

READING CHAVARA IN THE CONTEXT OF PSALMS

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Abstract: Psalms, as powerful resource for spiritual growth, are human prayers raised to God, and every prayer, in one way or another, resembles the mind of the psalmist. A soul who seeks and wants to live for God reveals the spirit of the Psalms by praising God for who He is, what He has done and for His steadfast and everlasting faithfulness and love while affirming the greatness of God who is to be ever talked to, walked with in order to reach His house. Though looking at Chavara from the angle of Psalms could be a bit puzzling, from the said perspective, we see many similarities. An attempt is made to see the embeddedness of Chavara in the Psalms, and I proceed with connecting the sum total of his spirituality with the purpose of Psalms under three headings, i.e., 1) God's house, the End of the good life, 2) God's instructions, the way of the good life, and 3) God's anointed king, which are closely related to good and happy life - the quintessence of Christian life.

Keywords: Psalms and Christian life, Good life, Essence of Christian life, God's house as the end of Christian life, God's instructions as way of life, Chavara and Psalms, Salvation of souls, Zeal for Church and family, God's instructions

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1. Psalms and Christian Life: Purpose

Though the recitation of the Psalms as part of the liturgy is a familiar thing, many do not realize its purpose, namely, to make us whole and happy persons, holy and happy in God. "The psalms are Judeo-Christian devotional songs whose purpose is to stimulate soul growth vis a vis the sublime."¹ It serves to get along with God. It helps to see things happening in life from the perspective of God and to cross over to the side of God. It is in the Psalms where the wo/man of the earth meets the God of heaven; it is here the creature bows before the creator; s/he bursts into tears, laughter, joy, praising, and dancing. According to Basil of Caesarea, "It foretells coming events; it recalls history; it frames laws for life; it suggests what must be done; and, in general, it is the common treasury of good doctrine, carefully finding out what is suitable for each one. The old wounds of souls it cures completely, and to the recently wounded, it brings speedy improvement; the diseased it treats, and the unharmed it preserves."²

Further, every faithful believer, everyone anointed and consecrated, will have the language of Psalms as their language in the midst of adversaries, turmoil and commotion as an existential response while s/he walks over the face of the earth. In Ps 89:20, we find, "I have found David, my servant; with my sacred oil I have anointed him." It is not merely a response but a prayer in which everything is taken to God. If scripture is God speaking to us or the Word of God coming to us, in the case of Psalms, it is human words spoken to God. Every pouring of the heart of an anointed one before God, analogically, is a Psalm, no matter in which form they are. They could be called even extended psalms, possible in different dimensions, elements and emotions – such as praise, thanksgiving, repentance, complaints, cries for help, worship, fear,

¹ Terry Muck, "The Psalms as a Place to Begin for Old Testament Theology," in *Psalms and Practice: Worship, Virtue, and Authority*, edited by Stephen Breck Reid (Collegeville, Minnesota, The Liturgical press), 2001, 28.

² Basil of Caesarea, "Homily 10," in *Basil of Caesarea: Exegetic Homilies*, The Fathers of the Church, Vol. 46, trans. Agnes Clare Way (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1981). Cf. similar themes in Athanasius, "The Letter of St. Athanasius to Marcellinus on the Interpretation of the Psalms," in *The Life of Antony and the Letter to Marcellinus*, trans. Robert C. Gregg (New York: Paulist Press, 1980). Or *Basil the Great (330-379): Homily 1 (on Psalm 1), 1-2*; Saint Basil: Exegetic Homilies, translated by Agnes Clare Way, Catholic University of America Press (*The Fathers of the Church*, Vol. 46), 151-153.

despair, abandonment, shame, rejection, grief, and so on. They may fall into the traditional categories of Psalms - such as Songs of Lament, Hymns of Praise, and Songs of Thanksgiving.

An analysis of the prayer of one with faith before God would make us conclude that there is a closer similarity between his/her mental state and faith expressions and that of the psalmist. Psalms have indubitable power or great staying power over us as they enable us to speak out of the depths of one's heart. "In turbulent times of history, when the foundations are shaking (Ps 11:3), and the world seems on the verge of chaos, many people testify that the psalms enable them to speak to God 'out of the depths' in company with the community of faith, visible and invisible, past and present, local and worldwide."³ Psalms teach us that the Christian life is a good life, an abundant life, and a happy life; and in one word, Beatitude. This is the destiny of human beings and for which desires – the culmination of all one's search for happiness. According to Augustine, the blessing of dwelling in God's house is God's "ultimate promise," "to which our hope aspires, so that when we reach it we shall look for nothing further nor ask anything more."⁴

Though finding a close and direct connection between Kuriakose Elias Chavara and the book of Psalms per se may not be traceable from his biographical pages, its influence on his life and writings is traceable. As an exploring of the full treasury of Psalter's teachings on the good life is not possible in this article,⁵ I only consider how the Psalms aim to make us whole and happy persons, holy and happy in God, by instructing us on three topics: 1) God's house, which is the End of the good life, 2) God's instruction, which is the way of the good life, and 3) God's anointed king, in whom the End and the way of the good life are personally embodied. According to the Psalter, the good life is found ultimately in God's house, by following the path of God's instruction, in fellowship with God's anointed king.

³ Bernhard W. Anderson, Roy Steven Bishop, *Out of the Depths: The Psalms Speak for Us Today*, (Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), ix.

⁴ Augustine, "Exposition of Psalm 109," in *Expositions of the Psalms*, trans. Maria Boulding, ed. Boniface Ramsey, Vol. 5 (New York: New City Press, 2018), 261.

⁵ This article acknowledges the indebtedness to the article: Scott R. Swain, "The Psalms and the Christian Life" *Reformed Faith and Practice*, Vol. 6.1, (May 2021), 18-30.

2. God's house, which is the End of the Good life

Throughout Psalms, we find a constant longing to abide in God's presence within His house. Psalm 26:8 reads, "O Lord, I love the habitation of your house and the place where your glory dwells." This is a singular drive of the heart of the psalmist as he says, "one thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple" (Ps 27:4). This desire or longing for a life with God in the house of God found elsewhere culminates in the well-known psalm: "I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever" (Ps 23:6). It makes a believer happy. According to Thomas Aquinas, happiness is a universal desire, though people disagree about what happiness is and about how to achieve it. In one of his sermons, citing Psalm 84:4, he says, perfect happiness can only be found in the Lord's house."⁶ "Blessed are those who dwell in your house" (Ps 84:1-2, 4).

The very thought that flashes through our mind while thinking of the founders of the religious congregation of Carmelites of Mary Immaculate are the concepts *Darsana Veedu* and *Tapasu-bhavanam*, or later, christening the monastery as *Bes-Rauma* (house in the highest). This strongly alludes to his longing to get along with God, to see Him and remain in His presence. This, for him in his context, was realized by sitting and meditating in the presence of the Eucharistic Lord for hours, and the experience of Chavara with the living God turned him into a seer and a prophet that he could contribute to the realization of the kingdom of God on earth. He wanted to see God in all his poses and stages of life that we find in the third chapter of the *Compunction of the Soul* - "I long to see (*kānakēnam*)."⁷

In the fourth chapter, one can find his earnest desire to keep his heart as a house of God: "O my Father, remember me your servant, Keep me

⁶ Thomas Aquinas, "Sermon 19," in *Thomas Aquinas: The Academic Sermons*, The Fathers of the Church: Medieval Continuation, Vol. 46, trans. Mark-Robin Hoogland (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 281.

⁷ Kuriakose Elias Chavara, *Complete Works of Bl. Chavara, Compunction of the Soul*, Dirge, *Anastasia's Martyrdom*, M. Leo, trans., Vol. II (Mannanam, The Committee for the Cause of Blessed Chavara, 1989), 17-19. Chavara's *Compunction of the Soul* expresses his longing to see (*kānakēnam*) and experience Christ, capturing various events of Jesus' life through poetic meditation, aiming to see God-with-us in his spiritual endeavours. The longing to see expressed repeatedly.

close to your son.”⁸ In the fifth chapter, we see, “O my Guide and almighty God, Lord and the Saviour of mankind, kindly turn your eyes towards me.”⁹

His love for the house of God was equally present for the mystical body of Christ, the physical Church too.

Help them who come here to pray
Guard them always for their good
And besides, free the spot
From those who come to desecrate
Guard the plain and protect it.¹⁰

3. God’s Instructions – Way of the Good Life

God’s house is the promised End of the good life, and His instruction serves as the path leading us there. For “Blessed are those whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways to Zion” (Ps 84:5). The metaphor ‘path’ can mean a number of things as it is clear from different psalms – (1) instruction as we find in Psalm 21:11: “Teach me your way, O Lord; a life modelled by the Lord’s instructions;¹¹ (2) path as a point to “life formed according to” the Lord’s “prescription” as seen in the declaration: “I will run in the way of your commandments when you enlarge my heart” (Ps 119:32); (3) a goal or End towards which the divine instruction directs, it could be righteousness or Beatitude (Ps 1:6).¹² God being perfect, His laws too, are perfect, and His design is impeccable. Such perfect instructions cannot but lead one to wholeness and righteousness. That is to say, it leads to the house of the Lord (Ps 92:12-15).

God’s design is perfect and aims at the best of everything created, namely, the creature’s Beatitude. One who dwells in the house of the Lord will find everything in accordance with God’s design. “Blessed are those whose strength is in You, in whose hearts are the highways to Zion” (Ps 84:5). Beatitude is not an immediate reality, but the end

⁸ *Complete Works of Bl. Chavara, Compunction of the Soul*, 29.

⁹ *Complete Works of Bl. Chavara, Compunction of the Soul*, 31.

¹⁰ *Complete Works of Bl. Chavara, Compunction of the Soul*, 108.

¹¹ Oliver O’Donovan, *Finding and Seeking, Ethics as Theology*, Vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), 220.

¹² Walking in God’s methods of righteousness will bring us His delight, protection, and companionship instead of we sharing the fate of the wicked.

product or, more precisely, the path to Beatitude must pass through tough ways – move from land of exile to freedom, pass through the shadow of death (Ps 23:4).

Our undeniable experience of groaning, temptations, miseries, and dangers makes us lament, but the hope in the Lord makes us also sing His praises (Ps 89; 69; 19:12-13). One should believe that God is not far, nor is He silent; He is not absent, but He leads us. What He designs is the route map to travel; it becomes a means of grace. For "God will send out His steadfast love and His faithfulness!" (Ps 57:3; Isa 40:3); He is a path on which He accompanies us. Further, we read, "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me" (Ps 23:4). The path to which He leads us, as our front and rear guard, is to our final and blessed destination, that is the house of God. We see, "surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever" (Ps 23:6). God's experience of the presence makes things change and life blessed. Because of the Lord's presence to help, accompany, and guide us, the valley of tears becomes "a place of springs" (Ps 84:6).

In the "Letters,"¹³ Chavara states that God has designed the congregation – as a path set before all who are called to be part of it. "The community Chavara envisaged has to be the fellowship of those who have turned away from everything worldly and lived a life of being tuned to God."¹⁴ Self-surrendering and dwelling with God are the goals envisaged that would facilitate a constant thinking with the Church. For him, the means to know the will of God in order to surrender oneself was the conversation with God, besides the instructions of the superiors. He writes, "Ah, dwell in the love of Jesus Christ, always sit before the eyes; walk near him; always speak with him."¹⁵ When we dwell in the love of God and sit before His eyes and walk near Him, we are sure that the path we have chosen is not a deviated one, and we are moving towards Him.

¹³ Kuriakose Elias Chavara, *Complete Works of Bl. Chavara, The Letters*, Vol. IV (Mannanam: The Committee for the Cause of Blessed Chavara, 1990).

¹⁴ Thomas Kadankavil, *Chavara: A Multidimensional Saint* (Kottayam: Deepika Book House, 2014), 95.

¹⁵ *Complete Works of Bl. Chavara*, Letters, 82.

Chavara seems equally concerned about obedience to the superiors, which he regarded as foundational for all other virtues. In his own words, "The only mark of a religious is total surrender of one's will and obedience as if one does not have one own eyes and ears."¹⁶ For one who is called to something designed by God and to which he surrenders himself, has nothing to fear, but enjoys Beatitude. He says, "he who practices obedience in all these three levels (to hierarchy, superiors and mutual obedience) will enjoy heavenly peace already while in the monastery, which is a miniature heaven. This is certain."¹⁷ This logically sound and theologically right statement would imply that following the instructions and doing one's duty is the will of God as far as they facilitate the realization of God's kingdom and peace in the community. The kingdom of God is not far from you (Mk 12:34). He cautions of the path to be followed and be alert of the amendment needed: "You, on your way to eternity, has to make sure that you are on the right road that leads to heaven and not to perdition: Therefore, stop a while and make a review of your life. God invites you that you may make a correct assessment of your life and make programme for the betterment of your life."¹⁸

Chavara is not all unrealistic or a castle builder. He does not rule out the suffering and struggles in religious life, which he considers as part of following him and remaining on the side of God. "Why did you choose a way of life that is hard, requiring much sacrifice, when you could live with ease and comfort in the world? Or is it not to follow in the footsteps of the Lord in sacrifice, abnegation, carrying the cross, working zealously for one's own sanctification and sanctification of others?"¹⁹

Like the psalmist (Ps 77:11), he gratefully remembers the way the Lord has guided him, though unworthy he is.

Your boundless love, no reason else I see
Hail, hail almighty God supreme!
Reflect, dear my heart on your deeds

¹⁶ *Complete Works of Bl. Chavara*, Letters, 70.

¹⁷ *Complete Works of Bl. Chavara*, Letters, 71.

¹⁸ Kuriakose Elias Chavara, *Complete Works of Blessed Chavara: Colloquies with the Heavenly Father*, Vol. III (Mannanam: The Committee for the Cause of Blessed Chavara, 1989), 25.

¹⁹ *Colloquies with the Heavenly Father*, 25.

The numberless ungracious words and thoughts to boot
 The auspicious moment of our birth did see
 The birth of several more like you.²⁰

Now, coming to factual and contextual life, Chavara was equally concerned about giving instructions to his own community members, priests, and people out of his love for the salvation of the souls and good of the members of the community.²¹ In other words, he was keen to the good of Christian and religious life, the End of which is the God's house or the kingdom of God on earth. This is attested by *Chavarul: Testament of a Loving Father*²², which comprises of instructions for the renewal and sustenance of Christian families; *Three Meditations on Vocation and priests*, where Chavara aims at the overall well-being of priestly life; the long *Circular Letter, written along with Fr. Gerard Missionary*²³ comprising of a series of corrections of the shortcomings, dated August 1869, and *Will and Testament of Fr. Chavara*²⁴ addressed to the members of TOCD in 1870.

4. God's Anointed King

The third point in reading the Psalms in connection with teaching on the good life would be incomplete without considering the personal, messianic dimension of its moral instruction, namely God's anointed king, who is both the End of the good life and the path to that End. There could be different understandings of the question of who this anointed one is. To speak of God's anointed king in the light of the Psalms is to speak of fulfilment in the apostolic announcement of Jesus Christ and His coming. Through the speech of the Psalms, the to-be-incarnate son

²⁰Complete Works of Bl. Chavara, *Compunction of the Soul*, 64.

²¹ *Tapasbhavanam* and *Darsanaveed* arose out of his perception that the church is barren and spiritually blind. He advocated that "monasteries to be mirrors of virtues and assembly of Holy people. A house of discipline (*Tapas*) where virtue is regularly practiced only can generate wisdom (*Darsana*), for which one has to stay permanently in a place as n ones' own house." Kadankavil, *Chavara: A Multidimensional Saint*, 72.

²²Kuriakose Elias Chavara, *Complete Works of Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, Letters, Jossy Maria and Saju Chakkalackal, ed., Vol. IV (Kakkanad: Chavara Central Secretariat & Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2020), 184-202.

²³ *Complete Works of Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, Letters, 109-110.

²⁴ *Complete Works of Kuriakose Elias Chavara*, Letters, 109-110, 114-119.

of God presents himself to us, in riddle and promise, as the one in whom the good life finds fulfilment.

In one of the most cited psalms in the New Testament (Ps 110), God's anointed king is addressed by God as God and enthroned by God as God: "The Lord says to my Lord: 'Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool'" (Ps 110:1).²⁵ God sends His divine son in the fulness of time. The divine identity of the anointed king would answer to the promise of God as help, light, and guide us on the path of God's law to the Beatitude of God's house. Further, He is the supreme good and final End to which that path leads us. By His beauty and majesty, He causes His name to be "remembered in all generations" and nations to praise him "forever and ever" (Ps 45:17). He is our supreme good and final End. In the words of St Augustine, "When we reach Him, we shall have nowhere further to go, and so he is called the 'end' of our journey."²⁶

Chavara, on the day of the reception of the tonsure adopted Psalm 16:5 as his motto - "The Lord is my portion" (Ps 16:5). True to his baptismal name 'Kuriakose,' which in Greek means 'one who belongs to the Lord,' he always tried to remain on the side of God. Jose Eroorickal states that "this conviction of belongingness to God becomes still more explicit through the mystical experiences [...] in his colloquy with the heavenly Father. [...]. The life of intimacy with God prompted Chavara to work so hard for Christ and for his Church."²⁷ For him, God was everything - the path, the light, the help, and the destination. Later, we find him singing "oh my God you are my love, my joy and all my

²⁵ He had one left to send, a son, whom he loved. He sent him last of all, saying, 'They will respect my son.' "But the tenants said to one another, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.' So they took him and killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard (Mark 12:1-12, 35-37). "But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship" (Gal 4:4-7).

²⁶ Augustine, "Exposition of Psalm 45," in *Expositions of the Psalms*, trans. Maria Boulding, ed. Boniface Ramsey, Vol. 2 (New York: New City Press, 2018), 310-311.

²⁷ Jose Eroorickal, *Mystical and Missionary Spirituality of Blessed Kuriakose Chavara* (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2014), 222.

fortune. If not in you, how could I live my life? You are my breath, my food and my drink. What solace have I in you?"²⁸

The feeling of God always beside and becoming one with Him was his own experience that is visible in his Letter to the sisters:

Even for a moment He is not away from you. He wants you to make happy and he wants only that you love him. He tells you that he can give you everything that you want. All that he wants of you in return is you must love Him. [...]. Ha, Jesus, until we become one with you, do not depart from us.²⁹

Elsewhere, Chavara identified himself with the lost sheep and he mystically experiences Jesus saying to him: "In search of you I wandered along forest and hilltops, seas and mountain, because I loved you and had resolved to take you to my royal house."³⁰ He is led and guided by Jesus as he is the path and life. Yet another experience makes him see the anointed one as the promised in the history who for Chavara is both the End of the good life and the path to that End. "To find you out I stepped down from My throne – that you may have no fear of Me – I was born as a baby for your sake."³¹ This makes him see or long to realize him in the appellations found in the scripture as he writes in the *Compunction of the Soul* with the refrain *kānakēnam*.

Lord of Mercy, the son of God, His glorious splendour, I long to see! ...How Jesus Anna's grandson was hunger-smitten, I long to see! And with the Pharisees, He discussed the law in His twelfth ear, I long to see! The good shepherd, seeking His flock that had gone astray, I long to see. The Lord of goodness, proclaiming Himself as our loving Friend, I long to see.³²

5. Chavara and Psalms: An Analogous Understanding

While one might argue that drawing parallels between Chavara and the psalmist involves a degree of eisegesis, it is clear that the spiritual insights and practices of Chavara were significantly influenced by the rich tradition of the Psalms. This connection highlights the timeless relevance of the Psalms in shaping the lives of saints and Chavara alike,

²⁸ *Complete Works of Bl. Chavara, Compunction of the Soul*, 10.

²⁹ *Complete Works of Kuriakose Elias Chavara, Letters*, 131-132.

³⁰ *Colloquies with the Heavenly Father*, 10.

³¹ *Colloquies with the Heavenly Father*, 10.

³² *Complete Works of Bl. Chavara, Compunction of the Soul*, 17.

guiding them towards a deeper relationship with God and a more profound sense of fulfilment in their spiritual journeys. His attitude and life attest to this as better proof.

1. Ps 55:22 "Cast your cares on the Lord, and he will sustain you; He will never let the righteous to be shaken."

A similar attitude is found in his *Colloquies with the Heavenly Father*:

"My dear Father and patron, I entrust myself to your care and protection. [...]. I certainly trust in His mercy and lasting love for me. Still, I am disturbed and shaken by many things. Help me to remain in the divine virtue of hope."³³

2. Ps 102:17 "He will respond to the prayer of the destitute; he will not despise their plea."

"When Fr. Leopold and I were in great trouble, we requested the prayer of sisters; they prayed for it, reciting with O Remember, O Most Virgin Mary and Hail Holy Queen. What emerged as hill, disappeared like smoke."³⁴

3. Ps 23:1-2 "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters."

While speaking to sisters over the construction of the convent quickly with trust in God as only capital, he says, "See, how he provides us everything we need. Look at the affair of this convent. From the moment it was established, it is God who runs it. He fulfils all our needs without allowing even the smallest inconvenience. The Word of God, "Seek, you shall find is true."³⁵

4. Ps 130:7 "Hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is abundant redemption."

Expressing his hope in the Lord for making him what he is despite his unworthiness, Chavara writes,

"I am a beggar attending wedding dinner without a proper outfit. However, one who called me, the Lord of Mercy is capable of giving

³³ *Colloquies with the Heavenly Father*, 19-20.

³⁴ *Colloquies with the Heavenly Father*, 24.

³⁵ *Complete Works of Bl. Chavara, Letters*, 138.

me a royal robe, i.e., higher degrees of prayer and sanctity, provided I am enough to ask him."³⁶

5. Ps 103:1-2 With my whole heart, with my whole life, and with my innermost being, I bow in wonder and love before you, the holy God!

Chavara repenting on the feeling of lack of sincere love of the Lord, prays before him. This attitude is reflected throughout his colloquies. "How long shall I wait, O my soul, to love the Lord wholeheartedly." "Oh, infinite Love, I love you with all my heart."³⁷

6. Ps 128:4 speaks of a family framed out of fear of the Lord:

"Blessed are all who fear the Lord, who walk in obedience to him. You will eat the fruit of your labor; blessings and prosperity will be yours. Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your children will be like olive shoots around your table. Yes, this will be the blessing for the man who fears the Lord."

Chavarul is the guideline for families to grow in the fear of the Lord and to walk as children of God. The norm of relationships and dealings in the family and with neighbors is the fear of the Lord. "The most valuable possession of a family consists in fear of and devotion to the Lord. A family in which the fear of the Lord pervades will enjoy the fruit of divine blessings in this world as well as in eternity."³⁸ Making the fear of God as a framework of good family, he admonishes, "do not contract relationships with the disorderly and who have no fear of God. For it is not the rich who bring blessing and joy to your family, but the orderly, God-fearing relatives."³⁹ Conceiving family as God's blessing and a vibrant reality, he insists on the role of God-fearing people; therefore, he warns, "don't entertain all sorts of people in your house, but receive only those who are well-mannered and God-fearing."⁴⁰

7. Ps 51:1- "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions."

³⁶ *Colloquies with the Heavenly Father*, 1.

³⁷ *Colloquies with the Heavenly Father*, 39-40.

³⁸ Kuriakose Elias Chavara, *Chavarul: Testament of a Loving Father*, revised and updated edition (Kochi: Chavara Central Secretariat, 2018), 25.

³⁹ Chavara, *Chavarul*, 16.

⁴⁰ Chavara, *Chavarul*, 17.

Chavara in his *Compunction of the Soul*, displays the plight of a sinful person who seeks God's mercy with a repentant heart as in the case of Psalm 51. It can be seen both as a form of repentance and an act of contrition. Presenting himself as a sinner, he trusts the merciful God.

"Alas what a grief! I have torn into pieces the purity, the innocence of heart of those days."

"O Master God-man, source of mercy, Lord, look with eyes of pity on me, a great sinner."

"Master, Lord, Saviour of mankind, Lord, look with pity on me a sinner."

"Grant me, O source of mercy, forgiveness of sins through your blood."

"In your look of mercy, I behold A gentle saviour, not a judge. [...]. Abide with me, save me from troubles Guard me, O Your grace draws me. Devoutly I pray, in the words of David Your blessed ancestor thus: The sins of my youth, remember not."⁴¹

6. Conclusion

The Psalms claim that the Christian life is the good life. They seek to make us whole and happy persons, holy and happy in God, by directing us to the End of the good life, which is to dwell in God's house, and by directing us to the path of the good life, which lies in following God's instruction. They present to us the supreme good and final End of the Christian life by directing us on the path that leads to that supreme good and final End of Christian life - the way, the truth and the life (Jn 14:6) - that is, God's anointed king, Jesus Christ our Lord. For Chavara too, a good Christian family is the image of heaven, where members live together by the bond of blood and affection, duly respecting and obeying the parents, walking peacefully before God and people, seeking eternal salvation, according to each one's proper state of life. For him, "monastery is a miniature heaven." Salvation of soul was his concern, the barren Church his pain. His concern was for house of the God and for family, the domestic Church. He longed to see God and he could see things from the perspective of God that is clear in his works composed out of his most profound experiences.

⁴¹ See, *Complete Works of Bl. Chavara, Compunction of the Soul*, # II: 115-116; 241-242; V:141-142; VI: 351-352; V:163-66, 179-83.