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978-1-107-44576-5 - The Psalter of the Church: The Prayer Book Version of the Psalms: With Introduction and Marginal Notes

James G. Carleton

Excerpt

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# THE PSALMS OF DAVID

## THE FIRST DAY

### Morning Prayer

#### PSALM I. *Beatus vir, qui non abiit &c.*

##### GENERAL PREFACE TO THE PSALTER

Contrast between the blessedness of the righteous and the misery of the wicked.

#### Proper on All Saints' Day [America].

**B**LESSED is the man that hath not walked in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners : and hath not sat in the seat of the scornful.

2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD : and in his law will he <sup>a</sup>exercise himself <sup>1</sup> day and night.

3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the water-side : that will bring forth <sup>b</sup>his fruit in due season.

4 His leaf also shall not wither : and look, whatsoever he doeth, it shall prosper.

5 As for the ungodly, it is not so with them : but they are like the chaff, which the wind scattereth away <sup>1</sup> from the face of the earth <sup>1</sup>.

6 Therefore the ungodly shall not be able to stand in the judgement : neither the sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

7 But the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous : and the way of the ungodly shall perish.

Negative description of the righteous man. He avoids association with the wicked. The threefold parallelism, 'walk,' 'stand,' 'sit'; 'counsel,' 'way,' 'seat,' marks a steady progression in wickedness.

Positive side of the righteous man's character. Glad obedience to the law and continuous study of it.

<sup>a</sup> *meditate.*

<sup>b</sup> R.V. *its.*

The threshing-floors of the East are on elevated places exposed to the wind which blows away the chaff when the winnower with his fan (shovel) throws the grain into the air. St Matt. iii. 12.

'the righteous' here = the ideal Israel which shall be manifested at the judgement, when the LORD's 'people shall be all righteous.' Is. lx. 21.

'knoweth,' i.e. regardeth with loving care.

<sup>1</sup> Not in A.R.V., added in P.B.V. from Vulg.

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PSALM II

DAY I

PSALM II. *Quare fremuerunt gentes?*

Vassal princes threaten a revolt, destined to result in their own utter discomfiture, against some king of David's line, perhaps Solomon. Mystically the Psalm points forward to the contest between the world and Christ, remarkably evidenced at His Passion by the combination of Caiaphas and Pilate, Jews and Gentiles against Him. Acts iv. 25—28.

## Proper on Easter Day.

**W**HY do the heathen so furiously rage together : and why do the <sup>a</sup>people imagine a vain thing?

<sup>a</sup>R.V. *peoples.*

2 The kings of the earth stand up, and the rulers take counsel together : against the LORD, and against his anointed.

'his anointed' = the king of David's house, the type of the coming Messiah (anointed one). From this verse and v. 7 are taken two titles given by the Jews to the expected Deliverer viz. Messiah and Son of God. St Matt. xxvi. 63; St John i. 49.

3 Let us break their bonds asunder : and cast away their cords from us.

3. The confederates speak.  
'their bonds...their cords,' i.e. those of the LORD and His anointed.

4 He that dwelleth in heaven shall laugh them to scorn : the Lord shall have them in derision.

5 Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath : and <sup>b</sup>vex them in his sore displeasure.

<sup>b</sup>A.R.V. *mg. trouble.*

6 Yet have I set my king : upon my holy hill of Sion.

6. The LORD's words.

7 <sup>c</sup>'I will preach the law, whereof the LORD hath said unto me':

7—9. The king speaks, quoting the LORD's promise to him.

<sup>c</sup>R.V. *I will tell of the decree: The LORD said unto me.*

Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee.

i.e. I have declared thee My son by placing thee on thy royal throne. The allusion is to God's promise to David and his heirs through Nathan. 'I will be his father, and he shall be

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## DAY I

## PSALM III

3

8 Desire of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance : and the utmost parts of the earth for thy possession.

9 'Thou shalt bruise them with a rod of iron : and break them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

10 Be wise now therefore, O ye kings : be learned, ye that are judges of the earth.

11 Serve the LORD in fear : and rejoice <sup>1</sup>'unto him' with reverence.

12 <sup>2</sup>Kiss the son, lest he be angry, and so ye perish <sup>a</sup>'from the <sup>1</sup>right way : if his wrath be kindled, (yea, but a little,)' <sup>b</sup>'blessed are all they that put their trust in him.

my son.' <sup>2</sup> Sam. vii. 14. These words received their complete fulfilment when Christ 'born of the seed of David... was declared to be the Son of God... by the resurrection of the dead.' Rom. i. 3, 4. See Acts xiii. 33.

'bruise,' Sept. has 'rule,' and is followed in Rev. ii. 27, xii. 5, xix. 15.

10—12. The Psalmist speaks. He exhorts the insurgent rulers to shew true wisdom by submitting to Jehovah in the person of His anointed son.

Give him the kiss of homage; see 1 Sam. x. 1; 1 Kings xix. 18; Hos. xiii. 2.

<sup>a</sup>R.V. *in the way* [i.e. in your expedition], *for his wrath will soon be kindled.*

PSALM III. *Domine, quid multiplicati?*

'A Psalm of David when he fled from Absalom his son' (Title). The morning prayer (see *v.* 5) of one who, in the midst of danger, put his trust in God.

**L**ORD, how are they increased that trouble me : many are they that rise against me.

2 Many one there be that say of my soul : There is no help for him in his God.

'The LORD hath avenged thee this day of all them that rose up against thee.' Words of the Cushite in announcing to David the victory over Absalom. <sup>2</sup> Sam. xviii. 31, 32.

They say that God as well as man has turned against me.

<sup>1</sup> Not in A.R.V., added in P.B.V. from Vulg.

<sup>2</sup> 'Kiss the son.' Two other translations preferred by many scholars are given in R.V. *mg. viz. Lay hold of (or, Receive) instruction, and Worship in purity.*

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PSALM IV

DAY I

3 But thou, O LORD, art <sup>a</sup>my defender<sup>1</sup>: thou art my <sup>b</sup>worship, and the lifter up of my head.

<sup>a</sup>R.V. *a shield about me*. Cp. Gen. xv. 1.

<sup>b</sup>'worship' = *glory*.

4 I did call upon the LORD with my voice: and he heard me out of his holy hill.

'his holy hill' = Sion where Jehovah specially manifested His Presence.

5 I laid me down and slept, and rose up again: for the LORD sustained me.

The hosts on the side of Absalom.

6 I will not be afraid for ten thousands of the people: that have set themselves against me round about.

<sup>c</sup>*Arise, O LORD*. The first words of the cry raised when the ark set forward in the wilderness, Num. x. 35. They frequently occur in the Psalter. The complete formula appears in Ps. lxxviii. 1.

They are like wild beasts made helpless by the breaking of the jaw.

7 <sup>e</sup>Up, LORD<sup>7</sup>, and help me, O my God: for thou smitest all mine enemies upon the cheek-bone; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly.

<sup>d</sup>R.V. *Thy blessing be*. David prays for the whole nation including those that have set themselves against him.

8 Salvation belongeth unto the LORD: <sup>d</sup>and thy blessing is<sup>7</sup> upon thy people.

PSALM IV. *Cum invocarem.*

'A Psalm of David' (Title). An evening hymn (see *v.* 9), probably written like the previous Psalm during the flight from Absalom.

Proper on Easter Even [America].

**H**EAR me when I call, O God of my righteousness: thou hast set me at liberty when I was in trouble; have mercy upon me, and hearken unto my prayer.

God who knows my righteousness and will vindicate it.

Former deliverances embolden me now to plead to Thee for help.

2 O ye sons of men, how long will ye blaspheme mine honour: and have such pleasure in vanity, and seek after <sup>e</sup>leasing?

'sons of men.' The Hebrew phrase here means 'men of high rank.' See Ps. xlix. 2, lxii. 9. The Psalmist is addressing the rebellious leaders.

<sup>e</sup>'leasing' = (R.V.) *falsehood*. The rebellion of Absalom was founded on intrigue and misrepresentation. 2 Sam. xv. 2—6.

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## DAY I

## PSALM V

5

3 Know this also, that the LORD hath chosen to himself <sup>a</sup>'the man that is godly': when I call upon the LORD, he will hear me.

4 <sup>1</sup>'Stand in awe', and sin not : commune with your own heart, and in your chamber, and be still.

5 Offer the <sup>b</sup>sacrifice of righteousness : and put your trust in the LORD.

6 There be many that say : Who will shew us any good?

7 LORD, lift thou up : the light of thy countenance upon us.

8 Thou hast put gladness in my heart : <sup>c</sup>'since the time that' their corn, and wine, <sup>2</sup>'and oil', increased.

9 I will lay me down in peace, and take my rest : for it is thou, LORD, only, that makest me dwell in safety.

<sup>a</sup>R.V. mg. *one that he favoureth.*

'Stand in awe' of God and the king, and break with your sin of rebellion.

Meditate on these truths in the silence of the night, and cease from your enterprise.

<sup>b</sup>*sacrifices of righteousness* are those offered with a right disposition.

The desponding words of David's faint-hearted adherents.

David's prayer combines two petitions of the priestly benediction, 'The LORD make his face to shine upon thee,' 'the LORD lift up his countenance upon thee and give thee peace' (see *v.* 9). Num. vi. 24–26.

<sup>c</sup>R.V. *more than they have when.* David's God-given gladness in this time of his trouble is greater than that of his enemies in this time of their prosperity.

PSALM V. *Verba mea auribus.*

'A Psalm of David' (Title) when in peril from treacherous foes. A morning hymn (*v.* 3).

**P**ONDER my words, O LORD : consider my meditation.

2 O hearken thou unto the voice of my calling, my King, and my God : for unto thee will I make my prayer.

'meditation' = silent or scarcely audible prayer like Hannah's. 1 Sam. i. 13.

David, the king, acknowledges the supreme Kingship of God.

<sup>1</sup> R.V. mg. *Be ye angry*, after Sept. The verse is so quoted Eph. iv. 26. With this rendering the primary meaning of the words is 'Be ye angry with my rule, if you must, but do not sin by rebelling against it.'

<sup>2</sup> Not in A.R.V., added in P.B.V. from Vulg.

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PSALM V

DAY I

3 My voice shalt thou hear be-  
times, O LORD : early in the  
morning will I <sup>a</sup>direct my prayer  
unto thee, and will <sup>b</sup>look up<sup>1</sup>.

4 For thou art the God that hast  
no pleasure in wickedness : neither  
shall any evil dwell with thee.

5 <sup>c</sup>Such as be foolish<sup>7</sup> shall not  
stand in thy sight : for thou hatest  
all <sup>d</sup>them that work vanity<sup>1</sup>.

6 Thou shalt destroy them that  
speak <sup>e</sup>leasing : the LORD will  
abhor both the bloodthirsty and  
deceitful man.

7 But as for me, I will come into  
thine house, even upon the multi-  
tude of thy mercy : and in thy fear  
will I worship toward thy holy  
temple.

8 Lead me, O LORD, in thy  
righteousness, because of mine  
enemies : make thy way plain  
before my face.

9 For there is no faithfulness in  
<sup>f</sup>his mouth : their inward parts  
are very wickedness.

10 Their throat is an open sepul-  
chre : they flatter with their tongue.

11 <sup>g</sup>Destroy thou them<sup>7</sup>, O God ;  
let them perish through their own  
imaginings : cast them out in  
the multitude of their ungodliness ;  
for they have rebelled against thee.

12 And let all them that put their  
trust in thee rejoice : they shall  
ever <sup>h</sup>be giving of thanks<sup>7</sup>, be-  
cause thou defendest them ; they  
that love thy Name shall be joy-  
ful in thee ;

13 For thou, LORD, wilt give thy  
blessing unto the righteous : and  
with thy favourable kindness wilt  
thou defend him as with a shield.

<sup>a</sup>R.V. *order*. It is the word used  
(Lev. i. 7, 8) of the priest's arranging  
the wood &c. for the sacrifice. David  
compares his morning devotions to the  
daily morning offering.

<sup>b</sup>R.V. *keep watch* for an answer to  
my prayer.

4—6. The wicked are excluded  
from God's presence.

<sup>c</sup>R.V. *The arrogant*.

<sup>d</sup>*workers of iniquity*.

<sup>e</sup>'leasing' = (R.V.) *lies*.

The Psalmist, through the divine  
favour, will draw near to God.

God's righteousness is pledged to  
protect His true worshippers.  
'thy way,' i.e. the way Thou hast  
appointed for me.

<sup>f</sup>*their*.

<sup>g</sup>R.V. *Hold them guilty*.

The enemies of David are rebels  
against God whose vicegerent he is.

<sup>h</sup>*shout for joy*.

God's Name Jehovah (LORD) here  
and elsewhere stands for His character  
as He has revealed it to His people.

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DAY 1

PSALM VI

7

**Evening Prayer**PSALM VI. *Domine, ne in furore.*

The Psalmist is suffering from severe illness aggravated by the taunts of enemies.

The first of the Penitential Psalms.

**Proper on Ash Wednesday.**

**O** LORD, rebuke me not in thine indignation : neither chasten me in thy displeasure.

2 Have mercy upon me, O LORD, for I am <sup>a</sup>weak : O LORD, heal me, for my bones are vexed.

3 My soul also is sore troubled : but, LORD, how long wilt thou punish me?

4 Turn thee, O LORD, and deliver my soul : O save me for thy mercy's sake.

5 For in death no man remembereth thee : and who will give thee thanks in <sup>b</sup>'the pit'?

6 I am weary of my groaning ; every night wash I my bed : and water my couch with my tears.

7 <sup>c</sup>'My beauty is gone' for very trouble : <sup>d</sup>'and worn away' because of all mine enemies.

8 <sup>e</sup>'Away from me, all ye that work vanity' : for the LORD hath heard the voice of my weeping.

9 The LORD hath heard my petition : the LORD will receive my prayer.

10 All mine enemies shall be confounded, and sore vexed : they shall be turned back, and put to shame suddenly.

The Psalmist regards his illness as a proof of God's displeasure.

<sup>a</sup>R.V. *withered away.*

Words used by our Lord on the eve of His Passion, 'Now is my soul troubled.' St John xii. 27 ; see Ps. xlii. 6.

The general O.T. conception of death as a cheerless existence cut off from communion with God ; cp. Is. xxxviii. 18.

<sup>b</sup>R.V. *Sheol* = the world beyond the grave.

<sup>c</sup>R.V. *Mine eye wasteth away.* The eye reveals the ravages of disease.

<sup>d</sup>*it waxeth old.*

Sudden change of note from depression to exultation: the Psalmist's prayer is heard, his enemies will be discomfited.

<sup>e</sup>*Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.* Words appropriated by our Lord as His final sentence on the wicked. St Matt. vii. 23.

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PSALM VII

DAY I

PSALM VII. *Domine, Deus meus.*

<sup>1</sup> Shiggaion of David, which he sang unto the LORD, concerning the words of Cush a Benjamite' (Title). Cush was probably a follower of Saul and foremost among the calumniators of David.

**O** LORD my God, in thee have I put my trust : save me from all them that <sup>a</sup>persecute me, and deliver me ;

<sup>a</sup>R.V. *pursue.*

<sup>2</sup> Lest he devour my soul, like a lion, and tear it in pieces : while there is none to help.

'he' = Cush or Saul himself.

<sup>3</sup> O LORD my God, if I have done any such thing : or if there be any wickedness in my hands ;

Cp. David's words when he protests his innocence to Saul. 1 Sam. xxiv. 11, xxvi. 18.

<sup>4</sup> If I have rewarded evil unto him that dealt friendly with me : (yea, I have delivered him that without any cause is mine enemy);

So far was David from wantonly injuring his friends, that he saved the life of Saul his enemy when in his power. 1 Sam. xxiv. 4 ff., xxvi. 8 ff.

<sup>5</sup> Then let mine enemy <sup>b</sup>persecute my soul, and take me : yea, let him tread my life down upon the earth, and lay <sup>c</sup>'mine honour' in the dust.

<sup>b</sup>R.V. *pursue.*<sup>c</sup>R.V. *my glory*, poetical for 'soul,' as being the noblest part of man; see Ps. xvi. 10; Gen. xlix. 6.

<sup>6</sup> Stand up, O LORD, in thy wrath, and lift up thyself, because of the indignation of mine enemies : arise for me in the judgement that thou hast commanded.

David calls upon God to take His place as Judge and vindicate his innocence.

<sup>7</sup> And so shall the congregation of the <sup>d</sup>people come about thee : <sup>e</sup>'for their sakes therefore lift up thyself again'.

<sup>d</sup>R.V. *peoples*. In David's vision all nations will be gathered together to hear his acquittal pronounced.<sup>e</sup>R.V. *and over them return thou on high*, i.e. after Thy visit to earth to gather the peoples, take again the seat of judgement which Thou hast seemed to abandon for a time.

<sup>8</sup> The LORD shall judge the <sup>f</sup>people ; give sentence with me, O LORD : according to my righteousness, and according to the innocency that is in me.

<sup>f</sup>R.V. *peoples.*<sup>1</sup> 'Shiggaion' probably means a poem of irregular structure and emotional character.



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## DAY I

## PSALM VII

9

9 O let the wickedness of the ungodly come to an end : but <sup>a</sup>guide thou the just.

<sup>a</sup>*establish.*

10 For the righteous God : trieth the very hearts and reins.

‘The heart’ in the O.T. is the seat of thought and determination; ‘the reins’ (=kidneys) of the emotions.

11 My help cometh of God : who preserveth them that are true of heart.

12 God is a righteous Judge, <sup>1r</sup>strong, and patient<sup>1</sup> : and God is provoked every day.

13 If a man will not turn, he will whet his sword : he hath bent his bow, and made it ready.

14 He hath prepared for him the instruments of death : he <sup>b</sup>ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>b</sup>R.V. *maketh his arrows fiery shafts*, i.e. the lightning-flashes.

15—17. The wicked man brings destruction on himself as the natural consequence of his own doings.

15 Behold, he travaileth with mischief : he hath conceived sorrow, and brought forth <sup>c</sup>ungodliness.

<sup>c</sup>*falsehood.*

16 He hath <sup>d</sup>graven and digged up a pit : and is fallen himself into the <sup>e</sup>destruction that he made for other.

<sup>d</sup>‘graven’ = digged.<sup>e</sup>*ditch.*

‘other’ is the old plural for ‘others.’

17 For his travail shall come upon his own head : and his wickedness shall fall on his own pate.

18 I will give thanks unto the LORD, according to his righteousness : and I will praise the Name of the LORD most High.

<sup>1</sup> Not in A.R.V., added in P.B.V. from Vulg.

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PSALM VIII

DAY I

PSALM VIII. *Domine, Dominus noster.*

'A Psalm of David' (Title). The greatness of man as lord of creation—fully realized when man in Christ was exalted to be Ruler of the universe. Heb. ii. 6 ff.

Proper on Ascension Day and on Advent  
Sunday [America].

**O** LORD our Governour, how excellent is thy Name in all the world : thou that hast set thy glory <sup>a</sup>above the heavens!

2 Out of the mouth of very babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength, because of thine enemies : that thou mightest still the enemy, and the avenger.

3 For I will consider thy heavens, even the works of thy fingers : the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained.

4 What is man, that thou art mindful of him : and the son of man, that thou visitest him?

5 Thou madest him <sup>b</sup>lower than the angels<sup>7</sup> : to crown him with glory and <sup>c</sup>worship.

6 Thou makest him to have dominion of the works of thy hands : and thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet ;

7 All sheep and oxen : yea, and the beasts of the field ;

'our,' i.e. He is Lord not of David only, but of all Israel (i.e. mankind from the Christian point of view).

'excellent' formerly meant 'pre-eminent,' 'excelling.'

<sup>a</sup>R. V. *upon*.

The glory of God is confessed even by children whose lisping praises put to silence the hostility of the wicked. Our Lord quotes the words in accepting the Hosannas of the children in the temple. St Matt. xxi. 16 ; see xi. 25 ; 1 Cor. i. 27.

'ordained strength,' Sept. 'perfected praise,' so quoted St Matt. xxi. 16.

'avenger' = revengeful. Ps. xlv. 17.

'visitest,' i.e. with love and providential care.

<sup>b</sup>So Sept., Vulg. and Heb. ii. 7. R. V. *but little lower than God*. 'God created man in his own image,' Gen. i. 27.

<sup>c</sup>'worship' = *honour*.

Gen. i. 26.

Man's dominion reached its climax in the universal rule of the Son of Man. Heb. ii. 9.