

THE VINDICTIVE PSALMS VINDICATED.

PART III.

IN the preceding number of *THE EXPOSITOR* I undertook to prove, as a step towards the vindication of the Vindictive Psalms, that it was lawful and commendable in the children of the first covenant to pray for the temporal punishment of the wicked. The proof of this proposition was necessarily left incomplete, but, so far as it went, it assumed the following shape:—

1. The first Dispensation contained no clear revelation of a future state, and no revelation at all of a future state of rewards and punishments. But,

2. It established an elaborate system of temporal rewards and punishments; its theodicy dealing with men precisely as if there were no hereafter. And,

3. It provided a varied and extensive machinery for the exaction of these temporal punishments, so that its children were led to expect that, in one way or other, "every transgression and disobedience" would receive "its just recompense of reward," here, now, and at once.

But it now becomes necessary for us to observe—for at this point we take up the argument—that this system of temporal rewards and punishments was not always, and often seemed not to be when it really was, fully and equitably administered. The Israelites, and especially those who, like the Psalmists, lived under the monarchy, did not by any means find in practice what the theory of their religion taught them to expect—viz., conspicuous and even-handed justice. Of this we have abundant indica-

tions in the Old Testament. It is the mystery with which the Book of Job is occupied and which that Book leaves unsolved. It is one of the problems which perplex the writer of the Book of Ecclesiastes. Jeremiah ventures to reason with God on the subject: "Wherefore doth the wicked prosper?" he asks; "wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?" (Jerem. xii. 1.) The Jews of Ezekiel's time complain, though unjustly, that the ways of the Lord are not equal. (Ezek. xviii. 25, 29.) The Psalms teem with references to the apparent indifference of God to right and wrong, and the consequent presumption and daring of the wicked.¹ The sacred writers picture these latter as "in great power and spreading themselves like a green bay tree" (Psa. xxxvii. 35), as prospering in the world and increasing in riches (Psa. lxxiii. 12), and as plotting against the just and gnashing upon him with their teeth (Psa. xxxvii. 12). The Heathen are described as eating up God's people as they eat bread (Psa. liii. 4), as blaspheming Him daily (Psa. lxxiv. 10, 18, 22), and as shedding "the blood of his saints like water" (Psa. lxxix. 3), while the people of the Most High are represented as "cast off and put to shame" (Psa. xlv. 9), as made "a byword among the heathen" (verse 14), as fed "with the bread of tears" (Psa. lxxx. 5), as plagued all the day long and chastened every morning (Psa. lxxiii. 14). It is clear, then, that to the

¹ The silence of God is the subject of astonishment and complaint, in a large number of Psalms. Such are x. xiii. xxii. xxviii. lix. lxx. cix. ; while a still larger number describe the audacity and seeming impunity of the wicked. Among these are Psalms vii. x. xii. xvii. xxii. xxxv. liii. lxxiv. cxi.

vision of the Jew, the justice of God, as administered in daily life, was marked by delays and failures and inequalities.

Nor is it any impeachment of that inflexible justice to admit that it was marked by *real* inequalities; to allow that, after establishing a system of temporal recompenses, God did not always insure their full and equitable distribution. For we must remember that then, as now, there *was* a judgment to come, a day for impartial and universal retribution, appointed in the counsels of God, though the Jew did not know of it, and that it was, no doubt, part of the Divine plan then, as it is now, that the inequalities which are inevitable in the world, except under a system which should be destructive either of faith or of free will, should be tolerated for a time, and find their remedy and adjustment hereafter. *We* can see, what the Jew could not, that the justice of God was not compromised even when the wicked blasphemed God with impunity, and when his saints were persecuted and oppressed. These things might be, even under the Mosaic law, and yet every man after all receive his just and perfect recompense.

I have spoken of these inequalities as inevitable even under the theocracy. That such was the case will be clear if we remember what has been stated before,¹ that the carrying out of the Mosaic Code, and especially the distribution of its punishments, depended for the most part on the officers of the Hebrew Commonwealth, the kings, judges, and magistrates, to whom this duty had been delegated

¹ THE EXPOSITOR, vol. iii. p. 116.

by God.¹ When we consider what these officers too frequently were like, it will cause us no surprise to find that, so far from vice and irreligion being visited and punished, the wicked often “walked on every side” and the “vilest men were exalted.” With such men as Saul, Ahab, and Manasseh for God’s “ministers and avengers to execute wrath,” what wonder if the scheme of temporal retributions was but unequally and corruptly administered?

But from whatever causes they arose—and they arose from more causes than one—it is undeniable that there were occasionally conspicuous and flagrant inequalities, and it is clear, too, that the Jews suspected them where they did not really exist (Ezek. xviii. 4). Let us now, therefore, consider what effect such inequalities would have, and had as a matter of fact, on the minds of devout Jews, on the minds, for example, of the Psalmists. It is obvious that every failure, or apparent failure of justice, every instance of apparent non-retribution, would cause them the greatest perplexity and distress. Suckled as they had been in the belief that “the Lord is a God of recompenses,” and that if men are to receive any recompense at all for their good and evil deeds, they must receive it during this present life; confirmed, too, as they had been in the expectation of seeing such recompense meted out to men before their very eyes, the prosperity of the wicked and the

¹ It is very noticeable that such officers are called “gods,” אֱלֹהִים (Exod. xxi. 6; Psa. xlv. 6; lxxxii. 6, &c.), as being invested with his authority and as acting in his name. It would seem from the passage last cited (“I have said ye are gods,” &c.), taken in connection with St. John x. 35, as if this name were given them by God himself. We know He gave this title to Moses (Exod. vii. 1), as being his representative.

impunity of the wrong-doer would occasion them, as we know it did, the keenest doubts and questionings and mental agonies. "Why does the Judge of all the earth permit it? Why does He suffer men to set Him at defiance? Why does He not stop them in their career of crime? Why not awake and vindicate his outraged honour?" Such were the questions they anxiously asked themselves.¹ And not without good reason, for, according to their theodicy, nothing could be more prejudicial to religion, nothing more fatal to morality, than the escape of the guilty. If sin was to go unpunished, where was justice? where was holiness? where was the faithfulness of God to his word? where, in short, was the sin-hating and sin-avenging Deity? They conceived it their duty, therefore, in the interests of morality and piety, to cry to God for vengeance, to call upon him to "awake," to "disappoint" the evil-doers, to "cast them down," to "give them after the work of their hands" (Psa. xxviii. 4). It seemed to them to be a simple dictate of piety to pray God for the confusion and excision of wicked men. Nor was it possible for them to think otherwise. Professing such a creed as they professed, animated by such convictions as they had drawn in with every breath they drew, to pray for the repression, confusion, and, if need be, the destruction² of the wicked, was for the Jew an imperative religious duty. It was this for the following reasons:—

First. Because such Divine interpositions were necessary in order to vindicate the character of God.

¹ See, *e.g.*, Psalms x. 12; xii. i.; xliv. 23; lxxiv. 22; xciv. 3.

² See pp. 190–199.

The silence, the seeming non-interference, of Jehovah was very liable to be misconstrued. It might minister to Atheism. Men might ask, nay, they did ask, whether there was a moral governor of the world at all. Fools said in their hearts, "There is no God" (Psalms xiv. 1; liii. 1; x. 4 *Heb.*), or else sneeringly demanded, "How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the Most High?" (Psa lxxiii. 11.) Or if it did not lead to blank Atheism, it favoured impious views of the Godhead. Men thought He "was altogether such a one as" themselves (Psa. l. 21). Sometimes the wicked "said in his heart, God hath forgotten" (Psa. x. 11), thus virtually denying his omniscience; sometimes he would contemptuously ask, "Who doth hear?" (Psa. lix. 7), thus practically disputing his omnipresence. And, worst of all, those who retained a belief in God, even they concluded that He was indifferent to oppression and wrong. "The Lord shall not see," they said, "neither shall the God of Jacob regard it." (Psa. xciv. 7; *cf.* x. 4 (*Heb.*);¹ x. 13.) On this ground, then, because God's character was compromised by the impunity of the sinner, add because retribution was necessary in order to "justify the ways of God to men," it was a religious duty in the Jew to pray for vengeance on the wrong-doer.

But it was, in the second place, a duty which the Hebrew owed to his religion, to pray thus. By the failure of justice, and especially by the impunity of the oppressor, the one true religion, the one belief

¹The literal translation of Psa. x. 4, a verse which I have twice quoted, is,— "The wicked in his arrogance [saith], 'He will not require,' [there is] 'no God,' [these are] all his thoughts."

which was the salt of the earth, the one faith which held fast by the living God, was discredited and brought into contempt. If God was to look on unmoved while cruelties and impieties were practised under his very eyes, the Heathen might well ask, "Where is thy God?" (Psa. xlii. 10.) Nay, they did more than this. Emboldened by the silence of Israel's God, they "took crafty counsel against his people;" they said, "Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation, that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance" (Psa. lxxxiii. 4). Now, to prevent this, to protect the one lamp which illumined the darkness of the world from being extinguished; to save the chosen seed, which alone witnessed for the truth, from being crushed and silenced by the powers of Heathendom, the Psalmists cried to God, and I contend they were bound by their creed to cry, that He would confound the oppressor and cast him down, so that the Divine righteousness might "be openly shewed in the sight of the heathen" (Psa. xcvi. 2), and "that the nations" might "know themselves to be but men" (Psa. ix. 20).

Nor is it less clear that to pray for fitting manifestations of God's righteous anger was also a duty which the Jew owed to the sacred cause of morality. Exemplary punishment of wrong-doers was necessary for the prevention of crime. If no Nemesis tracked the steps of guilt, what wonder if the feet of men became "swift to shed blood," and if "destruction and misery were in their ways?" Let but "the sentence against an evil work" be "not executed speedily," and "the heart of the sons of

men would be fully set in them to do evil." They would "slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless, and say, The Lord shall not see" (Psa. xciv. 6). It was necessary, therefore, to pray for retribution, to pray that evil men should be "confounded," that evil courses should be checked, in order to prevent a reign of terror, in order to procure the peace of the Commonwealth, the maintenance of right, and the security of life and property. It was a duty which the Jew owed to society to cry to God to make an example of the wicked in order that others might take warning, and that "the man of the earth" might "no more oppress" (Psa. x. 18).

But, furthermore,—and I regard this as very noteworthy—the Jews, and of course the Psalmists among them, were not left to conjecture what their duty might be with regard to crime and wrong; they were not left to infer it from such considerations as have been just mentioned; but they had been expressly taught, and that in the most impressive manner, that they were bound to look for and pray for the curse of God on the guilty. For when the tribes of Israel entered the land of promise, when they were first settled as the subjects of the Theocracy, on the very day that they "became the people of the Lord" (Deut. xxvii. 9), they were made to join in a solemn public act of Commination. Standing near Mount Ebal, they heard, one by one, from the lips of the Levites, "the curses of God against impenitent sinners," and to these, one by one, the lips of the people pronounced the "Amen" of assent—probably the Amen of entreaty.

The whole nation, therefore, had been taught of God in and by the law to invoke curses on the transgressors of the law ; they had been taught that retribution was their concern as well as his ; that it was as much their duty to implore vengeance as it was his design to inflict it. So far, then, as the Psalmists foretell the just judgment of God against sinners, and so far as they pray for it, they are but following the precedent which their inspired Lawgiver had furnished them ; they are but reciting the lesson which their forefathers had learned from Almighty God Himself.

Nor is it too much to say that the discharge of this duty, which was neither more nor less than *the duty of pronouncing comminations and imprecations against sinners*, was more necessary in the times of the Psalmists than at an earlier period of Jewish history. For when the monarchy was set up amongst the Jews, and when a visible king became the representative and viceroy of the Invisible, the latter would appear to have withdrawn Himself more and more into the thick darkness, and to have left the execution of his laws to the delegates whom He had appointed. In other words, the distribution of punishments was effected less openly than before by the finger of God, and more obviously than before by the officers of State. It was now their recognized duty to correct, and in some cases to cut off, the wrong-doer. (Psa. ci. 5, 8.) But what if they were indifferent to justice ? What if they connived at wickedness, as was too commonly the case ? What should the pious Israelite do then ? *Quis custodiet ipsos custodes ?* It was in vain to implore their interference ; in vain for David, for example, to pray

Saul to requite Doeg, or for Zechariah to hope for justice from Joash (2 Chron. xxiv. 20-22), or for the Maccabees to invoke the secular arm against "that wicked Alcimus" (1 Macc. vii. 9). They were driven, consequently, to appeal to a higher tribunal, to the Supreme Magistrate and Executor of Jewish law; and they pray Him, in the interests of justice and humanity, to "look upon it and require it," that so such miscreants might not go unpunished.

And if, in the discharge of this duty, they sometimes prayed, not merely in general terms for the punishment, but for the *destruction* of sinners,—that they might be "rooted out of the land of the living" (Psalms lii. 5; lxix. 28), or that they might be "cut off" in their wickedness (Psalms xii. 3; liv. 5; xciv. 23; cxliii. 12), who can wonder at it? For the Hebrews had been taught with a terrible distinctness, and that again and again, that God's way of punishing heinous sin was by destroying the sinner. They could have no doubts as to his settled plan and purpose in this respect, for destruction—the death of the guilty—had ever been his sentence upon flagrant guilt. They had before them, to begin with, the fate of the antediluvians. God had once, as they read it, scourged the whole earth of its corrupt and impious inhabitants. He had "brought in the flood upon the world of the ungodly." They remembered, too, what was recorded of the Cities of the Plain. God had checked *their* profligacy by simply blotting them out of the book of life. They had a pattern of his dealings with the rebellious Heathen in the case of the Egyptians. "The waters covered their enemies: there was not one of them left" (Psa. cvi.

11). They had a still more striking instance in the seven nations of Canaan. Their own forefathers had been commissioned in God's name to exterminate them. "Thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth: thou shalt utterly destroy them" (Deut. xx. 16, 17). The Jews of a later age, an age almost contemporaneous with that of the composition of the earlier Psalms, were employed by God to smite a neighbouring nation, the Amalekites, for a sin committed four hundred years before their time. For this they were "utterly to destroy all that they" had; to "slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass" (1 Sam. xv. 3). The author of many of the Psalms had himself, as the viceroy of God and with the help of God (Psalms xxi. 9; xviii. 40), devoted the population of entire cities, "all the cities of the children of Ammon," to a dreadful death (2 Sam. xii. 31). A few centuries later, when some of the Psalms were still being written, the Hebrew people saw an entire host—"an hundred, fourscore, and five thousand" Assyrians destroyed in one night by the direct visitation of God. With these records before their eyes—and they had other proofs which it is needless to specify—the Jews could not fail to see that destruction was the doom denounced by God against the enemies and oppressors of his people.

And they had no less convincing proofs that a similar fate was designed for the rebellious Israelite. Not merely had God repeatedly declared that such should be "cut off," but they had terrible instances of the fulfilment of the threat. They could not forget the "very great plague" of Kibroth-Hat-

taavah (Numb. xi. 33), nor Korah and his company, who "went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them" (Numb. xvi. 33), nor yet the "fourteen thousand and seven hundred" who died in the plague that followed the earthquake, nor the "four and twenty thousand" "slain for Peor's sake in the day of the plague."¹ And nearer their own times the Psalmists had had proofs that God's purpose was in nowise changed. The sin of the two priests, Hophni and Phinehas, was punished by death. It was the Lord who slew them in battle. (1 Sam. ii. 25.) The peasants of Beth-shemesh looked into the ark, and forfeited their lives. Fifty thousand and three score and ten men are said to have fallen victims to their sacrilegious curiosity.² It were easy to adduce a score of instances in which the violation of God's law was visited by instant destruction, but those already cited will suffice. Now, these startling providences must have taught the Psalmists that it was God's will and pleasure to requite the sinner by destroying him. What more natural, then, than that, when they prayed, as they were bound to do, for exemplary vengeance on the

¹ I do not wish the reader to infer, from my citing these numbers, that we are pledged to a belief in their strict accuracy in every case. Numbers are notoriously liable to be altered in the course of transcription. St. Paul states the number of those who fell in one day on account of Baal Peor at "*three* and twenty thousand" (1 Cor. x. 8).

² The numbers here are allowed to be incorrect. A village like Beth-shemesh can hardly have had 50,000 inhabitants. And the Hebrew text itself suggests the suspicion of a mistake. Literally translated, it runs: "And he smote of the people seventy men, fifty thousand men." Five ancient MSS. omit the last three words. So also does Josephus. There is little doubt they represent a marginal gloss, which has been accidentally embodied in the text.

transgressor, they should pray for his death? To pray thus would seem to them to be simply equivalent to the petition, "Thy will be done."

But fully to understand how thoroughly the children of Israel had been schooled and trained to seek the destruction of wicked men, one additional fact must be remembered, viz., that not merely the magistrates, but the nation at large, had been constituted by God, in certain cases, the ministers of destruction: they were required, that is to say, to put flagitious sinners to death *with their own hands*. I have already referred to the case of the Canaanites and Amalekites, where the soldiers of Israel were charged with the extermination of entire nations. But it was not merely in the shock of battle, or after victory, that the Jews were made God's executioners: they were expected to inflict capital punishments on their own countrymen, calmly, deliberately, and as carrying out a judicial sentence. The Israelite who gave his seed to Molech was to be publicly destroyed by his fellow-Israelites. "All the people of the land shall stone him with stones" (Levit. xx. 2). The wizard was to die a like death at their hands. So was the blasphemer (Levit. xxiv. 14); the Sabbath-breaker (Numb. xv. 36); the false prophet (Deut. xiii. 10); the idolater (Deut. xiii. 15). And these sentences they were compelled to carry out. The son of Shelomith was stoned by the whole congregation (Levit. xxiv. 23). It was the whole congregation who put to death the "man that gathered sticks upon the Sabbath-day." It was "all Israel" that stoned Achan (Josh. vii. 25). It was "all the

sons of Levi" who went "in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp and slew every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour," till about three thousand men had fallen by their sword (Exod. xxxii. 27, 28). And in each case we find this duty was entailed upon them by express Divine command. Can we wonder then that, in after ages, the descendants of these very men, when they found themselves debarred by circumstances from carrying out a sentence of death which was still in force, cried to God to inflict it? What more natural than that men who should have been the executioners of God, who should have stoned the sinner with their own hands, had not discipline been relaxed, should pray God to execute his own laws, laws which they found themselves powerless to fulfil?

We are forced, consequently, to the conclusion that it was not only lawful and commendable in the Psalmists to pray for the temporal punishment of the wicked, but that every pious Jew (and especially such Jews as the Psalmists, who were in some sense the guardians of morality and religion) had been taught, and was bound, as a duty which he owed to society, to religion, and to God, to pray for those specific temporal punishments which were the sanctions of the Old Testament law. If it was right for the Jew to pray for the punishment of evil-doers at all, then, plainly, it was right for him to pray for the only punishments of which he had any certain knowledge, in other words, for temporal, and amongst these *retaliatory* and *capital*, punishments.

And if these conclusions are correct: if, that is to say, the Psalmists were bound, by the social and religious conditions under which they lived, to desire, and to pray for, the just and adequate retribution of guilt; then it follows, as a natural consequence, that they are not to be blamed, if they also pray for *immediate* retribution. For it is obvious that every reason which they experienced for desiring temporal punishment was equally a reason for seeking instant temporal punishment. Was it desirable, for example, for the vindication of the righteousness of God, that the wicked should be put to shame? Then it was desirable that this should be done at once; because, so long as it was left undone, so long would the righteousness of God be compromised and questioned. Was it expedient for the good of society that evil-doers should be cut off? Then it was expedient that they should be cut off quickly; because, so long as they were unmolested, so long would the peace of society be endangered. Was it essential for the repression of crime that an example should be made of the criminal? Then the sooner the better, in order that the connection between the sin and the retribution might be the more conspicuous. It is evident, then, that men with such a creed and such convictions as inspired and governed those who penned the Psalms were bound to pray, not only for the punishment of the wicked (for that a Christian is permitted, under certain well-defined limitations, to do), but for the temporal, and for the *instant* temporal, punishment of all the enemies of God,—which was precisely the proposition which we undertook to prove.

And now we begin to see more clearly, not only why the Jews could, but also why Christians cannot, pray thus; why petitions which were commendable in them would be inexcusable in us. We have just said that the Christian, like the Jew, may pray for the punishment of the wicked.¹ Such prayers are recorded—and recorded, we can hardly doubt, for our imitation—in the New Testament. They are the prayers, be it remembered, of God's spotless saints. It is the blessed St. Paul who writes, "Alexander the copper-smith did me much evil: the Lord *reward him according to his works*" (2 Tim. iv. 14). It is the gentle St. Paul, the same who elsewhere says, "I could wish that myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren," &c. (Rom. ix. 3), who pronounces the imprecation, "If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema" (1 Cor. xvi. 22). It is the glorified saints under the altar who cry, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" (Rev. vi. 10.) So that in this matter of imprecating retribution on the enemies of the Lord, the New Testament is in thorough accord with the Old. The cry for requital is by no means peculiar to the Psalmists, but the glorious company of the apostles and the noble army of martyrs take up and re-echo the appeal. And if, in these

¹ I am very far from wishing to imply that either Christian or Jew is permitted to pray for punishment, because of the pain—whether the *poena damni* or the *poena sensus*—which it brings with it. To desire it on this ground would be sheer vindictiveness; to pray for it with this in view would be contrary both to the Law and the Gospel. Neither was Jew, nor is Christian, justified in praying for the punishment of sinners with any other motives than the glory of God, the good of society, and the correction of the sinner himself.

latter days, the cry is seldom heard from Christian lips, may it not be, not that our faith is more enlightened, but that our love and zeal are less fervent? When we remember that it is not for the glory of God now, any more than it was in the apostolic age, that the sinner should escape, and that sin is now no less abominable, no less hateful and dishonouring to God than it was formerly, it is difficult to understand why the prayer for a just retribution should be less needed or less appropriate than it was in the infancy of the Christian Church.

It must not be supposed, however, that the Christian has the same imperious reasons for beseeching God for retribution that the Jew had. With the latter it was a question of life and death. He had reason to fear that his religion could not exist without it. The Christian has no such fear, and consequently he does not experience the same need for such prayers. It is for this reason, I imagine, among others, that while such prayers may be counted in the Old Testament by scores, in the New there are but three or four.

We see, then, that Christians, as well as Jews, may pray, and perhaps ought to pray, for the punishment of the guilty, for the glory of God. But at this point the resemblance ceases. The Jew prayed for instant visible temporal retribution; the Christian cannot lawfully pray for it and look for it except from the Judge of the quick and dead. For *he* knows that the present life is not all; knows how "*Deus est patiens, quia aeternus;*" knows too that "though the mills of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceeding small." The Jew believed

the present world to be a state of rewards and punishments ; he therefore prayed for temporal punishments. The Christian is taught that the Deity reserves his chief recompenses for the world to come ; he therefore looks for retribution and prays for it, so far as he prays for it at all, hereafter.

But there is this further reason why the Christian cannot pray as did the Jew ; why he cannot pray, *i.e.*, for the “destruction” even of the chief of sinners. He knows that the longer a man lives, the greater, humanly speaking, will be his chance of conversion. For him, therefore, to pray for the excision of the sinner would be, in effect to pray for the shortening of his day of grace ; it would be to ask God to “cut him off even in the blossom of his sins ;” to send him to his grave, no “reckoning made, with all his imperfections on his head.” But the Jews appear to have had no hopes of the conversion, at any rate, of the Heathen, and many of the imprecations, it must be remembered, were directed against the Heathen. They had no commission to preach to them, or to seek to win them for God. They could not but remember that the only remedy which Divine mercy had found for the sin of the Canaanites and others was extermination—extermination, root and branch, for the good of the world. It was still for the good of the world, they judged, that sinners should be taken out of the way, and the sooner the better, because of their pernicious example. It is for this reason, among others, that whilst the Christian is bound to echo the prayer of his Master, “Spare it,” the Jewish cry could only be, “Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?” And

hence we find, what indeed we might expect to find, that the last martyr of Judaism, thoroughly penetrated with the spirit of his religion, passed away with the prayer on his lips, "The Lord look on it and require it," whilst the protomartyr of Christianity, equally true to the teachings of his nobler creed, fell asleep, after the loud and earnest cry, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge" (Acts vii. 60).

But there are other, and perhaps more cogent reasons, why the children of the "better covenant, established upon *better promises*," cannot pray as did the children of the Law, and I hope in a succeeding paper to indicate some of them. I shall also hope, by a comparison of the imprecations of the Psalmists with those of the Prophets and with other parts of the Scripture to prove, beyond possibility of challenge, the lawfulness of such imprecations in Hebrew lips. At present I must content myself with the remark that enough has, I venture to hope, been said to shew that in this one fact, that the view of the Psalmists was limited to this present life, and did not embrace the vision of a "judgment to come," we have both the secret and the vindication of the Vindictive Psalms. Only let it be remembered that in their days life and immortality had not been brought to light; that it is since their days that the realm and recompenses of the future have been disclosed to view, and their imprecations will be found to be, not the "impatient and revengeful" utterances of unchastened and cruel minds, but the fervid breathings of a true piety and righteous zeal for the glory of God.

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