

"PAY THY VOWS UNTO THE MOST HIGH."

THE FIFTIETH PSALM furnishes food for most profitable meditation to the consecrated. It starts with a precious reminder of the glory that is shortly to be revealed in and through the faithful. Taking the standpoint of the Church's future completeness and glory, it says (verse 1): "The mighty God, even Jehovah, speaketh [through the glorified Church, the Christ, Head and body], and calleth the earth from the rising of the Sun ["the Sun of Righteousness, with healing in his wings" – Mal. 4:2] unto the going down thereof" [i.e., from the beginning to the close of the Millennial day, Jehovah, through his Anointed, will be calling the earth to repentance and to righteousness and eternal life.]

Verse 2. "Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty [out of the Church exalted and glorified], God shineth forth [his glorious character and plan are made known]."

But verse 3 reminds us that that time is yet future, and begins to describe the coming of the Lord, while the following verses discourse as to the first work of his presence.

Verse 3. "Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire ["the fire of his jealousy"] shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him." It will be the tempest of the great time of trouble so often and so variously and vividly described elsewhere.

Verse 4. "He shall call to the heavens above, and to the earth, to judge his people." In this time of the Lord's presence and the harvest of the Gospel age, all who claim to be his people – *i.e.*, all "Christendom," Christ's kingdom, falsely so-called, or "Babylon," as named in the Scriptures (Rev. 16:19) – are brought into judgment before the assembled hosts of heaven and earth – angels and men.

Already this judgment of "Christendom," "Babylon," is in progress: hence the late overhauling and revision of the hitherto accepted and unquestioned creeds of its various sects. And hence, too, the unsparing criticism of nominal Christianity by the world at large, in the secular press, etc., calling attention to its traditional errors, and to its untenable positions. It is now recognized as a self-contradictory mouthpiece of God.

Verse 5 is the command of the now present Lord of the harvest to the reapers, to separate the true wheat from the great bundles of tares in Babylon – "Gather my saints together unto me: those that have made a covenant with me [not merely by the lips, but] *by [actual] sacrifice*" – those who have faithfully carried out the solemn covenant of entire devotedness to the Lord.

Verse 6. "And the heavens shall declare his righteousness; for God himself is judge." In that judgment which heaven and earth are called upon to witness, and which shall closely discriminate between the wheat and the tares, and effectually separate them, "the heavens [the Kingdom of God which will be established as the outcome of this judgment] shall declare his [God's] righteousness; for God himself [who cannot err] is [the] Judge."

The following verses of the chapter sum up charges brought against God's nominal people, while verses 14,15,22 and 23 interpose a word of wise counsel for those who will receive it.

Verses 7 and 8. "Hear, O my people [ye who claim to be my people by a solemn covenant], and I will speak: O Israel [nominal spiritual Israel], and I will testify against thee: I am God, even thy God. Not because of thy sacrifices will I reprove thee; and thy burnt offerings [free-will offerings, such as benevolent works, etc.] are continually before me." But such works cannot commend them to God in that day of judgment; for, said Jesus, "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?"

and then will I say unto them, I never knew [approved] you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." (Matt. 7:22,23.) These have been "false prophets" (Matt. 7:15), "teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." (Matt. 15:9.) For their own erroneous theories they have claimed divine authority; and though in going about to establish their own righteousness they have done "many wonderful works," those works are not acceptable to God, because they have not submitted themselves to his plans and methods.

Verses 9-13 declare God's independence of their works, and intimate his perfect ability to accomplish the blessing of the world according to his own plan without their assistance. "I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he goats out of thy folds; for every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry I would not tell thee; for the world is mine and the fulness thereof. **[R3648 : page 312]** Will I eat flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats?" – Am I in need of your wisdom or works, or in any way *dependent* upon your gifts? No – "Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the Most High." (Verse 14.) What have any of us to offer unto the Lord that we did not first receive from him, and that should not, therefore, be thankfully received and used according to the directions of his plan? And this is what all who have consecrated themselves to God have covenanted to do. It is, therefore, obligatory upon all such that they pay their vows, fulfil their covenant unto the Most High.

True, in the faithful fulfilling of a covenant of entire consecration to God there is much to endure in the way of reproach and persecution from the world (2 Tim. 3:12); but to such the Lord through the Prophet (verse 15) says, "Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou [by thy testimony and faithfulness] shalt glorify me."

Verses 16,17. "But unto the wicked God saith" [The wicked here referred to are not people of the world; for, according to verse 7, this testimony is borne against those who claim to be the Lord's people, and members of the spiritual house of Israel. These "wicked" are the covenant-breakers among those who still claim to be **[R3648 : page 313]** faithful people of God.] – unto these God saith, "What hast thou to do to declare my statutes [decrees, doctrines] or that thou shouldest take my covenant into thy mouth? seeing thou hatest instruction and castest my words behind thee." The Lord will not hold them guiltless who, professing entire consecration to him, nevertheless despise instruction and cast his words behind them while they cling to their own traditions and theories; "For," says the Apostle, "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold down [Greek *katecho* – hold down or suppress] the truth in unrighteousness." (Rom. 1:18.) This is what the various ecclesiastical systems of Great Babylon have been guilty of for centuries past: they have taught their own false doctrines and have claimed for them the divine authority of the Word of God. In doing so they have unjustly suppressed the truth: they have hated instruction and have cast the words of the Lord behind them whenever the latter were brought forward to testify against them or their plans.

What right, the Prophet inquires, have such covenant-breakers to declare the plan of God? None whatever. Such unfaithful and "wicked and slothful" servants are hindered by *their* errors from seeing truths now due. Having been unfaithful to the measure of truth received, they are not permitted to know, and hence cannot declare, the deeper things of God – the breadth and scope of his wonderful plan. "Light is sown for the righteous" who faithfully and thankfully receive and disseminate it, "and gladness [the gladness which comes from a realization of the truth] for the upright in heart." – Psa. 97:11.

But the testimony against this class proceeds – verse 18 – "When thou sawest a thief [one desirous of robbing God's children of the truth], then thou consentedst with him." All who do not guard the truth

and the flock of God against the encroachment of error, who bid false teachers God-speed, or who commend wolves in sheep's clothing to the Lord's little ones, are, according to the Prophet's language, wickedly consenting with thieves and robbers. And not only so, but he continues – "and hast been partaker with adulterers." Such a compromise with the spirit of the world is, in the language of the Scriptures, defined as adultery. For this reason Babylon the Great (Papacy) is termed a harlot, and the mother of harlots (of the various similar systems that sprang from her); and the principle holds good in every case where unfaithful covenant-breakers consent to any degree with the thieves and robbers who plot and scheme against the truth.

Verse 19. "Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit." Such is the course of all who in unrighteousness suppress the truth and go about to establish their own righteousness and their own plans.

Verse 20. "Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother's son." The unfaithful always take the attitude of persecutors, to some degree, of the faithful. Such is the attitude of the whole nominal church against those faithful servants who receive and advocate the truth.

Verse 21. "These things hast thou done ["Babylon," "Christendom," the great nominal church], and I kept silence: [up to the present time, the harvest; and because I kept silence and permitted this evil to run and prosper] thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself [that I was consenting with thee to thy evil ways]; but [not so; for a purpose I permitted you to run your course and to make your real character manifest; but *now*, in this harvest and judgment time] I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes." Hence the present investigations and exposures of creeds, and the growing unrest in the various sects of "Christendom."

Verses 22,23. "Now consider this [reproof], ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces [destroy you], and there be none to deliver.

"Whoso offereth thanksgiving [thankfully receives the reproof and applies his heart unto instruction] glorifieth me [or honors me, as a faithful and consistent believer and representative of the truth]; and to him that ordereth his course aright [that conforms his life and teaching to the light received] will I show the salvation of God."

How solemn and weighty the admonition, and how worthy of the most thoughtful and prayerful consideration of all who name the name of Christ! The day of reckoning is upon the Church – upon all who profess to be members of it: "The hour of his judgment is come." Who is worthy to stand? Only those who gratefully receive the message of divine truth, and who faithfully pay their vows to the Most High.

