

PSALM XCV.

This Psalm has no title, and all we know of its authorship is that Paul quotes it as "in David." (Heb. iv. 7.) It is true that this may merely signify that it is to be found in the collection known as David's Psalms; but if such were the Apostle's meaning it would have been more natural for him to have written, "saying in the Psalms;" we therefore incline to the belief that David was the actual author of this poem. It is in its original a truly Hebrew song, directed both in its exhortation and warning to the Jewish people, but we have the warrant of the Holy Spirit in the epistle to the Hebrews for using its appeals and entreaties when pleading with Gentile believers. It is a Psalm of invitation to worship. It has about it a ring like that of the church bells, and like the bells it sounds both merrily and solemnly, at first ringing out a lively peal, and then dropping into a funeral knell as if tolling at the funeral of the generation which perished in the wilderness. We will call it THE PSALM OF THE PROVOCATION.

DIVISION.—It would be correct as to the sense to divide this Psalm into an invitation and a warning, so as to commence the second part with the last clause of verse 7: but upon the whole it may be more convenient to regard verse 6 as "the beating heart of the Psalm," as Hengstenberg calls it, and make the division at the end of verse 5. Thus it will form (1) an invitation with reasons, and (2) an invitation with warnings.

EXPOSITION.

O COME, let us sing unto the LORD, let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.

2 Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms.

3 For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods.

4 In his hand are the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills is his also.

5 The sea is his, and he made it: and his hands formed the dry land.

1. "O come, let us sing unto the Lord." Other nations sing unto their gods, let us sing unto Jehovah. We love him, we admire him, we reverence him, let us express our feelings with the choicest sounds, using our noblest faculty for its noblest end. It is well thus to urge others to magnify the Lord, but we must be careful to set a worthy example ourselves, so that we may be able not only to cry "Come," but also to add "let us sing," because we are singing ourselves. It is to be feared that very much even of religious singing is not unto the Lord, but unto the ear of the congregation: above all things we must in our service of song take care that all we offer is with the heart's sincerest and most fervent intent directed towards the Lord himself. "Let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation." With holy enthusiasm let us sing, making a sound which shall indicate our earnestness; with abounding joy let us lift up our voices, actuated by that happy and peaceful spirit which trustful love is sure to foster. As the children of Israel sang for joy when the smitten rock poured forth its cooling streams, so let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. The author of this song had in his mind's eye the rock, the tabernacle, the Red Sea, and the mountains of Sinai, and he alludes to them all in this first part of his hymn. God is our abiding, immutable, and mighty rock, and in him we find deliverance and safety, therefore it becomes us to praise him with heart and with voice from day to day; and especially should we delight to do this when we assemble as his people for public worship.

"Come let us to the Lord sing out
With trumpet voice and choral shout."

2. "Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving." Here is probably a reference to the peculiar presence of God in the Holy of Holies above the mercy-seat, and also to the glory which shone forth out of the cloud which rested above

the tabernacle. Everywhere God is present, but there is a peculiar presence of grace and glory into which men should never come without the profoundest reverence. We may make bold to come before the immediate presence of the Lord—for the voice of the Holy Ghost in this Psalm invites us, and when we do draw near to him we should remember his great goodness to us and cheerfully confess it. Our worship should have reference to the past as well as to the future; if we do not bless the Lord for what we have already received, how can we reasonably look for more. We are permitted to bring our petitions, and therefore we are in honour bound to bring our thanksgivings. "*And make a joyful noise unto him with Psalms.*" We should shout as exultingly as those do who triumph in war, and as solemnly as those whose utterance is a Psalm. It is not always easy to unite enthusiasm with reverence, and it is a frequent fault to destroy one of these qualities while straining after the other. The perfection of singing is that which unites joy with gravity, exultation with humility, fervency with sobriety. The invitation given in the first verse is thus repeated in the second with the addition of directions, which indicate more fully the intent of the writer. One can imagine David in earnest tones persuading his people to go up with him to the worship of Jehovah with sound of harp and hymn, and holy delight. The gladness of his exhortation is noteworthy, the noise is to be *joyful*; this quality he insists upon twice. It is to be feared that this is too much overlooked in ordinary services, people are so impressed with the idea that they ought to be serious that they put on the aspect of misery, and quite forget that joy is as much a characteristic of true worship as solemnity itself.

3. "*For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods.*" No doubt the surrounding nations imagined Jehovah to be a merely local deity, the god of a small nation, and therefore one of the inferior deities; the Psalmist utterly repudiates such an idea. Idolaters tolerated gods many and lords many, giving to each a certain measure of respect; the monotheism of the Jews was not content with this concession, it rightly claimed for Jehovah the chief place, and the supreme power. He is great, for he is all in all; he is a great King above all other powers and dignitaries, whether angels or princes, for they owe their existence to him; as for the idol gods, they are not worthy to be mentioned. This verse and the following supply some of the reasons for worship, drawn from the being, greatness, and sovereign dominion of the Lord.

4. "*In his hand are the deep places of the earth.*" He is the God of the valleys and the hills, the caverns, and the peaks. Far down where miners sink their shafts, deeper yet where lie the secret oceans by which springs are fed, and deepest of all in the unknown abyss where rage and flame the huge central fires of earth, there Jehovah's power is felt, and all things are under the dominion of his hand. As princes hold the mimic globe in their hands, so does the Lord in very deed hold the earth. When Israel drank of the crystal fount which welled up from the great deep, below the smitten rock, the people knew that in the Lord's hands were the deep places of the earth. "*The strength of the hills is his also.*" When Sinai was altogether on a smoke the tribes learned that Jehovah was God of the hills as well as of the valleys. Everywhere and at all times is this true; the Lord rules upon the high places of the earth in lonely majesty. The vast foundations, the gigantic spurs, the incalculable masses, the untrodden heights of the mountains are all the Lord's. These are his fastnesses and treasure-houses, where he stores the tempest and the rain; whence also he pours the ice-torrents and looses the avalanches. The granite peaks and adamantine aiguilles are his, and his the precipices and the beetling crags. Strength is the main thought which strikes the mind when gazing on those vast ramparts of cliff which front the raging sea, or peer into the azure sky, piercing the clouds, but it is to the devout mind the strength of God; hints of Omnipotence are given by those stern rocks which brave the fury of the elements, and like walls of brass defy the assaults of nature in her wildest rage.

5. "*The sea is his.*" This was seen to be true at the Red Sea when the waters saw their God, and obediently stood aside to open a pathway for his people. It was not Edom's sea though it was red, nor Egypt's sea though it washed her shores. The Lord on high reigned supreme over the flood, as King for ever and ever. So is it with the broad ocean, whether known as Atlantic or Pacific, Mediterranean or Arctic; no man can map it out and say "Tis mine"; the illimitable acreage of waters knows no other lord but God alone. Jehovah rules the waves. Far down in vast abysses, where no eye of man has gazed, or foot of diver has descended, he is sole proprietor; every rolling billow and foaming wave owns him for monarch;

Neptune is but a phantom, the Lord is God of ocean. "And he made it." Hence his right and sovereignty. He scooped the unfathomed channel and poured forth the overflowing flood; seas were not fashioned by chance, nor their shores marked out by the imaginary flinger of fate; God made the main, and every creek, and bay, and current, and far-sounding tide owns the great Maker's hand. All hail, Creator and Controller of the sea, let those who fly in the swift ships across the wonder-realm of waters worship thee alone!

"And his hands formed the dry land." Whether fertile field or sandy waste, he made all that men call *terra firma*, lifting it from the floods and fencing it from the overflowing waters. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." He bade the isles upraise their heads, he levelled the vast plains, upreared the table-lands, cast up the undulating hills, and piled the massive Alps. As the potter moulds his clay, so did Jehovah with his hands fashion the habitable parts of the earth. Come ye, then, who dwell on this fair world, and worship him who is conspicuous where'er ye tread! Count it all as the floor of a temple where the footprints of the present Deity are visible before your eyes if ye do but care to see. The argument is overpowering if the heart be right; the command to adore is alike the inference of reason and the impulse of faith.

6 O come, let us worship and bow down : let us kneel before the LORD our maker.

7 For he is our God ; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. To-day if ye will hear his voice,

8 Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness :

9 When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my work.

10 Forty years long was I grieved with *this* generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways :

11 Unto whom I sware in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest.

6. Here the exhortation to worship is renewed and backed with a motive which, to Israel of old, and to Christians now, is especially powerful; for both the Israel after the flesh and the Israel of faith may be described as the people of his pasture, and by both he is called "our God." "O come, let us worship and bow down." The adoration is to be humble. The "joyful noise" is to be accompanied with lowliest reverence. We are to worship in such style that the bowing down shall indicate that we count ourselves to be as nothing in the presence of the all-glorious Lord. "Let us kneel before the Lord our maker." As suppliants must we come; joyful, but not presumptuous; familiar as children before a father, yet reverential as creatures before their maker. Posture is not everything, yet is it something; prayer is heard when knees cannot bend, but it is seemingly that an adoring heart should show its awe by prostrating the body, and bending the knee.

7. "For he is our God." Here is the master reason for worship. Jehovah has entered into covenant with us, and from all the world beside has chosen us to be his own elect. If others refuse him homage, we at least will render it cheerfully. He is ours, and our God; ours, therefore will we love him; our God, therefore will we worship him. Happy is that man who can sincerely believe that this sentence is true in reference to himself. "And we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand." As he belongs to us, so do we belong to him. "My Beloved is mine, and I am his." And we are his as the people whom he daily feeds and protects. Our pastures are not ours, but his; we draw all our supplies from his stores. We are his, even as sheep belong to the shepherd, and his hand is our rule, our guidance, our government, our succour, our source of supply. Israel was led through the desert, and we are led through this life by "that great Shepherd of the sheep." The hand which cleft the sea and brought water from the rock is still with us, working equal wonders. Can we refuse to "worship and bow down" when we clearly see that "this God is our God for ever and ever, and will be our guide, even unto death"?

But what is this warning which follows? Alas, it was sorrowfully needed by the Lord's ancient people, and is not one whit the less required by ourselves. The favoured nation grew deaf to their Lord's command, and proved not to be truly

his sheep, of whom it is written, "My sheep hear my voice": will this turn out to be our character also? God forbid. "*To day if ye will hear his voice.*" Dreadful "*if.*" Many would not hear, they put off the claims of love, and provoked their God. "To-day," in the hour of grace, in the day of mercy, we are tried as to whether we have an ear for the voice of our Creator. Nothing is said of to-morrow, "he limiteth a certain day," he presses for immediate attention, for our own sakes he asks instantaneous obedience. Shall we yield it? The Holy Ghost saith "To-day," will we grieve him by delay?

8. "*Harden not your heart.*" If ye will hear, learn to fear also. The sea and the land obey him, do not prove more obstinate than they!

"Yield to his love who round you now
The bands of a man would cast."

We cannot soften our hearts, but we can harden them, and the consequences will be fatal. To-day is too good a day to be profaned by the hardening of our hearts against our own mercies. While mercy reigns let not obduracy rebel. "*As in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness*" (or, "like Meribah, like the day of Massah in the wilderness"). Be not wilfully, wantonly, repeatedly, obstinately rebellious. Let the example of that unhappy generation serve as a beacon to you; do not repeat the offences which have already more than enough provoked the Lord. God remembers men's sins, and the more memorably so when they are committed by a favoured people, against frequent warnings, in defiance of terrible judgments, and in the midst of superlative mercies; such sins write their record in marble. Reader, this verse is for you, for you even if you can say, "He is our God, and we are the people of his pasture." Do not seek to turn aside the edge of the warning; thou hast good need of it, give good heed to it.

9. "*When your fathers tempted me.*" As far as they could do so they tempted God to change his usual way, and to do their sinful bidding, and though he cannot be tempted of evil, and will never yield to wicked requests, yet their intent was the same, and their guilt was none the less. God's way is perfect, and when we would have him alter it to please us, we are guilty of tempting him; and the fact that we do so in vain, while it magnifies the Lord's holiness, by no means excuses our guilt. We are in most danger of this sin in times of need, for then it is that we are apt to fall into unbelief, and to demand a change in those arrangements of providence which are the transcript of perfect holiness and infinite wisdom. Not to acquiesce in the will of God is virtually to tempt him to alter his plans to suit our imperfect views of how the universe should be governed. "*Proved me.*" They put the Lord to needless tests, demanding new miracles, fresh interpositions, and renewed tokens of his presence. Do not we also peevishly require frequent signs of the Lord's love other than those which every hour supplies? Are we not prone to demand specialities, with the alternative secretly offered in our hearts, that if they do not come at our bidding we will disbelieve? True, the Lord is very condescending, and frequently grants us marvellous evidences of his power, but we ought not to require them. Steady faith is due to one who is so constantly kind. After so many proofs of his love, we are ungrateful to wish to prove him again, unless it be in those ways of his own appointing, in which he has said, "Prove me now." If we were for ever testing the love of our wife or husband, and remained unconvinced after years of faithfulness, we should wear out the utmost human patience. Friendship only flourishes in the atmosphere of confidence, suspicion is deadly to it: shall the Lord God, true and immutable, be day after day suspected by his own people? Will not this provoke him to anger? "*And saw my work.*" They tested him again and again, throughout forty years, though each time his work was conclusive evidence of his faithfulness. Nothing could convince them for long.

"They saw his wonders wrought,
And then his praise they sung;
But soon his works of pow'r forgot,
And murmur'd with their tongue.

"Now they believe his word,
While rocks with rivers flow;
Now with their lusts provoke the Lord,
And he reduc'd them low."

Fickleness is bound up in the heart of man, unbelief is our besetting sin; we must

for ever be seeing, or we waver in our believing. This is no mean offence, and will bring with it no small punishment.

10. "*Forty years long was I grieved with this generation.*" The impression upon the divine mind is most vivid ; he sees them before him now, and calls them "*this generation.*" He does not leave his prophets to upbraid the sin, but himself utters the complaint and declares that he was grieved, nauseated, and disgusted. It is no small thing which can grieve our long-suffering God to the extent which the Hebrew word here indicates, and if we reflect a moment we shall see the abundant provocation given ; for no one who values his veracity can endure to be suspected, mistrusted, and belied, when there is no ground for it, but on the contrary the most overwhelming reason for confidence. To such base treatment was the tender Shepherd of Israel exposed, not for a day or a month, but for forty years at a stretch, and that not by here and there an unbeliever, but by a whole nation, in which only two men were found so thoroughly believing as to be exempted from the doom which at last was pronounced upon all the rest. Which shall we most wonder at, the cruel insolence of man, or the tender patience of the Lord ? Which shall leave the deepest impression on our minds, the sin or the punishment ? unbelief, or the barring of the gates of Jehovah's rest against the unbelievers ? "*And said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways.*" Their heart was obstinately and constantly at fault ; it was not their head which erred, but their very heart was perverse : love, which appealed to their affections, could not convert them. The heart is the mainspring of the man, and if it be not in order, the entire nature is thrown out of gear. If sin were only skin-deep, it might be a slight matter ; but since it has defiled the soul, the case is bad indeed. Taught as they were by Jehovah himself in lessons illustrated by miracles, which came to them daily in the manna from heaven, and the water from the flinty rock, they ought to have learned something, and it was a foul shame that they remained obstinately ignorant, and would not know the ways of God. Wanderers in body, they were also wanderers in heart, and the plain providential goodness of their God remained to their blinded minds as great a maze as those twisting paths by which he led them through the wilderness. Are we better than they ? Are we not quite as apt to misinterpret the dealings of the Lord ? Have we suffered and enjoyed so many things in vain ? With many it is even so. Forty years of providential wisdom, yea, and even a longer period of experience, have failed to teach them serenity of assurance, and firmness of reliance. There is ground for much searching of heart concerning this. Many treat unbelief as a minor fault, they even regard it rather as an infirmity than a crime, but the Lord thinketh not so. Faith is Jehovah's due, especially from those who claim to be the people of his pasture, and yet more emphatically from those whose long life has been crowded with evidences of his goodness : unbelief insults one of the dearest attributes of Deity, it does so needlessly and without the slightest ground, and in defiance of all-sufficient arguments, weighty with the eloquence of love. Let us in reading this Psalm examine ourselves, and lay these things to heart.

11. "*Unto whom I swear in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest.*" There can be no rest to an unbelieving heart. If manna and miracles could not satisfy Israel, neither would they have been content with the land which flowed with milk and honey. Canaan was to be the typical resting-place of God, where his ark should abide, and the ordinances of religion should be established ; the Lord had for forty years borne with the ill manners of the generation which came out of Egypt, and it was but right that he should resolve to have no more of them. Was it not enough that they had revolted all along that marvellous wilderness march ? Should they be allowed to make new Massahs and Meribahs in the Promised Land itself ? Jehovah would not have it so. He not only said but swore that into his rest they should not come, and that oath excluded every one of them ; their carcasses fell in the wilderness. Solemn warning this to all who leave the way of faith for paths of petulant murmuring and mistrust. The rebels of old could not enter in because of unbelief, "let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of us should even seem to come short of it."

One blessed inference from this Psalm must not be forgotten. It is clear that there is a rest of God, and that some must enter into it : but "they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief, there remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God." The unbelievers could not enter, but "we which have believed do enter into rest." Let us enjoy it, and praise the Lord for it for

ever. Ours is the true Sabbatic rest, it is ours to rest from our own works as God did from his. While we do so, let us "come into his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with Psalms."

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—These six Psalms, xcv. to c., form, if I mistake not, one entire prophetic poem, cited by St. Paul in the Epistle to the Hebrews, under the title of the Introduction of the First Born into the world. Each Psalm has its proper subject, which is some particular branch of the general argument, the establishment of the Messiah's Kingdom. The 95th Psalm asserts Jehovah's Godhead, and his power over all nature, and exhorts his people to serve him. In Psalm 96th all nations are exhorted to join in his service, because he cometh to judge all mankind, Jew and Gentile. In the 97th Psalm, Jehovah reigns over all the world, the idols are deserted, the Just One is glorified. In the 98th Psalm, Jehovah hath done wonders, and wrought deliverance for himself: he hath remembered his mercy towards the house of Israel; he comes to judge the whole world. In the 99th, Jehovah, seated between the cherubim in Zion, the visible Church, reigns over all the world, to be praised for the justice of his government. In the 100th Psalm, all the world is called upon to praise Jehovah the Creator, whose mercy and truth are everlasting.—*Samuel Horsley.*

Whole Psalm.—This Psalm is twice quoted in the Epistle to the Hebrews, as a warning to the Jewish Christians at Jerusalem, in the writer's day, that they should not falter in the faith, and despise God's promises, as their forefathers had done in the wilderness, lest they should fail of entering into his rest; see Heb. iii. 7, where verse 7 of this Psalm is introduced with the words, "As the Holy Ghost saith, To-day if ye will hear his voice," and see Heb. iv. 7, where it is said, "Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To-day." It has by some been inferred from these words, that the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews ascribes this Psalm to David. It may be so. But it seems not improbable that the words "in David" mean simply "the Book of Psalms," the whole being named from the greater part; and that if he had meant that David wrote the Psalm, he would have written, "David spake," or, "the Holy Ghost spake by David," and not as it is written, "as it is said in David."—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Verse 1.—"O come, let us sing unto the Lord," etc. The first verse of the Psalm begins the invitation unto praise and exultation. It is a song of three parts, and every part (like Jacob's part of the sheep) brings forth twins; each a double string, as it were, in the music of this praise, finely twisted of two parts into a kind of *discordant concord*, falling into a musical close through a differing yet reconciled diapason. The first couple in this song of praise are *multitude* and *unity*, *concourse* and *concord*: "O come," there's *multitude* and *concourse*; "let us," there's *unity* and *concord*. The second twisted pair, are *tongue* and *heart*, "let us sing," there's the voice and sound; and "heartily rejoice," there's the heart and soul. The third and last intertwined string, or part of the musick, is *might* and *mercy*, (rock or) *strength* and *salvation*; *God's strength* and *our salvation*: "to the strength (or rock) of our salvation."—*Charles Herle* (1598—1659) in a "Sermon before the House of Lords," entitled "David's Song of Three Parts."

Verse 1.—"Come." The word "come" contains an exhortation, exciting them to join heart and lips in praising God; just as the word is used in Genesis where the people, exciting and encouraging each other, say, "Come, let us make bricks;" and "Come, let us make a city and a town;" and, in the same chapter, the Lord says, "Come, let us go down, and there confound their tongue."—*Bellarmino.*

Verse 1.—If it be so that one "come, let us" goes further than twenty times *go and do*, how careful should such be whom God hath raised to eminence of place that their examples be Jacob's ladders to help men to heaven, not Jeroboam's stumbling-blocks to lie in their way, and make Israel to sin.—*Charles Herle.*

Verse 1.—There is a silent hint here at that human listlessness and distraction of cares whereby we are more prompt to run after other things than to devote ourselves seriously to the becoming praises and service of God. Our foot has a greater

proclivity to *depart* to the field, the oxen, and the new wife, than to *come* to the sacred courts, Luke xiv. 18, *seq.* See Is. ii. 3, "Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord."—*Marlin Geier.*

Verse 1.—"Joyful noise." The verb רָעַד , signifies to make a loud sound of any sort, either with the voice or with instruments. In the Psalms, it generally refers to the mingled din of voices and various instruments, in the Temple service. This wide sense of the word cannot be expressed otherwise in the English language than by a periphrasis.—*Samuel Horsley.*

Verse 1.—"The rock of our salvation." Jesus is the Rock of ages, in which is opened a fountain for sin and uncleanness; the Rock which attends the church in the wilderness, pouring forth the water of life, for her use and comfort; the Rock which is our fortress against every enemy, shadowing and refreshing a weary land.—*George Horne.*

Verse 2.—"Let us come before his presence." Hebrew, *prevent his face*, be there with the first. "Let us go speedily. . . . I will go also," Zech. viii. 21. Let praise wait for God in Zion, Ps. lxxv. 1.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 2 (second clause).—"Let us chaunt aloud to him the measured lay." שִׁירֵי יְהוָה , I take to be songs, in measured verse, adjusted to the bars of a chaunt.—*S. Horsley.*

Verse 3.—He that hath a mind to praise God, shall not want matter of praise, as they who come before princes do, who for want of true grounds of praise in them, do give them flattering words; "for the Lord is a great God," for power and pre-eminence, for strength and continuance.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 3.—The Supreme Being has three names here: אל *El*, יהוה *Jehovah*, אֱלֹהִים *Elohim*, and we should apply none of them to false gods. The first implies his strength; the second, his being and essence; the third, his covenant relation to mankind. In public worship these are the views we should entertain of the Divine Being.—*Adam Clarke.*

Verse 3.—"Above all gods." When he is called a great God and King above all gods, we may justly imagine that the reference is to the angels who are wont to be introduced absolutely under this name, and to the supreme Judges in the land, who also wear this title, as we have it in Ps. lxxxii.—*Venema.*

Verse 4.—"In his hand." The dominion of God is founded upon his preservation of things. "The Lord is a great King above all gods." Why? "In his hand are the deep places of the earth." While his hand holds, his hand hath a dominion over them. He that holds a stone in the air exerciseth a dominion over its natural inclination in hindering it from falling. The creature depends wholly upon God in its preservation; as soon as that divine hand which sustains everything were withdrawn, a languishment and swooning would be the next turn in the creature. He is called Lord, *Adonai*, in regard of his sustentation of all things by his continual influx, the word coming of יָסַד , which signifies a basis or pillar that supports a building. God is the Lord of all, as he is the sustainer of all by his power, as well as the Creator of all by his word.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 4.—

"In whose hand are the recesses of the earth
And the treasures of the mountains are his."

—*Thomas J. Conant's Translation.*

Verse 4.—"In his hand are the deep places of the earth." This affords consolation to those, who for the glory of the divine name are cast into prisons and subterraneous caves; because they know, that even there it is not possible to be the least separated from the presence of Christ. Wherefore he preserved Joseph when hurled by his brethren into the old pit, and when thrust by his shameless mistress into prison; Jeremiah also when sent down into the dungeon; Daniel among the lions, and his companions in the furnace. So all who cleave to him with a firm faith, he wonderfully keeps and delivers to this day.—*Solomon Gesner, 1559—1605.*

Verse 4.—"In his hand are the deep places of the earth." As an illustration of the working and presence of the Lord in the mines amid the bowels of the earth we have selected the following:—"The natural disposition of coal in detached portions," says the author of an excellent article in the *Edinburgh Review*, "is not simply a phenomenon of geology, but it also bears upon natural considerations.

It is remarkable that this natural disposition is that which renders the fuel most accessible and most easily mined. Were the coal situated at its normal geological depth, that is, supposing the strata to be all horizontal and undisturbed or upheaved, it would be far below human reach. Were it deposited continuously in one even superficial layer, it would have been too readily, and therefore too quickly, mined, and therefore all the superior qualities would be wrought out, and only the inferior left; but as it now lies it is broken up by geological disturbances into separate portions, each defined and limited in area, each sufficiently accessible to bring it within man's reach and labour, each manageable by mechanical arrangements, and each capable of gradual excavation without being subject to sudden exhaustion. Selfish plundering is partly prevented by natural barriers, and we are warned against reckless waste by the comparative thinness of coal-seams, as well as by the ever augmenting difficulty of working them at increased depths. By the separation of seams one from another, and by varied intervals of waste sandstones and shales, such a measured rate of winning is necessitated as precludes us from entirely robbing posterity of the most valuable mineral fuel, while the fuel itself is preserved from those extended fractures and crumbling and falls, which would certainly be the consequence of largely mining the best bituminous coal, were it aggregated into one vast mass. In fact, by an evident exercise of forethought and benevolence in the Great Author of all our blessings, our invaluable fuel has been stored up for us in deposits the most compendious, the most accessible, yet the least exhaustible, and has been locally distributed into the most convenient situations. Our coalfields are so many *Bituminous Banks*, in which there is abundance for an adequate currency, but against any sudden run upon them nature has interposed numerous checks; whole reserves of the precious fuel are always locked up in the bank-cellar under the invincible protection of ponderous stone-beds. It is a striking fact, that in this nineteenth century, after so long an inhabitation of the earth by man, if we take the quantities in the broad view of the whole known coal-fields, so little coal has been excavated, and that there remains an abundance for a very remote posterity, even though our own best coal-fields may be then worked out."

But it is not only in these inexhaustible supplies of mineral fuel that we find proofs of divine foresight, all the other treasures of the earth-rind equally convince us of the intimate harmony between its structure and the wants of man. Composed of a wonderful variety of earths and ores, it contains an inexhaustible abundance of all the substances he requires for the attainment of a higher grade of civilisation. It is for his use that iron, copper, lead, silver, tin, marble, gypsum, sulphur, rock-salt, and a variety of other minerals and metals, have been deposited in the veins and crevices, or in the mines and quarries, of the subterranean world. It is for his benefit that, from the decomposition of the solid rocks results that mixture of earths and alkalis, of marl, lime, sand, or chalk, which is most favourable to agriculture.

It is for him, finally, that, filtering through the entrails of the earth, and dissolving salutary substances on their way, the thermal springs gush forth laden with treasures more inestimable than those the miner toils for. Supposing man had never been destined to live, we well may ask why all those gifts of nature—useless to all living beings but to him—why those vast coal-fields, those beds of iron ore, those deposits of sulphur, those hygeian fountains, should ever have been created? Without him there is no design, no purpose, in their existence; with him they are wonderful sources of health or necessary instruments of civilisation and improvement. Thus the geological revolutions of the earth-rind harmoniously point to man as to its future lord; thus, in the life of our planet and that of its inhabitants, we everywhere find proofs of a gigantic unity of plan, embracing unnumbered ages in its development and progress.—*G. Hartwig*, in "*The Harmonies of Nature*," 1866.

Verse 4.—"*The deep places of the earth*," *penetralia terre*, which are opposed to the heights of the hills, and plainly mean the deepest and most retired parts of the terraqueous globe, which are explorable by the eye of God, and by his only.—*Richard Mant*.

Verse 4.—"*The strength of the hills*." The word translated "*strength*" is plural in Hebrew, and seems properly to mean fatiguing exertions, from which some derive the idea of strength, others that of extreme height, which can only be reached by exhausting effort.—*J. A. Alexander*.

Verse 4.—"*The strength of the hills is his also*." The reference may be to the *wealth of the hills*, obtained only by labour [*Gesenius*], corresponding to the former—"the deep places of the earth," explained as referring to *the mines* [*Mendelssohn*].

Go where man may, with all his toil and searching in the heights or in the depths of the earth, he cannot find a place beyond the range of God's dominion.—A. R. Fausset.

Verses 4, 5.—“*Hills,*” “*The Sea,*” “*the dry land.*” The relation of areas of land to areas of water exercises a great and essential influence on the distribution of heat, variations of atmospheric pressure, directions of the winds, and that condition of the air with respect to moisture, which is so necessary for the health of vegetation. Nearly three-fourths of the earth's surface is covered with water, but neither the exact height of the atmosphere nor the depth of the ocean are fully determined. Still we know that with every addition to or subtraction from the present bulk of the waters of the ocean, the consequent variation in the form and magnitude of the land would be such, that if the change was considerable, many of the existing harmonies of things would cease. Hence, the inference is, that the magnitude of the sea is one of the conditions to which the structure of all organised creatures is adapted, and on which indeed they depend for well-being. The proportions between land and water are exactly what the world as constituted requires; and the whole mass of earth, sea, and air, must have been balanced with the greatest nicety before even a crocus could stand erect, or a snowdrop or a daffodil bend their heads to the ground. The proportions of land and sea are adjusted to their reciprocal functions. Nothing deduced from modern science is more certain than this.—*Edwin Sidney, in “Conversations on the Bible and Science.”*

Verse 5.—“*The sea is his.*” When God himself makes an oration in defence of his sovereignty, Job xxxviii., his chief arguments are drawn from creation: “The Lord is a great King above all gods. The sea is his, and he made it.” And so the apostle in his sermon to the Athenians. As he “made the world, and all things therein,” he is styled “Lord of heaven and earth,” Acts xvii. 24. His dominion also of property stands upon this basis: Ps. lxxxix. 11, “The heavens are thine, the earth also is thine: as for the world and the fulness thereof, thou hast founded them.” Upon this title of forming Israel as a creature, or rather as a church, he demands their services to him as their Sovereign. “O Jacob and Israel, thou art my servant: I have formed thee; thou art my servant, O Israel,” Isa. xlv. 21. The sovereignty of God naturally ariseth from the relation of all things to himself as their entire creator, and their natural and inseparable dependence upon him in regard of their being and well-being.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 5.—“*He made it.*”

The Earth was form'd, but in the womb as yet
Of waters, embryo immature involv'd,
Appear'd not: over all the face of Earth
Main ocean flow'd, not idle; but, with warm
Prolifick humour softening all her globe,
Fermented the great mother to conceive,
Satiated with genial moisture; when God said,
Be gather'd now, ye waters under Heaven
Into one place, and let dry land appear.
Immediately the mountains huge appear
Emergent, and their broad bare backs upheave
Into the clouds; their tops ascend the sky:
So high as heav'd the tumid hills, so low
Down sunk a hollow bottom broad and deep,
Capacious bed of waters.

—*John Milton.*

Verse 6.—You hold it a good rule in worldly business, not to say to your servants, “O come,” “arise ye, go ye;” but, *Let us come*, let us go, let us arise. Now shall the children of this world be wiser in their generation than the children of light? Do we commend this course in mundane affairs, and neglect it in religious offices? Assuredly, if our zeal were as great to religion, as our love is towards the world, masters would not come to church (as many do) without their servants, and servants without their masters; parents without their children, and children without their parents; husbands without their wives, and wives without their husbands; but all of us would call one to another, as Esay prophesied (ch. ii. 3): “Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and

he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths," and as David here practised.—*John Boys*.

Verse 6.—“*Let us worship and bow down.*” To fall upon the ground is a gesture of worship, not only when the worshipper mourns, but when the worshipper rejoiceth. It is said (Matthew ii. 10, 11) that the wise men when they found Christ, “*rejoiced with exceeding great joy,*” and presently, “*they fell down, and worshipped him.*” Neither is this posture peculiar to worship in times or upon occasions of extraordinary joy and sorrow; for the ordinary invitation was, “*O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our maker.*”—*Joseph Caryl*.

Verse 6.—“*Let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our maker.*” Not before a crucifix, not before a rotten image, not before a fair picture of a foul saint: these are not our makers; we made them, they made not us. Our God, unto whom we must sing, in whom we must rejoice, before whom we must worship, “*is a great King above all gods*”: he is no god of lead, no god of bread, no brazen god, no wooden god; we must not fall down and worship our Lady, but our Lord; not any martyr, but our Maker; not any saint, but our Saviour: “*O come, let us sing unto the Lord: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.*” Wherewith: with voice, “*Let us sing*”; with soul, “*Let us heartily rejoice*”; with hands and knees, “*Let us worship and bow down: let us kneel*”; with all that is within us, with all that is without us: he that made all, must be worshipped with all, especially when we “*come before his presence.*”—*John Boys*.

Verse 6.—“*Bow down.*” That is, so as to touch the floor with the forehead, while the worshipper is prostrate on his hands and knees. See 2 Chron. vii. 3.—*John Fry*, 1842.

Verse 6.—“*Worship,*” “*bow down,*” “*kneel.*” Kimchi distinguishes the several gestures expressed by the different words here used. The first we render “*worship,*” signifies, according to him, the prostration of the whole body on the ground, with the hands and legs stretched out. The second a bowing of the head, with part of the body; and the third a bending of the knees on the ground.—*Samuel Burder*.

Verse 7.—“*We are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.*” See how elegantly he hath transposed the order of the words, and as it were not given its own attribute to each word; that we may understand these very same to be “*the sheep,*” who are also “*the people.*” He said not, the sheep of his pasture, and the people of his hand; which might be thought more congruous, since the sheep belong to the pasture; but he said, “*the people of his pasture*”: the people themselves are sheep. But again, since we have sheep which we buy, not which we create; and he had said above, “*Let us fall down before our Maker*”; it is rightly said, “*the sheep of his hand.*” No man maketh for himself sheep, he may buy them, they may be given, he may find them, he may collect them, lastly he may steal them; make them he cannot. But our Lord made us; therefore “*the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand,*” are the very sheep which he hath deigned by his grace to create unto himself.—*Augustine*.

Verse 7.—“*The sheep of his hand,*” is a fit though figurative expression, the shepherd that feeds, and rules, and leads the sheep, doing it by his hand, which manageth the rod and staff (Ps. xxiii. 4), by which they are administered. The Jewish Arab reads, *the people of his feeding, or flock, and the sheep of his guidance.*—*H. Hammond*.

Verse 7.—“*For we are his people whom he feeds in his pastures, and his sheep whom he leads as by his hand.*” [French Version.] Here is a reason to constrain us to praise God; it is this,—that not only has he created us, but that he also directs us by special providence, as a shepherd governs his flock. Jesus Christ, Divine Shepherd of our souls, who not only feeds us in his pastures, but himself leads us with his hand, as intelligent sheep. Loving Shepherd, who feeds us not only from the pastures of Holy Writ, but even with his own flesh. What subjects of ceaseless adoration for a soul penetrated by these great verities! What a fountain of tears of joy at the sight of such prodigious mercy!—*Quesnel*.

Verse 7.—“*To-day if ye will hear his voice.*” If we put off repentance another day, we have a day more to repent of, and a day less to repent in.—*W. Mason*.

Verse 7.—He that hath promised pardon on our repentance hath not promised to preserve our lives till we repent.—*Francis Quarles*.

Verse 7.—You cannot repent too soon, because you do not know how soon it may be too late.—*Thomas Fuller*.

Verse 7.—"If ye will hear his voice." Oh! what an *if* is here! what a reproach is here to those that hear him not! "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me"; "but ye will not come to me that ye might have life." And yet there is mercy, there is still salvation, if ye will hear that voice. Israel heard it among the thunders of Sinai, "which voice they that heard it entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more"; so terrible was the sight and sound that even Moses said, "I exceedingly quake and fear": and yet they heard too the Lord's still voice of love in the noiseless manna that fell around their tents, and in the gushing waters of the rock that followed them through every march for forty years. Yet the record of Israel's ingratitude runs side by side with the record of God's mercies—"My people would not hearken to my voice, and Israel would none of me."—*Barton Bouchier.*

Verse 7.—"If ye will hear his voice." And yet, as S. Bernard tells us, there is no difficulty at all in hearing it; on the contrary, the difficulty is to stop our ears effectually against it, so clear is it in enunciation, so constant in appeal. Yet there are many who do not hear, from divers causes; because they are far off; because they are deaf; because they sleep; because they turn their heads aside; because they stop their ears; because they hurry away to avoid hearing; because they are dead; all of them types of various forms and degrees of unbelief.—*Bernard and Hugo Cardinalis, in Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 7.—"If ye will hear his voice." These words seem to allude to the preceding words, in which we are represented as the *sheep of God's pasture*, and are to be considered as an affectionate call of our heavenly Shepherd to follow and obey him.—*From "Lectures on the Liturgy, from the Commentary of Peter Waldo," 1821.*

Verses 7, 8.—It will be as difficult, nay, more difficult, to come to Christ to-morrow, than it is to-day: therefore "*to-day hear his voice, and harden not your heart.*" Break the ice now, and by faith venture upon your present duty, wherever it lies: do what you are now called to. You will never know how easy the yoke of Christ is, till it is bound about your necks, nor how light his burden is, till you have taken it up. While you judge of holiness at a distance, as a thing without you and contrary to you, you will never like it. Come a little nearer to it; do but take it in, actually engage in it, and you will find religion carries meat in its mouth; it is of a reviving, nourishing, strengthening nature. It brings that along with it, that enables the soul cheerfully to go through with it.—*Thomas Cole (1627—1697) in the "Morning Exercises."*

Verse 8.—"Harden not your hearts." An old man, one day taking a child on his knee, entreated him to seek God *now*—to pray to him, and to love him; when the child, looking up at him, asked, "But why do not *you* seek God?" The old man, deeply affected, answered, "I would, child; but my heart is *hard*—my heart is *hard*."—*Arvine's Anecdotes.*

Verse 8.—"Harden not your heart."—*Heart* is ascribed to reasonable creatures, to signify sometimes the whole soul, and sometimes the several faculties appertaining to the soul.

1. It is frequently put for the whole soul, and that for the most part when it is set alone; as where it is said, "Serve the Lord with all your heart," 1 Sam. xii. 20.

2. For that principal part of the soul which is called the mind or understanding. "I gave my heart to know wisdom," Eccles. i. 17. In this respect darkness and blindness are attributed to the heart, Eph. iv. 18, Rom. i. 21.

3. For the will: as when heart and soul are joined together, the two essential faculties of the soul are meant, namely, the mind and will: *soul* put for the mind, heart for the will. "Serve the Lord with all your heart and with all your soul," Deut. xi. 13.

4. For the memory. "I have hid thy word in my heart," saith the prophet, Psalm cxix. 11. The memory is that faculty wherein matters are laid up and hid.

5. For the conscience. It is said that "David's heart smote him," that is, his conscience, 1 Sam. xxiv. 5, 2 Sam. xxiv. 10. Thus is heart taken, 1 John iii. 20, 21.

6. For the affections: as where it is said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind," Matt. xxii. 37. By the *mind* is meant the understanding faculty; by the *soul*, the will; by the *heart*, the affections.

Here in this text the heart is put for the whole soul, even for mind, will, and

affections. For blindness of mind, stubbornness of will, and stupidity of affections go together.—*William Gouge.*

Verse 8.—In “*Massah—in Meribah.*” Our translators say, “*in the provocation, in the day of temptation.*” But the places were denominated by names taken from the transactions that occurred in them; and the introduction of those names gives more liveliness to the allusion. See to the same effect Ps. lxxxi. 7; where the Bible translation retains the proper name.—*Richard Mant.*

Verse 8.—Let us not fail to notice, that while it is *the flock* who speak in verses 1—7, it is *the Shepherd* who takes up their expostulating words, and urges them home himself at verse 8 to the end, using the argument which by the Holy Ghost is addressed to us also in Hebrews iii. There is something very powerful in this expostulation, when connected with the circumstances that give rise to it. In themselves, the burst of adoring love, and the full outpouring of affection in verses 1—7 are irresistibly persuasive; but when (verse 8) the voice of the Lord himself is heard (such a voice, using terms of vehement entreaty!) we cannot imagine expostulation carried further. Unbelief alone could resist this voice; blind, malignant unbelief alone could repel *The flock, and then the Shepherd, inviting men now to enter the fold.*—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verse 9.—“*Your fathers tempted me.*” Though God cannot be tempted with evil he may justly be said to be tempted whenever men, by being dissatisfied with his dealings, virtually ask that he will alter those dealings, and proceed in a way more congenial to their feelings. If you reflect a little, you will hardly fail to perceive, that in a very strict sense, this and the like may be called tempting God. Suppose a man to be discontented with the appointments of providence, suppose him to murmur and to repine at what the Almighty allots him to do or to bear; is he not to be charged with the asking God to change his purposes? And what is this if it is not tempting God, and striving to induce him to swerve from his plans, though every one of those plans has been settled by Infinite Wisdom?

Or again, if any one of us, notwithstanding the multiplied proofs of Divine loving-kindness, doubt or question whether or not God do indeed love him, of what is he guilty, if not of tempting the Lord, seeing that he solicits God to the giving additional evidence, as though there was a deficiency, and challenges him to a fresh demonstration of what he has already abundantly displayed? This would be called tempting amongst men. If a child were to show by his actions that he doubted or disbelieved the affection of his parents, he would be considered as striving to extract from them new proofs, by asking them to evince their love more, though they may already have done as much as in wisdom and in justice they ought to do. And this is clearly tempting them, and that too in the ordinary sense of the term. In short, unbelief of every kind and every degree may be said to tempt God. For not to believe upon the evidence which he has seen fit to give, is to provoke him to give more, offering our possible assent if proof were increased as an inducement to him to go beyond what his wisdom has prescribed. And if in this, and the like sense, God may be tempted, what can be more truly said of the Israelites, than that they tempted God in *Massah*? . . . We are perhaps not accustomed to think of unbelief or murmuring as nothing less than a tempting God, and therefore, we do not attach to what is so common, its just degree of heinousness. It is so natural to us to be discontented whenever God’s dealings are not just what we like, to forget what has been done for us as soon as our wishes seem thwarted, to be impatient and fretful under every new cross, that we are scarcely conscious of committing a sin, and much less one more than usually aggravated. Yet we cannot be dissatisfied with God’s dealings, and not be virtually guilty of tempting God. It may seem a harsh definition of a slight and scarcely avoidable fault, but nevertheless it is a true definition. You cannot mistrust God, and not accuse him of want either of power or of goodness. You cannot repine, no, not even in thought, without virtually telling him that his plans are not the best, nor his dispensations the wisest which he might have appointed in respect of yourselves. So that your fear, or your despondency, or your anxiety in circumstances of perplexity, or peril, are nothing less than the calling upon God to depart from his fixed course—a suspicion, or rather an assertion that he might proceed in a manner more worthy of himself, and, therefore, a challenge to him to alter his dealings if he would prove that he possesses the attributes which he claims. You may not intend thus to accuse or to provoke God whenever you murmur, but your murmuring does all this, and cannot fail to

do it. You cannot be dissatisfied without virtually saying that God might order things better; you cannot say that he might order things better without virtually demanding that he change his course of acting, and give other proofs of his Infinite perfections.—*Henry Melvill.*

Verse 9.—“*Your fathers tempted me.*” There are two ways of interpreting the words which follow. As *tempting God* is nothing else than yielding to a diseased and unwarrantable craving after proof of his power, we may consider the verse as connected throughout, and read, *They tempted me and proved me, although they had already seen my work.* God very justly complains, that they should insist upon new proof, after his power had been already amply testified by undeniable evidences. There is another meaning, however, that may be given to the term “*proved*,”—according to which, the meaning of the passage would run as follows:—Your fathers tempted me in asking where God was, notwithstanding all the benefits I had done them; and they proved me, that is, they had actual experience of what I am, inasmuch as I did not cease to give them open proofs of my presence, and consequently they saw my work.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 9.—“*Proved me,*” put me to the proof of my existence, presence, and power, by requiring me to work, *i.e.* to act in an extraordinary manner. And this desire, unreasonable as it was, I gratified. They not only demanded, but they likewise saw “*my work,*” *i.e.* what I could do.—*J. A. Alexander.*

Verse 9.—“*Forty years.*” To understand this passage we must bear in mind the event referred to. The same year in which the people of Israel came forth from Egypt, they were distressed for water at Rephidim, (Ex. xvii. 1;) and the place had two names given to it, Massah and Meribah, because the people tempted God and chided with Moses. The Lord did not swear *then* that they should not enter into the land of Canaan; but this was in the following year, after the return of the spies. (Num. xiv. 20—38.) And God said then that they had tempted him “*ten times*”; that is, during the short time since their deliverance from Egypt. It was after *ten* temptations that God deprived them of the promised land.

Bearing in mind these facts, we shall be able to see the full force of the passage. The “*provocation*” or contention, and “*temptation*” refer clearly to the latter instance, as recorded in Numb. xiv., because it was then that God swore that the people should not enter into his rest. The people’s conduct was alike in both instances.

To connect “*forty years*” with grieved, was the work of the Punctuists, and this mistake the Apostle corrected; and it is to be observed that he did not follow in this instance the *Septuagint*, in which the words are arranged as divided by the Masorites. Such a rendering as would correspond with the Hebrew is as follows,—

- “To-day when ye hear his voice,
 8. Harden not your hearts as in the provocation,
 In the day of temptation in the wilderness.
 9. When your fathers tempted me, they proved me
 And saw my works forty years :
 10. I was therefore offended with that generation and said,
 Always do they go astray in heart,
 And they have not known my ways ;
 11. So that I swear in my wrath,
 ‘They shall by no means enter into my rest.’”

The meaning of the ninth verse is, that when the children of Israel tempted God, they proved him, *i.e.*, found out by bitter experience how great his displeasure was, and saw his works or his dealings with them forty years. He retained them in the wilderness during that period until the death of all who disbelieved his word at the return of the spies; he gave them this proof of his displeasure.—*John Owen, of Thrussington, 1853.*

Verse 10.—O the desperate presumption of man, that he should offend his Maker “*forty years*” ! O the patience and longsuffering of his Maker, that he should allow him forty years to offend in ! Sin begins in the “*heart*,” by its desires *wandering* and going astray after forbidden objects; whence follows inattention to the “*ways*” of God, to his dispensations, and our own duty. Lust in the heart, like vapour in the stomach, soon affects the head, and clouds the understanding.—*George Horne.*

Verse 10.—“*Forty Years.*” It is curious to know that the ancient Jews believed that “*the days of the Messiah were to be forty years.*” Thus Tanchuma, F. 79, 4.

"Quamdiu durant anni Messiae? R. Akiba dixit, xl. annos, quemadmodum Israelitae per tot annos in deserto fuerunt." It is remarkable, that in forty years after the ascension, the whole Jewish nation were cut off equally as they who fell in the wilderness.—*John Brown*, in "An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews." 1862.

Verse 10.—"Was I grieved." The word is a strong word, expressive of *loathing* and *disgust*.—*J. J. S. Perowne*.

Verse 10.—"This generation." The word דור, *dor*, signifies an age, or the allotted term of human life; and it is here applied to the men of an age, as if the Psalmist had said, that the Israelites whom God had delivered were incorrigible, during the whole period of their lives.—*John Calvin*.

Verse 10.—"It is a people that do err in their heart." We may observe here, that he does not simply say, This people errs. What mortal is there that does not err? Or, where is there a multitude of mortals, exposed to no errors? But he adds, "In their heart." Every error therefore is not blamed here, but the error of their heart is fastened upon. It is to be noted, therefore, that there is a twofold kind of error:

1. One is of the intellect, by which we go astray through ignorance. In this kind of erring Paul erred when he persecuted the Church of Christ; the Sadducees erred, not knowing the Scriptures, Matt. xxii.; and to this day many in the Church go astray, endowed with zeal for God, but destitute of a true knowledge of Him.

2. The other kind of erring is of the heart and affections, by which men go astray, not through ignorance, but through corruption and perversity of heart. This error of heart is a mind averse to God, and alienated from the will and way of God, which is elsewhere thus described in the case of this very people: "And their heart was not right with him."—*Musculus*.

Verse 10.—"It is a people that do err in their heart." To err in heart may mean either to err in judgment, or in disposition, intention: for the Hebrew דָּבַר, and after it the Greek καρδία, means either *animus*, *judicium*, or *mens*, *cogitatio*, *desiderium*. I understand καρδία here, as used according to the Hebrew idiom (in which it is often pleonastic, at least it seems so to us,) so that the phrase imports simply, *They always err*, i.e. they are continually departing from the right way.—*Moses Stuart*.

Verse 10.—"Err in their heart." He had called them sheep, and now he notes their wandering propensity, and their incapacity for being led; for the footsteps of their Shepherd they did not know, much less follow.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 10.—"They have not known my ways"; that is, they have not regarded my ways, have not allowed of them, or loved them; for otherwise they were not ignorant of them; they heard his words, and saw his works.—*David Dickson*.

Verse 10.—"They have not known my ways." This ungrateful people did not approve of God's ways—they did not enter into his designs—they did not conform to his commands—they paid no attention to his miracles—and did not acknowledge the benefits which they received from his hands.—*Adam Clarke*.

Verse 10.—"A people that do err in their heart," &c. These words are not to be found in Numb. xiv.; but the inspired Psalmist expresses the sense of what Jehovah said on that occasion. "They do always err in their heart," [Heb. iii. 10]. They are radically and habitually evil. "They have not known my ways." God's "ways" may mean either his dispensations or his precepts. The Israelites did not rightly understand the former, and they obstinately refused to acquire a practical knowledge—the only truly valuable species of knowledge—of the latter. The reference is probably to God's mode of dealing: Rom. xi. 33; Deut. iv. 32, viii. 2, xxix. 2—4. Such a people deserved severe punishment, and they received it. "So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest." The original words in the Hebrew are, "If they shall enter into my rest." This elliptical mode of expressing oaths is common in the Old Testament: Deut. i. 35; 1 Sam. iii. 14; Ps. lxxxix. 35; Isai. lxii. 8. This awful oath is recorded in the 14th chapter of Numbers: "But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord. Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; surely they shall not see the land which I swear unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it: but my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land wherinto he went; and his seed shall possess it. (Now the Amalekites and the Canaanites dwell in the valley.) To morrow turn you, and get you into the wilderness by the way of the Red Sea. And the Lord spake unto Moses and

unto Aaron, saying, How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur against me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me. Say unto them, As truly as I live, saith the LORD, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you: your carcases shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me." The words of the oath seem here borrowed from the account in Deut. i. 35. There are many threatenings of God which have a tacit condition implied in them; but when God interposes his oath, the sentence is irreversible.

The curse was not causeless, and it did come. We have an account of its actual fulfilment, Numb. xxvi. 64, 65. The "rest" from which they were excluded was the land of Canaan. Their lives were spent in wandering. It is termed "God's rest," as there he was to finish his work of bringing Israel into the land promised to their fathers, and fix the symbol of his presence in the midst of them,—dwelling in that land in which his people were to rest from their wanderings, and to dwell in safety under his protection. It is *his* rest, as of his preparing, Deut. xii. 9. It is *his* rest—rest like his, rest along with him. We are by no means warranted to conclude that all who died in the wilderness came short of everlasting happiness. It is to be feared many of them, most of them, did; but the curse denounced on them went only to their exclusion from the earthly Canaan.—*John Brown.*

Verses 10, 11.—"And said." Mark the gradation, first grief or *disgust* with those who *erred* made him *say*; then *anger* felt more heavily against those who did not *believe* made him *swear*. The people had been called sheep in verse 7, to sheep the highest good is rest, but into this rest they were never to come, for they had not known or delighted in the ways in which the good Shepherd desired to lead them.—*John Albert Bengel.*

Verse 11.—The word *swearing* is very significant, and seems to import these two things. 1st. The certainty of the sentence here pronounced. Every word of God both is, and must be truth; but ratified by an oath, it is truth with an advantage. It is signed irrevocable. This fixes it like the laws of the Medes and Persians, beyond all possibility of alteration; and makes God's word, like his very nature, unchangeable. 2ndly. It imports the terror of the sentence. If the children of Israel could say, "Let not God speak to us, lest we die," what would they have said had God then sworn against them? It is terrible to hear an oath from the mouth but of a poor mortal, but from the mouth of an omnipotent God, it does not only terrify, but confound. An oath from God is truth delivered in anger; truth, as I may so speak, with a vengeance. When God speaks, it is the creature's duty to hear; but when he swears, to tremble.—*Robert South.*

Verse 11.—"That they should not enter into my rest." There is something unusual and abrupt in the conclusion of this Psalm, without any cheering prospect to relieve the threatening. This may be best explained by assuming, that it was not meant to stand alone, but to form one of a series.—*J. A. Alexander.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—An invitation to praise the Lord. I. A favourite method of worship—"let us sing." II. A fitting state of mind for singing—joyful gratitude. III. A fitting subject to excite both gladness and thankfulness—the rock of our salvation.

Verse 1.—"The rock of our salvation." Expressive imagery. Rock of shelter, support, indwelling, and supply—illustrate this last by the water flowing from the rock in the wilderness.

Verse 2.—I. What is meant by coming before his presence? Certainly not the holiness of places, etc. II. What offering is most appropriate when we come into his presence?

Verse 3.—I. The greatness of God as god. He is to be conceived of as great in goodness, power, glory, etc. II. His dominion over all other powers in heaven or earth. III. The worship which is consequently due to him.

Verses 4, 5.—The universality of the divine government. I. In all parts of the globe. II. In all providences. III. In every phase of moral condition. Or, Things

deep, or high, dark or perilous are in his hand; circumstances shifting, terrible, overwhelming as the sea, are under his control as much as the comfortable terra firma of peace and prosperity.

Verse 6.—A true conception of God begets—I. A disposition to worship. II. Mutual incitement to worship. III. Profound reverence in worship. IV. Overwhelming sense of God's presence in worship.—*C. A. Davis.*

Verses 6, 7.—God is to be worshipped—I. As our Creator—"our maker." II. As our Redeemer, "the people," etc. III. As our Preserver, "the sheep, etc."—*George Rogers.*

Verse 7.—The entreaty of the Holy Ghost. I. The special voice—"the Holy Ghost saith"—1. In Scripture. 2. In the hearts of his people. 3. In the awakened. 4. By his deeds of grace. II. A special duty, "hear his voice," instructing, commanding, inviting, promising, threatening. III. A special time—"to-day." While God speaks, after so long a time, in the day of grace, now, in your present state. IV. The special danger—"harden not your hearts," by indifference, unbelief, asking for signs, presumption, worldly pleasures, etc.

Verse 7.—Sinners entreated to hear God's voice. "Hear his voice," because—I. Life is short and uncertain; II. You cannot properly or lawfully promise to give what is not your own; III. If you defer, though but till to-morrow, you must harden your hearts; IV. There is great reason to fear that, if you defer it to-day, you will never commence; V. After a time God ceases to strive with sinners; VI. There is nothing irksome or disagreeable in a religious life, that you should wish to defer its commencement.—*Edward Payson.*

Verse 7.—The Difference of Times with respect to Religion.—Upon a spiritual account there is great difference of time. To make this out, I will shew you, I. That *sooner and later* are not alike, in respect of eternity. II. That *times of ignorance and of knowledge* are not alike. III. That *before and after voluntary commission of known iniquity*, are not alike. IV. That *before and after contracted naughty habits*, are not alike. V. That the time of *God's gracious and particular visitation* and the time when God *withdraws* his gracious presence and assistance, are not alike. VI. The flourishing time of our *health and strength*, and the hour of *sickness, weakness*, and approach of *death*, are not alike. VII. Now and hereafter, present and future, *this world and the world to come*, are not alike.—*Benjamin Whichcot.*

Verse 7.—This supposition, "*If ye will hear*," and the consequence inferred thereupon, "*harden not your hearts*," doth evidently demonstrate that a right hearing will prevent hardness of heart; especially hearing of Christ's voice, that is, the gospel. It is the gospel that maketh and keepeth a soft heart.—*William Gouge.*

Verses 8—11.—I. Israel's fearful experiment in tempting God. II. The awful result. III. Let it not be tried again.—*C. A. Davis.*

Verse 10.—The error and the ignorance which are fatal.

Verse 11.—The fatal moment of the giving up of a soul, how it may be hastened, what are the signs of it, and what are the terrible results.

Verses 10, 11.—The kindling, increasing, and full force of divine anger, and its dreadful results.