BOOK I

PSALM 1

✠ This psalm is in the form of a Wisdom Psalm. This psalm focusses on God's word. Wisdom psalms are generally instructive ; therefore, they may also be called Didactic Psalms. They contain teachings and advice similar to those found in the Proverbs and in the wisdom books. Unlike those, the Wisdom Psalms are sung.

- ✣ See Psalms 14, 18, 36, 48, 72, 90, 111, 126, 127, 132. The numbers of this sort of psalm (and of other sorts of psalms) vary according to the perception of the various commentators.

✠ Please read the introductory notes on pp. *i-xi* with regard to various differences between the Septuagint Greek and the Masoretic Hebrew texts, including the versification system. In Orthodox cultures, the names and spellings of the Scriptural names and places more closely reflect the Greek spelling than is often presented in this text. For centuries, most English language translations have followed Hebrew spelling. Therefore, if traditional Orthodox spelling (following the Septuagint text) were used in this text, then people would hardly likely comprehend the word or the reference. All scriptural citations in this text (except for references to this text of the Psalter) refer to *The Orthodox Study Bible*, in which the Old Covenant is translated from the Septuagint Greek (but not the Septuagint spelling of the names).

✠ Saint Gregory of Nyssa, in his *Commentary on the Inscriptions of the Psalms*, reminds us that a psalm is a choral chant with a musical instrument. Saint Gregory of Nyssa further says that this psalm introduces, and serves as an outline for, the teaching of the whole Psalter. The essence of this is : reject evil, persevere in the good, resemble God in fortitude.

✠ Saint Basil the Great comments that this psalm is to the Psalter as the keel is to a ship, as the foundation is to a house, and as the heart is to a body. He continues, saying that the Prophet David, in this beginning of the evangelical purposes of the whole Psalter, also revealed the end or purpose of our many labours and sufferings, so that we might be able to endure the afflictions of this life.

✠ Saint Hilary of Poitiers cautions us to consider the references to God in this psalm without distinguishing which Person. He further urges us in our reading to recall that the inspiration of this psalm and all the psalms is the Holy Spirit, and that we discern who is speaking, and who is being addressed. He also reminds us that the psalms are not of uniform character ; that they not all of the same authorship ; and that there are various sorts of psalms.

✠ Father Patrick Reardon, distilling patristic teaching, informs us that the first three psalms all together form a sort of introduction and, as it were, a tripod on which the whole Psalter rests. These three provide the theological outline for the whole Psalter, based on three major Christological themes. The first psalm presents the Man, the New Adam — the Incarnate Lord. The second psalm presents the Messianic fulfilment, the New David — the Christ. The third psalm presents the Suffering Servant (Isaiah 50-53), the Persecuted Righteous Prophet delivered up for the sins of the world — the Saviour. The first psalm is not a prayer in the usual sense. Rather, it is a meditation on the theme of how a righteous person lives and what he hopes for.

✠ Selections from this psalm are sung, together with selected verses from following psalms of the

"station" (*stasis*), at Great Vespers of Sunday, and of some feast-days, with a refrain. Sometimes, the whole "station" is sung.

✠ This psalm presents the contrast between the way of the righteous (verses 1-3) and the way of the impious (verses 4-5).

"*The righteous and the impious before the Judgement of God*"

"*The two ways : tree or dust*"

✠ In each psalm, the first Christianised title (in italics) is from the Psalter translated by Archimandrite Placide (Deseille) (†2018). In each psalm, this is followed by the title or titles provided by Archimandrite Lazarus (Moore) (†1992) in his translation. (Most often, Archimandrite Lazarus (Moore) provides two titles.)

[*Without inscription in Hebrew and Greek.*]

V 1 About the inscription (some other translators use "superscription") : "Psalm of David" is absent in the Greek and Hebrew, although some translations include it. Nevertheless, 73 of the psalms are clearly attributed to King David. According to Saint Gregory of Nyssa, Psalm 1 serves as an inscription for Psalm 2, and it as a whole introduces Psalm 2.

[Μακάριος ἀνήρ Beatus vir, qui non abiit]

1 Blessed is the man/ who has not walked in the counsel of the impious,/ nor stood on the way of sinners,/ nor sat on the seat of the pestilent ;

✠ In every psalm, the beginning words of both the Greek and the Latin texts are given.

✠ About "*blessed*" (adjective) : Saint Basil the Great explains that what is truly good is what is called "*blessed*". This must refer to God, who is the ultimate Goodness. To Him everything looks, and all desire Him : His unchangeable nature, His dignity, His calmness, His joyful way of life which does not change and cannot be changed, the Inexhaustible Spring flowing with abundant Grace, and inexhaustible treasure. Those who are ignorant of the true meaning of goodness grossly misunderstand the concept and use it to describe what is merely empty fame, health, wealth and power. The one who is blessed is the one who is in God, and who is characterised by the words which follow in this psalm.

✣ According to Saint Athanasius, if we wish to declare someone to be "blessed", then in Psalm 1 we learn how to do so, whom to call upon, and what words to say. He also shows us that the same can be done by reading Psalms 31, 40, 111, 118, and 127.

✣ Saint Gregory of Nyssa tells us that likeness to God, participation in true existence, is a definition of human blessedness. Indeed, he says that every sublime concept pertaining to God may define

blessedness. The true Good transcends every other good, and this Good alone is blessed and longed after by our nature, since everything that participates in the true Good is blessed. The Psalter shows human beings clearly how to attain blessedness. Psalm 1 presents us with an outline of the rest. It calls blessedness a turning away from evil (to the destruction of evil), and a following of the impulse to the Good. These first words are a gate to this blessedness.

✣ Saint Augustine mentions that this word means the zenith and the crown of everything that is good.

✣ Saint Nikolaj (Velimirović) prays that by God's help we hearken to the Lord's counsel, to walk only in His paths, and to shine only with His example. He notes that one who is blessed is one who is not so disfigured by sin that he is deaf to the Lord's counsel through the prophets, and cannot therefore fulfil it. One is blessed who is does not seek the counsel of the ungodly or impious, and does not agree with their ungodly thoughts and ways, but finds counsel for all he needs for salvation in the Law of God. One is blessed who never sets foot on the way of sinners. He is also blessed if, having stepped on that way, repents and returns to the Way of God. One is blessed who does not play the role of the scorner of innocent souls through scandalising them by a bad example.

✣ The English dictionary meaning of "*blessed*" is " holy", "consecrated", "sacred", "sanctified", "worthy of veneration" and the like. The underlying presumption is the action of Divine Favour.

✣ The Greek word μακάριος, *makarios*, is translated into Latin as "*beatus*", which means "joyful" or "blissful". The preference in translating into English is "blessed". Although some prefer to use "happy", this word's source in Old Norse is rooted in the word "hap", meaning "chance", "fate", "luck", "fortune", or even "accident". This remains the undercurrent meaning of "happy", which in no way should be used to translate *makarios* because it perpetuates a pagan mentality. It is inappropriate, since it cannot convey the Christian understanding of Divine Favour. All this is in harmony with the words of Saint Gregory of Nyssa.

✣ See Psalms 2:12 ; 31:1, 2 ; 32:12 ; 33:9 ; 39:5 ; 40:2 ; 64:5 ; 83:5, 6, 13 ; 88:16 ; 93:12 ; 105:3 ; 111:1 ; 118:1, 2 ; 126:5 ; 127:1, 2 ; 136:8, 9 ; 143:15 ; 145:5. See also the note about "*blessed*" on Psalm 17:48.

✠ About "*man*" : Saint Hilary of Poitiers cautions us against considering that the "*blessed*" "*man*" here is to be understood as being Christ. Rather, he says, the whole Psalter is to be referred to Him. He says that in fact the context of the whole psalm are unsuitable to be referred simply to Christ. In this case, he shows that it is the Holy Spirit who through these words stirs up the weak person to desire true piety. He adds that where we may discern Christ in the psalms, we ought also to discern the time and situation in His life to which the words are related.

✣ The Greek here is ἀνήρ, *anēr*, meaning "a man". However, as Bishop Eusebius of Cæsarea points out, this man is neither any man, nor mankind in general. Bishop Eusebius, as we see also in other patristic writings, shows us that a specific man is referred to in this psalm, namely Jesus Christ, the God-man. Bishop Eusebius says that it is He, the first truly Blessed Man, who has then brought many more to be called blessed. See the foot-note about "*Men*" on Psalm 4:3.

✣ Metropolitan Bartholomew (Anania) comments that although the Prophet David uses the word "*man*", Saint Basil the Great, commenting on the text, says that virtue is the same for both male and female, and that the latter is implied as being part of one and the same human nature.

✣ Father Reardon shows us that "*the man*" can refer to the human being before the fall, the Righteous Adam.

✣ *The Orthodox Study Bible* indicates that, according to many Fathers, the Incarnate Lord is "*the man*" referred to, and who (in the psalms) is teaching us how to pray. For this reason, the Psalter has always been considered to be our prayer-book.

✠ Although each psalm has its own historical context, it has been the custom of Christians to look at all the psalms as referring to, or from the perspective of, Christ. Some consider this artificial ; but because there is so much prophetic reference to Christ, and because the psalms are at the centre of our worship, this makes it inevitable, useful, and constructive in the Church. The psalms present the manner in which our Saviour lived His life with us.

✠ Please note that in this verse, the characteristics of the blessed man are defined by what he does not do.

✠ About "*not walked ... pestilent*" : Saint Hilary of Poitiers shows that these three phrases begin a series of five indicators in this psalm of what describes a blessed person. He reminds us that not every sinner is impious, but every impious person is a sinner. He further draws our attention to the significance of the fact that here, the impious has a counsel ; the sinner has a way ; the pestilent has a seat.

✠ About "*has not walked*" : Saint Basil comments that this line does not say "who does not walk". He who happens to be in this life is not yet blessed because of the uncertainty about what his personal condition may be at the time of his departure from this life. However, the one who has departed, having fulfilled life in a way that cannot be contradicted, can be called blessed. Blessed, therefore is the one who avoided "*the way of sinners*", but pursued a godly way of life. He also reminds us of the Dominical words about the two opposite ways : one broad and easy, the other narrow and difficult (see Matthew 7:13-14).

✣ Walking can imply a deliberate co-operation.

✣ See the note on Psalm 14:2 ; see 2 Moses 15:19 (Matins Canticle 1) ; Psalms 11:9 ; 22:4 ; 25:1, 11 ; 31:8 ; 37:7 ; 38:7 ; 40:7 ; 54:15 ; 57:22 ; 77:10 ; 80:13, 14 ; 81:5 ; 83:12: 85:11 ; 87:9 ; 88:15, 16, 31 ; 90:6 ; 95:8 ; 100:2, 6 ; 103:3 ; 106:7 ; 113:15 ; 118:1, 3, 45 ; 121:1 ; 127:1 ; 130:1 ; 137:7 ; 138:7 ; 141;4 ; 142:8 ; Proverbs 1:16 ; 4:14 (Masoretic text only) ; Isaiah 48:17.

✠ About "*counsel*" (noun) : see 5 Moses 32:28 (Matins Canticle 2) ; Psalms 12:3 ; 13:6 ; 19:5 ; 20:12 ; 32:10, 11 ; 65:5 ; 72:24 ; 105:13, 43 ; 106:11 ; 118:24. See also the note on Psalm 30:14.

✠ About "*the impious*" (plural) : this word is pronounced "**im**-pea-uhs". It means a person not having or showing a dutiful spirit of reverence for God.

✣ Saint Hilary of Poitiers explains the implications of the meaning of this word. He applies this word to those who categorically reject God as the Creator of All and the Origin of All. Such persons accept the philosophical proposition that what is material has always existed (a proposition currently popular amongst atheistic scientists). The material, including the world, came into existence by chance, as it were, and similarly people come into existence and go out of existence by some so-called "law of nature". It is a pointless and endless circle. Further, there are those who construct a god of their own imagining and reasoning. They likewise wander in pointlessness, and they do not comprehend that it is as senseless to construct a god as it is to deny God. They all refuse God's self-revelation.

✣ Archimandrite Lazarus (Moore) remarks that "*impious*" is sometimes translated as "ungodly". He adds that the Hellenistic sense is that of a sinner, an evildoer, a profane person. One who commits sacrilege is irreverent, disrespectful to God (or to a god), and therefore impious.

✣ See verses 4, 5, 6 ; see Psalms 11:9 ; 16:9 ; 25:5, 9 ; 30:18 ; 36:28, 38 ; 50:15 ; Isaiah 26:19 (Matins

Canticle 5) ; see the note about "*impious*" (singular) on Psalm 9:6 ; see also the note about "*impiety*" on Psalm 72:6.

✠ About "*the way of sinners*" : Saint Didymus the Blind of Alexandria comments that the devil himself may be called "*the way of sinners*". He exhorts anyone who stands in this way to beware of ever pausing there. He asks that we recall what the Scriptures say : "*Resist the devil and he will flee from you*" (James 4:7). He reminds us that the one who will not stand on the path of the devil will come to the Lord, who says : "*I am the Way*" (John 14:6).

✠ About "*way*" (bad) : see verse 6 ; see Psalms 9:26 ; 24:8 ; 106:17 ; 118:29 ; 138:24 ; 145:9.

✠ About "*sinners*" : see verse 5 ; see Psalms 7:10 ; 9:17, 18, 24, 25, 36 ; 10:2, 6 ; 27:3 ; 31:10 ; 33:22 ; 35:12 ; 36:10, 12, 14, 16, 17, 20, 21, 32, 34, 40 ; 57:4 ; 67:3 ; 72:3, 12 ; 74:9, 10 ; 81:2 ; 83:11 ; 90:8 ; 91:8 ; 93:3 ; 96:10 ; 100:8 ; 103:35 ; 105:18 ; 118:53, 61, 95, 110, 119, 155 ; 124:3 ; 128:3, 4 ; 138:19 ; 140:10 ; 144:20 ; 145:9 ; 146:6. See also the note about "*sin*" on Psalm 9:36.

✠ Saint Athanasius notes that the "*seat*" refers to the teaching of evil people.

- ✣ Saint Basil the Great notes that this "*seat*" refers to stubborn persistence in badness.
- ✣ See the notes about "*sat*" on Psalm 25:4, and about "*sit*" on Psalm 25:5. See also Jeremiah 15:17.

✠ "*Pestilent*" is the English word for the Greek translation of the Hebrew word for "scoffer". Some write "arrogant". See Isaiah 29:20.

✠ Metropolitan Bartholomew (Anania) of Cluj, Alba, Crişana and Maramureş in Romania (†2011) calls our attention to the ascending scale of words in this verse, by steps of three verbs in combination with three categories of people. 1) "*Impious*" (ἀσεβής, *asebēs*) is a general term : one without God and, as such impious and without any religious feeling. Not to walk in the counsel of the ungodly is not to take on their opinions or their guidelines. We are not to let ourselves be influenced by them. 2) "*Sinner*" (ἁμαρτωλός, *hamartōlos*) is a specific term : one who perseveres in sin and practices it just like a professional. In Romanian and in some English translations, the line is often given as "*nor stood in the way of sinners*". However, both in Romanian and English, to stand in the way of someone is to try to stop that person. He makes of the grammatical construction the suggestion of this meaning : Blessed is the man who, meeting a sinner in the way, did not stop, nor did he enter into conversation with the sinner ; but rather, he went on his own way. 3) "*Pestilent*" (λοιμός, *loimos*) translates the Greek word whose generic meaning is a plague, a pestilence, an injurious person. The text uses the word scoffer or mocker. This is one who mocks the holy, and those who believe in the holy. The one who did sit as an authority "*on the seat of the pestilent*" was establishing the class of pestilent peopole. Such a person is very close to collapsing into nothingness .

- ✣ Father P Reardon comments that in this verse, three significant postures are cited (walked, stood, sat), in which the righteous man is *not* found. He further writes that evil counsel, or "*the counsel of the impious*", causes suffering to the listeners : see Proverbs, Jeremiah, Job ; see also 2 Kingdoms 16-17 (Absalom : the counsel of Ahithophel) ; 3 Kingdoms 12 (Rehoboam, &c) ; Isaiah 36:5 (Hezekiah).

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2 but rather, in the law of the LORD is his delight,/ and on His law shall he ruminate by day and by night.

V 2 About this verse : these two portions conclude the series of five indications of the character of a blessed person as pointed out by Saint Hilary of Poitiers.

✠ About "*law*" (of the Lord) : Saint Isaac of Niniveh reminds us that the purpose of all the laws and commandments of God for us is purity of heart in us.

> ✣ Saint Nikolaj (Velimirović) laments the shallowness of the mind and heart of those who do not know the Law of God. He comments that the depth of a person's mind is measured by the depth of the knowledge of the Law of God. The mind of one who cleaves to the mysteries of God's Law is deep and broad and uplifted. He reminds us that the mind is the rudder of the heart and will. Without being united to the Will of God, a human being's will is shallow and fickle. He also reminds us that the Law of God is simply an expression of the Will of God. This Will and this Law are found in the Holy Scriptures, and in the teachings of the saints of the Church.
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> ✣ See Psalms 18:8 ; 36:31 ; 39:9 ; 58:12 ; 77:1, 10 ; 88:31 ; 93:12 ; 104:45 ; 118:1, 18, 29, 34, 44, 51, 55, 57, 61, 70, 77, 85, 92, 97, 105, 109, 113, 126, 136, 142, 150, 153, 163, 165, 174.

✠ About "*LORD*" : "LORD", as presented in this format, represents the Greek translation of the Hebrew word, the unpronounceable Name of the Lord, יהוה (YHWH) (see 2 Moses 3:14). In Hebrew, this Name is always pronounced as *Adonai* (meaning "Lord"), in order to pronounce it somehow. The Name of God, not pronounced in Judaism for well over two thousand years, is known to be a form of the verb "to be". We see it sometimes elsewhere as I AM, or in Greek Ἐγώ εἰμι. The word "God", which is seen from the beginning in 1 Moses 1, is the translation of another Hebrew word, אל (El).

✠ About "*delight*" (noun) : Saint Jerome explains that "*delight*" expresses the fact that we whole-heartedly obey the Lord.

> ✣ Saint Hilary of Poitiers draws our attention to the fact that the Greek word θέλημα, *thelēma*, essentially means "will", "wish". However, there are nuances which affect the meaning, which allow it also to mean "delight". The will to do the Will of the Lord may result from fear, or it may result from a positive will or wish. Those who are perfect are instantly ready and willing to obey, whereas the fearful grudgingly and reluctantly comply.
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> ✣ See Psalms 15:11 ; 26:4 ; 35:9 ; 138:11 ; Romans 7:22. See the note about "*delight*" on Psalm 5:5.

✠ About " "*Shall*" : this is an expression of the simple future tense in English. The verb "will" has been used also in a future sense, but historically it includes the sense of the act of the will. Since it is God alone who can act reliably and stably with the will, we are confining the use of the verb "will" to references to God Himself. See the note about "*will*" in Psalm 2:8.

✠ About "*ruminate*" : Saint Athanasius the Great explains that the Grace of the Great Feast of Pascha is not limited only to one time, nor does its splendid brilliance wane. Rather, it is always present. This Grace is constantly enlightening the minds of those who earnestly desire it. In this Grace is constant goodness for those who are illuminated in their minds, and who day and night ruminate on the Holy Scriptures, like the Man to whom a blessing is given, as it is written in Psalm 1 : "*Blessed is the man who has not walked in the counsel of the impious*". Clearly, it is not the multitude of stars, nor the sun or the moon which illumines him. Rather, he shines with the reflection of the brilliant light of God over all.

> ✣ Saint Hilary of Poitiers tells us that meditation [rumination] on the Law does not consist in simply reading its words, but rather in the godly performance of its words and directions ; not in a mere perusal of the books and writings, but in a practical contemplation of and exercise of their

respective contents. Moreover, meditation of the Law consists in a fulfilment of the Law by the works which we do by night and by day.

✣ Saint Cæsarius of Arles exhorts us not to engage in useless activities and empty conversations, but rather repeatedly to read the Scriptures, or listen to them being read to us.

✣ Metropolitan Bartholomew (Anania) writes that some seem to prefer to interpret this verb using the primary meaning of the Hebrew, and they translate the word "ruminate" as "murmur" or "recite", from the ancient custom of the Jews to recite daily (in a low voice) fragments of the Law given by God to Moses on Mount Sinai. In a Christian sense, pondering on the Law of the Lord is to focus inwardly on the essence to which, ultimately, the Law of Moses is reduced : love of God and love of neighbour (see Matthew 22:37-40). The mystical dimension of the text borders on relentless inner thought and the practice of the hesychastic Jesus Prayer (of the mind in the heart).

✣ "*Ruminate*" implies verbalised repetition, that is, repeating orally. The allusion is to the manner in which ruminants chew things over and over before final digestion. Here, the righteous person ruminates on God's word. In Psalm 2:1, the unrighteous person ruminates on "*emptiness*". See the notes on Psalms 36:30 ; 89:9.

✣ See Joshua 1:8 ; Psalms 2:1 ; 34:28 ; 36:30 ; 37:13 ; 70:24 ; 76:6, 13 ; 89:9 ; 118:16, 47, 70, 117, 148 ; Wisdom of Sirach 6:37 ; 14:20-21. See also the note about "*rumination*" on Psalm 18:15.

✠ About "*by day and by night*" : Saint Augustine explains that this phrase may suggest unceasing rumination or prayer. He suggests that "*night*" may also include the difficult periods in our lives, and that "*day*" may include the joyful periods.

✣ See Psalms 12:3 ; 21:3 ; 31:4 ; 41:4, 9 ; 54:11 ; 77:14 ; 87:2. See also Psalm 90:5, 6 ; 120:6.

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3 He shall be like the tree planted/ beside the streams of waters,/ which shall give its fruit in its time,/ and its leaf shall not fall./ In all things, whatever he may do, it shall go well.

V 3 About "*the tree*" : Saint Hilary of Poitiers reminds us about the two trees in the Garden of Eden. He refers us specifically to the Tree of Life, which is planted beside the rivers in Paradise (the Kingdom of God). It is to this place that our Saviour led the repentant thief after the Crucifixion (see Luke 23:43). He then explains that any blessed person will become like this tree, eternally bearing fruit, and unable to be moved because it has been planted by the Lord (see Matthew 15:13).

✣ Saint Jerome refers us to Proverbs 3:20 : "*She is a tree of life for all who cleave to her*". "She" refers to Divine Wisdom. "Wisdom" is commonly understood to refer to the Son of God. In this context, he says that the blessed one will be like the tree in Paradise, and therefore like Christ.

✣ Saint Theophan the Recluse explains that it is God who bears fruit in the blessed person who prays. God is his teacher. He acts in him. To live in this way is the seed and the heart of the Tree of Life within him.

✣ See 4 Moses 24:6 ; Psalm 91:13-14 ; Proverbs 3:20 ; Isaiah 44:4 ; Jeremiah 17:4.

✠ About "*time*" : Saint John of Damascus writes that the soul which is watered by the Holy Scriptures

grows fat and bears fruit in its Time. The fruit is the Orthodox Faith. Thus, it is adorned with its evergreen leaves and with God-pleasing deeds. In this way, we are inspired towards virtuous actions and undisturbed contemplation of the Holy Scriptures.

✣ It is possible to make the connexion with our Saviour's encounter with the fruitless fig tree. The sense is that as the fig tree should be fruit-bearing at the appropriate time of our Saviour's coming, so must we be found bearing fruit when our Saviour comes. This is the "right Time", which is different from the regular seasons according to the Time of year. About this fig tree, see Matthew 21:18-19 ; Mark 11:12-14.

✣ "*Time*", in Greek, has two words to express it. Χρόνος, *chronos*, refers to time, passing time, time in general, time seen from a distance, and from the side, as it were. Καιρός, *kairos*, refers to a specific time, the right time, high time, the appropriate time, the ordained time, time seen from within, looking along its length, as it were. The definite article with time, in this text, indicates *kairos* time, "the time" (implying the "right time"), even if the Greek lacks the definite article, in order to distinguish in English between the two. One must listen closely to the words to try to determine what is *kairos*, and what is *chronos*. In this verse is the first appearance of this word in the Psalter.

✣ About "*kairos*" time (this verse) : see 5 Moses 32:35 (Matins Canticle 2) ; Psalms 9:10, 22, 26 ; 20:10 ; 31:6 ; 33:2 ; 36:19, 38 ; 68:14 ; 70:9 ; 74:3 ; 80:16 ; 101:14 ; 103:27 ; 105:3 ; 118:20, 126 ; 144:15 ; Habakkuk 3:2 (Matins Canticle 4) ; Daniel 3:38 (Matins Canticle 7).

✣ About "*chronos time*" : see the note on Psalm 88:46.

✠ About "*go well*" : see 1 Moses 39:3, 23 ; 4 Kingdoms 18:7 ; Isaiah 65:22 ; Wisdom of Sirach 4:13.

✠ About "*leaf shall not fall*" : Saint Augustine explains that the words of the blessed man will be effectual. His fruits and leaves (his deeds and words) will prosper and be beneficial.

✣ See Isaiah 1:30 ; 64:5 ; Ezekiel 47:12.

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4 Not so, the impious, not so :/ but rather, they are just like dust,/ which the wind flings from the face of the earth.

V 4 About "*impious ... dust*" : Saint John Chrysostom explains that in the same way that chaff lies exposed to the gusts of wind and is easily caught up and swept away, so the sinner is also driven about by every temptation. Since a sinner is at war with himself and carries the warfare everywhere with him, what hope of safety does he possess ? He is betrayed at home, and he carries with him that conscience which is a constant enemy.

✣ Saint Hilary of Poitiers comments that the "*impious*" have no possibility of participating in the blessedness of the Tree of Life. Instead, they will wander, be dispersed, and be swept away by the wind. In this context, he refers us to Psalm 17:43.

✣ Saint Augustine's perception of these words is that the dust referred to may be said to be the silly boastings of the proud, which are puffed up but lack any substance. Rather, they are swept away by the wind. He stresses the rôle of pride and its effects. It was pride that produced the first fall. It

was pride which took Adam and Eve from Paradise. Pride produces insubstantial emptiness. It is not unreasonable therefore to say that Adam was cast out from that place from which he in fact had already cast himself out by his decision.

✠ About "*the impious*" : see verse 1.

✠ About "*dust*" : see Psalms 34:5 ; 82:14 ; Job 21:18 ; Proverbs 10:31 ; Wisdom of Solomon 11:20 ; Hosea 13:3 ; Isaiah 17:13 ; 29:5 ; Daniel 2:35.

✠ About "*wind*" : in this psalter, this word translates two Greek words : ἄνεμος, *anemos* (as in this and some other psalms), and πνεῦμα, *pneuma* (as in some other psalms).

✣ See Psalms 10:6 ; 17:11, 43 ; 34:5 ; 47:8 ; 82:14 ; 103:3 ; 106:25 ; 134:7 ; 148:8 ; Daniel 3:50 (Matins Canticle 7) ; Daniel 3:65 (Matins Canticle 8).

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5 Because of this, the impious shall not arise in the fair-judgement,/ nor shall sinners in a council of the righteous ;

V 5 About "*the impious shall not arise*" : Archimandrite Lazarus (Moore) comments that the impious will not find "justification" since they cannot stand up to judgement.

✣ Those who have not been made righteous through the Lord's forgiveness, but rather remain impious, shall not arise and stand at the judgement, nor be numbered amongst the righteous. "Justification" is a western term someTimes used instead of, but better understood as "being made righteous". Righteousness is measured by the standard of God's love, rather than by a seemingly static law or rule.

✠ About "*the impious*" : see verse 1.

✠ About "*fair-judgement*" : Metropolitan Bartholomew (Anania) comments that unbelievers will have no right to judge others, since in the Christian vision it is the saints who, together with Jesus Christ, will judge the world (see Matthew 19:28 ; Luke 22:30 ; 1 Corinthians 6:2). The meaning of this verse is illuminated by the following verse.

✣ "*Fair Judgement*" translates the Greek word κρίσις, *krisis*. This word implies the decision of a judge which may come near to true justice, and which therefore may imply Divine Judgement. In no way does *krisis* imply only condemnation. Rather, it implies an accurate discernment about what is right, what is wrong, what is good, what is bad, what is light, what is darkness, what is life-giving, what is death-dealing.

✣ See the note on Psalm 9:17 ; see 5 Moses 32:4 (Matins Canticle 2) ; Psalms 9:5, 8 ; 24:9 ; 32:5 ; 34:23 ; 36:28, 30 ; 71:2 ; 75:9, 10 ; 93:15 ; 98:4 ; 100:1 ; 105:3 ; 110:7 ; 111:5 ; 118:84, 137, 154 ; 121:5 ; 139:13 ; 142:2 ; Daniel 3:27, 28, 31 (Matins Canticle 7) ; John 3:19 ; 5:22, 24, 27, 30 ; 12:31.

✠ About "*sinners*" : see verse 1.

✠ About "*the righteous*" : in the Greek, this word is in the plural, which is implied in the context itself.

✣ See verse 6 ; see Psalms 31:11 ; 32:1 ; 33:16, 18, 20 ; 36:17, 29, 39 ; 51:8 ; 67:4 ; 68:29 ; 96:12 ; 117:15, 20 ; 124:3 ; 139:14 ; 140:5 ; 141:8 ; 145:8 ; Daniel 3:86 (Matins Canticle 8). See the note about "*the*

righteous one" on Psalm 5:13.

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6 for the LORD knows the way of the righteous,/ but the way of the impious shall perish.

V 6 About "*knows*" : Saint Augustine teaches that not to be known by God means death. With God, to know is to love, so that knowledge partakes of being ; to be unknown is to cease to exist. Not to be known or remembered by God is not to exist (see Wisdom of Sirach 10:7).

✣ Implications of Saint Augustine's "Not to be known by God is not to exist" can be perceived in the singing of "Memory Eternal" for the departed. There is a depth of meaning and a crucial importance in singing this frequently. See the Orthodox Study Bible note on 1 Moses 8:1 ; see also the notes about "*remembered*" on Psalm 9:13 ; about "*will You forget me*" on Psalm 12:2 ; about "*eternal memory*" on Psalm 111:6.

✣ See 2 Moses 33:17 ; 4 Moses 16:5 (LXX only) ; Psalms 36:18 ; 43:22 ; 138:1-6, 23 ; Proverbs 4:27 (LXX only) ; Wisdom of Solomon 15:3 ; Nahum 1:7 ; Habakkuk 1:13 ; Matthew 7:23 ; John 5:14 ; 10:14 ; 1 Corinthians 8:3 ; 13:2 ; Galatians 4:9 ; 2 Timothy 2:19.

✠ About the two ways : this verse explicitly distinguishes between "*the way of the righteous*" and "*the way of the impious*". Many other writings likewise remind us that there are two quite different ways in which a person may live. This is explicitly laid out in The Didache 1:1 : "There are two ways, one of life, and one of death ; and there is an immense difference between the two". See 5 Moses 30:15-20 ; Proverbs 4:27 ; Wisdom of Sirach 15:17.

✠ About "*the way of the righteous*" : see Psalm 2:12 ; Proverbs 3:19 ; 4:17 ; Didache 1:2, ff. See also the note about "*ways*" on Psalm 15:11.

✠ About "*the way of the impious*" : see the note about "*the way of sinners*" on verse 1. See Proverbs 4:13, 18 ; Didache 5.

✠ About "*the way*" (good) : see Psalms 15:11 ; 24:4, 9, 10, 12 ; 31:8 ; 36:18 ; 100:2, 6 ; 101:24 ; 109:7 ; 118:14, 27, 30, 32, 33 ; 138:24 ; 142:8 ; Proverbs 3:19 ; Isaiah 48:17 ; Jeremiah 6:16 ; Baruch 3:13 ; John 14:6.

✠ About "*the way*" (bad) :

✠ About "*the impious*" : see verse 9:4

✠ About "*perish*" : see Psalms 2:12 ; 9:4, 6, 7, 19, 37 ; 36:20 ; 40:6 ; 48:11 ; 67:3 ; 72:19, 27 ; 79:17 ; 91:10 ; 101:27 ; 111:10 ; 118:92 ; 145:4.

✠ Concerning Divine Judgement : see 4 Moses 16:26 ; Isaiah 1:27-28 ; the Kontak of Meatfare Sunday.

✠ This last verse provides a chiastic structure based on "*way*", which gives a poetic intensification.

O Lord, cause us to be in Your sight as a most fruitful tree, that,
watered by Your showers, we may be pleasing to You
by an abundance of sweet fruits. — Roman

✠ About "*Roman*" : this is a prayer from ancient Roman Psalters. Such a prayer ended each psalm, or portion of a psalm (*e.g.* the sections of Psalm 118). These prayers were used in the Time of Saint John Cassian, for instance, when the Psalter was read in a different manner, and in different manners, from nowadays. In this Psalter, at the end of each psalm or psalm-portion, are translations of these prayers, from the Latin. In former Times, these prayers would normally have been in the body of the Psalter itself, at the end of the psalm or psalm-portion, in the same way that they are presented in this edition.
