

Theology on *the Web.org.uk*

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes.
Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit
or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the
copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the
ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the
links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbadshaw>

A table of contents for *The Expositor* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expositor-series-1.php

in the moral government of the world proceed from our ignorance, and not from any failure of Divine justice. That, we may be sure, is absolute and perfect; and if we are wise we shall acquiesce gratefully in its decisions, whether the reasons for them are discovered or concealed. W. SANDAY.

THE VINDICTIVE PSALMS VINDICATED.

PART II.

So far it has been my ungracious task to impugn the various apologies made for the Vindictive Psalms by others. It remains to be seen whether any real solution of the difficulty can be suggested in their stead. The explanation that I have to offer has not the attraction of novelty; perhaps it would be no recommendation if it had. In its main features it may be familiar to some of my readers. I do not know, however, that anything more than its naked outline can be found elsewhere, or that the conclusions to which I have come are in complete accordance with those of any other writer on the subject.¹

It may be as well to state here what those conclusions are; in other words, what it will be my object in the following pages to prove. They are: That the so-called "vindictive" expressions of the Psalms are only seemingly and not really vindictive; that they seem to be vindictive only because we view them from the standpoint of the New Testament,

¹ It would be scarcely ingenuous were I not to express here my obligations to Professor Perowne's Commentary, and to his Hulsean Lectures. Writing as I do several years after I first read these works, I cannot be sure for what ideas I am indebted to them; but I suspect it is for more than I am now conscious of.

instead of from the standpoint of the Old ; that, read in the light of the Hebrew Scriptures, they are innocent, unexceptionable, and even imitable : in short, that, rudely as they may jar upon our ears and wrong as they would be in our lips, they are, nevertheless, in perfect harmony with the kind and degree of revelation vouchsafed to those who penned them ; that they are the natural and, more than that, the commendable outcomes of the system under which the writers lived ; that they are as natural to that system and as lawful under it, as they are unnatural and unlawful under a different and more perfect system ; and, finally, that they are all this without contravening in the remotest degree those eternal principles of justice and piety and charity which are the foundation of the Old Testament no less than of the New. This is what I shall hope to establish, though I do not engage to prove *these* propositions, either *seriatim* or formally.

Let us begin by asking two questions: First, What is it that really shocks us in these Psalms—what is the head and front of their offending ? Secondly, What would be a valid and incontrovertible defence of them ? When, and under what conditions, could they be considered as completely vindicated ?

In the Comminatory Psalms—for it will be necessary to take the two classes separately—the chief, if not the only, stumbling-block is the spitefulness, the malignity, the longing (felt to be cherished, if not always expressed) for vengeance upon the Psalmists' enemies which they *seem* to exhibit. It is that the Psalmists appear to anticipate with delight the discomfiture of enemies—their own and their country's

—when these enemies are not necessarily wrong-doers and transgressors of the law of God. We do not resent the Psalmists', any more than we resent the Apostles' or Prophets' denouncing God's judgments against impenitent sinners ; we feel it is only proper that they should do *that*. But what grieves and offends us is their identifying, to all appearance, their private enemies with God's enemies, the enemies of right and religion, and their confounding the former in the doom reserved by God for the latter.

Take, for example, Psa. lix. 10, “God shall let me see my desire upon mine enemies.” Who does not instinctively feel that the writer of these words was hoping to enlist the arm of God against his private foes, was counting on the connivance and help of God in fulfilling his long-cherished hopes of vengeance and retaliation.

The same may be said of what is seemingly the most cruel and malignant of all the Comminations : “ Happy shall he be that taketh thy little ones and dasheth them against the stones ” (Psa. cxxxvii. 9). The offence lies in the (apparently) fiendish satisfaction with which the writer anticipates the paying off of an old grudge; the paying it off in the blood and butchery of innocent children.

Consequently, before the Comminatory Psalms can be considered as vindicated, these two points must be established : First, that the Psalmist in no case predicates evil of mere private injuries, but always of God's enemies, the enemies, that is, of his law, his religion, his chosen people, because

of violations of that law, affronts offered to that religion, or wrongs done to that people; in other words, because of *sins*. Secondly, that, supposing him always to speak of God's enemies, he nowhere predicts a punishment disproportionate to the offence; a punishment, in fact, such as the Merciful God will never inflict. If we can prove these two points—prove that the vengeance, whatever it may be, is pronounced against the wicked, *qua* wicked, and if we can shew at the same time that such vengeance, so far as we can judge, would be, by the law of the older Dispensation, but the meet and equitable recompense for their wickedness, then surely we need have no further misgivings about the *Comminatory Psalms*.

But in the case of the *Imprecatory* expressions, an additional and a much greater difficulty confronts us. Apart from the appearance of vindictiveness, apart from the seeming craving for vengeance which they exhibit in a much greater degree than do the Comminatory Psalms, we have to account for this fact, that the writers deliberately pray God (not to be forbearing or forgiving, but) to be angry, to take vengeance, to inflict punishment—whether on private enemies or on God's enemies seems at first sight to signify very little. For it appears to us, who live under the Dispensation of mercy, to be malicious and uncharitable and every way unbecoming in men who need mercy themselves to urge the Omnipotent *not* to be merciful, but to pour the vials of his wrath even on flagitious sinners. A Christian is taught to pray for the conversion of such men; but the Psalmists pray for

instant and condign punishment. They protest, in fact, against the mercy and forbearance of God ; they cry aloud for chastisements upon the sinner ; they will have him confounded, persecuted, destroyed, without loss of time.

Consequently, in order to vindicate the Imprecatory Psalms, we shall have to prove, in the first place, that it was lawful and commendable for those who penned them to pray God for vengeance, for the instant temporal punishment of the wicked. And, this point being established, we shall have to prove, as before, that the Psalmists in every case pray for vengeance on the *wicked*, and not on persons who are *merely* private enemies ; that they pray only for the due and proportionate punishment of the wicked ; and, finally, that, so far as we can judge, they pray for such punishment in no vindictive spirit, but from a sense of duty and a desire for God's honour and glory. If all this can be made good, then surely the Imprecatory Psalms may be considered as for ever eliminated from the list of Scripture difficulties.

Now the major part of these propositions, it is obvious, can only be established by a detailed examination of the various passages which are commonly esteemed to be vindictive. There is one link in the chain of argument, however, and that by far the most important, which must be firmly rivetted in its place before this examination is attempted, and it is this : "That it was lawful and commendable for the Psalmists to pray God for the instant temporal punishment of the wicked," a proposition which can only be proved, if it can be

proved at all, by a consideration of the peculiar character of the Jewish economy, of the nature of the law under which the Psalmists lived. For it will be admitted, I apprehend, by all, that a Christian has no right to pray for the infliction of temporal punishment, much less of certain specific temporal punishments, even upon the most wicked and mischievous of men. If he prays for such persons at all (and they need his prayers), it must be for their conversion. He may perhaps cry to God for their repression, for their confusion, because of the harm they are doing and the malign influence they are exercising. But he cannot pray—Christian charity forbids him to pray—as the Psalmists do, for their destruction. We are driven, consequently, to ask whether there was anything in the Legal Dispensation which made it lawful for a Jew to pray as it is confessedly unlawful for a Christian to pray. In other words, can desires and petitions, which are disallowed by the law of Christ, be allowed and encouraged by the law of Moses? It will be my endeavour to prove the affirmative. And to do this, I must beg the reader to consider with me what the Old Testament revelation really was, or, rather, in the first instance, what it was *not*.

It was, to begin with, *no revelation of a future life*. Account for it as we may, the fact is indisputable, that the sacred writings of the older Dispensation nowhere promise, directly and expressly, a future state of existence. On this capital question their silence is well-nigh absolute. True it is that our Lord Christ, the same who “brought life and immortality to light,” has taught *us* to see an intimation of

the Resurrection in the words of Moses "at the bush" (St. Mark xii. 26, 27); but no one can seriously suppose that such a remote "allusion as *that*" could have served to make known the doctrine to any one who had previously known nothing of the subject."¹ More than that, this very text, if carefully considered, will be found to furnish a most convincing proof that this magnificent doctrine is nowhere distinctly revealed in the Hebrew Scriptures. For, of course, the probability is that our blessed Lord, when appealing to the Old Testament to shew that the Sadducees were wrong "as touching the dead," would cite the most powerful proof which that volume afforded, the one most likely to silence all cavillers. We may presume, therefore, that this text was quoted because it was the most conclusive that could be quoted, because nothing else could be adduced which would carry with it the same amount of force. And yet, what does this text amount to? It merely suggests an *inference* on this doctrine—an inference which we may readily believe the Sadducees would be by no means disposed to accept. For, although, it would seem, they were "put to silence," yet obviously this text would not necessarily be conclusive *with them*. They might have replied—perhaps they did reply—that the expression "I am the God of Abraham," &c., "did not necessarily mean more than that Jehovah had been the God of those patriarchs whilst they lived."² We find, then, that the scripture cited by our blessed Lord to prove not merely the survival of the soul but also

¹ Whately, "Scripture Revelations concerning a Future State."

² Smith's "Dictionary of the Bible," art. "Sadducees."

the resurrection of the body, and which, it is a fair presumption, was the most cogent that could be adduced in this behalf, is not obviously conclusive on either of these points. And therefore we claim, on the authority of Christ Himself, that the doctrine of eternal life, if taught inferentially, is nowhere taught expressly in the Old Testament.¹ But a scarcely less powerful proof of the silence or uncertainty of the Law and the Prophets on this great question is to be found in the existence of these very Sadducees, a sect which embraced the Jewish aristocracy and which furnished the nation with many of its High Priests, every member of which, however, affirmed that there was no resurrection of the dead. We know that all men naturally, and especially men in whom the religious instincts are so powerfully developed as they were in every scion of the Hebrew race, a race, be it remembered, of priests, a consecrated nation (*Exod. xix. 6*), desire to believe in a life beyond the grave. Moreover, it is the interest of a priestly caste, such as the Sadducees are suspected to have been, to hold and inculcate such a doctrine. What so likely to enhance their importance in the eyes of their co-religionists? what so calculated to strengthen their position in Church and State? We may be perfectly sure then, that if Jews, if Sadducean priests, if High Priests, generation after generation, persistently repudiated this doctrine, it was only because their convictions compelled them to repudiate it against their will; only because they

¹ “In Mosis lege . . . aeternae vitae non fieri mentionem nisi per umbras aut rationis consequentiam, certissimum mihi videtur, *Christi auctoritate*, qui Sadduceos non verbis directis sed *ratiocinando* refellit.”—*Grotius*.

found no evidence in the written Law which would warrant them in embracing it. It is absolutely impossible that such a sect could have maintained its existence if the Sacred Writings had contained one clear unequivocal proof-text of a future state. The *raison d'être* of the Sadducees was that the tenets of the Future Life and the Resurrection could not be discovered (as certain modern Jews confess)¹ in Holy Writ, and had no better basis than "the tradition of the Elders."

But, furthermore, have we not direct and positive proof that some of the sacred writers, some of the Psalmists for example, had no assurance, no *certainty*, of a future state of being? Is it conceivable that men possessing any such assurance could have expressed themselves as these have done? What mean these words, "In death there is no remembrance of thee; in the unseen world who shall give thee thanks?" (Psa. vi. 5); and, again, "Shall thy loving-kindness be declared in the grave, or thy faithfulness in destruction? Shall thy wonders be known in the dark, and thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?" (Psa. lxxxviii. 11.)² What mean these words if those who penned them had had a future state of conscious existence revealed to their view? I do not by any means contend that these expressions involve a denial of such future state, or are incompatible with a *hope* of the soul's survival; but I say it

¹ Klein, "Le Judaïsme," p. 15 (quoted in Smith's "Dictionary of the Bible").

² See also Psalms xxx. 9, cxv. 17, cxvi. 4; and Isa. xxxviii. 18 ff. "On the whole they [the passages quoted from the Psalms] leave an impression of a final triumph of death, of the annihilation of consciousness."—"Speaker's Commentary," vol. iv. pp. 161, 162.

is hard to conceive how they could have been written by men who were *certified* of these imperious truths. We must admit, of course, that the Jews, like other nations of antiquity,¹ had their speculations, their traditions perhaps, upon this question. The very words “Sheol” (*Orcus, Hades*, the invisible world) and “Rephaim” (*Manes*, ghosts) justify the belief that they had some dim confused ideas of a disembodied state, ideas similar to those of Homer and the Orphic Hymns. Nor is it denied, again, that some of the Psalmists and others were at times lifted above themselves, and from the Pisgah-top of Inspiration had momentary glimpses of a Promised Land beyond the grave.² But it is distinctly affirmed that even they—with perhaps some rare exceptions—had no *certain* information on the question; none which would warrant them in erecting their hope, their undefined belief, their persuasion perhaps, into an article of the faith. And if this was true of the elect spirits of Judaism, the channels of inspiration, the men by whose mouths God spake to other men, still less can we believe that the Hebrew people generally at the time when most of the Psalms were written, maintained a firm belief in a future life, or found it revealed in such Scriptures as they possessed. I am not unaware that many, perhaps most, divines have affirmed the contrary; but I cannot divest myself of the feeling that we have, in their laboured treatises,³

¹ For the Greek traditions on this subject, see the *Contemporary Review*, August 1872. For their evidential value, Whately, “Scripture Revelations.”

² See, e.g., Psalms xvi. 10, xvii. 15, xl ix. 15; and compare St. John viii. 56, Heb. xi. 10-14.

³ See, e.g., Dr. Liddon’s Sermon on Immortality. “Hibbard on the Psalms,” pp. 78-100. Geden’s Fernley Lecture.

conclusive proof of the instability of their views. They ransack the whole of the Old Testament in search of proof-texts,—and what is the result? The result is that we have presented to us some dozen dubious expressions, all of which are capable of a very different interpretation from that which these writers have put upon them. It is not necessary that we should enter into an examination of these texts, though I am prepared to do so, if occasion should require it, because my contention is, that the very fewness and the very dubiousness of the texts relied on to prove their position disprove it. "The institution," says Whichcote, "which has but one text for it, has never a one." For can any one suppose for a moment that if men had once been certified of a life after death, that a doctrine so startling, so portentous, so pregnant with consequences, would not have made itself prominent in Jewish history and stamped itself on every page of Scripture? Is it possible that Prophets and Psalmists could have written as they have written, consistently ignoring the doctrine of a future life, if such a doctrine had been objectively revealed, or anyhow firmly believed in? Besides, it is worth while remembering that the Jews had been in contact, in close contact, with one nation at least whose religious belief embraced and centred in the doctrine of a future state of existence. This was the case with the Egyptians. The silence of the Hebrew Scriptures on this subject, consequently, is all the more striking. It is thus proved that their silence cannot be accidental. The doctrine must have been designedly suppressed in the revelation of Sinai, for "to pass over a matter of this kind is to

reject it.”¹ Why it was passed over it is not difficult, I think, to discover; but this is a question which it is no part of my present undertaking to consider. It is enough for us that the doctrine was not revealed. The Jews were left to conjectures. Certainty they had none.²

But if the revelation granted to the Hebrew race contained in it no doctrine of a future state of being, still less did it involve the disclosure of a future state of rewards and punishments. And it is upon its silence on this latter subject that I ground my defence of the Vindictive Psalms. The uncertainty of the Jews as to a Future *Life* is not a necessary link in my chain of argument, though it helps to strengthen my position. I might freely concede that the Psalmists were certified of an existence hereafter, provided it were proved, as I

¹ Zincke, “Egypt of the Pharaohs and the Khedive,” p. 182.

² As the views expressed above may seem to some of my readers to be novel and irregular, it may be well to cite a few contemporary writers, whose words will carry more weight than any of mine can possibly do. “The Jewish religion,” says Dean Stanley (“Jewish Church,” vol. i. p. 154), “is characterized in an eminent degree by the dimness of its conception of a future life. From time to time there are glimpses of the hope of immortality; but, for the most part, it is in the present life that the faith of the Israelite finds its full accomplishment.”—“The immortality of the soul,” writes Dr. Perowne (Hulsean Lectures, on “Immortality,” p. 63), “is neither argued nor affirmed [in the Old Testament]. Darkness rests on the grave and all beyond it.” Again (p. 67) : “So far as any distinct knowledge of a future life went, the Jew had no advantage over the Gentile.”—“It is clear that no distinct knowledge of a future state of retribution had as yet [the age of the Psalmists] been vouchsafed to the Israelites. . . . To the generality of the people, the grave, or the unknown Sheol, of which the grave was the entrance, bounded the region of hope and fear; whatever they might conjecture touching the state after death, few indeed appear to have distinctly realized it as a state of consciousness, or one to be followed by restoration.”—Canon Cook in the “Speaker’s Commentary,” vol. iv. p. 161.—“No objective revelation had as yet

think it can be, conclusively, that they were completely ignorant of any retribution hereafter. I say "conclusively," for this is a position on which, I should imagine, there is but little room for any difference of opinion. The proof *e silentio* is complete. The Holy Scriptures, down to the time of the Captivity, at any rate, afford us not the slightest hint of any requital awaiting men after death. Not even from the Psalms or the Prophets can one clear unmistakable *dictum probans* be adduced. And that this affirmation is neither new nor singular, the testimonies cited at the foot of this page will prove.¹ It is needless to multiply such authorities, for it rests, of course, with those who maintain that the Psalmists *did* know of a judgment and a punishment hereafter to point out to us *where* these doctrines are revealed.

been vouchsafed. What the Psalmists believed or hoped for touching the future state in or after Sheol was, so far as we can judge, even to the last, a subjective conviction."—*Ib.* p. 162.—"Generally speaking, the Hebrews regarded the grave as the final end of all sentient and intelligent existence."—Dr. F. W. Farrar, in Smith's "Dictionary of the Bible," art. "Hell."

¹ "Moses in religionis Judaicae institutione . . . nihil promisit supra hujus vitae bona, terram uberem, penum copiosum," &c.—Grotius.—"In tota lege Mosaica," writes Episcopius, "nullum vitae æternae praemium ac ne aeterni quidem praemii indicium vel vestigium extat."—"Vel in his libris [the Psalms, Daniel, and Ezekiel] clarum ac disertum aeternae vitae praemium vix, ac ne vix quidem, reperias."—Bishop Bull.—"C'est le comble d'ignorance de mettre en doute cette vérité, qui est une des plus communes de la religion Chrétienne et qui est attestée par tous les Pères, que les promesses de l'Ancien Testament n'étaient que temporelles et terrestres."—Arnauld.—(I am indebted for these authorities to Warburton, "Div. Leg." vol. ii. pp. 463-465.)—And, again, "The rewards and punishments of the future life are either unknown or exercise no practical influence."—*Ib.* p. 63.—"I am not aware that there is a single passage in the Old Testament which represents the unseen world as a place of punishment for the ungodly."—Perowne, Hulsean Lectures, p. 71.

We see, then, that the faith delivered to the writers of the Psalms embraced neither the doctrine of a future life nor the doctrine of a future recompense. Let us now regard it from its positive side and see what it did proclaim. It proclaimed, and that again and again, and in every conceivable way, the doctrine of a Particular Providence, of a present God impartially dealing out rewards and punishments to men in this present life. More than that, it established, as the law of this Providence, an elaborate system of temporal recompenses. It gave the Jews a code, the rule at once of their civil and their religious life. For every transgression of that code, a punishment, a "just recompense of reward" was provided. But the sanctions of that code were one and all temporal.¹ Its retributions were meted out to men *precisely as if there were no hereafter*. Its language was, from first to last, "Thy days shall be long in the land;" "Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store;" "I will take sickness away from the midst of thee;" "Thou shalt see thy children's children;" or, "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth;" "That thief shall die;" "The elders of the city shall take that man and chastise him;" "The people of the land shall stone him with stones;" and so forth. Everywhere, that is to say, even in the terrible comminations of Levit. xxvi. and Deut. xxix., where the judgments of God are denounced in detail, and where, if anywhere, the terrors of the world to come might have been looked for, we have temporal recompenses, and

¹ "Lex promissa habuit terrena et terrena tantum."—Bishop Bull
—"All the sanctions of the Law were temporal, not eternal."—
Bishop Harold Browne.

these alone. Even in the prayer of Solomon, again, at the dedication of the Temple, an occasion when, if "eternal judgment" had formed an article of the national faith, it would assuredly have found a mention, only temporal blessings are sought, only temporal chastisements are deprecated. The fact, then, is indisputable that everywhere, throughout the Pentateuch, the Psalms, the Prophets, the "strength of Israel" stands pledged to purely temporal requital.

And this, no doubt, we may remark in passing, is one reason why the Old Testament Scriptures contain no revelation of the recompenses of the future. They could not have contained any such revelation, without contradicting or impairing the belief in the Theocracy, in a real and practical government of the race by God. The supremacy of Israel's invisible King, and the execution of his laws, were secured by a system of *temporal* rewards and punishments; a scheme of *future* retribution and recompenses could hardly have been established co-ordinately or even concurrently with this, except at the risk of weakening its sanctions and compromising its authority. Indeed, it was the gradual rise of a belief in a future life and a judgment after death which ultimately accomplished its overthrow.

But there are one or two features of the Mosaic system which, as they will force themselves upon our notice hereafter, it may be as well to consider here. The first is, that it was a system of strict and literal *retaliation*; in other words, it was a *lex talionis*. Its keynote was the precept which, it is worth observing, occurs under slightly different forms three times (Exod. xxi. 23-25; Levit. xxiv. 20; Deut. xix. 21),

"Life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe." In this emphatic way was the Jew taught to give and to seek redress, even for private wrongs, on the broad principle of "like for like." But more than that, this same code had its "nicely calculated less and more." Its sanctions were on a graduated scale. Sometimes it prescribed simple restitution (Exod. xxi. 35; xxii. 12), sometimes payment of the person injured "for the loss of his time" (xxi. 19), or payment "as the judges determine" (verse 22). At another time the wrong-doer must "restore the principal" and "add the *fifth part* more thereto" (Leviticus v. 16; vi. 5). The thief must in certain cases "restore *double*" (Exod. xxii. 4), while transgressors of another type should be repaid *sevenfold* (Leviticus xxvi. 18, 21, 24, 28). The Jew then was encouraged by the law under which he lived to look, not merely for retribution, but for retaliation (in the primary sense of the word); for the exact and proportionate recompense, in kind and degree, of wrong and crime.

It is also to be noticed here that there were a considerable number of offences to which the law of Moses assigned no less a penalty than death. Sometimes it was death by fire (Leviticus xxi. 9), sometimes death by stoning (Deut. xiii. 10), sometimes death by the visitation of God (Leviticus xvii. 10), but the number of cases obnoxious to capital punishment in one shape or other is almost startling. (See, e.g., Leviticus vii. 20, 25, 27; xviii. 29; xx. *passim*.) Yet it could not well be otherwise. For one who knew nothing of a judgment to come, the

Law could have no higher sanction, could propose no severer penalty, than "sudden destruction." Just as "length of days" was its highest recompense, so would premature and violent death be its most dreaded doom. The Jew, then, was warranted by the Mosaic code in anticipating for certain offenders the expiation of their crime in blood. The cases were many in which it could be said with perfect truth, "We have a law, and by our law he ought *to die.*"

We must now proceed to remark that the Dispensation we are considering, not only threatened the contumacious Israelite with temporal pains and penalties, but it also made abundant provision for their exaction. Sometimes the chastisement came direct from an avenging Deity (*e.g.*, Jeremiah iii. 3; Haggai i. 9), but God also had his "ministers attending continually upon this very thing." The Hebrew judges, for example, were appointed that they might be the dispensers of the Divine requital. To the kings again, as God's vicegerents in the Theocracy, was delegated the punishment of evil-doers. The witnesses of sin, the elders of the city, and, in some cases, the whole population, were charged with the correction of immorality and apostacy. The sword of neighbouring states, the noisome beast, the famine, the pestilence, and even the palmer-worm, the locust, and the caterpillar were made the scourges of idolatry and rebellion. In all these ways did the *digitus Dei* work and manifest itself amongst the chosen people. The temporal punishments, that is to say, denounced by the Law and the Prophets, the Providence of God, either directly or instrumentally, visited upon the evil-doer.

Such, then, so far as it concerns our present purpose to examine it, was the revelation vouch-safed to the Jew; such was the position to which the Hebrew people, in the age of the Psalmists, had attained in that gradual development of doctrine and belief, which has apparently been going on from the first, and which is the principal factor in the gradual progress of the human race. They knew of no future state of rewards and punishments, but they believed in one Omnipresent and over-ruling Deity, by whose direct and immediate supervision the present life was made a state of rewards and punishments. They looked, each one of them, for a full settlement of their account with Him before the day of death. They believed that by means of kings and magistrates, fire and sword, lightning and tempest, pestilence and famine, blasting and mildew, caterpillar and locust, He had designed that "every transgression and disobedience" should "receive a just recompense of reward" (Heb. ii. 2). They did not know that if these scourges of Providence failed to reach every transgressor there was still a full requital, a recompense for every thought and word and deed, awaiting all hereafter. They could not have known this except at the risk of weakening their idea of temporal retribution, of imperilling their belief in a living, avenging, and swiftly-recompensing God.

But how this bears on the Vindictive Psalms; how it helps to prove that it "was lawful for the Psalmists to pray for the instant temporal punishment of the wicked," it must remain for a future issue of *THE EXPOSITOR* to shew.

JOSEPH HAMMOND.