

PSALM TWELVE AND THIRTEEN

parallel at the conclusion of a psalm"; the which frank admission may prepare us for the drastic treatment of Briggs, who, by a new decipherment of the consonants, and in part leaning on the Septuagint and on verse 5, sets forth as the concluding couplet

Though round about the wicked walk,
When thou risest up, thou dost lightly esteem the sons of
mankind.

"This," says he, "gives an appropriate climax to the psalm."

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Upon what adequate basis are we to conclude that Hezekiah edited the psalms of David? Discuss.
2. If we conclude that there is a definite possibility that such editing took place—are we to believe that Hezekiah was divinely directed in his editing?—why did he edit?
3. Since some of our readers will not share Rotherham's explanation as including Hezekiah's editing—please relate this to the life of David and show how *all* the psalm can be related to David.
4. Please remember God lives in the eternal everlasting NOW—all the proud liars of David's day (and Hezekiah's day) are destroyed—God does NOT live in the time-space sequence called life—how does this help?

PSALM 13

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Sorely Tried Believer in Jehovah Expostulates,
Entreats, and Ultimately Exults.

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., vers. 1, 2, Expostulation; Stanza II., vers. 3, 4, Entreaty; Stanza III., vers. 5, 6, Exultation.

(Lm.)—Psalm—by David

- 1 How long Jehovah—wilt thou forget me for ever?
how long wilt thou hide thy face from me?

STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 2 how long must I lay up sorrow in my soul?¹
how long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?
3 Oh look well answer me, Jehovah my God!
light thou up my eyes lest I sleep on into death,
4 lest mine enemy say "I have prevailed over him,"
and mine adversaries exult when I am shaken.
5 But I in thy kindness do trust,—
let my heart exult in thy salvation,
6 let me sing to Jehovah because he hath dealt bountifully with
me,
and let me harp to the name of the Lord Most High.²

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

PARAPHRASE

PSALM 13

How long will You forget me, Lord? Forever? How long will You look the other way when I am in need?

2 How long must I be hiding daily anguish in my heart? How long shall my enemy have the upper hand?

3 Answer me, O Lord my God; give me light in my darkness lest I die.

4 Don't let my enemies say, "We have conquered him!" Don't let them gloat that I am down.

5 But I will always trust in You and in Your mercy and shall rejoice in Your salvation.

6 I will sing to the Lord because He has blessed me so richly.

EXPOSITION

The keynote of Stanza I. of this psalm is, *How long?*—from which, indeed, we cannot safely infer that the present trial had lasted for many years; but only that, to the tried one, it seemed as if it would never end. Time, to our consciousness, is relative: under stress and strain, minutes seem hours; hours, days; days, as though they would drag on their slow length for ever. Such has been the feeling of the psalmist; but his half-formed thought is corrected ere he utters it—hence the broken construction of the first line. The very attempt to utter his complaint soothes

1. M.T.: "How long must I lay up designs in my soul, sorrow in my heart by day."

2. Line preserved in Sep. and Vul.

PSALM THIRTEEN

his spirit, and he becomes measured and musical in the expression of his appeal to Jehovah his God, to whom his words reveal unmistakable nearness. We readily forgive his anthropomorphisms, for the sake of the vivid sense we thereby obtain of his accustomed personal fellowship with his God. We note the orderly progression of the singer's thought, as he passes from the Divine *mind* to the Divine *face* as its manifestation; then from Jehovah to himself; then from himself to his enemy. On our way through the stanza we note the fine phrase *lay up sorrow in my soul*: "the soul," or sensitive nature, which feels the sorrow caused by the trial; and includes the memory which stores it up, and renders the soul a treasure-house of experience. We also note the apt and characteristic restraint which in all probability points to King Saul as the *enemy*.

He who can thus remonstrate with Jehovah, can do more: he can ask his interposition. And so Stanza II. is prayer. It is more—it is argued prayer. It dares to tell Jehovah what will be the deplorable results of leaving the prayer unanswered. Two decisive petitions, *Oh look well* (or *Look around*) as if to take in the whole situation and *answer me*—in what way he does not indicate, for he is speaking to one who knows the actual facts, and knows, as well his own gracious purposes; and then we feel how the petitioner lays hold of Deity by the name of promise and its appropriating synonym, *Jehovah my God*. *Light thou up mine eyes*, he adds, seeking for the invigoration which will cause his eyes to gleam with new health and hope: *lest*—and this is the keynote of Stanza II., twice expressed and once implied. His apprehensions move outwards in enlarging circles; beginning with himself, he fears that answer deferred will mean death; then, thinking of his enemy, that answer deferred will mean his openly expressed boast; and, still further out from himself, that thereupon a whole chorus of adversaries will exult. The weight of these deprecations he leaves his divine Friend to estimate.

And now we come, in Stanza III., to the psychological problem of the psalm. Is it possible that the same singer can now thus early and thus suddenly mount from the depths of despair to so near an approach to exultation? We say "approach" advisedly; for, strictly construed, the language is still that of prayer. But it is easy to see that prayer is by this time

STUDIES IN PSALMS

lit up with joyful anticipation. In the very act of saying *Let my heart exult*, he is letting his heart ascend to the altitude of joy. Here, again, we are delighted with the orderly evolution of thought: on the objective side, *kindness* brings *salvation*, *salvation* is crowned with *bountiful dealing*; and on the subjective side, *trust* produces *exultation*, *exultation* leads to *song*, *song* calls for the *harp*. We are thus well-pleased with the completeness, in spirit and in form, secured by accepting the additional line preserved by the Septuagint and Vulgate. Moreover, we are thus led to a critical preference of Briggs over Delitzsch, which, for once in a way, is not distasteful. The latter, severely following the Massoretic Text, resolves the psalm into three decreasing stanzas—five lines, four, three; and then temptingly says, “The five lines of lamentation and the four of supplication are now followed by three of joyous anticipation.” The leading characteristics—of “lamentation,” “supplication” and “joyous anticipation”—are a manifestly correct description of the psalm; but why “anticipation” should be less exuberant in language than “lamentation” and “supplication,” we do not clearly see, and, inasmuch as the shortening of the first stanza relieves the third question of the psalm of abnormal distinctions between “soul” and “heart,” as Briggs forcibly points out, and inasmuch as this emendation, together with the restoration of the last line from the old versions, levels the whole psalm into three equal stanzas, we—feeling that symmetry does count for something when sustained by other evidence—are constrained to say, Briggs has it.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. This psalm should be of real interest to all of us—for we have shared David’s dilemma—why does God seem remote during a period of pain?
2. Who was David’s enemy as described in this psalm?—In what particulars did he have the advantage of David?—What lesson is there in this for us?
3. Just how did David imagine God would answer his prayer for light in the midst of darkness?
4. What difference would it make if David’s enemies did gloat over his fall?
5. David had a change of heart in verses 5 and 6—what caused it?