also in chapter 29 that his heart had dwelt upon his upright and benevolent walk with complacency, commending himself, and feeding his self-love with it. "When the eye saw me it gave witness to me." God was bringing him to say, "Now mine eye seeth Thee and I abhor myself." It is with these chapters (29, 30, 31), which express his good opinion of himself, that Job ends his discourse; he had told his whole heart out. He was self-satisfied: the grace of God had wrought and in a lovely way in him; but the present effect through the treacherousness of the human heart, and not being in God's presence which detects it, was to make him lovely in his own eyes. If (chap. 9) he confesses man's iniquity (for who can deny it; and especially what converted men?), it is in bitterness of spirit, because it is useless to attempt being just with such a God. Chapter 6, as well as the whole of his discourse, proves that, whether it was the pride of his heart which could not bear to be found in such a state by those who had known his greatness, a state which pride would have born in stubbornness alone, or sympathy which, in weakening that had left him to the full sense of it, it was the presence and the language of his friends that was the means of bringing out all that was in his heart. We see also in ~~1830~~chapter 30 that the pride of his heart was detected.

As to the friends of Job, they do not call for any extended remarks. They urge the doctrine that God's earthly government is a full measure and manifestation of His righteousness, and of the righteousness of man, which would correspond with it: a doctrine which proves a total ignorance of what God's righteousness is, and of His ways; as well as the absence of all real knowledge of what God is, or man as a sinner. We do not see either that the

feelings of their hearts were influenced by communion with God. Their argument is a false and cold estimate of the exact justice of His government as an adequate manifestation of His relationship with man, though they say many true commonplace things which even the Spirit of God adopts as just. Although Job was not before God in his estimate of himself, he judges rightly in these respects. He shews that although God shews His disapprobation of the wicked, yet the circumstances in which they are often found overthrow the arguments of his friends. We see in Job a heart which, although rebellious, depends upon God, and would rejoice to find Him. We see, too, that when he can extricate himself, by a few words, from his friends, who, he is quite sensible, understands nothing of his case, nor of the dealings of God, he turns to God (although he does not find Him, and although he complains that His hand is heavy upon him), as in that beautiful and touching chapter 23, and the reasonings as to divine government, chapters 24, 21. That is to say, we see one who has tasted that God is gracious, whose heart, wounded indeed and unsubdued, yet claims those qualities for God because it knows Him which the cold reasonings of his friends could not ascribe to Him; a heart which complains bitterly of God, but which knows that, could it once come near Him, it would find Him all that it had declared Him to be, and not such as they had declared Him to be, or were themselves could he find Him, he would not be as they were, He would put words in his mouth; a heart which repelled indignantly the accusation of hypocrisy; for Job was conscious that he looked to God, and that he had known God and acted with reference to Him, though God thought fit to bring his sin to remembrance.

But these spiritual affections of Job did not prevent his turning this consciousness of integrity into a robe of self-righteousness which hid God from him, and even hid him from himself. He declares himself to be more righteous than God (chap. ~~10~~10:7, 8; ~~16~~16:14, 17; ~~23~~23:11, 13; ~~27~~27:26). Elihu reproves him for this, and on the other hand explains the ways of God. He shews that God visits man and chastises him, in order that when subdued and broken down if there is one who can show him the point of moral contact between his soul and God, in which his soul would stand in truth before Him* God may act in grace and blessing, and deliver him from the evil that oppresses him. Elihu goes on to show him that, if God chastises, it is becoming in man to set himself before God to learn wherein he has done wrong: in short, that the ways of God are right, that He withdraweth not His eyes from the righteous, but if they are in affliction He shews them their transgressions, and if they return to Him in obedience when He openeth their ear to discipline, He will give them prosperity; but that the hypocrite shall perish. The first case which Elihu brings forward (chap. 33) is God's dealings with men. He awakens their consciences to

their state, and puts His bridle on the pride and self-will of man. God chastises and humbles him. The second is specially with the righteous (chap. 36), the case of positive transgression but in one righteous in God's sight, from whom He withdraws not His eyes, in whom He allowed not iniquity; but in the first case he was in the path of destruction. It was this case** which needed the interpreter to place him in uprightness before God. Finally, he insists upon the incomprehensible power of God Almighty.

[*This is a very important point. God can bless in a direct manner with the light of His grace, when the soul is brought into its true place, to what it really is in His sight. Then, whatever its state may be, He can bless it, in respect of that state, with increased light and grace. If I have got far from Him, and careless in walk, when I have the consciousness how far I am, He can fully and directly bless. But the soul must be brought into the recognition of its state, or there would be no real blessing; I should not see God in unison with it. For its sensible state did not answer to its real state in God's sight.]

[**In this case it may be a first conviction of sin, or the knowledge of self where self has never been really judged, as was Job's case.]

Jehovah then speaks, and addressing Job, carries on the subject. He makes Job sensible of his nothingness. Job confesses himself to be vile, and declares that he will be silent before God. The Lord resumes the discourse, and Job acknowledges that he has darkened counsel by speaking of that which he understood not. But now, still more submissively, he declares openly his real condition. Formerly he had heard of God by the hearing of the ear; now his eye had seen Him, wherefore he abhors himself and repents in dust and ashes. This is the effect of having seen God, and of finding himself in His presence. The work of God was accomplished the work of His perfect goodness, which would not leave Job without causing him to know himself, without bringing him into God's own presence. The object of discipline was attained, and Job is surrounded with more blessings than before.

We learn two things here; first, that man cannot stand in the presence of God; and secondly, the ways of God for the instruction of the inner man.

It is also a picture of God's dealings with the Jews on the earth.

The Book of Job plainly sets before us also the teaching of the Spirit, as to the place which Satan occupies in the dealings of God and His government, with respect to man on the earth. We may also remark the perfect and faithful care of God, from whom (whatever may have been the malice of Satan) all this proceeded, because He saw that Job needed it. We observe that it is God who sets the case of Job before Satan, and that the latter disappears from the scene; because here it is a question of his doings on the

earth, and not of his inward temptations. Further, if God had stopped short in the outward afflictions, Job would have had fresh cause for self-complacency. Man might have judged that those afflictions were ample. But the evil of Job's heart consisted in his resting on the fruits of grace in himself, and this would have only increased the good opinion he had already entertained of himself: kind in prosperity, he would have been also patient in adversity. God therefore carries on His work, that Job may know himself.

Either the sympathy of his friends (for we can bear alone, and from God in His presence, that which we cannot bear when we have the opportunity of making our complaint before man), or the pride which is not roused while we are alone but which is wounded when others witness our misery, or perhaps the two together, upset the mind of Job; and he curses the day of his birth. The depths of his heart. are displayed. It was this that he needed.

We have thus, man standing between Satan, the accuser, and God, the question being not God's revelation of everlasting righteousness, but His ways with the soul of man in this world. The godly man comes into trouble. This has to be accounted for, the friends insisting that this world is an adequate expression of God's righteous government, and that consequently as Job had made great profession of piety he was a hypocrite. This he stoutly denies, but his will unbroken rises up against God. God has chosen to do it, and he cannot help it. Only he is sure if he could find Him, He would put words in his mouth. He spoke well of Him though in rebellion, and thinking of his goodness as his own. Still he affirms that though there was a government, this world did not show it as his friends said; but he is not broken down before God. Elihu comes in, the interpreter, one among a thousand (and practically how rare they are!) and he shews God's discipline with man and with the righteous, and rebukes both sides with intelligence. Then God comes in and puts Job in his place by the revelation of Himself; but owns Job's right feeling as to Him, and puts the friends in their true place, and Job is to intercede for them. Job, humbled, can be fully blessed. This knowledge of self in God's sight is of all importance; we are never humble nor distrustful of self till then.

PSALMS

INTRODUCTION

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

The Psalms are almost all the expression of the sentiments produced in the hearts of God's people by the events (or I should speak more correctly if I said, prepared for them in the events), through which they pass, and indeed express the feelings, not only of the people of God, but often, as is known, those of the Lord Himself. They are the expression of the part the Spirit of God takes, as working in their hearts, in the sorrows and exercises of the saints. The Spirit works in connection with all the trials through which they pass, and the human infirmity which appears in those trials; in the midst of which it gives thoughts of faith and truth which are a provision for them in all that happens. We find in them consequently the hopes, fears, distress, confidence in God, which respectively fill the minds of the saints sometimes the part which the Lord Himself takes personally in them, and that, occasionally, exclusive of all but Himself, the place which He has held that He might so sympathize with them. Hence a maturer spiritual judgment is required to judge rightly of the true bearing and application of the Psalms than for other parts of scripture; because we must be able to understand what dispensationally gives rise to them, and judge of the true place before God of those whose souls' wants are expressed in them; and this is so much the more difficult as the circumstances, state, and relationship with God, of the people whose feelings they express are not those in which we find ourselves. The piety they breathe is edifying for every time; the confidence they often express in God in the midst of trial has cheered the heart of many a tried servant of God in his own. This feeling is carefully to be preserved and cherished; yet it is for that very reason so much the more important that our spiritual judgment should recognize the position to which

the sentiments contained in the Psalms refer, and which gives form to the piety which is found in them. Without doing this, the full power of redemption and the force of the gospel of the grace of God is lost for our own souls; and many expressions which have shocked the Christian mind, unobservant of their true bearing and application, remain obscure and even unintelligible.

The heart that places itself in the position described in the Psalms returns back to experiences which belong to a legal state, and to one under discipline for failure and trial in that state, and to the hopes of an earthly people. A legal and, for a Christian, unbelieving state is sanctioned in the mind: we rest content in a spiritual state short of the knowledge of redemption; and while we think to retain the Psalms for ourselves, we keep ourselves in a state of soul in which we are deprived of the intelligence of their true use and our own privileges, and become incapable of the real understanding of, and true delight in, the Psalms themselves; and, what is more we miss the blessed and deeply instructive apprehension of the tender and gracious sympathies of Christ in their true and divinely given application. The appropriating spirit of selfishness does not learn Christ as He is, as He is revealed, and the loss is really great. There are comforts and ministrations of grace for a soul under the law in the Psalms, because they apply to those under the law (and souls in that state have been relieved by them); but to use them in order to remain in this state, and to apply them prominently to ourselves, is, I repeat, to misapply the Psalms themselves, lose the power of what is given to us in them, and deprive ourselves of the true spiritual position in which the gospel sets us. The difference is simple and evident. Relationship with the Father is not, cannot be introduced in them, and we live out of that if we live in them, though obedience and confiding dependence be ever our right path.

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

The Psalms, and the workings of the Spirit of God expressed in them, belong properly in their application and true force to the circumstances of Judah and Israel, and are altogether founded on Israel's hopes and fears: and, I add, to the circumstances of Judah and Israel in the last days, though as to the moral state of things those last days began with the rejection of

Christ. The piety and confidence in God with which they are filled find an echo, no doubt, in every believing heart, but this exercise, as expressed here, is in the midst of Israel. This judgment, of which the truth is evidently demonstrated by the reading of the Psalms themselves, is sanctioned by the Apostle Paul. He says, after citing the Psalms, "Now we know that whatsoever things the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law."

The Psalms then concern Judah and Israel, and the position in which those who belong to Judah and Israel are found. Their primary character is the expression of the working of the Spirit of Christ as to, or in, the remnant of the Jews. This so distinctly characterizes the Psalms that there are very few indeed even of those which are prophetic of Christ, where the remnant is not found. In the second book they are not, because that element is distinctly presented as the primary subject in the first: the connection being moral through His entering into their sorrows in grace, this is easily understood. And it is necessary to remember this, to account for various passages in which they come in, though partly applicable to, or used by; Christ. See pp. 46, 47, 48, 50, and 51.

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

Still, they must pass through sorrow, according to the righteous ways of God, in respect of their folly and wickedness, and to purify them inwardly from it. Into all this sorrow Christ entered, as He also bore their sins, to be a spring of life and sustainer of faith to them in it, when the hand of oppression should be heavy without, and the sense of guilt terrible within and hence no sense of favor, but that One who had assured to them and could convey this favor had taken up their cause with God, and passed

through it for them. The full efficacy indeed of His work in their deliverance, in that one Man's dying for the nation, will not be known by them till they look on Him whom they have pierced. They are purposely left (and especially the remnant, because of their integrity; for the rest will join the idolatrous Gentiles for peace' sake) in the depth of trial, which, as ways of God in government, brings them through grace to the sense of their guilt in a broken law and a rejected and crucified Messiah, that they may truly now what each of them is, and bow before an offended Jehovah in integrity of heart, and say, "Blessed be he that cometh in the name of Jehovah."

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

But to return. The great foundation which had to be laid to make sympathy possible was, that Christ did not escape where the remnant of Israel will, It is in the point of death that the sufferings of Christ, whether for righteousness' sake, and that which He underwent to be able to sympathize with them when they suffer under the government of God, on the one hand, or atonement on the other the latter prefigured in the burnt and sin-offering (compare ~~some~~ Hebrews 9), the former the expression and testing of perfectness in the meat-offering meet. Christ suffered onward up to death. Then He also made atonement for sin. Some of the remnant may suffer unto death, as faithful under the trials of this government; but then, like

Christ, they will obtain a better resurrection. Of course, the atoning Heart is exclusively His.

The Psalms, then, belong properly to Israel, I here use Israel as contrasted with the Assembly and Gentiles. We shall see Judah distinguished from Israel when we enter into details.

In examining the Psalms themselves, we shall find other elements of this judgment, which are very clear and positive. The Psalms distinguish (⁴⁷³Psalm 73) and commence by distinguishing (⁴⁰⁰Psalm 1) the man who is faithful and godly, according to the law, from the rest of the nation. "The ungodly are not so," nor shall they "stand in the congregation of the righteous." Indeed, Isaiah teaches the same truth doctrinally just as strongly. Compare ²³⁸²Isaiah 48:22; ²⁵²¹Isaiah 57:21.

Again, it is evident (and it is the second general principle I would notice), that it is the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of prophecy, which speaks. That is to say, it is the Spirit of Christ interesting Himself in the condition of the faithful remnant of Israel. This Spirit speaks of things to come as if they were present, as is always the case with the prophets. But this does not make it the less true that it is a spirit of prophecy which speaks of the future, and which in this respect often resumes its natural character. But if the Spirit of Christ is interested in the remnant of Israel, Christ's own sufferings must be announced, which were the complete proof of that interest, and without which it would have been unavailing. And we find, in fact, the most touching expressions of the sufferings of Christ, not historically, but just as He felt then, expressed as by His own lips at the moment He endured them. Hence the intimacy of feeling and peculiar interest of the Psalms. They are the beating of the heart of Him, the history of whose circumstances, the embodying of whose life, in relationship with God and man, whose external presentation, in a word, and all God's ways in respect of it, are found in the rest of scripture. Compare ⁴⁰¹¹1 Peter 1:11.

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

We find both these points brought out: the distresses are laid before God, seeking for deliverance; and integrity is pleaded and the sins confessed at the very same time. Christ, having come into their sorrows, as we have seen, and made atonement, can lead them in spite of their sins and about their sins, to God. They do not indeed know at first perhaps the full forgiveness, but they go in the sense of grace as led by Christ's Spirit, (and how many souls are practically in this state!) The state of the prodigal till he

met his Father the state of every soul, where the God who is light and love has been revealed in Christ; but redemption-work, and acceptance in Him are not known there is confidence, but not peace.

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

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

Testament (as in Philippians, for example, and elsewhere) to find the heavenly ones of those He has redeemed.

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

During His whole life, up even to death itself, He suffered from man for righteousness' sake (see, in connection with this Psalm 11 and others). Besides this, on the cross He suffered for sin, drank the cup of wrath for sin, the cup His Father had given Him to drink. But besides these two kinds of suffering He bore in His soul, at the close of His life (we may say from after the paschal supper), all the distress and affliction under which the Jews will come through the government of God not condemnation, but still the consequence of sin. No doubt He had anticipated, and, so far felt it, as in <BIBL> John 12 the coming cross; but now He entered into it. It was, as to the point we are now on, as He said, apostate Israel's hour then and the power of darkness. But He was still looking to His Father in the sense of faithfulness. Nor was He yet forsaken of God. He could still look to man's watching with Him. What could watching do when divine wrath was upon

Him? But the distinctive character of these kinds of suffering is clearly seen if we, as taught of God, weigh the psalms which speak of them respectively. Thus we shall see that, when He suffers from man, He looks, as speaking by His Spirit in and for Israel, for vengeance on man. Others too are then often seen to suffer with Him. When He suffers from God, He is wholly alone, and the consequences are unmingled blessing and grace. As to suffering from man, we can have the privilege of so suffering, having the fellowship of His sufferings. In suffering from God as under wrath, He did so that we might never have the least drop whatever of that cup; it would have been our everlasting ruin. In the sufferings He underwent under Satan's power, and darkness, and death, when not yet actually drinking the cup of wrath, besides what was due to the majesty of God in view of this see ^{<3100>}Hebrews 2:10), He suffered to sympathize with the Jews in their afflictions, which they come into through their integrity and yet in their sins. Every awakened soul under the law will find comfort in this. All these sufferings are entered into in the Psalms as to Christ and as to Israel. But the Jews passed into utter ruin, and loss of all the promises (save sovereign grace), and the remnant into their place of trial and sorrow as such, by the rejection of Messiah.

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

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

It is generally known that the Psalms are divided into five books, the first of which ends with ^{<3400>}Psalm 41; the second, with ^{<3720>}Psalm 72; the third, with ^{<3800>}Psalm 89; the fourth, with ^{<3900>}Psalm 106; and the fifth, with Psalm 150. Each of these books is distinguished, I doubt not, by an especial subject. Our examination of the Psalms contained in each will give the fullest insight

into the character of the several books; but it may be well to give here a general notion of their contents.

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

In the second book, the remnant are viewed as cast out of Jerusalem (Christ, of course, taking this place with them and giving its true place of hope to the remnant in this condition) The introduction of Christ, however, restores them, in the view of prophecy, to their position in relationship with Jehovah as a people before God (^{4961E}Psalms 45, 46). Previously, when cast out, they speak of God (Elohim) rather than Jehovah, for they have lost covenant blessings; but by this they learn to know Him much better. I doubt not, the history of Christ's life afforded occasion to His entering into the practical personal sense of thus condition of the people, though, of course, less historically His place in general. In ^{4961E}Psalm 51 the remnant own the nation's (more precisely the Jews') guilt in rejecting Him. I think it will be found that the first two books are somewhat distinguishable from the last three. The first two are more Christ personally among the Jews; the last three, more national and historical. And so ^{4972E}Psalm 72, the last part of the first two books, closes with the Solomon reign.

In the third book we have the deliverance and restoration of Israel as a nation, and God's ways towards them as such (Jerusalem, at the close, being the center of His blessing and government). The dreadful effect of their being under the law, and the centering of all mercies in Christ are brought out in ^{4980E}Psalms 88 and 89, closing with the cry for the accomplishing of the latter. Electing grace in royalty for deliverance, when all was lost, is presented in ^{4980E}Psalm 87.

In the fourth, we have Jehovah at all times the dwelling place of Israel. Israel is delivered by the coming of Jehovah. It may, in its main contents, be characterized as the bringing in the Only-begotten into the world. Jehovah having been always Israel's dwelling-place, they look for His deliverance. For this the Abrahamic and millennial names of God, Almighty and Most High, are introduced. And where is He to be found? Messiah says, "I seek them in Jehovah, the God of Israel." There He is indeed found. Thus there will be judgment on the wicked, and the righteous delivered. The full divine nature of Messiah, once cut off, is brought in to

lay the ground for His having a part in the latter-day blessings, though once cut off. He is the unchangeable living Jehovah, the Creator. Then comes blessing on Israel, creation, judgment of the heathen, that Israel might enjoy the promises. But it is the same mercy which has so often spared them.

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

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

Then the closing praises.

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

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

far the most interesting. The others naturally pursue more the details which carry out the general idea thus given.

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