

When God of Old Came Down from Heav'n

John Keble, 1827.

Thomas Est, 1592.

When God of old came down from Heav'n,
In power and wrath He came;
Before His feet the clouds were riven,
Half darkness and half flame:

Around the trembling mountain's base
The prostrate people lay;
A day of wrath, and not of grace;
A dim and dreadful day.

But when He came the second time,
He came in power and love;
Softer than gale at morning prime
Hovered His holy Dove.

The fires that rushed on Sinai down
In sudden torrents dread,
Now gently light, a glorious crown,
On every sainted head.

Like arrows went those lightnings forth
Winged with the sinner's doom,
But these, like tongues, o'er all the earth
Proclaiming life to come:

And as on Israel's awe-struck ear
The voice exceeding loud,
The trump, that angels quake to hear,
Thrilled from the deep, dark cloud;

So, when the Spirit of our God
Came down His flock to find,
A voice from Heaven was heard abroad,
A rushing, mighty wind.

Nor doth the outward ear alone
At that high warning start;
Conscience gives back th' appalling tone;
'Tis echoed in the heart

It fills the Church of God; it fills
The sinful world around;
Only in stubborn hearts and wills
No place for it is found.

To other strains our souls are set:
A giddy whirl of sin
Fills ear and brain, and will not let
Heaven's harmonies come in.

Come Lord, come wisdom, love and power,
Open our ears to hear;
Let us not miss th' accepted hour;
Save, Lord, by love or fear.