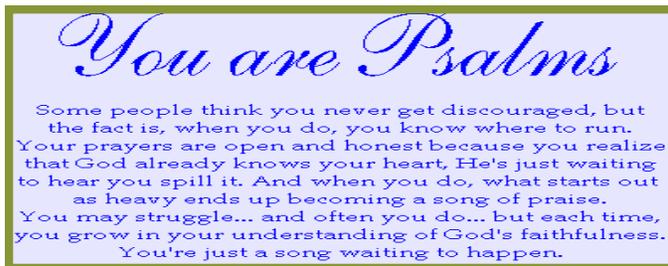


in this Psalm complain of being punished, without having in anywise offended; while other saints generally attribute their persecutions to their own sins. Daniel, for instance speaking of the captivity in Babylon, says, "we have sinned, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly, and have revolted; and we have gone aside from thy commandments and thy judgments." And the three holy children thrown into the fiery furnace, from which they were miraculously delivered by God, confess to him as follows: "for thou hast executed true judgments in all the things that thou hast brought upon us and upon Jerusalem the holy city; for we have sinned, and committed iniquity, departing from thee; and we have trespassed in all things." Such also is the language of the Maccabees: "for we suffer thus for our sins." The answer is, that God suffers his people to be persecuted by reason of their sins; but the inspired writers and speakers use different language, and different forms of speech. Sometimes they assume the person of the more infirm members, ("for we are one body, and members one of another,") and charge themselves with the sins of their brethren, just as the tongue would charge itself for sins committed by the other members. Sometimes they speak in the person of the saints and of the perfect, who suffer grievously in the common persecution caused by the sins of others. Thus the Scriptures do not contradict each other, for Daniel and the Maccabees spoke in the person of the infirm members: the persons speaking in this Psalm do it in their own proper, holy, and sanctified persons. The second question. When God persecutes the wicked, why does he punish the innocent along with them? The answer is: when the innocent so suffer, they are not persecuted, but tried; and God wishes, by a severe trial, as if by "the fire of the fining pot," or "the fan of the floor," so to purge his Church, and make it appear who are the true, who are the false believers, who the gold, who the brass, who the grain, who the chaff; as the apostles says, Rom. 5, "patience worketh trial;" and in Wisd. 3, we read, "God hath tried them, and found them worthy of himself; as gold in the furnace he hath proved them." Questioned the third. Why, then, do the saints complain of persecution, and pray for a speedy termination of it? We are ordered to endure tribulation, not to love it; and nobody loves what he is merely bound to tolerate, though he may love the act of toleration; for though he may rejoice in the toleration of anything, he would prefer not being called upon to tolerate it. With that, persecutions and temptations are dangerous, and the victory over them being uncertain, the saints must not be too confident, or rely too much on their own strength. A fourth question. Why does God sometimes pour down so many favors on his people, and enable them to master their enemies; and at other times deprive them of all such favors, and allow them to be subdued and conquered by their enemies? To let all see that the gifts of Providence come from himself alone, and not from the evil spirits, or by chance. He, then, gives these gifts to his friends when he deems it expedient; but, for fear they may cling to or adhere to them, and take up with a stable for a house, with an exile for their country, he often takes them from them, as we have explained at length in the beginning of Psalm 41.

END OF PSALM 43



**FOR MORE PAMPHLETS ON PSALMS AND OTHER READINGS
PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE: www.pamphletstoinspire.com**

PSALMS (SONGS OF PRAISE)

TRUST
IN THE
LORD *and do good;*
dwell in the land and
enjoy safe pasture.
PSALM 36: 3

PSALM NUMBER: 43

**The Church commemorates former favors, and present afflictions:
under which she prays for succor.**

1. **We have heard, O God, with our ears: our fathers have declared to us, the work thou hast wrought in their days, and in the days of old.**
2. **Thy hand destroyed the Gentiles, and thou planted them: thou didst afflict the people and cast them out.**
3. **For they got not the possession of the land by their own sword: neither did their own arm save them. But thy right hand and thy arm, and the light of thy countenance: because thou wast pleased with them.**
4. **Thou art thyself my King and my God; who commandest the saving of Jacob.**
5. **Through thee we will push down our enemies with the horn: and through thy name we will despise them that rise up against us.**
6. **For I will not trust in my bow: neither shall my sword save me.**
7. **But thou hast saved us from them that afflict us; and hast put them to shame that hate us.**

Continued >

(continued from preceding page)

8. In God shall we glory all the day long: and in thy name we will give praise forever.
9. But now thou hast cast us off, and put us to shame: and thou, O God, will not go out with our armies.
10. Thou hast made us turn our back to our enemies: and they that hated us plundered for themselves.
11. Thou hast given us up like sheep to be eaten: thou hast scattered us among the nations.
12. Thou hast sold thy people for no price: and there was no reckoning in the exchange of them.
13. Thou hast made us a reproach to our neighbors, a scoff and derision to them that are round about us.
14. Thou hast made us a byword among the Gentiles; a shaking of the head among the peoples.
15. All the day long my shame is before me: and the confusion of my face hath covered me.
16. At the voice of him that reproacheth and detracteth me; at the face of the enemy and persecutor.
17. All these things have come upon us, yet we have not forgotten thee: and we have not done wickedly in thy covenant.
18. And our heart hath not turned back: neither hast thou turned aside our steps from thy way.
19. For thou hast humbled us in the place of affliction: and the shadow of death hath covered us.
20. If we have forgotten the name of our God, and if we have spread forth our hands to a strange god:
21. Shall not God search out these things? For he knoweth the secrets of the heart. Because for thy sake we are killed all the day long: we are counted as sheep for the slaughter.
22. Arise, why sleepest thou, O Lord? Arise, and cast us not off to the end.
23. Why turnest thou thy face away? And forgettest our want and our trouble?
24. For our soul is humbled down to the dust: our belly cleaveth to the earth.
25. Arise, O Lord, help us: and redeem us for thy name's sake.

The Psalms are songs of praise and cover a period of about 1000 years, from the time of Moses (ca. 1400 B.C.) to the Israelites' return from exile (ca. 450 B.C.). They deal with selected events of that period and provide us with the thoughts and feelings of those who went through the experiences recorded. After being made a Cardinal by Pope Clement VIII, Saint Robert Bellarmine, prepared for posterity his very own commentary on each of the Psalms. Enclosed are his interpretations on each of the Psalms.

PSALM NUMBER: 43

EXPLANATION OF THE PSALM

1. "We have heard, O God, with our ears: our fathers have declared to us, the worry thou hast wrought in their days, and in the days of old." God's people under

They now prove, by the testimony of God himself, that they did not forget him, as they already stated; for they say, "if we have forgotten the name of our God, and if we have spread forth our hands to a strange God," that is, to pray to him, "shall not God search out these things?" Most certainly he will, and find out all, "for he knoweth the secrets of the heart." He will certainly find out that we did not forget his name, "because for thy sake we are killed all the day long." They conclude by asking God to put an end to the persecution, because they are daily put to death and tormented by reason of their adherence to him; "we are counted as sheep for the slaughter," butchered every day like so many sheep, who are incapable of offering any resistance.

22. "Arise, why sleepest thou, O Lord? Arise, and cast us not off to the end." While your business is thus being done, and your servants are suffering so much in doing it, why are you silent, as if you were asleep, and were not cognizant of it? "Arise from sleep;" act as they do who rise from their sleep, and begin to see what they did not see before; "arise" to help us, "and cast us not off" from your favor "to the end," to the consummation, until, through your assistance, there shall be an end to the persecution. St. Paul alludes to this passage in Rom. 8, where he says, "who then shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation? Or distress? Or famine? Or nakedness? Or danger? Or persecutions? Or the sword? As it is written: for thy sake we have put the death; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter."

23. "Why turnest thou thy face away? And forgettest our want and our trouble?" He goes on with the same prayer, using two other metaphors. He drew one from sheep in the preceding verse, and now he takes one from the aversion of God's face; and the other from his forgetfulness; neither of which can, properly, be applied to God. God, however, is set to turn away his face, as if he did not see our wretchedness, when he does not help us; and he is also set to forget when he does not succor the needy and the troubled, as if he altogether forgot them.

24. "For our soul is humbled down to the dust: our belly cleaveth to the earth." Continuing the same prayer, and knowing that the prayer of the humble is most grateful to God, he now says, that he has humbled himself to such a degree, that he can humble himself no more. He who will pray while he stands, can humble himself by kneeling; and he who prays in that position, can humble himself still more by prostration; but when once so humbled, he can go no further. Now, one can be humbled in mind and body even to the earth: in mind, if he truly reflect, and understand, and acknowledge that he is mere dust, and the language of Abraham, who said, "I will speak to my Lord, I, who am but dust and ashes:" in his body, if he prays prostrate on the earth, as Matthew and Mark relate of our Lord. If Luke says he prayed on that occasion, on his knees, it only shows that he began the prayer on his knees, and concluded it in a prostrate position. The petitioners here pray in both positions, for they say, "for our soul is humbled down to the dust; our belly cleaveth to the earth." Acknowledging ourselves to be dust, our bellies in prostration have adhered to the earth, while he prayed in that position.

25. "Arise, O Lord, help us: and redeem us for thy name's sake." He now adds the last and most efficacious reason for moving God to deal mercifully with his people; and that is, to save his name from further blasphemy. "Arise, and help us," in this our trouble; "and redeem us;" that is, deliver us, "for thy name's sake;" that it may no longer be blasphemed, but glorified; and, as "thou hast sold thy people for no price," redeem them now without any price; not for our deserts, but "for thy name's sake;" through your mercy and kindness. For the better understanding of this, we will now discuss a few points that naturally present themselves to the reader. The first is, how it happens that the speakers

15. "All the day long my shame is before me: and the confusion of my face hath covered me."

16. "At the voice of him that reproacheth and detracteth me, at the face of the enemy and persecutor." He now describes the effect of his being so derided and jeered at; it quite confused and confounded him. During the whole of my persecution "my shame was before me;" it was not always staring me in the face, and encompassing me all round like a veil and all this confusion was caused by "the voice of him that reproacheth and detracteth me;" by those who call me a fool for worshiping one that had been crucified; and an impious person for not worshiping the gods; falsely reproaching me with infanticide, incest, and similar crimes; and he explains who these were that so charged him when he adds, "at the face of the enemy and the persecutor," all done by his enemies. Such confusion and shame, however, would not appear to apply to the holy martyrs, when it is written, "he that shall be ashamed of me, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he shall come in his majesty and that of his Father," Luke 9; and again, "he that shall acknowledge me before men, the Son of Man will acknowledge him when he shall come with his holy angels in the glory of his father." The Lord does not prohibit shame and confusion when it does not prevent the knowledge of, or adherence to the truth. He censures those only who are so overcome by shame as not only not to know Christ, but even to deny him; and the following verse proves that it is not of such persons he speaks here.

17. "All of these things have come upon us, yet we have not forgotten thee: and we have not done wickedly in thy covenant." Having related the favors of the Almighty to the fathers of old, and his desertion and abandonment of them in latter times, the Prophet, speaking in their person, asserts that their sins cannot be alleged as a cause for treatment so different, and says, "all these things have come upon us," we have suffered all these persecutions and troubles; and, however, "we have not forgotten thee," we have not forsaken you to worship other gods. The term "forgetting God," is not infrequently applied to idolatry in the Scripture, as in Psalm 105, "they changed their glory into the likeness of a calf that eateth grass. They forgot God who saved them, who had done great things in Egypt;" and in Deut. 32, "they sacrificed to devils and not to God. Thou hast forsaken the God that begot thee, and hast forgotten, the Lord that had created thee;" and in this very Psalm, "if we have forgotten the name of our God, and if we have spread forth our hands to a strange God." They then insist that they did not worship any other god; and, therefore, they say, "we have not forgotten thee, and we have not done wickedly in thy Covenant;" that is to say, we have not only not acknowledged other gods in forgetfulness of you, but we have not even "done wickedly in thy covenant," the covenant you struck with us for our observance on Mount Sinai. And thus they protest that they neither deserted God, nor transgressed his law.

18. "And our heart had not turned back: neither hast thou turned aside our steps from thy way." They repeat the same, in different terms, to establish their innocence more fully; for they say, when we did go with you we did so cordially, we neither turned back nor deserted you.

19. "For thou hast humbled us in the place of affliction: and the shadow of death hath covered us." The latter part of this verse should be read first, thus, "the shadow of death hath covered us, for thou hast humbled us in the place of affliction," which means that we have been immersed in the depth of miseries.

20. "If we have forgotten the name of our God, and if we have spread forth our hands to a strange god."

21. "Shall not God search out these things? For he knoweth the secrets of the heart. Because for thy sake we are killed all the day long: we are counted as sheep for the slaughter."

persecution, and groaning in affliction, brings to his recollection the wonderful things God was wont to do for the defense of his faithful, and wonders how he now seems to have deserted them, thereby hoping to move him to mercy. "O God," says the Prophet, speaking in the person of the Church, or the martyrs of both Testaments, "we have heard with our ears" he might have said "we have heard," simply, but he adds, "with our ears," to express the greater certainty St. John, in the beginning of his first epistle, uses the same language, "what we have seen with our eyes, and our hands have handled," when he might have said, "we have seen and handled;" but such phrases, somehow, strengthen the assertions. They say, then, when they heard it, "our fathers have declared to us." It was not by vague rumor, or from people we did not know, that we heard it, but from our fathers, men worthy of belief, who never could have deceived us, "they declared to us." What did they hear or learn from them? "The work thou hast wrought in their days, and in the days of old." Our fathers told us not only of the wonderful works you did in their own times, but in the times of their fathers before them.

2. "Thy hand destroyed the Gentiles, and thou planted them; thou didst afflict the people and cast them out." Descending to particulars, he instances one of the wonderful works God did for his faithful in the days of their fathers, "thy hand destroyed the Gentiles," you scattered, and destroyed, and expelled from the land of promise the Chananeans and Jebuseans that dwelt therein, "and thou planted them;" you established our fathers in their place; "thou didst afflict the people and cast them out;" you harassed them in various grievous battles, until you finally rooted and "cast them out" of the land of promise. From this passage we can infer that what he said in the first verse, "our fathers have declared to us the work thou hast wrought in their days," does not refer to one particular date or epoch, but to a succession of events. Because the things recorded here happened in the time of Moses and Josue, who could not possibly have stated these matters to the Maccabees, nor to the apostles, nor even to David himself, but that those facts were handed down for one generation to another. "Thou planted them," a highly figurative expression, implying that the Hebrews were as firmly fixed and rooted in the land of promise as if they had grown there, and that it would be as difficult to expel them as it would be to tear up a tree from its roots. Trees, also, once planted, not only grow and get firmly fixed in the earth, but they also increase and multiply, as David himself, in a beautiful metaphor, expresses it in Psalm 79, "thou planted the roots thereof and it filled the land, the shadow of it covered the hills, and the branches thereof the cedars of God."

3. "For they got not the possession of the land by their own sword: neither did their own arm save them. But thy right hand and thy arm, and the light of thy countenance: because thou wast pleased with them." He proves what he stated in the previous verse. "For they got not the possession of the land by their own sword," that is to say, our fathers, it is true, in the days of Moses and Josue, fought with the Chananeans, but, had you not been their "helper and protector," they would not only have failed in getting possession of the country, but they would not have been able to escape with their lives from the enemy, by reason of their being fewer in number, less skilled in war and having fortified cities to oppose them. It was not, then, by their swords, or by their arms, that they got hold of the land of promise, "but thy right hand, and thy arm and the light of thy countenance," put them in possession, and preserved them in their battles with the Chananeans, from death or captivity; and all this, "because thou wast pleased with them;" all this was the consequence, not of their virtues or merits, but of your having freely chosen them to be your people. The truth of all this is evident from Jos. 6, where we read that at the mere shout of the children of Israel, the walls of Jericho tumbled tee totally to

to the ground; and in chapter 10, where we read that while Josue was fighting, that God discharged a shower of hailstones on the enemy; and the Scripture says, “that many more were killed with the hailstones, than were slain by the swords of the children of Israel.”

4. “Thou art thyself my king and my God; who commandest the saving of Jacob.” God’s people now expresses its admiration, saying, “thou art thyself my king and my God; “you that assisted and protected our fathers by reason of being their king and their God, you are our God and our king too; the very same “who commandest the saving of Jacob;” you who were wont to save your people, called after Jacob. “Who commandest; who savest your people, not by fighting for them, or helping them, as one king would another; but by a simple word, by a simple command.

5. “Through thee we will push down our enemies with the horn: and through thy name he will despise them that rise up against us.” He now shows that not only is God the same that he was in the days of their fathers, but that the people too are the same; and that they have the hope in God that their fathers had; and is, therefore, astonished how the same God can deal so differently with the same people; how he could bring them off conquerors on every occasion, and now permit them to be subdued and conquered. “Through thee we will push down our enemies with the horn;” we, too, if you help and protect us, will equally subdue our enemies; “and through thy name we will despise them that rise up against us;” once we invoke your name we will have no fear of the enemy, and will make little of any attempt of theirs upon us. “We will push down our enemies with the horn,” is a metaphor, taken from the bull, who uses his horns to strike down everything in his way, so we, relying on thy power, will break down every obstacle, and demolish all our enemies with the same ease and facility that the bull beats down everything before him.

6. “For I will not trust in my bow: neither shall my sword save me.” He goes on with the resemblance between the past and the present people of God. As they got no possession of the land by the sword, so I and my people “will not trust in my bow;” will not rely on our arms or our strength; “neither shall my sword save me;” I know and feel, that if we conquer, it will not be by our swords, but through your help.

7. “But thou hast saved us from them that afflict us; and hast put them to shame that hate us.” He now explains the expression, “my sword shall not save me,” by saying, “but thou hast saved us from those that afflict us;” that is, I acknowledge my safety is not owing to my own strength, because, as often as I have been rescued from any danger, you “have saved us from those that afflict us;” and “put to shame;” so protecting us as to frustrate their designs, and cause them to retire in confusion “that hate us;” our enemies who sought to destroy us.

8. “In God shall we glory all the day long: and in thy name we will give praise forever.” He infers from the foregoing, that God’s people, whenever they shall be delivered from any tribulation, will thank God for it, and give him the whole glory thereof.

“In God shall we glory in him all the day long.” We won’t glory in ourselves, but we will always glory in God who delivered us; “and in thy name,” and in the name of the Lord we will praise and glorify him forever.

9. “But now thou cast us off, and put us to shame: and thou, O God, wilt not go out with our armies.” The stricken people now begin to complain; they are astonished! “But now!” You, who so favored and cherished us, “hast cast us off, and put us to shame.” In the days of Antiochus, to be called a Jew was a disgrace; under the Roman emperors, the name of a Christian was stamped with infamy, and the faithful seemed to have been abandoned by God. “And thou, O God, will not go out with our armies.” If we want to repel the incursions of our enemies, you, who always led us to the fight, will not now accompany us, to fight for your people.

10. “Thou hast made us turn our back to our enemies: and they that hated us plundered for themselves.” The persecution continued. “Thou hast made us turn our back to our enemies.” We that were in the van, have been thrown back into the rear; obliged to follow our enemies as so many captives. And our enemies “that hated us,” used their own discretion, and “plundered for themselves,” converted everything to their own use.

11. “Thou has given us up like sheep to be eaten: thou hast scattered us among the nations.” A beautiful description of the sufferings of the martyrs. You let us be slaughtered as if we were so many sheep, who are daily killed in great numbers, without being able to offer the slightest resistance. “Thou hast scattered us amongst the nations,” those who were not slaughtered, were dispersed all over the world; as has been the case with many of the saints.

12. “Thou hast sold thy people for no price: and there was no reckoning in the exchange of them.” He alludes to another description of punishment to which the martyrs were subjected, as if they were the vilest of slaves; they were employed in cutting marble, or attending cattle, or obliged to combat with wild beasts in the theaters, for the amusement of the people. “Thou hast sold thy people for no price;” you have handed them over to their enemies, and got nothing in return, “and there was no reckoning in the exchange of them.” What you got in return for them was so small that it was not worth counting.

13. “Thou hast made us a reproach to our neighbors, a scoff and derision to them that are round about us.” In addition to the corporal punishments, they were scoffed at and derided. God having suffered them to be visited by so many temporal calamities, all the neighbors around them began to scoff at and deride them.

14. “Thou has made us a byword among the Gentiles: a shaking of the head among the peoples.” When the Gentiles wished to express anything very odious or baleful, they would compare it to us; and the people not only spoke in such terms of us, but they shook their heads at us, in hatred and derision.