

PSALM CXLVII.

SUBJECT.—*This is a specially remarkable song. In it the greatness and the condescending goodness of the Lord are celebrated. The God of Israel is set forth in his peculiarity of glory as caring for the sorrowing, the insignificant, and forgotten. The poet finds a singular joy in extolling one who is so singularly gracious. It is a Psalm of the city and of the field, of the first and the second creations, of the commonwealth and of the church. It is good and pleasant throughout.*

DIVISION.—*The song appears to divide itself into three portions. From 1 to 6, Jehovah is extolled for building up Zion, and blessing his mourners; from 7 to 11, the like praise is given because of his provision for the lowly, and his pleasure in them; and then, from 12 to 20, he is magnified for his work on behalf of his people, and the power of his word in nature and in grace. Let it be studied with joyful gratitude.*

EXPOSITION.

PRAISE ye the LORD: for *it is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant; and praise is comely.*

2 The LORD doth build up Jerusalem: he gathereth together the outcasts of Israel.

3 He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.

4 He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by *their* names.

5 Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite.

6 The LORD lifteth up the meek: he casteth the wicked down to the ground.

1. "*Praise ye the LORD,*" or Hallelujah. The flow of the broad river of the Book of Psalms ends in a cataract of praise. The present Psalm begins and ends with Hallelujah. Jehovah and happy praise should ever be associated in the mind of a believer. Jove was dreaded, but Jehovah is beloved. To one and all of the true seed of Israel the Psalmist acts as choir-master, and cries, "*Praise ye the Lord.*" Such an exhortation may fitly be addressed to all those who owe anything to the favour of God; and which of us does not? Pay him we cannot, but praise him we will, not only now, but for ever. "*For it is good to sing praises unto our God.*" It is good because it is right; good because it is acceptable with God, beneficial to ourselves, and stimulating to our fellows. The goodness of an exercise is good argument with good men for its continual practice. Singing the divine praises is the best possible use of speech: it speaks of God, for God, and to God, and it does this in a joyful and reverent manner. Singing in the heart is good, but singing with heart and voice is better, for it allows others to join with us. Jehovah is *our* God, our covenant God, therefore let him have the homage of our praise; and he is so gracious and happy a God that our praise may best be expressed in joyful song.

"*For it is pleasant; and praise is comely.*" It is pleasant and proper, sweet and suitable to laud the Lord Most High. It is refreshing to the taste of the truly refined mind, and it is agreeable to the eye of the pure in heart: it is delightful both to hear and to see a whole assembly praising the Lord. These are arguments for song-service which men who love true piety, real pleasure, and strict propriety will not despise. Please to praise, for praise is pleasant: praise the Lord in the beauty of holiness, for praise is comely. Where duty and delight, benefit and beauty unite, we ought not to be backward. Let each reader feel that he and his family ought to constitute a choir for the daily celebration of the praises of the Lord.

2. "*The LORD doth build up Jerusalem.*" God appears both in the material and spiritual world as a Builder and Maker, and therein he is to be praised. His grace, wisdom, and power are all seen in the formation and establishment of the chosen seat of his worship; once a city with material walls, but now a church

composed of spiritual stones. The Jews rejoiced in the uprising of their capital from its ruins, and we triumph in the growth of the church from among a godless world. "*He gathereth together the outcasts of Israel*"; and thus he repairs the waste places, and causes the former desolations to be inhabited. This sentence may relate to Nehemiah and those who returned with him; but there is no reason why it should not with equal fitness be referred to David, who, with his friends, was once an outcast, but ere long became the means of building up Jerusalem. In any case, the Psalmist ascribes to Jehovah all the blessings enjoyed; the restoration of the city and the restoration of the banished he equally traces to the divine hand. How clearly these ancient believers saw the Lord present, working among them and for them! Spiritually we see the hand of God in the edification of the church, and in the ingathering of sinners. What are men under conviction of sin but outcasts from God, from holiness, from heaven, and even from hope? Who could gather them from their dispersions, and make citizens of them in Christ Jesus save the Lord our God? This deed of love and power he is constantly performing. Therefore let the song begin at Jerusalem our home, and let every living stone in the spiritual city echo the strain; for it is the Lord who has brought again his banished ones, and builded them together in Zion.

3. "*He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.*" This the Holy Spirit mentions as a part of the glory of God, and a reason for our declaring his praise: the Lord is not only a Builder, but a Healer; he restores broken hearts as well as broken walls. The kings of the earth think to be great through their loftiness; but Jehovah becomes really so by his condescension. Behold, the Most High has to do with the sick and the sorry, with the wretched and the wounded! He walks the hospitals as the good Physician! His deep sympathy with mourners is a special mark of his goodness. Few will associate with the despondent, but Jehovah chooses their company, and abides with them till he has healed them by his comforts. He deigns to handle and heal broken hearts: he himself lays on the ointment of grace, and the soft bandages of love, and thus binds up the bleeding wounds of those convinced of sin. This is compassion like a God. Well may those praise him to whom he has acted so gracious a part. The Lord is always healing and binding: this is no new work to him, he has done it of old; and it is not a thing of the past of which he is now weary, for he is still healing and still binding, as the original hath it. Come, broken hearts, come to the Physician who never fails to heal: uncover your wounds to him who so tenderly binds them up!

4. "*He telleth the number of the stars.*" None but he can count the mighty host, but as he made them and sustains them he can number them. To Jehovah stars are as mere coins, which the merchant tells as he puts them into his bag. "*He calleth them all by their names.*" He has an intimate acquaintance with each separate orb, so as to know its name or character. Indeed, he gives to each its appropriate title, because he knows its constitution and nature. Vast as these stars are, they are perfectly obedient to his bidding; even as soldiers to a captain who calls their names, and allots them their stations. Do they not rise, and set, and move, or stand, precisely according to his order? What a change is here from the preceding verse! Read the two without a break, and feel the full force of the contrast. From stars to sighs is a deep descent! From worlds to wounds is a distance which only infinite compassion can bridge. Yet he who acts a surgeon's part with wounded hearts, marshals the heavenly host, and reads the muster-roll of suns and their majestic systems. O Lord, it is good to praise thee as ruling the stars, but it is pleasant to adore thee as healing the broken in heart!

5. "*Great is our Lord.*" Our Lord and King is great—magnanimous, infinite, inconceivably glorious. None can describe his majesty, or reckon up the number of his excellences. "*And of great power.*" Doing as he wills, and willing to do mighty deeds. His acts reveal something of his might, but the mass of his power is hidden, for all things are possible with God, even the things impossible with men. "*His understanding is infinite.*" There is no fathoming his wisdom, or measuring his knowledge. He is infinite in existence, in power, and in knowledge, as these three phrases plainly teach us. The gods of the heathen are nothing, but our God filleth all things. And yet how condescending! For this is he who so tenderly nurses the sick souls, and waits to be gracious to sinful men. He brings his boundless power and infinite understanding to bear upon human distress for its assuagement and sanctification. For all these reasons let his praise be great: even could it be infinite, it would not exceed his due. In the building of his church and the salvation of

souls, his greatness, power, and wisdom are all displayed : let him be extolled because of each of these attributes.

6. "*The LORD lifteth up the meek : he casteth the wicked down to the ground.*" He reverses the evil order of things. The meek are down, and he lifts them up ; the wicked are exalted, and he hurls them down to the dust. The Lord loves those who are reverent to himself, humble in their own eyes, and gentle to their fellow-men : these he lifts up to hope, to peace, to power, to eternal honour. When God lifts a man, it is a lift indeed. Proud men are, in their own esteem, high enough already ; only those who are low will care to be lifted up, and only such will Jehovah upraise. As for the wicked, they must come down from their seats of vain glory. God is accustomed to overthrow such ; it is his way and habit. None of the wicked shall in the end escape. To the earth they must go ; for from the earth they came, and for the earth they live. It is one of the glories of our God for which his saints praise him, that he hath put down the mighty from their seats, and hath exalted them of low degree. Well may the righteous be lifted up in spirit and the wicked be downcast as they think of the judgments of the Lord God.

In this verse we see the practical outcome of that character of Jehovah, which leads him to count and call the stars as if they were little things, while he deals tenderly with sorrowful men, as if they were precious in his esteem. He is so great that nothing is great to him, and he is so condescending that nothing is little to him : his infinite majesty thus naturally brings low the lofty and exalts the lowly.

7 Sing unto the LORD with thanksgiving ; sing praise upon the harp unto our God :

8 Who covereth the heaven with clouds, who prepareth rain for the earth, who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains.

9 He giveth to the beast his food, *and* to the young ravens which cry.

10 He delighteth not in the strength of the horse : he taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man.

11 The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.

7. In this paragraph the contrast announced in the former section is enlarged upon from another point of view, namely, as it is seen in nature and in providence.

"*Sing unto the LORD with thanksgiving ;*" or rather, "respond to Jehovah." He speaks to us in his works, let us answer him with our thanks. All that he does is gracious, every movement of his hand is goodness ; therefore let our hearts reply with gratitude, and our lips with song. Our lives should be responses to divine love. Jehovah is ever engaged in giving, let us respond with thanksgiving.

"*Sing praise upon the harp unto our God.*" Blend music with song. Under a dispensation of ritual the use of music was most commendable, and suitable in the great congregation : those of us who judge it to be less desirable for public worship, under a spiritual economy, because it has led to so many abuses, nevertheless rejoice in it in our privacy, and are by no means insensible to its charms. It seems a profanation that choice minstrelsy should so often be devoted to unworthy themes : the sweetest harmonies should be consecrated to the honour of the Lord. He is *our* God, and this fact is one choice joy of the song. We have chosen him because he has chosen us ; and we see in him peculiarities which distinguish him from all the pretended deities of those among whom we dwell. He is *our* God in covenant relationship for ever and ever, and to him be praise in every possible form.

8. "*Who covereth the heaven with clouds.*" He works in all things, above as well as below. Clouds are not caused by accident, but produced by God himself, and made to assume degrees of density by which the blue firmament is hidden. A sky-scape might seem to be a mere fortuitous concourse of vapours, but it is not so : the Great Artist's hand thus covers the canvas of the heavens. "*Who prepareth rain for the earth.*" The Lord prepares clouds with a view to rain, and rain with an eye to the fields below. By many concurrent circumstances all things are made ready for the production of a shower ; there is more of art in the formation of a rain-cloud and in the fashioning of a rain-drop, than appears to superficial observers. God is in the vapour, and in the pearly drop which is born of it. "*Who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains.*" By the far-reaching shower he produces vegetation where the hand of man is all unknown. He cares not only for Goshen's fertile plains,

but for Carmel's steep ascents. God makes the heavens the servants of the earth, and the clouds the irrigators of the mountain meadows. This is a kind of evolution about which there can be no dispute. Nor does the Lord forget the waste and desolate places, but causes the lone hills to be the first partakers of his refreshing visitations. This is after the manner of our God. He not only causes rain to descend from the heavens to water the grass, and thus unites the skies and the herbs by a ministry of mercy; but he also thinks of the rocky ledges among the hills, and forgets not the pastures of the wilderness. What a God is this!

"Passing by the rich and great,
For the poor and desolate."

9. "*He giveth to the beast his food.*" By causing the grass to grow on the hills the Lord feeds the cattle. God careth for the brute creation. Men tread grass under foot as though it were nothing, but God causeth it to grow; too often men treat their cattle with cruelty, but the Lord himself feedeth them. The great God is too good, and, indeed, too great to overlook things that are despised. Say not, "Doth God care for oxen?" Indeed he does, and he permits himself to be here described as giving them their food as husbandmen are wont to do. "*And to the young ravens which cry.*" These wild creatures, which seem to be of no use to man; are they therefore worthless? By no means; they fill their place in the economy of nature. When they are mere fledgelings, and can only clamour to the parent birds for food, the Lord does not suffer them to starve, but supplies their needs. Is it not wonderful how such numbers of little birds are fed! A bird in a cage under human care is in more danger of lacking seed and water than any one of the myriads that fly in the open heavens, with no owner but their Creator, and no provider but the Lord. Greatness occupied with little things makes up a chief feature of this Psalm. Ought we not all to feel special joy in praising One who is so specially remarkable for his care of the needy and the forgotten? Ought we not also to trust in the Lord? for he who feeds the sons of the raven will surely nourish the sons of God! Hallelujah to him who both feeds the ravens and rules the stars! What a God art thou, O Jehovah!

10. "*He delighteth not in the strength of the horse.*" Not to great and strong animals doth the Creator in any measure direct his special thought; but in lesser living things he has equal pleasure. If man could act the Creator's part, he would take peculiar delight in producing noble quadrupeds like horses, whose strength and speed would reflect honour upon their maker; but Jehovah has no such feeling; he cares as much for helpless birds in the nest as for the war-horse in the pride of its power. "*He taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man.*" These are the athlete's glory, but God hath no pleasure in them. Not the capacities of the creature, but rather its weakness and necessity, win the regard of our God. Monarchs trust in their cavalry and infantry; but the King of kings exults not in the hosts of his creatures as though they could lend power to him. Physical or material greatness and power are of no account with Jehovah; he has respect to other and more precious qualities. Men who boast in fight the valour of gigantic might, will not find themselves the favourites of God: though earthly princes may feast their eyes upon their Joabs and their Abners, their Abishais and Asahels, the Lord of hosts has no pleasure in mere bone and muscle. Sinews and thews are of small account, either in horses or in men, with Him who is a spirit, and delights most in spiritual things. The expression of the text may be viewed as including all creature power, even of a mental or moral kind. God does not take pleasure in us because of our attainments, or potentialities: he respects character rather than capacity.

11. "*The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.*" While the bodily powers give no content to God, spiritual qualities are his delight. He cares most for those emotions which centre in himself: the fear which he approves is fear of him, and the hope which he accepts is hope in his mercy. It is a striking thought that God should not only be at peace with some kinds of men, but even find a solace and a joy in their company. Oh! the matchless condescension of the Lord, that his greatness should take pleasure in the insignificant creatures of his hand. Who are these favoured men in whom Jehovah takes pleasure? Some of them are the least in his family, who have never risen beyond hoping and fearing. Others of them are more fully developed, but still they exhibit a blended character composed of fear and hope: they fear God with holy awe and filial reverence, and they also hope for forgiveness and blessedness because of the divine mercy. As a father takes pleasure in his own children, so doth the Lord solace himself in his own

beloved ones, whose marks of new birth are fear and hope. They fear, for they are sinners; they hope, for God is merciful. They fear him, for he is great; they hope in him, for he is good. Their fear sobers their hope; their hope brightens their fear: God takes pleasure in them both in their trembling and in their rejoicing.

Is there not rich cause for praise in this special feature of the divine character? After all, it is a poor nature which is delighted with brute force; it is a diviner thing to take pleasure in the holy character of those around us. As men may be known by the nature of the things which give them pleasure, so is the Lord known by the blessed fact that he taketh pleasure in the righteous, even though that righteousness is as yet in its initial stage of fear and hope.

12 Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem; praise thy God, O Zion.

13 For he hath strengthened the bars of thy gates; he hath blessed thy children within thee.

14 He maketh peace *in* thy borders, *and* filleth thee with the finest of the wheat.

15 He sendeth forth his commandment *upon* earth: his word runneth very swiftly.

16 He giveth snow like wool: he scattereth the hoarfrost like ashes.

17 He casteth forth his ice like morsels: who can stand before his cold?

18 He sendeth out his word, and melteth them: he causeth his wind to blow, *and* the waters flow.

19 He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel.

20 He hath not dealt so with any nation: *and as for his* judgments, they have not known them. Praise ye the LORD.

12. "*Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem; praise thy God, O Zion.*" How the poet insists upon praise; he cries *praise, praise*, as if it were the most important of all duties. A peculiar people should render peculiar praise. The city of peace should be the city of praise; and the temple of the covenant God should resound with his glories. If nowhere else, yet certainly in Zion there should be joyful adoration of Zion's God. Note, that we are to praise the Lord in our own houses in Jerusalem as well as in his own house in Zion. The holy city surrounds the holy hill, and both are dedicated to the holy God, therefore both should ring with hallelujahs.

13. "*For he hath strengthened the bars of thy gates.*" Her fortifications were finished, even to the fastenings of the gates, and God had made all sound and strong, even to her bolts and bars: thus her security against invading foes was guaranteed. This is no small mercy. Oh, that our churches were thus preserved from all false doctrine and unholy living! This must be the Lord's doing; and where he has wrought it his name is greatly to be praised. Modern libertines would tear down all gates and abolish all bars; but so do not we, because of the fear of the Lord. "*He hath blessed thy children within thee.*" Internal happiness is as truly the Lord's gift as external security. When the Lord blesses "*thy sons in the midst of thee,*" thou art, O Zion, filled with a happy, united, zealous, prosperous, holy people, who dwell in communion with God, and enter into the joy of their Lord. When God makes thy walls salvation thy gates must be praise. It would little avail to fortify a wretched, starving city; but when the walls are strengthened, it is a still greater joy to see that the inhabitants are blessed with all good gifts. How much our churches need a present and abiding benediction.

14. "*He maketh peace in thy borders.*" Even to the boundaries quiet extends; no enemies are wrangling with the borderers. If there is peace there, we may be sure that peace is everywhere. "When a man's ways please the Lord he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him." Peace is from the God of peace. Considering the differing constitutions, conditions, tastes, and opinions of men, it is a work of God when in large churches unbroken peace is found year after year; and it is an equal wonder if wordlings, instead of persecuting the godly, treat them with marked respect. He who builds Zion is also her Peace-maker, the Lord and Giver of peace. "*And filleth thee with the finest of the wheat.*" Peace is attended with plenty,—plenty of the best food, and of the best sort of that food. It is a great reason for thanksgiving when men's wants are so supplied that they are filled:

it takes much to fill some men : perhaps none ever are filled but the inhabitants of Zion ; and they are only to be filled by the Lord himself. Gospel truth is the finest of the wheat, and those are indeed blessed who are content to be filled therewith, and are not hungering after the husks of the world. Let those who are filled with heavenly food fill their mouths with heavenly praise.

15. "*He sendeth forth his commandment upon the earth.*" His messages fly throughout his dominions : upon earth his warrants are executed as well as in heaven. From his church his word goes forth ; from Zion he missions the nations with the word of life. "*His word runneth very swiftly*" : his purposes of love are speedily accomplished. Oriental monarchs laboured hard to establish rapid postal communication ; the desire, will, and command of the Lord flash in an instant from pole to pole, yea, from heaven to earth. We who dwell in the centre of the Lord's dominions may exceedingly rejoice that to the utmost extremity of the realm the divine commandment speeds with sure result, and is not hindered by distance or time. The Lord can deliver his people right speedily, or send them supplies immediately from his courts above. God's commands in nature and providence are flats against which no opposition is ever raised ; say, rather, to effect which all things rush onward with alacrity. The expressions in the text are so distinctly in the present that they are meant to teach us the present mission and efficiency of the word of the Lord, and thus to prompt us to present praise.

16. Here follow instances of the power of God upon the elements. "*He giveth snow like wool.*" As a gift he scatters the snow, which falls in flakes like fleecy wool. Snow falls softly, covers universally, and clothes warmly, even as wool covers the sheep. The most evident resemblance lies in the whiteness of the two substances ; but many other likenesses are to be seen by the observant eye. It is wise to see God in winter and in distress as well as in summer and prosperity. He who one day feeds us with the finest of the wheat, at another time robes us in snow : he is the same God in each case, and each form of his operation bestows a gift on men. "*He scattereth the hoarfrost like ashes.*" Here again the Psalmist sees God directly and personally at work. As ashes powder the earth when men are burning up the rank herbage ; and as when men cast ashes into the air they cause a singular sort of whiteness in the places where they fall, so also does the frost. The country people talk of a black frost and a white frost, and the same thing may be said of ashes, for they are both black and white. Moreover, excessive cold burns as effectually as great heat, and hence there is an inner as well as an outer likeness between hoarfrost and ashes. Let us praise the Lord who condescends to wing each flake of snow and scatter each particle of rime. Ours is no absent or inactive deity : he worketh all things, and is everywhere at home.

17. "*He casteth forth his ice like morsels.*" Such are the crumbs of hail which he casts forth, or the crusts of ice which he creates upon the waters. These morsels are his ice, and he casts them abroad. The two expressions indicate a very real presence of God in the phenomena of nature. "*Who can stand before his cold ?*" None can resist the utmost rigours of cold any more than they can bear the vehemence of heat. God's withdrawals of light are a darkness that may be felt, and his withdrawals of heat are a cold which is absolutely omnipotent. If the Lord, instead of revealing himself as a fire, should adopt the opposite manifestation of cold, he would, in either case, consume us should he put forth all his power. It is ours to submit to deprivations with patience, seeing the cold is his cold. That which God sends, whether it be heat or cold, no man can defy with impunity, but he is happy who bows before it with child-like submission. When we cannot stand before God we will gladly lie at his feet, or nestle under his wings.

18. "*He sendeth out his word, and melteth them.*" When the frost is sharpest, and the ice is hardest, the Lord intervenes ; and though he doth no more than send his word, yet the rocks of ice are dissolved at once, and the huge bergs begin to float into the southern seas. The phenomena of winter are not so abundant in Palestine as with us, yet they are witnessed sufficiently to cause the devout to bless God for the return of spring. At the will of God snow, hoar-frost, and ice disappear, and the time of the opening bud and the singing of birds has come. For this let us praise the Lord as we sun ourselves amid the spring flowers. "*He causeth his wind to blow, and the waters flow.*" The Lord is the great first cause of everything ; even the fickle, wandering winds are caused by him. Natural laws are in themselves mere inoperative rules, but the power emanates directly from the Ever-potent One. The soft gales from the south, which bring a general thaw, are from the Lord, as

were those wintry blasts which bound the streams in icy bonds. Simple but effectual are the methods of Jehovah in the natural world; equally so are those which he employs in the spiritual kingdom; for the breath of his Holy Spirit breathes upon frozen hearts, and streams of penitence and love gush forth at once.

Observe how these two sentences the word and the wind go together in nature. They attend each other in grace; the gospel and the Holy Spirit co-operate in salvation. The truth which the Spirit breathed into prophets and apostles he breathes into dead souls, and they are quickened into spiritual life.

19. "*He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel.*" He who is the Creator is also the Revealer. We are to praise the Lord above all things for his manifesting himself to us as he does not unto the world. Whatever part of his mind he discloses to us, whether it be a word of instruction, a statute of direction, or a judgment of government, we are bound to bless the Lord for it. He who causes summer to come in the place of winter has also removed the coldness and death from our hearts by the power of his word, and this is abundant cause for singing unto his name. As Jacob's seed of old were made to know the Lord, even so are we in these latter days; wherefore, let his name be magnified among us. By that knowledge Jacob is ennobled into Israel, and therefore let him who is made a prevailing prince in prayer be also a chief musician in praise. The elect people were bound to sing hallelujahs to their own God. Why were they so specially favoured if they did not, above all others, tell forth the glory of their God?

20. "*He hath not dealt so with any nation.*" Israel had clear and exclusive knowledge of God, while others were left in ignorance. Election is the loudest call for grateful adoration. "*And as for his judgments, they have not known them*"; or, "and judgments, they had not known them," as if not knowing the laws of God, they might be looked upon as having no laws at all worth mentioning. The nations were covered with darkness, and only Israel sat in the light. This was sovereign grace in its fullest noontide of power. "*Praise ye the Lord.*" When we have mentioned electing, distinguishing love, our praise can rise no higher, and therefore we close with one more hallelujah.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS.

Whole Psalm.—The whole Psalm is an invitation unto praising of God. Arguments therein are drawn, First, from God's *general goodness* to the world (verses 4, 8, 9, 16—18): Secondly, from his *special mercy* to his Church. 1. In *restoring* it out of a sad and broken condition (verses 2, 3). 2. In *confirming* it in a happy and prosperous estate, both temporal, in regard of strength, peace, and plenty (verses 12—14); and spiritual, in regard of his word, statutes, and judgments, made known unto them (verses 19, 20). Lastly, these mercies are all commended by the *manner* of bestowing them—*powerfully* and *swiftly*. He doth it by a word of command, and by a word of speed: "He sendeth forth his commandment upon earth: his word runneth very swiftly" (verse 15).

The temporal part of this happy estate, together with the manner of bestowing it, is herein described, but we must by no means exclude the spiritual meaning. And what can be wanting to a nation which is "strengthened" with walls, "blessed" with multitudes, hath "peace" in the border, "plenty" in the field, and, what is all in all, God in the sanctuary: God the bar of the "gate," the Father of the children, the crown of the "peace," the staff of the "plenty"? They have a "gate" restored, a "city" blessed, a "border" quieted, a "field" crowned, a "sanctuary" beautified with the oracles of God. What can be wanting to such a people, but a mouth filled, a heart enlarged, a spirit exalted in the praises of the Lord? "Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem; praise thy God, O Zion," etc. (verse 12).—*Edward Reynolds, in a Sermon entitled "Sion's Praises," 1657.*

Whole Psalm.—The God of Israel, what he has done, what he does, what he can do—this is the "*Hallelujah*" note of his song. So gladsome is the theme, that in verse 1 we find a contribution for it levied on Ps. xxxiii. 1, xcii. 1, and cxxxv. 3; each must furnish its quota of testimony to the desirableness of giving praise to such a God.—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

Verse 1.—"Praise ye the Lord." *Alleluia.* An expression in sound very similar to this seems to have been used by many nations, who can hardly be supposed to have borrowed it from the Jews. Is it impossible that this is one of the most ancient expressions of devotion? From the Greeks using $\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\upsilon\iota$ *l̄h*, as a solemn beginning and ending of their hymns to Apollo, it should seem that they knew it; it is said to have been heard among the Indians in America, and *Alla, Alla*, as the name of God, is used in great part of the East: also in composition. What might be the primitive stock which has furnished such spreading branches?—*Augustine Calmet*, 1672—1757.

Verse 1.—"It is good to sing praises unto our God." Singing is necessarily included and recognised in the praise of the Psalms. That the joyful should sing is as natural as that the afflicted should pray—rather more natural. Song as the expression of cheerfulness is something universal in human nature; there were always, both in Israel and among all other nations, songs of joy. Hence it is constantly mentioned in the prophets, by whom joyous singing is used as a frequent figure, even as they threaten that God will take away the song of the bridegroom and the bride, and so forth. The *singing* of men is in itself good and noble. The same God who furnished the birds of heaven with the notes wherein they unconsciously praise their Creator, gave to man the power to sing. We all know how highly Luther, for example, estimated the gift and the art of song. Let him to whom it is granted rejoice therein; let him who lacks it seek, if possible, to excite it; for it is a good gift of the Creator. Let our children learn to sing in the schools, even as they learn to read. Our fathers sang more in all the affairs of life than we do; our tunes are in this respect less fresh, and artless, and joyous. There are many among us who never sing, except when adding their voices to the voice of the church, —and therefore they sing so badly there. Not that a harsh song from a good heart is unacceptable to God; but he should have our best. As David in his day took care that there should be practised singers for the sanctuary, we should also make provision for the church's service of song, that God may have in all respects a perfect offering. How gracious and lovely is the congregation singing with the heart acceptable songs!—*Rudolf Stier*, in "*The Epistle of James Expounded*," 1859.

Verse 1.—The translation here is doubtful. It may either be rendered, "Praise the Lord for he is good," or, "for it (praise) is good." Why is it declared to be "*pleasant*" and "*comely*" to praise the Deity? Not only because if we glorify him he will also glorify us, but because he is so infinitely glorious that we are infinitely honoured simply in being reckoned worthy to worship One so great.—*John Lorinus*.

Verse 1.—"It is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant; and praise is comely." These points are worthy of careful consideration.

I. To praise God is "*good*" for divers reasons. 1. That is good which God commands (Mic. vi. 8). So that thanksgiving is no indifferent action, no will-worship, but it is *cultus institutus*, not to be neglected. 2. It raiseth the heart from earth to heaven; and being the work of angels and saints in heaven, joins us with that choir above. 3. It is good, again, because by it we pay, or at least acknowledge, a debt, and this is common justice. 4. Good, because for it we are like to receive a good and a great reward; for if he that prays to God is like to be rewarded (Matt. vi. 6), much more that man who sings praises to him; for in prayer we consult with our own necessities, in our praises we honour God, and bless him for his gifts.

II. To praise God is "*pleasant*." 1. Because it proceeds out of love; for nothing is more pleasant to him that loves, than to make sonnets in the praise of that party he loves. 2. Because it must needs please a man to perform that duty for which he was created; for to that end God created men and angels, that they should praise him. 3. Because God is delighted with it, as the sweetest sacrifice (Ps. I. 23). 4. It is pleasant to God, because he is delighted with those virtues which are in us,—faith, hope, charity, religion, devotion, humility, etc., of all which our praises are a manifestation and exercise.

III. To praise God is "*comely*"; for there is no greater stain than ingratitude; it is made up of a lie and injustice. There is, then, all the decency in the world in praise, and it is comely that a man be thankful to his God, who freely gives him all things,—*William Nicholson*.

Verse 1.—David, to persuade all men to thankfulness, saith, "*It is a good and pleasant thing*" to be thankful. If he had said no more but "*good*," all which

love goodness are bound to be thankful ; but when he saith not only "good," but "pleasant" too, all which love pleasure are bound to be thankful ; and therefore, as Peter's mother-in-law, so soon as Christ healed her of a fever, rose up immediately to minister unto him (Matt. viii. 15), so we, so soon as Christ hath done anything for us, should rise up immediately to serve him.—*Henry Smith.*

Verse 1.—There is no heaven, either in this world, or the world to come, for people who do not praise God. If you do not enter into the spirit and worship of heaven, how should the spirit and joy of heaven enter into you ? Selfishness makes long prayers, but love makes short prayers, that it may continue longer in praise.—*John Pulsford, 1857.*

Verse 1.—"Praise." There is one other thing which is a serious embarrassment to praising through the song-service of the Church, and that is, that we have so few hymns of praise. You will be surprised to hear me say so ; but you will be more surprised if you take a real specimen of praising and search for hymns of praise. You shall find any number of hymns that talk about praise, and exhort you to praise. There is no lack of hymns that say that God ought to be praised. But of hymns that praise, and say nothing about it, there are very few indeed. And for what there are we are almost wholly indebted to the old churches. Most of them came down to us from the Latin and Greek Churches . . . There is no place in human literature where you can find such praise as there is in the Psalms of David.—*Henry Ward Beecher.*

Verse 2.—"The Lord doth build up Jerusalem," etc. If this Psalm were written on occasion of the return from Babylon, and the rebuilding of the earthly city, the ideas are to be transferred, as in other Psalms of the same kind, to a more important restoration from a much worse captivity, and to the building up of the church under the gospel, when Christ "gathered together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad" (John xi. 52) ; that is, in the words of our Psalm, he "gathered together the outcasts of Israel." So shall he again, at the resurrection, "gather together his elect from the four winds" (Matt. xxiv. 31), and "build up a Jerusalem," in which they shall serve and praise him for ever.—*George Horne.*

Verse 2.—"The Lord doth build up Jerusalem," etc.

Jerusalem ! Jerusalem ! the blessing lingers yet
On the city of the chosen, where the Sabbath seal was set
And though her sons are scattered, and her daughters weep apart,
While desolation, like a pall, weighs down each faithful heart ;
As the plain beside the waters, as the cedar on the hills,
She shall rise in strength and beauty when the Lord Jehovah wills :
He has promised her protection, and the holy pledge is good,
'Tis whispered through the olive groves, and murmured by the flood,
As in the Sabbath stillness the Jordan's flow is heard,
And by the Sabbath breezes the hoary trees are stirred.

Mrs. Hale, in "The Rhyme of Life."

Verse 2.—"He gathereth together the outcasts of Israel." Wonder not that God calls together "the outcasts," and singles them out from every corner for a return ; why can he not do this, as well as "tell the number of the stars, and call them all by their names" ? There are none of his people so despicable in the eye of man, but they are known and regarded by God. Though they are clouded in the world, yet they are the stars of the world ; and shall God number the inanimate stars in the heavens, and make no account of his living stars on the earth ? No ; wherever they are dispersed, he will not forget them : however they are afflicted, he will not despise them. The stars are so numerous that they are innumerable by man ; some are visible and known by men, others lie more hid and undiscovered in a confused light, as those in the milky way ; a man cannot see one of them distinctly. God knows all his people. As he can do what is above the power of man to perform, so he understands what is above the skill of man to discover.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 2.—"He gathereth together the outcasts of Israel." David might well have written feelingly about the "outcasts," for he had himself been one ; and even from Jerusalem, in his age, when driven forth from thence by his unnatural son, he went up by the ascent of Olivet, weeping and barefooted, and other "outcasts" with him weeping also as they went.—*Barton Bouchier.*

Verse 3.—"He healeth the broken in heart," etc. Here are two things contained in this text; the *patients* and the *physician*. The patients are the broken in heart. The physician is Christ; it is he who bindeth up their wounds.

The patients here are felt and discerned to have two wounds or maladies; brokenness of heart, and woundedness: he binds up such. Brokenness of heart presupposeth a former wholeness of heart. Wholeness of heart is twofold; either wholeness of heart *in sin*, or wholeness of heart *from sin*. First, wholeness of heart *from sin* is when the heart is *without sin*; and so the blessed angels have whole hearts, and so Adam and Eve, and we in them, before the fall, had whole hearts. Secondly, wholeness of heart *in sin*; so the devils have whole hearts, and all men since the fall, from their conception till their conversion, have whole hearts; and these are they that our Saviour intends,—“The whole need not the physician, but they that are sick.”

Brokenness of heart may be considered two ways; first, *in relation to wholeness of heart in sin*: so brokenness of heart is not a malady, but the commencement of the cure of a desperate disease. Secondly, *in relation to wholeness of heart from sin*; and so it is a malady or sickness, and yet peculiar to one blood alone, namely, God's elect; for though the heart be made whole in its desire towards God, yet it is broken for its sins. As a man that hath a barbed arrow shot into his side, and the arrow is plucked out of the flesh, yet the wound is not presently healed; so sin may be plucked out of the heart, but the scar that was made with plucking it out is not yet cured. The wounds that are yet under cure are the plagues and troubles of conscience, the sighs and groans of a hungering soul after grace, the stinging poison that the serpent's fang hath left behind it; these are the wounds.

Now the heart is broken three ways. First, *by the law*; as it breaks the heart of a thief to hear the sentence of the law, that he must be hanged for his robbery; so it breaks the heart of the soul, sensibly to understand the sentence of the law,—Thou shalt not sin; if thou do, thou shalt be damned. If ever the heart come to be sensible of this sentence,—“Thou art a damned man,” it is impossible to stand out under it, but it must break. “Is not my word like a hammer, that breaketh the rock in pieces?” (Jer. xxiii. 29). Can any rock-heart hold out and not be broken with the blows of it? Indeed, thus far a man may be broken, and yet be a reprobate; for they shall all be thus broken in hell, and therefore this breaking is not enough.

Secondly, *by the Gospel*; for if ever the heart come to be sensible of the love of the Gospel, it will break all to shatters. “Render your heart; for the Lord is gracious,” etc.: Joel ii. 13. When all the shakes of God's mercy come, they all cry “Render.” Indeed, the heart cannot stand out against them, if it once feel them. Beat thy soul upon the gospel: if any way under heaven can break it, this is the way.

Thirdly, the heart is broken *by the skill of the minister* in the handling of these two, the law and the gospel: God furnisheth him with skill to press the law home, and gives him understanding how to put the gospel, and by this means doth God break the heart: for, alas, though the law be never so good a hammer, and although the gospel be never so fit an anvil, yet if the minister lay not the soul upon it the heart will not break: he must fetch a full stroke with the law, and he must set the full power of the gospel at the back of the soul, or else the heart will not break.

“He healeth the broken in heart.” Hence observe, that *Christ justifies and sanctifies*; for that is the meaning.

1. First, because *God hath given Christ grace to practise for the sake of the broken in heart*; and therefore if this be his grace, to heal the broken-hearted, certainly he will heal them. “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,” etc. He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted,” etc.: Luke iv. 18. If he be *created* master of this art, even for this purpose, to heal the broken in heart, he will verily heal them, and none but them. He is not like Hosander and Hippocrates, whose father appointed them both to be physicians: he appointed his son Hippocrates to be a physician of horses, yet he proved a physician for men; he appointed Hosander to be a physician for men, and he proved a physician for horses. Jesus is not like these; no, no; he will heal those whom he was appointed to heal.

2. Because *Christ hath undertaken to do it*. When a skilful physician hath undertaken a cure, he will surely do it: indeed, sometimes a good physician may fail, as Trajan's physician did, for he died under his hands; on whose tomb this was written, “Here lies Trajan the emperor, that may thank his physician that he died.” But if Christ undertake it, thou mayest be sure of it; for he tells thee that art broken in heart that he hath undertaken it, he hath felt thy pulse already. Isa. lviii. 15. He

doth not only undertake it, but he saith he will go *visit* his sick patient, he will come to thy bedside, yea, he will come and dwell with thee all the time of thy sickness ; thou shalt never want anything, but he will be ready to help thee : thou needest not complain and say, " Oh, the physician is too far off, he will not come at me." I dwell in the high places indeed, saith God, but yet I will come and dwell with thee that art of an humble spirit. Thou needest not fear, saying, " Will a man cure his enemies ? I have been an enemy to God's glory, and will he yet cure me ? " Yea, saith Christ, if thou be *broken in heart* I will bind thee up.

3. Thirdly, because *this is Christ's charge*, and he will look to his own calling : " The Lord hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted " (Isa. lxi. 1). . . . Neither needest thou fear thine own poverty, because thou hast not a fee to give him ; for thou mayest come to him by way of begging ; he will look to thee for nothing for, " To him will I look that is poor," etc. : Isa. lxxvi. 2.

4. Fourthly, *none but the broken in heart will take physic of Christ*. Now this is a physician's desire, that his patient would cast himself upon him ; if he will not, the physician hath no desire to meddle with him. Now none but the broken in heart will take such physic as Christ gives, and therefore he saith, " To him will I look that is of a broken heart, and trembles at my words " : Isa. lxxv. 2. When I bid him take such a purge, saith God, he trembles, and he takes it.—*William Fenner, in a Sermon entitled "The Sovereign Virtue of the Gospel,"* 1647.

Verse 3.—

O thou who dry'st the mourner's tear,
How dark this world would be,
If, when deceived and wounded here,
We could not fly to Thee !
The friends, who in our sunshine live,
When winter comes are flown ;
And he who has but tears to give
Must weep those tears alone.
But Thou wilt heal that broken heart,
Which, like the plants that throw
Their fragrance from the wounded part,
Breathes sweetness out of woe.

When joy no longer soothes or cheers,
And e'en the hope that threw
A moment's sparkle o'er our tears
Is dimmed and vanished too ;
Oh ! who would bear life's stormy doom,
Did not thy wing of love
Come, brightly wafting through the gloom
Our peace-branch from above ?
Then sorrow, touched by Thee, grows bright
With more than rapture's ray ;
As darkness shows us worlds of light
We never saw by day !

Thomas Moore, 1779—1852.

Verse 3.—"*He healeth the broken in heart.*" The broken in heart is one whose heart is affected with the evil of sin, and weeps bitter tears on account of it ; one who feels sorrow, shame, and anguish, on the review of his past sinful life, and his base rebellion against a righteous God. Such a one has a broken heart. His heart is broken at the sight of his own ingratitude—the despite done by him to the strivings of the Holy Spirit. His heart is broken when he considers the numberless invitations made to him in the Scriptures, all of which he has wickedly slighted and despised. His heart is broken at the recollection of a thousand kind providences to him and to his family, by day and by night, all sent by God, and intended for his moral, spiritual, and eternal benefit, but by him basely and wantonly abused. His heart is broken at the consideration of the love and compassion of the adorable Redeemer ; the humiliation of his birth ; the devotedness of his life ; the reproach, the indignity of his sufferings ; the ignominy and anguish of his death. His heart is broken when his conscience assures him that all this humiliation, this suffering, this death, was for him, who had so deliberately and repeatedly refused the grace which the blood and righteousness of Christ has purchased. It is the sight of Calvary that fills him with anguish of spirit, that overwhelms him with confusion and self-abasement. While he contemplates the amazing scene, he stands, he weeps, he

prays, he smites upon his breast, he exclaims, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" And adds, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

The broken in heart must further be understood as one who seeks help from God alone, and will not be comforted till he speaks peace to his soul.

The act of God, in the scripture before us, is the moral and spiritual health of man—of man, who had brought disease on himself—of man, by his own rebellion against his Creator—of man, who had, in ten thousand ways, provoked the justice of heaven, and deserved only indignation and eternal wrath—the health of man, whom, in an instant, he could hurl to utter destruction. The saving health here proposed is the removal of all guilt, however contracted, and of all pollution, however rooted. It is the communication of God's favour, the riches of his grace, the implantation of his righteousness.

To effect the healing of the broken heart, God has, moreover, appointed a Physician, whose skill is infallible, whose goodness and care are equal to his skill. That Physician is none other than the Son of God. In that character he has been made known to us. "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that be sick." The prophet Isaiah introduces his advent in the most sublime language: "He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound."

The health, the moral and spiritual soundness of the soul, my brethren, is derived from the atoning sacrifice of Christ. The grace of God flows to the broken in heart through his manhood, his godhead, his righteousness, his truth; through his patience, his humility, his death and passion; through his victory over sin, his resurrection, and ascension into heaven. Here, thou broken in heart, thou sorrowing, watching penitent; here is the medicine, here the Physician, here the cure, here the health thou art seeking.

The healing of the broken in heart must be further understood as effected through the agency of the Holy Spirit. It is done by the Spirit of God, that it may be done, and that it may be well done; and that all the praise, the glory of that which is done, may be ascribed to the plenitude, the freeness, the sovereignty of his grace. The Spirit of God, however, uses means. The means of grace are appointed expressly for this purpose; the blessing of health is there applied. There, under the sound of the everlasting gospel, while looking by faith to Christ, and appropriating his merits, he healeth the broken in heart. There, while commemorating the dying love of Christ, and applying its benefits by faith to the soul, he healeth the broken in heart. There, while the soul, sensible of his goodness, is offering up the song of praise, and trusting alone in his mercy, he healeth the broken in heart. There, while prostrate at his footstool, supplicating his grace, resting on his finished redemption, he healeth the broken in heart. In the private acts of devotion the Spirit of God also is near to bless and save. There, while reading and believing his holy Word, while meditating on its meaning; there, while in secret, solemn prayer, the soul takes hold on God in Christ Jesus; he healeth the broken in heart.—*Condensed from a Sermon by Thomas Blackley, 1826.*

Verse 3.—"He healeth the broken in heart." I do indeed most sincerely sympathise with you in this fresh sorrow. "Thy breaking waves pass over me." The trial, so much the heavier that it is not the first breaking in, but the waters continuing still, and continuing to rise, until deep calleth unto deep at the noise of God's water-spouts, "Yea, and thy billows all." In such circumstances we are greatly tempted to wonder if it be true, of the Holy One in the midst of us, that a bruised reed he will not break, that the smoking flax he will not quench. We may not, however, doubt it, nor even in the day of our grief and our desperate sorrow, are we at liberty to call it in question. Our God is the God of the broken heart. The deeper such a heart is smitten, and the more it bleeds, the more precious it is in his sight, the nearer he draws to it, the longer he stays there. "I dwell with him who is of a contrite heart." The more abundantly will he manifest the kindness and the glory of his power, in tenderly carrying it in his bosom, and at last binding up its painful wounds. "He healeth the broken in heart." "O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires." Weeping Naomi said, "Call me Mara, for the Lord hath dealt very bitterly with me." Afterwards, happy Naomi took the child of her own Ruth, and laid it in her bosom, and sweetly found that the days of her mourning were ended.

My dear friend, this new gash of deep sorrow was prepared for you by the Ancient of Days. His Son—and that Son is love—watched over the counsels of old, to keep and to perform them to the minutest circumstance.—*John Jameson, 1838.*

Verse 4.—“*He telleth the number of the stars,*” etc. In which similitude he showeth, that albeit Abraham could not comprehend the multitude of the children, either of his faith or of his flesh, more than he could count the number of the stars; yet the Lord knoweth every believer by name, as he knoweth every star and can call everyone by its name.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 4.—“*He telleth the number of the stars,*” etc. Among the heathen every constellation represented some God. But the Scriptures show Jehovah, not as one of many starry gods, but as the one God of all the stars. He is, too, as he taught his people by Abraham, the God of a firmament of nobler stars. His people are scattered and trodden as the sands of the sea-shore. But he turns dust and dirt to stars of glory. He will make of every saint a star, and Heaven is his people’s sky, where broken-hearted sufferers of earth are glorified into glittering galaxies.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 4.—“*He calleth them all by their names.*” Literally, “*calleth names to all of them,*” an expression marking not only God’s power in marshalling them all as a host (Isa. xl. 26), but also the most intimate knowledge and watchful care, as that of a shepherd for his flock. John x. 3.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 4.—“*He calleth them all by their names.*” They render a due obedience to him, as servants to their master. When he singles them out and calls them by name to do some official service, he calls them out to their several offices, as the general of an army appoints the station of every regiment in a battalion; or, “*he calls them by name,*” i.e. he imposeth names upon them, a sign of dominion, the giving names to the inferior creatures being the first act of Adam’s derivative dominion over them. These are under the sovereignty of God. The stars by their influences fight against Sisera (Jud. v. 20); and the sun holds in its reins, and stands stone-still to light Joshua to a complete victory: Josh. x. 12. They are all marshalled in their ranks to receive his word of command, and fight in close order, as being desirous to have a share in the ruin of the enemies of their sovereign.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 4.—The immense distance at which the nearest stars are known to be placed, proves that they are bodies of a prodigious size, not inferior to our own sun, and that they shine, not by reflected rays, but by their own native light. But bodies encircled with such refulgent splendour, would be of little use in Jehovah’s empire, unless surrounding worlds were cheered by their benign influence, and enlightened by their beams. Every star is therefore concluded to be a sun surrounded by planetary globes. Nearly a thousand of these luminaries may be seen in a clear winter’s night by the naked eye. But these do not form the eighty-thousandth part of what may be descried by the help of telescopes. While Dr. Herschel was exploring the most crowded part of the milky way, in one quarter of an hour’s time no less than 116,000 stars passed through the field of view of his telescope. It has been computed, that nearly one hundred millions of stars might be perceived by our most perfect instruments, if all the regions of the sky were thoroughly explored. But immeasurable regions of space lie beyond the utmost boundaries of human vision, even thus assisted, into which imagination itself can scarcely penetrate, but which are doubtless filled with operations of divine wisdom and divine omnipotence.—*Thomas Dick, in “The Christian Philosopher.”*

Verse 5.—“*His understanding is infinite.*” Hebrew: “*Of his understanding there is no number.*” God is incomprehensible. In *place*; in *time*; in *understanding*; in *love*. First, in *place*; because no place, no space, can be imagined so great, but God exceeds it, and may be found beyond it. Secondly, in *time*; because he exceeds all time: for he was before all time that can be conceived, and shall be after all time. Time is a created thing, to attend upon the creation and continuance of all things created and continued by God. Thirdly, in *understanding*; because no created understanding can comprehend him so that nothing of God may be hid from it. Fourthly, in *love*; because God doth exceed all love; no creature can love God according to his worth. All these ways of incomprehensibility follow upon his infiniteness.—*Thomas Larkham in “The Attributes of God Unfolded, and Applied,”* —1656.

Verse 5.—"His understanding is infinite." The Divine wisdom is said to be "without number"; that is, the objects of which this wisdom of God can take cognisance are innumerable.—*Simon de Muis.*

Verse 5.—In this verse we have three of God's attributes, his greatness, his power, and his knowledge; and though only the last of these be expressly said to be *infinite*, yet is the same implied also of the two former; for all the perfections of God being essential to him, must need be infinite as he himself is; and therefore what is affirmed of one must, by a parity of reason, be extended to the rest.—*John Conant, 1608—1693.*

Verse 6.—"The LORD lifteth up the meek," etc. The meek need not envy the lofty who sweep the earth with their gay robes, any more than real royalty is jealous of the kingly hero who struts his hour upon the stage. They shall be princes and rulers long after these actors have laid aside their tinsel crowns.

How wonderful shall be the reversal when God shall place the last first and the first last! Moralists have often pointed us to the ruler of a hundred broad kingdoms lying down at last in six feet of imprisoning clay; but God shall show us the wayside cottager lifted into the inheritance of the universe.—*Evangelical Magazine.*

Verses 7—9.—God creates, and then fails not to supply. Analogically, the Lord buildeth Jerusalem, and provides for the wants of the inhabitants: by spiritual inference, the saints argue that Christ establishes his church and gives all the gracious gifts which are needed in that institution.—*John Lorinus.*

Verses 8, 9.—"Mountains . . . ravens." Wonderful Providence which takes cognisance of the mountainous and the minute alike. The All-Provider descends from august and sublime heights to save the meanest creature from starvation—extending constant care to the wants of even those abject little objects, the young ravens, Heb. "the sons of the raven."—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 8.—"Clouds . . . rain . . . grass." There is a mutual dependence and subordination between all second causes. The creatures are serviceable to one another by mutual ministries and supplies; the earth is cherished by the heat of the heavens, moistened by the water, and by the temperament of both made fruitful; and so sendeth forth innumerable plants for the comfort and use of living creatures, and living creatures are for the supply of man. It is wonderful to consider the subordination of all causes, and the proportion they bear to one another. The heavens work upon the elements, the elements upon the earth, and the earth yieldeth fruits for the use of man. The prophet taketh notice of this admirable gradation: "I will hear the heavens, and the heavens shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and the corn, and the wine, and the oil, shall hear Jezreel" (Hosea ii. 21, 22). We look to the fields for the supplies of corn, wine, and oil; but they can do nothing without clouds, and the clouds can do nothing without God. The creatures are beholden to one another, and all to God. In the order of the world there is an excellent chain of causes, by which all things hang together, that so they may lead up the soul to the Lord.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 8.—"Who prepareth rain?" The rain-cloud parts with its contents only when God commands it, and as he commands, whether in the soft gentle shower or in the drenching downpour that floods the fields and obstructs the labours of the husbandman.—*Thomas Robinson, in "Homiletical Commentary on the Book of Job," 1876.*

Verse 8.—"Who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains." The wild grasses are taken, as it were, under the special providence of God. In the perennial verdure in regions above the zone of man's cultivation, we have a perpetual proof of God's care of the lower animals that neither sow nor reap. The mountain grasses grow spontaneously; they require no culture but such as the rain and the sunshine of heaven supply. They obtain their nourishment directly from the inorganic soil, and are independent of organic materials. Nowhere is the grass so green and vigorous as on the beautiful slopes of lawn-like pasture high up in the Alps, radiant with the glory of wild flowers, and ever musical with the hum of grasshoppers, and the tinkling of cattle-bells. Innumerable cows and goats browse upon them; the peasants spend their summer months in making cheese and hay from them for winter

consumption in the valleys. This exhausting system of husbandry has been carried on during untold centuries; no one thinks of manuring the Alpine pastures; and yet no deficiency has been observed in their fertility, though the soil is but a thin covering spread over the naked rocks. It may be regarded as a part of the same wise and gracious arrangement of Providence, that the insects which devour the grasses on the *Kuh* and *Schaf Alpen*, the pasturages of the cows and sheep, are kept in check by a predominance of carnivorous insects. In all the mountain meadows it has been ascertained that the species of carnivorous are at least four times as numerous as the species of herb-eating insects. Thus, in the absence of birds, which are rare in Switzerland, the pastures are preserved from a terrible scourge. To one not aware of this check, it may seem surprising how the verdure of the Alpine pastures should be so rich and luxuriant considering the immense development of insect life. The grass, whenever the sun shines, is literally covered with them—butterflies of gayest hues, and beetles of brightest iridescence; and the air is filled with their loud murmurs. I remember well the vivid feeling of God's gracious providence, which possessed me when passing over the beautiful Wengern Alp at the foot of the Jungfrau, and seeing, wherever I rested on the green turf, alive with its tiny inhabitants, the balance of nature so wonderfully preserved between the herb which is for man's food and the moth before which he is crushed. Were the herbivorous insects allowed to multiply to their full extent, in such favourable circumstances as the warmth of the air and the verdure of the earth in Switzerland produce, the rich pastures which now yield abundant food for upwards of a million and a half of cattle would speedily become bare and leafless deserts. Nor only in their power of growing without cultivation, but also in the peculiarities of their structure, the mountain grasses proclaim the hand of God. Many of them are viviparous. Instead of producing flowers and seed, as the grasses in the tranquil valleys do, the young plants spring from them perfectly formed. They cling round the stem and form a kind of blossom. In this state they remain until the parent stalk withers and falls prostrate on the ground, when they immediately strike root and form independent grasses. This is a remarkable adaptation to circumstances; for it is manifest that were seeds instead of living plants developed in the ears of the mountain grasses, they would be useless in the stormy regions where they grow. They would be blown away far from the places they were intended to clothe, to spots foreign to their nature and habits, and thus the species would speedily perish.

The more we think of it, the more we are struck with the wise foresight which suggested the creative fiat, "Let the earth bring forth grass." It is the most abundant and the most generally diffused of all vegetation. It suits almost every soil and climate.—*Hugh Macmillan*, in "*Bible Teachings in Nature*," 1868.

Verses 8, 9.—The Hebrews had no notion of what we denominate "secondary laws," but believed that God acted directly upon matter, and was the immediate, efficient cause of the solemn order, and the varied and wonderful phenomena of nature. Dispensing thus with the whole machinery of cause and effect, as we employ those terms in philosophical language, their minds were brought into immediate contact with God in his manifold works, and this gave, both to devotion and the spirit of poetry, the liveliest inspiration and the freest scope of action. Heaven and earth were governed by his commands; the thunder was his "voice," the lightning his "arrows." It is he who "causeth the vapour to ascend from the ends of the earth." When the famished city should call upon the corn, the wine, and the oil, and those should call upon the earth for nourishment, and the parched earth should call upon the heavens for moisture, and the heavens should call upon the Lord for permission to refresh the earth, then Jehovah would hear and supply. He gave the rain, and he sent the drought and famine. The clouds were not looked upon merely as sustained by a law of specific gravity, but God spread them out in the sky; these clouds were God's chariot, the curtains of his pavilion, the dust of his feet. Snow and hail were fearful manifestations of God, often sent as the messengers of his wrath.—*F. G. Hubbard*, in "*Bate's Encyclopædia*," 1865.

Verses 8, 9.—God by his special providence prepares "food" for those who have no other care taken for them. "Beasts" that live among men are by men taken care of; they enrich the ground with manure, and till the ground; and that brings forth corn for the use of these cattle as well as men. But the *wild beasts* that live upon the *mountains*, and in woods and desert places, are fed only from the heavens: the "rain" that from thence distills enricheth those dry hills and "*maketh grass to grow*" there, which else would not, and so God giveth to these *wild beasts* their

food after the same manner of Divine Providence as in the end of the verse he is said to provide for the "young ravens."—Henry Hammond.

Verse 9.—"The young ravens cry." The strange stories told by Jewish and Arabian writers, on the raven's cruelty to its young, in driving them out of their nests before they are quite able to provide for themselves, are entirely without foundation, as no bird is more careful of its young ones than the raven. To its habit of flying restlessly about in search of food to satisfy its own appetite and that of its young ones, may perhaps be traced the reason of its being selected by the sacred writers as an especial object of God's protecting care.—W. Houghton, in "The Bible Educator."

Verse 9.—"The young ravens cry." While still unfledged the young ravens have a strange habit of falling out of their nests, and flapping their wings heavily to the ground. Next morning they are found by the shepherds sitting croaking on the ground beneath their former homes, and are then captured and taken away with comparative ease.—J. G. Wood, in "The Illustrated Natural History," 1869.

Verse 9.—"The young ravens cry." The evening proceedings and manœuvres of the rooks are curious and amusing in the autumn. Just before dusk they return in long strings from the foraging of the day, and rendezvous by thousands over Selbourne-down, where they wheel round in the air, and sport and dive in a playful manner, all the while exerting their voices, and making a loud cawing, which, being blended and softened by the distance that we at the village are below them, becomes a confused noise or chiding; or rather a pleasing murmur, very engaging to the imagination, and not unlike the cry of a pack of hounds in hollow, echoing woods, or the rushing of the wind in tall trees, or the tumbling of the tide upon a pebbly shore. When this ceremony is over, with the last gleam of day, they retire for the night to the deep beechen woods of Tisted and Ropley. We remember a little girl, who, as she was going to bed used to remark on such an occurrence, in the true spirit of physico-theology, that the rooks were saying their prayers, and yet this child was much too young to be aware that the Scriptures had said of the Deity that "He feedeth the ravens that call upon him."—Gilbert White (1720—1793), in "The Natural History of Selbourne."

Verse 9.—

Behold, and look away your low despair;
See the light tenants of the barren air:
To them, nor stores, nor granaries belong,
Nought but the woodlands and the pleasing song;
Yet, your kind heavenly Father bends his eye
On the least wing that flits along the sky.
To him they sing when Spring renews the plain;
To him they cry in Winter's pinching reign;
Nor is the music, nor their plaint, in vain,
He hears the gay, and the distressful call,
And with unsparing bounty fills them all.
Will he not care for you, ye faithless, say?
Is he unwise? Or, are ye less than they?

James Thomson, 1700—1748.

Verse 9.—It is related of Edward Taylor, the sailor-preacher of Boston, that on the Sunday before he was to sail for Europe, he was entreating the Lord to care well for his church during his absence. All at once he stopped, and ejaculated, "What have I done? Distrust the Providence of heaven! A God that gives a whale a ton of herrings for a breakfast, will he not care for my children?" and then went on, closing his prayer in a more confiding manner.—From "Eccentric Preachers," by C. H. S.

Verse 10.—The two clauses of this verse are probably intended to describe cavalry and infantry, as forming the military strength of nations. It is not to those who trust in such resources that Jehovah shows favour, but to those who rely on his protection (verse 11).—Annotated Paragraph Bible.

Verses 10, 11.—When a sinner is brought upon his knees, and becomes a suppliant, when as he is laid low by affliction, so he lieth low in prayer and supplication, then the Lord will be favourable to him, and show his delight in him. "The Lord delighteth not in the strength of the horse; he taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man." No man

is favoured by God because of his outward favour, because he hath a beautiful face, or strong, clean limbs; yea, not only hath the Lord no pleasure in any man's legs, but not in any man's brains, how reaching soever, nor in any man's wit how quick soever, nor in any man's judgment how deep soever, nor in any man's tongue how eloquent or well spoken soever; but "*The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy,*" in those that walk humbly with him, and call upon him. . . All the beauties and rarities both of persons and things are dull and flat, yea, wearisome and loathsome to God, in comparison of a gracious, honest, humble soul. Princes have their favourites (Job. xxxiii. 26): they are favourable to some above many, either because they are beautiful and goodly persons, or because they are men of excellent speech, prudence and deportment. All godly men are God's favourites; he is favourable to them not only above many men in the world, but above all the men of this world, who have their portion in this life; and he therefore favours them, because they are the purchase of his Son and the workmanship of his Spirit, convincing them of, and humbling them for, their sins, as also creating them after God in righteousness and true holiness. Such shall be his favourites.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 11.—"Them that fear him, those that hope in his mercy." Patience and fear are the fences of hope. There is a beautiful relation between hope and fear. The two are linked in this verse. They are like the cork in a fisherman's net, which keeps it from sinking, and the lead, which prevents it from floating. Hope without fear is in danger of being too sanguine; fear without hope would soon become desponding.—*George Seaton Bowes, in "In Prospect of Sunday," 1880.*

Verse 11.—"Them that fear him, those that hope in his mercy." A sincere Christian is known by both these; a fear of God, or a constant obedience to his commands, and an affiance, trust, and dependence upon his mercies. Oh, how sweetly are both these coupled, a uniform, sincere obedience to him, and an unshaken, constant reliance on his mercy and goodness! The whole perfection of the Christian life is comprised in these two—believing God and fearing him, trusting in his mercy and fearing his name; the one maketh us careful in avoiding sin, the other diligent to follow after righteousness; the one is a bridle from sin and temptations, the other a spur to our duties. Fear is our curb, and hope our motive and encouragement; the one respects our duty, the other our comfort; the one allayeth the other. God is so to be feared, as also to be trusted; so to be trusted, as also to be feared; and as we must not suffer our fear to degenerate into legal bondage, but hope in his mercy, so our trust must not degenerate into carnal sloth and wantonness, but so hope in his word as to fear his name. Well, then, such as both believe in God and fear to offend him are the only men who are acceptable to God and his people. God will take pleasure in them, and they take pleasure in one another.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 11.—"Fear" and "Hope" are the great *vincula* of Old Testament theology, bracketing and including in their meaning all its ideas.—*Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 11.—*Fear* and *hope* are passions of the mind so contrary the one to the other, that with regard to the same object, it is strange they should meet in the same laudable character; yet here we see they do so, and it is the praise of the same persons, that they both fear God, and hope in him. Whence we may gather this doctrine: That in every concern that lies upon our hearts, we should still endeavour to keep the balance even between hope and fear.

We know how much the health of the body depends upon a due temperament of the humours, such as preserves any one from being predominant above the rest; and how much the safety and peace of the nations result from a due balance of trade and power, that no one grow too great for its neighbours; and so necessary is it to the health and welfare of our souls, that there be a due proportion maintained between their powers and passions, and that the one may always be a check upon the other, to keep it from running into extremes; as in these affections mentioned in the text. A holy fear of God must be check upon our hope, to keep that from swelling into presumption; and a pious hope in God must be a check upon our fear, to keep that from sinking into despondency. This balance must, I say, by a wise and steady hand, be kept even in every concern that lies upon our hearts, and that we have thoughts about. I shall enumerate those that are of the greatest importance. We must keep up both hope and fear. 1. As to the concerns of our souls, and our spiritual and eternal state. 2. As to our outward concerns, relating

to the body and the life that now is. 3. As to the public concerns of the church of God, and our own land and nation.

In reference to each of these, we must always study and strive to support that affection, whether it be hope or fear, which the present temper of our minds and circumstances of our case make necessary to preserve us from an extreme.—*Matthew Henry*.

Verse 12.—That all Creation must involuntarily praise the Lord, and that the primary duty of conscious intelligence is the willing praise of the same Deity, are the two *axioms* of the Psalmist's theology. He has in the first part of this Psalm been stating the first, and now he is about to announce the second.—*Martin Geier*.

Verse 13.—“*He hath strengthened the bars of thy gates.*”—Blessed is the city whose gates God barreth up with his power, and openeth again with his mercy. There is nothing can defend where his justice will strike; and there is nothing can offend where his goodness will preserve.—*Thomas Adams*.

Verses 13, 14.—The Psalmist recites four arguments from which he would have Zion sing praises. 1. Security and defence. 2. Benediction. 3. Peace. 4. Sustenance or provision.

1. *Security.* Jerusalem is a city secure, being defended by God: “*For he hath strengthened the bars of thy gates.*” Gates and bars do well to a city, but then only is the city secure when God makes them strong. The true munition of a city is God's defence of it. Arms, laws, wealth, etc., are the bars, but God must put strength into them.

2. *Benediction.* Jerusalem is a happy city, for “*he hath blessed thy children within thee,*” thy kings, princes, magistrates, etc., with wisdom, piety, etc.

3. *Peace.* Jerusalem is a peaceable city. “*He maketh peace in thy borders,*” the very name intimates so much; for Jerusalem interpreted is *visio pacis*—Vision of peace.

4. *Abundance.* Jerusalem is a city provided by God with necessary food and provision; for “*He filleth thee with the finest of the wheat.*”—*William Nicholson*.

Verse 14.—“*He maketh peace in thy borders,*” etc. There is a political peace—peace in city and country; this is the fairest flower of a Prince's crown; peace is the best blessing of a nation. It is well with bees when there is a noise; but it is best with Christians when, as in the building of the Temple, there is no noise of hammer heard. Peace brings plenty along with it; how many miles would some go on pilgrimage to purchase this peace! Therefore the Greeks made Peace to be the nurse of Pluto, the God of wealth. Political plants thrive best in the sunshine of peace. “*He maketh peace in thy borders, and filleth thee with the finest of the wheat.*” The ancients made the harp the emblem of peace: how sweet would the sounding of this harp be after the roaring of the cannon! All should study to promote this political peace. The godly man, when he dies, “enters into peace” (Isa. lvii. 2); but while he lives, peace must enter into him.—*Thomas Watson*.

Verse 14.—“*He maketh peace.*” The Hebrews observe that all the letters in the name of God are *literæ quiescentes*, letters of rest. God only is the centre where the soul may find rest: God only can speak peace to the conscience.—*John Stoughton*, —1639.

Verse 14.—“*Finest of the wheat.*” If men give much it is in cheap and coarse commodity. Quantity and quality are only possible with human production *in inverse ratio*; but the Lord gives the *most* and *best* of all supplies to his pensioners. How truly the believer under the gospel knows the inner spirit of the meaning here! The Lord Jesus Christ says, “My peace I give unto you.” And when he sets us at rest and all is reconciliation and peace, then he feeds us with *himself*—his body, the finest wheat, and his blood, the richest wine.—*Johannes Paulus Palanterius*.

Verse 15.—“*His word runneth very swiftly.*” There is not a moment between the shooting out of the arrow and the fastening of it in the mark; both are done in the very same atom and point of time. Therefore we read in the Scripture of the immediate effects of the word of Christ. Saith he to the leprous man, “Be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed”: Matt. viii. 3. And to the blind man, “Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight”: Mark x. 52. No arrow makes so immediate an impression

in the mark aimed at as the arrow of Christ's word. No sooner doth Christ say to the soul, Be enlightened, be quickened, be comforted, but the work is done.—*Ralph Robinson.*

Verse 16.—"He giveth snow like wool." There are three things considerable in snow, for which it is compared to wool. First, for the *whiteness* of it. Snow is white as wool; snow is so exceeding white that the whiteness of a soul cleansed by pardoning grace, in the blood of Christ, is likened unto it (Isa. i. 18); and the latter part of the same verse intimates that the whiteness of snow bears resemblance to that of wool. The whiteness of snow is caused by the abundance of air and spirits that are in that pellucid body, as the naturalists speak. Any thing that is of a watery substance, being frozen or much wrought upon by cold, appears more white; and hence it is that all persons inhabiting cold climates or countries, are of a whiter complexion than they who inhabit hot. Secondly, snow is like wool for *softness*, 'tis pliable to the hand as a lock or fleece of wool. Thirdly, snow is like wool (which may seem strange) with respect to the *warmness* of it. Though snow be cold in itself, yet it is to the earth as wool, or as a woollen cloth or blanket that keeps the body warm. Snow is not warm formally, yet it is warm effectively and virtually; and therefore is it compared to wool.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 16.—"Like wool." Namely, curled and tufted, and as white as the snow in those countries. Isa. i. 18, Rev. i. 14.—*John Diodati.*

Verse 16.—"Snow like wool." The ancients used to call snow *επιουδες υδωρ*, *woolly water* (Eustathius, in Dionys. Perieget. p. 91). Martial gives it the name of *densum vellus aquarum*, a *thick fleece of waters* (Epigram. l. iv. Ep. 3). Aristophanes calls clouds, *flying fleeces of wool* (Nubes, p. 146). Pliny calls it *the froth of the celestial waters* (Nat. His. lib. xvii. cap. 2).—*Samuel Burder.*

Verse 16.—"He giveth snow like wool." In Palestine snow is not the characteristic feature of winter as it is in northern latitudes. It is merely an occasional phenomenon. Showers of it fall now and then in severer seasons on the loftier parts of the land, and whiten for a day or two the vineyards and cornfields: but it melts from the green earth as rapidly as its sister vapours vanish from the blue sky. . . . But the Psalmist seized the occasional snow, as he seized the fleeting vapour, and made it a text of his spiritual meditations. Let us follow his example.

"He giveth snow like wool," says the Psalmist. This comparison expressly indicates one of the most important purposes which the snow serves in the economy of nature. It covers the earth like a blanket during that period of winter sleep which is necessary to recruit its exhausted energies, and prepare it for fresh efforts in the spring; and being, like wool, a bad conductor, it conserves the latent heat of the soil, and protects the dormant life of plant and animal hid under it from the frosty rigour of the outside air. Winter-sown wheat, when defended by this covering, whose under surface seldom falls much below 32° Fahr., can thrive even though the temperature of the air above may be many degrees below the freezing-point. Our country, enjoying an equable climate, seldom requires this protection; but in northern climates, where the winter is severe and prolonged, its beneficial effects are most marked. The scanty vegetation which blooms with such sudden and marvellous loveliness in the height of summer, in the Arctic regions and on mountain summits, would perish utterly were it not for the protection of the snow that lies on it for three quarters of a year.

But it is not only to Alpine plants and hibernating animals that God gives snow like wool. The Esquimaux take advantage of its curious protective property, and ingeniously build their winter huts of blocks of hardened snow; thus, strangely enough, by a homoeopathic law, protecting themselves against cold by the effects of cold. The Arctic navigator has been often indebted to walls of snow banked up around his ship for the comparative comfort of his winter quarters, when the temperature without has fallen so low that even chloric ether became solid. And many a precious life has been saved by the timely shelter which the snow-storm itself has provided against its own violence. But while snow thus warms in cold regions, it also cools in warm regions. It sends down from the white summits of equatorial mountains its cool breath to revive and brace the drooping life of lands sweltering under a tropic sun; and from its lofty, inexhaustible reservoirs it feeds perennial rivers that water the plains when all the wells and streams are white and silent in the baking heat. Without the perpetual snow of mountain regions the earth would be reduced to a lifeless desert.

And not only does the Alpine snow thus keep always full rivers that water the plains, but, by its grinding force as it presses down the mountains, it removes particles from the rocks, which are carried off by the rivers and spread over the plains. Such is the origin of a large part of the level land of Europe. It has been formed out of the ruins of the mountains by the action of snow. It was by the snow of far-off ages that our valleys and lake-basins were scooped out, the form of our landscapes sculptured and rounded, and the soil formed in which we grow our harvests. Who would think of such a connection? And yet it is true! Just as each season we owe the bloom and brightness of our summer fields to the gloom and blight of winter, so do we owe the present summer beauty of the world to the great secular winter of the glacial period. And does not God bring about results as striking by agencies apparently as contradictory in the human world? He who warms the tender latent life of the flowers by the snow, and moulds the quiet beauty of the summer landscape, by the desolating glacier, makes the cold of adversity to cherish the life of the soul, and to round into spiritual loveliness the harshness and roughness of a carnal, selfish nature. Many a profitable Christian life owes its fairness and fruitfulness to causes which wrecked and wasted it for a time. God giveth snow like wool; and chill and blighting as is the touch of sorrow, it has a protective influence which guards against greater evils; it sculpts the spiritual landscape within into forms of beauty and grace, and deepens and fertilises the soil of the heart, so that in it may grow from God's own planting the peaceable fruits of righteousness.

And now let us look at the Giver of the snow. "*He giveth snow like wool.*" "The snow-flake," as Professor Tyndall strikingly says, "leads back to the sun"—so intimately related are all things to each other in this wonderful universe. It leads further and higher still—even to him who is our sun and shield, the light and heat of all creation. The whole vast realm of winter, with its strange phenomena, is but the breath of God—the Creative Word—as it were, congealed against the blue transparency of space, like the marvellous frost-work on a window-pane. The Psalmist had not the shadow of a doubt that God formed and sent the annual miracle of snow, as he had formed and sent the daily miracle of manna in the desert. It was a common-place thing; it was a natural, ordinary occurrence; but it had the Divine sign upon it, and it showed forth the glory and goodness of God as strikingly as the most wonderful supernatural event in his nation's history. When God would impress Job with a sense of his power, it was not to some of his miraculous, but to some of his ordinary works that he appealed. And when the Psalmist would praise God for the preservation of Israel and the restoration of Jerusalem—as he does in the Psalm from which my subject is taken—it is not to the wonderful, miraculous events with which the history of Israel abounded that he directs attention, but to the common events of Providence and the ordinary appearances and processes of nature. He cannot think enough of the Omnipotent Creator and Ruler of the Universe entering into familiar relations with his people, and condescending to their humblest wants. It is the same God that "giveth snow like wool," who "shows his word unto Jacob, and his statutes and commandments unto Israel." And the wonder of the peculiarity is enhanced by thoughts borrowed from the wonders of nature. We know a thousand times more of the nature, formation, and purpose of the snow than the Psalmist did. But that knowledge is dearly earned if our science destroys our faith. What amount or precision of scientific knowledge can compensate us for the loss of the spiritual sensibility, which in all the wonders and beauties of the Creation brings us into personal contact with an infinitely wise mind and an infinitely loving heart?—*Hugh Macmillan, in "Two Worlds are Ours," 1880.*

Verse 16.—"Snow." It is worth pausing to think what wonderful work is going on in the atmosphere during the formation and descent of every snow shower; what building power is brought into play! and how imperfect seem the productions of human minds and hands when compared with those formed by the blind forces of nature! But who ventures to call the forces of nature blind? In reality, when we speak thus, we are describing our own condition. The blindness is ours; and what we really ought to say, and to confess, is that our powers are absolutely unable to comprehend either the origin or the end of the operations of nature.—*John Tyndall, in "The Forms of Water," 1872.*

Verses 16, 17.—The Lord takes the ice and frost and cold to be his; it is not only *his sun*, but *his ice*, and *his frost*: "he scattereth *his hoar frost* like ashes." The frost is compared to ashes in a threefold respect. First, because the hoarfrost

gives a little interruption to the sight. If you scatter ashes into the air, it darkens the light, so doth the hoar frost. Secondly, the hoary frost is like ashes because near in colour to ashes. Thirdly, 'tis like, because there is a kind of burning in it: frost burns the tender buds and blossoms, it nips them and dries them up. The hoar frost hath its denomination in the Latin tongue from *burning*, and it differs but very little from that word which is commonly used in Latin for a coal of fire. The cold frost hath a kind of scorching in it, as well as the hot sun. Unseasonable frosts in the spring scorch the tender fruits, which bad effect of frost is usually expressed by *carbunculation* or *blasting*.—*Joseph Caryl*.

Verse 17.—“*He casteth forth his ice like morsels.*” Or, *shivers of bread*. It is a worthy saying of one from this text,—The ice is bread, the rain is drink, the snow is wool, the frost a fire to the earth, causing it inwardly to glow with heat; teaching us what to do for God’s poor.—*John Trapp*.

Verse 17.—“*He casteth forth his ice like morsels.*” The word here translated “*morsels*,” means, in most of the places where it occurs in the Bible, *pieces of bread*, exactly the LXX. $\psi\omega\mu\alpha\iota\sigma$; for this very ice, this wintry cold, is profitable to the earth, to fit it for bearing future harvests, and thus it matures the *morsels of bread* which man will yet win from the soil in due season.—*Genebrardus, in Neale and Littledale*.

Verse 17.—“*Morsels.*” Or, *crumbs*. Gen. xviii. 5; Judges xix. 5. Doubtless the allusion is to hail.—*A. S. Aglen*.

Verse 17.—“It is extremely severe,” said his sister to Archbishop Leighton one day, speaking of the season. The good man only said in reply, “But thou, O God, hast made summer and winter.”—*From J. N. Pearson’s Life of Archbishop Leighton, 1830*.

Verse 18.—“*He sendeth out his word, and melteth them.*” Israel in the captivity had been ice-bound, like ships of Arctic voyagers in the Polar Sea; but God sent forth the vernal breeze of his love, and the water flowed, the ice melted, and they were released. God turned their captivity, and, their icy chains being melted by the solar beams of God’s mercy, they flowed in fresh and buoyant streams, like “rivers of the south,” shining in the sun. See Ps. cxxvi. 4.

So it was on the day of Pentecost. The winter of spiritual captivity was thawed and dissolved by the soft breath of the Holy Ghost, and the earth laughed and bloomed with spring-tide flowers of faith, love, and joy.—*Christopher Wordsworth*.

Verse 19.—Here we see God in compassion bending down, in order to communicate to the deeply fallen son of man something of a blessed secret, of which without his special enlightenment, the eye would never have seen anything, nor the ear ever have heard.—*J. J. Van Oosterzee, on “The Image of Christ.”*

Verses 19, 20.—If the publication of the law by the ministry of angels to the Israelites were such a privilege that it is reckoned their peculiar treasure—“*He hath shewed his statutes unto Israel; he hath not dealt so with any nation*”—what is the revelation of the gospel by the Son of God himself? For although the law is obscured and defaced since the fall, yet there are some ingrafted notions of it in human nature; but there is not the least suspicion of the gospel. The law discovers our misery, but the gospel alone shows the way to be delivered from it. If an advantage so great and so precious doth not touch our hearts; and, in possessing it with joy, if we are not sensible of the engagements the Father of mercies hath laid upon us; we shall be the ungratefullest wretches in the world.—*William Bates*.

Verses 19, 20.—That some should have more means of knowing the Creator, others less, it is all from the mercy and will of God. His church hath a privilege and an advantage above other nations in the world; the Jews had this favour above the heathens, and Christians above the Jews; and no other reason can be assigned but his eternal love.—*Thomas Manton*.

Verse 20.—“*He hath not dealt so with any nation . . . Praise ye the Lord.*” The sweet Psalmist of Israel, a man skillful in praises, doth begin and end this Psalm with *Hallelujah*. In the body of the Psalm he doth set forth the mercy of God, both towards all *creatures* in general in his common providence, and towards his *church* in particular. So in this close of the Psalm: “He sheweth his word unto Jacob, and his statutes to Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation.” In the original 'tis, “He hath not dealt so with *every nation* : ” that is, with *any nation*.

In the text you may observe a *position* and a *conclusion*. A *position*; and that is, that God deals in a singular way of mercy with his people above all other people. And then the *conclusion*: "*Praise ye the Lord.*" Doctrine. That God deals in a singular way of mercy with his people, and therefore expects singular praises from his people.—*Joseph Alleine* (1663—1668), in "*A Thanksgiving Sermon.*"

Verse 20.—See the wonderful goodness of God, who besides the light of nature, has committed to us the sacred Scriptures. The heathen are enveloped in ignorance. "*As for his judgments, they have not known them.*" They have the oracles of the Sybils, but not the writings of Moses and the apostles. How many live in the region of death, where the bright star of Scripture has never appeared! We have the blessed Book of God to resolve all our doubts, and to point out a way of life to us. "*Lord, how is it thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?*"—*John xiv. 22.*—*Thomas Watson.*

HINTS TO PREACHERS.

Verse 1.—Praise. Its profit, pleasure, and propriety.—*J. F.*

Verse 1.—The Reasonable Service. I. The methods of praise: by word, song, life; individually, socially. II. The offerers of praise: "ye." III. The object of praise: "the Lord, our God." IV. The reasons for praise: it is "good," "pleasant," "becoming."—*C. A. D.*

Verses 1—3.—I. The Privilege of Praising God. 1. It is good. 2. Pleasant. 3. Becoming. II. The Duty of Praising God. 1. For gathering a church for himself among men: "The Lord doth build up Jerusalem." 2. For the materials of which it is composed: "The outcasts," etc. 3. For the preparation of those materials for his purpose: "He healeth," etc., verse 3.—*G. R.*

Verse 2.—The Lord is Architect, Builder, Sustainer, Restorer, and Owner of the Church. In each relation let him be praised.

Verse 2.—The Great Gatherer. I. Strange persons sought for. II. Special search and means made use of. III. Selected centre to which he brings them. IV. Singular exhibition of them for ever and ever in heaven.

Verse 2.—First the church built and then the sinners gathered into it. A prosperous state of the church within necessary to her increase from without.

Verse 2.—See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 1302: "Good Cheer for Outcasts."

Verse 2.—Upbuilding and In gathering. I. The church may be in a fallen condition. II. Its upbuilding is the Lord's work. III. He accomplishes it by gathering together its outcast citizens.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 3.—See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 53: "Healing for the Wounded."

Verse 3.—God a true physician, and a tender nurse.—*J. F.*

Verses 3, 4.—Heaven's Brilliants, and Earth's Broken Hearts. I. The Proprietor of the Stars with the Wounded. The stars left kingless for broken hearts. Jehovah! with lint and liniment and a woman's hand. Who binds together the stars, shall bind firmly grieved hearts. II. The Gentle Heart-healer with the Stars. Be all power entrusted to such tenderness. Its comely splendour. God guides the stars with an eye on wounded hearts. The hopefulness of prayer. III. Hearts, Stars, and Eternity. Some hearts shall "shine as the stars." Some stars shall expire in "blackness of darkness." God's hand and eye are everywhere making justice certain. Trust and sing.—*W. B. H.*

Verses 3, 4.—God's Compassion and Power. I. Striking diversity of God's cares: "hearts" and "stars." II. Wonderful variety of God's operations. Gently caring for human hearts. Preserving the order, regularity, and stability of creation. III. Blessed results of God's work. Broken hearts healed; wounds bound up. Light, harmony, and beauty in the heavens. IV. Mighty encouragement to trust in God. God takes care of the universe; may I not entrust my life, my soul, to him? Where he rules unquestioned there is light and harmony; let me not resist his will in my life.—*C. A. D.*

Verse 5.—A contemplation of God's greatness. I. Great in his essential nature. II. Great in power. III. Great in wisdom. Let us draw inferences concerning the insignificance of man, &c.

Verse 6.—Reversal. I. In the estimate of the world the meek are cast down

and the wicked lifted up. II. In the judgment of heaven the meek are lifted up and the wicked cast down. III. The judgment of heaven will, in the end, be found the true one.—C. A. D.

Verse 7.—The use and benefit of singing.

Verse 8.—God in all. The unity of his plan ; the co-operation of divine forces ; the condescending mercy of the result.

Verse 9.—See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 672 : "The Ravens' Cry."

Verse 11.—The singularity of our God, and of his favour. For which he is to be praised. I. *The objects of that favour distinguished.* 1. From physical strength. 2. From mental vigour. 3. From self-reliance. 4. From mere capacity for service. II. *The objects of that favour described.* 1. By emotions relating to God. 2. By the weakest forms of spiritual life. 3. By the highest degrees of it ; for the maturest saint fears and hopes. 4. By the sacred blend of it. Fear of our guilt, hope of his mercy. Fear of self, confidence in God. Hope of perseverance, fear of sinning. Hope of heaven, fear of coming short. Hope of perfection, mourning defects. III. *The blessing of that favour implied.* 1. God loves to think of them. 2. To be with them. 3. To minister to them. 4. To meet them in their fears and their hopes. 5. To reward them for ever.

Verse 11.—He takes pleasure in their persons, emotions, desires, devotions, hopes, and characters.—W. W.

Verse 12.—I. The Lord whom we praise. II. His praise in our houses—Jerusalem. III. Our praise in his house—Zion.

Verse 13.—A Strong Church. I. The utility and value of a strong church. II. The marks which distinguish it. 1. Gates well kept. 2. Increase of membership. 3. The converts blessed to others. III. The important care of a strong church : to trace all blessing to Zion's God.—W. B. H.

Verses 14, 15.—See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 425 : "Peace at Home, and Prosperity Abroad."

Verses 14, 15.—Church blessings. I. Peace. II. Food. III. Missionary energy. IV. The presence of God : the source of all blessing.

Verse 15 (*second clause*).—See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 1607 : "The Swiftly Running Word."

Verse 16.—The unexpected results of adversity : snow acting as wool.

Verses 16—18.—See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 670 : "Frost and Thaw."

Verse 19.—I. God's people. II. God's Word. III. God's revelation to the soul. IV. God's praise for this special revelation.

Verse 20.—Electing Grace inspires the Heart with Praise. I. God's love has chosen us. Hallelujah. II. God has entrusted us with his truth. Hallelujah. III. God has made us almoners of his bounty. Hallelujah. IV. God through us is to save the world. Hallelujah.—W. B. H.