

I earnestly pray it may be so, viz., that the Lord may be blessed evermore. This is the end of the third book, according to the Hebrew's.

END OF PSALM 88

You are Psalms

Some people think you never get discouraged, but the fact is, when you do, you know where to run. Your prayers are open and honest because you realize that God already knows your heart, He's just waiting to hear you spill it. And when you do, what starts out as heavy ends up becoming a song of praise. You may struggle... and often you do... but each time, you grow in your understanding of God's faithfulness. You're just a song waiting to happen.

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PSALMS (SONGS OF PRAISE)

TRUST
IN THE
LORD *and do good;*
dwell in the land and
enjoy safe pasture.
PSALM 36: 3

PSALM NUMBER: 88

The perpetuity of the Church of Christ, in consequence of the promises of God: which, notwithstanding, God permits her to suffer sometimes most grievous afflictions.

1. The mercies of the Lord I will sing. I will show forth thy truth from my mouth to generation and generation.
2. For thou hast said: Mercy shall be built up in the heavens: thy truth shall be prepared in them.
3. I have made a covenant with my elect: I have sworn to David my servant.
4. Thy seed will I settle forever. And I will build up thy throne unto generation and generation.
5. The heavens shall confess thy wonders, O Lord; and thy truth in the church of the saints.
6. For who in the clouds can be compared to the Lord: or who among the sons of God shall be like to God?
7. God, who is glorified in the assembly of the saints: great and terrible above all them that are about him.
8. O Lord God of Hosts, who is like to thee? Thou art mighty, O Lord, and thy truth is round about thee.
9. Thou rulest the power of the sea: and appeases the motion of the waves thereof.
10. Thou hast humbled the proud one as one that is slain: with the arm of thy strength thou hast scattered thy enemies.
11. Thine are the heavens, and thine is the earth: the world and the fullness thereof thou hast founded.
12. The north and the sea thou hast created. Thabor and Hermon shall rejoice in thy name.
13. Thy arm is with might. Let thy hand be strengthened, and thy right hand exalted:
14. Justice and judgment are the preparation of thy throne. Mercy and truth shall go before thy face.
15. Blessed is the people that knoweth jubilation. They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance.
16. And in thy name they shall rejoice all the day; and in thy justice they shall be exalted.
17. For thou art the glory of their strength: and in thy good pleasure shall our horn be exalted.

CONTINUED >

18. For our protection is of the Lord, and of our King the Holy One of Israel.
19. Then thou spakest in a vision to thy saints, and said: I have laid help upon one that is mighty, and have exalted one chosen out of my people.
20. I have found David my servant: with my holy oil I have anointed him.
21. For my hand shall help him: and my arm shall strengthen him.
22. The enemy shall have no advantage over him: nor the son of iniquity have power to hurt him.
23. And I will cut down his enemies before his face; and them that hate him I will put to flight.
24. Ad my truth and my mercy shall be with him; and in my name shall his horn be exalted.
25. And I will set his hand in the sea; and his right hand in the rivers.
26. He shall cry out to me: Thou art my father; my God, and the support of my salvation.
27. And I will make him my firstborn, high above the kings of the earth.
28. I will keep my mercy for him forever and my covenant faithful to him.
29. And I will make his seed to endure forevermore; and his throne as the days of heaven.
30. And if his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments:
31. If they profane my justices; and keep not my commandments;
32. I will visit their iniquities with a rod; and their sins with stripes.
33. But my mercy I will not take away from him: nor will I suffer my truth to fail.
34. Neither will I profane my covenant: and the words that proceed from my mouth I will not make void.
35. Once have I sworn by holiness: I will not lie unto David:
36. His seed shall endure forever.
37. And his throne as the sun before me; and as the moon perfect forever, and a faithful witness in heaven.
38. But thou hast rejected and despised: thou has been angry with thy anointed.
39. Thou hast overthrown the covenant of thy servant: thou has profaned his sanctuary on the earth.
40. Thou hast broken down all his hedges: thou hast made his strength fear.
41. All that pass by the way have robbed him: he is become a reproach to his neighbors.
42. Thou hast set up the right hand of them that oppress him: thou hast made all his enemies to rejoice.
43. Thou hast turned away the help of his sword; and hast not assisted him in battle.
44. Thou hast made his purification to ease: and thou hast cast his throne down to the ground.
45. Thou hast shortened the days of his time: thou hast covered him with confusion.
46. How long, O Lord, turnest thou away unto the end? Shall thy anger burn like fire?
47. Remember what my substance is: for has thou made all the children of men in vain?
48. Who is the man that shall live, and not see death; that shall deliver his soul from the hand of hell?
49. Lord, where are thy ancient mercies, according to what thou didst swear to David in thy truth?
50. Be mindful, O Lord, of the reproach of thy servants (which I have held in my bosom) of many nations:
51. Wherewith thy enemies have reproached, O Lord; wherewith they have reproached the change of thy anointed.
52. Blessed be the Lord forevermore. So be it; so be it.

The Psalms are songs of praise and cover a period of about 1000 years, from the time of Moses (ca. 1400 B.C.) to the Israelites' return from exile (ca. 450 B.C.). They deal with selected events of that period and provide us with the thoughts and feelings of those who went through the experiences recorded. After being made a Cardinal by Pope Clement VIII, Saint Robert Bellarmine, prepared for posterity his very own commentary on each of the Psalms. Enclosed are his interpretations on each of the Psalms.

PSALM NUMBER: 88

EXPLANATION OF THE PSALM

1. "The mercies of the Lord I will sing forever. I will show forth thy truth with my

who was to open the kingdom of heaven to believers, at once; for if some part, at least, of the human race were not to come to a happy and eternal life, through Christ, in fact, God would seem to have made all the children of men in vain. He, therefore, says, "remember what my salvation is," how brief, how frail, how full of troubles is my existence on earth. "For hast thou made all the children of men in vain?" Have you made and created mankind to enjoy this life alone, and that a life of such short duration, and so full of misery? That would amount to the creation of man in vain, when no part of mankind would have arrived at its ultimate end. "Who is the man that shall live and shall not see death?" The shortness and the misery of this life is clear from the fact, that no one can escape death, "or deliver his soul from the hand of hell." For the other world hurries all men, without exception, to itself.

49. "Lord, where are thy ancient mercies, according to what thou didst swear to David in thy truth?" He now openly prays to God to send that king, from the seed of David, who was to rule over his people, saying, where are those promises you formerly made in your mercy to David, promises you confirmed by an oath, when you swore, "and I will make his seed to endure more, and his throne as the days of Heaven."

50. "Be mindful, O Lord, of the reproach of thy servants (which I have held in my bosom) of many nations." He assigns another reason for asking so urgently for the coming of the Messiah, because the infidels were constantly reproaching God's people with the folly of their expecting a king from the seed of David, who was to reign. "Be mindful, O Lord, of the reproach of thy servants," of the constant reproaches heaped upon them by the infidels, "which I have held in my bosom," which your people have been obliged to bear in silence, having no reply to make, when "many nations" reproached them, and not being able to show that God's promises were either fulfilled, or would be fulfilled in any given time, or with any certainty.

51. "Wherewith thy enemies have reproached, O Lord: wherewith they have reproached the change of thy anointed." Here is the reproach he carried in his bosom, that the enemies of the Lord upbraided God's people with having exchanged the anointed, that is, with David having received no compensation whatever for the loss of his kingdom, notwithstanding all the ample promises.

52. "Blessed be the Lord forevermore. So be it; so be it." This conclusion of the Psalm clearly shows that the Prophet understood the promise made to David was sure and certain, and would be accomplished in the proper time, however unlikely it may have appeared to have been in the time of Nabuchodonosor. Nay, even this very conclusion shows that David knew that it was a part of the divine policy to allow that temporal kingdom to be abolished, for fear the carnal Jews may suppose that the divine promises were accomplished in Solomon or any of the kings of Juda. He, therefore, says, "Blessed be the Lord forevermore. So be it, so be it." May praise and thanks be always given to God, for he does everything well, is just in all his words, and holy in all his acts. "So be it; so be it."

42. "Thou hast set up the right hand of them that oppress him: thou hast made all his enemies to rejoice."

43. "Thou hast turned away the help of his sword: and hast not assisted him in battle." He continues to describe the calamities into which the people fell, when they were deserted by God. "Thou hast set up the right-hand of them that oppress him," you have assisted the enemies of your people to obtain a more easy victory over them. The enemies joy, then, was unbounded on so cheap a victory, and he, therefore, adds, "thou hast made all his enemies rejoice," while, on the other hand "thou hast turned away the help of the sword," or rather you have withdrawn your own help from his, the king's sword, and from his people, which he expresses more plainly when he adds, "and hast not assisted him in battle," and hence the kings of Juda were unable to resist their enemies, the Assyrians.

44. "Thou hast made his purification to cease: and thou hast cast is throne down to the ground." An obscure passage, but the end of the verse seems to indicate that he alludes to the king being deprived of that regal splendor and mode of living princes are usually accustomed to; and the meaning would seem to be: you have deprived the king of his royal apparel, you have made his cleanness and his purification to disappear, by compelling him to submit to filthy and uncared for garments; and "you have so cast his throne to the ground" that there is no trace either of it, or of the respect and submission due to the king himself.

45. "Thou hast shortened the days of his time: thou hast covered him with confusion." The last and principal calamity was, that though God had promised David that his kingdom would be everlasting, it would now appear that the everlasting term so promised had been reduced to a very limited period, for that temporal kingdom of David, that he hoped would have had no end, was terminated and the time of Jechonias and Sedecias; and, from such "shortening of the days of this time," David, through his posterity, "was covered with confusion."

46. "How long, O Lord, turnest thou away unto the end? Shall thy anger burn like fire?" He now begins a prayer for the acceleration of the Messias, in order that the sworn promises of God may be fulfilled. "How long, O Lord, turnest thou away unto the end?" How long will you turn away your face from us? Will it be to the end, until we shall have been totally ruined and swept away? "Shall thy anger burn like fire?" That never ceases until it consumes everything within its reach.

47. "Remember what my substance is: for hast thou made all the children of men in vain?"

48. "Who is the man that shall live; and not see death; that shall deliver his soul from the hand of hell?" Those verses have been variously interpreted, but, in my mind, the true interpretation is as follows: the Prophet being an extremely spiritual person, from reflecting on the extreme shortness of human life, and the uncertainty of human affairs, was carried away by a burning desire for life everlasting in the world to come, and prayed to God to send the Messias, the Father of the world to come,

mouth to generation and generation." God's mercy is the entire subject of this Psalm. The Prophet at once tells us that he is about the sing of the sure and certain mercies of God; that is, the favors that were promised in his mercy, and which will never fail, which are called in Isaia 55, "the faithful mercies of David." The word forever is not to be connected with the verb sing, up with the noun mercies; for David, who was then near his end, could not say he would sing; but he could say that he would sing of the mercies of the Lord that were to endure. "I will show forth with my mouth thy truth to generation and generation." A repetition and an explanation of the first part of the verse; for "to generation and generation" signifies the same as "forever." "I will sing" and "show forth" are clearly the same, and "the mercies of the Lord" seem to be the same as "his truth." In the first part of the verse he says he will sing of the mercies of the Lord that will exist forever; in the second part of the verse he says he will sing of the truth of the Lord; that is, his observance of what he promises, which will remain from generation to generation. The words, "to generation and generation," like the word "mercies," in the first part of the verse, are to be connected with the noun, "thy truth," and not with the verb "show forth," as is clear from his adding "with my mouth," unless we will have it, that David meant to convey that his Psalms would be chanted by the faithful to the end of time; and therefore, that through the faithful he may be said "to sing forever," and "to show forth his truth."

2. "For thou hast said: mercy shall be built up forever in the heavens: thy truth shall be prepared in them." He proves that God's mercy and truth will be everlasting. God, who cannot speak a falsehood, having said so; I will sing of your truth and mercy which will be everlasting, "for thou hast said so," and revealed it to me your prophet. "Mercy shall be built up forever in the heavens," the favors mercifully promised to David will rise up like an everlasting edifice in heaven; that is, will be as firm and stable as an immovable edifice, that no time can damage. And this edifice of mercy will be "in heaven," where everything is eternal. For the event will not depend on the caprice of mortals, nor on mutable counsels and decrees, but will have its foundation in heaven. "Thy truth shall be prepared in them." In the same heavens your faithful accomplishment of your promises will be prepared. The Hebrew for prepared implies direction and adjustment, and thus the meaning of the sentence is: the pledges you have given are certain, can be tampered with by no inferior authority, because they will be confirmed and strengthened in heaven and will be like unto heaven, which endureth forever.

3. "I have made a covenant with my elect: I have sworn to David my servant." He now begins to unveil the faithful mercy he proposed to sing in the beginning of the Psalm. That mercy was a certain promise, confirmed by an agreement and an oath, regarding David's posterity, and the supreme power to be continued in his family; an account of which we have in 2 Kings 7, where David desired to build a house for the Lord, that is, a temple for the reception of the Ark, and for divine sacrifice; and God, through Nathan the prophet, rewarded David for his good intentions, by a promise of raising his house; that is, by the propagation of

his posterity, and establishing the sovereignty in his family. This he conveys when he says, "I have made a covenant with my elect;" I have entered into a treaty with my chosen people; "I have sworn to David my servant;" I have made a promise, an oath, to David the prince of my people elect. "Thy seed will I settle." I have sworn to establish his descendants, so that son of David shall never be wanted. "And I will build up thy throne unto generation and generation." I will keep up your kingdom, which is the meaning of from generation to generation. They can be no doubt but all these things apply to Christ alone, who was to come from the family of David, and whose reign was to be everlasting. Isaias alludes to it when he says, chapter 9, "his empire shall be multiplied, and there shall be no end of peace; he shall sit upon the throne of David and on his kingdom, to establish it and strengthen it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth and forever." The Angel Gabriel announced the same when he said, "and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of David his father, and he shall reign in the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end." These prophecies cannot possibly apply to a temporal kingdom that has long ceased to exist, and of which there is now no trace, but to a spiritual, and an eternal kingdom; and hence, the Jews, who still look out for the Messiah, who, they expect, will rule yet in Jerusalem, are grievously mistaken.

4. "Thy seed will I settle forever. And I will build up thy throne unto generation and generation."

5. "The heavens shall confess thy wonders, O Lord; and thy truth in the church of the saints." Before he enters into detail of the promises of God, a summary of which he had already given, he digresses for the purpose of praising him, and offering him a sacrifice of thanksgiving. And first of all, the holy man, seeing himself incompetent to return adequate thanks for all the favors conferred on him, calls upon the Angels to do it for him, to praise and thank God for him. "The heavens shall confess thy wonders, O Lord." I am not equal to the task, I am unable to praise them as they merit, but the "heavens," the Angels dwelling therein will do it for me, will recount "thy wonders," the extent of your wonderful mercy, "and thy truth in the Church of the saints." The same Angels, who surround your throne in such numbers, will praise and glorify your mercy and your truth. They know the extent of that "mercy" that is built up forever in the heavens, better than we do who lie groveling on the earth.

6. "For who in the clouds can be compared to the Lord: or who among the sons of God shall be like to God?" He proves that the Angels will not object to such an office, because they are inferior to God. "For who in the clouds can be compared to the Lord?" Not one of those in heaven, which is over the clouds, can be compared to him who created them and heaven. They are all subjects, all servants, which he repeats by asking, "or who were among the sons of God shall be like to God?" Which of the sons of God who are his angels is like to God in point of equality, he alone being essentially God, and not by participation.

7. "God, who is glorified in the assembly of the saints: great and terrible above all them that are about him." He now proves that none of the Angels can be compared to God, because God is "glorified in the assembly of the saints;" he is acknowledged

long, he will appear to have no idea of observing this bargain and his oath. The meaning, then, of this and the following verses is: you have promised, O Lord, with an oath, that the son of David would reign, but now we see the kingdom taken from the children of David, and seized upon by the king of the Assyrians; to carry out your promise, then, send a son of David you promised, and give him that everlasting kingdom you swore to give them, for otherwise, our enemies will laugh at us, and our disgrace will be attributed to you. "But thou has rejected and despised;" you promised all manner of favors, but now you only heap misery on us, for you have "rejected us" from your protection, "and despised" those you previously made so much of; "thou hast been angry with thy anointed;" you have in your anger allowed your anointed kings Jechonias and Sedecias, to be led away captives to Babylon.

39. "Thou hast overthrown the covenant of thy servant: thou hast profaned his sanctuary on the earth." He now explains how God did reject and despise his people; and first he lays down, that God "overthrew the covenant of his servant," backed out of the bargain he entered into with his servant David, which must be understood as if he did so in appearance, and not in reality; for God, in suffering the city of Jerusalem, as well as all Palestine, to fall into the hands of the king of the Assyrians, would seem to be unwilling that David's kingdom should be everlasting; whereas the promise applied to the spiritual and celestial kingdom of David, and not to his kingdom of this world. "Thou hast profaned his sanctuary on the earth," you have brought to the ground and thus profaned his holy diadem which happened when David's kingdom terminated, Jechonias and Sedecias having been deposed, and the royal diadem carried away.

40. "Thou hast broken down all his hedges: thou hast made his strength fear."

41. "All that pass by the way have robbed him he is become a reproach to his neighbors." He compares the Jewish people, represented by David, to a vineyard, whose fences are broken down and plundered indiscriminately by every passer by; a thing of frequent occurrence to the Jews, who were more than once conquered and despoiled by the Assyrians, when God withdrew his protection from them. Read the fourth book of Kings hereon. "Thou hast, broken down all his hedges," you have deprived us, O Lord, of your help and protection, so that, like a vineyard whose fences are destroyed, we have been indiscriminately plundered by the enemy. "Thou hast made his strength fear." In David's kingdom his soldiers, who were full of life and courage, and were the strength of his kingdom, now became so timid, so full of fear, that they could not for moment withstand the enemy, and the people attribute all this to God, because they knew such could not befall them without God's will, and that he might, had he so willed, easily have prevented it all. "All that passed by the way have robbed him," all the enemies of God's people have plundered and pillaged them, just as the passers by plunder a vineyard they see without a wall or a hedge, or anyone in care of it. "He is become a reproach to his neighbors." Hence, all the neighboring people mock and jest at the people of God, now become so feeble, as to be incapable of resisting anyone.

opinion of St. Augustine, who understands the passage as applying to Christ, is also admissible, and, in such case, the children of David must be taken to represent all Christians regenerated in Christ. The second is, that we are not to infer from this passage that the children of David, whether the Jews or Christians, however wicked they may be, can never be lost; for God does not say, through the Psalmist, “my mercy I will not take” from them, but from him. If the wicked, then, upon being paternally corrected, choose to reform, they will not lose the inheritance; nay, even like the prodigal child, they will be taken back to favor most affectionately; but, if they obstinately persevere in sin, they will certainly lose the inheritance; but the truth of the Lord will hold; nor will the kingdom of Christ fail; for “he is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham,” although those, who are previously known and predestined in Christ before the constitution of the world, will, most unquestionably, persevere to the end in faith, hope and charity.

35. “Once have I sworn by my holiness: I will not lie unto David.”

36. “His seed shall endure forever.”

37. “And his throne as the sun before me; and as the moon perfect forever, and a faithful witness in heaven.” He assigns a reason for his wishing to fulfill the promise he made of establishing David’s kingdom, even though his children should not observe his commandments; and the reason is, because he swore thereto; promised firmly, without the power of retracting. “Once have I sworn by my holiness.” I have irrevocably and solely sworn by my holiness. The word “once,” implies immutability, for one oath of God’s is equivalent to innumerable oaths of others. “I will not lie unto David;” as he says in Psalm 131, “the Lord hath sworn truth to David, and he will not make it void.” A similar expression occurs in Isaias 22, “surely this iniquity shall not be forgiven you till you die, saith the Lord of Hosts.” Here are the words of the oath. “His seed shall endure, and his throne as the sun before me.” I have sworn, and I will not deceive David, that his son, Christ, shall live forever; and that his kingdom will be everlasting; and he illustrates this sworn promise of his by three comparisons; with the sun, the full moon, and the rainbow. “His throne as the sun before me; and as the moon, perfect forever; and a faithful witness in heaven;” which signify that the kingdom of Christ, and through it, his Church, would be always visible and conspicuous; for nothing is brighter or more beautiful than the sun by day, or the rainbow be times in the clouds, that has been given by God as a faithful witness to man, of the earth being nevermore to be destroyed by a deluge.

38. “But thou hast rejected and despised: thou hast been angry with thy anointed.” This is the second part of the Psalm, in which the Prophet, speaking in the person of the people in their captivity, asks that God’s promises may be fulfilled; for, though God may have solemnly, and even with an oath, made a promise; still, he wishes to be asked to do what he so promised; thus, “Isaac besought the Lord for his wife, because she was barren;” though God had promised a numerous progeny to Abraham through his son Isaac. “I will multiply your seed; as the stars of heaven” and again, “in thy seed shall all nations be blessed.” In his prayer the Prophet seems to give a gentle hint to the Almighty, that if he defer the fulfillment of this promise so

by the saints themselves in their assembly as worthy of all glory, and he is “great” in power and wisdom; and therefore, more dreaded and revered, than all the angels who surround his throne like so many soldiers or servants.

8. “O Lord God of Hosts, who was like to thee? Thou art mighty, O Lord, and thy truth is round about thee.” He had hitherto narrated God’s praises, he now continues the subject, by addressing God, and descanting more at length on his praise. “Lord God of Hosts, who is like to thee?” You, O Lord, are the Lord of armies, of many thousands of Angels, and so outshine them all that no one is like you. “Thou art mighty O Lord, and thy truth is round about thee;” the reason why nobody is perfectly like you arises from your being alone all powerful, able to do not this one thing, or that one thing, but to do every, all things, and nothing can resist your power; and you are not only able to do all things, but you actually do what you promise, for you are faithful in all your promises. Truth, or veracity, the faithful carrying out what was promised, is said to be “round about” God, because it is like a cincture to him, according to Isaias, “and justice shall be the girdle of his loins, and faith the girdle of his reins;” for, as a cincture ties up one’s robes, and binds them firmly to his person, so truth binds one to his promise, so that he will not swerve from it, but carry it out; and as a cincture adjusts one’s clothes, and fits him for a journey, whence the angel Raphael is said to have appeared to Tobias in the shape of a young man, with his robes tied up and prepared for a journey, so truth or veracity, causes a man to remove every obstacle, and proceed without delay to carry out what he may have promised.

9. “Thou rulest the power of the sea: and appeaseth the motion of the waves thereof.” Having said that God was both powerful and faithful, he now proves the former by the fact of his ruling to sea, and claiming its billows. The sea is sometimes dreadfully agitated and uproarious, being of immense length and breadth, and sometimes raising its billows, apparently to the very skies; and, therefore, nowhere is God’s omnipotence more less clearly manifested than when he quiets and composes it. The Lord himself, speaking here on, says, Job 38, “I set my bounds round about it, and made it bars and doors. And I said: hitherto shalt thou come, and shalt go no further; and here thou, shalt break thy swelling waves;” and, in Jeremiah 5, “will you not, then, fear me, saith the Lord, and will you not repent at my presence? I have set the sand a bound for the sea, an everlasting ordinance, which it shall not pass over, and the waves thereof shall toss themselves, and shall not prevail: they shall swell, and shall not pass over it.” But God especially showed his command of the sea, when he dried up the Red Sea, and stayed its billows, so that the water stood up like a wall on each side, while the children of Israel were passing through

10. “Thou hast humbled the proud one, as one that is slain: with the arm of thy strength thou hast scattered thy enemies.” This verse is to be literally understood of Pharaoh and his army, and is justly connected with the preceding verse; for, at one and the same moment, God thoroughly dried up the sea, and destroyed Pharaoh the proud and his army, leaving him as one that is slain, and

the enemies of God's people scattered; which is more fully expressed in Isaiah 51, "hast thou not struck the proud one, and wounded the dragon? Hast thou not dried up the sea, the water of the mighty deep, who madest the depth of the sea a way, that the delivered might pass over." He, therefore, says, "thou hast humbled the proud one," by stretching him in the depth of the sea, and that without any trouble, as easily as "one that is slain; with the arm of thy strength;" what your most powerful arm you have "scattered your enemies," Pharaoh's army, in the Red Sea.

11. "Thine are the heavens, and thine is the earth: the world and the fullness thereof thou hast founded." He now informs us that it is no wonder that God so easily calmed the sea, and humbled the proud one; for he is the Lord of all, and that by reason of his having created everything, "thine are the heavens," and every one in them; "thine is the earth," and everything in it; "the world and the fullness thereof thou hast founded;" you are the absolute owner of the world and everything in it, because it is your creation, without the help of assistance of any other person.

12. "The north and the sea thou hast created. Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in thy name." You made the foundations of the globe, north, south, east and west. The north requires no comment; the sea means the south, for the greater part of the sea lay in that direction. Tabor and Hermon signify the east and west, those mountains lying east and west of Jerusalem; and they, that is, their inhabitants, will rejoice in the great goodness and mercy of the Lord..

13. "Thy arm is with might. Let thy hand be strengthened, and thy right hand exalted." That your hand is a strong one, in no wise feeble or weak, but full of strength and power, can be inferred from your dominion over the sea, from your humiliation of the proud, and the scattering of your enemies. "Let thy hand be strengthened, and thy right hand exalted." The holy Prophet had spoken of two of God's attributes, power and truth, in verse 8; he discussed his power in the five following verses, and he now has to speak of and extol his truth, which is also called justice and judgment, and is usually united to mercy. "Let thy hand be strengthened, and become more powerful; "and thy right hand exalted;" praised and magnified by all, as is right it should; but, at the same time –

14. "Justice and judgment are the preparation of thy throne. Mercy and truth shall go before thy face." Let your throne be prepared, decorated, and founded on mercy and justice. I consider that justice means here goodness and mercy in this sense it is taken in Matthew 5, "unless your justice abound more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees;" and again, chapter 6, "take heed that you do not your justice before men;" in both of which justice means the giving of alms; and, in the same chapter, we read, "seek first the kingdom of God, and his justice;" for he repeats it when he says, "Mercy and truth shall go before thy face;" that is to say, justice shall go before thy face to prepare your throne when you are about to come to administer justice; which means, we are quite certain that you will not judge but with the greatest justice, tempered with mercy, administering as little punishment as possible, and faithfully rendering to everyone according to their works. We have here a metaphor taken from the king's throne. Before the King seats himself thereon for judgment, the

its eternity, which does not apply to David, nor the Solomon, nor to his posterity for the kingdom had an end under Jechonias. "I will keep my mercy from him; the mercy through which I promised David a son, through him his kingdom should be everlasting, shall always keep and remain to him; for "my covenant," my agreement and promise made to Nathan, shall be observed most faithfully. But, if we are to apply this verse to Christ, the meaning would be: "I will keep my mercy for him forever;" that is, the mercy, through which I predestined and chose him from eternity to be the Son of God in power, and high above the kings of the earth, will always be kept with him; for the Hypostatic Union of the humanity with the Word will never be dissolved, and, through it, the man Christ will always be the Son of God, "firstborn," and "high above the kings of the earth;" "and my covenant faithful to him;" my agreement to establish his kingdom forever will be always faithfully observed, which promises the Angel Gabriel expressed when he said, "and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

29. "And I will make his seed to endure forevermore; and his throne as the days of heaven." He now explains how God intends to keep his mercy forever for David; for he will give him seed, that is, a son, meaning Christ, who "will endure forevermore;" and thus, "his throne," his kingdom, will never have an end, but will be "as the days of heaven," as long as there shall be a heaven, which God "has established forever and for ages of ages."

30. "And if his children forsake my law and walk not in my judgments."

31. "If they profane my justices; and keep not my commandments."

32. "I will visit their iniquities with a rod; and this sins with stripes."

33. "But my mercy I will not take away from him: nor will I suffer my truth to fail."

34. "Neither will I profane my covenant: and the words that proceed from my mouth I will not make void." He answered an objection that may be made, and says, that if the sons of David should provoke the anger of the Lord by their evil doings, that he will punish the delinquents, but that it will not cause him to break his promise, a promise that he made upon oath. "And if his children forsake my law," if David's posterity should break my laws, whether judicial, ceremonial, or moral, "and walk not in my judgments;" if they break even the judicial law alone. "If they profane my justices," if they even infringe on the ceremonial law, "and keep not my commandment;" if they fail in observing my moral code, "I will visit their iniquities with a rod, and their sins with stripes;" I will not let their crimes go unpunished, but I will chastise them as a father would his children. "But my mercy I will not take away from him." The sins of the children, however, will not cause me to withdraw the favors I promised, in my mercy, to the father. "Nor will I suffer my truth to fail." I will not go against the truth, a thing I should do were I to injure him after the promises I made him. There are two observations to be made here; one is, that David's children may be read literally; and the

will be extended until, “at his name, every knee shall bend of those that are in heaven, on earth, and in hell.” Christ’s power is said to be exalted in the name of God, because his glory is “as that of the only begotten of the Father;” and he is adored by all as the Son of the eternal Father, and he came in the name of the Father, and “God the Father also hath exalted him, and hath given him a name which is above every name.”

25. “And I will set his hand in the sea; and his right-hand in the rivers.” From this verse to the end cannot possibly be applied to any but Christ, or to David, through his descendant Christ, so that David may be named, while Christ, the son, was understood; but David never had any power at sea, his power was limited to the land, and that confined enough, for the land of promise lay between the sea and the river Euphrates; while the king spoken of here is to have “his hand set in the sea;” to have the command of the sea, and “his right hand in the rivers,” and, consequently, all over the world; for the sea surrounds the land, and the rivers, intersect it, so that the sea and the rivers comprehend the globe, which is expressed in other words in Psalm 71, when he says “he shall rule from sea to sea;” from one extremity of the world to the other.

26. “He shall cry out to me: thou art my Father; my God, and to support of my salvation.” He now speaks more plainly of Christ, and not of himself, unless these words may be applied to David as representing his Son, Christ; but David, throughout the Psalms, never addresses God as his Father; and, therefore, he cannot mean himself when he says, “he shall cry out to me: thou art my Father.” And, perhaps, it was by God’s special Providence that David should never have invoked God by the name of Father, in order to show that this passage could not possibly apply to David, save and except through Christ. Now, Christ commenced his labors by referring to his Father, for, in Luke 2, he says, “did you not know that I must be about the things that are my Father’s;” and his last words upon the earth were, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit;” and, through his whole life, he most constantly addressed God as his Father. “He shall cry out to me Thou art my Father,” as far as my divinity is concerned. “My God,” as far as my humanity is concerned; “the support of my salvation,” as regards my mortality

27. “And I will make him my firstborn, high above the kings of the earth.” He now speaks of Christ in the plainest manner; for Christ, who, as regards the divinity, is only begotten, as regards the humanity, is firstborn among many brothers; and there are three reasons for calling him firstborn. First, because he is first in the order of predestination, for it is through him, as through the head, that we are predestined, as we read in a Eph. 1. Secondly, because he is first in the second generation to life everlasting, whence he is called, Col. 1, “the firstborn of the dead;” and, thirdly, because he had the rights of the firstborn; for “he was appointed heir of all things;” and he was made not only firstborn, but also “high above the kings of the earth;” that is, Prince of the kings of the earth, a King of kings.

28. “I will keep my mercy for him forever: and my covenant faithful to him.” As well as he had before predicted the excellence of the kingdom of Christ, he now predicts

servants usually precede him, in order to dust, arrange, and dispose in order everything connected with it. Mercy and justice are supposed here to do the same, for they cause God’s decisions to be most just, and, by no possibility unjust. For God, in the first instance, exhibits great mercy to all men, by teaching them through his laws, by helping them through his grace, by encouraging them to virtue through the promise of reward, by deterring them from sin through the threats of punishment, and afterwards proves his justice by rewarding the good, and punishing the wicked; for, had not his mercy preceded his justice, we would have been all lost. Hence, the rulers and authorities of this world may learn that their thrones are more highly ornamented, and more firmly established by mercy and justice than by gold and precious stones; and that they are bound to prevent rather than to punish crime. If not the princes themselves, at least many deriving authority under them, will glory in having crime committed, that they may have an opportunity of showing their zeal in bringing the offenders to justice; and they will feel indignant at the efforts of the pious in devising means for the diminution of crime, as if the lawyers or the judges were to suffer thereby; but where mercy and justice prepare the throne, avarice and iniquity have no room whatever.

15. “Blessed is the people that knoweth jubilation. They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance.” Having explained the union of God’s power and truth with his mercy, he applies them to the people of Israel, and particularly to himself, showing that he and they fully experienced God’s power, mercy, and justice. “Blessed is the people that knoweth jubilation.” Truly happy, beyond all others, are the people of Israel, who know by experience and practice, how to praise God, and “jubilation,” to praise him with great affection. Hence, we can infer that he is not blessed who with his lips alone praises God unless he also truly understands and thinks that God is most worthy, nay, even more worthy than can be expressed, of all praise and glory; and therefore, that the whole feelings of our heart must accompany the motion of our lips and of our voice, when we turn to praise or to pray to him. “They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance.” He tells us why they who “know jubilation” are happy; it is because they do not walk in darkness, like the Gentiles who know not God; but, having been converted to God, “in the light of his countenance,” walk the way of this life. The light of God’s countenance comprehends the enlightenment of the understanding by the knowledge of the law and of the will of God, as well as the gift of grace, that inflames the affections. The joy of a good conscience and thanksgiving, is the consequence of such walking in the light of God’s countenance; and therefore,

16. “And in thy name they shall rejoice all the day; and in thy justice they shall be exalted.” That means they will daily exult praising and thanking God for his mercies. And, as they who tread in such a path with daily advance more and more, and come to a closer of friendship with, and more intimate knowledge of God and will be, consequently, favored with fresh gifts, he therefore adds, “and in thy justice they shall be exalted;” will arrive a greater perfection, and afterwards come to eternal glory, through the justice that causes God to keep

his promises, or through the justice he gives us when he daily justifies us more and more, or makes us more just. And here we are reminded that we are not to confide either in our own strength, or in our learning; either when we begin to walk, or when we have made a proficiency in walking.

17. "For thou art the glory of their strength: and in thy good pleasure shall our horn be exalted." He now proceeds to humble man's pride that is so ready to assume to itself what belongs to God, thereby deserving to lose what it already had received. I had reason for saying "that it is in thy justice they shall be exalted," because "thou art the glory of their strength." Whatever power and strength they have is from you, and not from themselves; and, therefore, it is in you, and not in themselves, they should glory; and that you do, not because they deserve it, but because you will it; for it is through "thy good pleasure" your will and pleasure, that "our horn shall be exalted," we shall be rendered valiant and brave, to meet and confound our enemies.

18. "For our protection is of the Lord, and of our King the Holy One of Israel." Herein appeared the good pleasure of God, that out of all the people on the face of the earth it pleased him to select the people of Israel for his own. "Our protection is of the Lord." The Lord, through his good pleasure, and not from our own merits, selected us as his own people, and deigned to become our King in order to protect us. God is called "the Holy One of Israel" by David, as well as by the other prophets, because his name was regarded by the Israelites with peculiar veneration, and was strictly forbidden to be taken in vain, blasphemed, or dishonored.

19. "Then thou spokest in a vision to thy Saints, and said: I have laid help upon one that is mighty, and have exalted one chosen out of my people." He now begins to descend to himself, as the head of a people specially beloved by God. A serious question, however, arises here, viz., whether this and the following verses applied to Christ or to David, or partly to Christ, and partly to David. St. Augustine applies them to Christ; but the words of the apostle, Acts 13, "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man according to my own heart," apply those words to David, which are partly taken from this passage and partly from 1 Kings 13; with the expression, "I will make his seed to endure forevermore," verse 29, can hardly be applied to Christ; while it is most applicable to David, to whom God promised, that he would place his seed on his throne, and that his kingdom would endure. Others apply the whole to David himself; but verse 27, "I will make him my firstborn," forbids that. Others will have it apply partly to Christ, and partly to David; but the continuity of the subject, and the connection of the language and of the ideas, clearly indicate that one or either only was intended. My opinion is, that the whole was intended for David himself, but that a great part was to be fulfilled only in Christ, so that David may be called the firstborn, high above the kings of the earth, but only inasmuch as he was the type of Christ, his son. If this explanation be not approved of, we must adopt St. Augustine's, who applies it exclusively to Christ, thus: when you adopted the Jewish people as your own you gave them a king highly agreeable to yourself, for you spoke in a vision or revelation to your Saints to Samuel, and afterwards to Nathan, and you said "I have laid help upon one that is mighty." I have given my people, as a helpful, one that is stout and resolute in mind and body, "and have exalted one chosen out of my

people." I have set up a powerful help for my people, because I have exalted him whom I have chosen from among them to be a king and a protector and a defender of my people.

20. "I have found David my servant: with my holy oil I have anointed him." He now tells us who the powerful man is, and says it was David himself, whom he had found worthy to be elected and anointed king, and thus, this verse can be literally applied to David, who was anointed by Samuel. However, St. Augustine maintains that Christ was intended here, though named as David, as is the case in chapters 34 and 37 of Ezekiel; and of whose anointing we read in Psalm 44, when he says, "therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee." The expression, "I have found David," is purely metaphorical; for God, who sees everything, however secret, at one glance, has no need of seeking after anyone; but he is said to seek, because he does not choose at random, nor take the next to hand; but he finds without the labor and trouble that mortals must have recourse to, and chooses him who is most fit for and worthy of, the position in question.

21. "For my hand shall help him: and my arm shall strengthen him."

22. "The enemy shall have no advantage over him: nor the son of iniquity have power to hurt him."

23. "And I will cut down his enemies before his face; and them that hate me I will put to flight." However true all this may be of David, who, through God's assistance had many victories over his enemies, they apply much more forcibly to Christ, "for the enemy had an advantage over" David, when he induced him to commit the sin of murder and adultery; and this enemy Absalom, had an advantage over him, when he banished and drove him out of his kingdom. Such was not the case with Christ, for "the hand and the arm" of the Lord, which means the very Word of God, the power and wisdom of the Father, so strengthened the human nature of Christ, hypostatically united to it, that no enemy could possibly "have an advantage over him," nor deceive nor circumvent him in any shape; but, on the contrary all who hated him "were cut down before his face," and were conquered and routed. For, through Christ was scourged and crucified by his enemies, yet, it was with his own consent, and it was through that passion of his that he conquered the devil, rescued those who were captives to him, and had a most glorious triumph over him; and we see the Jews, his enemies, dispersed through the whole world, like a routed and scattered army.

24. "And my truth and my mercy shall be with him; and in my name shall his horn be exalted." This was rather obscurely foreshadowed in David but accomplished most fully in Christ; for the truth and mercy of God always remained with Christ. The Hypostatic Union, that could never be dissolved, was the effect of his mercy; and his truth appeared from having faithfully carried out what the angel promised, Luke 1, "he shall reign in the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end." And, from the fact of truth and mercy always remaining with him, "in my name shall his horn be exalted;" his power