

History of Biblical Interpretation March 2022

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As Protestants we take as self-evident the importance of the Bible to Christian belief and practice. Yet we also affirm the rich variety of experience and contexts that comprise the history of Christianity as a global faith. How did the church in different times and places relate to Scripture and understand its meaning? In what ways did significant cultural shifts impact methods of interpreting Scripture in the church? What can the history of biblical exegesis teach us about the diverse questions God's people brought to God's word in various situations, the answers they found, and the implications of these lessons for our reading of Scripture today?

Schedule

Week 1 (3/6)	Heresy and Early Christian Approaches to Scripture
Week 2 (3/13)	Spiritual Exegesis from Origen to Thomas Aquinas
Week 3 (3/20)	<i>The Protestant Reformers and the Bible's "Literal Sense"</i>
Week 4 (3/27)	A Great Cloud of Witnesses: Modern Approaches to Reading Scripture

I. Psalm 8 and Medieval Exegesis

“Apostolic Hermeneutics” and so-called “Messianic Psalms”

Augustine on Psalm 8

Thomas Aquinas on Psalm 8

The Fourfold Reading of Scripture

Literal

Allegorical

Moral

Anagogical

II. The Reformers and the Bible's Literal Sense

Authority and Polemic

A Trove of Sources

III. Psalm 8 in Reformation Exegesis

Luther and Calvin

Next time: What were they doing and what do we do?

Psalm 8 (NSRV)

To the leader: according to The Gittith. A Psalm of David.

¹ O Lord, our Sovereign,
 how majestic is your name in all the earth!
You have set your glory above the heavens.
² Out of the mouths of babes and infants
you have founded a bulwark because of your foes,
 to silence the enemy and the avenger.
³ When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
 the moon and the stars that you have established;
⁴ what are human beings that you are mindful of them,
 mortals that you care for them?
⁵ Yet you have made them a little lower than God,
 and crowned them with glory and honor.
⁶ You have given them dominion over the works of your hands;
 you have put all things under their feet,
⁷ all sheep and oxen,
 and also the beasts of the field,
⁸ the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea,
 whatever passes along the paths of the seas.
⁹ O Lord, our Sovereign,
 how majestic is your name in all the earth!

Hebrews 2:5–9 (NSRV)

⁵ Now God did not subject the coming world, about which we are speaking, to angels. ⁶ But someone has testified somewhere,

“What are human beings that you are mindful of them,
 or mortals, that you care for them?
⁷ You have made them for a little while lower than the angels;
 you have crowned them with glory and honor,
⁸ subjecting all things under their feet.”

Now in subjecting all things to them, God left nothing outside their control. As it is, we do not yet see everything in subjection to them, ⁹ but we do see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

of its own. Every nature, as such, must have existence; light has existence, darkness has no existence. He who forsakes his Maker and reverts to that from which he was made, in other words to nothingness, is enveloped in the darkness of his sin. Yet he does not perish utterly, but is placed in due order in the lowest depths. Thus, having said: *I will confess to the Lord*, for fear we should think he was referring to the confession of sins the Psalmist adds finally: *And will sing to the name of the Lord most high*. For singing is a mark of joy, whereas repentance for sin bespeaks sadness.

20. We may also apply this Psalm to the Man of the Lord, provided that we refer to our own weak nature which He took upon Himself anything which is said to our discredit.

DISCOURSE ON PSALM 8

1. [Verse 1] *Unto the end, for the presses. A Psalm for David himself.*¹ The text of this Psalm tells us nothing whatever about these wine presses from which it takes its title, thus showing that the Scriptures often convey one and the same idea under many and various symbols. The wine presses, then, we may take to mean the Church, on the same principle by which we also understand a threshing floor to represent the Church. In fact, both on the threshing floor and in the wine press, the produce is merely cleared of its coverings, necessary as they were for the formation, growth and ripening of the harvest or vintage. From this protective covering both the wheat and the wine are separated: the wheat from the chaff on the threshing floor and the wine from the grapeskins in the presses. Similarly in the Church the good are to be found in company

with a multitude of worldly people whose presence has been necessary to bring them into the world and prepare them for the word of God; and God's ministers work to separate them from this throng by means of a desire which is spiritual. For at this present time it so happens that the good are set apart from the bad not by space but by difference of aim, although as far as bodily presence goes they mingle together in the churches. The time will come, however, for the grain to be separated and stored in barns and the wine in cellars. *He will gather the wheat into his barns, says the Evangelist, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.*² The same thought can be expressed in another simile: He will store the wine in cellars, but the grapeskins he will cast out for the cattle; so that the maw of the cattle may be taken as representing the punishments of hell.

2. We may look at the wine presses from another angle, provided that we always regard them as a figure of the Church. The grapes can be viewed as a symbol of the divine Word; for our Lord was typified by the cluster of grapes which the spies sent ahead by the people of Israel carried, hung crucified as it were upon a pole, on their return from the Promised Land.³ Accordingly, when the Word of God has need of borrowing the sound of a voice to reach the ears of His hearers, His meaning is enclosed in the utterance of the voice as wine in the skin that contains it. Thus this "cluster of grapes" comes to our ears to be trodden out as if in a wine press. There it is crushed, so that while the sound reaches as far as the ears, the meaning sinks into the memory of the hearers as into a sort of vat. Thence it passes into moral training and a habit of mind, as wine from the vat passes into the cellars, where, if it does not turn sour through carelessness, it will mature with age.

With the Jews it turned sour, and this vinegar of theirs they gave our Lord to drink.⁴ On the contrary, that wine, the produce of the fruit of the New Testament,⁵ which our Lord is to drink with His saints in the kingdom of His Father, must needs be very sweet and mellow.

3. Often enough, wine presses also denote martyrdom; for having been trampled beneath the weight of persecution, the mortal remains of the confessors of Christ's name have been flung on the ground like grapeskins, while their souls flowed forth into the repose of their heavenly dwelling place. But this figurative sense by no means departs from the idea of the Church's fruitfulness. Therefore the Psalmist sings for *the wine presses*, to celebrate the inauguration of the Church, when our Lord rose again in order to ascend into heaven. For then it was that He sent the Holy Spirit, who so filled the disciples that they preached the word of God with confidence and gathered together the members of the Church.

4. The Psalmist begins, then: [V. 2] *O Lord, how admirable is thy name in the whole earth.* How, I ask, is it that His name is wonderful throughout the earth? The answer comes: *For thy magnificence is elevated above the heavens.* The meaning, then, is this: O Lord, who art our Lord, how all the dwellers upon earth marvel at thee, since through thine abasement in this world, thy majesty has been exalted above the heavens. For those who witnessed and for those others who have believed in it, thine ascent on high has declared who thou wast that didst first descend.

5. [V. 3] *Out of the mouths of babes and of sucklings thou hast perfected praise because of thy enemies.* I cannot take babes and sucklings to mean any others but those to whom the Apostle says: *As unto little ones in Christ I gave you milk to drink, not meat.*⁶ These little ones are symbol-

ized by the children who went before our Lord praising Him. When the Jews told Him to rebuke them, our Lord defended them with these words: *Have you never read: "Out of the mouths of infants and of sucklings thou hast perfected praise"?*⁷ With good reason the Psalmist says not, thou hast fashioned, but *thou hast perfected praise.* For in the Church there are also those who are no longer given milk to drink, but eat solid food; it is to these the same Apostle refers when he says: *We speak wisdom among the perfect.*⁸ Yet the Church is not brought to its full stature through these alone, for were these the only ones, no allowance would have been made for the human race in general. But out of regard for their weakness, those as yet incapable of understanding things spiritual and eternal are nurtured on faith in the historical events which have been wrought for our salvation since the times of the patriarchs and prophets, especially in the mystery of the Incarnation, by Him who is the incomparable Power and Wisdom of God. Whoever accepts it with faith finds in it salvation; for every one who is inspired by our Lord's leadership will submit to the ordinances which will purify him. Then, rooted and founded in charity, he will be capable of running with the saints, no longer now a babe fed on milk, but a youth who can take solid food, able to comprehend what is the breadth and length and height and depth, to know also the charity of Christ which surpasses all knowledge.⁹

6. *Out of the mouths of infants and of sucklings thou hast perfected praise because of thy enemies.* In general we should understand as enemies to the dispensation made by Jesus Christ, and Him crucified, all those who forbid belief in the unknown and who promise certitude. Such is the conduct of all heretics and of those whom pagan superstition terms philosophers. Not that the promise of knowl-

to show the intense determination with which such men pursue their futile and fleeting aims.

Now these three types of vices, gratification of the flesh, pride, and curiosity, comprise all kinds of sin. These, it seems to me, the Apostle John enumerates when he says: *Love not the world. For all that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life.*³⁹ The eyes above all minister to curiosity; the rest of the quotation is clear enough. The temptation of the Man of the Lord was threefold: through food, that is through the concupiscence of the flesh, when it was suggested to Him: *Command that these stones be made bread;*⁴⁰ through vainglory, when He was set down upon a mountaintop and all the kingdoms of the earth were shown Him and promised Him if He would render adoration; through curiosity, when He was advised to cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the Temple, to see whether the angels would uphold Him. Accordingly, when the enemy could not prevail against Him with any of these attempts, this is what is written about him: *When the devil had ended every temptation.*

To return to the metaphor of the wine presses, not only the wine but the grapeskins too are put under His feet. Not only sheep and oxen, in other words saintly souls among the faithful, are His, whether in the body of the Church or among its ministers, but also the beasts of sensuality, the birds of pride, the fishes of curiosity. All these classes of sinners, as we ourselves witness, are mingled with the upright and holy in the Church. May God work in His Church, then; may He separate the pure wine from the skins. Let us, on our part, strive to become the wine and to rank with the sheep or oxen, not the grapeskins or the beasts of the field, the birds of the air or the fishes that pass

through the paths of the sea. Not that this is the only way of interpreting and explaining these creatures; it depends on the context; elsewhere they may have a different signification. This rule is to be observed in all allegorical interpretation, namely, that the meaning given should look to the context. Such is the teaching of our Lord and His apostles. To conclude, let us repeat the last verse, with which the Psalmist opened his song, and let us praise God with the words: [V. 16] *O Lord our God, how admirable is thy name in all the earth.* After the body of the treatise it is fitting, indeed, to return to the head, which sums up the whole discourse.

DISCOURSE ON PSALM 9

1. The title of this Psalm runs: [Verse 1] *Unto the end, for the hidden things of the Son, a Psalm for David himself.* We may inquire what the hidden things of the Son are, but since this Son is not defined, we must infer that it is the only-begotten Son of God Himself. In fact, when David's son is mentioned in the title of a Psalm, the words used are: *When he fled from the face of his son Absalom.*¹ To name him leaves no doubt about the son's identity, yet Scripture not merely says *from the face of son Absalom* but adds the word *his*. Here, however, both because the Psalmist has omitted *his*, and also because he says a good deal about the Gentiles, it cannot denote Absalom. Nor can the war which that abandoned youth waged against his father have any reference to the Gentiles, since in it the people of Israel alone were divided against themselves. Obviously, then, this Psalm is a hymn celebrating the mysteries of God's only-begotten Son. In fact, when our Lord refers simply to the Son, He wishes to signify that

commemorationem divini beneficii, quando eduxit de Aegypto filios Israel in tabernaculis, et induxit in terram promissionis ubi sunt fructus: et ideo oportebat quod haberent fructus pulcherrimos, quo tempore erant torcularia; et ideo dicitur *pro torcularibus*, hoc ad litteram.

Sed specialiter torcular est ecclesia: *Isa. 5. Plantavit vineam electam, torcular extruxit in ea: Matth. 21. Plantavit vineam, et fondit in ea torcular.*

Dicit ergo *pro torcularibus*, idest ecclesiis orbis: et dicitur ecclesia torcular, quia sicut in torculari seperatur vinum a vinatiis, sic in ecclesia boni seperantur a malis opere ministrorum: etsi non loco semper, affectu tamen. Eadem ratione dicitur et area: quia separatio fit grani a paleis.

Item a verbis literaliter positus seperantur sensus spiritualis.

Item torcularia sunt martyria, in quibus fit separatio animarum a corporibus, dum corpora eorum qui pro Christi nomine afflictione et persecutione calcantur, quassatim remanent in terra, animae vero ad requiem in caelestibus emanant.

Psalma ista dividitur in duas partes. Primo enim Psalmista admiratur divinam excellentiam. Secundo eius clementiam, ibi, *Quid est homo*. Circa primum duo facit. Primo ostendit maiestatem Dei esse admirabilem. Secundo esse manifestam, ibi, *Ex ore infantium*. Circa primum duo facit: quia primo ponit eum mirabilem. Secundo rationem dicti manifestat, ibi, *Quoniam elevata* etc.

Dicit ergo *Domine omnium: Hester 13. Dominus omnium tu es*; sed specialiter *Dominus noster*, qui te colimus, tibi adhaeremus. Hieronymus habet, *Dominatur noster: Iudic. 8. Non dominabor vestri, nec filius meus, sed dominabitur super vos Dominus. Quam admirabile est nomen tuum* etc. scilicet divinitatis: *Psal. 92.*

commemorate the divine bounty, because God led the sons of Israel out of Egypt in booths, and led them into the land of promise where there were fruits to enjoy: and for this reason it was fitting that they possessed the finest fruits to enjoy, during the time that they were in the booths; and, therefore, he said *for the presses*, this meant literally.

But, in particular, the press is the Church; *Isaiah 5: And he fenced it in, and picked the stones out of it, and planted it with the choicest vines, and built a tower in the midst thereof, and set up a winepress therein; Matthew 21: There was a man an householder, who planted a vineyard...and dug in it a press.*

He says therefore *for the presses*, that is, the circle of the church: and he calls the church a press, because, just as in a press the wine is separated from the lees, so in the church the good are separated from the evil by the work of the ministers: and if not in place, at least by their state of mind. For the same reason it is called also a threshing-floor: for the separation is made of the grain from the chaff.

Likewise, the spiritual sense is separated from the words which have been set down literally.

Likewise, the presses are the martyrdoms, in which the separation of the souls from the bodies is made, for when their bodies, which are tread upon in affliction and persecution for the name of Christ, at the same time remain in the earth, their souls arise to rest in the heavens.

This Psalm is divided into two parts. In the first, the Psalmist marvels at the divine excellence. In the second, at His primacy, whence, *What is man*. Regarding the first, he does two things. First, he shows that the majesty of God is marvelous. Second, that it is manifested, whence, *Out of the mouths of infants*. Regarding the first, he does two things: for, first, he writes of its marvels. Second, he displays the reason for saying this, whence, *How elevated* etc.

He says therefore *Lord of all: Esther 13: Thou art Lord of all*; but in particular *our Lord*, who we worship, we cleave to Thee. Jerome has, *our Ruler: Judges 8: I will not rule over you neither shall my son rule over you, but the Lord shall rule over you. How admirable is your name* etc. Namely that of the divinity: *Psalms 92: Wonderful are the surges of the sea* etc. *Genesis 32: Why dost thou ask my name [which is mighty]?*

Ut ostendat ergo quod haec subtiliora sunt aliis, dicit *Opera digitorum* etc. Lunam vero nominat, et non solem, propter Gentiles, qui credebant eum summum Deum: et ideo ponit specialiter, *Lunam et stellas*, in quibus non est manifesta ratio erroris: *Eccl. 43. Species caeli gloria stellarum, mundum illuminans in excelsis Dominus.*

Mytice apostolos vel Scripturas *opera digitorum*. Tres digiti tres personae; quasi dicat, Opera totius trinitatis vel Spiritus sancti. *Lunam*, ecclesia: *stellas*, doctores. Et haec Deus fundavit. *Quid.*

d. Supra Psalmista admiratus est divinae maiestatis excellentiam; et nunc commemorat duo beneficia divinitus collata hominibus. Secundo ex hoc psalmum terminat in laudem, ibi, *Domine Dominus noster* etc. Circa primum tria facit. Primo ostendit clementiam Dei ad homines, per comparisonem ad ea quae sunt supra homines. Secundo per comparisonem ad primum hominem, ibi, *Gloria et honore*. Tertio per comparisonem eorum, quae sunt sub homine, *Et constituisti*. Supra hominem duplex est natura, divina scilicet, et angelica. Primo ergo ponit beneficia per comparisonem ad Deum. Secundo per comparisonem ad angelos, ibi, *Minuisti*. Primo exponatur secundum quod competit quantum ad beneficia naturalia. Secundo quantum ad gratuita. Et secundum primum modum et circa eum duo facit. Primo ponit specialem curam hominis a Deo. Secundo familiaritatem specialem, *Aut filius hominis*.

Mirabile est quod quis magnus alicui parvo speciali familiaritate coniungitur: et ideo primo Psalmista commemorat parvitatem hominis ex conditione *quid est homo*, tam parva res: *Iob. 14. Homo natus de muliere: et 25. Homo putredo, et filius hominis vermis*. Secundo quantum ad originem: quia etiam vilis: *Iob. 24. Quis potest facere mundum de immundo conceptum semine?* Et *10. Nonne sicut lac* etc. Et ideo dicit, *Aut filius hominis*.

Sed isti sic parvo, sic vili, dicit quod duo facit: scilicet quod memoratus est eius, et

subtle works. In order that it be shown that these are more subtle works than others, he says *Thy fingers* etc. For he names the moon, and not the sun, for the sake of the Gentiles who believed that the sun was the highest God. And therefore the Psalmist writes in particular, *The moon and stars*, in which there is no proportion of error manifest. *Sirach 43: The glory of the stars is the beauty of heaven; the Lord enlighteneth the world on high.*

In a mystical sense, the Apostles and Scriptures are *Works of thy fingers*. Three fingers, three persons; as if to say, "the works of the entire Trinity or the Holy Spirit". *The moon*, the church: *Stars*, the doctors. And God has established this.

The excellence of the divine majesty is what is admired as above the Psalmist; and now he commemorates two benefits of the divinity conferred on humans. Following from this he ends the Psalm in praise, whence, *O Lord our Lord* etc. Regarding the first, he does three things. First, he shows the mercy of God towards humans, by comparison to those things which are above humans. Second, by comparison to the first human, whence, *With glory and honor*. Third, by comparison with those things which are below humans, *And thou hast set him*. The nature above humans is twofold, namely, the divine and the angelic. First, therefore he writes of the benefits by comparison to God. Second, by comparison to the angels, whence, *Thou hast made him a little less*. First, he explains this according to what is compatible to natural benefits. Second, what to those of grace. And in accordance with the first way and referring to it, he does two things. First, he writes of a special care for humans by God. Second, a special familiarity, *Or the son of man*.

It is marvelous that anyone so great would tie Himself to someone small by a special familiarity: and thereby the Psalmist first commemorates the littleness of man out of the condition *what is man*, since he is such a small thing: *Job 14: Man, born of a woman: and 25: Man that is rottenness and the son of man who is a worm*. Second, in as much as his origin: since it is vile: *Job 14: Who can make him clean that is conceived of unclean seed?* And *10: Hast thou not milked me like milk* etc. And therefore he says, *And the son of man*.

But, to this so little, so vile man, he says that He does two things: namely, that He is mindful of him, and that

quae non subiicuntur secundum totum genus: et horum quaedam sunt gressibilia: et quantum ad hoc dicit, *Insuper et pecora campi* etc. scilicet apri, cervi, et huiusmodi: quaedam volatilia, scilicet aves: et quaedam natatilia sicut pisces.

Possunt ad hoc ad beneficia gratiae referri: et tunc in his omnia mysteria Christi numerantur. Primo incarnationis, *Quid est homo?* Duo tangit, scilicet causam incarnationis, et ipsam incarnationem: et dicit, *Quid est homo?* Videbatur enim Deus oblitus hominis, quando expulit eum de paradiso: huiusmodi recordatur quando reducitur illud *Psalm. 79. Memento nostri Domine*. Et sic sequitur incarnatio: quia visitat, et ideo dicit, *Aut filius hominis* etc. Quia licet totum genus humanum visitaverit, specialiter tamen illum hominem assumptem in unitate hypostasis: *Hebr. 1. Nusquam angelos apprehendit, sed semen Abrahae*. Secundum est passionis. *Minuisti propter passionem, Heb. 2. Eum autem qui modico quam angeli minoratus est* etc. In hebraeo habetur, *Et minues eum parvum a Deo*, quia coniunctus est Deo in unitate personae; sed minutus propter passibilitatem assumptam. Tertium est beneficium resurrectionis in honore exhibito Apostolis, qui numeratur per passionem: *Phil. 1. In nomine Iesu omne genuflectatur* etc. *Io. 5. Ut omnes honorificent Filium, sicut honorificant Patrem*. Quartum mysterium est accensionis, *Constituisti eum super* etc. *Eph. 1. Constituens eum ad dexteram suam, supra omnem principatum et potestatem* etc. Quintum mysterium est adventus ad iudicium, *Omnia subiecisti* etc. idest constituisti eum iudicem super omnia: *Hebr. 2. Nunc autem necdum videmus omnia subiecta ei: tunc omnia subiicientur sub pedibus eius*, idest humanitate eius, quia caput Christi Deus, *2. Cor. 11*. Et sunt pedes humanitas, *Io. 5. Potestatem dedit ei iudicium facere*.

Et hi in iudicio quidam boni: et horum quidam subditi sunt signati per oves: *2. Reg. ult. Isti qui sunt oves quid fecerunt?*

this in the feminine gender, *All* [feminine in the Latin], because herds are made primarily of cows and ewes. There are others which have not been subordinated following from their entire genus: and certain of these can be graded: and in as much as he says, *moreover all the beasts of the fields* etc. Namely, boars, deer, and things of this like: certain flying things, namely birds; and certain swimming things, namely fish.

And these things can be referred to the benefit of grace: and afterwards, among all of these, the mysteries of Christ are numbered. First, of the incarnation, *What is man?* He touches on two points, namely the cause of the incarnation, and that very incarnation: and he says, *What is man?* For, God appears to have forgotten man when he expelled him from paradise: It is recorded in a like manner when that forgetting is revoked *Psalm 79: O Lord of Hosts restore us*. And so followed the incarnation: because he cared, and therefore it says, *or the son of man*. Because it was fitting that he should care for the entire human race, but in particular for that man taken into the unity of the hypostasis: *Heb. 2: For nowhere doth he take hold of the angels: but of the seed of Abraham he taketh hold*. Second is the Passion. *Thou hast made him a little less* on the account of the Passion, *Heb. 2: Who was made a little lower than the angels*, etc. In the Hebrew, it has, *And You make him equal from God*, since he is conjoined with God in the unity of person; but a little less because of his capacity for taking on suffering. Third is the benefit of the Resurrection in glory made manifest through the Apostles, which is reckoned through suffering; *Philippians 2: That in the name of Jesus every knee should bow* etc. *John 5: That all men may honour the Son, as they honour the Father*. The fourth mystery is the Ascension, *Hast set him over* etc. *Ephesians 1: And setting him on his right hand in the heavenly places. Above all principality, and power*, etc. The fifth mystery is the coming to judgement, *Thou hast subjugated all things* etc., that is, you have set him to judge over all things: *Hebrews 2: Thou hast subjected all things under his feet...But now we see not as yet all things subject to him*, that is, his humanity, because the head of Christ is God, *2 Corinthians 11*. And the feet are humanity; *John 5. But hath given all judgement to the Son*.

And some good people are in this judgement too: and some of these placed under judgement have been signified by *sheep*: *2 Kings 24: These that are the*

The prophet David wrote this psalm, and the title testifies that David is its author: "A Psalm of David." The title contains the words: "to be sung upon נְבִלָה ." The word נְבִלָה also appears in Psalm 81 and Psalm 84. Since the Aramaic text always uses the word *cinnora* for it, I believe that the נְבִלָה was a stringed instrument, a harp or violin.¹ In David's time music was not as artistic as it is nowadays. An instrument like the lyre with ten strings was just about the highest and most glorious and most artistic they had, while ordinary instruments had three or four strings. Now music has grown enormously, and we have many instruments that are more artistic; but in David's time there were only lyres, harps, violins, pipes, cymbals, and so forth.

The statement in the title, "to be sung upon נְבִלָה " should be taken to mean that a priest or a Levite sang this psalm, and another one played the harp or violin. David had ordained four thousand singers to praise the Lord and divided these into four groups, to worship, thank, and praise God on all sorts of stringed instruments before the Ark of the Covenant. Therefore there must have been constant singing and ringing all year, with cymbals, lyres, and harps, as we can see from 1 Chronicles 25:1 ff. David himself wrote the songs they had to use for worshiping and praising God in His works. Hence this book is called סֵפֶר תְּהִלִּים ,² that is, a book of praise or a book of thanks. Therefore it has so many psalms of thanks, which worship and praise God for all sorts of blessings; mingled with these there are many prophecies and promises for the pious as well as warnings against the ungodly. The priests and the Levites were ordained to sing and to accompany on stringed instruments such songs of thanks written by David. So much in brief on the title.

This psalm is one of the beautiful psalms and a glorious prophecy about Christ, where David describes Christ's person and kingdom and teaches who Christ is; what kind of kingdom He has and how it is formed; where this King rules, namely, in all lands and yet in heaven; and the means by which His kingdom is founded and regulated, namely, only through the Word and faith, without sword and armor. Therefore this is the way he begins:

¹ The word signifies either an instrument, as Luther states here, or a mode of singing.

² The name of the Book of Psalms in the Hebrew Bible.

1. *O Lord, our Ruler, how glorious is Thy name in all the lands! Thou to whom thanks are given in heaven.*

He turns to the King and addresses Him, as though he wanted to say: "Before Thy coming to earth, O King, Thou art praised and thanked only in the tiny narrow corner of Judea and in Jerusalem. But after Thy coming there will be more ringing and singing, thanking and praising, not in the narrow corner of Judea alone, but in all the lands under heaven, throughout the world." By this he prophesies and proclaims at the very beginning of this psalm that through this coming King God will be praised and worshiped throughout the world.

Lord, our Ruler.

But he calls this King "Lord" and "Ruler." These are two names. In all of Holy Scripture the word "Lord" (יְהוָה) is never ascribed to anyone except to the Divine Majesty. For it is the great name of God, which in our German Bibles is written in capital letters to distinguish it from the other names. The name Lord (יְהוָה) is ascribed to no creature on earth, no, not even to an angel in heaven, but only to God. Therefore it is a special and proper name of God and means "the right, true, and eternal God."

But the word אֲדֹנָי , lord or ruler, is a common name, which Holy Scripture uses even for princes and heads of the household. It does not mean "Lord" as God is called Lord, but as men are lords and reign. Thus Sarah calls Abraham her lord: "I am old, and my lord אֲדֹנָי is also old" (Gen. 18:12). Joseph calls Potiphar, Pharaoh's chamberlain and courtier who had bought him from the Ishmaelites, his "lord" (Gen. 39:8). Joseph himself is called "lord" by the Egyptians, as he acknowledges when he says: "God has made me lord over all the land of Egypt" (Gen. 45:8). Aaron calls Moses his lord: "Let not the anger of my lord turn hot" (Ex. 32:22). The word is used this way in many other passages. Therefore the word "ruler" here does not mean the Divine Majesty in its secret, heavenly being, as the Father is and is called Lord and God, and the Son is and is called Lord and God, and the Holy Spirit is and is called Lord and God. But it means the human nature and the external rule of this King over us men.

Since, then, this King is called "Lord, our Ruler," it follows that He must be true God and true man at the same time. For if He were not true God, He could not be and be called "Lord," since God will

not give His name and glory to another. Isaiah 42:8: "I am the Lord, that is My name, My glory I give to no other, nor My praise to graven images." On the other hand, if He were not true man, He could not be our Ruler, since our Ruler must also be a man because He is to possess this rule and dominion over men. So this King is Lord, that is, God; and our Lord or Ruler, that is, man. This means He is equal to God and yet is also a man.

It follows further that this King has dominion over us men on earth, not only as the true and eternal God in and of Himself — for as such He needs neither dominion nor subjects — but also as true, natural man. In that He is Lord and God, He needs no dominion. But in that He became man, He needs the dominion; otherwise He could not have the name and be called Ruler over men. He came to earth and became man to deal with us and be our Ruler, Sovereign, and Authority, and we His dominion and subjects. He is Lord and God by His eternal and divine nature and being. He is Ruler by His human nature and by the office and kingdom in which He is our overlord and we are His subjects.

So, then, Christ is the true and eternal God with the Father and Holy Spirit in an undivided divine being, and true, natural man. He came to earth and served us; for our good He established a kingdom in which we could enjoy Him, so that He might not remain all by Himself in the Godhead, but also might become like us and be our Ruler. As Psalm 95:6, 7 says: "Oh, come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker! For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand."

But David keeps the unity of the person firm and sure. He gives Christ the King two names — a great divine name, Lord; and a small human name, Ruler. Thus he indicates the two natures in Christ, the divine and human nature; yet he speaks not of two, but of one single Lord and Ruler, to show the unity of the person, that Christ the Lord, our Ruler, is one single person. He distinguishes the natures and gives each nature a special name. Yet he does not divide the person, but keeps the person undivided. Let us follow this prophet, as by the Holy Spirit he prophesies that Christ is the Lord and the Ruler of us all and yet is not two Lords nor two Rulers nor two Messiahs nor two Kings, but one single Lord, our Ruler, one single Messiah and King.

There are three sublime doctrines that David mentions and confesses here in brief words. First, this King has two natures, that is, He is true God and man. Second, He is an undivided person; not two persons, two Kings, two Lords and Rulers; but one person, one King, one Lord and Ruler. For since he ascribes the name and glory of God to the Lord or Ruler, that is, to this man, and calls Him "Lord," that is, God; this Lord and man must be no other god or idol, but really and truly God with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Again, since he ascribes human names and attributes to this Lord, that is, God, and calls Him "Ruler," the way men are rulers and reign; this Lord and God must be true man and equal to men in everything except sin. And since he combines "Lord" and "Ruler" and says that this Lord, our Ruler, is not two but one, so that this Lord is identical with our Ruler and our Ruler identical with the Lord; this Lord, our Ruler, must be one single person. The third doctrine is that this Lord, that is, God, was to become man and receive dominion, power, and glory from the Father over all. What kind of dominion and kingdom the Father gives this man and Ruler, he will discuss later.

How glorious is Thy name in all the lands!

So far he has been describing the person and portraying this King as the true and only God and true man, a sovereign and ruler over us men. Now he slips into a discussion of His kingdom and says that this Lord, our Ruler, has a majestic name in all the lands. What sort of name this is St. Paul teaches in Philippians 2:9-11: "God has highly exalted Christ and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." And in Romans 1:4 he says that God the Father raised His Son from the dead and glorified Him through the Holy Spirit in words, signs, and wonders in all the world, that man might recognize and know that He is the Son of God, whom He has made the heir and the head over all.

In the same wonderful way David sees here that from the little corner in Jerusalem there will come a proclamation that will resound powerfully and gloriously through the whole world: that Jesus Christ, true God and man, is such a Lord and Ruler, to whom everything is subjected even according to His humanity — angels, men, sin, death,

17. *I will praise Jehovah according to his righteousness ; and I will sing to the name of Jehovah, Most High.*

As the design of God in the deliverances which he vouchsafes to his servants is, that they may render to him in return the sacrifices of praise, David here promises that he will gratefully acknowledge the deliverance which he had received, and at the same time affirms that his preservation from death was the undoubted and manifest work of God. He could not, with truth, and from the heart, have ascribed to God the praise of his deliverance, if he had not been fully persuaded that he had been preserved otherwise than by the power of man. He, therefore, not only promises to exercise the gratitude which was due to his deliverer, but he confirms in one word what he has rehearsed throughout the psalm, that he is indebted for his life to the grace of God, who had not suffered Saul to take it from him. *The righteousness of God* is here to be understood of his faithfulness, which he makes good to his servants in defending and preserving their lives. God does not shut up or conceal his righteousness from our view in the secret recesses of his own mind, but manifests it for our advantage when he defends us against all wrongful violence, delivers us from oppression, and preserves us in safety, although wicked men make war upon us and persecute us.

PSALM VIII.

David, reflecting upon God's fatherly beneficence towards mankind, is not content with simply giving thanks for it, but is enraptured by the contemplation of it.

¶ To the chief musician upon Haggith. A song of David.

1. *O Jehovah¹ our Lord, how wonderful is thy name in all the earth, to set² thy glory above the heavens!*

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WHETHER גִּתִּית, *Gittith*, signifies a musical instrument or some particular tune, or the beginning of some famous and well-known song, I do not take upon me to determine. Those who think that the psalm is so called because it was composed in the city of Gath, give a strained and far-fetched explanation of the matter. Of the other three opinions, of which I have spoken, it is not of much importance which is adopted. The principal thing to be attended to is what the psalm itself contains, and what is the design of it. David, it is true, sets before his eyes the wonderful power and glory of God in the creation and government of the material universe ; but he only slightly glances at this subject, as it were, in passing, and insists principally on the theme of God's infinite goodness towards us. There is presented to us in the whole order of nature, the most abundant matter for showing forth the glory of God, but, as we are unquestionably more powerfully affected with what we ourselves experience, David here, with great propriety, expressly celebrates the special favour which God manifests towards mankind ; for this, of all the subjects which come under our contemplation, is the brightest mirror in which we can be-

¹ This first word is the incommunicable name of God ; the next word, אֲדֹנָי, *Adonenu, our Lord*, is derived from the root נָדַן, which signifies to rule, to judge, to support.

² "Pourceque tu as mis."—*Fr.* "Because thou hast set." "Ou, qui as mis, ou que de mettre."—*Fr. Marg.* "Or, who hast set, or even to set."

hold his glory. It is, however, strange why he begins the psalm with an exclamation, when the usual way is first to give an account of a thing, and then to magnify its greatness and excellence. But if we remember what is said in other passages of Scripture, respecting the impossibility of expressing in words the works of God, we will not be surprised that David, by this exclamation, acknowledges himself unequal to the task of recounting them. David, therefore, when reflecting on the incomprehensible goodness which God has been graciously pleased to bestow on the human race, and feeling all his thoughts and senses swallowed up, and overwhelmed in the contemplation, exclaims that it is a subject worthy of admiration, because it cannot be set forth in words.¹ Besides, the Holy Spirit, who directed David's tongue, doubtless intended, by his instrumentality, to awaken men from the torpor and indifference which is common to them, so that they may not content themselves with celebrating the infinite love of God and the innumerable benefits which they receive at his hand, in their sparing and frigid manner, but may rather apply their whole hearts to this holy exercise, and put forth in it their highest efforts. This exclamation of David implies, that when all the faculties of the human mind are exerted to the utmost in meditation on this subject,² they yet come far short of it.

The *name* of God, as I explain it, is here to be understood of the knowledge of the character and perfections of God, in so far as he makes himself known to us. I do not approve of the subtle speculations of those who think the name of God means nothing else but God himself. It ought rather to be referred to the works and properties by which he is known, than to his essence. David, therefore, says that the earth is full of the wonderful glory of God, so that the fame or renown thereof not only reaches to the heavens, but ascends far above them. The verb *תנה*, *tenah*, has been rendered by some in the preterite tense, *hast set*, but in my judgment, those give a more accurate translation who render

¹ "Puis que langue ne bouche ne la scauroit exprimer."—*Fr.* "Because neither tongue nor mouth can express it."

² "A louer les graces de Dieu."—*Fr.* "In praising the grace of God."

it in the infinitive mood, *to place* or *to set*; because the second clause is just an amplification of the subject of the first; as if he had said, the earth is too small to contain the glory or the wonderful manifestations of the character and perfections of God. According to this view, *אשר*, *asher*, will not be a relative, but will have the meaning of the expletive or exegetic particle *even*, which we use to explain what has preceded.¹

2. *Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast founded thy strength because of the adversaries, that thou mightest put to flight the enemy and avenger.*

He now enters upon the proof of the subject which he had undertaken to discourse upon,² declaring, that the providence of God, in order to make itself known to mankind, does not wait till men arrive at the age of maturity, but even from the very dawn of infancy shines forth so brightly as is sufficient to confute all the ungodly, who, through their profane contempt of God, would wish to extinguish his very name.³

The opinion of some, who think that *מפי*, *mephi*, *out of the mouth*, signifies *מפי*, *kephi*, *in the mouth*, cannot be admitted, because it improperly weakens the emphasis which David meant to give to his language and discourse. The meaning, therefore, is, that God, in order to commend his providence, has no need of the powerful eloquence of rhetoricians,⁴ nor even of distinct and formed language, because the

¹ "Mais vaudra autant comme Que, dont on use pour declarer ce qui a precedé."—*Fr.*

² The doctrine proposed to be illustrated in this psalm is the excellence of God's name, or his power, goodness, and other perfections, as manifested in his providence and government of the world; and this the Psalmist states in the first verse. He then proceeds to establish and illustrate this doctrine: 1. From the case of infants; 2. From the starry heavens; and, 3. From God's being mindful of man, and visiting him, notwithstanding his unworthiness, sinfulness, and misery.

³ "Qui voudroyent que son nom fust totalement aboli de la memoire des hommes."—*Fr.* "Who would wish that his name were totally extinguished from the memory of men."

⁴ "Que Dieu pour magnifier et exalter sa providence n'ha pas besoin de la rhetorique et eloquence de grans orateurs."—*Fr.* "That God, in order to magnify and exalt his providence, has no need of the rhetoric and eloquence of great orators."

tongues of infants, although they do not as yet speak, are ready and eloquent enough to celebrate it. But it may be asked, In what sense does he speak of children as the proclaimers of the glory of God? In my judgment, those reason very foolishly who think that this is done when children begin to articulate, because then also the intellectual faculty of the soul shows itself. Granting that they are called babes, or infants, even until they arrive at their seventh year, how can such persons imagine that those who now speak distinctly are still hanging on the breast? Nor is there any more propriety in the opinion of those who say, that the words *for babes and sucklings* are here put allegorically for the faithful, who, being born again by the Spirit of God, no longer retain the old age of the flesh. What need, then, is there to wrest the words of David, when their true meaning is so clear and suitable? He says that babes and sucklings are advocates sufficiently powerful to vindicate the providence of God. Why does he not entrust this business to men, but to show that the tongues of infants, even before they are able to pronounce a single word, speak loudly and distinctly in commendation of God's liberality towards the human race? Whence is it that nourishment is ready for them as soon as they are born, but because God wonderfully changes blood into milk? Whence, also, have they the skill to suck, but because the same God has, by a mysterious instinct, fitted their tongues for doing this? David, therefore, has the best reason for declaring, that although the tongues of all, who have arrived at the age of manhood, should become silent, the speechless mouth of infants is sufficiently able to celebrate the praise of God. And when he not only introduces babes as witnesses and preachers of God's glory, but also attributes *mature strength* to their mouth, the expression is very emphatic. It means the same thing as if he had said, These are invincible champions of God who, when it comes to the conflict, can easily scatter and discomfit the whole host of the wicked despisers of God, and those who have abandoned themselves to impiety.¹

¹ "Et desconfire toute l'armee des meschans contempteurs de Dieu, et gens adonnez à impiete."—*Fr.*

We should observe against whom he imposes upon infants the office of defending the glory of God, namely, against the hardened despisers of God, who dare to rise up against heaven to make war upon God, as the poets have said, in olden time, of the giants.¹

Since, therefore, these monsters,² with furious violence, pluck up by the roots, and overthrow whatever godliness and the fear of God³ there is in the world, and through their hardihood endeavour to do violence to heaven itself, David in mockery of them brings into the field of battle against them the mouths of infants, which he says are furnished with armour of sufficient strength, and endued with sufficient fortitude, to lay their intolerable pride⁴ in the dust. He, therefore, immediately subjoins, *On account of the adversaries*. God is not under the necessity of making war with great power to overcome the faithful, who willingly hearken to his voice, and manifest a ready obedience, as soon as he gives the smallest intimation of his will. The providence of God, I confess, shines forth principally for the sake of the faithful, because they only have eyes to behold it. But as they show themselves willing to receive instruction, God teaches them with gentleness; while, on the other hand, he arms himself against his enemies, who never submit themselves to him but by constraint. Some take the word *founded* as meaning, that, in the very birth or generation of man, God lays foundations for manifesting his own glory. But this sense is too restricted. I have no doubt that the word is put for *to establish*, as if the prophet had said, God needs not strong military forces to destroy the ungodly; instead of these, the mouths of children are sufficient for his purpose.⁵

To put to flight. Interpreters differ with respect to the

¹ "Comme les poètes ont dit anciennement des geans."—*Fr.*

² "Cyclopes."—*Latin version*. "Ces monstres."—*French version*.

³ "Et crainte de Dieu."—*Fr.*

⁴ "Leur orgueil intolerable."—*Fr.*

⁵ "Comme si le prophete eust dit que Dieu se sert des bouches des petis enfans, comme d'une puissante armee et bien duite à la guerre et qu'elles luy suffisent pour destruire et exterminer les meschans."—*Fr.*
"As if the prophet had said, God makes use of the mouths of little children as of a powerful and well-fitted army, and these suffice him to destroy and exterminate the wicked."

word *השנית*, *hashbith*. It properly signifies, *to cause to cease*; for it is in the conjugation *Hiphil* of the neuter verb *שבת*, *shabath*, which signifies *to cease*. But it is often taken metaphorically for *to destroy*, or *to reduce to nothing*, because destruction or death brings to an end. Others translate it, *that thou mayest restrain*, as if David meant that they were put to silence, so that they desisted from cursing or reviling God. As, however, there is here a beautiful allusion to a hostile combat, as I have a little before explained, I have preferred the military phrase, *to put to flight*. But it is asked, How does God put to flight his enemies, who, by their impious slanders and detractions, do not cease to strike at, and violently to rush forward to oppose all the proofs of a Divine Providence which daily manifest themselves? ¹ I answer, They are not routed or overthrown in respect of their being compelled to become more humble and unassuming; but because, with all their blasphemies and canine barkings, they continue in the state of abasement and confusion to which they have been brought. To express the whole in a few words: so early as the generation or birth of man the splendour of Divine Providence is so apparent, that even infants, who hang upon their mothers' breasts, can bring down to the ground the fury of the enemies of God. Although his enemies may do their utmost, and may even burst with rage a hundred times, it is in vain for them to endeavour to overthrow the strength which manifests itself in the weakness of infancy. A desire of revenge reigns in all unbelievers, while, on the other hand, God governs his own children by the spirit of meekness and benignity: ² but, according to the scope of the present passage, the prophet applies this epithet, *the avenger*, to the despisers of God, who are not only cruel towards man, but who also burn with frantic rage to make war even against God himself.

I have now discharged the duty of a faithful interpreter in opening up the mind of the prophet. There is only one

¹ "Lesquels par leurs mesdisances et detractions plenes de sacrilege ne cessent de heurter et choquer impetueusement encontre tout ce en quoy la providence de Dieu se manifeste journellement."—*Fr.*

² "De douceur et benigne."—*Fr.*

difficulty remaining, which is this, that Christ (Matth. xxi. 16) seems to put upon this passage a different meaning, when he applies it to children ten years old. But this difficulty is easily removed. Christ reasons from the greater to the less in this manner: If God has appointed children even in infancy the vindicators of his glory, there is no absurdity in his making them the instruments of showing forth his praise by their tongues after they have arrived at the age of seven years and upwards.

3. *When I see thy heavens, the works of thy fingers; the moon and the stars which thou hast arranged:*
4. *What is man,¹ that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?²*

As the Hebrew particle *כי*, *ki*, has often the same meaning as *because* or *for*, and simply affirms a thing, both the Greek and the Latin fathers have generally read the fourth verse as if it were a complete sentence by itself. But it is, doubtless, closely connected with the following verse; and, therefore, the two verses ought to be joined together. The Hebrew word *כי*, *ki*, might be very properly translated into the disjunctive particle, *although*, making the meaning to be this: Although the infinite majesty of God shines forth in the heavenly bodies, and justly keeps the eyes of men fixed on the contemplation of it, yet his glory is beheld in a special manner, in the great favour which he bears to men, and in the goodness which he manifests towards them. This interpretation would not be at variance with the scope of the passage; but I choose rather to follow the generally received opinion. My readers, however, must be careful to mark the design of the Psalmist, which is to enhance, by this comparison, the infinite goodness of God; for it is, indeed, a wonderful thing that the Creator of heaven, whose glory is so surpassingly great as to ravish us with the highest admiration, condescends so far as graciously to take upon him the

¹ "Alors je pense, Qu'est-ce de l'homme?"—*Fr.* "Then I think, what is man?"

² "Ou, as souvenance de luy?"—*Fr. marg.* "Or, art mindful of him?"

5. For¹ thou hast made him little lower than God,² and hast crowned him with glory and honour.
 6. Thou hast set him over the works of thy hands : Thou hast put all things under his feet.

5. *Thou hast made him little lower.* The Hebrew copulative **וְ**, *ki*, I have no doubt, ought to be translated into the causal particle *for*, seeing the Psalmist confirms what he has just now said concerning the infinite goodness of God towards men, in showing himself near to them, and mindful of them. In the first place, he represents them as adorned with so many honours as to render their condition not far inferior to divine and celestial glory. In the second place, he mentions the external dominion and power which they possess over all creatures, from which it appears how high the degree of dignity is to which God hath exalted them. I have, indeed, no doubt but he intends, by the first,³ the distinguished endowments which clearly manifest that men were formed after the image of God, and created to the hope of a blessed and immortal life. The reason with which they are endued, and by which they can distinguish between good and evil; the principle of religion which is planted in them; their intercourse with each other, which is preserved from being broken up by certain sacred bonds; the regard to what is becoming, and the sense of shame which guilt awakens in them, as well as their continuing to be governed by laws; all these things are clear indications of pre-eminent and celestial wisdom. David, therefore, not without good reason, exclaims that mankind are adorned with glory and honour. *To be crowned*, is here taken metaphorically, as if David had said, he is clothed and adorned with marks of honour, which are not far removed from the splendour of the divine majesty. The Septuagint render **אלהים**, *Elohim*, by *angels*, of which I do not disapprove, since this name, as is well known, is often given to angels, and I explain the words of David as meaning the same thing as if he had said, that the condition

¹ "Ou, Et tu fas."—*Fr. marg.* "Or, And thou hast."

² "Ou, les anges."—*Fr. marg.* "Or, the angels."

³ "Qu'il n'entende par la premier."—*Fr.*

of men is nothing less than a divine and celestial state. But as the other translation seems more natural, and as it is almost universally adopted by the Jewish interpreters, I have preferred following it. Nor is it any sufficient objection to this view, that the apostle, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, (chap. ii. 7,) quoting this passage, says, *little less than the angels*, and not *than God*;¹ for we know what freedoms the apostles took in quoting texts of Scripture; not, indeed, to wrest them to a meaning different from the true one, but because they reckoned it sufficient to show, by a reference to Scripture, that what they taught was sanctioned by the word of God, although they did not quote the precise words. Accordingly, they never had any hesitation in changing the words, provided the substance of the text remained unchanged.

There is another question which it is more difficult to solve. While the Psalmist here discourses concerning the excellency of men, and describes them, in respect of this, as coming near to God, the apostle applies the passage to the humiliation of Christ. In the first place, we must consider the propriety of applying to the person of Christ what is here spoken concerning all mankind; and, secondly, how we may explain it as referring to Christ's being humbled in his death, when he lay without form or beauty, and as it were disfigured under the reproach and curse of the cross. What some say, that what is true of the members may be properly and suitably transferred to the head, might be a sufficient answer to the

¹ Certainly the fact that Paul uses the word *angels* instead of *God*, does not prove the inaccuracy of Calvin's rendering. As the Septuagint version was in general use among the Jews in the time of Paul, he very naturally quotes from it just as we do from our English version. And this was sufficient for his purpose. His object was, to answer an objection which the Jews brought against the Christian dispensation, as being inferior to the Mosaic, inasmuch as angels were mediators of the latter, while the mediator or head of the former was in their estimation but a man. This objection he answers from their own Scriptures, and quotes this psalm to show, that Christ, in his human nature, was little inferior to the angels, and that he is exalted far above them in respect of the glory and dominion with which he is crowned. If the apostle had quoted from the Hebrew Scriptures, and used **אלהים**, *Elohim*, God, meaning the Most High, his argument in support of the dignity of Christ in human nature would have been still stronger.—See *Stuart's Commentary on the Hebrews*, vol. ii. pp. 68-71.

first question; but I go a step farther, for Christ is not only the first begotten of every creature, but also the restorer of mankind. What David here relates belongs properly to the beginning of the creation, when man's nature was perfect.¹ But we know that, by the fall of Adam, all mankind fell from their primeval state of integrity, for by this the image of God was almost entirely effaced from us, and we were also divested of those distinguishing gifts by which we would have been, as it were, elevated to the condition of demigods; in short, from a state of the highest excellence, we were reduced to a condition of wretched and shameful destitution. In consequence of this corruption, the liberality of God, of which David here speaks, ceased, so far, at least, as that it does not at all appear in the brilliancy and splendour in which it was manifested when man was in his unfallen state. True, it is not altogether extinguished; but, alas! how small a portion of it remains amidst the miserable overthrow and ruins of the fall. But as the heavenly Father hath bestowed upon his Son an immeasurable fulness of all blessings, that all of us may draw from this fountain, it follows that whatever God bestows upon us by him belongs of right to him in the highest degree; yea, he himself is the living image of God, according to which we must be renewed, upon which depends our participation of the invaluable blessings which are here spoken of. If any person object that David first put the question, What is man? because God has so abundantly poured forth his favour upon a creature so miserable, contemptible, and worthless; but that there is no cause for such admiration of God's favour for Christ, who is not an ordinary man, but the only begotten Son of God. The answer is easy, and it is this: What was bestowed upon Christ's human nature was a free gift; nay, more, the fact that a mortal man, and the son of Adam, is the only Son of God, and the Lord of glory, and the head of angels, affords a bright illustration of the mercy of God. At the same time, it is to be observed, that whatever gifts he has received

¹ "Lorsque la nature de l'humain n'estoit point encore corrompue."—*Fr.* "When the nature of man was not yet corrupted."

ought to be considered as proceeding from the free grace of God, so much the more for this reason, that they are intended principally to be conferred upon us. His excellence and heavenly dignity, therefore, are extended to us also, seeing it is for our sake he is enriched with them.

What the apostle therefore says in that passage concerning the abasement of Christ for a short time, is not intended by him as an explanation of this text; but for the purpose of enriching and illustrating the subject on which he is discoursing, he introduces and accommodates to it what had been spoken in a different sense. The same apostle did not hesitate, in Rom. x. 6, in the same manner to enrich and to employ, in a sense different from their original one, the words of Moses in Deut. xxx. 12: "Who shall go up for us to heaven and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?" &c. The apostle, therefore, in quoting this psalm, had not so much an eye to what David meant; but making an allusion to these words, *Thou hast made him a little lower*; and again, *Thou hast crowned him with honour*, he applies this diminution to the death of Christ, and the glory and honour to his resurrection.¹ A similar account may be given of Paul's declaration in Eph. iv. 8, in which he does not so much explain the meaning of the text, (Ps. lxxviii. 18,) as he devoutly applies it, by way of accommodation, to the person of Christ.

6. *Thou hast set him over.* David now comes to the second point, which I have just now spoken of, namely, that from the dominion over all things which God has conferred upon men, it is evident how great is the love which he has borne towards them, and how much account he has made of them. As he does not stand in need of any thing himself, he has destined all the riches, both of heaven and earth, for their use. It is certainly a singular honour, and one which cannot be sufficiently estimated, that mortal man, as the representative of God, has dominion over the world, as if it pertained

¹ "Tu l'as fait un peu moindre; puis Tu l'as couronné d'honneur, il approprie ceste diminution à la mort de Christ, et la gloire et honneur à la resurrection."—*Fr.*