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A HEALING JOURNEY THROUGH THREE PSALMS: Spiritual Imagination and Psalms XXII - XXIV



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ABSTRACT

Through spiritual imagination, we may be led to visions of structure in scriptural texts and to a grasp of process in human events of which we might otherwise remain un-aware. From that standpoint, the author relates a transit from psalm xxii to psalm xxiv and depicts it as a healing journey. In describing the movement of that journey, he suggests that the first lines of each psalm tell the story of an ascent and its consummation:

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?
The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
The earth is the lord's, and the fullness thereof.

He notes that all three psalms are attributed to Israel's greatest king, David, *a man after God's own heart* (Acts 13:22) who knew greatness and anguish in equal measure. David is also the first writer in history to use the word "I" *autobiographically*—that is, in the sense of a personal, interior self. Thus, the author asserts, these three psalms reflect a psy-chospiritual perspective with insights based on an individual sense of self in personal relation to God—and the journey portrayed involves a raising of that perspective to its utmost human height. He examines various images, including those of sacred geometry, to illustrate how the journey begins with lamentation, passes through a sheltered middle, and arrives at unqualified praise—and shows how it is strategically assisted by unseen movements of Spirit acting on its own initiative. In human terms, the transit is the story of a distraught soul healed of its anguish and raised to a state of lasting peace and harmony. The path begins with a weak but sustained stirring in the lower half of Psalm XXII, which is a long cry of lamentation. Despite his weakness and irresolution, the psalmist eventually acts decisively, persisting in petition rather than complaint long enough to be available for being raised up by the invisible action of Spirit—first to the higher half of Psalm XXII, a paean of praise, and then to the pastoral peace of the Twenty-Third Psalm. There, he receives comfort rather than pain, care rather than cruelty, and comes to a deeper sense of his own nature. He is then raised yet again—to the heights of the holy hill presented in Psalm XXIV where his spiritual understanding is further increased, the circumference of his spiritual vision is extended, and his condition becomes one of perpetual receptivity to the "Lord of glory." The author concludes that in our existential condition we may find ourselves again and again surrounded by difficulties and the hostility of those round about us. Each time we must take our stand in calling upon and remaining available to Spirit and we must persist in that stand despite our fear and despair. It is not enough, but it is necessary. Spirit will not fail us. Then, as this brief study in spiritual imagination discloses, redemptive, healing change will come—and we shall be raised to new hope, higher ground, and deeper spirituality each time.

A HEALING JOURNEY THROUGH THREE PSALMS

SPIRITUAL IMAGINATION AND PSALMS XXII-XXIV

J. KINGSTON COWART, M.S.

*The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou
hearest the sound thereof, but canst not
tell whence it cometh. John 3:8 (KJV)*

*The spirit of the Lord shall come upon him,
the spirit of wisdom and understanding.
Isaiah 11:2 (KJV)*

*“Scrutamini scripturas.” These two
words have undone the world.¹
John Seldon*

Spiritual imagination enables the unseen to be seen in the seen for the sake of healing the soul. Face to face with God there is no religion, but there is always spirit. We do well then to speak of the spiritual and not the religious imagination—and to remember that even when imagination ceases, spirit remains. Through the advent of spiritual imagination we may be led to visions of structure in scriptural texts and to a grasp of process in human events of which we might otherwise remain unaware. For those initiated in sacred geometry, the lines, curves, planes, levels, and landscapes of a given set of scriptures may be most telling. Yet even when there has been no initiation, but introduction only—and sometimes even in the absence of any prior introduction at all—a beginning can be made. In fact, with respect to spiritual imagination no more than a beginning can ever be made. For what is of greatest importance is never imagination itself, but where it leaves off and spirit does not. Thus, when rightly done, starting out results in a return. The return is to a silent place within, a still point from which the true self has never departed—so that one returns to find oneself already always there, but each time in a somewhat different way. It is a place of both being and choosing to be. Spiritual imagination can be our guide. It can lead us there from

¹ *Scrutamini scripturas*: Let us examine the scriptures. John Seldon, *Table Talk*, 1689.

wherever we may think we are. Sometimes the transit has the nature of a healing journey in which a distraught soul is restored by grace to a state of peace and harmony.

There are three psalms, XXII-XXIV, which taken together embody just such a journey.² It is especially meaningful for us that they are attributed to Israel's greatest king, David, for not only was he *a man after God's own heart* (Acts 13:22) who knew greatness and anguish in equal measure, but he was also the first writer in history to use the word "I" *autobiographically*—that is, in the sense of a personal, interior self.³ Thus, our three psalms may be seen to reflect a psychospiritual perspective with insights based on an individual sense of self in personal relation to God.

The journey we examine here involves a raising of that perspective to its utmost human height. Of the three psalms, the Twenty-Third is central. By virtue of its centrality it calls the other two—on its left and right—to mind. Moreover, it forms an intersection between them, mediating the passage from the first to the third. It is thus a mediative text. The Twenty-Third Psalm is also essentially a meditative poem.⁴ The movement of mediation is from the middle. The movement of meditation is both toward the middle and to the middle. That is because meditation has two complementary aspects. On the one hand it involves our moving toward the middle with the energy of our own initiative. The image of the one who sits down to meditate and turns his consciousness inward comes to mind in this regard. On the other hand, and far more profoundly, meditation is a matter of our *being moved to* the middle quite apart from our own initiative altogether. Without our willingly moving *toward* the middle to begin with we are not available to be moved *to* the middle when the possibility for that is made present. And without our being moved to the middle (by spirit) we may benefit psychologically but surely not spiritually. Being at the middle is vital, for from the middle one can think and understand laterally; one can consider and grasp

² See Appendix, pp. 15-17 below, for the full text of all three psalms.

³ David Cahill, *The Gifts of the Jews: How a Tribe of Desert Nomads Changed the Way Everyone Thinks and Feels*. vol. 2 of *The Hinges of History* (New York: Nan A. Talese, 1998).

⁴ Mary Ellen Chase, *The Psalms for the Common Reader* (New York: Norton, 1962).

evenly both the left and the right. At the middle one can be thus informed from both sides—and from the center itself. What is most important, however, is that in the centrality of the middle we may wait in hope of transformation.

The Twenty-Third Psalm is not a hymn—yet it occupies a central position between two hymns, and joins them together in a suite of three parts. On its left lies Psalm XXII, a hymn of half lament and half praise. To its right we find Psalm XXIV, a hymn of praise alone. Our healing journey through the three thus begins with lamentation, passes through the middle, and arrives at unqualified praise. Spiritual imagination discloses a progress through them. That progress is in fact an ascent which, as we shall discover, is strategically assisted by unseen movements of spirit itself.

Keeping in mind John Seldon's warning that scrutiny of the scriptures can lead to strife and division (see fn. 1), let us first acknowledge that it will seem capricious to some that we take these three psalms together in a meaningful way. On the common view, they are not sequentially linked. Each is singular and merely ordinally but not operationally related to the others. Although all are attributed to David, each possesses a typology different from the others and is said to serve a purpose of its own. Psalm XXII, for instance, is most likely an expression of the communal suffering of the people of Israel. For many Christians it is prophetic of Christ's passion. The Twenty-Third Psalm, however, is regarded as a pastoral testimony of the personal presence of God. Its mood is calming, sheltering, and peaceful. Psalm XXIV differs from both of the others. At the apex of our healing journey, it is the fullest of the three. It is a cultic and cultural paean in honor of a national deity associated with David's defeat of the Jebusites, a victory which put him in possession of all Jerusalem. It is a song of greeting.⁵ It also is a hymn of the godly life.⁶ And moreover, as we shall see, it contains an image of the moment of meeting between God and man. The appearance of these psalms together might therefore seem to be only a happenstance of

⁵ Abraham Cohen, *The Psalms*, Soncino Books of the Bible Series (London: The Soncino Press, 1964) p. 483.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

compilation.

With no desire for dispute and with considerable respect for those who keep to conventional views, we need not apologize for apprehending what they may not. We may choose to recognize the possibility of meaningful coincidence in the way these texts have fallen together. We may choose also to recognize that, once written and compiled, a text or series of texts makes a stand of its own. We may accept that once it comes into existence a work becomes a thing unto itself—and not only unto itself but also unto those who seek to understand it; whose imagination for understanding is open to and opened by spirit. We may agree with the phenomenological hermeneutics of Charles Winquist or at least with the belief that such a text “no longer belongs to the author and to the privacy of the author’s intention” but that “it resides among other texts in the order of language.”⁷ And if we recognize God as the ultimate author, we need not argue that his word, once written down, is condemned to speak only in terms of accepted convention.

Thus it is altogether plausible that a latent structure lies waiting within the texts of Psalms XXII-XXIV—and not just within them, but in the relation of ascent among them, as well. An initial look at the first lines of each psalm in turn reveals a raising of perspective which supports this premise:

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

The earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof.⁸

PSALM XXII

As we examine each of these psalms more fully, we see that Psalm XXII consists of two distinct halves. The first half is lamentary and the second is laudatory. Even the first

⁷ Charles E. Winquist, *Epiphanies of Darkness: Deconstruction in Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), p. 49.

⁸ All scriptural quotations are from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible unless otherwise indicated.

half, however, is trapped in duality for in it “laments and petitions alternate” abruptly and “the mood of the worshipper restlessly fluctuates to and fro between trembling fear and yearning desire.”⁹ A sense of frenetic energy builds here at the base of our ascent, but it has no access upward. Eventually, it would seem, this energy must expend itself in collapse and despair—for so long as one is dually drawn by both fear and desire there is no way out of the dilemma. No one in that condition is available to the salvific action of Spirit should it arise.

A sudden change of perspective occurs at verse 22 however. This verse begins the second half of the text, which now shifts to a song of praise in response to salvation. We cannot say that the change *occurs* at verse 22, for by then it has *already* occurred—but it has *not yet* occurred in verse 21, although that is the verse which makes the shift possible. What follows it is a striking rise from a beseeching petition for rescue (v. 21: “Save me from the mouth of the lion”) to an exultant song of praise for the rescuer (v. 22: “I will tell of thy name unto my brethren”).

How has this come about? To answer that question we must first consider three basic elements of human existence affecting the psalmist: his circumstance, his situation, and his condition. Circumstance is that which *encircles* us. It is the surround in which all things are encompassed. One circumstance is encircled by another, then another, and ultimately by the cosmos. Situation is placement, the way in which one is *sited* within the surrounding circumstance. Human existence is situated in the material order and within time. Any individual human life consists of movement from one situation to another over time. Condition is a specific *state of being* at a given moment in a particular situation. With respect to a person, it entails the state of body, mind, and spirit together. In the midst of any circumstance and situation it may well be one’s condition which determines the outcome of events.

⁹ Artur Weiser, *The Psalms: A Commentary* [Die Psalmen], trans. Herbert Harwell (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), p 132.

The psalmist's circumstance, the immediate reality of his surround, is one of acute danger. He is encompassed by three separate concentric rings of threat. At farthest reach are bulls whose horns can pierce him to the quick and whose ravenous bellowings terrify him (vv. 12-15). Then nearer to him, he is beset by dogs capable of bringing him down and tearing him apart (v. 16a). Finally he is surrounded at close quarters by evildoers who seek his complete psychological and physical destruction (vv. 16-18).

When we look to his situation, the way in which he is placed within the surround, we find the psalmist at the middle ground, which is a circle in itself. It is important to note that from the perspective of spiritual imagination this inner circle is a precursor of the one presented later in Psalm XXIV (the destination of our journey), where at v. 6 we discover the "circle of those who turn to Him" (JPS).¹⁰ Naturally, this circle has a midpoint central to it and there are thus five structural elements to be seen in relation to the psalmist: three outer circles, an inner circle, and a midpoint.

As for his condition, initially the psalmist is the epitome of psychological despair. A distraught soul cringing in the midst of desperate misfortune, he is "a worm and no man," someone "scorned by men" and "despised by the people" (v. 6). Perhaps his eventual salvation is stimulated by the very abjectness of his ego, or the unpretentious plea he makes in verses 19-21. There he recognizes that the Lord, and not himself, is his strength (v. 19), seeks the deliverance of his soul (v. 20), and begs to be spared from the lion's mouth (v. 21). Yet although the psalmist is situated in the middle circle and has called out, he has not yet taken his stand at the midpoint, not yet made a true turn to the Lord. From verses 1-8 he muddles the middle badly—fluctuating between fear and desire, running back and forth, leaning one way and then the other, utterly unable to save himself. He is not entirely without hope, for hope is his birthright given him by God: "Thou didst make me hope when I was

¹⁰ Here I follow the Jewish Publication Society version of the Tanakh (Philadelphia, 1985) where "circle" is preferred to "generation" which is commonly found. A philological argument for this based on probable original vowel assignment for רָוַד in v. 6 (*dur* for circle rather than *dor* for generation) is presented in Donald W. Parry, "Temple Worship and a Possible Reference to a Prayer Circle in Psalm 24," *BYU Studies* 32 (Summer 1992): 59.

upon my mother's breasts" (v. 9, KJV). As Søren Kierkegaard taught so truly, however, hope alone is never enough.¹¹ That is especially true when hope is not yet attached to action because the hope is still attached to despair.

By verse 21, however, something very different has happened. He has turned again from despair to petition, but now has *persisted* in it for a time, satisfying both the requirement of faithfulness and the necessity for a willingness to relinquish attachment to despair itself. He has made a lasting turn and kept faith with petition, remaining a petitioner long enough to have cried out for salvation in three consecutive verses. In this the potential of the central "circle of those who turn to Him" (the capacity of centeredness at the midpoint to invite and to host both psychological change and spiritual transformation) is fulfilled.

We ought here to recognize a significant difference between our English text and the Hebrew when it comes to verse 21. We read "Save ... my afflicted soul from the horns of the wild oxen." But the Hebrew translates more directly as "from the horns of the wild oxen do thou answer me."¹² This difference is profound. On this original reading we see that the psalmist—while taking his stand at the midpoint, which is the first structure—has cast his attention and his hope outward to the fourth structure, which is the third circle, the ring of bulls. That is the object of his utterance. The subject, however, is God to whom he has turned in petition. He is thus focused primarily on his deliverer and not his tormentors. If we pause to rest with these images a moment, spiritual imagination may quicken a new understanding of what waits within the text. We may then see that the horns which might once have gored the psalmist have become instruments through which God answers and delivers him. Since we are dealing with a hymn, a musical image is entirely appropriate. The ox horn is an ancient wind instrument, and wind is an image of spirit as the breath of God. It is fitting, in fact, to think of the psalmist's cry as a note sounded from the first position and

¹¹ Søren Kierkegaard, *Repetition*, in *Fear and Trembling / Repetition*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong & Enda H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), see p. 132.

¹² Cohen, *op.cit.*, p. 64. Note: v. 21 in the RSV and KJV is found at v. 22 in the Hebrew text.

of God's answer as a correspondent sounded from the fourth. The effect of this is to raise the first note above itself—a musical image of transformation.

John Dixon has rightly written that “structure is shape and ordered relation” while “process is communication among structures” and “the reshaping of one structure into another” as well as “the transformation of one structure by another.”¹³ But the transformation in this case occurs not to a structure but to the psalmist within it. It occurs—unseen from outside and unspoken in the text—in the *space between* verses 21 and 22. It is not part of a process. It is not the influence of one structure upon another but an instantaneous instance of divine intervention instead. There, in the invisible interstice where spirit often lists (that is, inclines itself), the psalmist is raised up out of his situation—and to a new condition, as well.

Raised up to where, we may ask. If we regard Psalm XXII as an unrelated singularity, then he is merely raised up to the second half of the psalm itself. With respect to our healing journey of ascent, however, that does not reach high enough. If we recall that the transformation took place after he had taken his stand at the midpoint (and persisted in it) then we will understand that he has been raised to a higher middle. We shall therefore look for him in the Twenty-Third Psalm, which lies above Psalm XXII at the midpoint of our transit.

PSALM XXIII

The tranquility of this poem bespeaks its meditative quality through images of nature and relationship with God. Where enemies are mentioned, they are no longer a threat but merely a presence without menace. Neither darkness nor evil can provoke fear now, as is made clear in verse 4: “though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil.” The imagery of this verse requires careful attention. A closer translation of the Hebrew

¹³ John W. Dixon, Jr., *The Physiology of Faith: A Theory of Theological Relativity* (New York: Harper and Row, 1979), p. 76 (italics deleted).

yields “the valley of deep gloom.”¹⁴ There is no doubt a presentiment of physical death in the image, but it speaks more deeply of the archetype of the *abyss* of despair, and the spiritual death of those who fall into it and keep on falling. In Psalm XXII the psalmist had been brought down low and almost to the point of destruction while God was “en-throned” above him (v. 3). He was so cast down he seemed at times in danger of falling away into despair forever.

In the Twenty-Third Psalm, however, he and God are together on the even planes of green pastures and still waters in a state of peace and harmony. God is with him and his relation to the abyss is not one of falling down, but of walking through. Also, the great separation between the height of God and the depth of man’s distance from him depicted in Psalm XXII disappears in the image of God leading, feeding, and anointing him at the level of the Twenty-Third Psalm. And while the still waters (which are likely also deep waters) may provide another image of the abyss, the psalmist is led beside them, not into them, and remains safe with the divine shepherd.

Once again we find him in the center of a circle, but very differently. This time the circle is invisible, and he is not alone within it. It is a circle of immediate divine protection. In terms of sacred geometry the rod and the staff—the instruments of that protection—define its circumference by their lines of extension. The divine shepherd occupies the exact spiritual center at the geometric middle of the circle and his protection radiates in every direction, wherever the psalmist may be led. Whenever the shepherd moves to guide, protect, and comfort his sheep the spatial relation between them remains the same. His staff and rod are a vertical rule and a horizontal measure, representing governance of heaven and earth, time and place. The extension of the divine rod and staff outward and upward is essentially limitless, for God is infinite—yet, for the psalmist’s sake, they describe an existential limit because man is not. Thus he is with God in the present and upon the green pastures. Here again the meditative quality of the Twenty-Third Psalm is revealed, for the

¹⁴ Cohen, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

word "contemplation" (an aspect of meditation) derives from the Latin *contemplatus*, which refers to being with (*con*) the divine in a given time (*tempus*) and place (*platus*).

Even so—despite his finitude, and even while sheltering within the apparent temporal and physical limits of the existential world—the psalmist is given an intimation of an ever ongoing relation with the divine which, as we shall see, is fulfilled in Psalm XXIV. It is here in Psalm XXIII that he arrives at the spiritual certainty that he is to “dwell in the house of the Lord forever” (v. 6). He has been raised to a far higher level of self-understanding than he possessed in the pain and confusion of Psalm XXII. He now seems content in his own nature, whereas previously he had thought himself “a worm and no man.” His understanding seems also informed with a hint of what awaits him. In the final verse of the Twenty-Third Psalm he tells us with conviction that “goodness and mercy shall follow” him. This is an indication of further movement to come, for unless he be moved again he cannot be followed.

PSALM XXIV

Having taken his stand in a precursor to the “circle of those who turn to Him” (XXII, v. 6) and having then been lifted up to a circle of divine protection, the psalmist’s movement thus far has been an ascent. There is no reason to expect that God will let him down now. In Psalm XXIV, however, he is raised not only to a much higher place (“the hill of the Lord” v. 3) but to a higher point of view: to the perspective that “The earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof; the world and they that dwell therein” (v. 1). In the language of sacred geometry the hill is a blessed circle and also a rising cone and from the height of its center the psalmist now surveys a yet greater circle in which the circumference of his vision extends to all the world as God’s creation.

We do well now to recall that Psalm XXIV is a hymn of the godly life (see fn. 4). At this point in his healing journey, the psalmist no longer speaks of himself personally. He simply expresses the Creator’s relation to his creation—of which the psalmist is himself a

part, as creature. From this perspective his seeing encompasses past, present, and future in a single spiritual vision of divine dominion. The earth *is* the Lord's (v. 1); he *founded* it (v. 2); and the clean of hand and pure of heart *will* receive his blessing (v. 5). Despite this coextensive temporal quality, however, the psalmist's perspective in Psalm XXIV is raised to a view of what we must call an ever ongoing lifting up. He sings "Lift up your heads, O gates! and be lifted up O ancient doors! that the King of glory may come in" (v. 7).

Why is this an ever ongoing lifting up? Because, as noted earlier (see fn. 5), Psalm XXIV is also a hymn of greeting. Greeting is always a beginning. Greeting is always new. One greets those whom one has not yet fully met in the given moment. Sometimes we even greet anew those with whom we have been but moments before—even as we sometimes offer up repeated prayers with each one beginning anew each time. Man's meeting with God is always a greeting, always a beginning. The finite can never lay claim to any full meeting with the infinite. Where God greets us, and we reciprocate receptively, spirit enters in with deep peace and harmony. We are stilled. We are filled. But we cannot respond thus in return. We can neither still nor fill the divine. Nor, no matter how full the meeting may be on our part, can we ever fully meet the whole fullness of God. We can neither contain nor sustain it. Yet we are nevertheless always being made fully whole ourselves (being healed) from the first moment of greeting. In the words of Wallace Stevens, "Alpha continues to begin / Omega is refreshed at every end."¹⁵ He is right to say *every* end, for there is no final *ending* in any such end. Each end is always a new beginning. Psalm XXIV presents an image of continuous introduction to the ongoing incoming of the eternal King.

¹⁵ Wallace Stevens, "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven," in *The Necessary Angel: Essays on Reality and the Imagination* (New York: Random House, 1951), p. 31.

CONCLUSION

Informed by spiritual imagination, we have seen a transit from Psalm XXII to XXIV and called it a healing journey. In describing the movement which defines that journey, we have noted that the first lines of each psalm tell the story of an ascent and its consummation:

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof.

Our examination of the healing journey through these three psalms has revealed it to be a passage from the depths of despair, through a sheltered middle, to the height of a vision of perpetual encounter with the divine. We have seen a distraught soul healed of its anguish and raised to a state of lasting peace and harmony. The path of this passage began with a weak but sustained stirring in the lower order, at the midpoint between the two halves of Psalm XXII. The psalmist had to act decisively, to persist in his petition. Although his action was insufficient in itself, it was nonetheless necessary if he were to be raised to a higher middle. From within what we may recognize as a harbinger of the circle of those who turn to the Lord, in the fullness of which he is later to be found at the height of his journey, he sounded a note which was answered and raised above itself. Although the concentric circles of his peril in Psalm XXII were visible and his agony was palpable, the action of spirit in the interstice between petition and praise occurred unseen and apparently unfelt. He was evidently conscious of its having occurred, but not of its occurring. He had little in the way of self-understanding. In the Twenty-Third Psalm all of this was reversed. The circle of his protection was invisible but God provided him with visible and tangible blessings. He received comfort rather than pain, care rather than cruelty, and was conscious of this as it continued to happen. He came to a deeper sense of his own nature.

From this higher middle he was raised again. In Psalm XXIV his spiritual understanding was further increased and the circumference of his vision was extended. Yet, again, he had to make ready for it. This is revealed in verse 7: “Lift up your heads, O gates! and be lifted up, O ancient doors!” Just as in Psalm XXII, here also is an image of an action that is raised above itself. These gates and doors are the gates and doors of a soul open to and opened by spirit in spiritual imagination. They are the twin gates and double doors of willing attention and attentive willing—the spiritual eyes of the soul. In raising up to admit the Lord they are lifted up by the Lord, as the King of glory, who is always coming in to what is forever his own. His entering is never-ending.

The healing journey never ends, either. In our existential condition we shall find ourselves again and again surrounded by difficulties and the hostility of those round about us. Although we may envision it differently every time, each time we must first start out again in order to return to the place we have truly never left: the midpoint, the secure and balanced center of every circle into which we are set. We must cease to fret with anxious worry and we must call upon spirit. We must take our stand in that call and persist in taking it despite our fear and despair. It is not enough, but it is necessary. Spirit will not fail us. Redemptive, healing change will come. We may not realize it at first, for spirit works invisibly to produce its visible works. Yet we shall be raised to new hope and higher ground each time nonetheless. Every time, we shall be given a new set of images (new views of reality) to guide our understanding—and with every form which spiritual imagination may take, we must step back from it, release it, so that the way is clear for another. Spirit never ceases to offer its blessings. So long as the gates are open, then even where spiritual imagination leaves off, spirit remains to do its work unseen—continually inviting and escorting us to the ever-present and always ongoing coming in of the Lord himself, who is never not with us.

APPENDIX

Psalm XXII (RSV)

- 1: My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?*
- 2: O my God, I cry by day, but thou dost not answer; and by night, but find no rest.*
- 3: Yet thou art holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel.*
- 4: In thee our fathers trusted; they trusted, and thou didst deliver them.*
- 5: To thee they cried, and were saved; in thee they trusted, and were not disappointed.*
- 6: But I am a worm, and no man; scorned by men, and despised by the people.*
- 7: All who see me mock at me, they make mouths at me, they wag their heads;*
- 8: "He committed his cause to the LORD; let him deliver him, let him rescue him, for he delights in him!"*
- 9: Yet thou art he who took me from the womb; thou didst keep me safe upon my mother's breasts.*
- 10: Upon thee was I cast from my birth, and since my mother bore me thou hast been my God.*
- 11: Be not far from me, for trouble is near and there is none to help.*
- 12: Many bulls encompass me, strong bulls of Bashan surround me;*
- 13: they open wide their mouths at me, like a ravening and roaring lion.*
- 14: I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax, it is melted within my breast;*
- 15: my strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaves to my jaws; thou dost lay me in the dust of death.*
- 16: Yea, dogs are round about me; a company of evildoers encircle me; they have pierced my hands and feet*
- 17: I can count all my bones—they stare and gloat over me;*
- 18: they divide my garments among them, and for my raiment they cast lots.*
- 19: But thou, O LORD, be not far off! O thou my help, hasten to my aid!*
- 20: Deliver my soul from the sword, my life from the power of the dog!*
- 21: Save me from the mouth of the lion, my afflicted soul from the horns of the wild oxen!*

- 22: I will tell of thy name to my brethren; in the midst of the congregation I will praise thee:
23: You who fear the LORD, praise him! all you sons of Jacob, glorify him, and stand in awe of him, all you sons of Israel!
- 24: For he has not despised or abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; and he has not hid his face from him, but has heard, when he cried to him.
- 25: From thee comes my praise in the great congregation; my vows I will pay before those who fear him.
- 26: The afflicted shall eat and be satisfied; those who seek him shall praise the LORD! May your hearts live for ever!
- 27: All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD; and all the families of the nations shall worship before him.
- 28: For dominion belongs to the LORD, and he rules over the nations.
- 29: Yea, to him shall all the proud of the earth bow down; before him shall bow all who go down to the dust, and he who cannot keep himself alive.
- 30: Posterity shall serve him; men shall tell of the Lord to the coming generation,
31: and proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn, that he has wrought it.

Psalm XXIII (RSV)

- 1: The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want;
2: he makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters;
3: he restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
4: Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.
5: Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemies; thou anointest my head with oil, my cup overflows.
6: Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

Psalm XXIV (RSV)

- 1: The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein;
2: for he has founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the rivers.
3: Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place?

- 4: He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false, and does not swear deceitfully.
- 5: He will receive blessing from the LORD, and vindication from the God of his salvation.
- 6: Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek the face of the God of Jacob. Selah.
- 7: Lift up your heads, O gates! and be lifted up, O ancient doors! that the King of glory may come in.
- 8: Who is the King of glory? The LORD, strong and mighty, the LORD, mighty in battle!
- 9: Lift up your heads, O gates! and be lifted up, O ancient doors! that the King of glory may come in.
- 10: Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory! [Selah]

PSALM XXIV (JPS)

- 1: The earth is the LORD'S, and all that it holds, the world and its inhabitants.
- 2: For He founded it upon the ocean, set it on the nether streams.
- 3: Who may ascend the mountain of the LORD? Who may stand in His holy place?
- 4: He who clean hands, and a pure heart; who has not taken a false oath by My life or sworn deceitfully.
- 5: He shall carry away a blessing from the LORD, a just reward from God, his deliverer.
- 6: Such is the circle of those who turn to Him, Jacob, who seek Your presence. Selah.
- 7: O gates, lift up your heads! Up high, you everlasting doors; so the King of glory may come in!
- 8: Who is the King of glory?—the LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle.
- 9: O gates, lift up your heads! Lift them up, you everlasting doors; so the King of glory may come in!
- 10: Who then is the King of glory? The LORD of hosts; He is the King of glory. Selah

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READER'S NOTES