

PSALM XXIX.

TITLE.—A Psalm of David. *The title affords us no information beyond the fact that David is the author of this sublime song.*

SUBJECT.—*It seems to be the general opinion of modern annotators, that this Psalm is meant to express the glory of God as heard in the pealing thunder, and seen in an equinoctial tornado. Just as the eighth Psalm is to be read by moonlight, when the stars are bright, as the nineteenth needs the rays of the rising sun to bring out its beauty, so this can be best rehearsed beneath the black wing of tempest, by the glare of the lightning, or amid that dubious dusk which heralds the war of elements. The verses march to the tune of thunderbolts. God is everywhere conspicuous, and all the earth is hushed by the majesty of his presence. The word of God in the law and gospel is here also depicted in its majesty of power. True ministers are sons of thunder, and the voice of God in Christ Jesus is full of majesty. Thus we have God's works and God's word joined together: let no man put them asunder by a false idea that theology and science can by any possibility oppose each other. We may, perhaps, by a prophetic glance, behold in this Psalm the dread tempests of the latter days, and the security of the elect people.*

DIVISION.—*The first two verses are a call to adoration. From 3 to 10 the path of the tempest is traced, the attributes of God's word are rehearsed, and God magnified in all the terrible grandeur of his power; and the last verse sweetly closes the scene with the assurance that the omnipotent Jehovah will give both strength and peace to his people. Let heaven and earth pass away, the Lord will surely bless his people.*

EXPOSITION.

GIVE unto the LORD, O ye mighty, give unto the LORD glory and strength.
2 Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.

1. "Give," i.e., ascribe. Neither men nor angels can confer anything upon Jehovah, but they should recognise his glory and might, and ascribe it to him in their songs and in their hearts. "Unto the Lord," and unto him alone, must honour be given. Natural causes, as men call them, are God in action, and we must not ascribe power to them, but to the infinite Invisible who is the true source of all. "O ye mighty." Ye great ones of earth and of heaven, kings and angels, join in rendering worship to the blessed and only Potentate; ye lords among men need thus to be reminded, for ye often fail where humbler men are ardent; but fail no longer, bow your heads at once, and loyally do homage to the King of kings. How frequently do grandees and potentates think it beneath them to fear the Lord; but, when they have been led to extol Jehovah, their piety has been the greatest jewel in their crowns. "Give unto the Lord glory and strength," both of which men are too apt to claim for themselves, although they are the exclusive prerogatives of the self-existent God. Let crowns and swords acknowledge their dependence upon God. Not to your arms, O kings, give ye the glory, nor look for strength to your host of warriors, for all your pomp is but as a fading flower, and your might is as a shadow which declineth. When shall the day arrive when kings and princes shall count it their delight to glorify their God? "All worship be to God only," let this be emblazoned on every coat of arms.

2. "Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name." A third time the admonition is given, for men are backward in glorifying God, and especially great men, who are often too much swollen with their own glory to spare time to give God his rightful praise, although nothing more is asked of them than is most just and right. Surely men should not need so much pressing to give what is due, especially when the payment is so pleasant. Unbelief and distrust, complaining and murmuring, rob God of his honour; in this respect, even the saints fail to give due glory to their King. "Worship the Lord," bow before him with devout homage and sacred awe, and let your worship be such as he appoints. Of old, worship was cumbered with ceremonial, and men gathered around one dedicated building, whose solemn

pomp was emblematic of "*the beauty of holiness*;" but now our worship is spiritual, and the architecture of the house and the garments of the worshippers are matters of no importance; the spiritual beauty of inward purity and outward holiness being far more precious in the eyes of our thrice holy God. O for grace ever to worship with holy motives and in a holy manner, as becometh saints! The call to worship in these two verses chimes in with the loud pealing thunder, which is the church bell of the universe ringing kings and angels, and all the sons of earth to their devotions.

3 The voice of the LORD is upon the waters: the God of glory thundereth: the Lord is upon many waters.

4 The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is full of majesty.

5 The voice of the LORD breaketh the cedars; yea, the LORD breaketh the cedars of Lebanon.

6 He maketh them also to skip like a calf, Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn.

7 The voice of the LORD divideth the flames of fire.

8 The voice of the LORD shaketh the wilderness; the LORD shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh.

9 The voice of the LORD maketh the hinds to calve, and discovereth the forests: and in his temple doth every one speak of his glory.

10 The LORD sitteth upon the flood; yea, the LORD sitteth King for ever.

3. "*The voice of the Lord is upon the waters.*" The thunder is not only poetically but instructively called "the voice of God," since it peals from on high; it surpasses all other sounds, it inspires awe, it is entirely independent of man, and has been used on some occasions as the grand accompaniment of God's speech to Adam's sons. There is peculiar terror in a tempest at sea, when deep calleth unto deep, and the raging sea echoes to the angry sky. No sight more alarming than the flash of lightning around the mast of the ship; and no sound more calculated to inspire a reverent awe than the roar of the storm. The children of heaven have often enjoyed the tumult with humble joy peculiar to the saints, and even those who know not God have been forced into unwilling reverence while the storm has lasted. "*The God of glory thundereth.*" Thunder is in truth no mere electric phenomenon, but is caused by the interposition of God himself. Even the old heathen spake of Jupiter Tonans; but our modern wise men will have us believe in laws and forces, and anything or nothing so that they may be rid of God. Electricity of itself can do nothing, it must be called and sent upon its errand; and until the almighty Lord commissions it, its bolt of fire is inert and powerless. As well might a rock of granite, or a bar of iron fly in the midst of heaven, as the lightning go without being sent by the great First Cause. "*The Lord is upon many waters.*" Still the Psalmist's ear hears no voice but that of Jehovah, resounding from the multitudinous and dark waters of the upper ocean of clouds, and echoing from the innumerable billows of the storm-tossed sea below. The waters above and beneath the firmament are astonished at the eternal voice. When the holy Spirit makes the divine promise to be heard above the many waters of our soul's trouble, then is God as glorious in the spiritual world as in the universe of matter. Above us and beneath us all is the peace of God when he gives us quiet.

4. "*The voice of the Lord is powerful.*" An irresistible power attends the lightning of which the thunder is the report. In an instant, when the Lord wills it, the force of electricity produces amazing results. A writer upon this subject, speaks of these results as including a light of the intensity of the sun in his strength, a heat capable of fusing the compactest metals, a force in a moment paralysing the muscles of the most powerful animals; a power suspending the all-pervading gravity of the earth, and an energy capable of decomposing and recomposing the closest affinities of the most intimate combinations. Well does Thompson speak of "the unconquerable lightning," for it is the chief of the ways of God in physical forces, and none can measure its power.

As the voice of God in nature is so powerful, so is it in grace; the reader will do well to draw a parallel, and he will find much in the gospel, which may be

illustrated by the thunder of the Lord in the tempest. His voice, whether in nature or revelation, shakes both earth and heaven; see that ye refuse not him that speaketh. If his voice be thus mighty, what must his hand be! beware lest ye provoke a blow. "*The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty.*" The King of kings speaks like a king. As when a lion roareth, all the beasts of the forest are still, so is the earth hushed and mute while Jehovah thundereth marvelously.

"Tis listening fear and dumb amazement all."

As for the written word of God, its majesty is apparent both in its style, its matter, and its power over the human mind; blessed be God, it is the majesty of mercy wielding a silver sceptre; of such majesty the word of our salvation is full to overflowing.

5. "*The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars.*"

"Black from the stroke above, the smouldering pine
Stands a sad shatter'd trunk."

Noble trees fall prostrate beneath the mysterious bolt, or stand in desolation as mementoes of its power. Lebanon itself is not secure, high as it stands, and ancient as are its venerable woods: "*Yea, the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon.*" The greatest and most venerable of trees or men, may not reckon upon immunity when the Lord is abroad in his wrath. The gospel of Jesus has a like dominion over the most inaccessible of mortals; and when the Lord sends the word, it breaks hearts far stouter than the cedars.

6. "*He maketh them also to skip like a calf; Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn.*" Not only the trees, but the mountains themselves move as though they frisked and leaped like young bulls or antelopes. As our own poets would mention hills and valleys known to them, so the Psalmist hears the crash and roar among the ranges of Libanus, and depicts the tumult in graphic terms. Thus sings one of our own countrymen:—

"Amid Carnarvon's mountains rages loud
The repercussive roar: with mighty crash
Into the flashing deep, from the rude rocks
Of Penmaen Mawr, heap'd hideous to the sky.
Tumble the smitten cliffs; and Snowdon's peak,
Dissolving, instant yields his wintry load.
Far seen, the heights of heathy Cheviot blaze,
And Thulè bellows through her utmost isles."

The glorious gospel of the blessed God has more than equal power over the rocky obduracy and mountainous pride of man. The voice of our dying Lord rent the rocks and opened the graves: his living voice still works the like wonders. Glory be to his name, the hills of our sins leap into his grave, and are buried in the red sea of his blood, when the voice of his intercession is heard.

7. "*The voice of the Lord divideth the flames of fire.*" As when sparks fly from the anvil by blows of a ponderous hammer, so the lightning attends the thundering strokes of Jehovah.

"At first heard solemn o'er the verge of heaven,
The tempest growls; but as it nearer comes,
And rolls its awful burden on the wind,
The lightnings flash a larger curve, and more
The noise astounds: till overhead a sheet
Of livid flame discloses wide; then shuts
And opens wider; shuts and opens still
Expansive, wrapping ether in a blaze."

The thunder seems to divide one flash from another, interposing its deepening roar between the flash which precedes it and the next. That the flashes are truly flames of fire is witnessed by their frequently falling upon houses, churches, etc., and wrapping them in a blaze. How easily could the Lord destroy his rebellious creatures with his hot thunderbolts! how gracious is the hand which spares such great offenders, when to crush them would be so easy!

Flames of fire attend the voice of God in the gospel, illuminating and melting the hearts of men; by these he consumes our lusts and kindles in us a holy flame

of ever-inspiring love and holiness. Pentecost is a suggestive commentary upon this verse.

8. As the storm travelled, it burst over the desert. "*The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness; the Lord shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh.*" God courts not the applause of men—his grandest deeds are wrought where man's inquisitive glance is all unknown. Where no sound of man was heard, the voice of God was terribly distinct. The vast and silent plains trembled with affright. Silence did homage to the Almighty voice. Low lying plains must hear the voice of God as well as lofty mountains; the poor as well as the mighty must acknowledge the glory of the Lord. Solitary and barren places are to be gladdened by the gospel's heavenly sound. What a shaking and overturning power there is in the word of God! even the conservative desert quivers into progress when God decrees it.

9. "*The voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to calve,*" those timid creatures, in deadly fear of the tempest, drop their burdens in an untimely manner. Perhaps a better reading is, "the oaks to tremble," especially as this agrees with the next sentence, and "*discovereth the forests.*" The dense shades of the forest are lit up with the lurid glare of the lightning, and even the darkest recesses are for a moment laid bare.

"The gloomy woods
Start at the flash, and from their deep recess
Wide-flaming out, their trembling inmates shake."

Our first parents sought a refuge among the trees, but the voice of the Lord soon found them out, and made their hearts to tremble. There is no concealment from the fire-gleam of the Almighty—one flash of his angry eye turns midnight into noon. The gospel has a like revealing power in dark hearts, in a moment it lights up every dark recess of the heart's ungodliness, and bids the soul tremble before the Lord.

"*In his temple doth every one speak of his glory.*" Those who were worshipping in the temple, were led to speak of the greatness of Jehovah as they heard the repeated thunder-claps. The whole world is also a temple for God, and when he rides abroad upon the wings of the wind, all things are vocal in his praise. We too, the redeemed of the Lord, who are living temples for his Spirit, as we see the wonders of his power in creation, and feel them in grace, unite to magnify his name. No tongue may be dumb in God's temple when his glory is the theme. The original appears to have the force of "every one crieth Glory," as though all things were moved by a sense of God's majesty to shout in ecstasy, "Glory, glory." Here is a good precedent for our Methodist friends and for the Gogonians of the zealous Welsh.

10. "*The Lord sitteth upon the flood.*" Flood follows tempest, but Jehovah is ready for the emergency. No deluge can undermine the foundation of his throne. He is calm and unmoved, however much the deep may roar and be troubled: his government rules the most unstable and boisterous of created things. Far out on the wild waste of waters, Jehovah "plants his footsteps in the sea, and rides upon the storm," "*Yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever.*" Jesus has the government upon his shoulders eternally: our interests in the most stormy times are safe in his hands. Satan is not king, but Jehovah Jesus is; therefore let us worship him, and rejoice evermore.

11 The Lord will give strength unto his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace.

Power was displayed in the hurricane whose course this Psalm so grandly pictures; and now, in the cool calm after the storm, that power is promised to be the strength of the chosen. He who wings the unerring bolt, will give to his redeemed the wings of eagles; he who shakes the earth with his voice, will terrify the enemies of his saints, and give his children peace. Why are we weak when we have divine strength to flee to? Why are we troubled when the Lord's own peace is ours? Jesus the mighty God is our peace—what a blessing is this to-day! What a blessing it will be to us in that day of the Lord which will be in darkness and not light to the ungodly!

Dear reader, is not this a noble Psalm to be sung in stormy weather? Can you sing amid the thunder? Will you be able to sing when the last thunders are let loose, and Jesus judges quick and dead? If you are a believer, the last verse is your heritage, and surely that will set you singing.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—In this Psalm, the strength of Jehovah is celebrated; and the exemplification of it is evidently taken from a thunder-storm in Lebanon. The Psalm seems to be addressed to the angels. See Psalm lxxxix. 7. It thus begins:—

“Render unto Jehovah, ye sons of the mighty,
Render unto Jehovah glory and strength;
Render to Jehovah the glory of his name;
Bow down to Jehovah in the majesty of holiness!”

Immediately follows the description of the thunder-storm, in which it does not seem fanciful to observe the historical progression which is usual on such occasions. The first lines seem to describe only the noise of the thunder, the description growing more intense as the rumbling draws nearer.

“The voice of Jehovah is above the waters;
The God of glory thundereth
Jehovah is louder than many waters,
The voice of Jehovah in strength,
The voice of Jehovah in majesty!”

But now the effects become visible; the storm has descended on the mountains and forests:—

“The voice of Jehovah shivers the cedars,
Even shivers Jehovah the cedars of Lebanon;
And makes them to skip, like a calf;
Lebanon and Sirion, like a young buffalo,
The voice of Jehovah forketh the lightning’s flash!”

From the mountains the storm sweeps down into the plains, where, however, its effects are not so fearful as on the mountains—

“The voice of Jehovah causeth the desert to tremble—
The voice of Jehovah causeth to tremble the desert of Kadesh—
The voice of Jehovah causeth the oaks to tremble,
And lays bare the forests!
Therefore, in his temple every one speaks of his glory.”

The description of the swollen torrents closes the scene—

“Jehovah upon the rain-torrent sitteth.
Yea, sitteth Jehovah a king for ever.”

And the moral or application of the whole is—

“Jehovah to his people will give strength.
Jehovah will bless his people with peace.”

Robert Murray M’Cheyne, 1813—1843.

Whole Psalm.—There is no phenomenon in nature so awful as a thunder-storm, and almost every poet from Homer and Virgil down to Dante and Milton, or rather down to Grahame and Pollok, has described it. In the Bible, too, we have a thunder-storm, the twenty-ninth Psalm—the description of a tempest, which, rising from the Mediterranean, and travelling by Lebanon and along the inland mountains, reaches Jerusalem, and sends the people into the temple-porticoes for refuge; and, besides those touches of terror in which the geographical progress of the tornado is described, it derives a sacred vitality and power from the presence of Jehovah in each successive peal.—*James Hamilton, D.D., in “The Literary Attractions of the Bible,” 1849.*

Whole Psalm.—A glorious Psalm of praise sung during a tempest, the majesty of which shakes universal nature, so much so that the greatness of the power of the Lord is felt by all in heaven and on earth. This Lord is the God of his people, who blesses them with strength and peace. To rightly appreciate the feelings of the bard, one ought to realise an Oriental storm, especially in the mountainous regions of Palestine, which, accompanied by the terrific echoes of the encircling mountains, by torrents of rain-like waterspouts, often scatters terror on man and

beast, destruction on cities and fields. Wilson, the traveller, describes such a tempest in the neighbourhood of Baalbek: "I was overtaken by a storm, as if the floodgates of heaven had burst; it came on in a moment, and raged with a power which suggested the end of the world. Solemn darkness covered the earth: the rain descended in torrents, and sweeping down the mountain side, became by the fearful power of the storm transmuted into thick clouds of fog." Compare also our Lord's parable, taken from life, in Matt. vii. 27.—*Augustus F. Tholuck, in loc.*

Verse 1.—"Give unto the Lord." Give, give, give. This showeth how unwilling such are usually to give God his right, or to suffer a word of exhortation to this purpose.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 1.—"O ye mighty." The Septuagint renders it, *O ye sons of rams!* These bell-wethers should not cast their noses into the air, and carry their crest the higher, because the shepherd hath bestowed a bell upon them, more than upon the rest of the flock.—*John Trapp.*

Verses 1, 2.—There are three gives in these two verses:—"Give unto the Lord, give unto the Lord, give unto the Lord the glory that is due unto his name." Glory is God's right, and he stands upon his right; and this the sincere Christian knows, and therefore he gives him his right, he gives him the honour and the glory that is due unto his name. But pray do not mistake me. I do not say that such as are really sincere do actually eye the glory of Christ in all their actions. Oh, no! This is a happiness desirable on earth, but shall never be attained till we come to heaven. Bye and base ends and aims will be still ready to creep into the best hearts, but all sincere hearts sigh and groan under them. They complain to God of them, and they cry out for justice, justice upon them; and it is the earnest desire and daily endeavours of their souls to be rid of them; and therefore they shall not be imputed to them, nor keep good things from them. But now take a sincere Christian in his ordinary, usual, and habitual course, and you shall find that his aims and ends in all his actions and undertakings are to glorify God, to exalt God, and to lift up God in the world. If the hypocrite did in good earnest aim at the glory of God in what he does, then the glory of God would swallow up his bye-aims and carnal ends, as Aaron's rod swallowed up the magicians' rods. Exod. vii. 10—12. Look, as the sun puts out the light of the fire, so the glory of God, where it is aimed at, will put out and consume all bye and base ends. This is most certain, that which is a man's great end, that will work out all other ends. He that sets up the glory of God as his chief end, will find that his chief end will by degrees eat out all low and base ends. Look, as Pharaoh's lean kine ate up the fat (Gen. xli. 4), so the glory of God will eat up all those fat and worldly ends that crowd in upon the soul in religious work. Where the glory of God is kept up as a man's greatest end, there all bye and base ends will be kept at an under.—*Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 2.—"Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name." Which yet you cannot do, for his name is above all praise (Psalm cxlviii. 13); but you must aim at it. The Rabbins observe that God's holy name is mentioned eighteen several times in this Psalm; that great men especially may give him the honour of his name, that they may stand in awe and not sin, that they may bring presents to him who ought to be feared, and those also the very best of the best, since he is a great king, and standeth much upon his seniority. Mal. i. 14.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 2.—"Worship the Lord." If any should ask, Why is the Lord to be worshipped? Why must he have such high honours from those that are high? What doth he in the world that calls for such adoration? David answereth meteorologically as well as theologically, he answers from the clouds (verses 3, 4), "The voice of the Lord is upon the waters: the God of glory thundereth: the Lord is upon many waters. The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty;" as if he had said, Although the Lord Jesus Christ will not set up an outward, pompous, political kingdom, such as that of Cyrus, Alexander, etc., yet by the ministry of the gospel he will erect a spiritual kingdom, and gather to himself a church that shall abide for ever, out of all the nations of the earth; for the gospel shall be carried and preached, to not only the people of Israel, the Jews, but to the Gentiles, all the world over, that the minds of men may be enlightened, awakened, and moved with that unheard of doctrine of salvation by Christ, which had been hid from ages and generations.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 3.—"The voice of the Lord is upon the waters: the God of glory thundereth: the Lord is upon many waters." Yes, great God, these torrents of tears which flow down from my eyes announce thy divine presence in my soul. This heart hitherto so dry, so arid, so hard; this rock which thou hast struck a second time, will not resist thee any longer, for out of it there now gushes healthful waters in abundance. The selfsame voice of God which overturns the mountains, thunders, lightens, and divides the heaven above the sinner, now commands the clouds to pour forth showers of blessings, changing the desert of his soul into a field producing a hundredfold; that voice I hear.—*J. B. Massillon.*

Verses 3—10.—"The Lord," etc. All things which we commonly say are the effects of the natural powers of matter and laws of motion, are, indeed (if we will speak strictly and properly), the effects of God's acting upon matter continually and at every moment, either immediately by himself, or mediately by some created intelligent being. Consequently there is no such thing as the cause of nature, or the power of nature.—*Samuel Clarke,* 1675—1729.*

Verses 3—10.—

The voice of the Lord on the ocean is known,
The God of eternity thundereth abroad;
The voice of the Lord from the depth of his throne
Is terror and power;—all nature is awed.

The voice of the Lord through the calm of the wood
Awakens its echoes, strikes light through its caves,
The Lord sitteth King on the turbulent flood,
The winds are his servants, his servants the waves.

James Montgomery, 1771—1854.

Verses 3—11.—

Messiah's voice is in the cloud,
The God of glory thunders loud.
Messiah rides along the floods,
He treads upon the flying clouds.
Messiah's voice is full of power,
His lightnings play when tempests lower.
Messiah's voice the cedars breaks,
While Lebanon's foundation quakes.
Messiah's voice removes the hills,
And all the plains with rivers fills.
The voice of their expiring God,
Shall make the rocks to start abroad;
Mount Zion and Mount Sirion,
Shall bound along with Lebanon:
The flames of fire shall round him wreath,
When he shall on the ether breathe.
Messiah's voice shall shake the earth,
And, lo! the graves shall groan in birth,
Ten thousand thousand living sons
Shall be the issue of their groans.
The peace of God, the gospel sounds;
The peace of God, the earth rebounds;
The gospel everlasting shines
A light from God that ne'er declines.
This is the light Jehovah sends,
To bless the world's remotest ends.

Barclay's Paraphrase.

Verse 4.—"The voice of the Lord." These vehement repetitions resemble a series of thunder-claps; one seems to hear the dread artillery of heaven firing volley after volley, while peal on peal the echo follows the sound.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 4.—"The voice of the Lord is powerful." I would render unto God the glory due unto his name, for the admirable change which he has wrought in my heart. There was nothing to be found in me but an impious hardness and inveterate disorder. From this helpless state he changed me into a new man and made resplendent the glory of his name and the power of his grace. He alone can work such prodigies. Unbelievers who refuse to acknowledge the hand of God in creation must surely in this case admit, that "this is the finger of God." Yes, great God,

* "The friend and disciple of Newton."

chaos knows not how to resist thee, it hears thy voice obediently, but the obdurate heart repels thee, and thy mighty voice too often calls to it in vain. Thou art not so great and wonderful in creating worlds out of nothing as thou art when thou dost command a rebel heart to arise from its abyss of sin, and to run in the ways of thy commandments. To disperse a chaos of crime and ignorance by the majesty of thy word, to shed light on the direst darkness, and by the Holy Ghost to establish harmonious order where all was confusion, manifests in far greater measure thine omnipotence than the calling forth of heavenly laws and celestial suns from the first chaos.—*J. B. Massillon.*

Verse 4.—O may the evangelical “Boanerges” so cause the glorious sound of the gospel to be heard under the whole heaven, that the world may again be made sensible thereof; before that voice of the Son of Man, which hath so often called sinners to repentance, shall call them to judgment.—*George Horne.*

Verse 4.—Where the word of a king is, there is power, but what imperial voice shall be likened unto the majestic thunder of the Lord?—*C. H. S.*

Verse 5.—“*The voice of Jehovah.*” Philosophers think not that they have reasoned skilfully enough about inferior causes, unless they separate God very far from his works. It is a diabolical science, however, which fixes our contemplations on the works of nature, and turns them away from God. If any one who wished to know a man, should take no notice of his face, but should fix his eyes only on the points of his nails, his folly might justly be derided. But far greater is the folly of those philosophers, who, out of mediate and proximate causes, weave themselves veils lest they should be compelled to acknowledge the hand of God, which manifestly displays itself in his works.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 5.—“*The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars,*” etc. Like as tempests when they arise, and lightning, quickly and in a trice, hurl down and overturn mountains and the highest trees; even so doth the Lord bring down with a break-neck fall, the proud, haughty, arrogant, and insolent, who set themselves against God, and seek the spoil of those that be quiet and godly.—*Robert Cawdray.*

Verse 5.—“*The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars.*” The ancient expositors remind us that the *breaking of the cedar trees* by the wind, is a figure of the laying low of the lofty and proud things of this world, by the rushing mighty wind of the Holy Spirit, given on that day. *Confringit cedros Deus, hoc est humiliat superbos.* (S. Jerome, and so S. Basil.)—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Verse 5.—“*The Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon.*”—What a shame is it then that our hard hearts break not, yield not, though thunder-struck with the dreadful menaces of God’s mouth!—*John Trapp.*

Verse 5.—“*Breaketh the cedars of Lebanon:*”—

When high in air the pine ascends,
To every ruder blast it bends.
The palace falls with heavier weight,
When tumbling from its airy height;
And when from heaven the lightning flies.
It blasts the hills that proudest rise.

Horace, translated by Philip Francis, D.D., 1765.

Verse 5.—“*The cedars of Lebanon.*” These mighty trees of God, which for ages have stood the force of the tempest, rearing their ever-green colossal boughs in the region of everlasting snow, are the first objects of the fury of the lightning, which is well known to visit first the highest objects.—*Robert Murray M’Cheyne.*

Verse 6.—“*He maketh them also to skip like a calf; Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn;*” that is, the Lord by his thundering, powerful voice, first, will make them skip, as frightened with fear; and secondly, as revived with joy. Yet more (*verse 7*), “*The voice of the Lord divideth the flames of fire;*” that is, will send and divide to every one as they need (1 Cor. xii. 11), the Holy Spirit, who is compared to and called *fire* (Matt. iii. 11), and who came as with a thunder-storm of a *rushing mighty wind*, and with the appearance of *cloven tongues, like as of fire*, and sat upon each one of the apostles. Acts ii. 2, 3. Nor did this voice of thunder, accompanied with divided flames of fire reach Jerusalem only; for, as it follows (*verse 8*), “*The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness; the Lord shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh;*” that is, the Lord by the voice of the gospel shall go forth with power to those Gentiles,

who are like a wilderness, barren of goodness, and unmanured in spirituals, though they dwell in well-governed cities, and are well furnished with morals. It shall go forth also to those Gentiles who inhabit waste wildernesses, and are not so much as reduced to civility. These wildernesses, the thundering voice of the Lord hath shaken heretofore, and doth shake at this day, and will yet further shake, that the fulness of the Gentiles may come in. Many of these wildernesses hath the Lord turned into fruitful fields, and pleasant lands, by the voice of the gospel sounding among them. For in these wildernesses (as it followeth, verse 9), "*The voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to calve* ; " that is, they that were as wild, as untaught, and untamed as the *hind*, or any beast in the forest, he brings to the sorrows of their new birth, to repentance and gospel humiliation, and in doing this, "*he* (as the Psalmist goes on), *discovereth the forests* ; " that is, opens the hearts of men, which are as thick set and full grown with vanity, pride, hypocrisy, self-love, and self-sufficiency, as also with wantonness and sensuality, as any forest is overgrown with thickets of trees and bushes, which deny all passage through, till cleared away with burning down or cutting up. Such an opening, such a discovery, doth the Lord make in the forests of men's hearts, by the sword and fire, that is, by the word and spirit of the gospel ; and when all this is done, the forest becomes a *temple*, and as that verse concludes, "*In his temple doth every one speak of his glory*." And if the *floods* of ungodliness rise up against this people, whom the thunder and lightning of the gospel have subdued to Christ, and framed into a holy temple, then the Psalmist assureth us (verse 10), "*The Lord sitteth upon the flood*," that is, 'tis under his power, he ruleth and overruleth it ; "*Yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever* ; " and (verse 11), "*The Lord will give strength unto his people ; the Lord will bless his people with peace*." Thus, the Lord "thundereth marvellously" (Job xxxvii. 5), and these are glorious marvels which he thundereth ; he converts sinners.

Thus, though I like not their way who are given to allegorise the Scriptures, yet I doubt not but we may make a profitable use of this and many other Scriptures by way of allegory. This being an undeniable truth, which is the ground of it—that the Lord puts forth, as it were, the power of thunder and lightning in the preaching of his Word ; these two things are to be marked.—*Joseph Caryl*.

Verse 6.—"*He maketh them also to skip like a calf*." That is to say, he hath made the splinters and broken pieces of trees that have been struck with lightning, to fly up into the air, or when they have been shaken by the wind, storms, or by earthquakes.—*John Diodati*.

Verse 6.—The original is—

" And makes them skip like a calf,
Lebanon and Sirion, like a young buffalo."

At first sight it might appear that the cedars were still meant, and that Lebanon and Sirion were used by metonymy for the cedars which grew upon them. But, 1. We never hear of cedars growing upon Sirion, or Shenir, or Hermon, for it has all these names ; and, 2. There is a parallel passage where this interpretation will hardly answer in Psalm cxiv. Describing the exodus of Israel, it says—

" The mountains skipped like rams,
And the little hills like lambs."

The same verb occurs here, the verb which means "to skip, to dance," used in Nahum iii. 2, to signify the jolting of chariots, and also in Joel ii. 5. In both these instances, rough motion, accompanied with noise, seems intended. Now, though this may very well be understood as a highly figurative description, as it undoubtedly is, of the usual effects of a thunder-storm ; yet it is interesting to compare it with the following passage of Volney, which describes certain phenomena as frequent in Mount Lebanon, which may give a new meaning to the "*skipping of the mountains* : "—

"When the traveller," says he, "penetrates the interior of these mountains, the ruggedness of the roads, the steepness of the declivities, the depth of the precipices, have at first a terrific effect ; but the sagacity of the mules which bear him soon inspires him with confidence, and enables him to examine at his ease the picturesque scenes which succeed one another, so as almost to bewilder him. There, as in the Alps, he sometimes travels whole days to arrive at a spot which was in

sight when he set out. He turns, he descends, he winds round, he climbs; and under the perpetual change of position, one is ready to think that a magical power is varying at every step the beauties of the landscapes. Sometimes villages are seen, ready as it were to slide down the deep declivities, and so disposed that the roofs of the one row of houses serve as a street to the row above. At another time, you see a convent seated on an isolated cone, like Marshaia in the valley of Tigré. Here a rock is pierced by a torrent, forming a natural cascade as at *Nahr-el-Leban*; there another rock assumes the appearance of a natural wall! Often on the sides, ledges of stones, washed down and left by the waters, resemble ruins disposed by art. In some places, the waters meeting with inclined beds, have undermined the intermediate earth, and have formed caverns, as at *Nahr-el-Kelb*, near Antoura. In other places, they have worn for themselves subterranean channels, through which flow little rivulets during part of the year, as at Mar Hama. Sometimes these picturesque circumstances have become tragical ones. Rocks loosened or thrown off their equilibrium by thaw or earthquake, have been known to precipitate themselves on the adjacent dwellings, and crush the inhabitants. An accident of this kind, about twenty years ago, buried a whole village near Mar Djordos, so as to leave no trace of its existence. More recently, and near the same spot, the soil of a hill planted with mulberry trees and vines detached itself by a sudden thaw, and, sliding over the surface of the rock which it had covered, like a vessel launched from the stocks, established itself entire in the valley below."—*Robert Murray M'Cheyne*.

Verse 7.—"The voice of the Lord divideth the flames of fire." By the power of God, the "flames of fire" are "divided" and sent abroad from the clouds upon the earth, in the terrible form of lightning, that sharp and glittering sword of the Almighty, which no substance can withstand. The same power of God goeth forth by his word, "quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword," penetrating, melting, enlightening, and inflaming the hearts of men. Acts ii. 3, Heb. iv. 12.—*George Horne*.

Verse 7.—"The voice of the Lord divideth the flames of fire." The voice of the Lord is here said to divide the flames; literally, to hew out flames, λατομεῖν φλόγας. The Sept. has διακόπτει φλόγα πυρός. In the words of Gesenius, "The voice of Jehovah cutteth out flames of fire, i.e., "sendeth out divided flames of fire." This is (as Theodoret has observed) very descriptive of the divine action at Pentecost, sending forth divided flames, like "tela trisulca," in the tongues of fire which were divided off from one heavenly source or fountain of flame, and sat upon the heads of the apostles, and which filled them with the fire of holy zeal and love.—*Christopher Wordsworth*.

Verse 7.—"Divideth the flames of fire." Marg., cutteth out. The Hebrew word כָּטַף *khatzab* means properly to cut, to hew, to hew out; as for example, stones. The allusion here is undoubtedly to lightning; and the image is either that it seems to be cut out, or cut into tongues and streaks—or, more probably, that the clouds seem to be cut or hewed, so as to make openings or paths for the lightning. The eye is evidently fixed on the clouds, and on the sudden flash of lightning, as if the clouds had been cleaved or opened for the passage of it. The idea of the Psalmist is, that the "voice of the Lord," or the thunder, seems to cleave or open the clouds for the flames of fire to play amidst the tempest.—*Albert Barnes*.

Verse 8.—"The Lord shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh." That Kadesh-Naphtali is meant, the geographical position of Lebanon would make us believe, though this is not necessary. And, although Syria is much exposed to earthquakes—as, for example, that of Aleppo, in 1822, which was sensibly felt at Damascus—yet it does not seem necessary to imagine anything farther than the usual effects of a thunder-storm. The oaks and forests of verse 9, suit well with the description given of the lower limbs of Lebanon, which abound in "thickets of myrtle, woods of fir, walnut trees, carob trees, and Turkish oaks." And the rain-torrent of verse 10 is admirably descriptive of the sudden swell of the thousand streams which flow from Lebanon. According to modern travellers, the number of water-courses descending from Lebanon is immense; and the suddenness of the rise of these streams may be gathered from the contradictions in their accounts. The *Nahr-el-Sazib* is described by one as "a rivulet, though crossed by a bridge of six arches;" by another it is called "a large river." The *Damour* (the ancient

Tamyras), which flows immediately from Lebanon, is "a river," says Mandrell, "apt to swell much upon sudden rains; in which case, precipitating itself from the mountains with great rapidity, it has been fatal to many a passenger." He mentions a French gentleman, M. Spon, who, a few years before, in attempting to ford it, was hurried down by the stream, and perished in the sea. This is one instance of very many in the mountains of Lebanon, where the brook, which is usually nearly dry, becomes all at once an impassable torrent. When Volney looked upon the rivers of Syria in summer, he doubted whether they could be called rivers. But had he ventured to cross them after a thunder-storm, his scepticism would no longer have had room or time to exercise itself, and he would have felt the propriety of the Psalmist's painting, where he says—

"Jehovah sitteth on the rain-torrents,
Jehovah sitteth a King for ever."

Robert Murray M'Cheyne.

Verse 8.—"The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness." Great God, I have laboured to escape thee! I sought refuge for my remorse in a retreat where nothing might recall me to my God. Far away from the succours of religion, remote from all the channels which bring to me the waters of grace, apart from all whose reproofing witness might restrain me from iniquity; yet even there, Great God, where I believed that I had found an asylum inaccessible to thine eternal mercy, wherein I could sin with impunity, even there, in that wilderness, thy voice arrested me and laid me at thy feet.—*J. B. Massillon.*

Verse 9.—"The voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to calve." With respect to the sense conveyed by the common reading, it may be observed, that hinds bring forth their young with great difficulty and pain, "bowing themselves, bruising their young ones, and casting out their sorrows" (Job xxxix. 4, 6); and it therefore heightens the description given of the terrific character of the thunder-storm, when the thunder which is here called "the voice of God" is represented as causing, through the terror which it inspires, the hinds in their pregnant state prematurely to drop their young; although, according to our ideas of poetical imagery, this may not accord so well with the other images in the passage, nor appear so beautiful and sublime as the image of the oaks trembling at the voice of Jehovah.—*John Calvin.*

Verses 9.—"The voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to calve." The care and tenderness of God towards beasts turns to his praise, as well as the care which he hath of, and the tenderness which he shows to believers. As it doth exceedingly advance the glory of God, that he takes care of wild beasts, so it may exceedingly strengthen the faith of man that he will take care of him. Doth the Lord take care of *hinds*? then certainly he takes care of those that particularly belong to him. There is a special providence of God towards these and such like creatures for the production of their young. He—if I may so speak with reverence—shows his midwifery in helping these savage beasts when their pains come upon them. As the Lord takes man, in an eminent manner, "out of the womb" (Psalm xxii. 9), so in a manner he takes beasts out of the womb too. "The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness; the Lord shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh;" so we translate it; but the word which we render "*shaketh*" is the same with that in Job xxxix. 2, which signifieth to *bring forth*; and hence, some very learned in the Hebrew tongue do not render as we, "The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness," but "The voice of the Lord maketh the wilderness to *bring forth*;" the Lord maketh the wilderness of Kadesh to *bring forth*;" which is not to be understood of the vegetative creatures (that's a truth, the Lord makes the trees of the forest to bring forth both leaves and fruit), but it is meant of animals or living creatures there. And then when he saith, "The voice of the Lord maketh the wilderness to bring forth," the meaning is, the Lord makes the wild beast of the wilderness to bring forth; which seems to be the clear sense of the place by that which followeth; for the Psalmist having said this in general at the eight verse, "*The voice of the Lord maketh the wilderness to bring forth*," he in the ninth verse gives the special instance of the *hind*: "*The voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to calve.*"—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 9.—"The voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to calve." It is with great propriety, says one of the ancients, that Jehovah demands, "The birth of the

hinds dost thou guard?" (Job xxxix. 1), for since this animal is always in flight, and with fear and terror always leaping and skipping about, she could never bring her young to maturity without such a special protection. The providence of God, therefore, is equally conspicuous in the preservation of the mother and the fawn; both are the objects of his compassion and tender care; and, consequently, that afflicted man has no reason to charge his Maker with unkindness, who condescends to watch over the goats and the hinds. It seems to be generally admitted, that the hind brings forth her young with great difficulty; and so much appears to be suggested in the verse, "They bow themselves, they bring forth their young ones, they cast out their sorrows." But if Pliny, and other naturalists are worthy of credit, divine providence has been graciously pleased to provide certain herbs, which greatly facilitate the birth; and by instinct, he directs the hind to feed upon them, when the time of gestation draws towards a close. Whatever truth there may be in this assertion, we know from higher authority, that providence promotes the parturition of the hind, by awakening her fears, and agitating her frame by the rolling thunder:—"The voice of Jehovah (a common Hebrew phrase, denoting thunder) maketh the hinds to calve." Nor ought we to wonder, that so timorous a creature as the hind, should be so much affected by that awful atmospheric convulsion, when some of the proudest men that ever existed, have been known to tremble. Augustus, the Roman Emperor, according to Suetonius, was so terrified when it thundered, that he wrapped a seal-skin round his body, with the view of defending it from the lightning, and concealed himself in some secret corner till the tempest ceased. The tyrant Caligula, who sometimes affected to threaten Jupiter himself, covered his head, or hid himself under a bed; and Horace confesses he was reclaimed from atheism by the terror of thunder and lightning, the effects of which he describes with his usual felicity. (Odes, b. i. 34.)—George Paxton's "Illustrations of Scripture."

Verse 9.—"The voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to calve." "Cervi sunt predicatores," says S. Jerome, who bring forth souls to Christ by the gospel which is God's voice; and the stripping of the leaves of the forest by the voice of the Lord, represents their work in humbling the strong oaks and lofty cedars of the world by the power of the gospel, and in stripping the souls of the worldly-minded of their manifold disguises (S. Basil). Others apply it to the act of the preachers of God's word, disclosing the dark thickets of divine mysteries in the holy Scriptures by evangelical light set forth by the Holy Ghost (S. Jerome).—Christopher Wordsworth.

Verse 9 (first clause).—"The voice of Jehovah makes havoc of the oaks, and strippeth bare the forests."—Samuel Horsley.

Verse 9.—"In his temple."—Some conceive that this Psalm was appointed by David to be sung in the temple in time of thunder, which is not unlikely. There are writers who make God to be the nominative case to the verb speaketh; and render it thus, *in his temple doth he utter all his glory*. As much as to say, much of his glory God uttereth in his thunder, but all in his temple, for whatsoever there he speaketh with his mouth he fulfilleth it with his hand.—John Trapp.

Verse 9 (last clause).—David speaking in the former part of the Psalm of the effects of natural thunder only, towards the close of the Psalm applieth it to the Word of God, while he saith, "And in his temple doth every one speak of his glory;" that is, the word and ordinances of God, ministered in his church or temple, will put every one to acknowledge and speak of the glorious power of God, even much more than the mighty thunder which soundeth in our ears, or the subtle lightning which flasheth in our eyes. There is far more royal power in the thunder of the Word, than in the word of thunder. This terrifieth only to conviction, but that terrifieth to salvation; for after God speaks terror there in his threatenings, he speaks comfort in the promises; and when he hath affrighted us with a sense of our sins and of his wrath due to us for our sins, as with an horrible tempest, he presently refresheth us with the gentle gales of revealed grace, and with the pleasant amiable sunshine of his favour by Jesus Christ.—Joseph Caryl.

Verse 11.—"The Lord will give strength unto his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace;" i.e., he is in war their strength, and their felicity in peace; in war he is the Author of all that power wherewith they are enabled to oppose and overcome potent enemies; and in peace, he is their truly felicitating good, and makes them, by his own vouchsafed presence, a truly blessed people.—John Howe.

Verse 11.—“*The Lord will bless his people with peace.*” Though some precious souls that have closed with Christ, and embraced the gospel, be not at present brought to rest in their own consciences, but continue for awhile under some dissatisfaction and trouble in their own spirits, yet even then they have *peace* of conscience in a threefold respect; *in pretio, in promisso, in semine*. First, every true believer hath peace of conscience *in pretio*; the gospel puts that price into his hand, which will assuredly purchase it, and that is the blood of Christ. We say that is gold which is worth gold, which we may anywhere exchange for gold; such is the blood of Christ; it is peace of conscience, because the soul that hath this may exchange it for this. God himself cannot deny the poor creature that prays on these terms: Lord, give me peace of conscience; here is Christ’s blood, the price of it. That which could pay the debt, surely can procure the receipt. Peace of conscience is but a discharge under God’s hand, that the debt due to divine justice is fully paid. The blood of Christ hath done that the greater for the believer, it shall therefore do this the less. If there were such a rare potion that did infallibly procure health to every one that takes it, we might safely say, as soon as the sick man hath drunk it down, that he hath drunk his health, it is in him, though at present he doth not feel himself to have it: in time it will appear. Secondly, *In promisso*. Every true believer hath peace of conscience in the promise, and that we count as good as ready money in the purse, which we have sure bond for. “*The Lord will bless his people with peace.*” He is resolved on it, and then who shall hinder it? It is worth your reading the whole Psalm, to see what weight the Lord gives to this sweet promise, for the encouragement of our faith in expecting the performance thereof. Nothing more hard to enter into the heart of a poor creature (when all is in an uproar in his bosom, and his conscience threatening nothing but fire and sword, wrath, vengeance, from God for his sins), than thoughts or hopes of peace and comfort. Now the Psalm is spent in showing what great things God can do, and that with no more trouble to himself than a word speaking, “*The voice of the Lord is full of majesty*” (verse 4), “It breaks the cedars, it divides the flames, it shakes the wilderness, it makes the hinds to calve.” This God that doth all this, promiseth to *bless his people with peace*, outward and inward; for without this inward peace, though he might give them peace, yet could he never bless them with peace as he there undertakes. A sad peace, were it not, to have quiet streets, but cutting of throats in our houses? yet infinitely more sad to have peace both in our streets and houses, but war and blood in our guilty consciences. What peace can a poor creature taste or relish, while the sword of God’s wrath lies at the throat of conscience? not peace with God himself. Therefore Christ purchased peace of pardon, to obtain peace of conscience for his pardoned ones, and accordingly hath bequeathed it in the promise to them, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.” John xiv. 27. Where you see he is both the testator to leave, and the executor of his own will, to give out with his own hands what his love hath left believers; so that there is no fear but his will shall be performed to the full, seeing himself lives to see it done. Thirdly, *In semine*. Every believer hath this inward peace in the seed. “Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.” Psalm xcvi. 11. Where sown, but in the believer’s own bosom, when principles of grace and holiness were cast into it by the Spirit of God? Hence it is called “the peaceable fruit of righteousness.” Heb. xii. 11. It shoots as naturally from holiness, as any fruit in its kind doth from the seed proper to it. It is, indeed, most true, that the seed runs and ripens into this fruit sooner in some than it doth in others. This spiritual harvest comes not alike soon to all, no more than the other that is outward doth; but here is the comfort—whoever hath a seed-time of grace pass over his soul, shall have his harvest-time also of joy.—*William Gurnall*.

Verse 11.—“*Peace.*” There is a threefold “peace,” *externa, interna, æterna*; temporal, spiritual, celestial peace. There is outward peace, the *blessing*; inward peace, the *grace*; and everlasting peace, of *glory*. And as in a stately palace there is a lodge or court that leads into the inmost goodly rooms, so external peace is the entrance or introduction to the inward lodgings of the sweet peace of conscience and of that eternal rest in which our peace in heaven shall be happy, inasmuch as external peace affords us many accommodations and helps to the gaining and obtaining both the one and the other.—*Ephraim Udall, 1642.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—The duty of ascribing our strength and the honour of it to God ; the penalty of neglecting to do so ; the pleasure of so doing.

Verse 1.—National glorying should be in the Lord.

Verse 2 (first clause).—Royal dues, the royal treasury, loyal subjects paying their dues, the king receiving them. Smugglers and preventive men.

Verse 2 (second clause).—Inspired ritualism. What to do? "*Worship.*" Whom? "*The Lord.*" How? "*In the beauty of holiness.*" Absence of all allusions to place, time, order, words, form, vestments, etc.

Verse 3.—God's voice heard in trouble and above trouble, or in great personal and national calamities.

Verse 4.—Power and majesty of the gospel. Illustrated by succeeding verses.

Verse 4 (last clause).—"The majestic voice." See Spurgeon's Sermons, No. 87.

Verse 5.—The breaking power of the gospel.

Verse 6.—The unsettling power of the gospel.

Verse 7.—The fire which goes with the word. This is a wide subject.

Verse 8.—The arousing and alarming of godless places by the preaching of the word.

Verse 9.—The revealing power of the word of God in the secrets of man's heart, and its regenerating force.

Verse 9 (last clause).—I. Matchless temple. II. Unanimous worship. III. Forcible motive. IV. General enthusiasm, "*glory.*" See Comment.

Verse 10.—The ever-present and undisturbed government of God.

Verse 11.—The twin blessings from the same source ; their connection, and their consummation.

Verse 11.—The two wills, the two blessings, the one people, the one Lord.

