

PSALM XCVII.

SUBJECT.—As the last Psalm sang the praises of the Lord in connection with the proclamation of the gospel among the Gentiles, so this appears to foreshadow the mighty working of the Holy Ghost in subduing the colossal systems of error, and casting down the idol gods. Across the sea to maritime regions a voice cries for rejoicing at the reign of Jesus (verse 1), the sacred fire descends (verse 3), like lightning the gospel flames forth (verse 4), difficulties vanish (verse 5), and all the nations see the glory of God (verse 6). The idols are confounded (verse 7), the church rejoices (verse 8), the Lord is exalted (verse 9). The Psalm closes with an exhortation to holy steadfastness under the persecution which would follow, and bids the saints rejoice that their path is bright, and their reward glorious and certain. Modern critics, always intent upon ascribing the Psalm to anybody rather than to David, count themselves successful in dating this song further on than the captivity, because it contains passages similar to those which occur in the later prophets; but we venture to assert that it is quite as probable that the prophets adopted the language of David as that some unknown writer borrowed from them. One Psalm in this series is said to be “in David,” and we believe that the rest are in the same place, and by the same author. The matter is not important, and we only mention it because it seems to be the pride of certain critics to set up new theories; and there are readers who imagine this to be a sure proof of prodigious learning. We do not believe that their theories are worth the paper they are written upon.

DIVISION.—The Psalm divides itself into four portions, each containing three verses. The coming of the Lord is described (1—3); its effect upon the earth is declared (4—6); and then its influence upon the heathen and the people of God. The last part contains both exhortation and encouragement, urging to holiness and inculcating happiness.

EXPOSITION.

THE LORD reigneth; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof.

2 Clouds and darkness are round about him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.

3 A fire goeth before him, and burneth up his enemies round about.

1. “*The Lord reigneth.*” This is the watchword of the Psalm—Jehovah reigns. It is also the essence of the gospel proclamation, and the foundation of the gospel kingdom. Jesus has come, and all power is given unto him in heaven and in earth, therefore men are bidden to yield him their obedient faith. Saints draw comfort from these words, and only rebels cavil at them. “*Let the earth rejoice,*” for there is cause for joy. Other reigns have produced injustice, oppression, bloodshed, terror; the reign of the infinitely gracious Jehovah is the hope of mankind, and when they all yield to it the race will have its paradise restored. The very globe itself may well be glad that its Maker and liege Lord has come to his own, and the whole race of man may also be glad, since to every willing subject Jesus brings untold blessings. “*Let the multitude of isles be glad thereof.*” To the ancient Israelites all places beyond the seas were isles, and the phrase is equivalent to all lands which are reached by ships. It is remarkable, however, that upon actual islands some of the greatest victories of the Cross have been achieved. Our own favoured land is a case in point, and not less so the islands of Polynesia and the kingdom of Madagascar. Islands are very numerous; may they all become Holy Islands, and Isles of Saints, then will they all be Fortunate Islands, and true Formosas. Many a land owes its peace to the sea; if it had not been isolated it would have been desolated, and therefore the inhabitants should praise the Lord who has moated them about, and given them a defence more available than bars of brass. Jesus deserves to be Lord of the Isles, and to have his praises sounded along every sea-beaten shore. Amen, so let it be.

2. “*Clouds and darkness are round about him.*” So the Lord revealed himself at Sinai, so must he ever surround his essential Deity when he shows himself to the

sons of men, or his excessive glory would destroy them. Every revelation of God must also be an obvelation; there must be a veiling of his infinite splendour if anything is to be seen by finite beings. It is often thus with the Lord in providence; when working out designs of unmingled love he conceals the purpose of his grace that it may be the more clearly discovered at the end. "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing." Around the history of his church dark clouds of persecution hover, and an awful gloom at times settles down, still the Lord is there; and though men for a while see not the bright light in the clouds, it bursts forth in due season to the confusion of the adversaries of the gospel. This passage should teach us the impertinence of attempting to pry into the essence of the Godhead, the vanity of all endeavours to understand the mystery of the Trinity in Unity, the arrogance of arraiguing the Most High before the bar of human reason, the folly of dictating to the Eternal One the manner in which he should proceed. Wisdom veils her face and adores the mercy which conceals the divine purpose; folly rushes in and perishes, blinded first, and by-and-by consumed by the blaze of glory.

"*Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.*" There he abides, he never departs from strict justice and right, his throne is fixed upon the rock of eternal holiness. Righteousness is his immutable attribute, and judgment marks his every act. What though we cannot see or understand what he doeth, yet we are sure that he will do no wrong to us or any of his creatures. Is not this enough to make us rejoice in him and adore him? Divine sovereignty is never tyrannical. Jehovah is an autocrat, but not a despot. Absolute power is safe in the hands of him who cannot err, or act unrighteously. When the roll of the decrees, and the books of the divine providence shall be opened, no eye shall there discern one word that should be blotted out, one syllable of error, one line of injustice, one letter of unholiness. Of none but the Lord of all can this be said.

3. "*A fire goeth before him.*" Like an advance guard clearing the way. So was it at Sinai, so must it be: the very Being of God is power, consuming all opposition; omnipotence is a devouring flame which "*burneth up his enemies round about.*" God is longsuffering, but when he comes forth to judgment he will make short work with the unrighteous, they will be as chaff before the flame. Reading this verse in reference to the coming of Jesus, and the descent of the Spirit, we are reminded of the tongues of fire, and of the power which attended the gospel, so that all opposition was speedily overcome. Even now where the gospel is preached in faith, and in the power of the Spirit, it burns its own way, irresistibly destroying falsehood, superstition, unbelief, sin, indifference, and hardness of heart. In it the Lord reigneth, and because of it let the earth rejoice.

4 His lightnings enlightened the world: the earth saw, and trembled.

5 The hills melted like wax at the presence of the LORD, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth.

6 The heavens declare his righteousness, and all the people see his glory.

4. "*His lightnings enlightened the world.*" In times of tempest the whole of nature is lighted up with a lurid glare, even the light of the sun itself seems dim compared with the blaze of lightning. If such are the common lights of nature what must be the glories of the Godhead itself? When God draws aside the curtain for a moment how astonished are the nations, the light compels them to cover their eyes and bow their heads in solemn awe. Jesus in the gospel lights up the earth with such a blaze of truth and grace as was never seen or even imagined before. In apostolic times the word flashed from one end of the heavens to the other, no part of the civilised globe was left unilluminated. "*The earth saw, and trembled.*" In God's presence the solid earth quakes, astonished by his glory it is convulsed with fear. To the advent of our Lord and the setting up of his kingdom among men these words are also most applicable; nothing ever caused such a shaking and commotion as the proclamation of the gospel, nothing was more majestic than its course, it turned the world upside down, levelled the mountains, and filled up the valleys. Jesus came, he saw, he conquered. When the Holy Ghost rested upon his servants their course was like that of a mighty storm, the truth flashed with the force and speed of a thunderbolt, and philosophers and priests, princes and people were utterly confounded, and altogether powerless to withstand it. It shall be so again. Faith even now sets the world on fire, and rocks the nations to and fro.

5. "*The hills melted like wax at the presence of the Lord.*" Inanimate nature

knows its Creator, and worships him in its own fashion. States and kingdoms which stand out upon the world like mountains are utterly dissolved when he decrees their end. Systems as ancient and firmly-rooted as the hills pass away when he does but look upon them. In the Pentecostal era, and its subsequent age, this was seen on all hands, heathenism yielded at the glance of Jehovah Jesus, and the tyrannies based upon it dissolved like melted wax. "At the presence of the Lord of the whole earth." His dominion is universal, and his power is everywhere felt. Men cannot move the hills, with difficulty do they climb them, with incredible toil do they pierce their way through their fastnesses, but it is not so with the Lord, his presence makes a clear pathway, obstacles disappear, a highway is made, and that not by his hand as though it cost him pains, but by his mere presence, for power goes forth from him with a word or a glance. O for the presence of the Lord after this sort with his church at this hour! It is our one and only need. With it the mountains of difficulty would flee away, and all obstacles would disappear. O that thou wouldest rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence, O Lord.

In the little world of our nature the presence of Jesus in reigning power is as a fire to consume our lusts and melt our souls to obedience. Sometimes we doubt the presence of the Lord within, for he is concealed with clouds, but we are again assured that he is within us when his light shines in and fills us with holy fear, while at the same time the warmth of grace softens us to penitence, resignation and obedience, even as wax becomes soft in the presence of fire.

6, "The heavens declare his righteousness." It is as conspicuous as if written across the skies, both the celestial and the terrestrial globes shine in its light. It is the manner of the inspired poets to picture the whole creation as in sympathy with the glory of God, and indeed it is not mere poetry, for a great truth underlies it, the whole creation has been made to groan through man's sin, and it is yet to share in the joy of his restoration. "And all the people see his glory." The glorious gospel became so well known and widely promulgated, that it seemed to be proclaimed by every star, and published by the very skies themselves, therefore all races of men became acquainted with it, and were made to see the exceeding glory of the grace of God which is resplendent therein. May it come to pass ere long that, by a revival of the old missionary ardour, the glad tidings may yet be carried to every tribe of Adam's race, and once again all flesh may see the glory of Jehovah. It must be so, therefore let us rejoice before the Lord.

7 Confounded be all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols: worship him, all ye gods.

8 Zion heard, and was glad; and the daughters of Judah rejoiced because of thy judgments, O LORD.

9 For thou, LORD, art high above all the earth: thou art exalted far above all gods.

7. "Confounded be all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols." They shall be so; shame shall cover their faces, they shall blush to think of their former besotted boastings. When a man gravely worships what has been engraved by a man's hand, and puts his trust in a mere nothing and nonentity, he is indeed brutish, and when he is converted from such absurdity he may well be ashamed. A man who worships an image is but the image of a man, his senses must have left him. He who boasts of an idol makes an idle boast. "Worship him, all ye gods." Bow down yourselves, ye fancied gods. Let Jove do homage to Jehovah, let Thor lay down his hammer at the foot of the cross, and Juggernaut remove his blood-stained car out of the road of Immanuel. If the false gods are thus bidden to worship the coming Lord, how much more shall they adore him who are godlike creatures in heaven, even the angelic spirits? Paul quotes this passage as the voice of God to angels when he sent his Son into the world. All powers are bound to recognise the chief power; since they derive their only rightful authority from the Lord, they should be careful to acknowledge his superiority at all times by the most reverent adoration.

8. "Zion heard, and was glad" While the heathen are confounded the people of God are made to triumph, for they love to see their God exalted. The day shall come when the literal Zion, so long forsaken, shall joy in the common salvation. It

did so at the first when the apostles dwelt at Jerusalem, and the good days will come back again. "*And the daughters of Judah rejoiced.*" Each individual believer is glad when he sees false systems broken up and idol gods broken down; the judgments of the Lord afford unalloyed delight to those who worship the true God in spirit and in truth. In the first ages of Christianity the believing Israel rejoiced to see Christ's kingdom victorious among the heathen, and even yet, though for a while turning aside, the daughters of Judah will sympathise in the wide-spread reign of Jehovah their God, through the gospel of his dear Son. As the women of Judah went forth to meet David in the dance, singing his victory over the Philistine, so shall they chant the triumphs of David's son and Lord.

9. "*For thou, Lord, art high above all the earth.*" And therefore do we rejoice to see the idols abolished and to see all mankind bending at thy throne. There is but one God, there cannot be another, and he is and ever must be over all. "*Thou art exalted far above all gods.*" As much as ALL is exalted above nothing, and perfection above folly. Jehovah is not alone high over Judea, but over all the earth, nor is he exalted over men only, but over everything that can be called god: the days are on their way when all men shall discern this truth, and shall render unto the Lord the glory which is due alone to him.

10 Ye that love the LORD, hate evil: he preserveth the souls of his saints; he delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked.

11 Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.

12 Rejoice in the LORD, ye righteous; and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.

10. "*Ye that love the Lord, hate evil.*" For he hates it, his fire consumes it, his lightnings blast it, his presence shakes it out of its place, and his glory confounds all the lovers of it. We cannot love God without hating that which he hates. We are not only to avoid evil, and to refuse to countenance it, but we must be in arms against it, and bear towards it a hearty indignation. "*He preserveth the souls of his saints.*" Therefore they need not be afraid of proclaiming war with the party which favours sin. The saints are the safe ones: they have been saved and shall be saved. God keeps those who keep his law. Those who love the Lord shall see his love manifested to them in their preservation from their enemies, and as they keep far from evil so shall evil be kept far from them. "*He delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked.*" It is not consistent with the glory of his name to give over to the power of his foes those whom his grace has made his friends. He may leave the bodies of his persecuted saints in the hand of the wicked, but not their souls, these are very dear to him, and he preserves them safe in his bosom. This foretells for the church a season of battling with the powers of darkness, but the Lord will preserve it and bring it forth to the light.

11. "*Light is sown for the righteous.*" All along their pathway it is strewn. Their night is almost over, their day is coming, the morning already advancing with rosy steps is sowing the earth with orient pearls. The full harvest of delight is not yet ours, but it is sown for us; it is springing, it will yet appear in fulness. This is only for those who are right before the Lord in his own righteousness, for all others the blackness of darkness is reserved. "*And gladness for the upright in heart.*" Gladness is not only for one righteous man in the singular, but for the whole company of the upright, even as the apostle, after speaking of the crown of life laid up for himself, immediately amended his speech by adding, "and not for me only, but also for all them that love his appearing." The upright ought to be glad, they have cause to be glad, yea and they shall be glad. Those who are right-hearted shall also be glad-hearted. Right leads to light. In the furrows of integrity lie the seeds of happiness, which shall develop into a harvest of bliss. God has lightning for sinners and light for saints. The gospel of Jesus, wherever it goes, sows the whole earth with joy for believers, for these are the men who are righteous before the Lord.

12. "*Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous.*" The Psalmist had bidden the earth rejoice, and here he turns to the excellent of the earth and bids them lead the song. If all others fail to praise the Lord, the godly must not. To them God is peculiarly revealed, by them he should be specially adored. "*And give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness*"—which is the harmony of all his attributes, the superlative wholeness of his character. This is a terror to the wicked, and a cause of thankfulness

to the gracious. To remember that Jehovah is holy is becoming in those who dwell in his courts, to give thanks in consequence of that remembrance is the sure index of their fitness to abide in his presence. In reference to the triumphs of the gospel, this text teaches us to rejoice greatly in its purifying effect ; it is the death of sin and the life of virtue. An unholy gospel is no gospel. The holiness of the religion of Jesus is its glory, it is that which makes it glad tidings, since while man is left in his sins no bliss can be his portion. Salvation from sin is the priceless gift of our thrice holy God, therefore let us magnify him for ever and ever. He will fill the world with holiness, and so with happiness, therefore let us glory in his holy name, world without end. Amen.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—The two preceding Psalms are songs of joy and thanksgiving, in which the gladness of Christ's people is poured forth as they go to meet their triumphant Lord at his second advent, and to bring him back in glory to assume his kingdom. The present Psalm, in language sufficiently explicit, describes the completion of this great event, "the Lord reigneth ;" Messiah is on his throne, and now the words of the second Psalm, verse 6, are fulfilled, "I have set my king upon my holy hill of Sion." Messiah's first act of sovereignty is judgment. Scriptures bearing upon that event are 2 Thess. i. 7 ; Jude 14 ; Isa. lxvi. 15. The character of these judgments is given in the Psalm : clouds and darkness encircling his throne, where, however, righteousness and mercy dwell ; a fire which burns up his enemies round about ; lightnings flashing upon the world, the earth trembling, and the hills melting like wax at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth. Peter, in his second Epistle, and third chapter, evidently refers to these events as yet future in his day.—R. H. Ryland.

Verse 1.—"The Lord reigneth." Here's good news, glad tidings : "The Lord reigneth." It cannot be published without *praise*, without *rejoicing*, without *singing*, without *blessing*. We should dishonour this truth if we did not publish it ; if we should with silence suppress it ; if we should not speak well of it. It is so sweet and comfortable, that it fills the whole world with joy ; and calls in every ear, and every tongue, and every heart, to be glad to rejoice, and to praise God. "Let the earth rejoice ; let the multitude of isles be glad." As though he should say, Let nothing fear but hell : let nothing be disquieted but devils. Let the *lowest*, the *poorest* of the people of God, though but *earth*, yet let them rejoice in this, "The Lord reigneth." . . .

Here are two things of very sweet consideration, 1. The *reign* of the Lord ; and, 2. The *reign* of the Lord *in the saints*. First, This *kingdom* that God is now setting up is his everlasting kingdom. It will not be administered by the weakness of man, but by the power of God ; not by the folly of man, but by the judgment of God. God will, in this kingdom, nakedly manifest his own righteousness, his own compassion and pity ; his own love, his own peace : he will do all things immediately by his own self. And therefore all the pride and ambition, all the oppression and tyranny, and miscarriages that have been in the government of men, shall be wholly taken away. Pure righteousness and judgment and equity shall be infallibly dispensed ; and infinite power, strength, holiness, goodness, and authority shall shine forth nakedly in the face of God ; and that shall be the judge of all men. We shall no longer be abused and oppressed by the will of men, by the lusts of men. The poor people shall no longer groan under the burden of men's lusts, nor sweat for the pleasure and contents of men ; nor their faces any longer be ground by the hardness of the spirit of men ; but they shall be under the protection of God. The great cry now of the people is, "Let's have a King !" Ye shall have one, one that will "reign in righteousness," the Lord himself.

Secondly, And this *reign* of the Lord shall be *in his saints* ; according to that in Dan. vii. 27. "And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey

him." As this kingdom shall be administered in the glory of God ; so also in the sweetness and gentleness of man, by brethren, by friends, by the saints of the Most High. God lifting up himself in the saints will administer this reign ; and as he will do it by the saints, so he will do it by the softness and tenderness of the saints ; " The kingdom and dominion under the whole earth shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High." It's now doing ; that ye shall obey none but the Lord ; ye shall know no other laws but the law of God ; ye shall know no other master but Jehovah. He hath made us priests and kings, and we shall reign with him on the earth. This nature of ours, this body of ours, shall reign with Christ, with God, and that upon earth.

" *The Lord reigns.*" The Lord hath served, hath been hitherto much, yea, mostly, " in the form of a servant." It hath been, as it were, the business of the Lord, whilst this world stood, to give supplies to men ; to serve men ; to give men strength, and wisdom, and riches, and authority, and power, that men might be great and happy, with the goodness of God : and (in this) God hath been *King* too, but in an under way ; as saith the Lord, " I have served with your sins " and lusts : now he will no longer *serve*, but *reign* ; God will take all the power and authority into his own hands. He will not be any longer under men, but above all men. It's time he should be so ; it's reason he should be so ; it's just he should be so. Everything now must bow, stoop, and submit to the law, and rule, and will of God. No man shall any longer say, it shall be so, because it is my will to have it so : there shall not be found an heart, or tongue, that shall move against the dominion of the Lord.

Satan hath been a prince ; he hath made laws of your captivity and misery ; he hath kept you to his task, to do him service. He hath said, *Be angry*, and then you have been full of rage. He hath said, *Be covetous*, and then you have been full of covetousness. He hath said, *Be dark*, and then you have been full of blindness. He hath said, *Be proud*, and then ye have been full of haughtiness. And so he hath, as a monstrous tyrant, tormented the world. The sting of Satan's whips is in your consciences, I know. Your errors and mistakes have been through the kingdom of darkness in you, that you do not know God, or his holy will. You would come into the enjoyment of God ; Satan will not let you : you would know God ; he will not suffer you : you would be wise unto salvation ; he will not permit you. He hath fettered you with his chains of darkness ; he hath captivated your judgments ; he hath made you to grind at his mill and to drudge in his service ; and hath made you to cry out, " O when will the Lord come ! " But now his wicked reign is at an end : what ye had, ye shall want, and what ye want, ye shall have ; what hath been shall not be ; that which shall be, must be, and cannot choose but be : ye shall have love, because the law of God is love ; and ye shall have peace, because the kingdom of God is peace ; and ye shall have light, because the inheritance is marvellous light ; ye shall have righteousness, because this state is true holiness ; ye shall have liberty, settledness, stability, and every good thing in this kingdom of God. It's always ill with us while Satan reigns. It's always well with us while God reigns ; when our Husband is King we shall have preferment, and honour, and riches, and greatness, and power, and authority, because our God reigns. " *The Lord reigns,*" for us ; the Lord takes his kingdom, and it is for us : the Lord hath reigned in himself all this while ; now he reigns by us : the Lord counts himself not to have a kingdom, till we have it with him : the Lord thinks himself mean and despised, till we are exalted. He is poor without us. He is weak, while absent from us. He is not himself unless he enjoys us. " Thou art my excellency, my first-born." The power of God is in weakness, till we become mighty. The kingdom of God is in darkness, till we shine forth. The treasures of God were of no worth to him, if we were not his richest jewels.

" *The Lord doth reign.*" This is not to be passed by ; it's in the present tense. This is the song that we hear and see angels sing. The elders and saints in heaven sing it perpetually ; we daily hear it. *Hallelujah, Hallelujah, the Lord reigneth !* There is administered into our hearts and ears *an hallelujah ; the Lord reigneth ;* indeed every creature speaks it, all in heaven and earth.

" *The Lord doth reign,*" and saith, " I am upon my throne. I am great ; none is great but myself. I am King ; I have the sceptre in my hand. I am powerful ; none is powerful but I." All the power of men is broken. All the thrones of men are shattered into dust. All the wisdom of men is turned into folly. All the strength of men is melted into weakness and water. The meltings and moulderings away

of the powers and dignities of the world, speak it aloud, *The Lord reigns*.—*William Sedgwick*, in "*Some Flashes of Lightnings of the Son of Man*," 1648.

Verse 1.—" *The Lord reigneth*." He who stood before the judge, he who received the blows, he who was scourged, he who was spit upon, he who was crowned with thorns, he who was struck with fists, he who hung upon the cross, he who as he hung upon the wood was mocked, he who died upon the cross, he who was pierced with the spear, he who was buried, himself arose from the dead. "*The Lord reigneth*." Let kingdoms rage as much as they can; what can they do to the King of kingdoms, the Lord of all kings, the Creator of all worlds?—*Augustine*.

Verse 1.—" *The Lord reigneth*." I am glad that Christ is Lord of all, for otherwise I should utterly have been out of hope, saith *Miconius* in an epistle to *Calvin*, upon a view of the church's enemies.—*John Trapp*.

Verse 1.—" *The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice*." Consider the divine government in various views, as legislative, providential, mediatorial, and judicial, and in each of these views the divine government is matter of universal joy.

I. "The Lord reigneth" upon a throne of legislation, "let the earth rejoice." He is the one supreme law-giver and is perfectly qualified for that important trust. Nothing tends more to the advantage of civil society than to have good laws established, according to which mankind are to conduct themselves, and according to which their rulers will deal with them. Now the supreme and universal King has enacted and published the best laws for the government of the moral world, and of the human race in particular. Let the earth then rejoice that God has clearly revealed his will to us and not left us in inextricable perplexities about our duty to him and mankind. . . . Again, "Let the earth rejoice" that these laws are suitably enforced with proper sanctions. The sanctions are such as become a God of infinite wisdom, almighty power, inexorable justice, untainted holiness, and unbounded goodness and grace, and such as are agreeable to the nature of reasonable creatures formed for an immortal duration. Let the earth rejoice that the divine laws reach the inner man, and have power upon the hearts and consciences of men. Human laws can only smooth our external conduct at best, but the heart in the meantime may be disloyal and wicked. Now this defect is supplied by the laws of the King of Heaven, which are spiritual. They require a complete uniformity and self-consistency in us that heart and life may agree, and therefore they are wisely framed to make us entirely good.

II. "The Lord reigneth" by his providence, "let the earth rejoice." The providence of God is well described in our shorter catechism, "It is his most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures and all their actions."

"The Lord reigneth" over the kingdoms of the earth, and manages all their affairs according to his sovereign and wise pleasure, and he doth the same for his church. He can reduce confusion into order, make the wrath of man to praise him, and restrain the remainder of it.

III. "The Lord reigneth" upon a throne of grace! "let the earth rejoice." It is the mediatorial government of the Messiah which the Psalmist had more immediately in view, and this is the principal cause of joy to the earth and its guilty inhabitants.

IV. And, lastly, the Lord will reign ere long upon a throne of universal judgment conspicuous to the assembled universe, "let the earth therefore rejoice, and the multitude of the isles be glad."—*Condensed from a Sermon by Samuel Davies*, 1724—1761.

Verse 1.—" *Let the earth rejoice*." The earth is called upon to rejoice because the Lord reigneth; and well it may, on the day of its enlargement and final emancipation from evil, which seems to be here set forth—a day of judgment, and so also a day of terror and destruction to the enemies of God and goodness—a day when at his presence "the elements shall melt with fervent heat;" but his own righteousness and glory shall be manifested in the sight of all people. Then will the worldly, who serve idols in loving the creature more than the Creator, be confounded and overthrown; but then, too, will the righteous lift up their heads and rejoice because of God's judgments.—*Thomas Chalmers*.

Verse 1.—" *The multitude of the isles*." In Poole's Synopsis we find from the various interpretations of different authors that the word may mean maritime regions, places beyond sea usually reached in ships, and all countries bordering on the ocean.—*C. H. S.*

Verse 1.—" *The isles*." Figuratively the isles may be taken for all the churches.

Why isles? Because the waves of all temptations roar around them. But as an isle may be beaten by the waves which on every side dash around it, yet cannot be broken, and rather itself doth break the advancing waves, than by them is broken: so also the churches of God, springing up throughout the world, have suffered the persecutions of the ungodly, who roar around them on every side; and behold the isles stand fixed, and at last the sea is calmed.—*Augustine.*

Verse 1.—When Bulstrode Whitelock was embarked as Cromwell's envoy to Sweden, in 1653, he was much disturbed in mind, as he rested at Harwich the preceding night, which was very stormy, as he thought upon the distracted state of the nation. It happened that a confidential servant slept in an adjacent bed, who, finding that his master could not sleep, at length said:—

“Pray, sir, will you give me leave to ask you a question?”

“Certainly.”

“Pray, sir, do you think God governed the world very well before you came into it?”

“Undoubtedly.”

“And pray, sir, do you think that he will govern it quite as well when you are gone out of it?”

“Certainly.”

“Then pray, sir, excuse me, but do not you think you may trust him to govern it quite as well as long as you live?”

To this question Whitelock had nothing to reply; but turning about, soon fell fast asleep, till he was summoned to embark.—*G. S. Bowes, in “Illustrative Gatherings,” 1862.*

Verse 2.—“*Clouds and darkness are round about him.*” The figurative language in the poetical parts of the Old Testament is frequently taken from the historical books, and refers to the facts therein recorded; thus the appearances of God to the saints and patriarchs in old times is the origin of the figure in our text. If you look at the history of these appearances, you will find they were all accompanied with clouds and darkness. The cloud of the Lord went before the children of Israel when they departed from the land of bondage. This cloud had a dark and bright side, and was a symbol of the divine presence. Thus it preceded the people in all their marches, as a pillar of fire by night, and of a cloud by day. When Solomon dedicated the temple, the glory of the Lord filled the house, and the priest could not enter into the house of the Lord, because the glory of the Lord filled the house. When God descended upon Mount Sinai, “there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud. And Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire; and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. And the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai, upon the top of the mount” (Exod. xix. 16, 18, 20). When our Saviour was transfigured before three of his disciples, “a bright cloud overshadowed them,” from which proceeded the voice of the Father, saying, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.” And Peter, who was present there, afterwards referring to the fact, says that the voice proceeded “from the excellent glory.” Thus, in all the symbols of the divine presence, there was a mixture of splendour with darkness and obscurity. So it is in the operations of Providence: in a moral and figurative sense, we may say that clouds and darkness surround all the operations of divine power and wisdom.

Clouds are emblems of obscurity; darkness, of distress. The works of God's providence are often obscure and productive of distress to mankind, though righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.—*Robert Hall.*

Verse 2.—“*Clouds and darkness are round about him.*” God doth govern the world *mysteriously*. As there are mysteries in the word, so in the works of God; *δυσνόητά*, “things hard to be understood,” (2 Pet. iii. 16,) many riddles which nonplus and puzzle men of the largest and most piercing intellectuals: “Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him: but he knoweth the way that I take.” Job xxiii. 8—10. God knoweth our ways, and counteth our steps; but the wisest of men do not know all God's ways. His way is frequently in the sea, and his chariot in the clouds; so that he is invisible, not only in his essence, but also in the design and tendency of his operations. Those that behold him with an eye of faith, do not yet see him

with an eye of understanding, so as to discern his way, and whither he is going. Paul assures us, "His judgments are unsearchable, and his ways past finding out." Rom. xi. 33. Some of them, indeed, are obvious, plain, and easy; we may upon the first view give a satisfactory account of them; we may read righteousness, equity, mercy, goodness, love, in them, because written in capital letters, and with such beams of light as he that runs may read them. But others of God's ways are dark and obscure, so that they are out of our reach and above our sight. He that goes about in them to trace God, may quickly lose himself. They are like that hand-writing upon the wall, which none of Belshazzar's wise men could read or give the interpretation of (Dan. v. 8). There are *arcana imperii*, "secrets of state and government," which are not fit to be made common. But this may be our comfort:—though God doth not now give any account of his matters, nor is he obliged thereunto, yet he can give a very good and satisfactory account; and one day his people shall be led into the mystery; and, though many things which God doeth they know not now, yet they shall know them afterward; and when they know, they shall approve and admire both the things, and the reason, and the end. They shall then be perfectly reconciled to all providences, and see that all were worthy of God, and that in all he acted *θεοπενῶς*, "as did highly become himself."—*Samuel Stater* (1704) in "The Morning Exercises."

Verse 2.—How despicable soever Christ's kingdom may seem to the world, yet it is full of heavenly majesty: "clouds and darkness are round about him." The glory of Christ's kingdom is unsearchable, and hid from the eyes of the world, who cannot take up the things of God, except he reveal himself to them, and do open the eyes of the understanding: "clouds and darkness are round about him."—*David Dickson*.

Verse 2.—"Darkness." This and the four following verses have a striking resemblance to the awful pomp of the march of God, as described Ps. xviii. 8, 9, and lxxviii. 8. All the dread phenomena and meteoric array of nature are in attendance; thunder and lightning, and earthquakes and volcanoes, with streams of melting lava, like streams of melting wax. Yet all is justice and equity, joy, exultation, and glory; and the wicked alone—the adversaries of Jehovah—feel his judgments—the host of idols and their brutish worshippers.—*John Mason Good*.

Verse 2.—"Righteousness and judgment." Righteousness is the essential perfection of the Divine Being. It is his nature: if there had been no creatures for him to govern, he would have had an unchangeable and invincible love of rectitude. Judgment is the application of the principle of righteousness in his government of his creatures and their actions; it is a development of his rectitude in the management of the affairs of his great empire; it is that superintendence over all, whereby the operations of all things are directed, to some vast and important end. Judgment implies measure and equity, in opposition to what is done without rule and consideration. All the divine conduct is equitable, regulated by rectitude, and every thing is directed by a judgment that cannot err.—*Robert Hall*.

Verse 2.—"Righteousness and judgment," etc. When the mercy and grace of our heavenly King are to be described, he is likened to the sun shining in a clear firmament, and gladdening universal nature with his beneficent ray. But when we are to conceive an idea of him, as going forth, in justice and judgment, to discomfit and punish his adversaries, the imagery is then borrowed from a troubled sky; he is pictured as surrounded by clouds and darkness; from whence issue lightnings and thunders, storms and tempests, affrighting and confounding the wicked and the impenitent.—*Samuel Burder*.

Verse 2.—The Lord manageth his kingdom and government with perfect equity. "Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." Righteousness, whereby he preserves, saves, and rewards the good; judgment, whereby he punishes, confounds, and destroys the wicked: these are "the habitation of his throne," his tribunal, his seat of judicature. These are the basis or foundation, which give unto his throne *rectitudinem et stabilitatem*, "rectitude and establishment." His throne is established in righteousness, and "the sceptre of his kingdom is a right sceptre:" though there be clouds, yet no blemishes; though darkness, yet no deformities: Ps. xcii. 15. Ever since the creation, all things have been done with that unreplicable exactness, that if the world were to begin again, and the affairs of it to be acted over again, there should not be an alteration in a tittle. All hath been so well, that nothing can be mended. Those dark and obscure passages of Providence, at which good men are startled, and by which all men are posed, are most excellent and curious

strokes, and as so many well-placed shades, which commend the work and admirably set off the beauty of Providence.—*Samuel Slater.*

Verse 2.—

Jove's firm decree, tho' wrapt in night,
Beams midst the gloom a constant light ;
Man's fate obscure in darkness lies,
Not to be pierc'd by mortal eyes :
The just resolves of his high mind
A glorious consummation find ;
Tho' in majestic state enthron'd
Thick clouds and dark enclose him round,
As from the tower of heav'n his eye
Surveys man's bold impiety ;
Till his ripe wrath on vengeance bent,
He arms each god for punishment,
And from his high and holy throne
Sends all his awful judgments down.

—*Æschylus* [*R. Potter's translation, 1808.*]

Verse 3.—“*A fire goeth before him.*” Like a marshal or advance guard before a royal presence, or as the javelin men who precede a judge. Fire is the sign both of grace and wrath (Ex. iii. 2 ; Ps. xviii. 9). Majesty marches forth in both displays of Deity.—*C. H. S. from Poli Synopsis.*

Verse 3.—“*A fire goeth before him.*” That fire which Christ came to send upon the earth, the kindling blaze of the Holy Ghost, which came down in tongues of fire at Pentecost, to burn freely throughout the world, for the destruction of obstinate unbelievers and the purifying of those who gladly received the Word. And of this the prophet spake, saying, “I will send a fire on Magog, and among them that dwell carelessly in the isles : and they shall know that I am the LORD.” (Ezek. xxxix. 6.) This divine flame goes still before the face of the Lord in his coming to every faithful soul, as it kindles with longing for him, and burns up all its sins therewith, as he heaps his coals of fire upon its head, to soften and purify it. “It must needs be,” teaches a great saint,* “that the fervour of holy desire must go before his face to every soul to which he means to come, a flame which will burn up all the mildew of sin, and make ready a place for the Lord. And then the soul knows that the Lord is at hand, when it feels itself kindled with that fire, and it saith with the prophet, ‘My heart was hot within me ; then spake I with my tongue.’”—Psalm xxxix. 3.—*Augustine, and others, quoted by Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 3.—“*A fire goeth before him.*” There is no less, but rather more wrath attending the despisers of the Gospel, than did attend the giving out of the law. Heb. xii. 29.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 4.—“*His lightnings enlightened the world.*” This passage is applied by Munster to the rapid increase of the kingdom of Christ : for the sound of the Gospel sped through all the world like lightning. There is a prediction almost to this effect in Zech. ix. 14 : “His arrow shall go forth as the lightning, and the Lord God shall blow the trumpet.”—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 4.—“*The earth saw and trembled.*” The bare sight of thee caused the earth to tremble (Ps. lxxvii. 16).—*A. R. Faussett.*

Verse 5.—“*The hills melted like wax at the presence of the Lord.*” For a parallel passage see Mic. i. 4. There the words are applied to the judgment of God about to fall on the people of the covenant : here they are applied to the judgment on the God-opposing world. The fact that judgment has begun at the house of God is a token that judgments of a far more destructive kind will overtake ‘the (openly) ungodly and sinners’ (1 Pet. iv. 7). “The hills” symbolize the heights of man’s self-exalting pride of intellect, wealth, and power.—*A. R. Faussett.*

Verse 5.—“*The Lord of the whole earth.*” In this title lies concealed the reason for the liquefaction of the hills, for the God who here manifests himself is he who created the earth, and is able therefore to reduce it to nothing.—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 6.—“*The heavens declare,*” etc. He does not say, the heavens exercise,

* S. Bernard.

but they declare his righteousness. To the eyes of the wicked the righteousness of God is hidden, until it is made manifest by an astonishing miracle.

"*The heavens.*" This phrase is not, *God* declares, but *the heavens* declare his righteousness. The creature is the servant and revealer of the righteousness of God.

"*His righteousness.*" He says not, the heavens declare *our* righteousness, but *his* righteousness. They testify that God is the righteous judge, rather than that the saints themselves are righteous.

"*All the people.*" Not only do the wicked, those oppressive monsters, see, but "all the people." God so reveals his glory that not only the wicked who are punished may see it, but also other mortals to their edification.

"*And shall see.*" They shall not simply hear or know, but they shall see. This at last is a powerful and convincing demonstration of the righteousness of God, which is put before their eyes.

"*His glory.*" Not merely the destruction of the wicked and vengeance on the enemies of God, but his glory; for in the destruction of the wicked, and the deliverance of the innocent, the glory of God is declared. Thus the prophet rejoices not so much concerning the destruction of the wicked as concerning the glory of God.—*Musculus.*

Verse 7.—"Confounded be all they that serve graven images," etc. Albeit such as are lovers of imagery not only do serve images, but also will defend the use of images in the exercise of religion, and glory in them; yet shall they at length be ashamed of their boasting.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 7.—"Worship him, all ye gods," or "Let all the angels of God worship him." The matter of the Psalm itself makes it manifest that the Holy Ghost treateth in it about God's bringing in the firstborn into the world, and the setting up of his kingdom in him. A kingdom is described wherein God would reign, which should destroy idolatry and false worship; a kingdom wherein the isles of the Gentiles should rejoice, being called to an interest therein; a kingdom that was to be preached, proclaimed, declared, unto the increase of light and holiness in the world, with the manifestation of the glory of God unto the ends of all the earth: every part whereof declareth the kingdom of Christ to be intended in the Psalm, and consequently that it is a prophecy of the bringing in of the first-begotten into the world. Our inquiry is, whether the angels be intended in these words. They are אֱלֹהִים *omnes dii*; and are so rendered by Jerome, *Adorate eum, omnes dii*; and by our authorised version, "Worship him, all ye gods." The preceding words are, "Confounded be all they that serve graven images," אֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁתַּחֲוֶינּוּ, *that boast themselves in or of "idols," "vanities, nothings,"* as the word signifies, wherein ensues this apostrophe, "Worship him, אֱלֹהִים, *all ye gods.*" And who they are is our present inquiry. Some, as all the modern Jews, say that it is the gods of the Gentiles, those whom they worship, that are intended; so making אֱלֹהִים and אֱלֹהִים, "*gods,*" and "*vain idols,*" to be the same in this place.

But (1) It cannot be that the Psalmist should exhort the *idols of the heathen*, some whereof were *devils*, some *dead men*, some *inanimate parts of the creation*, unto a reverential worshipping of God reigning over all. Hence the Targumist, seeing the vanity of that interpretation, perverts the words, and renders them, "Worship before him, all ye nations which serve idols."

(2) אֱלֹהִים, "*Elohim,*" is so far in this place from being exegetical of אֱלֹהִים "*gods,*" or "*vain idols*" that it is put in direct opposition to it, as is evident from the words themselves.

(3) The word *Elohim*, which most frequently denoteth the true God, doth never alone, and absolutely taken, signify *false gods* or *idols*, but only when it is joined with some other word discovering its application, as *his god*, or *their gods*, or *the gods of this or that people*, in which case it is rendered by the LXX., sometimes εἰδωλον, an "*idol*"; sometimes χειροποίητον, an "*idol made with hands*"; sometimes βδέλυγμα an "*abomination.*" But here it hath no such limitation or restriction.

Whereas, therefore, there are some creatures who, by reason of some peculiar excellency and likeness unto God, or subordination unto him in their work, are called gods, it must be those, or some of them, that are intended in the expression. Now these are either *magistrates* or *angels*.

(1) *Magistrates* are somewhere called *elohim*, because of the representation they make of God in his power, and their peculiar subordination unto him in their working.

The Jews, indeed, contend that no other magistrates but those only of the great Sanhedrim are anywhere called gods; but that concerns not our present inquiry. Some magistrates are so called, but none of them are intended by the Psalmist, there being no occasion administered unto him of any such apostrophe unto them.

(2) Angels are called *elohim*: *ἄγγελοι θεοί*, 1 Cor. viii. 5. They have the name of God attributed unto them, and these are they whom the Psalmist speaks unto. Having called on the whole creation to rejoice in the bringing forth of the kingdom of God, and pressed his exhortation upon things on the earth, he turns unto the ministering angels, and calls on them to the discharge of their duty unto the King of that kingdom. Hence the Targumist, in the beginning of Psalm xcvi. expressly mentioned "his high angels," joining in his praise and worship, using the Greek word *ἄγγελος*, for distinction's sake, as on the same account it often occurs in the Targum.

We have thus evinced that the Psalm treats about the bringing in of the firstborn into the world; as also that they are the ministering angels who are here commanded to worship him.—*John Owen*.

Verse 8.—"Zion heard," etc. But why, it may be asked, does he speak of those things being *heard*, rather than *seen*? Two reasons may be given for this. First, he would have God's believing people anticipate the blessing by hope, ere the consummation of it arrived; and, again, the language intimates, that the glory of the Gospel would be spread to such distant quarters, that the Jews would rather hear of it by report, than witness it with their own eyes.—*John Calvin*.

Verse 8.—"The daughters of Judah rejoiced." David alludes to a custom familiar in Judea, of forming choral bands of maidens after a victory or some happy circumstance. Thus after the passage of the Red Sea, when the Egyptians were drowned and the people of God brought in safety to the farther shore, Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women followed her with timbrels and dancing, saying, Let us sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. When Goliath was slain by David, it is said 1 Sam. xviii. 6, 7, "When David returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of music. And the women sang as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands."—*Le Blanc*.

Verse 10.—"Ye that love the Lord, hate evil." It is evident that our conversion is sound when we loathe and hate sin from the heart: a man may know his hatred of evil to be true, first, if it be universal: he that hates sin truly, hates all sin. Secondly, true hatred is fixed; there is no appeasing it but by abolishing the thing hated. Thirdly, hatred is a more rooted affection than anger: anger may be appeased, but hatred remains and sets itself against the whole kind. Fourthly, if our hatred be true, we hate all evil, in ourselves first, and then in others; he that hates a toad, would hate it most in his own bosom. Many, like Judah, are severe in censuring others (Gen. xxxviii. 24), but partial to themselves. Fifthly, he that hates sin truly, hates the greatest sin in the greatest measure; he hates all evil in a just proportion. Sixthly, our hatred is right if we can endure admonition and reproof for sin, and not be enraged; therefore, those that swell against reproof do not appear to hate sin.—*Richard Sibbes*.

Verse 10.—"Hate evil." Sin seemeth to have its name of *sana*, שָׂנֵא (the word here used) because it is most of all to be hated, as the greatest evil; as that which setteth us furthest from God the greatest good.—*John Trapp*.

Verse 10.—Get mortifying graces, especially love to God, for those that love the Lord, will hate evil. And the more they love him, the more they will hate it.—*David Clarkson*.

Verse 10.—God is a Spirit, and he looks to our very spirits; and what we are in our spirits, in our hearts and affections, that we are to him. Therefore, what ill we shun, let us do it from the heart, by hating it first. A man may avoid an evil action from fear, or out of other respects, but that is not sincerity. Therefore look to thy heart, see that thou hate evil, and let it come from sincere looking to God. "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil," saith David: not only avoid it, but hate it; and not only hate it, but hate it out of love to God.—*Richard Sibbes*.

Verse 10.—"Hate evil."

LUCIAN. I am the declared enemy of all false pretence, all quackery, all lies, and all puffing. I am a lover of truth, of beauty, of undisguised nature; in short, of everything that is lovely.

PHILOSOPHY. To love and to hate, they say, spring from one and the same source.

LUCIAN. That, O philosophy, must be best known to you. My business is to hate the bad, and to love and commend the good; and that I stick to.—*Lucian*. Piscat. c. 8.

Verse 10.—“*He preserveth the souls of his saints.*” Let us observe that there are two parts of divine protection—preservation and deliverance. Preservation is keeping lest we should be imperilled: deliverance has reference to those already involved in perils. The shepherd keeps his sheep lest they should fall among wolves; but if perchance they should fall into the clutches of the wolf he pursues and delivers. Both parts the Prophet exhibits, persuading us that it is the Lord who keeps the souls of his saints lest they fall into the hands of the wicked; and if they should fall, he will deliver them.—*Musculus*.

Verse 11.—“*Light is sown.*” עָרַף does not here signify sown = strewn into the earth, but strewn along his life’s way, so that he, the righteous one, advances step by step in the light. Hitzig rightly compares κίβητα, σκίβητα, used of the dawn and of the sun. Of the former Virgil also says, *Et jam prima novo spargebat lumine terras.*—*Franz Delitzsch*.

Verse 11.—“*Light is sown.*”

And now Aurora, from the saffron bed
Of her Tithonus rising, sow’d the earth
With dewy light.

—*C. R. Kennedy’s Translation of Virgil.*

Verse 11.—“*Light is sown.*”

Now Morn, her rosy steps in the eastern clime
Advancing, sow’d the earth with orient pearl.

—*John Milton.*

Verse 11.—“*Light is sown for the righteous.*” Most thoughtful men increase in faith and spiritual discernment by often doubting, and by having their doubts cleared up. Religious thought in this way grows into a personal feeling; and the solid rock of truer conviction and deeper trust as a firm foundation for the soul to build upon for eternity, remains behind after all the abrasion of loose and more perishable materials through speculation. A different if not a truer revelation of heavenly realities is given to us through the dark distressing process of doubting, than through the bright joyful exercise of unhesitating faith; just as our knowledge of the chemistry of the sun and stars, of the physical constitution of distant worlds, is derived not from the bright bands of their spectrum, which reveal only their size and shape, but from Fraunhofer’s wonderful lines—those black blank spaces breaking up the spectrum bands—which tell us of rays arrested in their path and prevented from bearing their message to us by particular metallic vapours. Unto the upright, just because of the purity and singleness of their motives and the earnestness of their quest after truth, there ariseth light in the darkness. We must remember that “light is sown for the righteous”; that its more or less rapid germination and development depend upon the nature of the soil on which it falls and the circumstances that influence it; that, like seed, it at first lies concealed in the dark furrow, under the cheerless clod, in the cold ungenial winter; but that even then, while shining in the darkness, while struggling with doubts and difficulties of the mind and heart, it is nevertheless the source of much comfort, and in its slow, quickening, and hidden growth the cause of lively hope, and of bright anticipation of that time when it shall blossom and ripen in the summer-time of heaven—shine more and more unto the perfect day.—*Hugh Macmillan*, in “*The Ministry of Nature*,” 1871.

Verse 11.—“*Light is sown for the righteous:*” sown in these two fields, 1. *Of God’s eternal decree*, in his power, promise, grace and love. These are the “upper springs.” 2. In the field of their *graces*, and *holy duties*; these are the “nether springs;” both which fall into one river, and “make glad the city of God;” both these fields yield a plentiful harvest of comfort to the godly.—*John Sheffield*, in “*The Rising Sun*,” 1654.

Verse 11.—“*Sown.*” The righteous man’s harvest is secret and hidden. It

lieth, like the corn covered in the ground ; " their life is hid ; " and " it is not manifest what they shall be ; " " no eye hath seen, or ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what the Lord hath laid up for them that love him " (Col. iii. 3 ; 1 John iii. 2 ; 1 Cor. ii. 9). Name what you can, and it will be a mystery, a secret thing, that belongs to the upright in heart. First, is not the decree of God a hidden thing ? a depth unsearchable ? and able to make a man astonished ? Did not Paul cry out, " O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God ! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out ! " (Rom. xii. 33). And is not the incarnation of Christ a secret too ? what more to be admired than that God should become man, and be manifested in the flesh ? The very angels desired to peep into this mystery. 1 Tim. iii. 16 ; 1 Pet. i. 12 ; Isai. vii. 14. Again, the conversion and regeneration of a sinner is admirable ; it's a noble, yet a secret work : Nicodemus a great doctor could not see it. And if natural births be so strange, what shall we judge of this ? Moreover, peace of conscience and joy in the Holy Ghost is no open matter ; none knoweth it, but he that hath it. So is the earnest of the Spirit, and true seal of salvation ; the power, life and sweetness of the word ; the remission and pardon of sin, with certainty of salvation. And in the fifth place, the harvest is secret, if we consider where it is growing. One close is, *the secret purpose of God* ; and who can understand it ? A second is, *his word* ; and how hardly is that to be searched into ? A third is, *a man's own heart* ; and is not that both secret and deceitful ? And last of all, the very principal part of the harvest is hid *with Christ in heaven* ; and when he appears, it will appear what it shall be.—*John Barlow.*

Verses 11 and 12 are both most savoury and precious notanda.—Give me to experience, O Lord, those revelations which follow in the train of obedience ; and O that I felt the charm and enjoyment of holiness, so as to give thanks, in the reflection that with a holy God holiness is an indispensable requisite for our appearing in his presence. We should further be grateful because of this essential attribute in the Godhead ; for it is in virtue of his holiness that evil cannot dwell with him, and that the world will at length be delivered, and this conclusively, from the wickedness and malice and vile sensualities by which it is now so disquieted and deformed. Hasten this consummation, O Lord.—*Thomas Chalmers.*

Verse 12.—" *Rejoice in the Lord.*" We must " rejoice evermore ; " for even holy mourning hath the seed of joy in it, which the soul finds by that time it is over. if not in it.—*William Cooper, in the " Morning Exercises."*

Verse 12.—" *Rejoice in the Lord.*" I. Our rejoicing in the Lord denotes our taking a very sincere and cordial pleasure in whatever relates to the ever-blessed God, particularly his existence, perfections, and providence ; the discoveries of his will to us, especially in his word ; the interest we have in him, and the relations wherein we stand to him ; his continual protection, guidance and influence ; his gracious intercourse with us in the duties of religious worship ; and, finally, the hope he has given us of fulness of joy, in his beatific and most glorious presence above. II. Rejoicing in the Lord signifies that our joy in God is superior to all our other joys, otherwise it is a joy unworthy of him, and no way, or not savingly, profitable to us. III. Whatever else we rejoice in, we are to rejoice in such a manner, that we may be properly said to rejoice in the Lord, even when other things are the immediate occasions of our joy. The God we serve is not an envious and a malevolent Being, but exceeding liberal and kind ; he has created us with an inextinguishable desire after happiness, as a secret intimation that he intends to make us happy, if we do not make ourselves miserable ; and while our principal happiness is lodged in himself, and to be found nowhere else, (in which he has shown the singular regard he has to our nature), he feeds our hearts with a thousand little rivulets of joy and satisfaction from created objects : our bodies are endowed with a variety of senses and appetites, and our souls with powers and faculties of their own ; nor was any one sense or faculty made in vain, or to lie always idle and useless ; but every sense, and much more every mental faculty, has not one, but a great number of things provided to entertain it. But then the soul is not to lose itself in this maze and labyrinth of delight ; it is not by this variety to be diverted from that one infinite good, who eminently contains in himself all the various kinds and degrees of true joy.—*Henry Grove, 1683—1737-8.*

Verse 12.—" *Rejoice . . . and give thanks.*" Two things are to be observed : One, that he unites joy in the Lord and praise of God. Rightly : for it is not possible

for a man to praise the Lord truly and from the soul, unless he rejoices in him. Another, that he connects the praise of God with the remembrance of his holiness. And with good reason: for it is the chief use of divine praise, that by the exercise thereof, we should keep fresh in our souls the remembrance of God and of all the blessings received from him. Thus this verse contains the root and fruit of divine praise. The root is joy in God; the fruit is the remembrance of God and his goodness.—*Musculus*.

Verse 12.—"Ye righteous . . . all ye that are upright in heart." Some may say the *just* or the *righteous* man may thus rejoice; but where are any such? "Who can say," saith Solomon, "I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin"? No; "There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not." A vain thing may it seem then to exhort men to rejoice, when the condition annexed is such as excludeth all from rejoicing. To what end is it to incite the *just* to rejoice when there are none such that may rejoice? The answer is ready at hand in the latter part of the verse. By *just* are meant all such as are "*upright in heart*," which clause is added partly to exclude the hypocrite, and partly to temper and qualify the rigour of the term before used, if it were strictly and exactly taken. So that it is a note as well of *extent*, as of *restraint*.

1. Of *restraint*, to exclude from this joy, and all right therein, all dissemblers, all counterfeit Christians, all hollow-hearted hypocrites, that repent in the face but not in the heart; that make a sour face that they may seem to fast, saith our Saviour, that justify themselves in the sight of men, but God seeth their hearts what they are, and seeth them to be far other than either they should be, or they pretend themselves to be.

2. Of *extent*, to extend and enlarge this joy, the ground of it and the right to it, to all that are single and sincere-hearted; and so to give and afford a share and a portion in it as well to those that are sincerely righteous on earth, as to those that are perfectly righteous in heaven. It is as a *key* to let in the one. It is as a *bolt* to bar out the other.—*Thomas Galaker*.

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—The sovereignty of God a theme for joy in many respects and to many persons, especially when exhibited in the reign of grace.

Verses 3—6.—The accompaniments of Christ's gospel advent. I. The fire of his Spirit. II. The light of the word. III. The commotion in the world. IV. The removal of obstacles. V. The display of the divine glory.

Verses 4, 5.—I. The terrors which accompanied the giving of the law: "his lightnings," etc. II. The reasons for those terrors. I. To show the guilt of man. 2. His inability to keep the law. 3. To show his need of a law-fulfiller on his behalf.—*G. R.*

Verses 4—6.—A description of the giving of the law. I. The lawgiver's heralds, or, *conviction*, ver. 4. II. The effect of his presence, or, *contrition*, ver. 5. III. The proclamation of the law, or, *instruction* (as by a voice from heaven, ver. 6). IV. The effect of the lawgiving, or, *divine manifestation* (ver. 6, latter clause).—*C. D.*

Verse 5.—The presence of God in the church her invincible power.

Verse 6.—The confusion of heart which will ensue from idolatrous worship, even if it be only spiritual. Breaking of the idol, disappointment in it, injury by it, removal from it, etc.

Verse 8.—I. The world is terrified at the divine judgments. II. The church rejoices in them, "Zion heard," etc.; or, I. When the world is glad the church is sad. II. When the world is sad the church is glad.—*G. R.*

Verse 10.—I. What you do now:—"Love the Lord." Reciprocally, personally, supremely, habitually, progressively. II. What you must do:—"Hate evil." Evil working, evil writing, evil speaking, evil thinking; renounce evil, master it, supplant it.—*W. J.*

Verse 10.—I. The distinguishing peculiarity of the people of God: "Ye that love the Lord." II. Its manifestation: "Hate evil." III. Its reward: "The Lord preserveth," etc.; "He delivereth," etc.—*G. R.*

Verses 10, 11.—David notes in God three characteristics of a true friend: First, with fidelity and good will he keepeth the souls of the pious. Secondly, with his power and majesty he delivereth them from their enemies. Thirdly, with his wisdom and holiness he enlightens and refreshes them.—*Le Blanc.*

Verse 11.—*I. Where is it sown?* The answer to this will come under the following heads, viz. In the purpose of God, In the purchase of Christ, In the office of the Spirit, In the promises of the Word, In the work of Grace wrought in the heart, and, In the preparations made above in glory. *II. When is the season of reaping?* And to this, the answer is, The season of reaping the first fruits, of reaping in part, is at certain times in the present life; the season of reaping more fully is at death; and of reaping most fully and perfectly commenceth at the day of judgment and is continued throughout eternity. 1. The season of reaping in part falls out at some times within the course of this present life. Particularly (1) Times of affliction have been to the upright, seasons of reaping the joy sown. By this they have been prepared for sufferings, supported under them, and made afterwards to forget their sorrows, by reason of the gladness breaking in from the affecting discovery of what God has done for them, and wrought in them. Thus God causeth light to arise in darkness, and in a rainy day refresheth them with a beam from heaven, brightening the drops that fall; brings his people into the wilderness, and there speaks comfortably unto them. (2.) Seasons of suffering for the sake of Christ and the gospel, have been seasons wherein the upright have begun to reap the joy sown. When called to resist unto blood, striving against sin, they have need of more than ordinary comfort, to enable them to meet, and hold firm through the fiery trial: and they have found that then encouragement hath been yielded them in a degree they never before experienced (John xvi. 33). (3.) Seasons wherein God has called the righteous to great and difficult service, have been seasons of reaping the beginnings of joys sown. When their heavenly Father has lifted up the light of his countenance upon them, and shed abroad the sense of his love within them, they are prepared to go whither he sends them, and to do whatever he bids them. (4.) After sore conflicts with Satan, the upright have been revived by the springing of the joy sown. After Christ was tempted came an angel to comfort him. And for the encouragement of his followers, he declares, Rev. ii. 17, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." (5.) In waiting upon God in the sanctuary the upright have met with him, and so have had the beginnings of joy sown. 2. A fuller reaping time will be at death; with some as the soul is going; but with all immediately after its release from the body. 3. The season in which the righteous shall reap their joy sown, to the full, and in perfection, shall be at the last day. Then Christ shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe, and lead them all in a body, and all of them perfected, into that presence of God, where there is fulness of joy, and where there are pleasures for evermore.—*Daniel Wilcox.*

Verse 12.—"Give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness." Be thankful for—1. Its unsullied perfection. 2. Its wondrous forbearance. 3. Its place in our salvation. 4. Its approachableness through Christ. 5. Its predicted triumphs.—*W. J.*

Verse 12.—*I.* A remembrance at which the world does not give thanks. *II.* Reasons which make it a matter of thanksgiving with the righteous. Its bearing on the way of salvation; on the doctrines of the gospel; on the law of the Christian life.—*C. D.*