CALVIN'S COMMENTARIES

COMMENTARY ON HABAKKUK • ZEPHANIAH HAGGAI • ZECHARIAH • MALACHI

JOHN CALVIN

SOLI DEO GLORIA

Commentary on Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi

John Calvin

Translated from the original Latin
by the Rev. John Owen

Monergism Books

Commentary on Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi

John Calvin

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Translator's Preface to Habakkuk, Zephaniah, and Haggai

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

The present Volume, though it contains the Works of These Prophets, is yet considerably smaller in size than the preceding Volumes; but the last will more than compensate for this deficiency.

The two first Prophets, Habakkuk and Zephaniah, lived before the Captivity; and the other, Haggai began his prophetic office about sixteen years after the return of the great body of the people from Babylon by the permission given them by King Cyrus.

It is commonly thought that Habbakuk prophesied *after* Zephaniah, though placed before him in our Bibles. The reign of Jehoiakin is assigned as his age, about 608 years before Christ, while Zephaniah performed his office in the reign of Josiah, about 30 years earlier. Like the other prophets he is mainly engaged in reproving the extreme wickedness of the people, on account of which he denounces on them the judgments of God, while he gives occasional intimations of a better state of things, and affords some glimpses of the blessings of the gospel.

In the *first* Chapter he begins with a complaint as to the oppression which he witnessed, foretells the dreadful invasion of the Chaldeans, describes the severity which would be exercised by them, and appeals to God on the subject. In the *second* he waits for an answer, receives it, and predicts the downfal of the Chaldeans, and refers to blessings in reserve for God's people. The *third* contains what is called the "Prayer of Habakkuk," an ode of a singular character, in which he briefly describes, for the encouragement of the faithful, the past interpositions of God on behalf of his people, and concludes

with expressing a full and joyful confidence in God, notwithstanding' the evils which were coming on the nation.

"The style of Habakkuk," Says Bishop *Lowth,* "is poetical, especially in his Ode, which may justly be deemed one of the most complete of its kind." [1] And in *describing* the character of this ode he says—"The Prophet indeed embellishes the whole of this poem with a magnificence equal to its commencement, selecting from so great an abundance of wonderful events the grandest, and setting them forth in the most splendid dress, by images and figures, and the most elevated diction; the high sublimity of which he augments and *enhances* by the *elegance* of a *remarkable conclusion:* so that hardly any thing of this kind would be more beautiful or more perfect than this poem, were it not for one or two spots of obscurity which are to be found in it, occasioned, as it seems, by its ancientness." [2]

Zephaniah was in part contemporary with Jeremiah, that is, during the former portion of the reign of Josiah. He foretells the Fall Of Nineveh, (Zephaniah 2:13,) and mentions "the remnant of Baal," (Zephaniah 1:4,) two things which prove that he prophesied during the former half of that king's reign; for Nineveh was destroyed about the sixteenth year of his reign, and it was after that time that the worship of Baal was demolished by that king.

The sins of The Jews and their approaching judgments occupy *the first* Chapter. The *second* contains an exhortation to Repentance, encouraged by a promise of protection during the evils that God would bring on neighboring nations. In the *third* the Prophet particularizes the sins of Jerusalem, announces its punishment, and then refers to the future blessings which God would freely confer on His Church.

The style of Zephaniah has been represented as being in some parts prosaic; and *Lowth* says that "he seems to possess nothing remarkable or superior in the arrangement of his matter or in the elegance of his diction." [3] But it is *Henderson's* opinion that *"many* of the censures that have been passed on his language are either without foundation or much exaggerated." He appears to be as poetic in his ideas as most of the Prophets, and in the manner in which he arranges them, though he deals not much in parallelisms, which constitute a prominent feature in Hebrew poetry.

The matters handled by the Prophet are said by *Marckius* to be "most worthy of God, whether we regard His serious reproofs or His severe threatenings, or His kind warnings, or His gracious promises, which especially appertain

[1] Poeticus est Habbaccuci stylus; sed maxime in Oda, quae inter absolutissimas in eo genere merito numerari potest—Proel, 21.

[2] Equidem totum hunc locum pari qua ingressus est magnificentia exornat vates; ex tanta rerum admirandarum copia nobilissima quaeque seligens, eaque coloribus splendidissimis, imaginibus, figuris, dictione elatissima illustrans; quorum summam sublimitatem cumulat et commendat singu-laris clausulae elegantia: ita ut, nisi una atque altera ei insideret obscuri-tatis nebula vetustate, ut videtur, inducta, vix quidquam hoc poemate in suo genere extaret luculentius aut perfectius.—Proel. 28.

[3] Is nihil videtur hahere singulare aut eximium, in dispositione rerum, vel colore dictionis.—Proel, 21.

to the dispensation of the New Testament. In all these particulars he not only agrees with the other prophets, but also adopts their expressions." [4] He then gives the following examples:—

Zephaniah 1:6 compared with Jeremiah 15:6
Zephaniah 1:15 compared with Joel 2:1, 2
Zephaniah 1:18 compared with Ezekiel 7:19, and Jeremiah 4:27
Zephaniah 2:8, 9 compared with Jeremiah 48:2, and Ezekiel 25:1
Zephaniah 3:3, 4 compared with Ezekiel 22:26, 27, 28, etc.

It does not appear at what time Haggai returned from exile, though probably at the first return of the Jews under Zerubbabel, before Christ 536. But he did not commence his prophetic office till about sixteen years after; and he delivered what his Book contains in the space of *three* months. His messages, which are *five,* [5] are very short; and hence some have concluded that they are but summaries of what he had delivered.

Much of this Book is historical, interspersed with what is conveyed in a poetic style. The Prophet, in the *first* Chapter, remonstrates with the people, who were very attentive to their own private concerns, but neglected to build the Lord's Temple; he refers to the judgments with which they had been visited on this account, encourages them to undertake the work, and promises them the favor of God; and then he tells us of his success. In the *second* Chapter he removes an apparent ground of discouragement, the temple then in building being not so splendid as the former, and promises an additional glory to it, evidently referring to the Gospel times. He then warns them against relaxing in their work and thinking it enough merely to offer sacrifices, assures them of God's blessing, and concludes with a special promise to Zerubbabel.

What Lowth says of this Prophet's style, that *"it* is altogether prosaic," is not strictly true; for there are some parts highly poetical. See Haggai 1:6,** and from 8 to 11 inclusive. "The style of Haggai," observes *Henderson,* "is not distinguished by any peculiar excellence; yet he is not destitute of pathos and vehemence, when reproving his countrymen for their negligence, exhorting them to the performance of duty."

Though in some instances our Commentator may not give the precise import of a passage, yet he never advances but what is consistent with Divine Truth, and always useful and practical, and often what betokens a profound acquaintance with the operations of the human mind under the various trials and temptations which we meet with in this life; so that the observations made are ever interesting and instructive. Calvin never deduces from a passage what is in itself erroneous or unsound, though in all cases he may not deduce what the text may legitimately warrant. There is, therefore,

[4] Est vaticiniorum ejus argumentum Deo dignissimum, sive serias ejus redargutiones, sive severas comminationes, sive amicas monitiones, sive blandas promissiones, ad gratiam N. T. quam maxime protensas, spectemus. In quabus omnibus non tantum quoad rem consentientes alios habet vates, sed et phrases adhibuit—Anal. Tseph. Exeg.

[5] I. Haggai 1:1-11. II. Haggai 1:12-15. III. Haggai 2:1-9. IV. Haggai 2:10-19. V. Haggai 2:20-23.

nothing dangerous in what he advances, though it. may not be included in the passage explained. But for the most part his application of doctrine is what may be fully justified, and is often very striking, and calculated to instruct and edify.

Some may think that our Author does not always give that full range of meaning to the promises and predictions which he explains. A reason for this may probably be found in the fact, that most of the Commentators who had preceded him had indulged in very great extravagancies on the subject; and a reaction generally drives men to an opposite extreme. But it is very seldom that Calvin can be justly charged with a fault of this kind; for, entertaining the profoundest veneration for the Word of God, he strictly followed what he conceived the words imported, and what he apprehended to be the general drift of a passage. Possibly, in the estimation of those who possess a very vivid imagination, he may be thought to have kept too closely to what the text and the context require; but in explaining the Divine Oracles, nothing is more to be avoided than to let loose the imagination, and nothing is more necessary than to possess a sound judgment, and to exercise it in the fear of God, and with prayer for His guidance and direction.

J.O.
THRUSSINGTON
October 1848.

Translator's Preface to Zechariah and Malachi

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

This Volume completes Calvin's Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets, — a Work which, had he written no ether, would have been sufficient to have rendered him illustrious as a faithful, lucid, and practical expounder. In course of time, when his Comments shall be carefully read, his high merits will no doubt be duly acknowledged. The Translator can bear this testimony, that before he read Calvin on the Minor Prophets, it was to him one of the least interesting and the least instructive portions of the ancient Scriptures; but that he finds it now one of the most interesting. It practically exhibits to us especially two things, which it greatly concerns us all to know, — what God is, and what man is. It sets before us manifest facts which prove the wonderful mercy and forbearance of God, and also the amazing tendency of man to superstition, and his persistency in his course notwithstanding all the powerful means adopted for his restoration.

Zechariah began to prophesy two months after Haggai, as we find by comparing Haggai 1:15, with Zechariah 1:1. Ezra mentions them as the two Prophets who encouraged the rebuilding of the Temple. Ezra 5:1; 6:14.

The greatest part of Zechariah was written, according to *Lowth,* in prose; but he adds that "some parts about the end of his Prophecy (Zechariah 9, 10. and the beginning of 11.) are poetical and highly embellished, and that they are sufficiently perspicuous, though written by a Prophet, who of all is perhaps the most obscure." [6] The testimony of *Jerome,* as to his obscurity, is the same; he says that he is "the most obscure as well as the longest of the Twelve Minor Prophets." *Marckius* concedes a majestic elegance to his diction, and says, that "his enigmatical symbols may be fitly compared

[6] Sunt aliqua sub ejus Vaticinii finem (vide cap. 9, 10. et init. 11.) et poetica et valde ornata, et, ut in Vate omnium fortasse obscurissimo, satis perspicua. — Proel. 21.

with those of Amos, Ezekiel, Daniel, and of John, the Prophet of the New Testament." "His prose," according to *Henderson,* "resembles most that of Ezekiel; it is diffuse, uniform and repetitious. His prophetic poetry possesses much of the elevation and dignity to be found in the earlier Prophets, with whose writings he appears to have been familiar."

The Book contains *four* parts: the *first* is a short message to the Jews, Zechariah 1:1-6; the *second* includes the rest of the first six chapters, which record a series of eight visions confined to one single night, and vouchsafed to the Prophet three months after the first message; the *third* contains two chapters, the seventh and the eighth; and the *fourth,* the six remaining chapters.

Since the days of Calvin a dispute has arisen, originated by *Mede,* respecting this last portion. Owing especially to a quotation in Matthew 27:9, 10, where Jeremiah, and not Zechariah, is mentioned, many since the time of *Mede,* such as *Hammond, Newcome,* and several German divines, have adopted the notion, that these chapters have somehow been misplaced, and that they belong to the book of Jeremiah. This view has been strongly opposed by *Blayney* and others, who, together with *Scott, Adam Clarke,* and *Henderson,* consider that there is no sufficient ground for such a supposition, and who for various reasons think that there is a typographical mistake in Matthew. [7]

"It is alleged," observes* Blayney,* "that the Evangelist St. Matthew, Matthew 27:9, cites a passage found in Zechariah 11:13, as spoken, not by Zechariah, but by the Prophet Jeremiah. But is it not possible, nay, is it not much more probable, that the word {Ιερεμιου} may have been written by mistake by some transcribers of Matthew's Gospel, than that those of the Jewish Church, who settled the Canon of Scripture, of whom Zechariah himself is supposed to have been one, should have been so grossly ignorant of the right author of those chapters as to place them under a wrong name? It is not, I think, pretended that these chapters have been found in any copy of the Old Testament otherwise placed than as they now stand. But in the New Testament there are not wanting authorities for omitting the word {Ιερεμιου}."

The other arguments urged by Mede and others are successfully combated by Blayney as well as by Henderson.

The first is, that many things are mentioned in these chapters which correspond not with Zechariah's time; the second, that the prophecy in Zechariah 11, concerning the destruction of the Temple and of the people, is not suitable to the scope of

[7] Augustine mentions that in his time some MSS. omitted the name of {Ιερεμίου}. It is also omitted in the MS. 33, 157; in the Syriac, which is the most ancient of all the versions ... The Greek MS. 22, reads {Ζαχαρίου}, as also do the Philoxenian Syriac in the margin, and the Arabic MS. quoted by Bengel Origen and Eusebius, were in favor of this reading. I think it very probable that Matthew did not insert either name, but simply wrote in his Hebrew gospel {הנביא} ,{ביד} by the Prophet, just as in chap. 1:22; 2:5, 15; 13:35; 21:4; 27:35; and that his Greek Translator, mistaking {ד} in {ביד} for {ר} read ,{ביר} which he considered to be a contraction for ,{בירמיהו} and so rendered it {δια} {Ἱερεμίου} {του} {προφήτου}.. This reading having found its way into the first Greek MS. will account for its all but universal propagation. Another conjecture supposes {Ἰριου}, to have been written by some early copyist instead of {Ζριου}." --- Henderson. The notion of Hengstenberg, derived from a hint by Grotius, is too subtle and refined. He supposes that Matthew intentionally ascribed the words to Jeremiah, in order to show that Zechariah's prediction was but a repetition of what Jeremiah had foretold in Jeremiah 18, and 19., and to intimate that it would be followed by a similar judgment. But this sort of reasoning is too abstruse and artificial to be admitted.

Zechariah's commission, which was to encourage the people to build the Temple; and the third, that the style of these chapters is different from that of the preceding ones. These reasons, especially the two last, are justly said to be easily accounted for by the supposition that Zechariah wrote the former portions while he was young, (Zechariah 2:4,) and these chapters in his advanced years. And Blayney thinks that he is the Zechariah mentioned by our Savior in Matthew 23:35, and that he was slain by the Jews on account of these prophecies which he announced in his old age. [8]

The last of the Old Testament Prophets, as admitted by all, was Malachi. Who and what he was, we are left without any knowledge. Some have supposed him to have been Ezra under another name, or under the name of his office, as Malachi means a messenger. But most think that he lived near a century after Haggai and Zechariah Usher places him in the year 416 before Christ, and Blair in 436. It appears certain from Malachi 3:10, that his time was after the building of the Temple. It is most probable that he was contemporary with Nehemiah, especially after his second return from Persia, as the same things are condemned by both, --- foreign marriages and the neglect of paying tythes. The Jews are wont to call him the seal ({חותם}) of the Prophets.

It is observed by Lowth that Malachi wrote ``in a middle sort of style, and evidently in such a style as seems to prove that Hebrew poetry had declined since the Babylonian exile, and that being now in advanced age it was somewhat verging towards senility.'' [9] But Henderson speaks in a higher strain, ``Considering the late age in which he lived, the language of Malachi is pure; his style possesses much in common with the old Prophets, but is distinguished more by its animation than by its rhythmus or grandeur.''

The interesting character of the Commentary will be found to be in no degree diminished in this Volume, but on the contrary increased, though some of the subjects had been before discussed. The same thoughts, no doubt, sometimes occur, but their different connections ever introduce some variety. The Commentator follows his text, and very seldom deviates from what it strictly requires, and the application of it to present circumstances is generally natural and obvious, and for the most part confined to a few sentences; so the reader's attention is not diverted from the passage that is explained. The main object throughout seems to be to interpret God's Word and to impress it on the mind and heart, and so to apply it as to render it the rule of our life and the support of our hopes.

The curious reader, fond of novelties, and enamoured with speculative and fanciful notions, or one whose chief delight is in dry criticisms, will not find much in Calvin to gratify him: but those who possess a taste for Divine Truth, who seek to understand what they read, and desire to be fed by ``the sincere milk of the Word,'' will, through a blessing from above, be abundantly compensated by a careful perusal of his Comments. This is not said merely as a matter of inference from the character

[8] What seems to strengthen this supposition is, that in this case the first and the last martyr, previous to his time, are mentioned by our Savior.

[9] Prophetarum ultimus Malachius medio quodam dicendi genere utitur, atque ejusmodi plane, quod arguere videatur poesin Hebraeam inde a cap-tivitate Babylonica deflorescentem, et inclinata jam aetate in senium quodammodo vergentem. — Proel, 21.

of their contents, but as the result of personal experience. The testimony which the Translator can fully bear is similar to that of Bishop Horne, when he finished his Commentary on the Psalms, that the labor has been attended with so much pleasure and enjoyment, that the completion of his work occasions regret as well as joy; for the time during which he has been engaged in translating Calvin has been the happiest period of his life.

As to the Indices, added to this Volume, the most important is that to the subjects: and it is more useful than general readers may perhaps consider it to be. The very reading of it may convey no small measure of information. The variety of subjects handled in these Volumes is very great, so that they include almost everything in the wide range of Theology, not indeed discussed at large, but briefly touched upon and explained.

But as an illustration of the usefulness of this Index, let the word Faith be taken; and almost everything connected with it will be found mentioned and referred to. Turn again to the word Faithful, (Fideles,) which some of my co-workers have rendered Believers, and perhaps in some instances more appropriately; and hardly anything belonging to the character, spirit, life, and trials of God's people, will be found wanting. If there be a wish to know what Popery is, what is found under the word Papists will disclose almost the whole character of the system; and by referring to the Comment all its main lineaments will be found clearly exhibited in the character of the superstitions and idolatries of the Jews. The real features of errors are the same in every age, only somewhat modified by a change of circumstances: but an enlightened observer can read Popery in the history of the ancient Jews as clearly as in its own history. This of course cannot be done by the spiritually blind and the deluded; and yet so striking and palpable is the likeness in not a few instances, that it is impossible for any not to see it, except they be totally blind, and their judgment wholly perverted.

There have been many Commentators before and after the time of Calvin, but it may be doubted whether any of them possessed his combined excellencies, especially the capacity of being so plain as to be understood by common readers, and of being at the same time so profound as to be interesting and instructive to the most learned; so that his Comments do in this respect retain, in a measure, the character of the book he interprets and explains. Of his superiority over his predecessors we have the striking testimony of the learned Arminius, who, as he differed from him on several points of no small importance, may justly be considered to have been an impartial witness. His words are remarkable, --- ``Next to the reading of Scripture, which I strongly recommend, I advise you to read the Commentaries of Calvin, on whom I bestow higher eulogies than Helmichius did; for I consider that he is incomparable in interpreting Scripture, and that his Commentaries are of more value than all that the library of the Fathers transmits to us; so that I concede to him even a spirit of prophecy superior to that of most, yea, of all others. [10]

[10] Post Scripturae lectionem, quam vehementer inculco, ad Calvini Commentarios legendos adhortor, quem laudibus majoribus extollo quam ipse Helmichius; dico enim incomparabilem esse in interpretatione Scripturae, et majoris faciendos ipsius Commentarios, quam quicquid Patrum Biblio-theca nobis tradit; adeo ut et spiritum aliquem prophetiae eximium illi prae aliis

As to posterior Commentators, his comparative merits cannot indeed be rated so high, as there have been in later years Writers in this department of no ordinary character. Not to mention Foreign Divines, our own might with advantage be referred to, such as Henry, Lowth, Whitby, Doddridge, Scott, and Adam Clarke. And yet none of these can be regarded as in all respects equal to Calvin as a Commentator. Some of them excel him as Critics, and others in the number of their practical deductions; but he surpasses them all in pointing out and illustrating the main drift of a passage, in catching as it were its very spirit, and in the power he possessed of impressing on the mind in a few words both its meaning and its practical lessons. The Comment never diverts us from the Text, it never occupies as it were its place; but the Text itself, expounded and illustrated, is left fixed and riveted on the mind.

Thrussington, July 1849.

plerisque, imo et omnibus, concedam. See Merits of Calvin, p. 51.

Commentary on Habakkuk

Commentary on Habakkuk

The Commentaries
of John Calvin
on the Prophet
Habakkuk

Calvin's Preface to Habakkuk

Now follows The Prophet Habakkuk; [11] but the time in which he discharged his office of a Teacher is not quite certain. The Hebrews, according to their usual manner, unhesitatingly assert that he prophesied under the king Manasseh; but this conjecture is not well founded. We are however led to think that this prophecy was announced when the contumacy of the people had become irreclaimable. It is indeed probable, from the complaint which we shall have presently to notice, that the people had previously given many proofs of irremediable wickedness. To me it appears evident that the Prophet was sent, when others had in vain endeavored to correct the wickedness of the people. But as he denounces an approaching judgement on the Chaldeans, he seems to have prophesied either under Manasseh or under the other kings before the time of Zedechiah; but we cannot fix the exact time. [12]

The substance of the Book may be thus stated:---In the First chapter he complains of the rebellious obstinacy of the people, and deplores the corruptions which then

[11] Who Habakkuk was is uncertain. Some have concluded, from chapter 3:19, that he was of the tribe of Levi; but the premises do not warrant the conclusion. "He was probably," says Adam Clarke, "of the tribe of Simeon, and a native of Beth-zacar." The grounds for this probability are not stated.—Ed.

[12] Newcome's opinion is the following:—"It seems probable that Habakkuk lived after the taking of Nineveh, as he prophesies of the Chaldeans, and is silent on the subject of the Assyrians. We have also reason to conclude that he prophesied not long before the Jewish captivity. See chapter 1:5; 2:3; 3:2,6-19. He may therefore be placed in the reign of Jehoiakim, between the years 606 and 598 before Christ." Henderson agrees with this view. "Hunc librum canonicum esse constat,"—tum 1. quia in Bibliis Hebrais extat; tum 2. quia in N.T. allegatum, Acts 13:41; Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38. It appears that this book is canonical, 1., because it is extant in Hebrew; 2., because it is quoted in the New Testament," etc.—Tarnovius.

prevailed; he then appears as the herald of God, and warns the Jews of their approaching ruin; he afterwards applies consolation, as God would punish the Chaldeans when their pride became intolerable. In the second chapter he exhorts the godly to patience by his own example, and speaks at large of the near ruin of Babylon; and in the third chapter, as we shall see, he turns to supplication and prayer.

We shall now come to the words.

CHAPTER 1

Lecture One Hundred and Sixth.

Habakkuk 1

H

Habakkuk 1:1

1. The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see.

1. Onus quod vidit Chabakuk Propheta.

The greater part of interpreters refer this burden to the Chaldeans and the monarchy of Babylon; but of this view I do not approve, and a good reason compels me to dissent from their opinion: for as the Prophet addresses the Jews, and without any addition calls his prophecy a burden, there is no doubt but that he refers to them. Besides, their view seems wholly inconsistent, because the Prophet dreads the future devastation of the land, and complains to God for allowing His chosen and elect people to be so cruelly treated. What others think is more correct---that this burden belonged to the Jews.

What the Prophet understood by the word {משא}, mesha, has been elsewhere stated. Habakkuk then reproves here his own nation, and shows that they had in vain disdainfully resisted all God's prophets, for they would at length find that their threatening would be accomplished. The burden, then, which the Prophet Habakkuk saw, was this---That God, after having exercised long forbearance towards the Jews, would at length be the punisher of their many sins. It now follows---

Habakkuk 1:2, 3

2. O LORD, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save!

2. Quousque, Jehova, clamabo, et non exaudies? Vociferabor ad te ob violentiam, et non servabis?

3. Why dost thou shew me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance? for spoiling and violence are before me: and there are that raise up strife and contention.

3. Quare ostendis mihi iniquitatem, et moestiam aspicere facis? Et direptio et violentia in conspectu meo? et est qui litem et contentionem excitet.

As I have already reminded you, interpreters think that the Prophet speaks here

of future things, as though he had in his view the calamity which he afterwards mentions; but this is too strained a meaning; I therefore doubt not but that the Prophet expostulates here with God for so patiently indulging a reprobate people. For though the Prophets felt a real concern for the safety of the people, there is yet no doubt but that they burned with zeal for the glory of God; and when they saw that they had to contend with refractory men, they were then inflamed with a holy displeasure, and undertook the cause of God; and they implored His aid to bring a remedy when the state of things had become desperate. I therefore consider that the Prophet here solicits God to visit these many sins in which the people had hardened themselves. And hence we conclude that he had previously exercised his office of a teacher; for it would have been otherwise improper for him to begin his work with such a complaint and expostulation. He had then by experience found that the people were extremely perverse. When he saw that there was no hope of amendment, and that the state of things was becoming daily worse, burning with zeal for God, he gave full vent to his feelings. Before, then, he threatens the people with the future vengeance of God, he withdraws himself, as it were, from intercourse with men, and in private addresses God himself.

We must bear this first in mind, that the Prophet relates here the secret colloquy he had with God: but it ought not to be ascribed to an unfeeling disposition, that in these words he wished to hasten God's vengeance against his own kindred; for it behaved the Prophet not only to be solicitous for the salvation of the people, but also to feel a concern for the glory of God, yea, to burn with a holy zeal. As, then, he had in vain labored for a length of time, I doubt not but that, being as it were far removed from the presence of all witnesses, he here asks God, how long he purposed thus to bear with the wickedness of the people. We now apprehend the design of the Prophet and the import of his words.

But he says first, How long, Jehovah, shall I cry, and thou hearest not? How long shall I cry to thee for violence, that is, on account of violence, and thou savest not? We hence learn, that the Prophet had often prayed God to correct the people for their wickedness, or to contrive some means to prevent so much licentiousness in sinning. It is indeed probable that the Prophet had prayed as long as there was any hope; but when he saw that things were past recovery, he then prayed more earnestly that God would undertake the office of a judge, and chastise the people. For though the Prophet really condoled with those who perished, and was touched, as I have said, with a serious concern for their public safety, he yet preferred the glory of God: when, therefore, he saw that boldness in sin increased through impunity, and that the Jews in a manlier mocked God when they found that they could sin without being punished, he could not endure such unbridled wantonness. Besides, the Prophet may have spoken thus, not only as expressing his own feeling, but what he felt in common with all the godly; as though he had undertaken here a public duty, and utters a complaint common to all the faithful: for it is probable that all the godly, in so disordered a state of things, mourned alike. How long, then, shall I cry? How long, he says, shall I cry on account of violence? that is, When all things are in disorder, when there is now no regard for equity and justice, but men abandon themselves,

as it were with loose reins, unto all kinds of wickedness, how long, Lord, wilt thou take no notice? But in these words the Prophet not only egresses his own feelings, but makes this kind of preface, that the Jews might better understand that the time of vengeance was come; for they were become not only altogether intolerable to God, but also to his servants. God indeed had suspended his judgement, though he had been often solicited to execute it by his Prophet. It hence appears, that their wickedness had made such advances that it would be no wonder if they were now severely chastised by the Lord; for they had by their sins not only provoked him against them, but also all the godly and the faithful.

He afterwards adds, How long wilt thou show me iniquity, and make me to see trouble? Here the Prophet briefly relates the cause of his indignation,---that he could not, without great grief, yea, without anguish of mind, behold such evils prevailing among God's chosen people; for they who apply this to the Chaldeans, do so strainedly, and without any necessity, and they have not observed the reason which I have stated---that the Prophet does not here teach the Jews, but prepares them for a coming judgement, as they could not but see that they were justly condemned, since they were proved guilty by the cry and complaints made by all the godly.

Now this passage teaches us, that all who really serve and love God, ought, according to the Prophet's example, to burn with holy indignation whenever they see wickedness reigning without restraint among men, and especially in the Church of God. There is indeed nothing which ought to cause us more grief than to see men raging with profane contempt for God, and no regard had for his law and for divine truth, and all order trodden under foot. When therefore such a confusion appears to us, we must feel roused, if we have in us any spark of religion. If it be objected, that the Prophet exceeded moderation, the obvious answer is this,---that though he freely pours forth his feelings, there was nothing wrong in this before God, at least nothing wrong is imputed to him: for wherefore do we pray, but that each of us may unburden his cares, his griefs, and anxieties, by pouring them into the bosom of God? Since, then, God allows us to deal so familiarly with him, nothing wrong ought to be ascribed to our prayers when we thus freely pour forth our feelings, provided the bridle of obedience keeps us always within due limits, as was the case with the Prophet; for it is certain that he was retained under the influence of real kindness. Jeremiah did indeed pray with unrestrained fervor (Jeremiah 15:10): but his case was different from that of our Prophet; for he proceeds not here to an excess, as Jeremiah did when he cursed the day of his birth, and when he expostulated with God for being made a man of contention. But our Prophet undertakes here the defense of justice; for he could not endure the law of God to be made a sport, and men to allow themselves every liberty in sinning.

We now, then, see that the Prophet can be justly excused, though he expostulates here with God, for God does not condemn this freedom in our prayers; but, on the contrary, the end of praying is, that every one of us pour forth, as it is said in the Psalms, his heart before God. As, then, we communicate our cares and sorrows to God, it is no wonder that the Prophet, according to the manner of men, says, Why dost thou show me iniquity, and make me to see trouble? Trouble is to be taken here

in an active sense, and the verb {תבים}, tabith, has a transitive meaning. [13] Some render it, Why dost thou look on trouble? as though the Prophet indignantly bore the connivance of God. But the context necessarily requires that this verb should be taken in a transitive sense. ``Why dost thou show me iniquity?'' and then, ``and makest me to look on violence?'' He says afterwards, in the third place, in my sight is violence. But I have said, that the word trouble is to be taken actively; for the prophet means not that he was worn out with weariness, but that wicked men were troublesome to the good and the innocent, as it is usually the case when a freedom in sinning prevails.

And why, he says, are violence and plunder in my sight? and there is he who excites, etc.? The verb {נשא}, nusha means not here to undertake, as some render it; but, on the contrary, to raise. Others render it, ``Who supports,'' but this is frigid. Therefore the translation which I have stated is the most suitable---And why is there one who excites strife and contention?

But the Prophet here accuses them only of sins against the second table of the law: he speaks not of the superstitions of people, and of the corrupted worship of God; but he briefly says, that they had no regard for what was just and right: for the stronger any one was, the more he distressed the helpless and the innocent. It was then for this reason that he mentioned iniquity, trouble, plunder, violence, contention, strife. In short, the Prophet here deplores, that there was now no equity and no brotherly kindness among the people, but that robberies, rapines, and tyrannical violence prevailed everywhere. It follows---

Habakkuk 1:4

4. Therefore the law is slacked, and judgement doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgement proceedeth.

4. Propterea dissolvitur (vel, debilitatur) lex, et non egredietur perpetuo judicium (vel, non egreditur:) quia impius circumdat justum, propterea impius circumdat justum, propterea egredietur judicium perversum.

The Prophet confirms here what I have already said, and brings an excuse for his zeal; he proves that he was not without reason led to so great a warmth; for he saw that the law of God was trodden as it were under foot; he saw men so hardened in every kind of sin, that all religion and the fear of God had nearly been extinguished.

[13] Rather, a causative meaning; for so does Calvin take it; and Junius and Tremelius, Piscator, Grotius, and Newcome, agree with him: but Drusius, Marckius, Henderson, and others, consider it simply in the sense of seeing or beholding, and say with truth, that there is no other instance in which it has, though it be often found, as here, in Hiphil, a causative sense. The context, as Calvin says, seems certainly to favor this meaning; and we might suppose that Habakkuk used it in a sense different from others, were it not that he uses it at least twice in this very chapter, verses 5 and 13, simply in the sense of seeing or beholding. In these two verses there is no need of continuing the interrogatory form throughout, nor is this justified by the original. A strictly literal rendering, such as the following, would be the most appropriate: 2. How long, Jehovah, have I cried, and thou hearest not? I cry aloud to thee, "oppression," and thou savest not: 3. Why showest thou to me iniquity? Yea, wickedness is what thou seest; Even wasting and oppression are before me; Then there is strife, and contention arises. Some think that there is to be understood a preposition before [{,[{חמס which I render ``oppression,'' in the second line; but there is no need of it. The word means outrage, wrong forcibly done, violent injustice. ,[{עמל}] wickedness, in the second line of the third verse, in its primary sense, is labor, toil; it means also what produces toil, mischief, wickedness. Henderson renders it misery; but it is not so suitable; for it must be something that corresponds with iniquity in the previous line. Wickedness is the word adopted by Newcome. ,[{ריב}] strife, is a verbal contention or quarrel; and [{מדון}] contention, is a judicial contest, or a trial by law. Then in the next verse we see how unjustly this trial was conducted.---Ed.

Hence I have already said, that the Prophet was not here impelled by a carnal passion, as it often happens to us, when we defend ourselves from wrongs done to us; for when any one of us is injured, he immediately becomes incensed, while, at the same time, we suffer God's law to be a sport, His whole truth to be despised, and everything that is just to be violated. We are only tender on what concerns us individually, and in the meantime we easily forgive when God is wronged, and His truth despised. But the Prophet shows here that he was not made indignant through a private feeling, but because he could not bear the profanation of God's worship and the violation of His holy law.

He therefore says, that the law was dissolved or weakened, as though he said that God's law had no longer any authority or regard. Let us hence learn to rouse up ourselves, for we are very frigid, when the ungodly openly despise and even mock God. As, then, we are too unconcerned in this respect, let us learn, by the Prophet's example, to stimulate ourselves. For even Paul also shows, in an indirect way, that there is just reason for indignation---`Be ye angry,' he says, `and sin not,' (Ephesians 4:26); that is, every one ought to regard his own sins, so as to become an enemy to himself; and he ought also to feel indignant whenever he sees God offended.

This rule the Prophet now follows, Weakened, he says, is the law [14] We know that when a sinful custom prevails, there is but little authority in what is taught: nor are human laws only despised when men's audacity breaks through all restraints, but even the very law of God is esteemed as nothing; for they think that everything erroneously done, by the consent of all, is lawful. We now then see that the Prophet felt great anguish of mind, like holy Lot (Genesis 19:1-38.), when he saw every regard for God almost extinct in the land, and especially among the chosen people, whom God had above all others consecrated to himself.

He then adds, judgement goes not forth perpetually. Absurdly do many regard this as having been said in the person of foolish men, who think that there is no such thing as divine providence, when things in the world are in a disordered state: but the Prophet simply says, that all justice was suppressed. We have nearly the very same complaint in Isaiah 59:4. He then says, that judgement did not go forth perpetually, because the ungodly thought that no account was to be given by them. When, therefore, any one dared to say a word against them, they immediately boiled with rage, and like wild beasts fiercely attacked him. All then were silent, and nearly made dumb, when the ungodly thus prevailed and gathered boldness from the daily practice of licentiousness. Hence, `Go forth perpetually does not judgement;' that is, ``O Lord, things are now past hope, and there appears to be no end to our evils, except thou comest soon and applies a remedy beyond what our flesh can conceive.''

[14] Calvin omits to notice "therefore," [{,לכן}-{על} at the beginning of the verse. Henderson says, that the connection is with the second verse: but this can hardly be the case; and certainly what this verse contains is no reason for what is stated in the previous verse. ,[{לכן}] a similar proposition with this, when followed by ,[{כי}] as the case is here, refers sometimes to what follows and not to what precedes. See Psalm 16:10,11; 78:21,22. The meaning of the verse will be elicited, as I can conceive, by the following version:--- On this account the law fails, And judgment goeth not forth to victory, --- Because wickedness surrounds the righteous; Yea, on this account perverted judgment goeth forth. The expression, {לנצח}, [{לא}] is rendered ``never'' in our version, and by Newcome; but it never means this: ``not for ever, or not always,'' it is rendered in other places. See Psalm 9:19; 74:19. But [{נצח}] means as a noun, superiority, excellency, strength, victory; and this, according to Parkhurst, is what it means here. It seems better to render ,[{רשע}] wickedness, than wicked. It means injustice, the perversion of right, and by this the just man was surrounded or completely beset, so that he had no chance of having justice done to him.---Ed.

For the wicked, he says, surround the righteous; that is, when there was any one who continued to retain some regard for religion and justice, immediately the wicked rose up against him on every side and surrounded him before and behind; so it happened, that no one dared to oppose the torrent, though frauds, rapines, outrages, cruelty, and even murders everywhere prevailed; if any righteous men still remained, they dared not come forth into the public, for the wicked beset them on all sides.

He afterwards adds, Therefore perverted judgement goes forth. The Prophet now rises higher, that even the rulers themselves increased the rage for evils, and as it were supplied fuel to their wickedness, as they confounded all distinction between right and wrong: for the Prophet speaks not here of private wrongs which any one might have done, but he speaks of the very rulers, as though he said, ``There might have been one remedy, the judges might have checked so great an audacity; but they themselves stretch out their hands to the wicked and help them.'' Hence the tribunals, which ought to have been sacred, were become as it were dens of thieves. The word {משפט}, meshiphith is taken properly in a good sense: Is not judgement then a desirable thing? Yes, but the Prophet says, that it was perverted. It was then by way of concession that judgement is mentioned; for he afterwards adds a word to it, by which he shows that the administration of the laws was evil and injurious: for when any one oppressed had recourse to the assistance of the laws, he was plundered. In short, the Prophet means, that all things in private and in public were corrupt among the people. It now follows---

Habakkuk 1:5

5. Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvellously: for I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you

5. Videte in gentibus, et aspicite, et admiramini, admiramini; quia opus operans in diebus vestris, non credetis, quum narratum fuerit.

The Prophet turns his discourse to the Jews, after having related the private colloquy, in which he expostulated with God for having so patiently borne with the obstinate wickedness of the nation. Being now as it were furnished with God's command, (as the case really was,) he performs the office of a herald, and proclaims an approaching destruction. He indeed adopts a preface, which ought to have awakened drowsy and careless minds. He says---look, see, be astonished, be astonished; these repetitions do not a little increase the alarm; he twice bids them to see, and he twice exhorts them to be astonished, or to wonder. He then briefly proclaims the judgement of God, which he afterwards more fully describes. We now, then, perceive the object of the Prophet, and the manner in which he proceeds with his subject.

And he bids those among the nations to behold, as though he had said, that they were unworthy to be taught in the school of God; he therefore appointed other masters for them, even the Chaldeans, as we shall presently see. He might have said---look to God; but as the Prophet had so long spent his labor in vail and without profit while teaching them, he sets over them the Chaldeans as teachers. Behold, he says, ye teachers among the Gentiles. There is here indeed an implied contrast, as thought he said---``God has hitherto often recalled you to himself, and has offered himself to you, but ye have refused to look to him; now then, as he is wearied with

exercising patience so long, he appoints for you other teachers; learn now from the Gentiles what ye leave hitherto refused to learn from the holy mouth of God himself''.

The Greek translators no doubt read {בגורים}, for their version is---``Behold, ye despisers.'' [15] But in Hebrew there is no ambiguity as to the word.

He afterwards adds---And wonder ye, wonder [16] By these words the prophets express how dreadful God's judgement would be, which would astonish the Jews themselves. Had they not been extremely refractory they might have quietly received instruction, for God would have addressed them by his prophets, as though they had been his own children. They might thus, with composed minds, have listened to God speaking to them; but the time was now come when they were to be filled with astonishment. We hence see that the Prophet meant this in a few words---that there would be a new mode of teaching, which would overwhelm the unwilling with astonishment, because they would not endure to be ruled in a gentle manner, when the Lord required nothing from them but to render themselves teachable.

After having said that God's judgement would be dreadful, he adds that it was nigh at hand---a work, he says, will he work in your days, etc. They had already been often warned of that vengeance, but as they had for a long time disregarded it, they did ever remain sunk in their own self-delusions, like men who are wont to protract time and hunt on every side for some excuse for indulging themselves. So then when the people became hardened against all threatening, they thought that God would ever bear with them; hence the Prophet expressly declares, that the execution of that which they regarded as a fable was near at hand---He will work, he says, this work in your days

He then subjoins---ye will not believe when it shall be told you; that is, God will execute such a punishment as will be incredible and exceed all belief. The Prophet no doubt alludes to the want of faith in the people, and indirectly reproves them, as though he said---``Ye have hitherto denied faith to God's word, but ye shall at length find that he has told the truth; and this ye shall find to your astonishment; for as his word has been counted by you incredible, so also incredible shall be his judgement.'' In short, the Prophet intimates this---that though the Prophets had been derided by the Jews, and despised as inventors of fables, yet nothing had been said by them which would not be fully accomplished. This reward then was to be paid to all the unbelieving; for God would in the most dreadful manner avenge their impiety, so that they should themselves be astonished and become an astonishment to others. We now perceive what the Prophet meant by saying that the Jews would not believe the

[15] This may perhaps be considered one of the very few instances in which the Septuagint seems to have retained the true reading without the countenance of a single MS.; for the word "despisers" is more suitable to the context. The very same word is found in the 13th verse of this chapter. The omission is very trifling, only of the letter [{ד}], and Paul in quoting this passage, in Acts 13:41, retains this word, while in the other clauses he departs from the Septuagint, and comes nearer to the Hebrew text. Pocock thought that [{בגוים}] is a noun from the Arabic [{בגא}], which means to be unjust or injurious; and thus the Hebrew is made the same with the Septuagint, and St. Paul, {καταφρονηται}, despisers---the insolent; but the former supposition seems the more probable---that the letter [{ד}] has been omitted. Dathius renders the word ``perfidi---perfidious,'' and Newcome ``transgressors.''---Ed.

[16] This is the proper rendering, and not as in our version. It is not the usual mode in Hebrew to enhance the meaning by connecting two verbs together; but the two other verbs here are in the imperative mood, only the first is in Niphal and the other in Kal. Parkhurst very properly renders them, and be ye astonished, wonder, etc. The repetition, says Drusius, is for the sake of emphasis.—Ed.

work of God when told them, that is, the vengeance which he will presently describe.

This passage is quoted by Paul, and is applied to the punishment then awaiting the Jews; for Paul, after having offered Christ to them, and seeing that many of them regarded the preaching of Gospel with scorn, added these words---``see,'' he said, ``and be astonished, for God will work a work in your days which ye shall not believe.'' Paul at the same time made a suitable application of the Prophet's words; for as God had once threatened his people by his Prophet Habakkuk, so he was still like himself; and since had so severely vindicated the contempt of his law as to his ancient people, he could not surely bear with the impiety of that people whom he found to have acted so malignantly and so ungratefully, yea so wantonly and perversely, as to reject his grace; for this was the last remedy for the Jews. No wonder then that Paul set before them this vengeance, when the Jews of his time persisted through their unbelief to reject Christ. Now follows the explanation -

Habakkuk 1:6

6. For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwellingplaces that are not theirs.

6. Quia ecce ego excito Chaldaeos, gentem asperam, et praecipitem, quae incedet per latitudines terrae, ad possidendum tabernacula non sua.

This verse is added by the Prophet as an explanation; for it was not enough to speak generally of God's work, without reminding them that their destruction by the Chaldeans was nigh at hand. He does not indeed in this verse explain what would be the character of that judgement which he had mentioned in the last verse Habakkuk 1:5; but he will do this in what follows. Now the Prophets differ from Moses in this respect, for they show, as it were by the finger, what he threatened generally, and they declare the special judgements of God; as it is indeed evident from the demonstrative adverb, ``Behold.'' How necessary this was, we may gather from the perverseness of that people; for how distinctly soever the Prophets showed to them God's judgements, so that they saw them with their eyes, yet so great was their insensibility, that they despised denunciations so apparent. What, then, would have been done, if the Prophets had only said in general, `God will not spare you!' This, then, is the reason why the Prophet, having spoken of God's terrible vengeance, now declares in express terms, that the Chaldeans were already armed by Him to execute His judgement. The rest we leave for tomorrow.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that as our sins cry continually to heaven, each of us may turn to repentance, and by condemning ourselves of our own accord may anticipate thy judgement, and thus stir up ourselves to repentance, that being received into favor, we may find thee, whom we have provoked to take vengeance, to be indeed our Father: and may we be so preserved by thee in this world, that having at length put off all our vices, we may attain to that perfection of purity, to which thou invites us; and thus lead us more and more to thyself by thy Spirit, and separate us from the corruptions of this world, that we may glorify thee before men, and be at last made partakers of that celestial glory which has been purchased for us by the blood of thy only begotten Son. Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Seventh

In the lecture of yesterday the Prophet began to show from whom the Jews were to expect the vengeance of God, even from the Chaldeans, who would come, not by their own instinct, but by the hidden impulse of God. God indeed testifies that he should be the author of this war, and that the Chaldeans would fight, as it were, under his auspices. I am he, he says, who excites, etc. Then by calling the Chaldeans a bitter and hasty nation, he intended seriously to terrify the Jews, who had heedlessly despised all threatenings. [17] It was not indeed a subject of praise to the Chaldeans, that they were bitter and impetuous: but the Lord could turn these vices to a good purpose, inasmuch as he elicits light from darkness. When, therefore, we read that the Chaldeans were bitter, and also hasty, God thus intimates that he can employ the vices of men in executing his judgements, and yet contract hence no spot nor blemish; for we cannot possibly pollute him with our filth, as he scatters it far away by the brightness of his justice and equity.

He afterwards adds, They shall march through the latitudes [18] of the earth, to possess habitations not their own. He means that there would be no obstacles in the way of the Chaldeans, but that they would spread themselves over the whole earth, and occupy regions far remote. For they who fear, dare not thus disperse themselves, but, on the contrary, they advance cautiously with a collected army; but those, who have already obtained victory, march on to lay waste the land. This is what the Prophet says the Chaldeans would do.

The meaning is---that they would not come to carry on an uncertain warfare, but that they would enjoy a victory; for they would by an impetuous course fill the land, so as to occupy tents or habitations not their own. It was indeed a matter of blame in the Chaldeans, that they thus made inroads on their own neighbors: but, as I have said, God intended only to fill the Jews with terror, because he found that all threatenings were despised. He therefore meant to show how terrible the Chaldeans would be, and he confirms the same in the next verse.

Habakkuk 1:7

7. They are terrible and dreadful: their judgement and their dignity shall proceed of themselves.

7. Terribilis et metuenda ipsa, ab ipsa judicium ejus (pro jure ponitur hoc nomen,) et exultatio (vel, dignitas) ejus egredietur.

By saying that the Chaldeans would be terrible and dreadful, he praises not their virtues; but, as I have already reminded you, he shows that they would be prepared to do his service by executing his vengeance: and he so regulated his judgement, that he used their cruelty for a good purpose. Thus we see that the worst of men are in God's hand, as Satan is, who is their head; and yet that God is not implicated in

[17] "Bitter" rendered "cruel" by Drusius. To be "bitter" in mind means passively, to be grieved, or distressed, or discontented, 1 Samuel 22:2; and actively, to be revengeful, cruel, or inhuman, Jude 18-25—"Hasty" signifies to be rash, inconsiderate, or soon excited and made angry. It is obvious that the order is reversed; what follows is mentioned first, and then what precedes it; for to be hasty in entertaining anger is first, and then follows cruelty in executing it. A similar order is found in the next verse; the worst feature is mentioned first, that the nation would be "terrible;" and then what is less, that it would be "fearful." This is what is often done by the writers of both of the Old and New Testament.—Ed.

[18] The word, [{,מרהבים means ``breadths'' or broad places, or wide regions, as Henderson renders it.---Ed.

their wickedness, as some insane men maintain; for they say---That if God governs the world by his providence, he becomes thus the author of sin, and men's sins are to be ascribed to him. But Scripture teaches us far otherwise,---that the wicked are led here and there by the hidden power of God, and that yet the fault is in them, when they do anything in a deceitful and cruel manner, and that God ever remains just, whatever use he may make of instruments, yea, the very worst.

But when the Prophet adds, that its judgement would be from the nation itself, he means that the Chaldeans would act according to their own will. When any one indeed obeys laws, and willingly submits to them, he will freely allow either judges or umpires in case of a dispute; but he who will have all things done according to his own purpose repudiates all judges. The Prophet therefore means, that the Chaldeans would be their own judges, so that the Jews or others would complain in vain for any wrongs done to them. ``They shall be,'' he says, ``their own judges, and shall execute judgement, for they will not accept any arbitrators.'' The word judgement, taken in a good sense, is put here for law (jus); as though he said, ``Whatever the Chaldeans will claim for themselves, theirs shall it be; for no one will dare to interfere, and they will not submit to the will of others; but their power shall be for law, and their sword for a tribunal.'' We now understand the Prophet's meaning; and we must ever bear in mind what I have already said,---That God had no participation in these vices; but it was necessary that the stubbornness of an irreclaimable people should be thus corrected, or at least broken down. The Lord in the meantime could use such instruments in such a way as to preserve some moderation in his judgements. It follows---

Habakkuk 1:8

8. Their horses also are swifter than the leopards, and are more fierce than the evening wolves: and their horsemen shall spread themselves, and their horsemen shall come from far; they shall fly as the eagle that hasteth to eat.

8. Et velociores pardis equi ejus, et acutiores lupis vespertinis: et multiplicati sunt equites ejus, et equites ejus e longinquo venient; volabunt quasi aquila festinans ad comedendum (vel, ad cibum.)

The design of these figurative expressions is the same. The Prophet had spoken of the cruelty of those enemies whom the Jews despised: he now adds, that they would be so active as to surpass in velocity both leopards and eagles, or to be at least equal to them. He then says first, that their horses would be swifter then leopards. The Jews might have eluded his threatenings, or at least have cherished their insensibility by a vain confidence, as we see how this vice prevails in the world; for they might have thought thus within themselves, ``The Chaldeans are far away, and the danger of which the Prophet speaks cannot be so near at hand.'' Hence he declares that their horses would be swifter than leopards.

He then adds, that they would be fiercer than the evening wolves. The wolf is a rapacious animal; and when he ranges about all the day in vain seeking what he may devour, then in the evening hunger kindles his rage. There is, therefore, nothing more dreadful than hungry wolves. But, as I have said, except they find some prey about the evening, they become the more furious. We shall meet with the same

simile in Zephaniah 3:1. We now see the drift of the Prophet's words.

He adds that their horsemen would be numerous [19] He now sets forth their power, lest the Jews should have recourse to vain hopes, because they might obtain some help either from the Egyptians or other neighbors. The Prophet shows that all such hopes would be wholly vain; for had they gathered auxiliaries from all quarters, still the Chaldeans would exceed them in power and number.

He afterwards says, that their horsemen would come from a distance. Though they should have a long journey, yet weariness would not hinder and delay them in coming from a remote part. The toil of travelling would not weaken them, until they reached Judea. How so? Because it will fly, he says, (he speaks throughout of the nation itself,) as an eagle hastening to devour. This metaphor is also most suitable to the present purpose; for it signifies, that wherever the Chaldeans saw a prey, they would instantly come, as an eagle to any carcass it may observe. Let the distance be what it may, as soon as it sees a prey, it takes a precipitate flight, and is soon present to devour; for the rapidity of eagles, as it is well known, is astonishing.

We now see that what we learn from the Prophet's words is substantially this,---that God's judgement ought to have been feared, because he purposed to employ the Chaldeans as his servants, whose cruel disposition and inhumanity would be dreadful: he also shows that the Chaldeans would be far superior in power and number; and in third place he makes it known, that they would possess an astonishing rapidity, and that though length of journey might be deemed a hindrance, they would yet be like eagles, which come like an arrow from heaven to earth, whenever a prey is observed by them. And eagles are not only rapid in their flight, but they possess also sharpness of sight; for we know that the eyes of eagles are remarkably keen and strong: and it is said that they cast away their young, if they find that they cannot look steadily at the sun; for they regard them as spurious. The Prophet then intimates that the Chaldeans would from a distance observe their prey: as the eagles, who are endued with incredible quickness of sight, see from mid air every carcass lying on the ground; so also would the Chaldeans quickly discover a prey, and come upon it in an instant. Let us proceed.

Habakkuk 1:9

9. They shall come all for violence: their faces shall sup up as the east wind, and they shall gather the captivity as the sand.

9. Tota (semper de ipsa gente loquitur, hoc est. totus ipse populus) ad praedam venict; occursus vultus ipsorum (jam in plurali numera loquitar) ventus orientalis, et colliget quasi arenam captivitatem.

By saying that they would come to the prey, he means that they would have no trouble or labor, for they would be victorious before they had any contest, or had any

[19] Multiples, various: but this is not the meaning of the verb [{;[{פשה it signifies to range at large, or to spread far and wide. The whole verse may be thus rendered,--- And swifter than leopards shall be its horses, And more eager than the wolves of the evening; Spread far and wide shall its horsemen; Yea, its horsemen from far shall come, And fly as an eagle hastening to devour. The horsemen are represented as sweeping the whole country, spreading themselves in all directions; and when espying a prey at a distance, they are said to fly to it like an eagle. The idea of being ``numerous'' or ``abundant,'' as Junius and Tremelius render the verb, is derived from the Rabbins, and is not sanctioned by examples in Scripture. The rendering of the Septuagint is {ἐξιππασονται}, shall ride forth, and of Jerome, diffundentur, shall spread themselves. There is no occasion to borrow a meaning from Arabic, as Henderson does, and to render it ``spread proudly along.'' Newcome follows our common version.---Ed.

war with their enemies. The meaning then is, that the Chaldeans would not come to spend much time in warfare, as when there is a strong power to resist; but that they would only come for the booty, for the Jews would be frightened, and instantly submit themselves. And by these words the Prophet intimates, that there would be neither strength nor courage in a people so refractory: for God thus debilitates the hearts of those who fiercely resist his word. Whenever, then, men become strong against God, he so melts their hearts, that they cannot resist their fellow-mortals; and thus he mocks their confidence, or rather their madness. Lest then the Jews should still harbor any hope from the chance of war, the Prophet says that the Chaldeans would only come for the prey, for all would become subject to them.

He afterwards adds, that the meeting of their faces would be like the oriental wind. The word {גמה}, gime, means what is opposite; and its derivative signifies meeting or opposition (occursus.) We indeed know that the east wind was very injurious to the land of Judea, that it dried up vegetation, yea, that it consumed as it were the whole produce of the earth. The violence of that wind was also very great. Hence whenever the Prophets wished to express a violent impetuosity, they added this comparison of the east wind. It was therefore the same as though the Prophet had said that the Jews would now in vain flatter themselves; for as soon as they perceived the blowing of the east wind, they would flee away, knowing that they would be wholly unable to stand against it. [20]

Hence follows what is added by the Prophets, He shall gather the captivity like the sand; that is, the king of Babylon shall without any trouble subdue all the people, and collect captives innumerable as the sand; for by the sand of the sea is meant an immense number of men. In short, the Prophet shows that the Jews were already conquered; because their striving and their contest had been with God, whom they had so often and so obstinately provoked; and also, because God had chosen for himself such servants as excelled in quickness, and power, and cruelty. This is the sum of the whole. He afterwards adds---

Habakkuk 1:10

10. And they shall scoff at the kings, and the princes shall be a scorn unto them: they shall deride every strong hold; for they shall heap dust, and take it.

10. Et ipse reges ridebit, et principes subsannatio ei; ipse omnem munitionem subsannabit; congregabit pulverem et capiet eam.

The Prophet concludes the subject which he has been hitherto pursuing. He says that the Chaldeans would not come to engage in a doubtful war, but only to triumph

[20] This clause has been variously interpreted. The Targum, Vulgate, and Symmachus, countenance the view given here. There is no help from the Septuagint, as no sense is given. The word [{,[{מגמח only found here, is rendered by Symmachus, {προσοψις}, sight, aspect. Targum explains it by a word which signifies ``front.'' Henderson and Lee regard this as its meaning. Others, as Newcome and Drusius render it, supping up, or absorption, and derive it from ,[{גמא}] to drink up, to absorb; and they regard the idea to be, that the very presence of the Chaldeans would absorb every thing like a scorching wind. But ``the supping up of their faces shall be as the east wind,'' which is Newcome's version, is an odd phrase. The last word has [{ה}] affixed to it, which is never the case when it means the east wind. It is by all admitted, that ``towards the east'' is its proper construction. Hence the most probable rendering of this passage is, ``The aspect of their faces shall be towards the east;'' and with this corresponds what follows, that they should ``gather captives as the sand;'' that is, that they might carry them away to the place where they turned their faces. The version of Henderson, which is essentially that of Symmachus, is the following,--- The aspect of their faces is like the east wind. He owns the difficulty as to the last word, and views it here as in an irregular form. Dathius gives this paraphrase,--- It will have its face direct towards the east. He says that the word ,[{קדום}] by itself never means the pestilential wind from the east; but that when it means this, it has another word attached to it.---Ed.

over conquered nations. We indeed know that the Jews, though not excelling either in number or in riches, were yet so proud, that they looked down, as it were, with contempt on other nations, and we also know, that they vainly trusted in vain helps; for as they were in confederacy with the Egyptians, they thought themselves to be beyond the reach of danger. Hence the Prophet says, that kings and princes would be only a sport to the Chaldeans, and their fortresses would be only a derision to them. How so? For they will gather dust, he says; that is, will make a mound of the dust of the earth, and will thus penetrate into all fortified cities.

In short the Prophet intended to cut off every hope from the Jews, that they might humble themselves before God; or he intended to take away every excuse if they repented not, as it indeed happened; for we know that they did not repent notwithstanding these warnings, until vengeance at length fully overtook them. He then adds---

Habakkuk 1:11

11. Then shall his mind change, and he shall pass over, and offend, imputing this his power unto his god.

11. Tunc mutabit spiritum, et transgredietur, et impie aget: haec virtus ejus deo ipsius.

The Prophet now begins to give some comfort to the faithful, lest they should succumb under so grievous evils. He has hitherto directed his discourse to that irreclaimable people, but he now turns to the remnant; for there were always among them some of the faithful, though few, whom God never neglected; yea, for their sake often he sent his prophets; for though the multitude derived no benefit, yet the faithful understood that God did not threaten in vain, and were thus retained in his fear. This was the reason why the prophets were wont, after having spoken generally, to come down to the faithful, and as it were to comfort them apart and privately. And this difference ought to be noticed, as we have said elsewhere; for when the prophets denounce God's wrath, the discourse then is directed indiscriminately to the whole body of the people; but when they add promises, it is then as though they called the faithful to a private conference, and spake in their ear what had been committed to them by the Lord. The truth might have been useful to all, had they returned to a right mind; but as almost the whole people had hardened themselves in their vices, and as Satan had rendered stupid the minds and hearts of nearly all, it behaved the Prophet to have a special regard to the chosen of God. We now then apprehend his design.

And he says---now he will change his spirit. He bids the faithful to entertain hope, because the Chaldeans, after having poured forth all their fury, will be punished by the Lord for their arrogance, for it will be intolerable. This may indeed seem frigid to ungodly men; for what wonder is it that the Chaldeans, after having obtained so many victories, should grow haughty and exult in their success, as is commonly the case? But as this is a fixed principle with us, that men's pride becomes intolerable to God when they extremely exult and preserve no moderation---this is a very powerful argument---that is, that whosoever thus raises his horns shall suddenly be laid prostrate by the Lord. And Scripture also ever sets this before us, that God beats down

supercilious pride, and does this that we may know that destruction is nigh all the ungodly, when they thus grow violently mad, and know not that they are mortals. It was then for this reason that the Prophet mentions what he says here; it was that the faithful might hope for some end to the violence of their enemies, for God would check their pride when they should transgress. But he says---then He will change his spirit; not that there was before any humility in the Chaldeans, but that success inebriated them, yea, and deprived them of all reason. And it is a common thing that a person who has fortune as it were in his hand, forgets himself, and thinks himself no longer a mortal. Great kings do indeed confess that they are men; but we see how madness lays hold on them; for, as I have said, being deluded by prosperity, they deem themselves to be nothing less than gods.

The Prophet refers here to the king of Babylon and all his people. He will change, he says, his spirit; that is, success will take away from him whatever reason and moderation he had. Now since the proud betray themselves and their disposition when fortune smiles on them, let us learn to form our judgement of men according to this experiment. If we would judge rightly of any man we must see how he bears good and bad fortune; for it may be that he who has borne adversity with a patient, calm and resigned mind, will disappoint us in prosperity, and will so elate himself as to be wholly another man. The Prophet then does not without reason speak of a change of spirit; for though the Chaldeans were before proud, they were not so extremely haughty as when their pride passed all bounds, after their many victories. He will change then his spirit; not that the Chaldeans were another kind of people, but that the Lord thus discovered their madness which was before hid.

He then adds---he will pass over. The Prophet intended to express that when the Lord suffered the Chaldeans to rule far and wide, a way was thus opened for his judgements, which is far different from the judgement of the flesh. For the more power men acquire the more boldness they assume; and it seemed to tend to the establishing of their power that they knew how to use their success. But the Lord, as I have said, was secretly preparing a way to destroy them, when they thus became proud and passed all bounds; hence the Prophet does not simply condemn the haughtiness and pride of the Chaldeans, but shows that a way is already open, as it were, for God's judgement, that he might destroy them, inasmuch as they would render themselves intolerable.

He afterwards adds---and shall act impiously. The verb {אשם}, ashem I refer to the end of the verse---where he ascribes his power to his own god. And the Prophet adds this explanation, in order that the Jews might know what kind of sin would be the sin of the king of Babylon. He then charges him with sacrilege, because he would think that he had become the conqueror of Judea through the kindness of his idol, so that he would make nothing of the power and glory of the true God. Since then the Babylonian would transfer God's glory to his own idol, his own ruin would be thus made ripe; for the Lord would undertake his own cause, and execute vengeance on such a sacrilege; for he speaks here no doubt of the Babylonian, and according to his view, when he says---

This his strength is that of his god; but were any inclined to explain this of the

true God, as some do, he would make a harsh and a forced construction; for the Babylonians did not worship the true God, but were devoted, as it is well known, to their own superstitions. The Prophet then no doubt makes known here to the faithful the pride with which the Babylonians would become elated, and thus provoke God's wrath against themselves; and also the sacrilegious boasting in which they would indulge, ascribing the victories given them to their own idols, which could not be done without daring reproach to the true God. [21] It now follows---

Habakkuk 1:12

12. Art thou not from everlasting, O LORD my God, mine Holy One? we shall not die. O LORD, thou hast ordained them for judgement; and, O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction.

12. Annon tu ab initio, (vel, jampridem,) Jehova, Deus meus? sanctus meus, non moriemur; Jehova, ad judicium posiusti eum; et fortis, ad castigationem fundasti eum.

The Prophet now exulting, according to what all the faithful feel, shows the effect of what he has just mentioned; for as ungodly men wantonly rise up against God, and, while Satan renders them insane, throw out swelling words of vanity, as though they could by speaking confound earth and heaven; so also the faithful derive a holy confidence from God's word, and set themselves against them, and overcome their ferocity by the magnanimity and firmness of their own minds, so that they can intrepidly boast that they are happy and blessed even in the greatest miseries.

This then is what the prophet means when he adds---Art not thou our God? The question is much more emphatical than if he had simply declared that the true God was worshipped in Judea, and would therefore be the protector of that nation; for when the Prophet puts a question, he means, according to what is commonly understood in Hebrew, that the thing admits of no doubt. ``What! art not thou our God?'' We hence see that there is a contrast between the wicked and impious boastings in which the profane indulge, and the holy confidence which the faithful have, who exult in their God. But that the discourse is addressed to God rather than to the ungodly is not done without reason, for it would have been useless to contend with the wicked. This is indeed sometimes necessary, for when the reprobate openly reproach God we cannot restrain ourselves; nor is it right that we refrain from testifying that we regard all their slanders as of no account; but we cannot so courageously oppose their audacity as when we have the matter first settled between us and God, and be able to say with the Prophets---``Thou art our God.'' Whosoever then would boldly

[21] The foregoing verse is one on which no satisfactory explanation has been given. The one adopted here has been materially followed by Vatablus, Druius, and Dathius, except as to the last clause. As to the first part of the verse Henderson gives the best sense, for it corresponds with "changing" to [{חלף and ``courage'' to ,[{רוח}] (see Joshua 2:11; 5:1;) and of ``passing onward'' to ,[{עבר}] and not of ``passing over,'' i.e. bounds or moderation, which it seems not to have, when used, as here, intransitively. The passing here is evidently what is referred to in verse 6, as the renewing of courage would arise, from the success mentioned in verse 10. The best exposition of the last clause is what Grotius has suggested, and has been followed by Marckius and Dathius---that the Chaldeans made their own strength their God; (see verse 16;) the rendering then would be this,--- Then will it renew courage, And pass through, and become guilty; --- This is strength being its god, or literally, This is strength for its god. There is an inconsistency in our version, and also in Calvin, as to this passage, from verse 6 to the end of this verse. The number is changed. The ``bitter nation,'' mentioned in verse 6, is meant throughout; and we ought to adopt the plural number throughout, as Newcome does, or, according to Henderson, the singular. There is no change of person, as some suppose, at the beginning of verse 10; for ,[{הוא}] there, and [{הוא}] in verse 6 is the same---the ``bitter nation.''---Ed.

contend with the ungodly must first have to do with God, and confirm and ratify as it were that compact which God has proposed to us, even that we are his people, and that he in his turn will be always our God. As then God thus covenants with us, our faith must be really made firm, and then let us go forth and contend against all the ungodly. This is the order which the Prophet observes here, and what is to be observed by us---Art not thou our God?

He also adds---long since, {מקדם}, mekodam, by which word the Prophet invites the attention of the faithful to the covenant which God had made, not yesterday nor the day before that, with his people, but many ages before, even 400 years before he redeemed their fathers from Egypt. Since then the favor of God to the Jews had been confirmed for so long a time, it is not without reason that the Prophet says here---Thou art our God from the beginning; that is, ``the religion which we embrace has been delivered to us by thy hands, and we know that thou art its author; for our faith recumbs not on the opinion of men, but is sustained by thy word. Since, then, we have found so often and in so many ways, and for so many years, that thou art our God, there is now no room for doubt.'' [22]

He then subjoins---we shall not die. What the Jews say of this place, that it had been corrected by the scribes, seems not to me probable; for the reason they give is very frivolous. They suppose that it was written lo tamut, Thou diest not, and that the letter nun had been introduced, ``we shall not die,'' because the expression offended those scribes, as though the Prophet compared God to men, and ascribed to him a precarious immortality; but they would have been very foolish critics. I therefore think that the word was written by the Prophet as we now read it, Thou art our God, we shall not die. Some explain this as a prayer---``let us not die;'' and the future is often taken in this sense in Hebrew; but this exposition is not suitable to the present passage; for the Prophet, as I have already said, rises up here as a conqueror, and disperses as mists all those foolish boastings of which he had been speaking, as though he said---``we shall not die, for we are under the protection of God.''

I have already explained why he turns his discourse to God: but this is yet the conclusion of the argument,---that as God had adopted that people, and received them into favor, and testified that he would be their defender, the Prophet confidently draws this inference,---that this people cannot perish, for they are preserved by God. No power of the world, nor any of its defences, can indeed afford us this security; for whatever forces may all mortals bring either to protect or help us, they shall all perish together with us. Hence, the protection of God alone is that which can deliver us from the danger of death. We now perceive why the Prophet joins together

[22] Most commentators agree with our version in connecting "from the beginning," or "from eternity," with Jehovah, and not as Calvin seems to do, with "God." His view is evidently the most consonant with the design of the passage, and countenanced by the Septuagint, for Jehovah is rendered {κυριε}, in the vocative case. To assert the eternity of God seems not to be necessary here; but to say that he had been from old times the God of Israel is what is suitable to the context. The Prophet in saying ``my God,'' identifies himself with the people; for he says afterwards, ``we shall not die.'' Viewed in this light the former part of the verse may be thus rendered,--- Art not thou from of old, O Jehovah, my God! My holy one, we shall not die. The reason for which he calls him ``holy'' will appear from what the next verse contains. The Prophet seems to sustain himself by two considerations---that Jehovah was the God of Israel, and that he was a holy God. When he says ``we shall not die,'' he means, no doubt, as Marckius observes, that the people as a nation would not be destroyed, for he had prophesied of their subjugation and captivity by the Chaldeans. What he had in view was the Church of God, respecting which promises had been made.---Ed.

these two things, ``Thou art our God,'' and ``We shall not die;'' nor can indeed the one be separated from the other; for when we are under the protection of God, we must necessarily continue safe and safe for ever; not that we shall be free from evils, but that the Lord will deliver us from thousand deaths, and ever preserve our life in safety. When only he affords us a taste of eternal salvation, some spark of life will ever continue in our hearts, until he shows to us, when at length redeemed, as I have already said, from thousand deaths, the perfection of that blessed life, which is now promised to us, but as yet is looked for, and therefore hid under the custody of hope.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou settest around us so many terrors, we may know that we ought to be roused, and to resist the sloth and tardiness of our flesh, so that thou mayest fortify us by a different confidence: and may we so recumb on thine aid, that we may boldly triumph over our enemies, and never doubt, but that thou wilt at length give us the victory over all the assaults of Satan and of the wicked; and may we also so look to thee, that our faith may wholly rest on that eternal and immutable covenant, which has been confirmed for us by the blood of thy only Son, until we shall at length be united to him who is our head, after having passed through all the miseries of the present life, and having been gathered into that eternal inheritance, which thy Son has purchased for us by his own blood. Amen.

Lecture One hundred and Eighth

We began yesterday to explain the words of the Prophet, by which he encouraged himself and the faithful, and obtained support under circumstances bordering on despair; for he turned to God, when he saw the wicked, not only elated with prosperity, but also pouring forth blasphemies against the living God. The Prophet then says, that those who are under God's protection shall not perish. Of this he felt assured within himself. The declaration, as I have said, is much more striking, as the Prophet turns all his thoughts towards God, than if he had publicly and loudly declared what he testified, as it were, in a private conference.

But it was not without reason that he said, ``Thou, my God, my holy one;'' as though he had said, ``I trust in thee, inasmuch as I am one of thy chosen people.'' He does not indeed speak here in his own private name, but includes with himself the whole Church; for this privilege belonged to all the children of Abraham, as they had been set apart by the gratuitous adoption of God, and were a royal priesthood. This is the reason why the Prophet says, Thou, my God, my holy one. For the Jews were wont thus to call God, because they had been chosen from the rest of the world. And their holiness was, that God had deigned to take them as his people, having rejected others, while yet there was by nature no difference between them. [23]

There is, moreover, much weight in the words which follow, Jehovah! for judgement has thou set him. This temptation ever occurs to us, whenever we strive to put

[23] It seems that Calvin regarded "my holy one," as equivalent to "my sanctifier;" he who had separated the people from others to be his own. The primary meaning of [{[{קדש is no doubt to separate a thing from a common use to a sacred one; but whether in this connection it has this meaning is not quite certain. ``The holy one of Israel'' is a phrase several times used by Isaiah, see chapter 30:11; 43:3, etc. The sentence here may be rendered, ``God of my holiness,'' or ``My God, my holiness.''---Ed.

our trust in God---What does this mean? for God now forsakes us, and exposes us to the caprice of the wicked they are allowed to do what they please, and God interferes not. How, then, can we cherish hope under these perplexities?'' The Prophet now sets up a shield against this temptations---``Thou,'' he says, ``hast appointed him for judgement.'' For he ascribes it to God's providence, that the Assyrians had with so much wantonness wasted the land, or would waste it when they came; for he speaks of things yet future---``Thou,'' he says, ``hast appointed him for judgement.''

This is a truth much needed: for Satan darkens, as with clouds, the favor of God, when any adversity happens to us, and when God himself thus proves our faith. But adversities are as it were clouds, excluding us from seeing God's fervor, as the light of the sun appears not to us when the sky is darkened. If, indeed, the mass of evils be so great and so thick, that our minds are overwhelmed, they are not clouds, but the thick darkness of night. In that case our faith cannot stand firm, except the providence of God comes to our view, so that we may know, in the midst of such confusion, why he permits so much liberty to the wicked, and also how their attempts may turn out, and what may be the issue. Except then we be fully persuaded, that God by his secret providence regulates all these confusions, Satan will a hundred times a day, yea every moment, shake that confidence which ought to repose in God. We now see how opportunely the Prophet adds this clause. He had said, ``Art not thou our God? we shall not die.'' He now subjoins this by way of anticipation, ``The Assyrians indeed do lay waste thy land as with an unbridled wantonness, they plunder thy people, and with impunity slay the innocent; but, O Lord, this is not done but by thy permission: Thou overrules all these confused proceedings, nor is all this done by thee without a cause. Thou, Jehovah, hast for judgement appointed him.---Judgement is to be taken for chastisement.

But the Prophet repeats the same thing, and, being strong, thou hast for correction established him. Some render {צור}, tsur strong, in the accusative case, and give a twofold explanation. One party apply the term to the Jews, who were to be subdued by hard means, since they were so refractory; and hence they think that the Jews are called strong, because they were like stones. Others give this meaning, Thou hast made him strong to correct; that is, Thou hast given him strength, by which he will chastise us. But as this is one of God's titles, I doubt not but that the two clauses correspond. He now, then, gives this name to God. Having given him his name as an eternal God, Thou, Jehovah, etc.; he now calls him strong. He puts {צור}, tsur to correspond with Jehovah; and then to correct, to correspond with judgement. We hence see how well the whole context agrees, and how the words answer, the one to the other. Then it is, Thou, strong one, hast established him to correct. But why does the Prophet call him strong? though this title, as I have said, is commonly ascribed to God, yet the Prophet, I have no doubt, had regard to the circumstances at the time. It is indeed difficult to retain this truth,---that the world is ruled by the secret counsel of God, when things are turned upside down: for the profane then glamour against God, and charge him with listlessness; and others cry out, that all things are thus changed fortuitously and at random; and hence they call fortune blind. It is then difficult, as I have said, to retain a fast hold on this truth. The Prophet, therefore, in

order to support his own weakness, sets before himself this title of God, Thou, the strong God, or the rock, etc.; for {צור}, tsur means properly a rock, but it is to be taken here for God of strength. Why? ``Behold, we indeed see revolutions, which not only make our faith to totter, but also dissipate as it were all our thoughts: but how much soever the world revolve in confusion, yet God is a rock; His purpose fails not, nor wavers; but remains ever firm.'' We now then see why the Prophet calls God strong. [24]

Thou the strong one, he says, hast established him. He expresses more by the word established, than in the first clause: for he prepared himself with firmness against continued evils, in case God (as it might be easily conjectured) would not give immediate relief to his people, but add calamities to calamities. Should God then join evils to evils, the Prophet prepares himself for perseverance; ``Thou,'' he says, ``the strong one hast established him;'' that is, ``Though the Assyrian should not only like a whirlwind or a violent tempest rush upon us, but also continue to oppress us, as though he were a pestilence attached to the land, or some fixed mountain, yet thou, Lord, hast established him.'' For what purpose? to correct. But the Prophet could not have said this, had he not known that God justly chastised his people. Not only for his own sake did he say this; but he intended also, by his own example, to lead the faithful to make the same holy and pious confession.

The two clauses of this sentence then are these, that though the Assyrian would rage with unbridled wantonness, like a cruel wild beast, he would yet be restrained by the hidden power of God, to whom it peculiarly belongs to overrule by his secret providence the confusions of this world. This is one thing. The Prophet also ascribes justice to God's power, and thus confesses his own guilt and that of the people; for the Lord would justly use so severe a scourge, because the people needed such a correction. Let us now go on---

Habakkuk 1:13

13. Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?

13. Mundus es oculis, ne videas malum, et aspicere ad molestiam non potes (non poteris, adverbum;) quare aspicis transgressores? dissimulas quum impius devorat justiorem se?

The Prophet here expostulates with God, not as at the beginning of the chapter; for he does not here, with a holy and calm mind, undertake the defense of God's glory, but complains of injuries, as men do when oppressed, who go to the judge and implore his protection. This complaint, then, is to be distinguished from the former one; for at the beginning of the chapter the Prophet did not plead his own cause or that of the people; but zeal for God's glory roused him, so that he in a manner asked God to take vengeance on so great an obstinacy in wickedness; but he now comes

[24] Many agree in this view, Drusius, Piscator, Marckius, Henderson, etc. The Septuagint affords no help. The rendering of Symmachus is {κραταιον}, strong, and of Aquila, {στερεον}, firm; then it would be, ``and strong (or firm) for correction hast thou established him.'' Grotius, and also Newcome, adopt this meaning. And thou hast founded them on a rock to chasten us This is, no doubt, the easiest and most natural construction. See Ezekiel 3:9. God rendered the Chaldean nation firm, and strong, and resolute, to punish the Jews.---Ed.

down and expresses the feelings of men; for he speaks of the thoughts and sorrows of those who had suffered injuries under the tyranny of their enemies.

And he says, O God, thou art pure in eyes, thou lookest not on evil. Some render the verb {טהור}, theur in the imperative mood, clear the eyes; but they are mistaken; for the verse contains two parts, the one contrary to the other. The Prophet reasons from the nature of God, and then he states what is of an opposite character. Thou, God, he says, art pure in eyes; hence thou canst not look on evil; it is not consistent with thy nature to pass by the vices of men, for every iniquity is hateful to thee. Thus the Prophet sets before himself the nature of God. Then he adds, that experience is opposed to this; for the wicked, he says, exult; and while they miserably oppress the innocent, no one affords any help. How is this, except that God sleeps in heaven, and neglects the affairs of men? We now then understand the Prophet's meaning in this verse. [25]

By saying that God is pure in eyes, he assumes what ought to be deemed certain and indubitable by all men of piety. But as God's justice does not always appear, the Prophet has a struggle; and he shows that he in a manner vacillated, for he did not see in the state of things before him what yet his piety dictated to him, that is, that God was just and upright. It is indeed true, that the second part of the verse borders on blasphemy: for though the Prophet ever thought honourably and reverently of God, yet he murmurs here, and indirectly charges God with too much tardiness, as he connived at things, while he saw the just shamefully oppressed by the wicked. But we must notice the order which the Prophet keeps. For by saying that God is pure in eyes, he no doubt restrains himself. As there was danger lest this temptation should carry him too far, he meets it in time, and includes himself, in a manner, within this boundary---that we ought to retain a full conviction of God's justice. The same order is observed by Jeremiah when he says, `I know, Lord, that thou art just, but how is it that the ungodly do thus pervert all equity? and thou either takest no notice, or dost not apply any remedy. I would therefore freely contend with thee.' The Prophet does not immediately break out into such an expression as this, ``O Lord, I will contend with thee in judgement:'' but before he mentions his complaint, knowing that his feelings were strongly excited, he makes a kind of preface, and in a manner restrains himself, that he might check that extreme ardor which might have otherwise carried him beyond due bounds; ``Thou art just, O Lord,'' he says. In a similar manner does our prophet speak here, Thou art pure in eyes, so as not to behold evil; and thou canst not look on trouble

[25] Adjectives and participles in Hebrew commonly take a plural form, but not always, as evidently in the present case; for the word for "pure," though singular, will admit of a better construction with "eyes" than in any other way; and so Grotius renders the clause, "Purer are thine eyes," etc.; which is better than our version, followed by Newcome and Henderson. The whole passage will thus read better:— Purer are thine eyes than to behold evil, And to look on wickedness thou art not able: Why then lookest thou on the perfidious, And art still when the wicked swallows up One more righteous than himself? And makest man to be like the fish of the sea, Like the reptile which has no ruler? "Evil" means here wrong, injustice; the corresponding clause is "the wicked" swallowing up or oppressing his better. The Jews were bad, but better than the Chaldeans. "Wickedness," [{,עמל} is such a mischief as is done through treachery: hence in the next line, which, according to the style of the Prophets, corresponds with this, ``the perfidious'' are mentioned, improperly rendered ``plunderers'' by Henderson, and ``transgressors'' by Newcome. The Chaldeans had been the allies of the Jews. With respect to the reptile or the crawling fish, such as keep to the bottom of the waters, why is it said to be without a ruler? Is it more insulated and less gregarious, so to speak, than other fish? If so, ``without a ruler'' has an obvious meaning.---Ed.

Since, he says, thou canst not look on trouble, we find that he confirms himself in that truth---that the justice of God cannot be separated from his very nature: and by saying, {תוכל} {לא}, la tucal, ``thou canst not,'' it is the same as though he had said, ``Thou, O Lord, art just, because thou art God; and God, because thou art just.'' For these two things cannot be separated, as both the eternity, and the very being of God, cannot stand without his justice. We hence see how strenuously the Prophet struggled against his own impetuosity, so that he might not too much indulge himself in the complaint, which immediately follows.

For he then asks, according to the common judgement of the flesh, Why dost thou look on, when the ungodly devours one more just than himself? The Prophet here does not divest God of his power, but speaks in doubt, and contends not so much with God as with himself. A profane man would have said, ``There is no God, there is no providence,'' or, ``He cares not for the world, he takes his pleasure in heaven.'' But the Prophet says, ``Thou seest, Lord.'' Hence he ascribes to God what peculiarly belongs to him---that he does not neglect the world which he has created. At the same time he here inclines two ways, and alternates; Why does thou look on, when the ungodly devours one more just than himself? He says not that the world revolves by chance, nor that God takes his delight and ease in heaven, as the Epicureans hold; but he confesses that the world is seen by God, and that he exercises care over the affairs of men: notwithstanding, as he could not see his way clear in a state of things so confused, he argues the point rather with himself than with God. We now see the import of this sentence. The Prophet, however, proceeds---

Habakkuk 1:14, 15

14. And makest men as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things, that have no ruler over them?

14. Facis hominem quasi pisces maris, quasi reptile, quod caret duce (ad verbum, non est dux in illo.)

15. They take up all of them with the angle, they catch them in their net, and gather them in their drag: therefore they rejoice and are glad.

15. Totum hamo suo attrahet, colliget in sagenam suam, et congregabit in rete suum; propterea gaudebit et exultabit (hoc est, gaudet et exultat.)

He goes on, as it has been said, in his complaint; and by a comparison he shows that the judgement would be such as though God turned away from men, so as not to check the violence of the wicked, nor oppose his hand to their wantonness, in order to restrain them. Since, then, every one would oppress another as he exceeded him in power, and would with increased insolence rise up against the miserable and the poor, the Prophet compares man to the fish of the sea,---``What can this mean?'' he says. ``For men have been created after God's image: why then does not some justice appear among them? When one devours another, and even one man oppresses almost the whole world, what can be the meaning of this? God seems to sport with human affairs. For if he regards men as his children, why does he not defend them by his power? But we see one man (for he speaks of the Assyrian king) so enraged and so cruel, as though the rest of the world were like fish or reptiles.'' Thou makes men, he says, like reptiles or fishes; and then he adds, He draws up the whole by his

hook, he collects them into his drag, he gathers them into his net, he exults [26]

We now see what the Prophet means---that God would, as it were, close his eyes, while the Assyrians wantonly laid waste the whole world: and when this tyranny should reach the holy land, what else could the faithful think but that they were forsaken by God? And there is nothing, as I have already said, more monstrous, than that iniquitous tyranny should thus prevail among men; for they have all, from the least to the greatest, been created after God's image. God then ought to exercise peculiar care in preserving mankind; his paternal love and solicitude ought in this respect to appear evident: but when men are thus destroyed with impunity, and one oppresses almost all the rest, there seems indeed to be no divine providence. For how will it be that he will care for either birds, or oxen, or asses, or trees, or plants, when he will thus forsake men, and bring no aid in so confused a state? We now understand the drift of what the Prophet says.

But yet he does not, as I have already said, take away from God his power, nor does he here rail against fortune, as many cavillers do. Thou makest men, he says: he ascribes to God what cannot be taken from him,---that he governs the world. But as to God's justice, he hesitates, and appeals to God. Though the Prophet seems here to rush headlong like insane men; yet if we consider all things, we shall see that he strenuously contended with his temptations, and even in these words some sparks at least of faith will shine forth, which are sufficient to show to us the great firmness of the Prophet. For this especially is worthy of being noticed,---that the Prophet turns himself to God. The Epicureans, when they glamour against God, for the most part, seek the ear of the multitude; and so they speak evil of God and withdraw themselves at a distance from him; for they do not think that he exercises any care over the world. But the Prophet continually addresses God. He knew then that God was the governor of all things. He also desires to be extricated from thoughts so thorny and perplexing; and from whom does he seek relief? From God himself. When the profane wantonly deride God, they indulge themselves, and seek nothing else but to become hardened in their own impious conjectures: but the Prophet comes to God himself, ``How does this happen, O Lord?'' As though he had said,

``Thou sees how I am distracted, and also held fast bound---distracted by many absurd thoughts, so that I am almost confounded, and held fast bound by great perplexities, from which I cannot extricate myself. Do thou, O Lord, unfold to me these knots, and concentrate my scattered thoughts, that I may understand what is true, and what I am to believe; and especially remove from me this doubt, lest it should shake my faith; O Lord, grant that I may at length know and fully understand

[26] The construction of this verse can only be understood by a reference to the preceeding verse; where two things are mentioned, the fish of the sea and the reptile: as it is customary with the Prophets, the first clause was rasied up by a hook, and the fish were enclosed in a net, or collected by a drag. The reptile, [{,רמש}], is in the singular number, and used in a collective sense, and ,[{כלה}] every one, at the beginning of this verse, is in the same number. This entirely removes the difficulty which critics have felt, and made them to propose emendations. The verse then would read thus:--- Every one (i.e. every reptile) by a hook he raises up He draws them out (i.e. the fish) by his net, And collects them by his drag; He therefore rejoices, and exults. To ``gather then into the net'' can hardly be sense; nor is ``in the net'' much better. The drawing out and the collecting were evidently by the net and the drag; the preposition, ,[{ב}] has very commonly this meaning, as {ἐν} in Greek. The representation here is, that every means would be employed: men being compared to fishes, some are set forth as creeping along the bottom, and others as swimming at large at all depths; and then the fisherman, the Chaldean comes, and draws out the first by a fishing-hook, and the rest by a net and a drag; so that he takes them all.---Ed.

how thou art just, and overrules, consistently with perfect equity, those things which seem to be so confused.''

It also happens sometimes that the ungodly, as it were, openly revile God, a satanic rage having taken possession on them. But the case was far different with the Prophet; for finding himself overwhelmed and his mind not able to sustain him under so heavy trials, he sought relief, and as we have said, applied to God himself.

By saying, He therefore rejoices and exults, he increases the indignity; for though the Lord may for a time permit the wicked to oppress the innocent, yet when he finds them glorying in their vices and triumphing, so great a wantonness ought the more to kindle his vengeance. That the Lord then should still withhold himself, seems indeed very strange. But the Prophet proceeds---

Habakkuk 1:16

16. Therefore they sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense unto their drag; because by them their portion is fat, and their meat plenteous.

16. Propterea sacrificabit sagenae suae, et suffitum offeret reti suo, quia in illis pinguis portio ejus, et cibus ejus lautus.

The Prophet confirms the closing sentence of the last verse; for he explains what that joy was of which he had spoken, even the joy by which the wicked, as it were, designedly provoke God against themselves. It is indeed an abominable thing when the ungodly take delight in their vices; but it is still more atrocious when they deride God himself. Such, then, is the account now added by the Prophet, as though he had said, ``Not only do the ungodly felicitate themselves while thou sparest them, or for a time bearest with them; but they now rise up against thee and deride all thy majesty, and openly blaspheme against heaven itself; for they sacrifice to their own net, and offer incense to their drag.'' By this metaphor the Prophet intimates, that the wicked do not only become hardened when they succeed in their vices, but that they also ascribe to themselves the praise of justice; for they consider that to be rightly done which has been attended with success. They thus dethrone God, and put themselves in his place. We now then see the Prophet's meaning.

But this passage discovers to us the secret impiety of all those who do not serve God sincerely and with an honest mind. There is indeed imprinted on the hearts of men a certain conviction respecting the existence of a God; for none are so barbarous as not to have some sense of religion: and thus all are rendered inexcusable, as they carry in their hearts a law which is sufficient to make them a thousand times guilty. But at the same time the ungodly, and those who are not illuminated by faith, bury this knowledge, for they are enveloped in themselves: and when some recollection of God creeps in, they are at first impressed, and ascribe some honor to him; but this is evanescent, for they soon suppress it as much as they can; yea they even strive to extinguish (though they cannot) this knowledge and whatever light they have from heaven. This is what the Prophet now graphically sets forth in the person of the Assyrian king. He had before said, ``This power is that of his God.'' He had complained that the Assyrians would give to their idols what was peculiar to God alone, and thus deprive him of his right: but he says now, that they would sacrifice to their own drag, and offer incense to their net. This is a very different thing: for how

could they sacrifice to their idols, if they ascribed to their drag whatever victories they had gained? Now, by the words drag and net, the Prophet means their efforts, strength, forces, power, counsels, and policies as they call them, and whatever else there be which profane men arrogate to themselves. But what is it to sacrifice to their own net? The Assyrian did this, because he thought that he surpassed all others in craftiness, because he thought himself so courageous as not to hesitate to make war with all nations, regarding himself well prepared with forces and justified in his proceedings; and because he became successful and omitted nothing calculated to ensure victory. Thus the Assyrian, as I have said, regarded as nothing his idols; for he put himself in the place of all the gods. But if it be asked whence came his success, we must answer, that the Assyrian ought to have ascribed it all to the one true God: but he thought that he prospered through his own valour. If we refer to counsel, it is certain that God is he who governs the counsels and minds of men; but the Assyrian thought that he gained everything by his own skill. If, again, we speak of strength, whence was it? and of courage, whence was it, but from God? but the Assyrian appropriated all these things to himself. What regard, then, had he for God? We see how he now takes away all honor even from his own idols, and attributes everything to himself.

But this sin, as I have already said, belongs to all the ungodly; for where God's Spirit does not reign, there is no humility, and men ever swell with inward pride, until God thoroughly cleanse them. It is then necessary that God should empty us by his special grace, that we may not be filled with this satanic pride, which is innate, and which cannot by any means be shaken off by us, until the Lord regenerates us by his Spirit. And this may be seen especially in all the kings of this world. They indeed confess that kings rule through God's grace; and then when they gain any victory, supplications are made, vows are paid. But were any one to say to those conquerors, ``God had mercy on you,'' the answer would be, ``What! was then my preparation nothing? did I not provide many things beforehand? did I not attain the friendship of many? did I not form confederacies? did I not foresee such and such disadvantages? did I not opportunely provide a remedy?'' In a word, they sacrifice apparently to God, but afterwards they have a regard mainly to their drag and their net, and make nothing of God. Well would it be were these things not so evident. But since the Spirit of God sets before us a lively image of the fact, let us learn what true humility is, and that we then only have this, when we think that we are nothing, and can do nothing, and that it is God alone who not only supports and continues us in life, but also governs us by his Spirit, and that it is he who sustains our hearts, gives courage, and then blesses us, so as to render prosperous what we may undertake. Let us hence learn that God cannot be really glorified, except when men wholly empty themselves.

He then adds, because in (or by) them is his fat portion and his rich meat. Though some render {בראה}, berae, choice meat, and others, fat meat, I yet prefer the meaning of rich. [27] His meat then will be rich. The Prophet intimates here that men

[27] "His fat portion and rich meat" were the people whom he conquered. The words verbatim are these,— For through them abundant his portion, And his meat well-fed. The comparison of the drag and net is continued; by which is signified military strength and power. See Isaiah

are so blinded by prosperity that they sacrifice to themselves, and hence the more deserving of reproof is their ingratitude; for the more liberally God deals with us the more reason, no doubt, there is why we ought to glorify him. But when men, well supplied and fully satisfied, thus swell with pride and sacrifice to themselves, is not their impiety in this manner more completely discovered? But the Prophet not only proves that the Assyrians abused God's bounty, but he shows in their person what is the disposition of the whole world. For when men accumulate great wealth, and pile up a great heap from the property of others, they become more and more blinded. We hence see that we ought justly to fear the evil of prosperity, lest our fatness should so increase that we can see nothing; for the eyes are dimmed by excessive fatness. Let this then be ever remembered by us. The Prophet then concludes his discourse: but as one verse of the first chapter only remains, I shall briefly notice it.

Habakkuk 1:17

17. Shall they therefore empty their net, and not spare continually to slay the nations?

17. An propterea extendet [28] sagenam suam, et assiduus erit ad occidendas gentes, ut non parcat (alii vertuat, annon negative; atqui debuisset esse {לע}-{וכ}[] ?([{אלה}

This is an affirmative question, ``Shall they therefore;'' which, however, requires a negative answer. Then all interpreters are mistaken; for they think that the Prophet here complains, that he presently extends his net after having made a capture, but he rather means, ``Is he ever to extend his net?'' that is, ``How long, O Lord, wilt thou permit the Assyrians to proceed to new plunders, so as to be like the hunter, who after having taken a boar or a stag, is more eager, and immediately renews his hunting; or like the fisherman, who having filled his little ship, with more avidity pursues his vocation? Wilt thou, Lord, he says, suffer the Assyrians to become more assiduous in their work of destruction?'' And he shows how unworthy they were of God's forbearance, for they slew the nations. ``I speak not here,'' he says, ``either of fish or of any other animal, nor do I speak of this or that man, but I speak of many nations. As these slaughters are thus carried on through the whole world, how long, Lord, shall they be unpunished? for they will never cease.'' We now see the purport of the Prophet's complaint; but we shall find in the next lecture how he recovers himself.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that as it cannot be but that, owing to the infirmity of our flesh, we must be shaken and tossed here and there by the many turbulent commotions of this world,---O grant, that our faith may be sustained by this support---that thou art the governor of the world, and that men were not only once created by thee, but are also preserved by thy hand, and that thou art also a just judge, so that we may duly restrain ourselves; and though we must often have to bear many insults,

10:13.—Ed.

[28] The verb is [{,[[,יריק a hiphil form, and means, to evacuate, to empty, to empty out, and this is the sense in which it is taken here by Drusius, Marckius, Newcome, and Henderson. But the verb means also to draw out, i.e., a sword, Exodus 15:9, Leviticus 26:33, and to draw forth, i.e., an army, Genesis 14:14, and this is the meaning given to it by Grotius, Junius, and the Septuagint. To draw forth, to extend, or to expand, seems most in accordance with the drift of the passage. To empty his net, and that for the sake of filling it again, which must be what is implied, is rather a farfetched notion.---Ed.

let us yet never fail, until our faith shall become victorious over all trials, and until we, having passed through continued succession of contests, shall at length reach that celestial rest, which Christ thy Son has obtained for us. Amen.

CHAPTER 2

Lecture One Hundred and Ninth

Habakkuk 2

H

Habakkuk 2:1

1. I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved.

1. Super speculam meam stabo, et statuam me super arcem, et speculabor ad videndum quid loquatur mecum, et quid respondeam ad increpationem meam.

We have seen in the first chapter Habakkuk 1:2-3 that the Prophet said in the name of all the faithful. It was indeed a hard struggle, when all things were in a perplexed state and no outlet appeared. The faithful might have thought that all things happened by chance, that there was no divine providence; and even the Prophet uttered complaints of this kind. He now begins to recover himself from his perplexities; and he ever speaks in the person of the godly, or of the whole Church. For what is done by some interpreters, who confine what is said to the prophetic office, I do not approve; and it may be easy from the contempt to learn, that the Prophet does not speak according to his private feeling, but that he represents the feelings of all the godly. So then we ought to collect this verse with the complaints, which we have before noticed; for the Prophet, finding himself sinking, and as it were overwhelmed in the deepest abyss, raises himself up above the judgement and reason of men, and comes nearer to God, that he might see from on high the things which take place on earth, and not judge according to the understanding of his own flesh, but by the light of the Holy Spirit. For the tower of which he speaks is patience arising from hope. If indeed we would struggle perseveringly to the last, and at length obtain the victory over all trials and conflicts, we must rise above the world.

Some understand by tower and citadel the Word of God: and this may in some measure be allowed, though not in every respect suitable. If we more fully weigh the reason for the metaphor, we shall be at no loss to know that the tower is the recess of the mind, where we withdraw ourselves from the world; for we find how disposed we are all to entertain distrust. When, therefore, we follow our own inclination, various

temptations immediately lay hold on us; nor can we even for a moment exercise hope in God: and many things are also suggested to us, which take away and deprive us of all confidence: we become also involved in variety of thoughts, for when Satan finds men wandering in their imaginations and blending many things together, he so entangles them that they cannot by any means come nigh to God. If then we would cherish faith in our hearts, we must rise above all these difficulties and hindrances. And the Prophet by tower means this, that he extricated himself from the thoughts of the flesh; for there would have been no end nor termination to his doubts, had he tried to form a judgement according to his own understanding; I will stand, he says, on my tower, [29] I and I will set myself on the citadel. In short, the sentence carries this meaning---that the Prophet renounced the judgement of men, and broke through all those snares by which Satan entangles us and prevents us to rise above the earth.

He then adds, I will watch to see what he may say to me, that is, I will be there vigilant; for by watching he means vigilance and waiting, as though he had said, ``Though no hope should soon appear, I shall not despond; nor shall I forsake my station; but I shall remain constantly in that tower, to which I wish now to ascend: I will watch then to see what he may say to me.'' The reference is evidently to God; for the opinion of those is not probable, who apply this ``saying'' to the ministers of Satan. For the Prophet says first, `I will see what he may say to me,' and then he adds, `and what I shall answer.' They who explain the words `what he may say,' as referring to the wicked who might oppose him for the purpose of shaking his faith, overlook the words of the Prophet, for he speaks here in the singular number; and as there is no name expressed, the Prophet no doubt meant God. But were the words capable of admitting this explanation, yet the very drift of the argument shows, that the passage has the meaning which I have attached to it. For how could the faithful answer the calumnies by which their faith was assailed, when the profane opprobriously mocked and derided them---how could they satisfactorily disprove such blasphemies, did they not first attend to what God might say to them? For we cannot confute the devil and his ministers, except we be instructed by the word of God. We hence see that the Prophet observes the best order in what he states, when he says in the first place, `I will see what God may say to me;' and in the second place, `I shall then be taught to answer to my chiding;' [30] that is, ``If the wicked deride my

[29] On my watch-tower, [{;משמרתי}] the word means commonly the office, or the act of watching, but here it means evidently the place; the verb ``stand'' and the corresponding word [{מצור}] fortress, or citadel, in the next line, prove clearly that this is its meaning here. The metaphor is taken from the practice of ascending a high tower, when any messenger was expected with news. That any locality is meant here is supported by nothing in the passage. The Prophet puts himself in an attitude of waiting for an answer from God to the complaints which he had made: and the metaphor of ``tower and citadel'' is most beautifully applied by Calvin, and in a very instructive and striking manner. I give this version--- On my watch-tower will I stand, And I will set myself on a citadel; That I may look out to see what he will say to me, And what I shall answer to the reproof given to me; Literally, to my reproof. ---Ed.

[30] That is, to the chiding, rebuke, or reproof, given to me. Both Newcome and Henderson give a version of this line, which is nearly the same, but seems incongruous, though Grotius agrees with them. The version of the former is as follows:— And what I should reply to my arguing with him. The latter renders the line thus: — And what I shall reply in regard to my argument. The phrase is, [{[{תוכחתי}-{על upon, (to, says Drusius) my reproof, or rebuke, or chiding. This is the current meaning of the word, see 2 Kings 19:3; Proverbs 10:17; 12:1; Isaiah 37:3. He calls it ``my,'' because given him, either by his enemies, as Calvin thinks, or by God, as some others suppose. The view of Piscator and Junius is, that it is the reproof or correction he administered to the people in chapter 1:2-12. He was waiting to know what he might have to give as a reply in defense of that reproof. ``And what I may reply as to my reproof,'' i.e., the reproof given by him. In this case, the preceding clause, ``What

faith, I shall be able boldly to confute them; for the Lord will suggest to me such things as may enable me to give a full answer.'' We now perceive the simple and real meaning of this verse. It remains for us to accommodate the doctrine to our own use.

It must be first observed, that there is no remedy, when such trials as those mentioned by the Prophet in the first chapter Habakkuk 1:4-17 meet us, except we learn to raise up our minds above the world. For if we contend with Satan, according to our own view of things, he will a hundred times overwhelm us, and we can never be able to resist him. Let us therefore know, that here is shown to us the right way of fighting with him, when our minds are agitated with unbelief, when doubts respecting God's providence creep in, when things are so confused in this world as to involve us in darkness, so that no light appears: we must bid adieu to our own reason; for all our thoughts are nothing worth, when we seek, according to our own reason, to form a judgement. Until then the faithful ascend to their tower and stand in their citadel, of which the Prophet here speaks, their temptations will drive them here and there, and sink them as it were in a bottomless gulf. But that we may more fully understand the meaning, we must know, that there is here an implied contrast between the tower and the citadel, which the Prophet mentions, and a station on earth. As long then as we judge according to our own perceptions, we walk on the earth; and while we do so, many clouds arise, and Satan scatters ashes in our eyes, and wholly darkens our judgement, and thus it happens, that we lie down altogether confounded. It is hence wholly necessary, as we have before said, that we should tread our reason under foot, and come nigh to God himself.

We have said, that the tower is the recess of the mind; but how can we ascend to it? even by following the word of the Lord. For we creep on the earth; nay, we find that our flesh ever draws us downward: except then the truth from above becomes to us as it were wings, or a ladder, or a vehicle, we cannot rise up one foot; but, on the contrary, we shall seek refuges on the earth rather than ascend into heaven. But let the word of God become our ladder, or our vehicle, or our wings, and, however difficult the ascent may be, we shall yet be able to fly upward, provided God's word be allowed to have its own authority. We hence see how unsuitable is the view of those interpreters, who think that the tower and the citadel is the word of God; for it is by God's word, as I have already said, that we are raised up to this citadel, that is, to the safeguard of hope; where we may remain safe and secure while looking down from this eminence on those things which disturb us and darken all our senses as long as we lie on the earth. This is one thing.

Then the repetition is not without its use; for the Prophet says, On my tower will I stand, on the citadel will I set myself. He does not repeat in other words the same thing, because it is obscure; but in order to remind the faithful, that though they are inclined to sloth, they must yet strive to extricate themselves. And we soon find how slothful we become, except each of us stirs up himself. For when any perplexity

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he may or will say to me,'' refers to his complaint respecting the Chaldeans. This is altogether consistent with the mode in which the Prophets usually write: reversing the order, they take up first the last subject, and then refer to the first. He then waited to know two things, how to solve his difficulties respecting the conduct of the Chaldeans, and how to reply to his own people for the severe rebuke he gave them. There is much in this view to recommend it.---Ed.

takes hold on our minds, we soon succumb to despair. This, then, is the reason why the Prophet, after having spoken of the tower, again mentions the citadel.

But when he says, I will watch to see, he refers to perseverance; for it is not enough to open our eyes once, and by one look to observe what happens to us; but it is necessary to continue our attention. This constant attention is, then, what the Prophet means by watching; for we are not so clear-sighted as immediately to comprehend what is useful to be known. And then, though we may once see what is necessary, yet a new temptation can obliterate that view. It thus happens, that all our observations become evanescent, except we continue to watch, that is, except we persevere in our attention, so that we may ever return to God, whenever the devil raises new storms, and whenever he darkens the heavens with clouds to prevent us to see God. We hence see how emphatical is what the Prophet says here, I will watch to see. The Prophet evidently compares the faithful to watchmen, who, though they hear nothing, yet do not sleep; and if they hear any noise once or twice, they do not immediately sound an alarm, but wait and attend. As, then, they who keep watch ought to remain quiet, that they may not disturb others, and that they may duly perform their office; so it behaves the faithful to be also tranquil and quiet, and wait patiently for God during times of perplexity and confusion.

Let us now inquire what is the purpose of this watching: I will watch to see, he says, what he may say to me. There seems to be an impropriety in the expression; for we do not properly see what is said. But the Prophet connects together here two metaphors. To speak strictly correct, he ought to have said, ``I will continue attentive to hear what he may say;'' but he says, I will watch to see what he may say. The metaphor is found correctly used in Psalm 85:8,

``I will hear what God may say; for he will speak peace to his people.''

There also it is a metaphor, for the Prophet speaks not of natural hearing: ``I will hear what God may speak,'' what does that hearing mean? It means this, ``I will quietly wait until God shows his favor, which is now hid; for he will speak peace to his people;'' that is, the Lord will never forget his own Church. But the Prophet, as I have said, joins together here two metaphors; for to speak, or to say, means no other thing than that God testifies to our hearts, that though the reason for his purpose does not immediately appear to us, yet all things are wisely ruled, and that nothing is better than to submit to his will. But when he says, ``I will see, and I will watch what he may say,'' the metaphor seems incongruous, and yet there appears a reason for it; for the Prophet intended to remind us, that we ought to employ all our senses for this end,---to be wholly attentive to God's word. For though one may be resolved to hear God, we yet find that many temptations immediately distract us. It is not then enough to become teachable, and to apply our ears to hear his voice, except also our eyes be connected with them, so that we may be altogether attentive.

We hence see the object of the Prophet; for he meant to express the greatest attention, as though he had said, that the faithful would ever wander in their thoughts, except they carefully concentrated both their eyes and their ears, and all their senses, on God, and continually restrained themselves, lest vagrant specula-

tions or imaginations should lead them astray. And further, the Prophet teaches us, that we ought to have such reverence for God's word as to deem it sufficient for us to hear his voice. Let this, then, be our understanding, to obey God speaking to us, and reverently to embrace his word, so that he may deliver us from all troubles, and also keep our minds in peace and tranquillity.

God's speaking, then, is opposed to all the obstreperous clamours of Satan, which he never ceases to sound in our ears. For as soon as any temptation takes place, Satan suggests many things to us, and those of various kinds:---``What will you do? what advice will you take? see whether God is propitious to you from whom you expect help. How can you dare to trust that God will assist you? How can he extricate you? What will be the issue?'' As Satan then disturbs us in various ways, the Prophet shows that the word of God alone is sufficient for us all, then, who indulge themselves in their own counsels, deserve to be forsaken by God, and to be left by him to be driven up and down, and here and there, by Satan; for the only unfailing security for the faithful is to acquiesce in God's word.

But this appears still more clear from what is expressed at the close of the verse, when the Prophet adds, and what I may answer to the reproof given me; for he shows that he would be furnished with the best weapons to sustain and repel all assaults, provided he patiently attended to God speaking to him, and fully embraced his word: ``Then,'' he says, ``I shall have what I may answer to all reproofs, when the Lord shall speak to me''. By ``reproofs,'' he means not only the blasphemies by which the wicked shake his faith, but also all those turbulent feelings by which Satan secretly labors to subvert his faith. For not only the ungodly deride us and mock at our simplicity, as though we presumptuously and foolishly trusted in God, and were thus over-credulous; but we also reprove ourselves inwardly, and disturb ourselves by various internal contentions; for whatever comes to our mind that is in opposition to God's word, is properly a chiding or a reproof, as it is the same thing as if one accused himself, as though he had not found God to be faithful. We now, then see that the word ``reproof'' extends farther than to those outward blasphemies by which the unbelieving are wont to assail the children of God; for, as we have already said, though no one attempted to try our faith, yet every one is a tempter to himself; for the devil never ceases to agitate our minds. When, therefore, the Prophet says, what I may answer to reproof, he means, that he would be sufficiently fortified against all the assaults of Satan, both secret and external, when he heard what God might say to him.

We may also gather from the whole verse, that we can form no judgement of God's providence, except by the light of celestial truth. It is hence no wonder that many fall away under trials, yea, almost the whole world; for few there are who ascend into the citadel of which the Prophet speaks, and who are willing to hear God speaking to them. Hence, presumption and arrogance blind the minds of men, so that they either speak evil of God who addresses them, or accuse fortune, or maintain that there is nothing certain: thus they murmur within themselves, and arrogate to themselves more than they ought, and never submit to God's word. Let us proceed, -

Habakkuk 2:2, 3

2. And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it.

2. Et respondit mihi Jehova et dixit, Scribe visionem, et explana super tabulas, ut currat legens in ea:

3. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.

3. Quia adhue visio ad tempus statutum, et loquetur ad finem, et non mentietur; si moram fecerit, expecta eam; quia veniendo veniet, et non tardabit.

The Prophet now shows by his own example that there is no fear but that God will give help in time, provided we bring our minds to a state of spiritual tranquillity, and constantly look up to him: for the event which the Prophet relates, proves that there is no danger that God will frustrate their hope and patience, who lift up their minds to heaven, and continue steadily in that attitude. Answer me, he says, did Jehovah, and said. There is no doubt but that the Prophet accommodates here his own example to the common instruction of the whole Church. Hence, by testifying that an answer was given him by God, he intimates that we ought to entertain a cheerful hope, that the Lord, when he finds us stationed in our watch-tower, will in due season convey to us the consolation which he sees we need.

But he afterwards comes to the discharge of his prophetic office; for he was bid to write the vision on tables, and to write it in large letters, that it might be read, and that any one, passing by quickly, might be able by one glance to see what was written: and by this second part he shows still more clearly that he treated of a common truth, which belonged to the whole body of the Church; for it was not for his own sake that he was bid to write, but for the edification of all.

Write, then, the vision, and make it plain; for {באר}, bar properly means, to declare plainly. [31] Unfold it then, he says, on tables, that he may run who reads it; that is, that the writing may not cause the readers to stop. Write it in large characters, that any one, in running by, may see what is written. Then he adds, for the vision shall be for an appointed time

This is a remarkable passage; for we are taught here that we are not to deal with God in too limited a manner, but room must be given for hope; for the Lord does not immediately execute what he declares by his mouth; but his purpose is to prove our patience, and the obedience of our faith. Hence he says, the vision, is for a time, and a fixed time: for {מועד}, muod means a time which has been determined by agreement. But as it is God who fore appoints the time, the constituted time, of which the Prophet speaks, depends on his will and power. The vision, then, shall be for a time. He reproves here that immoderate ardor which takes hold on us, when we are anxious that God should immediately accomplish what he promises. The Prophet then shows that God so speaks as to be at liberty to defer the execution of his promise until it seems good to him.

[31] The word means, to open, or make open. It was to be written in open and plain letters, and on tables or tablets. These were either of wood or stone, made smooth. The Septuagint render the word {πυξιον}, a smooth plank of boxwood, and give the whole sentence thus: ``Write the vision and openly (or plainly---{σαφῶς},) on boxwood.'' See Deuteronomy 27:8. So Junius takes the word as an adverb, perspicue, perspicuously.---Ed.

At the end, he says, it will speak [32] In a word, the Prophet intimates, that honor is to be given to God's word, that we ought to be fully persuaded that God speaks what is true, and be so satisfied with his promises as though what is promised were really possessed by us. At the end, then, it will speak and it will not lie [33] Here the Prophet means, that fulfillment would take place, so that experience would at length prove, that God had not spoken in vain, nor for the sake of deceiving; but yet that there was need of patience; for, as it has been said, God intends not to indulge our fervid and importunate desires by an immediate fulfillment, but his design is to hold us in suspense. And this is the true sacrifice of praise, when we restrain ourselves, and remain firm in the persuasion that God cannot deceive nor lie, though he may seem for a time to trifle with us. It will not, then, lie

He afterwards adds, If it will delay, wait for it. He again expresses still more clearly the true character of faith, that it does not break forth immediately into complaints, when God connives at things, when he suffers us to be oppressed by the wicked, when he does not immediately succor us; in a word, when he does not without delay fulfill what he has promised in his word. If, then, it delays, wait for it. He again repeats the same thing, coming it will come; that is, however it may be, God, who is not only true, but truth itself, will accomplish his own promises. The fulfillment, then, of the promise will take place in due time.

But we must notice the contrariety, If it will delay, it will come, it will not delay. The two clauses seem to be contrary the one to the other. But delay, mentioned first, has a reference to our haste. It is a common proverb, ``Even quickness is delay to desire.'' We indeed make such haste in all our desires, that the Lord, when he delays one moment, seems to be too slow. Thus it may come easily to our mind to expostulate with him on the ground of slowness. God, then, is said on this account to delay in his promises; and his promises also as to their accomplishment may be said to be delayed. But if we have regard to the counsel of God, there is never any delay; for he knows all the points of time, and in slowness itself he always hastens, however this may be not comprehended by the flesh. We now, then, apprehend what the Prophet means. [34]

He is now bidden to write the vision, and to explain it on tables. Many confine this to the coming of Christ; but I rather think that the Prophet ascribes the name

[32] It is not a common word that is used: [{,[{יפח ``it will breathe.'' When transitively, it signifies, to breathe out or forth, and is rendered often in our version, to speak; see Proverbs 6:19; 12:17. The idea here seems to be the restoration, as it were, of a suspended life. The vision was to be for a time like a body without any symptom of life: but ``it will breathe,'' he says, ``at last,'' or at the end; that is, it will live, and manifest life and vigor. This breathing, or this life, would be its accomplishment. Corresponding with this idea is {ἀνατελεῖ}, ``it will rise,'' by the Septuagint.---Ed.

[33] [{,[{כזב its primary meaning, is to fail, Isaiah 63:11; and to fail, in a moral sense, is to lie, and also to deceive; and the latter meaning is attached to it here by Drusius, Piscator, and Grotius, non fallet, it will not deceive, i.e., disappoint.---Ed.

[34] What is here said is very true; but the words are not the same in Hebrew. The first signifies delay, [{[{יתמהמה rendered ``linger'' in Genesis 19:16; 43:10. The other verb, ,[{יאחר}] means, to put off, to postpone: and the sense is, that the vision will not be after the appointed time. So the two lines may be thus rendered: If it will delay, wait for it, For coming it will come, it will not be postponed; or, be after, i.e., the appointed time. Dr. Wheeler, quoted by Newcome, gives the right idea, by the following paraphrase: It shall not be later than its season. Both Jerome and Marckius have found a grammatical difficulty in this verse from a mistake as to the gender of ,[{חזון}] vision; and they had been evidently led astray by the Septuagint; in which the gender is changed, and the phrase, ``wait for it,'' is rendered, ``wait for him,'' {ὑπομεινον} {αὐτον}; and so as to what follows, ``for he that cometh ({ἐρχομενος}) shall come.'' But [{חזון}] is the masculine gender; it is elsewhere connected with verbs in that gender. See 1 Samuel 3:1; Ezekiel 12:22. Indeed the whole tenor of the passage admits not of any other construction. It is probable that this mistake made Eusebius and Augustine to apply this verse to Christ, and some to Nebuchadnezzar, in a typical sense.---Ed.

of vision to the doctrine or admonition, which he immediately subjoins. It is indeed true, that the faithful under the law could not have cherished hope in God without having their eyes and their minds directed to Christ: but it is one thing to take a passage in a restricted sense as applying to Christ himself, and another thing to set forth those promises which refer to the preservation of the Church. As far then as the promises of God in Christ are yea and amen, no vision could have been given to the Fathers, which could have raised their minds, and supported them in the hope of salvation, without Christ having been brought before them. But the Prophet here intimates generally, that a command was given to him to supply the hearts of the godly with this support, that they were, as we shall hereafter more clearly see, to wait for God. The vision, then, is nothing else than an admonition, which will be found in the next and the following verses.

He uses two words, to write and to explain; which some pervert rather than rightly distinguish: for as the Prophets were wont to write, and also to set forth the summaries or the heads of their discourses, they think that it was a command to Habakkuk to write, that he might leave on record to posterity what he had said; and then to publish what he taught as an edict, that it might be seen by the people passing by, not only for a day or for a few days. But I do not think that the Prophet speaks with so much refinement: I therefore consider that to write and to explain on tables mean the same thing. And what is added, that he may run who reads it, is to be understood as I have already explained it; for God intended to set forth this declaration as memorable and worthy of special notice. It was not usual with the Prophets to write in long and large characters; but the Prophet mentions here something peculiar, because the declaration was worthy of being especially observed. What is similar to this is said in Isaiah 8:1, `Write on a table with a man's pen.' By a man's pen is to be understood common writing, such as is comprehended by the rudest and the most ignorant. To the same purpose is what God bids here his servant Habakkuk to do. Write, he says how? Not as Prophecies are wont to be written, for the Prophets set before the people the heads of their discourses; but write, he says, so that he who runs may read, and that though he may be inattentive, he may yet see what is written; for the table itself will plainly show what it contains.

We now see that the Prophet commends, by a peculiar eulogy, what he immediately subjoins. Hence this passage ought to awaken all our powers, as God himself testifies that he announces what is worthy of being remembered: for he speaks not of a common truth; but his purpose was to reveal something great and unusually excellent; as he bids it, as I have already said, to be written in large characters, so that those who run might read it.

And by saying that the vision is yet for a time, he shows, as I have briefly explained, what great reverence is due to heavenly truth. For to wish God to conform to our rule is extremely preposterous and unreasonable: and there is no place for faith, if we expect God to fulfill immediately what he promises. It is hence the trial of faith to acquiesce in God's word, when its accomplishment does in no way appear. As then the Prophet teaches us, that the vision is yet for a time, he reminds us that we have no faith, except we are satisfied with God's word alone, and suspend

our desires until the seasonable time comes, that which God himself has appointed. The vision, then, yet shall be. But we are inclined to reduce, as it were, to nothing the power of God, except he accomplishes what he has said: ``Yet, yet,'' says the Prophet, ``the vision shall be;'' that is, ``Though God does not stretch forth his hand, still let what he has spoken be sufficient for you: let then the vision itself be enough for you; let it be deemed worthy of credit, so that the word of God may on its own account be believed; and let it not be tried according to the common rule; for men charge God with falsehood, except he immediately yields to their desires. Let then the vision itself be counted sufficiently solid and firm, until the suitable time shall come.'' And the word {מועד}, muod, ought to be noticed; for the Prophet does not speak simply of time, but, as I have already said, he points out a certain and a pre-ordained time. When men make an agreement, they on both sides fix the day: but it would be the highest presumption in us to require that God should appoint the day according to our will. It belongs, then, to him to appoint the times, and so to govern all things, that we may approve of whatever he does.

He afterwards says, And it will speak at the end, and it will not lie. The same is the import of the expression, it will speak at the end; that is, men are very perverse, if they wish God to close his mouth, and if they wish to deny faith to his word, except he instantly fulfill what he speaks. It will then speak; that is, let this liberty of speaking be allowed to God. And there is always an implied contrast between the voice of God and its accomplishment; for we are to acquiesce in God's word, though he may conceal his hand: though he may afford no proof of his power, yet the Prophet commands this honor to be given to his word. The vision, then, will speak at the end

He now expresses more clearly what he had before said of the preordained time; and thus he meets the objections which Satan is wont to suggest to us: ``How long will that time be delayed? Thou indeed namest it as the preordained time; but when will that day come?'' ``The Lord,'' he says, ``will speak at the end;'' that is, ``Though the Lord protracts time, and though day after day we seem to live on vain promises, yet let God speak, that is, let him have this honor from you, and be ye persuaded that he is true, that he cannot disappoint you; and in the meantime wait for his power; wait, so that ye may yet remain quiet, resting on his word, and let all your thoughts be confined within this stronghold---that it is enough that God has spoken. The rest we shall defer until to-morrow.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou sees us laboring under so much weakness, yea, with our minds so blinded that our faith falters at the smallest perplexities, and almost fails altogether,---O grant that by the power of thy Spirit we may be raised up above this world, and learn more and more to renounce our own counsels, and so to come to thee, that we may stand fixed in our watch tower, ever hoping, through thy power, for whatever thou hast promised to us, though thou shouldst not immediately make it manifest to us that thou hast faithfully spoken; and may we thus give full proof of our faith and patience, and proceed in the course of our warfare, until at length we ascend, above all watch towers, into that blessed rest, where we shall no more watch with an attentive mind, but see, face to face, in thine image, whatever

can be wished, and whatever is needful for our perfect happiness, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Tenth

The Prophet taught us yesterday, that we ought to allow God his right of speaking to us, and of sustaining us by his own word, until the ripe time shall come, when he shall really fulfill what he has promised. Then an exhortation follows, added at the close of the verse---that we are to exercise patience; and the Apostle also, referring to this passage in Hebrews 10:38, makes a similar application. He indeed quotes what we shall find in the next verse, `The just by his faith shall live;' but he had in view the whole context; and at the same time he reminds us of the Prophet's object here in exalting the authority of God's word. The exhortation, then, is briefly this---that though God may keep us in suspense, we yet ought not to cast away hope, for he knows when it is expedient for us that he should stretch forth his hand. And as there are two clauses, as I said yesterday, which seem at first sight to be inconsistent the one with the other, the Prophet very fitly joins them together, and considers them to be in perfect harmony; for though God may appear to delay, yet he is not slower than what is necessary and expedient. Let us then be fully persuaded that there is in God prudence and wisdom enough to assist us as soon as it may be needful. The Prophet now reminds us that it is no wonder if God seems to us to delay, for we are too hasty in our desires. Let therefore this fervor be restrained, so that we may subject our feelings to the providence and purpose of God. Let us now proceed---

Habakkuk 2:4

4. Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.

4. Ecce exaltatio, (vel, qui se munit, ut alii vertunt,) non recta est anima ejus in ipso: justus autem in fide sua vivet.

This verse stands connected with the last, for the Prophet means to show that nothing is better than to rely on God's word, how much soever may various temptations assault our souls. We hence see that nothing new is said here, but that the former doctrine is confirmed---that our salvation is rendered safe and certain through God's promise alone, and that therefore we ought not to seek any other haven, where we might securely sustain all the onsets of Satan and of the world. But he sets the two clauses the one opposed to the other: every man who would fortify himself would ever be subject to various changes, and never attain a quiet mind; then comes the other clause---that man cannot otherwise obtain rest than by faith.

But the former part is variously explained. Some interpreters think the word {עפלה}, ophle, to be a noun, and render it elevation, which is not unsuitable; and indeed I hesitate not to regard this as its real meaning, for the Hebrews call a citadel {עופל}, ouphel, rightly deriving it from {עפל}, ophle, to ascend. What some others maintain, that it signifies to strengthen, is not well founded. Some again give this explanation---that the unbelieving seek a stronghold for themselves, that they may fortify themselves; and this makes but little difference as to the thing itself. But interpreters vary, and differ as to the meaning of the sentence; for some substitute the

predicate for the subject, and the subject for the predicate, and elicit this meaning from the Prophet's words---``Every one whose mind is not at ease seeks a fortress, where he may safely rest and strengthens himself;'' and others give this view---``He who is proud, or who thinks himself well fortified, shall ever be of an unquiet mind.'' And this latter meaning is what I approve, only that I retain the import of the word {עפלה}, ophle, as though it was said---``where there is an elation of mind there is no tranquillity.''

Let us see first what their view is who give the other explanation. They say that the unbelieving, being obstinate and perverted in their minds, ever seek where they may be in safety, for they are full of suspicions, and having no regard to God they resort to the world for those remedies, by which they may escape evils and dangers. This is their view. But the Prophet, as I have already said, does here, on the contrary, denounce punishment on the unbelieving, as though he had said---``This reward, which they have deserved, shall be repaid to them---that they shall always torment themselves.'' The contrast will thus be more obvious; and when we say that God punishes the unbelieving, when he suffers them to be driven here and there, and also harasses their minds with various tormenting thoughts, a more fruitful doctrine is elicited. When therefore the Prophet says that there is no calmness of mind possessed by those who deem themselves well fortified, he intimates that they are their own executioners, for they seek for themselves many troubles, many sorrows, many anxieties, and contrive and mingle together many designs and purposes; now they think of one thing, then they turn to another; for the Hebrews say that the soul is made right when we acquiesce in a thing and continue in a tranquil state of mind; but when confused thoughts distract us, then they say that our soul is not right in us. We now perceive the real meaning of the Prophet.

Behold, he says: by this demonstrative particle he intimates that what he teaches us may be clearly seen if we attend to daily events. The meaning then is, that a proof of this fact exists evidently in the common life of men---that he who fortifies himself, and is also elated with self confidence, never finds a tranquil haven, for some new suspicion or fear ever disturbs his mind. Hence it comes that the soul entangles itself in various cares and anxieties. This is the reward, as I have said, which is allotted by God's just judgement to the unbelieving; for God, as he testifies by Isaiah, offers to us rest; and they who reject this invaluable benefit, freely offered to them by God, deserve that they should not only be tormented in one way, but be also harassed by endless agitations, and that they should also vex and torment themselves. It is indeed true that he who is fortified may also acquiesce in God's word; but the word {עפלה}, ophle, refers to the state of the mind. Whosoever, then, swells with vain confidence, when he finds that he has many auxiliaries according to the flesh, shall ever be agitated, and will at length find that there is nowhere rest, except the mind recumbs on God's grace alone. We now understand the import of this clause. [35]

[35] Most authors agree in the main with Calvin in his exposition of this clause. The whole verse is quoted by Paul in Hebrews 10:39, nearly verbatim from the Scriptures; only he inverts the clauses, and leaves out the pronoun, "my," connected with "faith." But this clause, as quoted by him, is materially different from the Hebrew text, as it now exists, though the chief difference relates to the word [{עפלה},{עלפה}] rendered elation, or pride, by Calvin and many others. Two MSS. give another reading; one has {עולפה}, and the other, {עלפה}, which means to swoon, or to faint, or to fail. This reading would essentially

It follows, but the just shall live by his faith. The Prophet, I have no doubt, does here place faith in opposition to all those defences by which men so blind themselves as to neglect God, and to seek no aid from him. As men therefore rely on what the earth affords, depending on their fallacious supports, the Prophet here ascribes life to faith. But faith, as it is well known, and as we shall presently show more at large, depends on God alone. That we may then live by faith, the Prophet intimates that we must willingly give up all those defences which are wont to disappoint us. He then who finds that he is deprived of all protections, will live by his faith, provided he seeks in God alone what he wants, and leaving the world, fixes his mind on heaven.

As {אמונת}, amunat, is in Hebrew truth, so some regard it as meaning integrity; as though the Prophet had said, that the just man has more safety in his faithfulness and pure conscience, than there is to the children of this world in all those munitions in which they glory. But in this case they frigidly extenuate the Prophet's declaration; for they understand not what that righteousness of faith is from which our salvation proceeds. It is indeed certain that the Prophet understands by the word {אמונת}, amunat, that faith which strips us of all arrogance, and leads us naked and needy to God, that we may seek salvation from him alone, which would otherwise be far removed from us.

Now many confine the first part to Nebuchadnezzar, but this is not suitable. The Prophet indeed speaks to the end of the chapter of Babylon and its ruin; but here he makes a distinction between the children of God, who cast all their cares on him, and the unbelieving, who cannot go forth beyond the world, where they seek to be made secure, and gather hence their defences in which they confide. And this is especially worthy of being observed, for it helps us much to understand the meaning of the Prophet; if this part---``Behold the proud, his soul is not right in him,'' be applied to Nebuchadnezzar, the other part will lose much of its import; but if we consider that the Prophet, as it were, in these two tablets, shows what it is to glory in our own powers or in earthly aids, then what it is to repose on God alone will appear much more clear, and this truth will with more force penetrate into our minds; for we know how much such comparisons illustrate a subject which would be otherwise obscure or less evident. For if the Prophet had only declared that our faith is the cause of life

harmonize the passage, and the context evidently favors it, as well as the antithesis in the verse itself. As to the rest of the clause the meaning is same with the Septuagint version, as cited by Paul, though the words are different; and there are other examples in which the apostle did not alter that version, though varying in words, when the sense was preserved. To say that man's soul is not right in him amounts to the same thing as to say that God is not pleased with him. There is indeed one MS. which has ,[{נפשי}] ``my soul,'' and not ``his soul;'' and then [{ישרה}] is often rendered {ἀρεσκειν}, to please, by the Septuagint. See Numbers 23:27; 2 Chronicles 30:4. There would in this case be a complete identity of words as well as of meaning. What especially countenances these readings is, that the alteration would agree better with the preceding verse. There is an exhortation to wait for the vision, i.e., its fulfillment. To refer to pride in this connection seems not suitable; but to mention fainting or failing through unbelief is quite appropriate; and then as a contrast to this state of mind, the latter clause is added. Adopting the main alteration, [{עלפה}] instead of ,[{עפלה}] (only a transposition of two letters,) I would render the verse thus--- Behold the fainting! not right is his soul within him; But the righteous, by his faith shall he live. The word for ``fainting'' is in the feminine gender, either on account of the word ``soul'' in what follows, or [{איש}] is understood, the ``man of fainting,'' instances of which are adduced by Henderson on this verse, though he retains the word of the present text; as {אני} ,[{תפלה}] ``I am prayer,'' instead of ``I am a man of prayer.''---Psalms 109:4; see Jeremiah 50:31, 32; Daniel 9:23 Now not only the antithesis is here complete, but the order also in which it occurs corresponds with what is often the style of the Prophets; the first part of the first clause corresponds with the last part of the second, and the last of the former with the first of the latter; and not according to Dr. Henderson, who represents the clauses as regularly antithetic. See a similar instance in chapter 1:13, and also in the first verse of this chapter. The man who faints, and he who lives by faith, form the contrast; and the addition ``by faith'' in the latter clause implies the fainting to be through want of faith, or through unbelief. Then the soul that is not right stands in contrast with the righteous, or the just in the second line. Thus every thing in the verse itself, and in its connection with what precedes it, is in favor of what has been proposed. And Grotius and Newcome seemed disposed to adopt this reading.---Ed.

and salvation, it might indeed be understood; but as we are disposed to entertain worldly hopes, the former truth would not have been sufficient to correct this evil, and to free our minds from all vain confidence. But when he affirms that all the unbelieving are deceived, while they fortify or elate themselves, because God will ever confound them, and that though no one disturbs them outwardly, they will yet be their own tormentors, as they have nothing that is right, nothing that is certain; when therefore all this is said to us, it is as though God drew us forcibly to himself, while seeing us deluded by the allurements of Satan, and seeing us too inclined to be taken with deceptions, which would at length lead us to destruction.

We now, then, perceive why Habakkuk has put these two things in opposition the one to the other---that the defences of this world are not only evanescent, but also bring always with them many tormenting fears---and then, that the just lives by his faith. And hence also is found a confirmation of what I have already touched upon, that faith is not to be taken here for man's integrity, but for that faith which sets man before God emptied of all good things, so that he seeks what he needs from his gratuitous goodness: for all the unbelieving try to fortify themselves; and thus they strengthen themselves, thinking that anything in which they trust is sufficient for them. But what does the just do? He brings nothing before God except faith: then he brings nothing of his own, because faith borrows, as it were, through favor, what is not in man's possession. He, then, who lives by faith, has no life in himself; but because he wants it, he flies for it to God alone. The Prophet also puts the verb in the future tense, in order to show the perpetuity of this life: for the unbelieving glory in a shadowy life; but the Lord will at last discover their folly, and they themselves shall really know that they have been deceived. But as God never disappoints the hope of his people, the Prophet promises here a perpetual life to the faithful.

Let us now come to Paul, who has applied the Prophet's testimony for the purpose of teaching us that salvation is not by works, but by the mercy of God alone, and therefore by faith. Paul seems to have misapplied the Prophet's words, and to have used them beyond what they import; for the Prophet speaks here of the state of the present life, and he has not previously spoken of the celestial life, but exhorted, as we have seen, the faithful to patience, and at the same time testified that God would be their deliverer; and now he adds, the just shall live by faith, though he may be destitute of all help, and though he may be exposed to all the assaults of fortune, and of the wicked, and of the devil. What has this to do, some one may say, with the eternal salvation of the soul? It seems, then, that Paul has with too much refinement introduced this testimony into his discussion respecting gratuitous justification by faith. But this principle ought ever to be remembered---that whatever benefits the Lord confers on the faithful in this life, are intended to confirm them in the hope of the eternal inheritance; for however liberally God may deal with us, our condition would yet be indeed miserable, were our hope confined to this earthly life. As God then would raise up our minds to the hopes of eternal salvation whenever he aids us in this world, and declares himself to be our Father; hence, when the Prophet says that the faithful shall live, he certainly does not confine this life to so narrow limits, that God will only defend us for a day or two, or for a few years; but he

proceeds much farther, and says, that we shall be made really and truly happy; for though this whole world may perish or be exposed to various changes, yet the faithful shall continue in permanent and real safety. Hence, when Habakkuk promises life in future to the faithful, he no doubt overleaps the boundaries of this world, and sets before the faithful a better life than that which they have here, which is accompanied with many sorrows, and proves itself by its shortness to be unworthy of being much desired.

We now perceive that Paul wisely and suitably accommodates to his subject the Prophet's words---that the just lives by faith; for there is no salvation for the soul except through God's mercy.

Quoting this place in Romans 1:17, he says that the righteousness of God is in the gospel revealed from faith to faith, and then adds,

``As it is written, The just shall live by faith.''

Paul very rightly connects these things together that righteousness is made known in the Gospel---and that it comes to us by faith only; for he there contends that men cannot obtain righteousness by the law, or by the works of the law; it follows that it is revealed in the Gospel alone: how does he prove this? By the testimony of the Prophet Habakkuk---

``If by faith the just lives, then he is just by faith; if he is just by faith, then he is not so by the works of the law.''

And Paul assumes this principle, to which I have before referred---that men are emptied of all works, when they produce their faith before God: for as long as man possesses anything of his own, he does not please God by faith alone, but also by his own worthiness.

If then faith alone obtains grace, the law must necessarily be relinquished, as the apostle also explains more clearly in the third chapter of the Epistle to the Galatians Galatians 3:11:

`That righteousness,' he says, `is not by the works of the law, is evident; for it is written, The just shall live by faith, and the law is not of faith.'

Paul assumes that these, even faith and law, are contrary, the one to the other; contrary as to the work of justifying. The law indeed agrees with the gospel; nay, it contains in itself the gospel. And Paul has solved this question in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, Romans 1:1-32 by saying, that the law cannot assist us to attain righteousness, but that it is offered to us in the gospel, and that it receives a testimony from the law and the Prophets. Though then there is a complete concord between the law and the gospel, as God, who is not inconsistent with himself, is the author of both; yet as to justification, the law accords not with the gospel, any more than light with darkness: for the law promises life to those who serve God; and the promise is conditional, dependent on the merits of works. The gospel also does indeed promise righteousness under condition; but it has no respect to the merits of works. What then? It is only this, that they who are condemned and lost are to embrace the favor offered to them in Christ.

We now then see how, by the testimony of our Prophet, Paul rightly confirms his own doctrine, that eternal salvation is to be attained by faith only; for we are

destitute of all merits by works, and are constrained to stand naked and needy before God; and then the Lord justifies us freely.

But that this may be more evident, let us first consider why men must come altogether naked before God; for were there any worthiness in them, the Lord would by no means deprive them of such an honor. Why then does the Lord justify us freely, except that he may thereby appear just? He has indeed no need of this glory, as though he could not himself be glorified except by doing wrong to men. But we obtain righteousness by faith alone for this reason, because God finds nothing in us which he can approve, or what may avail to obtain righteousness. Since it is so, we then see that to be true which the Holy Spirit everywhere declares respecting the character of men. Men indeed glory in a foolish conceit as to their own righteousness: but all philosophic virtues, as they call them, which men think they possess through free-will, are mere fumes; nay, they are the delusions of the devil, by which he bewitches the minds of men, so that they come not to God, but, on the contrary, precipitate themselves into the lowest deep, where they seek to exalt themselves beyond measure. However this may be, let us be fully convinced, that in man there is not even a particle either of rectitude or of righteousness; and that whatever men may try to do of themselves, is an abomination before God. This is one thing.

Now after God has stretched forth his hand to his elect, it is still necessary that they should confess their own want and nakedness, as to justification; for though they have been regenerated by the Spirit of God, yet in many things they are deficient, and thus in innumerable ways they become exposed to eternal death in the sight of God; so that they have in themselves no righteousness. The Papists differ from us in the first place, imagining as they do, that there are certain preparations necessary; for that false notion about free-will cannot be eradicated from their hearts. As then they will have man to be endued with free- will, they always connect with it some power, as though they could obtain grace by their own doings. They indeed confess that man of himself can do nothing, except by the helping grace of God; but in the meantime they blend, as I have said, their own fictitious preparations. Others confess, that until God anticipates us by his grace, there is no power whatever in free-will; but afterwards they suppose that free-will concurs with God's grace, as it would be by itself inefficient, except received by our consent. Thus they always reserve for men some worthiness; but a greater difference exists as to the second subject: for after we have been regenerated through God's grace, the Papists imagine that we are justified by the merits of works. They confess, that until God anticipates us by his grace, we are condemned and cannot attain salvation except through the assisting grace of God; but as soon as God works in us, we are then, they say, able to attain righteousness by our own works.

But we object and say, that the faithful, after having been regenerated by the Spirit of God, do not fulfill the law: they allow this to be true, but say that they might if they would, for that God has commanded nothing which is above what men are capable of doing. And this also is a most pernicious error. They are at the same time forced to confess, that experience itself teaches us that no man is wholly free from sin: then some guilt always remains. But they say, that if we kept half the law, we

could obtain righteousness by that half. Hence, if one by adultery offended God and thus becomes exposed to eternal death, and yet abstains from theft, he is just, they say, because he is no thief. He is an adulterer, it is true; but he is yet just in part, because he keeps a part of the law; and they call this partial righteousness. But God has not promised salvation to men, except they fully and really fulfill whatever he has commanded in his law. For it is not said, ``He that fulfill a part of the law shall live;'' but he who shall do these things shall live in them. Moses does not point out two or three commandments, but includes the whole law (Leviticus 18:5.) There is also a declaration made by James,

`He who has forbidden to commit adultery, has also forbidden to steal: whosoever then transgresses the law in one particular, is a transgressor of the whole law' (James 2:8,11):

he is then excluded from any hope of righteousness. We hence see that the papists are most grossly mistaken, who imagine, that men, when they keep the law only in part, are just.

Were there indeed any one found who strictly kept God's law, he could not be counted just, except by virtue of a promise. And here also the Papists stumble, and are at the same time inconsistent with themselves; for they confess that merits do not obtain righteousness for men by their own intrinsic worth, but only by the covenant of the law. But as soon as they have said this, they immediately forget themselves, and say what is contrary, like men carried away by passion. Were then the Papists to join together these two things---that there is no righteousness except by covenant, and that there is a partial righteousness they would see that they are inconsistent: for where is this partial righteousness? If we are not righteous except according to the covenant of the law, then we are not righteous except through a full and perfect observance of the law. This is certain.

They go astray still more grievously as to the remission of sins; for as it is well known, they obtrude their own satisfactions, and thus seek to expiate the sins of men by their own merits, as though the sacrifice of Christ was not sufficient for that purpose. Hence it is that they will not allow that we are gratuitously justified by faith; for they cannot be brought to acknowledge a free remission of sins; and except the remission of sins be gratuitous, we must confess that righteousness is not by faith alone, but also by merits. But the whole Scripture proves that expiation is nowhere else to be sought, except through the sacrifice of Christ alone. This error, then, of the Papists is extremely gross and false. They further err in pleading for the merits of works; for they boast of their own inventions, the works of supererogation, or as they call them, satisfactions. And these meritorious works, under the Papacy, are gross errors and worthless superstitions, and yet they toil in them and lacerate themselves, nay, they almost wear out themselves. If they mutter many short prayers, if they run to altars and to various churches, if they buy masses, in a word, if they accumulate all these fictitious acts of worship, they think that they merit righteousness before God. Thus they forget their own saying, that righteousness is by covenant; for if it be by covenant, it is certain that God does not promise it to fictitious works, which men of themselves invent and contrive. It then follows, that what men bring to God, devised

by themselves, cannot do anything towards the attainment of righteousness.

There is also another error which must be noticed, for in good works they perceive not those blemishes which justly displease God, so that our works might be deservedly condemned were they strictly examined and tried. The Papists rightly say, that we are not justified by the intrinsic worthiness of works, but afterwards they do not consider how imperfect our works are, for no work proceeds from mortal man which can fully answer to what God's covenant requires. How so? For no work proceeds from the perfect love of God, and where the perfect love of God does not exist, there is corruption there. It hence follows, that all our works are polluted before God; for they flow not except from the impure fountain of the heart. Were any to object and say, that the hearts of men are cleansed by the regeneration of the Spirit, we allow this; but at the same time much filth always remains in our hearts, and it ought to be sufficient for us to know that nothing is pure and genuine before God except where the perfect love of him exists.

As, then, the Papists are blind to all these things, it is no wonder that they with so much hostility contend with us about righteousness, and can by no means allow that the righteousness of faith is gratuitous, for from the beginning this figment about free- will has been resorted to---``if men of themselves come to God, then they are not freely justified.'' They, then, as I have said, imagine a partial righteousness, they suppose the deficiency to be made up by satisfactions, they have also, as they say, their devotions, that is, their own contrived modes of worship. Thus it comes, that they ever persuade themselves that the righteousness of man, at least in part, is made up by himself or by works. They indeed allow that we are justified by faith, but when it is added, by faith alone, then they begin to be furious; but they consider not that righteousness, if obtained by faith, cannot be by works, for Paul, as I have shown above, reasons from the contrary, when he says, that righteousness, if it be by the works of the law, is not by faith, for faith, as it has been said, strips man of everything, that he may seek of God what he needs. But the Papists, though they think that man has not enough for himself, do not yet acknowledge that he is so needy and miserable, that righteousness must be sought in God alone. But yet sufficiently clear is the doctrine of Paul, and if Paul had never spoken, reason itself is sufficient to convince us that men cannot be justified by faith until they cast away every confidence in their own works, for if righteousness be of faith, then it is of grace alone, and if by grace alone, then it cannot be by works. It is wholly puerile in the Papists to think, that it is partly by grace and partly by the merits of works; for as salvation cannot be divided, so righteousness cannot be divided, by which we attain salvation itself. As, then, faith acquires for us favor before God, and by this favor we are counted just, so all works must necessarily fall to the ground, when righteousness is ascribed to faith.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that as the corruption of our flesh ever leads us to pride and vain confidence, we may be illuminated by thy word, so as to understand how great and how grievous is our poverty, and be thus taught wholly to deny ourselves, and so to present ourselves naked before thee, that we may not hope for righteousness

or for salvation from any other source than from thy mercy alone, nor seek any rest but only in Christ; and may we cleave to thee by the sacred and inviolable bond of faith, that we may boldly despise all those empty boastings by which the ungodly exult over us, and that we may also so cast ourselves down in true humility, that thereby we may be carried upward above all heavens, and become partakers of that eternal life which thine only begotten Son has purchased for us by his own blood. Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Eleventh

We yesterday compared this passage of Habakkuk with the interpretation of Paul, who draws this inference, that we are justified by faith without the works of the law, because the Prophet teaches us that we are to live by faith, for the way of life and of righteousness is the same, inasmuch as life is not to be otherwise sought by us than through the paternal favor of God. This then is our life---to be united to God; but this union with God cannot be hoped for by us while he imputes sins to us; for as he is just and cannot deny himself, iniquity must be ever hated by him. Then as long as he regards us as sinners, he must necessarily hold us as hateful to him. Where the hatred of God is, there is death and ruin. It then follows, that we can have no hope of life until we be reconciled to God, and there is no other way by which God can restore us to favor, but by regarding and counting us as just. It hence follows, that Paul reasons correctly, when he leads us from life to righteousness; for they are two things which are connected and inseparable.

Hence the error of the Papists comes to light, who think that to be justified is nothing else but to be renewed in righteousness, in order that we may lead a pious and a holy life. Hence their righteousness is a quality. But Paul's view is very different, for he connects our justification and salvation together, inasmuch as God cannot be propitious to us without being reconciled to us. And how is this done even by not imputing to us our sins. Hence they speak correctly and truly express what the Holy Spirit everywhere teaches us, who call it imputative righteousness, for they thus show that it is not a quality, but, on the contrary, a relative righteousness, and therefore we said yesterday that he who lives by faith derives life from another, and that every one who is just by faith, is just through what is not in himself, even through the gratuitous mercy of God.

We now then see how suitably Paul joins righteousness with life, and adduces the Prophet's testimony to prove gratuitous justification, who affirms that we are to live by faith. But it is no wonder that the Papists go in so many ways astray in this instance, for they even differ with us in the meaning of the word faith. Hence it is that they so obstinately deny that we are justified by faith alone. They are forced, as we have said yesterday, to admit the righteousness of faith; but the exclusive particle they cannot endure; for they imagine that it is a moulded faith that justifies, and this moulded or formed faith is piety, or the fear of God. And by calling faith unformed they seem to think that we can embrace the promises of God without the fruit of regeneration, which is very absurd, as though faith were not the peculiar gift of the Spirit, and a pledge of our adoption. But these are principles of which the Papists are wholly ignorant; for they are given up to a reprobate mind, so that they

stumble at the very first elements of religion.

But it is sufficient for us, in order to understand this passage, to know that we live by faith; for our life is a shadow or a passing cloud; and hence our only remedy is to seek life from God alone. And how does God communicate this life to us? even by gratuitous promises which we embrace by faith; hence salvation is by faith. Now, salvation cannot be ascribed to faith and to works too; for faith refers the praise for life and salvation to God alone, and works show that something is due to man. Faith, then, as to justification, entirely excludes all works, so that they come to no account before God; and hence I have said that salvation is by faith; for we are accepted of God by gratuitous remission of sins. The union of God with us is true and real salvation; but no one can be united to God without righteousness, and there is found in us no righteousness; hence God himself freely imputes it to us; and as we are justified freely, so our salvation is said to be gratuitous.

I will not now repeat what may be said of justification by faith; for it is better to proceed with the Prophet's subject, only it may be necessary to add two things to what has been said. The Prophet testified to the men of his age that salvation is by faith; it then follows that they had regard to Christ; for without relying on a mediator they could not have trusted in God. For as our righteousness is said to be the remission of sins, so a sacrifice must necessarily intervene, by which God is pacified, so as not to impute our sins. They had indeed their sacrifices according to the law; but these were to direct their minds to Christ; for they were by no means acceptable to God, except through that Mediator on whom our faith at this day is founded. There is also another thing: the Prophet, by distinctly expressing that the just live by faith, clearly shows, that through the whole course of this life we cannot be deemed just in any other way than by a gratuitous imputation. He does not say that the children of Adam, born in a state exposed to eternal death, do recover life by faith; but that the just, who are now endued with the true fear of God, live by faith; and thus refuted is the romance about initial justification. Let us now then proceed -

Habakkuk 2:5

5. Yea also, because he transgresseth by wine, he is a proud man, neither keepeth at home, who enlargeth his desire as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all people.

5. Quanto magis (vel, etiam certe) vino transgrediens vir superbus, et non habitabit, quid dilatat quasi sepulchrum animam suam, et est similis morti, (ipse quasi mors, ad verbum,) et non satiabitur (non satiatur, significat actum continuum,) et colliget ad se omnes gentes, et coacervabit ad se omnes populos.

The Prophet has taught us that a tranquil state of mind cannot be otherwise had than by recumbing on the grace of God alone; and that they who elate themselves, and fly in the air, and feed on the wind, procure for themselves many sorrows and inquietudes. But he now comes to the king of Babylon, and also to his kingdom; for in my judgement he speaks not only of the king, but includes also that tyrannical empire with its people, and represents them as a great company of robbers. He then says in short, that though the Babylonians, like drunken men, hurried here and there without any control, yet God's vengeance, by which they were to be brought

to nothing, was nigh at hand. What ever therefore the Prophet subjoins to the end of the chapter tends to confirm his doctrine, which we have already explained---that the just shall live by faith. We cannot indeed be fully convinced of this except we hold firmly this principle---that God cares for us, and that the whole world is governed by his providence; so that it cannot be but that he will at length check the wicked, and punish their sins, and deliver the innocent who call upon him. Unless this be our conviction, there can be no benefit derived from our faith; we might indeed be a hundred times deceived; for experience teaches us that the hopes of men, as long as they are fixed on the earth, are vain and delusive, as they are only mere imaginations. Except then God governs the world there is no salvation to the faithful; for God in that case would delude them with vain promises, and they would flatter themselves with an empty prospect, or hope for that which is not. Hence the Prophet shows how it is that the just shall live by faith; and that is because the Lord will defend all who call upon him, and that inasmuch as he is the just Judge of all the world, he will finally execute judgement on all the wicked, though for a time they act wantonly, and think that they shall escape punishment, because God does not execute upon them immediate vengeance. We now perceive the design of the Prophet.

As to the words, these two particles, {כי} {אף}, aph ki, when joined together, amplify the meaning; and some render them---``how much more;'' others take them as a simple affirmative, and render them ``truly.'' I approve of a middle course, and render them ``yea, truly;'' (Etiam certe;) and they are so taken as I think, in Genesis 3:1, Satan thus asked the woman---yea, truly! Est-ce pour vrai? for the question is that of one doubting, and yet it refers to what is certain,---``How comes it that God should interdict the eating of the fruit? yea, is it so truly? can it be so? So it is in this place, yea, truly, says the Prophet. That it is an amplification may be gathered from the context. He had said before that they who elevate themselves, or seem to themselves to be well fortified, are fearful in their minds, and driven backwards and forwards. He now advances another step---that when men are borne along by unrestrained wantonness, and promise themselves all things, as though there was no God, they surpass even the drunken, being hurried on by blind cupidity. When therefore men thus abandon themselves, can they escape the judgement of God? Far less bearable is such a madness than that simple arrogance of which he had spoken in the last verse. Thus then are the two verses connected together,---``Yea, truly, he who in his pride is like a drunken man, and restrains not himself, and who is even like to wild beasts or to the grave, devouring whatever meets them---he surely will not at length be endured by God.'' Vengeance, then, is nigh to all the proud, who are cruelly furious, passing all bounds and without any fear.

But interpreters differ as to the import of the words which follow. Some render {בוגד}, bugad, to deceive, and it means so in some places; and they render the clause thus---``Wine deceives a proud man, and he will not dwell.'' This is indeed true, but the meaning is strained; I therefore prefer to follow the commonly received interpretation---that the proud man transgresses as it were through wine. At the same time I do not agree with others as to the expression ``transgressing

as through wine.'' Some give this version---``Man addicted to wine or to drunkenness transgresses;'' and then they add---``a proud man will not inhabit;'' but they pervert the sentence, and mangle the words of the Prophet; for his words are---By wine transgressing the proud man: he does not say that a man addicted to wine transgresses; but he compares the proud to drunken men, who, forgetting all reason and shame, abandon themselves unto all that is disgraceful; for the drunken distinguishes nothing, and becomes like a brute animal, so that he shuns nothing that is base and unbecoming. This is the reason why the Prophet compares proud men to the drunken, who transgress through wine, that is, who observe no moderation, but indulge themselves in excesses. We now then understand the real meaning of the Prophet, which many have not perceived. [36]

As to the word inhabiting I take it in a metaphorical sense, as signifying to rest or to continue in the same place. The drunken are borne along by a certain excitement; so they do not restrain themselves, for they have no power over their feet or their hands: but as wine excites them, so they ramble here and there like insane persons. As then such an unruly temper lays hold on and bewilders drunken men, so the Prophet very aptly says that the proud man never rests.

And the reason follows, (provided the meaning be approved,) because he enlarges as the grave his soul he is like to death. This is then the insatiableness which he had mentioned---that the proud cannot be satisfied, and therefore include heaven and earth and sea within the compass of their desires. Since then they thus run here and there, it is no wonder that the Prophet says that they do not rest. He enlarges then as the grave his soul; and then he adds---he heaps together, or congregates, or collects to himself all nations, and accumulates to himself all people; that is, the proud man keeps within no moderate limits; for though he were able to make one heap of all nations, he would yet think that not enough, like Alexander, who wept because he had not then enjoyed the empire of the whole world; and had he enjoyed it his tears would not have been dried; for he had heard that, according to the opinion of Democritus, there were many worlds. What did he mean? even this ``Were I to obtain the empire of the world, I should still be poor; for if there are more worlds I should still wish to devour them all.'' These proud men surpass every kind of drunkenness.

[36] Though the general meaning of the beginning of this verse is what most critics agree in, yet the construction is difficult. The only difference as to the meaning is, whether the proud man is said to be given to wine, or is compared to such an one, or to wine itself. Newcome takes the first, and gives this version— Moreover, as a mighty man transgresseth through wine, He is proud, and remaineth not at rest. Henderson, agreeing with Grotius and Mede, takes the latter sense, and renders the line as follows:— Moreoever wine is treacherous; The haughty man stayeth not at home. This is rather a paraphrase than a version; but this is the meaning of which the words are most capable. The two first participles need not be connected according to what Calvin proposes. Then the distich may be thus rendered— And truly, as wine is treacherous, So is the proud man, and he will not rest. Then follows a delineation of his character— Because he enlarges as the grave his desire, And he is like death and cannot be satisfied; For he gathers to himself all the nations, And collects to himself all the people. As to wine being treacherous, see Proverbs 30:1. Wine is pleasant to the taste and inviting in its color, but degrading, when taken immoderately, in its effects; so a proud and arrogant man is at first glittering and plausible, and splendid in his appearance, but afterwards cruel and oppressive. This seems to be the most obvious similitude, as contained in the passage. Parkhurst renders the two first lines as follows— Yea, as when wine deceiveth a man, So he is proud, and is not at rest. He interprets "proud," as meaning "intoxicated with power and dominion," and refers to Daniel 4:30.—Ed.

We now apprehend the meaning of the words; and though they contain a general truth, yet the Prophet no doubt applies them to the king of Babylon and to all the Chaldeans; for as it has been said, he includes the whole nation. He shows then here, that the Chaldeans were much worse and less excusable than those who with great fierceness elated themselves, for their rage carried them farther, as they wished to swallow up the whole world. But in order to express this more fully, he says that they were like drunken men; and he no doubt indirectly derides here the counsels of princes, who think themselves to be very wise, when either by deceit they oppress their neighbors, or by artful means seize for themselves on the lands of others, or by some contrivance, or even by force of arms, take possession of them. As princes take wonderful delight in their iniquities, so the Prophet says that they are like drunken men who transgress by wine, that is, who are completely overcome by excessive drinking; and at the same time he shows the cause of this drunkenness by mentioning the words {יהיר} {גבר}, ``proud man.'' As then they are proud, so all their crafts are like the freaks of drunkenness, that is, furious, as when a man is deprived of reason by wine. Having thus spoken of the Babylonians he immediately adds---

Habakkuk 2:6

6. Shall not all these take up a parable against him, and a taunting proverb against him, and say, Woe to him that increaseth that which is not his! how long? and to him that ladeth himself with thick clay!

6. Annon ipsi omnes super eum parabolam (vel apophthegma) tollent? et dicterium aenigmaticum (vel aenigmatum; alii [{הצילמ}] vertunt interpretationem; sed dicemus de vocibus) ei (vel super eum,) et dicet, Vae qui mutiplicat non sua (vel ex non suis, qui sese locupletat ex alieno); quousque? et qui accumulat (vel aggravat) super se densum lutum.

Now at length the Prophet denounces punishment on the Babylonian king and the Chaldeans; for the Lord would render them a sport to all. But some think that a punishment is also expressed in the preceding verse, such as awaits violent robbers, who devour the whole world. But I, on the contrary, think that the Prophet spoke before of proud cruelty, and simply showed what a destructive evil it is, being an insatiable cupidity; and now, as I have stated, he comes to its punishment; and he says first, that all the people who had been collected as it were into a heap, would take up a parable or a taunt, in order to scoff at the king of Babylon. When therefore the Chaldeans should possess the empire of almost the whole world, and subject to their power all their neighboring nations, all these would at length take up against them parables and taunts; and what would be said everywhere would be this---Woe to him who increases and enriches himself by things not his own. How long? that is, Is this to be perpetual? All then who thus increase themselves heap on themselves thick clay, by which they shall at last be overthrown.

With regard to the words, {משל}, meshil is a short saying or a pithy sentence, and worthy to be remembered, as we have noticed elsewhere. Some render it parable. As to the word {מליצה}, melitse, it probably signifies a scoff or a taunt, by which any one is reproved; for it comes from {לוץ}, luts, which means to laugh at one or to deride him. It is indeed true, that the Hebrews call a rhetorician or an interpreter

{מליץ}, melits; and hence some render {מליצה}, melitse, interpretation; but it is not suitable to this passage; for the Prophet speaks here of taunts that would be cast against the king of Babylon. For as he had as with an open mouth swallowed up all, so also all would eagerly prick him with their goads, and disdainfully deride him. The word he afterwards adds {חידות}, chidut, is to be read, I have no doubt, in the genitive case. [37] I therefore do not approve of adding a copulative, as many do, and read thus---``a taunt and an enigma.'' This word comes from the verb {חוד}, chud, which is to speak enigmatically; hence {חידות}, chidut, are enigmas, or metaphors, or obscure sentences; and we know that when we wish to touch a man to the quick, there is more sharpness when we use an obscure word, which contains a metaphor or ambiguity, or something of this kind. It is not therefore without reason that the Prophet calls taunts, enigmas, {חידות}, chidut, that is, obscure words, which bite or prick men sharply, as it were with goads. Hence in all scoffs a figurative language ought to be used; and except the expression be ambiguous or alliterative, or, in short, contain such metaphors as it is not necessary to recite here, there would be in it no beauty, no aptness. When therefore men wish to form biting taunts, they obscure what might be plainly said by some indirect metaphor; and this is the reason why the Prophet speaks here of a taunt that is enigmatical, for it is on that account more severe.

And he shall say. There is a change of number in this verb, but it does not obscure the sense. [38] The particle {הוי} may be rendered ``woe''; or it may be an exclamation, as when one is attracted by some particular sight, caca or sus; and so it is taken often by the Hebrews, and the context seems to favor this meaning, for ``woe'' would be frigid. When the Prophets pronounce a curse on the wicked, it is no doubt a dreadful threat; but what is found here is a taunt, by which the whole world would deride those haughty tyrants who thought that they ought to have been worshipped as gods. He! they say, where is he who multiplies himself by what belongs to another? and then, How long is this to be? even such accumulate on themselves thick clay; that is, they sink themselves in deep caverns, and heap on themselves mountains, by which they become overwhelmed. We now understand the meaning of the Prophet's words.

What seems here to be the singing of triumph before the victory is no matter of wonder; for our faith, as it is well known, depends not on the judgement of the flesh, nor regards what is openly evident; but it is a vision of hidden things, as it is called in Hebrews 11:1, and the substance of things not seen. As then the firmness of faith

[37] This can hardly be allowed; for in this case the final letter of the previous word must have been ן and not ה.[{ה}] It is a word evidently in appostion, designing the character of the proverb and the taunt, they being enigmas, conveyed in a highly figurative language. The whole verse may be thus rendered--- Shall not these, all of them, Raise against him a proverb and a taunt --- Enigmas for him; Yea, say will every one--- ``Woe to him who multiplies what is not his own! how long! ``And to him who accumulates on himself thick clay!'' To render the last word ,[{עבטיט}] (or {עב} ,[{טיט} apart, as given by ten MSS.,) ``pledges,'' as it is done by Newcome and Henderson, does not comport at all with the rest of the passage. The Septuagint favor the common explanation, and also the Vulgate, and most commentators.---Ed.

[38] It is rendered impersonally by Jerome "et dicetur—and it shall be said." Junius introduces a question, and supposed the just, who lives by faith to be referred to—"And shall not he, i.e., the just, say?" But Marckius considers that God is the speaker—"And he, i.e., God, shall say." But the most obvious construction is, that each one of the nations previously mentioned is introduced as speaking—"Unusquisque illorum—every one of them," is understood, says Piscator.—Ed.

is the same, though what it apprehends is remote, and as faith ceases not to see things hidden,---for through the mirror of God's word it ascends above heaven and earth, and penetrates into the spiritual kingdom of God,---as faith, then, possesses a view so distant, it is not to be wondered that the Prophet here boldly triumphs over the Babylonians, and now prescribes a derisive song for all nations, that the proud, who had previously with so much cruelty exalted themselves, might be scoffed at and derided.

But were any to ask, whether it be right to assail even the wicked with scoffs and railleries, the question is unsuitable here; for the Prophet does not here refer to what is lawful for the faithful to do, but speaks only of what is commonly done by men: and we know that it is almost natural to men, that when those whom they had feared and dared not to blame as long as they were in power, are overthrown, they break forth against them not only with many complaints and accusations, but also with wanton rudeness. As, then, it usually happens, that all triumph over fallen tyrants, and throw forth their taunts, and all seek in this way to bite, the Prophet describes this regular course of things. It is not, however, to be doubted, but that he composed this song according to the nature of the case, when he says, that they were men who multiplied their own by what belonged to others; that is, that they gathered the wealth of others. It is indeed true, that many things are commonly spread abroad, for which there is no reason nor justice; but as some principles of equity and justice remain in the hearts of men, the consent of all nations is as it were the voice of nature, or the testimony of that equity which is engraven on the hearts of men, and which they can never obliterate. Such is the reason for this saying; for Habakkuk, by introducing the people as the speakers, propounded, as it were, the common law of nature, in which all agree; and that is,---that whosoever enriches himself by another's wealth, shall at length fall, and that when one accumulates great riches, these will become like a heap to cover and overwhelm him. And if any one of us will consult his own mind, he will find that this is engraven on his very nature.

How, then, does it happen, that many should yet labor to get for themselves the wealth of others, and strive for nothing else through their whole life, but to spoil others that they may enrich themselves? It hence appears that men's minds are deprived of reason by sottishness, whenever they thus addict themselves to unjust gain, or when they give themselves loose reins to commit frauds, robberies, and plunders. And thus we perceive that the Prophet had not without reason represented all the proud and the cruel as drunken.

Then follow the words, {מתי}-{עד}, od-mati, how long? This also is the dictate of nature; that is, that an end will some time be to unjust plunders, though God may not immediately check plunderers and wicked men, who proceed and effect their purposes by force and slaughters, and frauds and evil-doings. In the mean time the Prophet also intimates, that tyrants and their cruelty cannot be endured without great weariness and sorrow; for indignity on account of evil deeds kindles within the breasts of all, so that they become wearied when they see that wicked men are not soon restrained. Hence almost the whole world sound forth these words, How long, how long? When any one disturbs the whole world by his ambition and

avarice, or everywhere commits plunders, or oppresses miserable nations,---when he distresses the innocent, all cry out, How long? And this cry, proceeding as it does from the feeling of nature and the dictate of justice, is at length heard by the Lord. For how comes it that all, being touched with weariness, cry out, How long? except that they know that this confusion of order and justice is not to be endured? And this feeling, is it not implanted in us by the Lord? It is then the same as though God heard himself, when he hears the cries and greenings of those who cannot bear injustice.

But let us in the meantime see that no one of us should have to say the same thing to himself, which he brings forward against others. For when any avaricious man proceeds through right or wrong, as they say, when an ambitious man, by unfair means, advances himself, we instantly cry, How long? and when any tyrant violently oppresses helpless men, we always say, How long? Though every one says this as to others, yet no one as to himself. Let us therefore take heed that, when we reprove injustice in others, we come without delay to ourselves, and be impartial judges. Self love so blinds us, that we seek to absolve ourselves from that fault which we freely condemn in others. In general things men are always more correct in their judgement, that is, in matters in which they themselves are not concerned; but as soon as they come to themselves, they become blind, and all rectitude vanishes, and all judgement is gone. Let us then know, that this song is set forth here by the Prophet, drawn, as it were, from the common feeling of nature, in order that every one of us may put a restraint on himself when he discharges the office of a judge in condemning others, and that he may also condemn himself, and restrain his desires, when he finds them advancing beyond just bounds.

We must also observe what he subjoins,---that the avaricious accumulate on themselves thick clay. This at first may appear incredible; but the subject itself plainly shows what the Prophet teaches here, provided our minds are not so blinded as not to see plain things. Hardly indeed an avaricious man can be found who is not a burden to himself, and to whom his wealth is not a source of trouble. Every one who has accumulated much, when he comes to old age, is afraid to use what he has got, being ever solicitous lest he should lose any thing; and then, as he thinks nothing is sufficient, the more he possesses the more grasping he becomes, and frugality is the name given to that sordid, and, so to speak, that servile restraint within which the rich confine themselves. In short, when any one forms a judgement of all the avaricious of this world, and is himself free from all avarice, having a free and unblessed mind, he will easily apprehend what the Prophet says here,---that all the wealth of this world is nothing else but a heap of clay, as when any one puts himself of his own accord under a great heap which he had collected together.

Some refer this to the walls of Babylon, which were built of baked bricks, as it is well known; but this is too farfetched. Others think that the Prophet speaks of the last end of us all; for they who possess the greatest riches, being at last thrown into the grave, are covered with earth: but this also is not suitable here, any more than when they apply it to Nebuchadnezzar, that is, to that sottishness by which he had inebriated himself almost through his whole life; or when others apply it to Belshazzar, his grandson, because when he drank from the sacred vessels of the

temple, he uttered slanders and blasphemies against God. These explanations are by no means suitable; for the Prophet does not here speak of the person of the king alone, but, as it has been said, he, on the contrary, summons to judgement the whole nation, which had given itself up to plunders and frauds and other evil deeds.

Then a general truth is to be drawn from this expression that all the avaricious, the more they heap together, the more they lade themselves, and, as it were, bury themselves under a great load. Whence is this? Because riches, acquired by frauds and plunders, are nothing else than a heavy and cumbrous lump of earth: for God returns on the heads of those who thus seek to enrich themselves, whatever they have plundered from others. Had they been contented with some moderate portion, they might have lived cheerfully and happily, as we see to be the case with all the godly; who though they possess but little, are yet cheerful, for they live in hope, and know that their supplies are in God's hand, and expect everything from his blessing. Hence, then, their cheerfulness, because they have no anxious fears. But they who inebriate themselves with riches, find that they carry a useless burden, under which they lie down, as it were, sunk and buried.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou deignest so far to condescend as to sustain the care of this life, and to supply us with whatever is needful for our pilgrimage---O grant that we may learn to rely on thee, and so to trust to thy blessing, as to abstain not only from all plunder and other evil deeds, but also from every unlawful coveting; and to continue in thy fear, and so to learn also to bear our poverty on the earth, that being content with those spiritual riches which thou offerest to us in thy gospel, and of which thou makes us now partakers, we may ever cheerfully aspire after that fullness of all blessings which we shall enjoin when at length we shall reach the celestial kingdom, and be perfectly united to thee, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Twelfth

Habakkuk 2:7

7. Shall they not rise up suddenly that shall bite thee, and awake that shall vex thee, and thou shalt be for booties unto them?

7. Annon repente consurgent qui te mordeant, et evigilabunt qui te exagitent, et eris in conculcationes ipsis?

The Prophet proceeds with the subject which we have already begun to explain; for he introduces here the common taunts against the king of Babylon and the whole tyrannical empire, by which many nations had been cruelly oppressed. He therefore says that enemies, who should bite him, [39] would suddenly and unexpectedly rise up.

[39] This is rendered by Henderson, “that have lent thee on usury;” but incorrectly, as the corresponding clause is found in the following, and not, as he says, in the preceding line. The literal version is as follows,— Shall not suddenly arise thy biters, And awake thy tormentors, And thou become for spoils to them? Now, the two corresponding words are “biters” and “tormentors;” and the idea of lending on usury cannot be admitted; and the common meaning of the word [{,נשך{,ל is to bite, and means lending on usury only in Hiphil. What the Septuagint gives is {δακνοντες}--- biters. Here is an instance of the peculiar manner of the Prophets, and also of the writers of the New Testament; the most obvious act is mentioned first ``arise,'' and then what is previous to it, ``awake.'' There is also a similar difference in ``biters'' and ``tormentors,'' or those who vex and harass: to torment or vex is not so great an evil as to bite, as it were, like a serpent; for such is the biting meant here.---Ed.

Some expound this of worms, but not rightly: for God not only inflicted punishment on the king when dead, but he intended also that there should be on earth an evident and a memorable proof of his vengeance on the Babylonians, by which it might be made known to all that their cruelty could not be suffered to go unpunished.

The words, Shall not they rise suddenly, are emphatical, both as to the question and as to the word, {פתע}, peto, suddenly. We indeed know that interrogations are more common in Hebrew than in Greek and Latin, and that they are stronger and more forcible. Our Prophet then speaks of what was indubitable. He adds, suddenly; for the Babylonians, relying on their own power, did not think that any evil was nigh them; and if any one dared to rise up against them, this could not have been so sudden, but they could have in time resisted and driven far away every danger. They indeed ruled far and wide; and we know that the wicked often sleep when they find themselves fortified on all sides. But the Prophet declares here that evil was nigh them, which would suddenly overwhelm them. It now follows---

Habakkuk 2:8

8. Because thou hast spoiled many nations, all the remnant of the people shall spoil thee; because of men's blood, and for the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein.

8. Quia tu spoliasti gentes multas, spoliabunt te omnes reliquiae populorum propter sanguines hominis et violentiam terrae, urbis et omnium habitantium in ea.

The Prophet here expresses more clearly why the Babylonians were to be so severely dealt with by God. He shows that it would be a just reward that they should be plundered in their turn, who had previously given themselves up to plunder, violence, and cruelty. Since, then, they had exercised so much inhumanity towards all people, the Prophet intimates here that God could not be deemed as treating them cruelly, by inflicting on them so severe a punishment: he also confirms the former truth, and recalls the attention of the faithful to the judgement of God, as a main principle to be remembered; for when things in the world are in a state of confusion, we despond, and all hope vanishes, except this comes to our mind---that as God is the judge of the world it cannot be otherwise but that at length all the wicked must appear before his tribunal, and give there an account of all their deeds; and Scripture, also, is wont to set God before us as a judge, whenever the purpose is to allay our troubles. The Prophet now does the same thing: for he says, that robbers should soon come upon the Babylonians, who would plunder them; for God, the judge of the world, would not at last suffer so many plunders to be unpunished.

But it was everywhere known that the Babylonians had, beyond all bounds and moderation, given themselves up to plunder, so that they spared no nations. Hence he says, because thou hast plundered many nations; and on this he enlarges; because the Babylonians had not only done wrongs to a few men, or to one people, but had marched through many countries. As, then, they had taken to themselves so much liberty in doing evil, the Prophet draws this conclusion---that they could not escape the hand of God, but that they were at length to find by experience that there was a God in heaven, who would repay them for their wrongs.

He says also, Spoil thee shall the remnant of all people. This admits of two expo-

sitions; it may mean, that the people, who had been plundered by the Chaldeans, would take revenge on them: and he calls them a remnant, because they were not entire; but yet he intimates that they would be sufficient to take vengeance on the Babylonians. This view may be admitted, and yet we may suppose, that the Prophet takes in other nations, who had never been plundered; as though he had said---``Thou hast indeed spoiled many nations; but there are other nations in the world whom thy cruelty could not have reached. All the people then who remain in the world shall strive to outdo one another in attacking thee; and canst thou be strong enough to resist so great a power?'' Either of these views may be admitted; that is, that in the wasted and plundered countries there would be still a remnant who would take vengeance,---or that the world contained other people who would willingly undertake this cause and execute vengeance on the Babylonians; for God would by his secret influence fulfill by their means his purpose of punishing them.

He then adds, on account of man's blood; that is, because thou hast shed innocent blood, and because thou hast committed many plunders; for thou hast not only injured a few men, but thy daringness and cruelty have also extended to many nations. He indeed mentions the earth, and also the city. Some confine these words to the land of Judea and to Jerusalem, but not rightly; for the Prophet speaks here generally; and to the land, he joins cities and their inhabitants. [40]

But this verse contains a truth which applies to all times. Let us then learn, during the licentious success of tyrants, to raise up our minds to heaven's tribunal, and to nourish our patience with this confidence, that the Lord, who is the judge of the world, will recompense these cruel and bloody robbers, and that the more licentious they are, the heavier judgement is nigh them; for the Lord will awaken and raise up as many to execute vengeance as there are men in the world, who by shedding blood will inflict punishment, though they may not intend to fulfill his purpose. God can indeed (as it has been often observed) execute his judgements in a wonderful and sudden manner. Let us hence also learn to restrain our evil desires; for none shall go unpunished who will allow themselves to injure their brethren; though they may seem to be unpunished for a time, yet God, who is ever the same, will at length return on their heads whatever they have devised against others, as we shall presently see again. He now adds---

Habakkuk 2:9

9. Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of evil!

9. Vae concupiscenti concupiscentiam malam domui suae, ut ponat in excelso nidum suum, quo se eripiat e manu (id est, e potestate) infortunii (mali, ad verbum.)

Habakkuk proceeds in exciting the king of Babylon by taunts; which were not scurrilous jests, but contained serious threatening; for, as it has been already said, the Prophet here introduces indeed the common people, but in that multitude we are

[40] So Grotius, Drusius, and Henderson regard the passage: the land, and the city, are supposed to have been used poetically for lands and cities. The word rendered "violence," [{,[{ɒɒɒ means an unjust or wrong act done by force, an outrage, a violent injustice: hence Grotius rightly renders it here, ``direptionem---robbing, pillaging, or plundering.'' While Newcome and others apply the passage to Judea and Jerusalem, the Septuagint version would lead us to suppose that Babylon was intended. The view taken here would be the most probable, were it not that the words are repeated at the end of verse 17; and there clearly they refer to the land of Judea and Jerusalem.---Ed.

to recognize the innumerable heralds of God's vengeance: and hence he says, Woe to him who coveteth, etc.; or we may say, He! for it is a particle of exclamation, as it has been said: He! thou, he says, who covetest an evil covetousness to thy house, and settest on high thy nest: but what shall happen? The next verse declares the punishment.

The clause, Woe to him who covets an evil covetousness to his house, may be read by itself,---that this cupidity shall be injurious to his house; as though he had said, ``Thou indeed wouldest provide for thy house by accumulating great riches; but thy house shall find this to be evil and ruinous. So the word {רעה}, roe, evil, might be referred to the house; but the verse is best connected by reading the whole together; that is, that the Babylonians not only provided for themselves, while they with avidity plundered and collected much wealth from all quarters; but that they wished also to make provisions for their sons and grandsons: and we also see, that avarice has this object in view; for they who are anxiously bent on the accumulation of riches do not only regard what is needful for themselves to pass through life, but also wish to leave their heirs rich. Since then the avaricious are desirous of enriching for ever their houses, the prophet, deriding this madness, says, Woe to him who covets an evil covetousness to his house; that is, who wishes not only to abound and be satiated himself, but also to supply his posterity with abundance.

He adds another vice, which is almost ever connected with the former---that he may set, he says, his nest on high; for the avaricious have a regard to this---to fortify themselves; for as an evil conscience is always fearful, many dangers come across their minds---``This may happen to me,'' and then, ``My wealth will procure for me the hatred and envy of many. If then some danger be at hand, I shall be able to redeem my life many times;'' and he also adds, ``Were I satisfied with a moderate portion, many would become my rivals; but when my treasures surpass what is common, then I shall be as it were beyond the reach of men; and when others envy one another, I shall escape.'' So the avaricious think within themselves when they are ardently bent on accumulating riches, and form for themselves a great heap like a nest; for they think that they are raised above the world, and are exempt from the common lot of men, when surrounded by their riches.

We now then see what the Prophet means: Woe, he says, to him who wickedly and intemperately covets. And why does he so do? To enrich his posterity. And then he adds, to him who covets that he may set his nest on high; that is, that he may by wealth fortify himself, that he may be able to drive away every danger, and be thus exempt from every evil and trouble. And he adds, that he may deliver himself from the power of evil; he expresses now more clearly what I have said---that the rich are inebriated with false confidence, when they surpass all others; for they think not themselves to be mortals, but imagine that they have another life, as though they had a world of their own, free from all dangers. But while the avaricious thus elevate themselves by a proud confidence, the Prophet derides their madness. He then subjoins their punishment---

Habakkuk 2:10

10. Thou hast consulted shame to thy house by cutting off many people, and hast

sinned against thy soul.

10. Consultasti in ignominiam domui tuae (vel, conflasti tuo consilio probrum et dedecus domui tuae) exidendo populos multos; et peccasti in animam tuam.

The Prophet again confirms the truth, that those who count themselves happy, imagining that they are like God, busy themselves in vain; for God will turn to shame whatever they think to be their glory, derived from their riches. The avaricious indeed wish, as it appears from the last verse, to prepare splendor for their posterity, and they think to render illustrious their race by their wealth; for this is deemed to be nobility, that the richer any one is the more he excels, as he thinks, in dignity, and the more is he to be esteemed by all. Since, then, this is the object of almost all the avaricious, the Prophet here reminds them, that they are greatly deceived; for the Lord will not only frustrate their hopes, but will also convert their glory into shame. Hence he says, that they consult shame to their family.

He includes in the word consult, all the industry, diligence, skill, care, and labor displayed by the avaricious. We indeed see how very sagacious they are; for if they smell any gain at a distance, they draw it to themselves, night and day they form new designs, that they may circumvent this person and plunder that person, and accumulate into their heap whatever money they can find, and also that they may join fields to fields, build great palaces, and secure great revenues. This is the reason why the Prophet says, that they consult shame. What is the object of all their designs? for they are, as we have said, very sharp and keen-sighted, they are also industrious, and torment themselves day and night with continual labor; for what purpose are all these things? even for this, that their posterity may be eminent, that their nobility may be in the mouth of all, and spread far and wide. But the Prophet shows that they labor in vain for God will turn to shame whatever they in their great wisdom contrived for the honor of their families. The more provident then the avaricious are, the more foolish they are, for they consult nothing but disgrace to their posterity.

He adds, though thou cuttest off many people. This seems to have been expressed for the sake of anticipating an objection; for it might have seemed incredible that the Babylonians should form designs disgraceful to their posterity, when their fame was so eminent, and Babylon itself was like an idol, and the king was everywhere regarded with great reverence and also fear. Since then the Babylonians had made such advances, who could have thought it possible that what the Prophet declares here should take place? But, as I have already said, he meets these objections, and says, ``Though the Babylonians shall conquer many enemies, and overthrow strong people, yet this will be of no advantage to them; nay, even that will turn out to their disgrace which they think will be to their glory.''

To the same purpose is what he adds, thou hast sinned against thy soul. Some give this version, ``Thou hast sinned licentiously'' or immoderately; others, ``Thy soul has sinned,'' but these pervert the Prophet's meaning; for what he intended was nothing else but the evils which the avaricious and the cruel bring on themselves, and which will return on their own heads. When therefore the Babylonians contrived ruin for the whole world, the Prophet predicts that an end, very different from what

they thought, would be to them: thou hast sinned, he says, against thine own soul; [41] that is, the evil which thou didst prepare to bring on others, shall be made by God to fall on thine own head.

And this kind of declaration ought to be carefully noticed; that is, that the ungodly, while they trouble all, and harass all, while they torment one, plunder another, oppress another, do always sin against their own souls; that is, they do not cause so much loss and sorrow to others as to themselves: for the Lord will make the evil they intend for others to return on themselves. He does not speak here of guilt, but of punishment, when he says, ``Thou hast sinned against thy soul;'' that is, thou shalt receive the reward due to all thy sins. We now then see what the Prophet means. It now follows---

Habakkuk 2:11-13

11. For the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it.

11. Quia lapis ex muro clamabit, et lignum ex tabulato (ad verbum est, ex ligno,) respondebit ei.

12. Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and stablisheth a city by iniquity!

12. Vae aedificanti urbem in sanguinibus, et paranti civitatem in iniquitate.

13. Behold, is it not of the LORD of hosts that the people shall labour in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity?

13. Annon ecce a Jehova exercituum? ideo laborabunt populi in igne et gentes in vanitate (hoc est, frustra fatigabuntur.)

There is here introduced by the Prophet a new personification. He had before prepared a common song, which would be in the mouth of all. He now ascribes speech to stones and wood, of which buildings are formed. The stone, he says, shall cry from the wall, and the wood from the chamber; that is, there is no part of the building that will not cry out that it was built by plunder, by cruelty, and, in a word, by evil deeds. The Prophet not only ascribes speech to wood and stone, but he makes them also respond one to the other as in a chorus, as in lyrics there are voices which take up the song in turns. The stone, he says, shall cry from the wall, and the wood shall respond to it from the chamber; [42] as though he said, ``There will be a striking harmony in every part of the building; for the wall will begin and will utter its song, `Behold I have been built by blood and by iniquity;' and the wood will utter the same, and will cry, `Woe;' but all in due order; there will be no confused noise, but as music has distinct sounds, so also the stones will respond to the wood and the wood to the

[41] Literally, "sinning thy soul." We have in Proverbs 8:36, [{,[{חטאי ``my sinner,'' rendered no doubt correctly, ``he that sinneth against me.'' So here ``sinning thy soul,'' means ``sinning against thy soul.'' See the same words in Proverbs 20:2. In Numbers 16:38, the preposition [{ב}] is before ``souls.'' ``Thy soul hath sinned,'' as given by the Septuagint, and adopted by Newcome, does not convey the meaning; for to sin against our souls, is to injure ourselves so as to bring down judgment, as in the case mentioned in Numbers 16:38, while the other phrase conveys only the idea of doing what is wrong.---Ed.

[42] The word rendered here "Wood," lignum, is [{,[{כפיס and only found here. The Septuagint has {κανθαρος}, a beetle,---Sym. {συνδεσμος}, bond, tie, or joint,---Theod. {ἔνδεσμος}, bandage or jointing. The context shows that it must be something connected with wood-building. Parkhurst says, that it is a verb in Syriac, and means to connect, to fasten together, and he renders it a beam or a rafter, which would exactly suit this place. The word, ,[{מעץ}] ``from the wood,'' evidently means the wood-building or wood-work. So that tabulatum, a story or a chamber in a building, as rendered by Calvin, is not amiss. Perhaps the best version would be,--- And the beam from the wood-work answers it. Bochart says, that ,[{כפיס}] in Rabbinical writings, means a brick, and that it was usual, formerly, as it was in this country not long ago, to build with bricks and wood or timber together; and Henderson has adopted this meaning, but the other is more satisfactory.---Ed.

stones, so that there may be, as they say, corresponding voices.''

The stone, then, from the wall shall cry, and the wood shall answer ---what will it answer?---Woe to him who builds a city by blood, and who adorns his city by iniquity. By blood and by iniquity he understands the same thing; for though the avaricious do not kill innocent men, they yet suck their blood, and what else is this but to kill them by degrees, by a slow tormenting process? For it is easier at once to undergo death than to pine away in want, as it happens to helpless men when spoiled and deprived of all their property. Wherever there is wanton plundering, there is murder committed in the sight of God; for as it has been said, he who spares not the helpless, but drinks up their blood, doubtless sins no less than if he were to kill them.

But if this personification seems to any one strange, he must consider how incredible seemed to be what the Prophet here teaches, and how difficult it was to produce a conviction on the subject. We indeed confess that God is the judge of the world; nay, there is no one who does not anticipate his judgement by condemning avarice and cruelty; the very name of avarice is infamous and hated by all: the same may be said of cruelty. But yet when we see the avaricious in splendor and in esteem, we are astounded, and no one is able to foresee by faith what the Prophet here declares. Since, then our dullness is so great, or rather our sottishness, it is no wonder that the Prophet should here set before us the stones and the wood, as though he said, ``When all prophecies and all warnings become frigid, and God himself obtains no credit, while openly declaring what he will do, and when his servants consume their labor in vain by warning and crying, let now the stones come forth, and be teachers to you who will not give ear to the voice of God himself, and let the wood also cry out in its turn.'' This, then, is the reason why the Prophet introduces here mute things as the speakers, even to awaken our insensibility.

Then he adds, Shall it not be, behold, from Jehovah of hosts? [43] Some give a wrong version, ``Is not this,'' as though {הנה}, ene, were put here instead of a pronoun demonstrative; but they extenuate and obscure the beauty of the expression; nay, they pervert the meaning of the Prophet: for when he says, {הנה}, ene, behold, he refers not to what he had said, nor specifies any particular thing, and yet he shows, as it were by the finger, the judgement of God, which he bids us to expect; as though he said, ``Shall not God at length have his turn, when the avaricious and the cruel have obtained their triumphs in the world, and darkened the minds and thoughts of all, as though no account were to be given by them before the tribunal of God? Shall not God sometime show that it is his time to interpose?'' When, therefore, he says, Shall it not be, behold, from Jehovah? it is an indefinite mode of speaking; he does not say, This or that shall be from the God of hosts; but, Shall it not be, behold, from

[43] The construction of the first line of this verse, as given by Calvin, is stiff and unnatural. There is no doubt but that [{הנה is a pronoun in the plural number, and so it has been taken by the Septuagint, {ταυτα}, these things, and such is the rendering of the Syriac and Arabic versions. No improvement, perhaps, can be made on Newcome's rendering of this verse,--- Are not these things from Jehovah God of hosts, That people should labor for the fire, And nations should weary themselves for a vain thing? The intimation is, that all the buildings erected by blood and prepared by iniquity, were destined for the fire. ``For the fire,'' {בדי},[{אש] literally is, for the supply of fire, as Parkhurst renders the phrase: then it is, for the supply of emptiness or vacuity, {בריו}.[{ריק} The last two lines, with some variety, are found in Jeremiah 51:58, and applied to Babylon. In Jeremiah, ``for a vain thing,'' is in the first line, and ``for the fire'' is in the second. Jeremiah puts the less evil first, and the greatest last; but Habakkuk's usual manner is the reverse, which has been before noticed, and we find an instance in the preceding verse, where he mentions ``blood'' first, and in the next line, ``iniquity.'' That the destination of Babylon for the fire is here meant, seems evident from the following verse. See Jeremiah 51:25.---Ed.

Jehovah of hosts? that is, God seems now indeed to rest, and on this account men indulge themselves with greater boldness; but he will not always remain still, Shall not God then come forth, who seems now to be unconcerned? Something there will at length be from the God of hosts. And the demonstrative particle confirms the same thing: Behold, he says, as though he would show to the faithful as in a picture the tribunal of God, which cannot be seen by us now but by faith. He says, Behold, will not there be something from the God of hosts? that is, Will not God at length stretch forth his hand, to show that he is not unconcerned, but that he cares for the affairs of men? In a word, by this mode of speaking is pointed out to us the change, which we are to hope for, inasmuch as it cannot be soon realised.

Hence he concludes, The people, then, labor in the fire, and the people weary themselves in vain. To labor in the fire means the same thing as to take in hand an unprofitable work, the fruit of which is immediately consumed. Some say that people labor in the fire, because Babylon had been built by a great number of men, and at length perished by fire; but this explanation seems far-fetched. I take a simpler view---that people labor in the fire, like him who performs a work, and a fire is put under it and consumes it; or like him, who with great labor polishes his own work, and a fire is prepared, which destroys it while in the hands of the artificer. For it is certain that the Prophet repeats the same thing in another form, when he says, {ריק}-{בדי}, bedi-rik, with vanity, or for vanity. We now then apprehend his object.

We may here collect a useful doctrine---that not only the fruit of labor shall be lost by all who seek by wicked means to enrich themselves, but also that were the whole world favorable and subservient to them, the whole would yet be useless; as it happened to the king of Babylon, though he had many people ready to obey him. But the Prophet derides all those great preparations, for God had fire at hand to consume whatever they had so eagerly contrived who wished to spend all their labor to please one man. He at length adds---

Habakkuk 2:14

14. For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

14. Quia replebitur terra cognitione gloriae Jehovae, sicuti aquae operiunt mare.

The Prophet briefly teaches us here, that so remarkable would be God's judgement on the Babylonians that his name would thereby be celebrated through the whole world. But there is in this verse an implied contrast; for God appeared not in his own glory when the Jews were led away into exile; the temple being demolished and the whole city destroyed; and also when the whole easterly region was exposed to rapine and plunder. When therefore the Babylonians were, after the Assyrians, swallowing up all their neighbors, the glory of God did not then shine, nor was it conspicuous in the world. The Jews themselves had become mute; for their miseries had, as it were, stupefied them; their mouths were at least closed, so that they could not from the heart bless God, while he was so severely afflicting them. And then, in that manifold confusion of all things, the profane thought that all things here take place fortuitously, and that there is no divine providence. God then was at that time hid: hence the Prophet says, Filled shall be the earth with the knowledge of God;

that is, God will again become known, when by stretching forth his hand he will execute vengeance on the Babylonians; then will the Jews, as well as other nations, acknowledge that the world is governed by God's providence, as it had been once created by him.

We now understand the Prophet's meaning, and why he says, that the earth would be filled with the knowledge of God's glory; for the glory of God previously disappeared from the world, with regard to the perceptions of men; but it shone forth again, when God himself had erected his tribunal by overthrowing Babylon, and thereby proved that there is no power among men which he cannot control. We have the same sentence in Isaiah 11:9. [44] The Prophet there speaks indeed of the kingdom of Christ; for when Christ was openly made known to the world, the knowledge of God's glory at the same time filled the earth; for God then appeared in his own living image. But yet our Prophet uses a proper language, when he says that the earth shall then be filled with the knowledge of God's glory, when he should execute vengeance on the Babylonians. Hence incorrectly have some applied this to the preaching of the gospel, as though Habakkuk made a transition from the ruin of Babylon to the general judgement: this is a strained exposition. It is indeed a well-known mode of speaking, and often occurs in the Psalms, that the power, grace, and truth of God are made known through the world, when he delivers his people and restrains the ungodly. The same mode the Prophet now adopts; and he compares this fullness of knowledge to the waters of the sea, because the sea, as we know, is so deep, that there is no measuring of its waters. So Habakkuk intimates, that the glory of God would be so much known that it would not only fill the world, but in a manner overflow it: as the waters of the sea by their vast quantity cover the deep, so the glory of God would fill heaven and earth, so as to have no limits. If, at the same time, there be a wish to extend this sentence to the coming of Christ, I do not object: for we know that the grace of redemption flowed in a perpetual stream until Christ appeared in the world. But the Prophet, I have no doubt, sets forth here the greatness of God's power in the destruction of Babylon. [45]

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that as we are so inclined to do wrong, that every one is naturally disposed to consider his own private advantage---O grant that we may confine

[44] The idea is nearly the same, though not the words. The verse in Isaiah is literally this—For fill the earth shall the knowledge of Jehovah, Like the waters spreading over the sea. The verb rendered "cover" here and in Isaiah is, [{כסה},], which means first to spread, and in the second place to cover, as the effect of spreading. It is followed here by ,[{על}] over, and by ,[{ל}] over, in Isaiah; and so spreading must be the idea included in the verb. The comparison in Isaiah is between knowledge and waters, and the earth and the sea. Hence the common version does not properly present the comparison. The verb ,[{מלא}] is used in a passive and active sense. See Genesis 6:13, and Genesis 1:22; 24:16. This verse may be rendered in Welsh word for word, without changing the order in one instance:---Canys henwa y ddaear wybodaeth o Jehova, Vel y dyvroedd dros y more yn ymdaenu. ``The knowledge of Jeohovah,'' {דעה}] ,[{יהוה}-{את} is not an instance of a genitive case by juxtaposition, which is common both in Hebrew and in Welsh; for [{את}] here must be a preposition, ``from,'' for it is sometimes used for .[{מאת}] It is a knowledge that was to come from Jehovah, and not a knowledge of Jehovah.---Ed.

[45] There is no reason to doubt but that this is the meaning of the sentence here: and it is a striking instance of the variety of meaning which belongs to similar expressions, when differently connected. The glory of God is manifested by judgments as well as by mercies. In Isaiah it is "the knowledge of or from Jehovah;" here the expression is, "the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah." By "the knowledge of Jehovah" is to be understood the revelation made by the gospel. But by "the knowledge of his glory" is meant evidently the display of his power in destroying Babylon, as power is often signified by glory.—Ed.

ourselves by that restraint which thou layest on us by thy Prophets, so that we may not allow our coveting to break forth so as to commit wrong or iniquity, but confine ourselves within the limits of what is just, and abstain from what belongs to others: may we also so learn to console ourselves in all our distresses, that though we may be justly oppressed by the wicked, we may yet rely on thy providence and righteous judgement, and patiently wait until thou deliverest us, and makes it manifest that whatever the wicked devise for our ruin, so cleaves to themselves as to return and recoil at length on their own heads; and may we so fight under the banner of the Cross, as to possess our souls in patience, until we at length shall attain that blessed life which is laid up in heaven for us, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Thirteenth

Habakkuk 2:15, 16

15. Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that puttest thy bottle to him, and makest him drunken also, that thou mayest look on his nakedness!

15. Vae qui potat socium suum (vel, amicum;) conjungis (conjungens) calorem tuum (vel, utrem tuum; alii vertunt, adhibes venenum tuum, vel, iram tuam; alii intendens iram;) atque etiam inebrias, ut aspicias super nuditates eorum (id est, verenda.)

16. Thou art filled with shame for glory: drink thou also, and let thy foreskin be uncovered: the cup of the Lord's right hand shall be turned unto thee, and shameful spewing shall be on thy glory.

16. Saturatus es ignominia ex gloria (vel, pro gloria;) bibe etiam tu et discooperire (vel, sopiares;) fundetur super te calix dexterae Jehovae, et vomitus ignominiae super gloriam tuam.

This passage, in which the Prophet condemns the king of Babylon for his usual practice of rendering drunk his friends, is frigidly interpreted by most expounders. It has been already often said how bold the Jews are in contriving what is fabulous; when nothing certain occurs to them, they divine this or that without any discrimination or shame. Hence they say, that Nebuchadnezzar was given to excess, and led all whom he could into a participation of the same vice. They also think that his associates were captive kings, as though he bid them for the sake of sport to be brought to his table, and by drinking to their health, forced them to intoxication, that he might laugh at them when they made themselves base and ridiculous. But all this is groundless; for there is no history that relates any such thing. It is, however, easy to see that another matter is here treated of by the Prophet; for he does not speak of the king only, but he refers to the whole empire. I therefore doubt not but that this whole discourse, in which the Babylonian king is condemned for making drunk his associates or friends, is metaphorical or allegorical. But before I proceed further on the subject, I shall say something as to the words; for the meaning of the Prophet will thereby be made more evident.

Woe, he says, to him who gives his friend drink; then he adds, {חמתך} {מספח}, mesephech chemetak, ``who joinest and bottle.'' {חמה}, cheme, is taken in Hebrew for a bottle; and we know, and it is sufficiently evident from Scripture, that the Jews used bottles of skin, as there are casks and larger vessels with us. Since, then,

they put their wine into bottles, these were often taken for their cups, as it is in our language, when one says, Des flacons, des bouteilles. Hence some give this explanation---that the king of Babylon brought forth his flagons, that he might force to intoxication, by excessive drinking, those who could not and dared not to resist his will. But others render {חמה}, cheme, wrath, with a preposition understood: and in order that nothing may be understood, some render the participle, {מספח}, ``displaying,'' that is, ``his fury.'' But as {חמה}, cheme, means to be hot, we may, therefore, properly give this version, ``Uniting thy heat;'' that is, ``It is not enough for thee to inebriate others, except thou implicates them with thyself.'' We now perceive the meaning of this phrase. He adds, And thou also dost inebriate. We may hence learn that the Prophet had no other thing in view, but to show that the king of Babylon sought for himself many associates in his intemperance or excess: at the same time he takes, as I have said, excess in a metaphorical sense. I shall presently explain more fully what all this means; but now we only expound the words. And thou, he says, dost also inebriate: the particle {אף}, as it is well known, is laid down for the sake of amplifying. After having said, Thou unitest thy heat; that is, thou exhales thine intemperance, so that others also contract the same heat with thyself, he immediately adds, Thou inebriatest them. It follows, that their nakedness may be made open; that is, that they may disclose themselves with shame. The following verse I shall defer until we shall see more clearly what the Prophet had in view. [46]

As I have already said the Prophet charges the Babylonian king with having implicated neighboring kings in his own evil desires, and with having in a manner inebriated them. He indeed compares the insatiable avarice of that king to intemperance; for as it is the object of drunken men not to drink what may suffice them, but to glut themselves with wine, so also when avarice is dominant in the hearts of men, they are seized with a certain kind of fury, like a person who has an immoderate love for wine. This is the reason for the metaphor; for the Babylonian king, when he thirsted for the blood of men, and also for wealth and kingdoms, led into the same kind of madness many other kings; for he could not have succeeded except he had allured the favor of many others, and deceived them with vain expectations. As a

[46] The rendering of this verse has been various, though most agree as to its import. Grotius, Marckius, and Henderson, take nearly the same view of its meaning as Calvin, regarding it as metaphorical. But Marckius thinks that the drunkenness which the king of Babylon produced, means the evils which he inflicted on other nations. To make a nation drunk was to subdue and oppress it. See Isaiah 51:17,22; Jeremiah 25:15,16, 27,28; 51:7,39,57. This view is confirmed by the following verse, where the king of Babylon is threatened with a similar judgment; he was also to drink of the cup of Jehovah's right hand. As he made other nations drunk, so the Lord threatens him with a like visitation. The verse will admit of a much simpler rendering than what has been commonly offered, such as the following:— Woe to him who makes his neighbor to drink, Who adds his bottle, and also strong drink, In order that he may look on their nakedness. To render [{,[{חמה wrath, or heat, or gall, or poison, as some have done, is to introduce an idea foreign to the context, and the word is often found to signify the bottle of skin in which wine was kept. Newcome renders it ``flagon.'' By mentioning bottle, abundance of wine was probably intended, and to this abundance was added the strong drink, ,[{שכר}] intoxicating liquor. It is commonly rendered as though it were a verb in Hiphil; but it is not so. It means here no doubt, as in other places, strong drink. This line is only an application, as we find often in the Prophets, of the preceding line. Though there is no MS. which has ``his'' instead of ``thy'' connected with ``bottle,'' yet the preceding and the following lines seem to require it; and this is the reading of Symmachus and of the Vulgate. The change of persons, it is true, is very common in the Prophets, but not in such a way as we find here, the third person being adopted both in the preceding and in the following line. The idea of drinking as a judgment may have arisen from the cup of malediction given to criminals before their execution. See also Psalms 75:8. Babylon is in Jeremiah 51:7, represented as ``a golden cup'' in God's hand to make the nations drunken. It was ``golden'' to signify an outward appearance that was plausible, and alluring. So the mystic Babylon is said to have a golden cup, which was full of all abominations, Revelation 17:4.---Ed.

person who gives himself up to drinking wishes to leave associates, so Habakkuk lays the same thing to the charge of the king of Babylon; for being himself addicted to insatiable avarice, he procured associates to be as it were his guests, and quaffed wine to them, that is, elicited their cupidity, that they might join him in his wars; for each hoped for a part of the spoil after victory. Since, then, he had thus blinded many kings, they are said to have been inebriated by him. We indeed know that such allurements infatuate the minds and hearts of men; for there is no intoxication that stultifies men more than that eager appetite by which they devour both lands and seas.

We now then apprehend what the Prophet meant---that the Babylonian king not only burnt with his own avarice, but kindled also, as it were, a flame in others, like drunken men who excite one another. As then he had thus inflamed all the neighboring kings to rush headlong without any consideration and without any shame, like a person suffocated and overcome by excessive drinking; so the Prophet designates this inflaming as quaffing wine to them.

And this metaphor ought to be carefully observed; for we see at this day as in a mirror what the Prophet teaches here. For all the great princes, when they devise any plans of their own, send their ambassadors here and there, and seek to involve with themselves other cities and princes; and as no one is willing to endanger himself without reason, they set forth many fallacious allurements. And when any city fears a neighboring prince, it will seek to fortify itself by a new protection; so a treaty, when offered, becomes like a snare to it. And then when any inferior prince wishes to enlarge his borders, or to revenge himself, he willingly puts on arms, nay, anxiously, that he may be able, by the help of a greater, to effect his purpose, which he could not otherwise accomplish. Thus we see that dukes and counts, as they are called, and free cities, are daily inebriated. They who are chief kings, abounding in wine, that is, full of many vain promises, give to drink, as it were with full flagons, bidding wine to be brought forth on a well furnished table---``I will make thine enemy to give way to thee, and thou shalt compel him according to thy wish, and when I shall obtain the victory a part of the spoil shall be allotted to thee; I desire nothing but the glory. With regard to you, the free cities, see, ye tremble continually; now if you lie under my shadow, it will be the best security for you.'' Such quaffing is to be found at this day almost throughout the whole of Europe.

Then the Prophet does not without reason commemorate this vice in the king of Babylon---that he made those associates drunk whom he had bound to himself by perfidious treaties; for as it has been said, there is no intoxication so dangerous as this madness; that is, when any one promises this or that to himself, and imagines what does not exist. Hence he not only says, that the Babylonian king gave drink to his friends, but also that he joined his bottles; as though he had said that he was very liberal, nay, prodigal, while seeking associates in his intemperance; for if one condition did not suffice, another was added---``Behold, my king is prepared; but if he is not enough another will be joined with him.'' They thus then join together their heat. If we take {חמה}, cheme, for a bottle, then to join together their bottles would mean, that they accumulated promises until they inebriated those whom they sought

to deceive. But if the other interpretation be more approved, which I am disposed to follow, then the meaning would be---They join together their own heat, that is, they implicate others with themselves; as they burn themselves with insatiable cupidity, so they spread this ardor far and wide, so that the desires of many become united.

He afterwards adds---that thou mayest see their nakedness. It was not indeed an object to the king of Babylon to disclose the reproach of all those whom he had induced to take part in his wars; but we know that great kings are wont to neglect their friends, to whom at first they promise every thing. When a king wishes to entice to himself a free city or an inferior prince, he will say---``See, I seek nothing but to be thy friend''. We indeed see how shamefully they perjure themselves; nor is it enough for them to utter these perjuries in their courts; but not many years pass away before our great kings make public their abominable perjuries; and it appears immediately afterwards that they thus seek, without any shame, to mock both God and all mankind. After testifying that they seek nothing except to defend by their protection what is right and just, and to resist the tyranny and pride of others, they immediately draw back when anything adverse afterwards happens, and the city, which had hoped everything from so liberal a king, is afterwards forced to submit and to agree with its enemies, and to manage matters anyhow; thus its nakedness is disclosed. In the same manner also are inferior princes deprived of their power. And to whom is this to be imputed but to the principal author? For when any one, for the sake of ambition or avarice, leads others to inconvenience or to damage, he may justly and correctly be said to disclose their nakedness. We now apprehend the Prophet's real meaning, which interpreters have not understood. I come now to the next verse---

He says that he is satiated with shame instead of glory. Some give this rendering---``Thou art satiated with shame more than glory;'' but this does not suit the passage; for the Prophet does not mean that the Babylonian king was satiated with his own reproach, but rather with that of others. Secondly, the particle {מ}, mem, is not put here in a comparative sense, but the clause is on the contrary to be understood thus---``By thy glory, or, on account of thy glory, thou art satiated with shame''. It must also in the third place be observed, that punishment is not what the Prophet describes in these words; for it immediately follows---{שתה} {גם} {אתה}, shite gam ate, ``drink thou also.'' He comes now to punishment. By saying, then, that the king of Babylon was satiated with shame on account of glory, it is the same as though he had said, that while he was intent on increasing his own glory he brought all others to shame. It is indeed the common game of great kings, as it has been said, to enlarge their own power at the expense and loss of others. They would, indeed, if they could, render their friends safe; but when any one loses ground in their favor they neglect him. We see how at this day great kings, raising great armies, shed innocent blood. When a slaughter is made in war they express their grief, but it is only on account of their own glory or advantage. They will in words profess that they sympathise with the miserable men who faithfully spent their life for them, but they have for them no real concern. As, then, great kings draw human blood, and care nothing when many perish for their sake, the Prophet justly says, That the king of Babylon was satiated

with shame on account of glory; that is, that while he was seeking his own glory he was satiated with the reproaches of many; for many perished on his account, many had been robbed of their power, or were afterwards to be robbed---for the Prophet refers not here to what had taken place, but he speaks of things future; and the past tense of verbs was intended to express certainty; and we know that this was a common mode of speaking with the Prophets. [47]

He now adds---drink thou also. We hence see that the king of Babylon was secure as long as he remained untouched, though his alliance and friendship had proved ruinous to many. As long then as his kingdom flourished, the king of Babylon cared but little for the losses of others. Hence the Prophet says---``Thou shalt also drink; thou thinkest that others only shall be punished, as though thou were not exposed to God's judgement; but thou shalt come in thy turn and drink;''---in what way? He speaks here allegorically of the vengeance which was nigh the king of Babylon---``Thou, also,'' he says, ``shalt drink and become a reproach,'' or, shalt be uncovered.

The word {ערל}, orel, means in Hebrew the foreskin; and the foreskinned, or uncircumcised, was the name given to the profane and the base, or the contaminated; and hence many give this rendering---``Thou also shalt become ignominious;'' but others express more clearly the Prophet's meaning by this version---``Thou shalt be uncovered.'' Yet their opinion is not amiss who think that there is here a change of letters, that {הערל}, eorel, is put for {הרעל}, erol; and {רעל}, rol, means to be cast asleep; and it well suits a drunken man to say that he is stupefied. But as the Prophet had spoken of nakedness, I retain the word as it is; and thus the two clauses will correspond---Then thou shalt drink and be uncovered

Then follows the explanation---Poured forth [48] into thee shall be the cup of Jehovah's right hand; that is, ``the Lord shall in his time be thy cup-bearer; as thou hast inebriated many nations, and under the pretense of friendship hast defrauded those who, being bound to thee by treaties, have been ruined; so the Lord will now recompense thee with the reward which thou hast deserved: As thou hast been a cup-bearer to others, so the Lord will now become thy cup-bearer, and will inebriate thee, but after another manner.'' We indeed know what the Scripture everywhere means by the cup of God's hand---even vengeance of every kind. God strikes some with giddiness and precipitates them, when deprived of all humanity, into a state of madness; others he infatuates by insensibility; some he deprives of all understanding, so that they perceive nothing aright; against others he rouses up enemies, who treat them with cruelty. Hence the Lord is said to extend his cup to the wicked whenever he takes vengeance on them.

Therefore he adds---the reproach of spewing shall be on thy glory. The word

[47] The view presented here of the first clause of the verse is striking, and such as the words may admit. But most commentators attach to them another meaning. Newcome's version is—Thou art filled with shame instead of glory. Henderson's rendering is— Thou art filled with shame, not with glory. The verb being in the past tense seems to favor Calvin's view—"Thou hast been satiated with shame from glory," that is, thou hast been filled to satiety with the shame occasioned to others, arising from the pursuit of thine own glory. And then, as Calvin justly observes, his punishment is denounced.—"Drink thou also."—Ed.

[48] The verb [{,{סוב loosely expressed here, is very correctly rendered by Henderson ``shall come round;'' and this is the idea which Calvin suggests in the following explanation.---Ed.

{קיקלון}, kikolun, is a compound. [49] We have already seen that {קלון}, kolun, is shame; and now he speaks of shameful spewing. And this may be referred to the king of Babylon---that he himself would shamefully spew out what he had before intemperately swallowed down; or it might be fitly applied to his enemies---that they would spew in the face of the king of Babylon.

The end of which Habakkuk speaks, awaits all tyrants, who disturb the world by their cupidity. Ambition does indeed so infatuate them, that they neither spare human blood, nor hesitate to endanger their nearest and most friendly associates. Since then an insatiable thirst for glory thus inflames them, the Prophet justly allots to them this reward---that they shall receive filthy and shameful spewing instead of that glory, in seeking which they observed no limits. Let us now proceed -

Habakkuk 2:17

17. For the violence of Lebanon shall cover thee, and the spoil of beasts, which made them afraid, because of men's blood, and for the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein.

17. Quia violentia Libani operiet te et praedatio animalium, quae terruit ea (vel, quae contrivit,) propter sanguines hominis et violentiam terrae, urbis et omnium habitantium in ea.

We may hence easily learn, that the Prophet has not been speaking of drunkenness, but that his discourse, as we have explained, was metaphorical; for here follows a reason, why he had denounced such a punishment on the king of Babylon, and that was, because he had exercised violence, not only against all nations indiscriminately, but also against the chosen people of God. He had before only set forth in general the cruelty with which the king of Babylon had destroyed many nations; but he now speaks distinctly of the Jews, in order to show that God would in a peculiar manner be the avenger of that cruelty which the Chaldeans had employed towards the Jews, because the Lord had taken that people under his own protection. Since then the king of Babylon had assailed the children of God, who had been adopted by him, and whose defender he was, he denounces upon him here a special punishment. We thus see that this discourse is properly addressed to the Jews; for he intended to bring them some consolation in their extreme evils, so that they might strengthen their patience; for they were thereby made to see that the wrongs done to them were come to a reckoning before God.

By Libanus then we are to understand either Judea or the temple; for Libanus, as it is well known, was not far from the temple; and it is elsewhere found in the same sense. But if any extends this to the land of Judea, the meaning will be the same; there will be but little or no difference as to the subject that is handled. Because the violence then of Libanus shall overwhelm thee

Then come the words, the pillaging of beasts. Interpreters think that the Chaldeans and Assyrians are here called {בהמות}, bemutt, beasts, as they had been

[49] It is commonly derived from [{,[{קי a contraction of ,[{קיא] a vomit or spewing, and ,[{קלון] shame. Compounds are no common things in Hebrew; and these are found separate in nine MSS. The Septuagint have {ἀτιμια}, reproach only; and the Vulgate, ``vomitus ignominiae---the spewing of shame.'' Newcome renders it ``foul shame,'' and Henderson ``great ignominy,'' regarding it as a reduplicate noun for .[{קלקלון}] But as drunkenness is the metaphor used, ``shameful spewing,'' or the spewing of shame or of reproach is most suitable to the passage.---Ed.

savage and cruel, like wild beasts, in laying waste Judea; but I rather understand by the beasts of Libanus those which inhabited that forest. The Prophet exaggerates the cruelty of the king of Babylon by this consideration, that he had been an enemy to brute beasts; and I consider the pronoun relative {אשר}, asher, which, to be understood before the verb {יחיתן}, ichiten, which may be taken to mean, to tear, or to frighten, Some give this rendering, ``The plundering of beasts shall tear them;'' as though he had said, ``The Babylonians are indeed like savage beasts, but they shall be torn by their own plundering:'' but another sense will be more suitable that the plundering of beasts, which terrified them, shall overwhelm thee; for the same verb, {יבס}, icas, shall cover or overwhelm the king of Babylon, is to be repeated here. He adds at last the clause, which was explained yesterday. We now perceive the meaning of the Prophet to be---that the king of Babylon would be justly plundered, because he had destroyed the holy land and iniquitously attacked God's chosen people, and had also carried on his depredations through almost the whole of the Eastern world. [50] It now follows---

Habakkuk 2:18

18. What profiteth the graven image that the maker thereof hath graven it; the molten image, and a teacher of lies, that the maker of his work trusteth therein, to make dumb idols?

18. Quid prodest sculptile? quia sculpsit illud fictor ejus conflatile et doctorem mendacii; quia confidit fictor figmento suo, ut faciat idola muta.

The Prophet now advances farther, and shows that whatever he had predicted of the future ruin of Babylon and of its monarchy, proceeded from the true God, from the God of Israel: for it would not have been sufficient to hold, that some deity existed in heaven, who ruled human affairs, so that it could not be, but that tyrants would have to suffer punishment for their cruelty. We indeed know that such sayings as these were everywhere common among heathen nations---that justice sits with Jupiter---that there is a Nemesis---that there is Divine vengeance. Since then such a conviction had ever been imprinted on the hearts of men, it would have been a frigid and almost an empty doctrine, had not the Prophet introduced the God of Israel. This is the reason why he now derides all idols, and claims for God the government of the whole world, and clearly shows that he speaks of the Jews, because they worshipped no imaginary gods, as the heathen nations, but plainly understood him to be the creator of heaven and earth, who revealed himself to Abraham, who gave his law by the hand of Moses. We now perceive the Prophet's design.

[50] It is commonly agreed, that Libanus here means either the temple or the land of Judah; most probably the last, according to the opinion of Jerome, Drusius, and others. The "violence," or outrage, of Libanus, means the violence done to it, as Newcome and others render the clause. The next line is more difficult: if the verb be retained as it is, we must either adopt what Calvin has proposed, and after him Drusius, or take the [{ו at the beginning as a particle of comparison, according to what is done by Henderson, ``As the destruction of beasts terrifieth them.'' But to preserve the parallelism of the two lines, it would be better to adopt the correction of all the early versions, Sept. Arab. Syr. and also of the Chald. par.; which substitute [{ז} for [{ז} and make the verb to be :[{יחיתד} and there are two MSS. which have .[{יחת} In this case the rendering would be the following--- Because the violence done to Libanus shall overwhelm thee; And the depredation done to the beasts shall rend thee; On account of the blood of men, and of violence to the land, To the city, and to all who dwelt in it. The reason men are called ``beasts'' is because Libanus is mentioned which was inhabited by beasts; and in the two following lines the statement is more clear, and according to the order usually observed, ``the depredation done to beasts'' is ``the blood of men;'' and ``the violence to Libanus'' is ``violence to the land.'' And then, as it is often the case in the Prophets, there is an addition made to the two last lines, ``To the city,'' etc.--- Ed.

As then the king of Babylon did himself worship his own gods, the Prophet dissipates that vain confidence, by which he might be deceived and deceive others. Hence he says, What avails the graven image? He speaks here contemptuously of images formed by men's hands. And he adds a reason, because the maker has graven it, he says. Interpreters give a sense that is very jejune, as though the Prophet had said, ``What avails a graven image, when it is graven or melted by its artificer?'' But the Prophet shows here the reason why the worship of idols is useless, and that is, because these gods are made of dead materials. And then he says, ``What deity can the artificer produce?'' We hence see that a reason is given in these words, and therefore we may more clearly render them thus---``What avails the graven image, when the framer has graven it?'' that is, since the graven image has its origin from the hand and skill of man, what can it avail? He then adds, he has formed a molten image; that is, though the artificer has given form to the metal, or to the wood, or to the stone, yet he could not have changed its nature. He has indeed given it a certain external appearance; but were any one to ask what it is, the answer would surely be, ``It is a graven image.'' Since then its nature is not changed by the work of man, it evidently appears, how stupid and mad must all those be who put their trust in graven images. [51]

He then adds, and a teacher of falsehood. He added this clause, because men previously entertain false notions, and dare not to form a judgement on the matter itself. For, how comes it that a piece of wood or a stone is called a god? Had any one asked the sages at Rome or at Athens, or in other cities, who thought all other nations barbarous, What is that? on seeing a Jupiter made of silver; or of wood, or of stone, the answer would have been, ``It is Jupiter, it is God.'' But how could this be? It is a stone, a piece of wood, or of silver. They would yet have asserted that it was God. Whence came this madness? Even from this, because men were bewitched, so that seeing they saw not; they wilfully closed their eyes, and resolved to be blind, being unwilling to understand. This is the reason why the Prophet, by way of anticipation, says, the artificer has formed ---what has he formed? a graven image and a teacher of falsehood. The material remains the same, but a false notion prevails, for men think idols to be gods. How come they to think so? It is no doubt the teaching of falsehood, a mere illusion. He then confirms the same thing; the fashioner, or the artificer, he says, trusts in his own work, or in what he has formed. How is this? Must they not be void of sense and reason who trust in lifeless things? ``The workman,'' as Isaiah says, ``will take his instruments, will form an idol, and then he will bow the knee, and call it his god; yet it is the work of his own hands.'' What! art not thou thyself a god? thou knowest thine own frailty, and yet thou createst new gods! Even in this manner does the Prophet confirm what he had previously said, that men are

[51] Rightly to understand this verse, it is necessary to remember that the graven and the molten image was the same; it was first graven and then covered with some metal, either of gold or of silver. See Note on Micah 1:7, vol. 3, p. 167. This verse, as given in our version and in that of Newcome, presents hardly a meaning; and Henderson is not justified in the peculiar sense he gives to the particle [{,[{כי taking it as a relative pronoun. The rendering of Calvin gives an evident and a striking sense. The verse may be thus literally rendered--- 18. What avails the graven image?--- For its graver has formed it,--- The molten image and the teacher of falsehood? For trust in it does the former of its form, After having made dumb idols. The last line show that the singular number before used is to be taken in a collective sense: and the preposition [{ל}] before an infinitive has sometimes the meaning of ``after.'' See Exodus 19:1, ``When he has made,'' etc., is the rendering of Grotius.---Ed.

extremely stupid, nay, that they are seized with monstrous sottishness, when they ascribe a kind of deity to wood, or to a stone, or to metal. How so? because they are, he says, false imaginations.

And he adds, that he may make dumb idols. He again repeats what he had said,---that the nature of the material is not changed by men's workmanship, when they form to themselves gods either from wood or from stone. How so? because they cannot speak. To the same purpose is what immediately follows; the next verse must therefore be added. We shall afterwards say something more on the general subject.

Habakkuk 2:19

19. Woe unto him that saith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise, it shall teach! Behold, it is laid over with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all in the midst of it.

19. Vae qui dicit ligno, Expergiscere; excitare, lapidi muto (mortuo,) ipse docebit: Ecce, ipse (vel ipsum lipsum, si vefaremus ad lignum; ipse ergo) opertus est auro et argento; et nullus spiritus in medio ejus.

He pursues, as I have said, the same subject, and sharply inveighs against the sottishness of men, that they call on wood and stone, as though there were some hidden power in them. They say to the wood, Awake; for they implored help from their idols. Shall it teach? Some render it thus as a question; but I take it in a simpler form, ``It will teach;'' that is, ``It is a wonder that ye are so wilfully foolish; for were God to send to you no Prophet, were there no one to instruct you, yet the wood and the stone would be sufficient teachers to you: ask your idols, that is, ascertain rightly what is in them. Doubtless, the god that is made of wood or of stone, sufficiently declares by his silence that he is no god. For there is no motion in wood and stone. Where there is no vigor and no life, is it not right to feel assured, that there is no deity? There are, indeed, many creatures endued with feeling and motion; but the God who gives power, and motion, and feeling to the whole world, and to all its parts, does he not surpass in these respects all his creatures? Since, then, wood and stone are silent, they are teachers sufficient for you, provided ye be apt scholars.''

We hence see how the Prophet in this way amplifies the insensibility of men; for they did not perceive what was quite manifest. The design of what follows is the same. Behold, it is covered over with gold and silver; that is, it is made splendid: for idolaters think that their gods are better when adorned with gold and silver; but yet there is no breath in the midst of them. ``Look,'' he says, ``within; look within, and ye shall see that they are dead.'' [52] The rest we shall dilate on to-morrow.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that as there is in us so little of right judgement, and as our minds are blind even at mid-day,---O grant, that thy Spirit may always shine in

[52] With the exception of the clause, "It will teach," there is a general agreement in the mode of rendering this verse. "Shall it teach," is Newcome's version. Henderson considers it to be ironical, "It teach!" Grotius agrees with Calvin, "It will itself teach thee," that is, that it is deaf, and no god. I regard the verse as capable of a simpler and more literal rendering, as follows: 19. Woe to him who saith to the wood, "Awake, Arise;" To the dumb stone, "It will teach:" Behold, it is covered with gold and silver! Yet there is no breath within it. The two verbs, "Awake, Arise," stand connected with "wood," and they are so given in the Septuagint; and there is a striking contrast between the dumb stone and teaching.—Ed.

us, and that being attentive to the light of thy word, we may also keep to the right way through the whole course of our pilgrimage, and subject to thee both ourselves and every action of our life, so that we may not be led by any allurements into the same ruin with the ungodly, who would deceive and entrap us, and who lie in wait on every side; but that being ruled by the counsel of thy Spirit, we may beware of all their intrigues: and may we, especially as to our spiritual life, be so given up to thee alone, as ever to keep ourselves far away from the defilements of all people, and so remain in the pure worship of thy majesty, that the ungodly may never draw us away into the same delusions with themselves, by which Satan so mightily deceives them; but may we follow Him as our leader whom thou wouldst have to be our ruler, even Christ thy Son, until he at length gathers us all into that celestial kingdom which he has purchased for us by his own blood. Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Fourteenth

We said yesterday, that the Prophet speaks now of idols, that he might deprive the king of Babylon of his vain confidence: for though heathens claim everything to themselves and to their own powers, yet their superstition in some measure dementates them. Hence the Prophet shows, that that tyrant in vain trusted in his idols, since they were things of nought. But the reasons by which he refutes idolatry ought to be noticed: he says, that the artificer, who formed gods, were not able to change the nature of the material, for the wood remained wood, and stone continued to be stone, and that the workmen and artificer in forming it did nothing more than make a molten image. The material then remained still the same. As to the image itself, the Prophet says, that it was mere falsehood and deception; yea, that gods made of wood or of silver, or of any other material, were instructors and teachers of falsehood, for they allured simple souls: and Satan spread his snares before men, when he set before their eyes these visible figures, and persuaded them that they contained something divine. Then this reasoning of the Prophet ought to be carefully observed; for he reminds us, that fictitious gods are made of lifeless and perishable materials, and that images are only the juggleries of Satan.

That saying of Gregory is common among the Papists, that images are the books of the ignorant; for such was his answer to Serenus, bishop of Marseilles, who turned out images from all the churches (Lib. 9, Epist. 9.) He said that he approved of his object, in wishing to correct the superstition which prevailed among the people, but that he had done what was not right in wholly taking away images, the books of the ignorant. But let us consider whether more faith is due to Gregory, a man imbued with many errors, (as that age was very corrupt), or to the Prophet Habakkuk, and also to Jeremiah, who announces nearly the same sentiment. Though, then, there is some speciousness in idols, yet the Prophet here reminds us that they are nothing but the impostures of Satan; for they teach falsehood. The reason also that is given is deserving of notice---that the workmen put their hope in what they themselves have formed. And it is indeed a thing most preposterous, that a mortal man should form his own god, and then imagine that something divine is enclosed in the very form, for deity is not in the material. The material is disregarded when unformed; but not so when it attains a beautiful shape. While the tree grows, while it produces

flowers and fruit, it is deemed, as it really is, a dead thing; but when a piece of it is formed in the figure of a man, it is believed to be a god! But it is extremely absurd to suppose that the hand of the artificer gives deity to a dead material; for the wood is dead, and nothing is perceived but the shape given to it by man. Since, then, the artificer trusts in what he has formed, it is what seems beyond anything strange. It is hence quite evident, that men are wholly demented by the devil, when they worship their own workmanship.

But now, in order to press the matter more fully on idolaters, the Prophet upbraids them for calling on the wood and on the stone to awake. It is certain, that when idolaters bow the knee before what they have themselves formed, they still imagine that there are celestial gods; but when before a figure of wood or stone they call upon God, it is the same thing as though they expected help from the wood and stone; for the question is not here what idolaters imagine, but the thing itself is to be regarded; and this is what the Prophet most fully and plainly condemns. Since, then, the superstitious are wont to address their prayers to wood and stone, he says, that they make to themselves gods, to whom they sacrifice. And the Prophet rightly refers in express terms to this kind of service; for the chief sacrifice which God bids to be offered to him, and demands from us, is to call on him; for we thus testify that life and all things belonging to salvation are found alone in him. Since, then, the majesty of God appears especially from having this testimony borne to him, that he is the fountain of life and of all blessings, every one who prostrates himself before a stone or wood, and implores the aid of a visible god, transfers, no doubt, the glory of the eternal God to a dead piece of wood or to a stone. If, then, we wish to be free from every superstition, let us remember this truth, that then only we have the only true God, when we direct our prayers and supplications to him alone, or, in a word, when we call on him alone. When we have recourse to dead idols, God is deprived of his own right. We may call him God a hundred times, but we give him an empty title, and one of no value, except we pray to him alone.

The Prophet, in the last place, derides the madness of men, by saying that the very idols teach: for, as it was said yesterday, the clause is not to be read as a question, as some do; but in order more sharply to reprove the stupidity of men, the Prophet says, ``Doubtless the very figures themselves, except ye are wholly senseless, will teach you.'' He had before said, it is true, that they were the teachers of falsehood and vanity; but he speaks now of another kind of teaching, that if men wisely attended to the thing itself, they might soon learn from a mere view of their gods, that they were most palpably the deceits of Satan; for if any one looked on the idols with a clear eye, he would see that they were a dead material, and would see that great wrong is done to God by transforming him into a likeness of what is dead.

We now understand the Prophet's meaning, when he says, That idols themselves are sufficient, and more than sufficient teachers, when men are teachable, and lend an attentive ear. He means not, as it was said yesterday, that idols teach fallaciously to the destruction of men, while something divine is ascribed to them; but he says that they teach, if any one of a sane mind, and free from error, comes to view the idol, and forms a judgement of the thing itself. But superstition occupies the minds

of men; and hence it is that all become the scholars of Satan, and no one applies his mind to understand the doctrine he mentions here. In short, idols teach naturally, and they teach through the artifice and delusion of Satan. They teach naturally; for by their silence they show that they are not gods, inasmuch as there is no strength in them. They teach, also, by the artifice of the devil; for they are made to claim a kind of divinity, and thus dazzle the minds of men, who are already corrupted by their own delusions. To the first teaching, of which the Prophet now speaks, none apply their minds; for almost all renounce nature wholly: this only lays hold on them---that idols are gods; for they make an image of the heavenly and eternal God, from whom we are at a great distance, and who does not otherwise descend to us, except through visible representations!

The same truth the Prophet confirms when he says, that though these gods are covered over with gold and silver, there is no breath in them, or in the midst of them. In short, he means that they are mere masks; for no divinity can be without life. As then idols are dead things, it follows that they are the most palpable impostures of Satan, by which he fascinates the minds of men, when they thus devote themselves to dead things.

Moreover, whatever is here said against idols, most certainly applies to the superstitions of popery. They deny that they give divine honors to their idols; but let us consider what the Prophet says. They indeed sacrifice to gold and silver, and then bend their knees before their images, and do not think that God is near them, except in these figures. Let them show, then, that the Prophet reasons here foolishly, or let them be held guilty according to the declaration, as it were, of the Holy Spirit, when they thus present their prayers before idols. It now follows---

Habakkuk 2:20

20. But the Lord is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him.

20. Jehova autem in templo sanctitatis suae (id est, in templo sancto suo:) sileat a facie ejus omnis terra.

After having taught us that the Babylonians were deceived in expecting any help from their idols, and were deluded by Satan, Habakkuk now recalls the attention of the faithful to the only true God; for it would not have been enough to take away from the Babylonians the false confidence which they had in their idols, except the Israelites, on the other hand, trusting in the grace of the true God, were fully persuaded that God was on their side, as he had taken them under his protection.

And we ought carefully to observe this order; for we see that many boldly deride all the superstitions which prevail in the world, and at the same time daringly and with cyclopic fury despise the true God. How many are at this day either Epicureans or Lucianians, who prate jestingly and scoffingly against the superstitions of the papacy, but in the meantime they are not influenced by any fear of God? If, however, we are to choose one of two evils, superstition is more tolerable than that gross impiety which obliterates every thought of a God. It is indeed true, that the more the superstitious toil in their delusions, the more they provoke God's wrath against them; for they transfer his glory to dead things; but yet they retain this principle---that honor and worship are due to God: but the profane, in whom there is no religion

whatever, not only change God from what he is, but also strive as far as they can to reduce him to nothing. Hence I have said, that the order which the Prophet observes here ought to be maintained. For, after having overturned the false illusions of the devil, by which he deludes the superstitious, by setting before them a mere shadow in the place of the true God, he now sets up the true worship of the only true God. Then the Prophet has hitherto been endeavoring to subvert superstitions, but he now builds up: for except God, when idols are pulled down, ascends his own tribunal, and shines there as supreme according to his right, it would be better, at least it would be more tolerable, as I have said, that superstitions should be left entire.

He now says that God is in his own temple or palace: this word is often taken for heaven, but is applied to the sanctuary. Many consider that the reference is made to heaven; as though the Prophet had said, that the true God, who is the artificer and creator of heaven and earth, is not to be seen in a visible form, nor covered over with gold and silver, nor represented by wood or stone; but that he rules in heaven, and fills heaven with his infinite glory and this view is by no means unsuitable. But as he here specially addresses the Jews, it seems to me more probable that he speaks of the temple, where God then designed to be worshipped, and sacrifices to be offered to him for it would not have been sufficient to set God, the creator of heaven and earth, in opposition to the superstitions of all the nations; but it was also necessary to introduce the contrast between the God of Israel and all those gods who then had obtained a name and reputation in the world, as they had been formed by the will of men. The God of Israel was indeed the creator of heaven and earth; but he had made himself known by his law, he had revealed himself to men, so that his majesty was not hidden; for when we speak of God, we are lost except he comes to us, and in a manner exhibits himself to us; for the capacity of our understanding is not so great that it can penetrate above all heavens. Hence the majesty of God is in itself incomprehensible to us; but he makes himself known by his works and by his word. Now as the Israelites worshipped, and surely knew that they worshipped the only true God, the Prophet here rightly confirms them in the hope they derived from the teaching of the law---that God was their Father, inasmuch as he had adopted them. If any prefer to take the word for heaven, I do not object; and that meaning, as I have said, is not unsuitable. But as the Prophet seems to me to have a special vies to his own people, to whom he was appointed a teacher; it is more probable that the word, temple or palace, is here to be understood of the sanctuary.

If any raises the objection that there is then no difference between the God of Israel and the gods of the Gentiles, for he also dwells in an earthly habitation, the answer is obviously this---that though God is said to dwell between the cherubim, he has not been represented by an image, as though he had anything like to wood or stone, or possessed any likeness to human bodies. All these delusions were banished from the Temple; for he commanded his worshipers to look up to heaven. There was an intervening veil, that the people might understand that they could not otherwise come to God than through that celestial model, and the types of which they saw in the altar of incense, in the altar on which they sacrificed, in the table of the shewbread, in short, in all other services of the Temple. And there is another difference to be

noticed; for though there was there the golden altar, though there was there the ark of the covenant, and the altar on which the victims were immolated, yet inscribed on all these typical representations was the word of God, by which alone true religion was to be distinguished from all false inventions. For whatever specious appearance of reason may therefore be in fictitious modes of worship, men have no authority to render them lawful; but so much reverence is due to the only true word of God, that it ought to overrule all other reasons. And besides, this word, as I have hinted already, did not retain the Jews in these delusions, but elevated their minds to heaven. We now then see that there was a wide difference between the Temple which was at Jerusalem, and the temples which the superstitious had then built for themselves throughout the world; for God ruled over the Jews, so that they could not have been deluded. And at this day, where the word of God shines among us, we can follow it with safety. And, further, God did spiritually draw to himself his own servants, though he employed, on account of their ignorance, certain outward elements. Hence the Prophet justly says, that God was in his palace or his Temple; for the Israelites knew of a certainty that they did not worship a fictitious God, since in his law he had revealed himself to them, and had chosen the sanctuary, where he intended to be worshipped in a typical, and yet in a spiritual manner.

He then adds, Let all the earth be silent before him. Habakkuk, no doubt, commends the power of God, that the Israelites might proceed with alacrity in their religious course, knowing it to be a sufficient security to be under the protection of the only true God, and that they might not seek after the superstitions of the nations, nor be carried here and there, as it often happens, by vain desires. Keep silence, then, he says, let all the earth. He shows that though the Israelites might be far inferior to the Babylonians and other nations, and be far unequal to them in strength, military art, forces, and, in short, in all things of this kind, yet they would be always safe under the guardianship of God; for the Lord was able to control whatever power there might be in the world.

We now see what the Prophet had in view: for he does not here simply exhort all people to worship God, but shows, that though men may grow mad against him, he yet can easily by his hand subjugate them; for after all the tumults made by kings and their people, the Lord can, by one breath of his mouth, dissipate all their attempts, however furious they may be. This, then, is the silence of which the Prophet now speaks. But there is another kind of silence, and that is, when we willingly submit to God; for silence in this respect is nothing else but submission: and we submit to God, when we bring not our own inventions and imaginations, but suffer ourselves to be taught by his word. We also submit to him, when we murmur not against his power or his judgements, when we humble ourselves under his powerful hand, and do not fiercely resist him, as those do who indulge their own lusts. This is indeed, as I have said, a voluntary submission: but the Prophet here shows that there is power in God to lay prostrate the whole world, and to tread it under his feet, whenever it may please him; so that the faithful have nothing to fear, for they know that their salvation is secured; for though the whole world were leagued against them, it yet cannot resist God. Now follows a prayer:---

CHAPTER 3

Habakkuk 3

Habakkuk 3:1

1. A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet upon Shigionoth.

1. Precatio Chabakuk Prophetae super ignorantiis (vel, super canticis, aut instrumentis musicis.)

There is no doubt but that the Prophet dictated this form of prayer for his people, before they were led into exile, that they might always exercise themselves in the study of religion. We indeed know that God cannot be rightly and from the heart worshipped but in faith. Hence, in order to confine the dispersed Israelites within due limits, so that they might not fall away from true religion, the Prophet here sets before them the materials of faith, and stimulates them to prayer: and we know, that our faith cannot be supported in a better way than by the exercise of prayer.

Let us then bear in mind, that the way of fostering true religion, prescribed here to the miserable Israelites while dispersed in their exile, was to look up to God daily, that they might strengthen their faith; for they could not have otherwise continued in their obedience to God. They would, indeed, have wholly fallen away into the superstitions of the Gentiles, had not the memory of the covenant, which the Lord had made with them, remained firm in their hearts: and we shall presently see that the Prophet lays much stress upon this circumstance.

He calls it his own prayer, [53] not because he used it himself privately, or composed it for himself, but that the prayer might have some authority among the people; for they knew that a form of prayer dictated for them by the mouth of a Prophet, was the same as though the Spirit itself was to show them how they were to pray to God. The name, then, of Habakkuk is added to it, not because he used it himself, but that

[53] The more correct rendering here would be, "A Prayer (or rather, An Intercession) by Habakkuk the Prophet;" that is, It was a prayer composed by him. The preposition [{[{ל before Habakkuk, as often before David in the Psalms, would be better rendered in this way, than by ``of;'' for the meaning is, not that it was his prayer, that is, one offered up by him, but that it was composed by him. ``A Psalm of David,'' ought to be, ``A Psalm by David.''---Ed.

the people might be more encouraged to pray, when they knew that the Holy Spirit, through the Prophet, had become their guide and teacher.

There is some difficulty connected with the word {שגינות}, sheginut. The verb {שגג}, shegag, or {שגה}, shege, means, to act inconsiderately; and from {שגה}, shege, is derived {שגיון}, shegiun. Many render it, ignorance; some, delight. Some think it to be the beginning of a song; others suppose it to be a common melody; and others, a musical instrument. Thus interpreters differ. In the seventh Psalm David, no doubt, calls either a song or some musical instrument by the word {שגיון}, shegiun. Yet some think that David bears testimony there to his own innocency; and that, as he was not conscious of having done wrong, his own innocency is alone signified by the title: but this is a strained view. The word is taken in this place, almost by common consent, for ignorances: and we know that the Hebrews denominate by ignorances all errors or falls which are not grievous, and such things as happen through inadvertence; and by this word they do not extenuate their faults, but acknowledge themselves to be inconsiderate when they offend. Then {שגיון}, shegiun, is no excusable ignorance, which men lay hold on as a pretext; but an error of folly and presumptions, when men are not sufficiently attentive to the word of God. But perhaps the word {שגינות}, sheginut, being here in the plural number, ought to be taken for musical instruments. Yet as I would not willingly depart from a received opinion, and as there is no necessity in this case to constrain us to depart from it, let us follow what had been already said,---that the Prophet dictates here for his people a form of prayer for ignorances, that is, that they could not otherwise hope for God's forgiveness than by seeking his favor. [54] And how can we be reconciled to God, except by his not imputing to us our sins?

But the Prophet, by asking for the pardons of ignorances, does not omit more grievous sins; but intimates that though their conscience does not reprove men, they are yet not on that account innocent and without guilt; for they often inconsiderately fall, and their faults are not to be excused for inadvertence. It is, then, the same thing as though the Prophet reminded his own people, that there was no remedy for them in adversity but by fleeing to God, and fleeing as suppliants, in order to solicit his forgiveness; and that they were not only to acknowledge their more grievous sins, but also to confess that they were in many respects guilty; for they might have fallen through error a thousand times, as we are inconsiderate almost through the whole course of our life. We now, then, perceive what this word means, and why the Prophet spoke rather of ignorances than of other sins. But I shall not proceed farther now, as there is some other business.

Prayer

[54] This explanation, adopted by Calvin, is derived originally from Aquila and Symmachus, who rendered the phrase, {ἐπι} {ἀγοηματων},---respecting oversights or errors: and they have been followed by Jerome, Vulgate, etc. The prior version of the Septuagint is, {μετ} {'} {ὠδδης},---with an ode that this prayer is composed in metre, is evident from the word, ``Selah,'' and from the conclusion of the chapter. The most probable meaning of the word is what Drusius has suggested, and adopted by Grotius, Marckius, and Henderson, and that is, that it refers to a peculiar metre, a kind of composition, which from its irregularity is called erratica cantio, an erratic verse. ``The prayer of Habakkuk,'' says Drusius, ``was to be sung according to the odes which they called Sigionoth.'' To the same purpose is what Grotius says, that is, it is ``a song according to the notes of an ancient ode which began with this word.'' It is derived from ,[{שגה}] to go astray, to wander, that is, in this instance, from the regular metre of an ode. It is an erratic ode, that is, one containing varieties. It may be thus paraphrastically expressed, ``According to the notes of the irregular ode;'' or, as it is in the margin of our Bibles, ``According to variable songs or tunes.''---Ed.

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast deigned to make thyself known to us by thy word, and as thou elevates us to thyself in a way suitable to the ignorance of our minds,---O grant, that we may not continue fixed in our stupidity, but that we may put off all superstitions, and also renounce all the thoughts of our flesh, and seek thee in the right way; and may we suffer ourselves to be so ruled by thy word, that we may purely and from the heart call upon thee, and so rely on thine infinite power, that we may not fear to despise the whole world, and every adversity on the earth, until, having finished our warfare, we shall at length be gathered into that blessed rest, which thine only-begotten Son has procured for us by his own blood---Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Fifteenth

Habakkuk 3:2

2. O Lord, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid: O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy.

2. Jehova, audivi vocem tuam (auditum tuum, ad verbum, ;[{דעמש}] [55]) Jehova, opus tuum in medio annorum vivifica illud (sed relativum pronomen abundat;) in medio annorum notum fac; in ira misericordiae recorderis.

The Prophet says here, in the name of the whole people, that he was terrified by the voice of God, for so I understand the word, though in many places it means report, as some also explain it in this place. But as the preaching of the Gospel is called in Isaiah 53:1, {שמעה}, shemoe, report, it seems to me more suitable to the present passage to render it the voice of God; for the general sentiment, that the faithful were terrified at the report of God, would be frigid. It ought rather to be applied to the Prophecies which have been already explained: and doubtless Habakkuk did not intend here to speak only in general of God's power; but, as we have seen in the last lecture, he humbly confesses the sins of the people, and then prays for forgiveness. It is then not to be doubted but that he says here, that he was terrified by the voice of God, that is, when he heard him threatening punishment so grievous. He then adds, Revive thy work in the middle of the years, and make it known. At last, by way of anticipation, he subjoins, that God would remember his mercy, though justly offended by the sins of the people.

But by saying, that he feared the voice of God, he makes a confession, or gives an evidence of repentance; for we cannot from the heart seek pardon, unless we be first made humble. When a sinner is not displeased with himself, and confesses not his guilt, he is not deserving of mercy. We then see why the Prophet speaks here of fear; and that is, that he might thus obtain for himself and for others the favor of God; for as soon as a sinner willingly condemns himself, and does not do this formally, but seriously from the heart, he is already reconciled to God; for God bids us in this way to anticipate his judgement. This is one thing. But if it be asked, for what purpose the Prophet heard God's voice; the obvious answer is,---that as it is not the private prayer of one person, but of the whole Church, he prescribes here to the faithful the way by which they were to obtain favor from God, and turn him to mercy; and that is, by dreading his threatening and by acknowledging that whatever God threatened

[55] The verb, "territus sum,—I feared," has been omitted. It is even omitted in the French version.—Ed.

by his Prophets was near at hand.

Then follows the second clause, Jehovah! in the middle of the years revive thy work. By the work of God he means the condition of his people or of the Church. For though God is the creator of heaven and earth, he would yet have his own Church to be acknowledged to be, as it were, his peculiar workmanship, and a special monument of his power, wisdom, justice, and goodness. Hence, by way of eminence, he calls here the condition of the elect people the work of God; for the seed of Abraham was not only a part of the human race, but was the holy and peculiar possession of God. Since, then, the Israelites were set apart by the Lord, they are rightly called his work; as we read in another place,

``The work of thine hands thou wilt not despise,''
Psalm 138:8.

And God often says, ``This is my planting,'' ``This is the work of my hands,'' when he speaks of his Church.

By the middle of the years, he means the middle course, as it were, of the people's life. For from the time when God chose the race of Abraham to the coming of Christ, was the whole course, as it were, of their life, when we compare the people to a man; for the fullness of their age was at the coming of Christ. If, then, that people had been destroyed, it would have been the same as though death were to snatch away a person in the flower of his age. Hence the Prophet prays God not to take away the life of his people in the middle of their course; for Christ having not come, the people had not attained maturity, nor arrived at manhood. In the middle, then, of the years thy work revive; that is, ``Though we seem destined to death, yet restore us.'' Make it known, he says, in the middle of the years; that is, ``Show it to be in reality thy work.'' [56]

We now apprehend the real meaning of the Prophet. After having confessed that the Israelites justly trembled at God's voice, as they saw themselves deservedly given up to perdition, he then appeals to the mercy of God, and prays God to revive his own work. He brings forward here nothing but the favor of adoption: thus he confesses that there was no reason why God should forgive his people, except that he had been pleased freely to adopt them, and to choose them as his peculiar people; for on this account it is that God is wont to show his favor towards us even to the last. as, then, this people had been once chosen by God, the Prophet records this adoption and prays God to continue and fulfill to the end what he had begun. With

[56] The view given of "the middle of the years," is ingenious and striking; but the common interpretation is, that "the years" of calamity, allotted to the Jews, are meant. The Septuagint version of this verse is so extremely wide of the original, that none can account for the differences. There are no various readings of any moment; and the literal rendering of this verse, and of the former part of the following, I consider to be this,— 2. O Jehovah! I have heard thy report; I feared, O Jehovah! Thy work! in the midst of the years revive it; In the midst of the years make it known; In anger remember mercy: 3. May God from Teman come And the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah. It is called "thy report," as it was a report which came from God; the allusion is to the threatenings in chapter 1. "The report from thee," would convey the sense. The third line is a prayer; and so are the following lines, though all the verbs are in the future tense, while that for "revive" is in the imperative mood. The third verse ought to end with the word "Selah." What follows in the other part and in the subsequent verses, is a relation of what took place when God had formerly interfered in behalf of Israel; while here, and in the latter part of the preceding verse, the Prophet expresses a prayer to God in reference to his people, and borrows his language from the past interpositions of God.—Ed.

regard to the half course of life, the comparison ought to be observed; for we see that the race of Abraham was not chosen for a short time, but until Christ the Redeemer was manifested. Now we have this in common with the ancient people, that God adopts us, that he may at length bring us into the inheritance of eternal life. Until, then, the work of our salvation is completed, we are, as it were, running our course. We may therefore adopt this form of prayer, which is prescribed for us by the Holy Spirit,---that God would not forsake his own work; in the middle of our course.

What he now subjoins---in wrath remember mercy, is intended to anticipate an objection; for this thought might have occurred to the faithful---``there is no ground for us to hope pardon from God, whom we have so grievously provoked, nor is there any reason for us to rely any more on the covenant which we have so perfidiously violated.'' The Prophet meets this objection, and he flees to the gracious favor of God, however much he perceived that the people would have to suffer the just punishment of their sins, such as they deserved. He then confesses that God was justly angry with his people, and yet that the hope of salvation was not on that account closed up, for the Lord had promised to be propitious. Since God then is not inexorable towards his people---nay, while he chastises them he ceases not to be a father; hence the Prophet connects here the mercy of God with his wrath.

We have elsewhere said that the word wrath is not to be taken according to its strict sense, when the faithful or the elect are spoken of; for God does not chastise them because he hates them; nay, on the contrary, he thereby manifests the care he has for their salvations. Hence the scourges by which God chastises his children are testimonies of his love. But the Scripture represents the judgement with which God visits his people as wrath, not towards their persons but towards their sins. Though then God shows love to his chosen, yet he testifies when he punishes their sins that iniquity is hated by him. When God then comes forth as it were as a judge, and shows that sins displease him, he is said to be angry with the faithful; and there is also in this a reference to the perceptions of men; for we cannot, when God chastises us, do otherwise than feel the accusations of our own conscience. Hence then is this hatred; for when our conscience condemns us we must necessarily acknowledge God to be angry with us, that is with respect to us. When therefore we provoke God's wrath by our sins we feel him to be angry with us; but yet the Prophet collects together things which seem wholly contrary---even that God would remember mercy in wrath; that is, that he would show himself displeased with them in such a way as to afford to the faithful at the same time some taste of his favor and mercy by finding him to be propitious to them.

We now then perceive how the Prophet had joined the last clause to the foregoing. Whenever, then, the judgement of the flesh would lead us to despair, let us ever set up against it this truth---that God is in such a way angry that he never forgets his mercy---that is, in his dealings with his elect. It follows---

Habakkuk 3:3

3. God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise.

3. Deus de Theman veniet, et Sanctus e monte Paran. Selach. [57] Operuit coelos decor (vel, gloria) ejus; laude ejus plena est terra.

This verse interpreters explain in two ways. Some construe the verb in the future tense in the past time---``God went forth from Teman, and the holy one from mount Paran''; for a verb in the past tense follows. But others consider it to be in the optative mood---``May God come, or go forth, from Teman, and the holy one from mount Paran;'' as though the Prophet prayed God to come as the defender of his people from mount Sinai, where the law was promulgated and the covenant ratified, which God had formerly made with Abraham and his posterity. I rather subscribe to their opinion who think that the manifestation of God, by which he had testified that he was the guardian of that people, is repeated by the Prophet. As, then, God had so made known his glory on mount Sinai, that it was evident that that nation was under his protection, so the Prophet, with the view of strengthening himself and others, records what was well known among the whole people---that is, that the law was given on mount Sinai, which was a testimony of singular favor; for God then by a new pledge testified, that the covenant formerly made with Abraham was firm and inviolable. The reason why Habakkuk does not mention mount Sinai, but Teman and Paran, seems to some to be this---because these mountains were nearer the Holy Land, though this view, I fear, will appear too refined; I therefore take this simple view---that instead of mentioning mount Sinai, he paraphrastically designates it by mount Paran and the desert of Teman. Some suppose these to be two mountains; but I know not whether Teman ought to be understood only as a mountain; it seems on the contrary to have been some large tract of country. It was a common thing among the Jews to add this name when they spoke of the south, as many nations were wont to give to winds the names of some neighboring places; so when the Jews wished to designate a wind from Africa, they called it Teman. ``It is a Teman wind;'' and so when they spoke of the south, they said Teman.

However this may be, it is certain that the desert of Teman was nigh to Sinai, and also that mount Paran was connected with that desert. As then they were places towards the south, and nigh to mount Sinai, where the law had been proclaimed, the Prophet records here, in order to strengthen the faith of the whole people, that God had not in vain gone forth once from Teman, and there appeared in his celestial power; for God then openly showed, that he took under his guardianship the children of Abraham, and that the covenant which he had formerly made with him was not vain or of no effect. Since, then, God had testified this in so remarkable and wonderful a manner, the Prophet brings forward here that history which tended especially to confirm the faith of the godly---God went forth once from Teman, and the holy one

[57] The word [{[{סלה is found 70 times, as Parkhurst says, in the Psalms, and thrice in this chapter. ``It was most probably,'' he adds, ``a note of music, or a direction to the singers in the temple service to raise their voices or instruments where it is inserted.'' The opinion of Gesenius is the same, it being a direction, as he says, ``to repeat the preceding verse in a louder strain.'' It is always rendered by the Septuagint {Διαψαλμα}, which means a variation in singing. Some have rendered the word pause, but it cannot be so considered, for it occurs at the end of at least three of the Psalms. There seems to be no regularity in its adoption in some of the Psalms it occurs once, in some twice, in others thrice, and in one psalm four times. Calvin has not referred, in his comment, to the latter part of this verse, which, according to his Latin, may be thus translated,--- Cover the heavens did his glory; With his praise full was the earth. Both glory and praise here are to be taken as signifying their manifestations. The reference is made to the displays of divine majesty on mount Sinai. The original may be thus rendered--- Cover the heavens did his shining, And his lustre filled the earth. ---Ed.

from mount Paran.

For it was not God's will that the memory of that manifestation should be obliterated; but he had once appeared with glory so magnificent, that the people might feel assured that they would ever be safe, for they were protected by God's hand, and that full of power, as the fathers had once known by manifest and visible evidences; and hence the Prophet represents God's going forth from mount Paran as a continued act, as though he rendered himself visible chiefly from that place. Nor is this representation new; for we see, in many other places, a living picture, as it were, set before the eyes of the faithful, in order to strengthen them in their adversity, and to make them assured that they shall be safe through God's presence. The Lord, indeed, did not daily fulminate from heaven, nor were there such visible indications of his presence as on mount Sinai; but it behaved the people to feel assured that he was the same God who had given to their fathers such clear evidence of his power, and that he is also at this time, and to the end of the world, endued with the same power, though it be not rendered visible.

We now then apprehend the design of the Prophet: God then came from Teman, and the holy one from mount Paran. We must also observe, that the minds of the godly were recalled to the spectacle on mount Sinai, when they were drawn away into exile, or when they were in the power of their enemies. They might indeed have then supposed, that they were wholly forsaken. Obliterated then must have been the memory of that history, had not this remedy been introduced. It is, therefore, the same as though the Prophet had said---``Though God now hides his power, and gives no evidence of his favor, yet think not that he formerly appeared in vain to your fathers as one clothed with so great a power, when the law was proclaimed on mount Sinai. It follows---

Habakkuk 3:4

4. And his brightness was as the light; he had horns coming out of his hand: and there was the hiding of his power.

4. Et splendor quasi lux fuit; cornua e manu ejus ei, et ibi absconsio fortitudinis ejus.

He confirms the declaration which I have explained that God, when he intended his presence to be made known to his people, gave evidences of his wonderful power, capable of awakening the minds of all. He then says, that the brightness was like light. By the word {אור}, aur, is doubtless meant the light, which diffuses itself through the whole world, and proceeds from the sun. Then he says, that the brightness which appeared on mount Sinai was equal to the light of the sun, capable of filling the whole world. He adds, that horns were to him from the hand. Some render it, splendor; but {קרן}, coren, properly means a horn, and {קרנים}, corenium, is here in the dual number: it is therefore more probable, that the Prophet ascribes horns to God, carried in both hands; and it more corresponds with what immediately follows, that ``there was the hiding of his strength,'' or that ``there was his power hidden.'' They who render the word, splendours, think that what had been said is repeated, that is, that the brightness was like light; but they are mistaken, for we may collect from the verse that two different things are expressed by the Prophet: he first speaks

of the visible form of God; and then he adds his power, designating it metaphorically by horns, which is common in Scripture. Indeed this mode of speaking occurs often. He then says, that God came armed with power, when he gave the law to his people; for he bore horns in his hands, where his strength was hid. [58]

As to the word hiding, some indeed give this refined view, that God then put forth his strength, which was before hidden. But this is a very strained explanation. To me it seems evident, that the Prophet in the first place says, that God's glory was conspicuous, capable of irradiating the whole world like the light of the sun; and he then adds, that this splendor was connected with power, for God carried horns in both his hands, where his strength was laid: and he says, that it was hid, because God did not intend to make known his power indiscriminately throughout the world, but peculiarly to his own people; as it is also said in Psalm 31:20, that

``the greatness of his goodness is laid up for the faithful alone,
who fear and reverence him.''

As then it is said, that the goodness of God is laid up for the faithful, for they enjoy it as children and members of the household; so also the power of God is said to be laid up, because he testifies that he is armed with power to defend his Church, that he may render safe the children of Abraham, whom he has taken under his protection. It afterwards follows---

Habakkuk 3:5

5. Before him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at his feet.

5. Coram facie ejus ambulavit pestis, et egredietur carbo ignitus (vel, ustio) ad pedes ejus.

The Prophet repeats here, that God came armed to defend his people, when he went forth from Teman; for he connects with it here the deliverance of the people. He does not indeed speak only of the promulgation of the law, but encourages all the godly to confidence; for God, who had once redeemed their fathers from Egypt, remained ever like himself, and was endued with the same power.

And he says, that before God's face walked the pestilence; this is to be referred to the Egyptians; and that ignited coal proceeded from his feet. Some render {רשף}, reshoph, exile; but its etymology requires it to be rendered burning or ignited coal, and there is no necessity to give it another meaning. [59]

[58] That [{[{קרז means to irradiate or to shine, is clear from Exodus 34:29,30,35; ``for shine did the skin of his face,'' {כי}] {קרז} {עור} .{פניי}]. Most critics consider that the noun here, though in this sense in no other instance, means rays, or beams of light; and this corresponds with the description given elsewhere of God's appearance on mount Sinai. Drusius, Marckius, Newcome, and Henderson, render it ``rays.'' The line then would literally be --- Rays from his hand were to him. or, to retain the English idiom. He had rays from his hand. To render the line, ``Rays streamed from his hand,'' is to give a paraphrase. The objection of Calvin as to the next line, seems not valid; for the hiding of strength may refer to the hand, or to the place, Sinai, whether we render the previous word, rays or horns;---to the place, if we retain our present reading, ,[{עזה}] ``of its strength;'' but to the hand, if we adopt the reading of many copies, [{עזו}] ``of his strength,'' which is perhaps the most accordant with the passage.---Ed.

[59] Most agree in the view given of this verse, only there is some shade of difference as to the word [{;[{רשף but though Calvin renders it carbo ignitus---ignited coals, yet in his exposition he seems to regard it with many others as a burning disease. In the six other instances in which the word occurs, it certainly has not this sense, except it be in Deuteronomy 32:24, which is doubtful. It signifies not a burning coal, but a glowing fire, burning or lightening. Compare Exodus 9:23,25, with Psalm 78:48; where it designates the fires or lightnings produced by thunder, which accompanied the hail. Lightning would be its most proper rendering here; for instead of referring this verse to the plagues in Egypt, it may be considered as a continuation of what is contained in the foregoing verse; and the Septuagint and Theodotion have rendered [{דבר}] in the preceding clause, not pestilence, but word---{λογος}, its most usual meaning. This makes the whole to comport to what we read of God's appearance on mount Sinai. See Exodus 19:16; Deuteronomy 33:2. The version then would be this--- From before him

The import of the whole is---that God had put to flight all the enemies of his people; for we know that the Egyptians were smitten with various plagues, and that the army of Pharaoh was drowned in the Red Sea. Hence, the Prophet says, that God had so appeared from Teman, that the pestilence went before him, and then the ignited coal; in short, that the pestilence and ignited coal were God's officers, which were ready to perform his commands: as when a king or a judge, having attendants, commands them to put this man in prison, and to punish another in a different way; so the Prophet, giving us a representation of God, says, that all kinds of evils were ready to obey his orders, and to destroy his and their enemies. He does not then intend here to terrify the faithful in mentioning the pestilence and the ignited coal; but, on the contrary, to set before their eyes evidences of God's power, by which he could deliver them from the hand of their enemies, as he had formerly delivered their fathers from Egypt. By God's feet, he then means his going forth or his presence; for I do not approve of what some have said, that ignited coals followed, when pestilence had preceded; for both clauses are given in the same way. It follows---

Habakkuk 3:6

6. He stood, and measured the earth: he beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow: his ways are everlasting.

6. Stetit et mensus est terram; aspexit et dissolvit gentes; et afflicti sunt montes aeterni; incurvati sunt colles seculi; itinera seculi ei.

He says that God possessed every power to subdue the earth to himself, and that he could at his will destroy it, yea, dissolve mountains as veil as nations. Some of the Jews understood this of the ark, which stood at that time in Gilead. They then suppose that the Prophet meant this in short---that when God chose a place for the ark of the covenant in Gilgal, that he determined then what he would do, and that he then in his secret counsel divided the land, so that each should have his portion by lot. This, it is true, was accomplished shortly after, for Joshua, as we know, divided it by lot between the tribes. But what the Jews affirm of the ark seems to me strained and frigid. Habakkuk, on the contrary, means by the word stand, that God was openly conspicuous, like him who assumes an erect posture, so that he is seen at a distance. In this sense we are to take the expression that God stood.

The measuring, of the earth is not to be confined to Judea, but is to be extended to the whole world. God, he says, has measured the earth. To measure the earth is what properly belongs to a sovereign king; and it is done that he may assign to each his portion. Except God, then, had a sovereign right over the earth and the whole world, Habakkuk would not have ascribed to him this office; and this we learn from the verse itself, for he immediately subjoins, that the nations, as it were, melted away, that the mountains were destroyed, that the hills were bowed down

We hence see that by earth we are not to understand Judea only, but the whole world; as though he had said, that when God appeared on mount Sinai, he made it fully evident that the earth was under his power and authority, so that he could determine whatever he pleased, and prescribe limits to all nations. For he does not

proceeded the word (i.e. the law;) And forth came lightning at his feet. Most of the ideas in this, and in the two preceding verses, seem to be similar to those we find in Deuteronomy 33:2,3.---Ed.

speak of God here as having, like a surveyor, a measuring line; but he says, that he measured the earth as one capable even then of changing the boundaries of the whole world; nay, he intimates that it was he himself who had at first created the earth and assigned it to men. It is indeed true that the nations did not then melt away, nor were the mountains demolished, nor the hills bowed down; but the Prophet simply means, that God's power then appeared, which was capable of shaking the whole world.

But he calls these the mountains of eternity and the hills ages, which had been from the beginning fixed on their own foundations. For if an earthquake happens on a plain, it seems less wonderful; and then if any of those mountains cleave, which are not so firmly fixed, it may be on account of some hollow places; for when the winds fill the caverns, they are forced to burst, and they cleave the mountains and the earth. But the Prophet relates an unusual thing, and wholly different from the ordinary course of nature---that the mountains of eternity, which had been from the beginning, and had remained without any change, were thus demolished and bowed down. In short, the Prophet intended by all means to raise up to confidence the minds of the godly, so that they should become fully persuaded that God's power to deliver them would be the same as that which their fathers had formerly experienced; for there is no other support under adverse, and especially under despairing circumstances, than that the faithful should know that they are still under the protection of that God who has adopted them. This is the reason why the Prophet amplifies, in so striking a manner, on the subject of God's power.

And hence also he subjoins, that the ways of ages are those of God. Some render the clause, ``the ways of the world.'' The word {עולם}, oulam, however, means properly an age, or perpetual time. The Prophet, I have no doubt, means by ways of ages, the wonderful means which God is wont to adopt for the defense of his Church; for we are ever wont to reduce God's wonder to our own understanding, while it is his purpose to perfect, in a manner that is wonderful, the work of our salvation. Hence the Prophet bids the faithful here to raise upwards their thoughts, and to conceive something greater of God's power than what they can naturally comprehend. If we take the ways of eternity, in this sense, then they are to be understood as in opposition to those means which are known and usual. They are his daily ways, when the sun rises and sets, when the spring succeeds the winter, when the earth produces fruit; though even these are so many miracles, yet they are his common ways. But God has ways of eternity that is he has means unknown to us by which he can deliver us from death, whenever it may please him.

But yet, if any prefer taking the ways of eternity as signifying the continued power of God, which has ever appeared from the beginning, the sense would be appropriate and not less useful: for it especially avails to confirm our faith, when we consider that God's power has ever been the same from the creation of heaven and earth, that it has never been lessened or undergone any change. Since, then, God has successively manifested his power through all ages, we ought hence to learn that we have no reason to despair, though he may for a time conceal his hand; for he is not on that account deprived of his right. He ever retains the sovereignty of the world.

We ought, then, to be attentive to the ways of ages, that is, to the demonstration of that power, which was manifested in the creation of the world, and still continues to be manifested. [60] It follows---

Habakkuk 3:7

7. I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction: and the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble.

7. Pro iniquitate (vel, pro nihilo, alii vertunt) vidi tentoria Cushan (vel, Aethiopiae;) contremiscent cortinae (vel, pelles) terrae Midian.

The Prophet relates here, no doubt, whatever might bring comfort to the miserable Jews, as they thought themselves rejected and in a manner alienated from God. Hence the Prophet mentions here other deliverances, which were clear evidences of God's constant favor towards his chosen people. He had hitherto spoken of their redemption, and he will presently return to the same subject: but he introduces here other histories; as though he had said, that it was not only at one time that God had testified how much he loved the race of Abraham, and how inviolable was the covenant he had made; but that he had given the same testimonies at various times: for as he had also defended his people against other enemies, the conclusion was obvious, that God's hand was thus made manifest, that the children of Abraham might know that they were not deceived, when they were adopted by him.

Hence Habakkuk mentions the tents of Cushan as another evidence of God's power in preserving his people, and the curtains of Midian; for we know how wonderful was the work, when the Jews were delivered by the hand of Gideon; and the same was the case with respect to the king of Chosen.

We now, then, understand the design of the Prophet: for as he knew that the time was near when the Jews might succumb to despair in their great adversities, he reminds them of the evidences of God's favor and power, which had been given to their fathers, that they might entertain firm hope in time to come, and be fully persuaded that God would be their deliverer, as he had been formerly to their fathers.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that as we have a continual contest with powerful enemies, we may know that we are defended by thine hand, and that even thou art fighting for us when we are at rest; so that we may boldly contend under thy protection, and never be wearied, nor yield to Satan and the wicked, or to any temptations; but firmly proceed in the course of our warfare: and however much thou mayest often humble us, so as to make us to tremble under thine awful judgement, may we yet never cease to entertain firm hope, since thou hast once promised to be to us an eternal Father in thine eternal and only-begotten Son, but being confirmed by the invincible constancy of faith, may we so submit ourselves to thee, as to bear all our

[60] This verse is explained in a very striking manner, but the version is not so strictly correct It may be thus rendered:— 6. He stood, and measured the earth; He looked, and agitated the earth; And burst themselves open did the perpetual mountains, Bend down did the hills of ages; The going of ages were his. “The perpetual mountains” are literally “the mountains of perpetuity,” which had remained the same from the beginning. “The hills of ages” might be rendered the hills of antiquity or of old time, [{,עולם}], an indefinite past time. ``The goings of ages,'' are God's proceedings, that is, in his works, and may therefore be rendered ``deeds;'' and they are said to be deeds ``of ages,'' i.e., of old time, with reference probably to the creation of the world: for he who makes perennial mountains to burst, and perpetual hills to bend downwards, must be their first creator.---Ed.

afflictions patiently, till thou gatherest us at length into that blessed rest, which has been procured for us by the blood of thine own Son. Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Sixteenth

We said yesterday that the Prophet spoke of the king of Cushan and of the Midianites, in order to strengthen the minds of the godly, and to set before their eyes the continued aid of God, so that they might venture to feel assured that he would not act otherwise towards the Church to the end of the world, then what he had done from the beginning. The meaning, then, is sufficiently evident. We must now consider the words.

Some understand by the word, {אוֹן}, aun, nothing, or vanity; as though the Prophet had said, that the tells of Cushan had been reduced to nothing: but another sense is more probable; I have seen the tents of Cushan on account of his iniquity; [61] that is, the reward which God had repaid, for the iniquity of the king of Cushan had been made manifest. The Prophet says that he had seen it, because it was evident and known to all. We now perceive what is meant that God had been a just judge against the army of Cushan; for as they had unjustly assailed the Israelites, so a just reward was rendered to them. The account of this we have in Judges 3. Cushan, the king of Mesopotamia, had well-nigh destroyed the Israelites, when the Lord put him to flight with all his forces. Some render the words, ``The tents of Ethiopia,'' as though it was written thus; but this is strained, and contrary to the rules of grammar; and besides, the following clause confirms what I have said; for the Prophet mentions the slaughter with which God destroyed the Midianites, who had also nearly overwhelmed the miserable people. He says that their curtains trembled, or their dwellings: for God, without the hand or sword of men, drove them into such madness, that they slew one another, as the sacred history testifies. See Judges 6:1, 7:1. It now follows---

Habakkuk 3:8

8. Was the Lord displeased against the rivers? was thine anger against the rivers? was thy wrath against the sea, that thou didst ride upon thine horses and thy chariots of salvation?

8. An contra fluvios iratus es, Jehova? an contra fluvios indignatio tua? an contra mare furor tuus (vel, ira tua)? quia equitasti super equos tuos; quadridge tuae salus.

The Prophet here applies the histories to which he has already referred, for the purpose of strengthening the hope of the faithful; so that they might know these to be so many proofs and pledges of God's favor towards them, and that they might thus cheerfully look for his aid, and not succumb to temptation in their adversities. When he asks, was God angry with the rivers and the sea, he no doubt intended in this way to awaken the thoughts of the faithful, that they might consider the design of God in the works which he had already mentioned; for it would have been unreasonable

[61] The word [{[{אוֹן not only means iniquity, but also what iniquity produces, labor, trouble, affliction; and this latter meaning, as allowed by Newcome and Henderson, is most suitable to it here. The word is so taken in Genesis 35:18; Deuteronomy 26:14; Hosea 9:4. Besides, this meaning makes a correspondence between this and the following line, as will be seen by the following version--- Under trouble have I seen the tents of Cushan, Tremble did the curtains of the land of Midian. The ``curtains'' were those used in forming tents, and are used here to designate them. The most obvious reference here is to Cushan, mentioned in Judges 3:8,10, as Calvin states; yet some consider that it stands for Cush, as Lotan, in Genesis 26:20, is put for Lot: and some, as Gesenius, say, that the African Cush is meant, and others, as Henderson, think, that it is the Arabian Cush, especially as Midian is also mentioned. Still the events recorded in Judges, nearly connected together, favor the opinion adopted by Calvin.---Ed.

that God should show his wrath against rivers and the sea; why should he be angry with lifeless elements? The Prophet then shows that God had another end in view when he dried the sea, when he stopped the course of Jordan, and when he gave other evidences of his power. Doubtless God did not regard the sea and the rivers; for that would have been unreasonable. It then follows that these changes were testimonies of God's favor towards his Church: and hence the Prophet subjoins, that God rode on his horses, and that his chariots were for salvation to his people. [62] We now perceive the Prophet's meaning, which interpreters have not understood, or at least have not explained.

We now, then, see why the Prophet puts these questions: and a question has much more force when it refers to what is in no way doubtful. What! can God be angry with rivers? Who can imagine God to be so unreasonable as to disturb the sea and to change the nature of things, when a certain order has been established by his own command? Why should he dry the sea, except he had something in view, even the deliverance of his Church? except he intended to save his people from extreme danger, by stretching forth his hand to the Israelites, when they thought themselves utterly lost? He therefore denies, that when God dried the Red Sea, and when he stopped the flowing of Jordan, he had put forth his power against the sea or against the river, as though he was angry with them. The design of God, says the Prophet, was quite another; for God rode on his horses, that is, he intended to show that all the elements were under his command, and that for the salvation of his people. That God, then, might be the redeemer of his Church, he constrained Jordan to turn back its course, he constrained the Red Sea to make a passage for his miserable captives, who would have otherwise been exposed to the slaughter of their enemies. There was indeed no hope of saving Israel, without a passage being suddenly opened to them through the Red Sea.

Hence all these miracles were designed to show that God had become the redeemer of his Church, and had put forth his power for the salvation of those whom he had taken under his protection: and it is easy from this fact to conclude, that the same help ought to be expected from God by posterity; for God was not induced by some sudden impulse to change the nature of things, but exhibited a proof of his favor: and his grace is perpetual, and flows in an even course, though not according to the apprehension of men; for it suffers some interruptions, because God exercises the faithful under the cross; yet his goodness never ceases. It hence follows that the faithful are to entertain hope; for God, when he pleases, and when he sees it expe-

[62] The two first lines present a difficulty in their construction. The most literal is this rendering of Junius— Did against rivers kindle, O Jehovah — Against rivers, thy wrath; Our language will admit of a similar construction in another form, by inverting the order— Did thy wrath against rivers, O Jehovah, Did it kindle against rivers? Some connect the two last lines of the verse with the previous one, thus— Was thine indignation against the sea, When thou didst ride on thy horses, On thy chariots of salvation? But Calvin considers them rather as an answer to the previous questions, or as explanatory; and they may be thus rendered— When thou didst ride on thy horses, Thy chariots were those of salvation. It is observed by Henderson, that "there is no necessity for our understanding either the angels or thunder and lightning by 'horses' and 'chariots.' They are," he adds, "merely figurative expressions, designed to carry out the metaphor adopted from military operations." Or it may be, that the horses and chariots of the Israelites are here meant, as in the 11th verse, the arrows and spears of the people are spoken of as those of God.—Ed.

dient, will really show the same power which was formerly exhibited to the fathers. It now follows---

Habakkuk 3:9

9. Thy bow was made quite naked, according to the oaths of the tribes, even thy word. Selah. Thou didst cleave the earth with rivers.

9. Nudando nudatus fuit (vel, manifestatione manifestus fuit) arcus tuus; juramenta Tribuum, sermo: Selach: fluviis scindes terram.

The Prophet explains the same thing more clearly in this verse---that the power of God was formerly manifested for no other reason but that the children of Abraham might be taught to expect from him a continued deliverance: for he says that the bow of God was made bare. By the bow, he means also the sword and other weapons; as though he had said, that God was then armed, as we have found declared before. God therefore was then furnished with weapons, and marched to the battle, having undertaken the cause of his chosen people, that he might defend them against the wicked. Since it was so, we hence see that these miracles were not to avail only for one period, but were intended perpetually to encourage the faithful to look ever for the aid of God, even in the midst of death; for he can find escapes, though they may not appear to us.

We now see the import of the text; but he emphatically adds, The oaths of the tribes; for hereby he more fully confirms that God had not then assisted the children of Abraham, so as to discard them afterwards; but that he had really proved how true he was in his promises; for by the oaths of (or to) the tribes he means the covenant that God had made not only with Abraham, but also with his posterity for ever. He puts oaths in the plural number, because God had not only once promised to be a God to Abraham and to his seed, but had often repeated the same promise, in order that faith might be rendered more certain, inasmuch as we have need of more than one thing to confirm us. For we see how our infirmity always vacillates, unless God supplies us with many props. As, then, God had often confirmed his servant Abraham, the Prophet speaks here of his oaths: but then as to the substance, the oath of God is the same; which was, that he had taken the race of Abraham under his protection, and promised that they should be to him a peculiar people, and, especially, that he had united the people under one head; for except Christ had been introduced, that covenant of God would not have been ratified nor valid. As, then, God had once included every thing when he said to Abraham, ``I am God Almighty, and I shall be a God to you and to your children;'' it is certain that nothing was added when God afterwards confirmed the faith of Abraham: but yet the Prophet does not without reason use the plural number; it was done, that the faithful might recomb with less fear on God's promise, seeing, that it had been so often and by so many words confirmed.

He calls them too the oaths to the tribes: for though God had spoken to Abraham and afterwards to Moses, yet the promise was deposited in the hands of Abraham, and of the patriarchs, and afterwards in those of Moses, that the people might understand that it belonged equally to them; for it would have been no great matter to promise what we read of to a few men only. But Abraham was as it were the deposi-

tory; and it was a certain solemn stipulation made with his whole race. We hence see why the Prophet here mentions the tribes rather than Abraham, or the patriarchs or Moses. He had indeed a special regard to those of his own time, in order to confirm them, that they might not doubt but that God would extend to them also the same power. How so? Because God had formerly wrought in a wonderful manner for the deliverance of his people. Why? That he might prove himself to be true and faithful. In what respect? Because he had said, that he would be the protector of his people; and he did not adopt a few men only, but the whole race of Abraham. Since it was so, why should not his posterity hope for that which they knew was promised to their fathers? for the truth of God can never fail. Though many ages had passed away, the faith of his people ought to have remained certain, for God intended to show himself to be the same as he had been formerly known by their fathers.

He afterwards adds {אמר}, amer, which means a word or speech; but it is to be taken here for a fixed and an irrevocable word. The word, {אמר}, amer, he says; that is, as they say, the word and the deed: for when we say, that words are given, we often understand that those who liberally promise are false men, and that we are only trifled with and disappointed when we place confidence in them. But the term, word, is sometimes taken in a good sense. ``This is the word,'' we often say, when we intend to remove every doubt. We now then perceive what the Prophet meant by adding {אמר}, amer, the word. ``O Lord, thou hast not given mere words to a people; but what has proceeded from thy mouth has been found to be true and valid. Such, therefore, is and faithfulness in thy promises, that we ought not to entertain the least doubt as to the event. As soon as thou givest to us any hope, we ought to feel assured of its accomplishment, as though it were not a word but the exhibition of the thing itself.'' In short, by this term the Prophet commends the faithfulness of God, lest we should harbour doubts as to his promises. [63]

He then says, that by rivers had been cleft the earth. He refers, I doubt not, to the history we read in Numbers 14; for the Lord, when the people were nearly dead through thirst, drew forth water from the rock, and caused a river to flow wherever the people journeyed. As then he had cleft the earth to make a perpetual course for the stream, and thus supplied the people in dry places with abundance of water, the Prophet says here, that the earth had been cleft by rivers or streams. It was

[63] This clause has been variously explained: the interpretation here given has been mostly adopted. In the Barberinean manuscript the whole of this prayer is given in many respects different from the present received text of the Septuagint, and this clause is thus found in it—{ἐχορτασας} {βολιδας} {της} {φαρετρας} {ἀυτου}. It is evident that this idea falls in more with the preceding clause than any other; and the Hebrew will admit of a sense bordering on this with less alteration than any other that has been offered. No version has been given without supposing something to be understood. Newcome says, that sixteen MSS. read ;[{שבועת}] by leaving out the ,[{ו}] it may be a verb in Kal in the past tense, as rendered above, and writers might have easily put down [{אמר}] for .[{אזור}] Then the line in Hebrew would be, {שבעת} {מטות} [{אזור} ``Thou hast filled with arrows the girdle.'' It is a description of one equipped for battle; his bow was made ready, and he had filled his girdle, that is, his military guide, with arrows; for this girdle the preceding Greek version introduced the quiver, in which arrows were commonly carried. The word ,[{מטות}] means rods or staves, that is, of arrows, as we may take it here. This is the most satisfactory solution of the difficulties connected with this line, of which there have been, as Henderson says, more than a hundred interpretations. The last clause of the verse is thus rendered by Newcome,--- Thou didst cleave the streams of the land; and by Henderson,--- Thou didst cleave the earth into rivers. The words will not admit the first version; the genitive case in Hebrew is always by juxtaposition; here ``streams'' and ``earth'' are separated by the verb. The other version contains hardly a meaning. The most literal rendering is that given by Calvin, and it affords the best sense. The words will admit of the following, which is materially the same,--- By streams didst thou cleavest the earth. The allusion evidently to the streams of that water which miraculously issued from the smitten rock, and followed the Israelites in the wilderness.---Ed.

indeed but one river; but he amplifies, and justly so, that remarkable work of God. He afterwards adds---

Habakkuk 3:10

10. The mountains saw thee, and they trembled: the overflowing of the water passed by: the deep uttered his voice, and lifted up his hands on high.

10. Viderunt me, timuerunt montes; inundatio (vel, gurges) aquarum transivit; dedit abyssus vocen suam; in altum manus suas sustulit (vel, altitudo, ;[{מור}] potest tam in casu nominandi legi quam in accusative.)

Habakkuk proceeds with the history of the people's redemption. We have said what his object was, even this that the people, though in an extreme state of calamity, might yet entertain hope of God's favor; for he became not a Redeemer to the race of Abraham for one time, but that he might continue the same favor to them to the end.

He says that mountains had seen and grieved. Some explain this allegorically of kings, and say, that they grieved when envy preyed on them: but this view is too strained. The Prophet, I have no doubt, means simply, that the mountains obeyed God, so as to open a way for his people. At the same time, the verb {חול}, chul, signifies not only to grieve, but also to bring forth, and then to fall and to abide in the same place. We might then with no less propriety read thus---see thee did the mountains, and were still, or fell down; that is, they were subservient to thy command, and did not intercept the way of thy people. I think the real meaning of the Prophet to be, that God had formerly imprinted on all the elements evident marks of his paternal favor, so that the posterity of Abraham might ever confide in him as their deliverer in all their distresses: and even the context requires this meaning; for he subjoins -

The stream or the inundation of waters, etc.: and this second part cannot be explained allegorically. We then see, that the import of the words is---That God removed all obstacles, so that neither mountains, nor waters, nor sea, nor rivers, intercepted the passage of the people. He says now, that the inundation of waters had passed away. This applies both to Jordan and to the Red Sea; for God separated the Red Sea, so that the waters stood apart, contrary to the laws of nature, and the same thing happened to Jordan; for the flowing of the water was stayed, and a way was opened, so that the people passed over dryshod into the land of Canaan. Thus took place what is said by the Prophet, the stream of waters passed away. We indeed know that such is the abundance of waters in the sea and in the rivers, that they cannot be dried up: when therefore waters disappear, it is what is beyond the course of nature. The Prophet, therefore, records this miracle, that the faithful might know, that though the whole world were resisting, their salvation would still be certain; for the Lord can surmount whatever impediments there may be.

He then ascribes life to waters; for he says, that the abyss gave its voice, and also, that the deep lifted up its hands; or that the abyss with uplifted hands was ready to obey God. It is a striking personification; for though the abyss is void of intelligence, and it cannot speak, yet the Prophet says, that the abyss with its voice and uplifted hands testified its obedience, when God would have his people to pass through to

the promised land. When anxious to testify our obedience, we do this both with our voice and in our gesture. When any one is willing to do what is commanded, he says, ``Here I am,'' or ``I promise to do this.'' As, then, servants respond to others, so the Prophet says, that a voice was uttered by the abyss. The abyss indeed uttered no voice; but the event itself surpassed all voices. Now when a whole people meet together, they raise their hands; for their consent cannot be understood except by the outstretching of the hands, and hence came the word hand-extending, {χειροτονια}. This similitude the Prophet now takes, and says, that the abyss raised up its hands; that is, shows its consent by this gesture. As when men declare by this sign that they will do what they are bidden; so also the abyss lifted up its hands. If we read, The deep raised up its hands, the sense will be the same. [64] Let us proceed -

Habakkuk 3:11

11. The sun and moon stood still in their habitation: at the light of thine arrows they went, and at the shining of thy glittering spear.

11. Sol, luna stetit in habitaculo, ad lucem sagittarum tuarum ambulabunt, ad splendorum fulguris hastae tuae.

Here the Prophet refers to another history; for we know that when Joshua fought, and when the day was not long enough to slay the enemies, the day was prolonged according to his prayer, (Joshua 10:12.) He seems indeed to have authoritatively commanded the sun to stay its course: but there is no doubt, but that having been answered as to his prayer, when he expressed this, he commanded the sun, as he did, through the secret impulse of the Holy Spirit: and we know that the sun would not have stopped in its course, except the moon also was stayed. There must indeed have been the same action as to these two luminaries.

Hence Habakkuk says, that the sun and moon stood still in their habitation; that is, that the sun then rested as it were in its dwelling. When it was hastening in its course, it then stood still for the benefit of God's people. The sun then and the moon stood,---How? At the light of thy arrows shall they walk. Some refer this to the pillar of fire, as though the Prophet had said, that the Israelites walked by that light, by which God guided them: but I doubt not but that this is said of the sun. The whole sentence is thus connected---that the sun and moon walked, not as from the beginning, but at the light of God's arrows; that is, when instead of God's command, which the sun had received from the beginning as its direction, the sun had God's arrows, which guided it, retarded its course, or restrained the velocity which it had before. There is then an implied contrast between the progress of the sun which it had by nature to that day, and that new direction, when the sun was retained, that it might give place to the arrows of God, and to the sword and the spear; for by the arrows and the spear he means nothing else but the weapons of the elect people;

[64] Most critics have overlooked the peculiar construction of this verse; but it presents a striking instant of the order in which the Prophets often arrange their ideas. There are two things referred to—the mountains and the waters—and the first verb regards both; the nominative case being anticipated, and the first of the two last lines refers to the waters, and the last to the mountains. This is the literal version,— They saw thee, — in pain were the mountains, The flood of waters passed away, Utter did the deep its voice, The height its hands lifted up. To construe [{[{מם adverbially, ``on high,'' does not so well comport with the characters of the Hebrew language; and it evidently here refers to the ``mountains,'' as the ``deep'' refers to the water.---Ed.

for we know, that when that people fought under the protection of God, they were armed as it were from above. As then it is said of Gideon, ``The sword of God and of Gideon;'' so also in this place the Prophet calls whatever armor the people of Israel had, the arrows of God and his spear; for that people could not move---no, not a finger's breadth---without the command of God. The sun then was wont before to regard the ordinary command, of which we read in Genesis; but it was then directed for another purpose: for it had regard to the arrows of God flying on the earth as lightning; and it had regard to the arrows, as though it stood astonished and dared not to advance. Why? because it behoved it to submit to God while he was carrying on war. [65] We now then perceive how much kindness is included in these words.

What, therefore, we have already referred to, ought to be borne in mind---that in this place there is no frigid narrative, but such things are brought before the faithful as avail to confirm their hope, that they may feel assured, that the power of God is sufficient for the purpose of delivering them; for it was for this end that he formerly wrought so many miracles. It follows---

Habakkuk 3:12

12. Thou didst march through the land in indignation, thou didst thresh the heathen in anger.

12. In ira calcasti terram (vel, ambulasti super terram; [{דעצ}] enim significat ambulare;) in ira (est tamen aliud nomen, ergo vertamus uno loco, indignationem, vel, furorem,---in furore) triturasti gentes (vel, triturabis.)

The Prophet relates here the entrance of the people into the land of Canaan, that the faithful might know that their fathers would not have obtained so many victories had not God put forth the power and strength of his hand. Hence he says, that God himself had trampled on the land in anger. For how could the Israelites have dared to attack so many nations, who had lately come forth from so miserable a bondage? They had indeed been in the desert for forty years; but they were always trembling and fearful, and we also know that they were weak and feeble. How then was it, that they overcame most powerful kings? that they made war with nations accustomed to war? Doubtless God himself trod down the land in his wrath, and also threshed the nations: as it is said in Psalm 44:5,

``It was not by their own sword that they got the land of Canaan; neither their own power, nor their own hand saved them; but the Lord showed favor to them, and became their Deliverer.''

Justly then does the Prophet ascribe this to God, that he himself walked over the land; for otherwise the Israelites would never have dared to move a foot. Doubtless,

[65] There is much beauty and force in this explanation: and accordant with it is the version of Henderson. But that of Newcome is somewhat different— The sun and the moon stood still in their habitation: By their light thine arrows went abroad; By their brightness, the lightning of thy spear. To avoid the insertion of so many words in italics which are not in the original, I would render the verse thus— The sun! the moon! — it stood — she remained stationary, For light to thine arrows which went forth, For brightness to the flashing of thy spear. The genitive case is often to be rendered as a dative, as in Jeremiah 31:35, [{{לילה},{לאור}} ``for the light of the night;'' that is, ``for light to the night.'' There are twelve MSS. which have ``and,'' ,[{ו}] before ``moon:'' but it is not wanted, the verb ``stood'' being singular; and it is followed, as I conceive, by another verb in the singular number, and in the feminine gender, while ``stood'' is in the masculine, and refers to the moon, and the last refers to the sun; which is sometimes feminine, while moon is ever the masculine. The verb [{זבל}] is not properly to dwell, but to continue fixed, or to remain stationary. The order in our language would be this--- The sun remained stationary, the moon stood. ---Ed.

they could never have been settled in that land, had not God gone before them. Hence when God did tread on the land in his anger, then it became a quiet habitation to the children of Abraham; warlike nations were then easily and without much trouble conquered by the Israelites, though they were previously very weak.

We now see, that the Prophet sets forth here before the eyes of the people their entrance into the land, that they might know that God did not in vain put to flight so many nations at one time; but that the land of Canaan might be the perpetual inheritance of his chosen people.

The Prophet changes often the tenses of the verbs, inconsistently with the common usage of the Hebrew language; but it must be observed, that he so refers to those histories, as though God were continually carrying on his operations; and as though his presence was to be looked for in adversities, the same as what he had granted formerly to the fathers. Hence the change of tenses does not obscure the sense, but, on the contrary, shows to us the design of the Prophet, and helps us to understand the meaning. It follows at length -

Habakkuk 3:13

13. Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people, even for salvation with thine anointed; thou woundedst the head out of the house of the wicked, by discovering the foundation unto the neck. Selah.

13. Egressus es in salutem populi tui, in salutem cum Christo tuo; transfodisti caput e domo impii, nudando fundamentum usque ad collum. Selah.

The Prophet applies again to the present state of the people what he had before recorded---that God went forth with his Christ for the salvation of his people. Some consider that there is understood a particle of comparison, and repeat the verb twice, ``As thou didst then go forth for the deliverance of thy people, so now wilt thou go forth for the deliverance of thy people with thy Christ.'' But this repetition is strained. I therefore take the words of the Prophet simply as they are---that God went forth for the deliverance of his people. But when God's people are spoken of, their gratuitous adoption must ever be remembered. How was it that the children of Abraham became the peculiar people of God? Did this proceed from any worthiness? Did it come to them naturally? None of these things can be alleged. Though then they differed in nothing from other nations, yet God was pleased to choose them to be a people to himself. By the title, the people of God, is therefore intimated their adoption. Now this adoption was not temporary or momentary, but was to continue to the end. Hence it was easy for the faithful to draw this conclusion---that they were to hope from God the same help as what he had formerly granted to the fathers.

Thou wentest forth, he says, for the salvation, for the salvation of thy people. He repeats the word salvation, and not without reason; for he wished to call attention to this point, as when he had said before---that God had not in vain manifested, by so many miracles, his power, as though he were angry with the sea and with rivers, but had respect to the preservation of his people. Since then the salvation of the Church has ever been the design of God in working miracles, why should the faithful be now cast down, when for a time they were oppressed by adversities? for God ever remains the same: and why should they despond, especially since that ancient

deliverance, and also those many deliverances, of which he had hitherto spoken, are so many evidences of his everlasting covenant. These indeed ought to be connected with the word of God; that is, with that promise, according to which he had received the children of Abraham into favor for the purpose of protecting them to the end. ``For salvation, for salvation,'' says the Prophet, and that of his elect people.

He adds, with thy Christ. This clause still more confirms what Habakkuk had in view---that God had been from the beginning the deliverer of his people in the person of the Mediator. When God, therefore, delivered his people from the hand of Pharaoh, when he made a way for them to pass through the Red Sea, when he redeemed them by doing wonders, when he subdued before them the most powerful nations, when he changed the laws of nature in their behalf---all these things he did through the Mediator. For God could never have been propitious either to Abraham himself or to his posterity, had it not been for the intervention of a Mediator. Since then it has ever been the office of the Mediator to preserve in safety the Church of God, the Prophet takes it now for granted, that Christ was now manifested in much clearer light than formerly; for David was his lively image, as well as his successors. God then gave a living representation of his Christ when he erected a kingdom in the person of David; and he promised that this kingdom should endure as long as the sun and moon should shine in the heavens. Since, then, there were in the time of Habakkuk clearer prophecies than in past times respecting the eternity of this kingdom, ought not the people to have taken courage, and to have known of a certainty that God would be their Deliverer, when Christ should come? We now then apprehend the meaning of the Prophet. [66] But I cannot now go farther; I shall defer the subject until tomorrow.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast so often and in such various ways testified formerly how much care and solicitude thou hast for the salvation of those who rely and call on thee,---O grant, that we at this day may experience the same: and though thy face is justly hid from us, may we yet never hesitate to flee to thee, since thou hast made a covenant through thy Son, which is founded in thine infinite mercy. Grant then, that we, being humbled in true penitence, may so surrender ourselves to thy Son, that we may be led to thee, and find thee to be no less a Father to us than to the faithful of old, as thou everywhere testifies to us in thy word, until at length being freed from all troubles and dangers, we come to that blessed rest which thy Son has purchased for us by his own blood. Amen.

[66] However true is what is said here, it seems not to be the doctrine of this text. The version of Aquila and the Vulgate have been followed as to the second clause of the verse. The Septuagint read, {του} {σωσαι} {τον} {χριστον} {σου}--- to save thy Christ;'' or, according to Alex. cod., ``thy Christs---{τους} {χριστους} {σου};'' or, according to Barb. MS., ``thine elect---{τους} {εκλεκτους} {σου}.'' Five Hebrew MSS. have ,[{משיחיך}] ``thine anointed ones.'' But if ``people'' in the preceding line; or it may refer to Joshua and his successors, the singular being used, as it is often done by the Prophets, in the collective sense. The particle [{את}] before it is not often used as a preposition; and the word [{ישע}] may better be taken here as a verb, according to the Septuagint, than as a noun, though as a verb it most commonly occurs in Hiphil: but see 1 Samuel 23:5; 2 Samuel 8:6. The following would then be the version--- Go forth didst thou to save thy people, To save thine anointed: Thou didst smite the head from the house of the wicked, Emptying out the foundation even to the neck. The reference in the two lines is evidently to the rooting out of the Canaanites, and not, as Newcome thinks, to the destruction of the firstborn in Egypt. The singular is poetically used for the plural: ``head,'' instead of heads, or chiefs, etc. The last line seems to be a proverbial saying, signifying an entire demolition, the very foundation being dug up, though so deep as to reach up to man's neck. There is no MSS. nor version to countenance ,[{צור}] ``rock,'' which Houbigant and Newcome adopt.---Ed.

Lecture One Hundred and Seventeenth

We explained yesterday why the Prophet says that God went forth for the salvation of the elect people with his Christ. His purpose was to confirm still more the faithful in the hope of their deliverance; for God is not only the same, and never changes his purpose, but the same Mediator also performs his office, through whom the people were formerly preserved. We must also notice this difference, to which I referred yesterday; for as God had then more clearly manifested Christ, with more cheerfulness it behaved the faithful to go on, as they had so remarkable a pledge of God's favor, inasmuch as God had promised that the kingdom of God would be for ever.

He adds, that wounded was the head from the house of the wicked; that is, that there was no power which had not been laid prostrate by God for the sake of his people; and we know that all the great kings were formerly destroyed, in order that favor might be shown to God's people. The other comparison seems different, and yet its object is the same---that God had made bare the foundation to the neck; that is, that he had destroyed from the roots his enemies; for by foundation he means, in a metaphorical sense, whatever stability there was in these enemies, and that this was torn up and overthrown to the very neck, that is, to the very summit; for the body of men, we know, is covered from the neck to the feet. And he says that their houses, that is their families, were made bare to the neck, for the Lord had destroyed them all from the bottom to the top. We now understand what the Prophet meant.

As to the word {סלה}, selah, I have hitherto said nothing; but I shall now briefly refer to what the Hebrew interpreters think. Some explain it by {לעולם}, laoulam, ``for ever;'' and by {ועד} {עד}, od uod, ``yet and yet;'' as though, when this word is inserted, the Holy Spirit pronounced what is to be for ever. Others render it by {אמן}, amen, as though God testified that what is said is true and indubitable. But as it never occurs except in this song and in the Psalms, and does not always comport with what they say, that is, that it denotes certainty or perpetuity, I prefer embracing the opinion of those who think that it refers to singing, and not to things. And what they add is also probable, if we regard its etymology, for the word means to raise or to elevate; and it was therefore put down to remind the singers to raise their voice. But as it is a thing of no great importance, it is enough shortly to state what others think. Let us now go on---

Habakkuk 3:14

14. Thou didst strike through with his staves the head of his villages: they came out as a whirlwind to scatter me: their rejoicing was as to devour the poor secretly.

14. Perforasti baculis ejus caput villarum ejus; prosilierunt instar turbinis ad dispellendum me; exultatio eorum sicut ad vorandum pauperem in abscondito.

At the beginning of this verse the Prophet pursues the same subject---that God had wounded all the enemies of his people; and he says that the head of villages or towns had been wounded, though some think that {פרזים}, perezim, mean rather the inhabitants of towns; for the Hebrews call fortified towns or villages {פרזות}, perezut, and the word is commonly found in the feminine gender; but as it is here a masculine noun, it is thought that it means the inhabitants. At the same time

this does not much affect the subject; for the Prophet simply means, that not only things had been overthrown by God's hand, but also all the provinces under their authority; as though he had said that God's vengeance, when his purpose was to defend his people, advanced through all the villages and through every region, so that not a corner was safe. [67] But we must also notice what follows---with his rods. The Prophet means that the wicked had been smitten by their own sword. Though the word rods is put here, it is yet to be taken for all kinds of instruments or weapons; it is the same as though it was said that they had been wounded by their own hands. [68]

We now perceive the import of this clause---that God not only put forth his strength when he purposed to crush the enemies of his people, but that he had also smitten them with infatuation and madness, so that they destroyed themselves by their own hands. And this was done, as in the case of the Midianites, who, either by turning their swords against one another, fell by mutual wounds, or by slaying themselves, perished by their own hands. (Judges 7:2.) We indeed often read of the wicked that they ensnared themselves, fell into the pit which they had made, and, in short, perished through their own artifices; and the Prophet says here that the enemies of the Church had fallen, through God's singular kindness, though no one rose up against them; for they had transfixed or wounded themselves by their own staff. Some read---``Thou hast cursed his sceptres and the head of his villages;'' but the interpretation which I have given is much more appropriate.

He adds, that they came like a whirlwind. It is indeed a verb in the future tense; but the sentence must be thus rendered---``When they rushed as a whirlwind to cast me down, when their exultation was to devour the poor in their hiding-places.'' It is indeed only a single verb, but it comes from {סער}, sor, which means a whirlwind, and we cannot render it otherwise than by a paraphrase. They rushed, he says, like a whirlwind. The Prophet here enlarges on the subject of God's power, for he had checked the enemies of his people when they rushed on with so much impetuosity. Had their advance been slow God might have frustrated their attempts without a miracle, but as their own madness rendered them precipitate, and made them to be like a whirlwind, God's power was more clearly known in restraining such violence. We now understand the import of what is here said; for the Prophet's special object is not to complain of the violent and impetuous rage of enemies, but to exalt the power of God in checking the violent assaults of those enemies whom he saw raging against his people.

He subjoins, their exultation was to devour the poor. He intimates that there was nothing in the world capable of resisting the wicked, had not God brought miraculous help from heaven; for when they came to devour the poor, they came not to wage war, but to devour the prey like wild beasts. Then he says, to devour the poor in secret. He means, that the people of God had no strength to resist, except help

[67] The Keri and many MSS. read [{,[{פרזיו ``his villages;'' but there is no need of this change, for the singular is used throughout instead of the plural, until we come to the two following lines; and this proves that the singular is to be taken in a collective sense. Henderson renders it ``captains,'' contrary to the meaning of the word in other parts. It means an open unfortified village, as it were scattered, and without any boundaries.---Ed.

[68] Newcome and some others, without any authority, read “thy rod;” but conjecture, without some solid reason, cannot be allowed.—Ed.

beyond all hope came from heaven. [69]

The import of the whole is---that when the miserable Israelites were without any protection, and exposed to the rage and cruelty of their enemies, they had been miraculously helped; for the Lord destroyed their enemies by their own swords; and that when they came, as it were to enjoy a victory, to take the prey, they were laid prostrate by the hand of God: hence his power shone forth more brightly. It follows---

Habakkuk 3:15

15. Thou didst walk through the sea with thine horses, through the heap of great waters.

15. Viam fecisti in mari equis tuis per acervum aquarum magnarum.

Some read, ``Thou hast trodden thy horses in the sea;'' but it is a solecism, that is quite evident. Others, ``Thou hast trodden in the sea by thy horses.'' But what need is there of seeking such strained explanations, since the verb {דרך}, darek, means to go or to march? The Prophet's meaning is by no means doubtful---that God would make a way for himself in the sea, and on his own horses. How? even when great waters were gathered into a mass. The Prophet again refers to the history of the passage through the Red Sea; for it was a work of God, as it has been said, worthy of being remembered above all other works: it is therefore no wonder that the Prophet dwells so much in setting forth this great miracle. Thou then didst make a way for thy horses ---where? in the sea; which was contrary to nature. And then he adds, The heap of waters: for the waters had been gathered together, and a firm and thick mass appeared, which was not according to nature; for we know that water is a fluid, and that hardly a drop of water can stand without flowing. [70] How then was it that he stopped the course of Jordan, and that the Red Sea was divided? These were evidences of God's incomprehensible power, and rightly ought these to have added courage to the faithful, knowing, as they ought to have done, that nothing could have opposed their salvation, which God was not able easily to remove, whenever it pleased him. It follows---

Habakkuk 3:16

16. When I heard, my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble: when he cometh up unto the people, he will invade them with his troops.

16. Audivit, et contremuit (vel, tumultuatus est) venter meus; ad vocem trepidarunt labia mea; ingressa est putredo in ossa mea; et apud me tumultuatus sum (ad verbum, tumultuabitur; sed diximus heri de temporibus verborum,) ad ascendedum ad populum, excidet eum (vel, colliget se.)

Those interpreters are mistaken in my view, who connect the verb, ``I have

[69] "To devour the poor in secret," seems to have an allusion to the practice of wild beasts, who take their prey to their dens to devour it there. The poor her, as in many other places, mean the helpless, such as are destitute of aid or power to resist their enemies. The line may be thus rendered— Their joy was, as it were, to devour the helpless in secret. —Ed.

[70] The word is [{,[{חמר which many have rendered acervus---heap; but there is no clear instance in which it has such a meaning. It is without a preposition, and the Septuagint render it by a participle, {ταρασσοντας}, which agrees with ``horses.'' It is singular in Hebrew, and, if a participle, it agrees with the nominative case to the preceding verb, ,[{דרכת}] ``thou didst guide'' or direct. The two lines might then be rendered thus,--- Thou didst guide through the sea thy horses, Disturbing mighty waters. Both Marckius and Henderson think that the passage through the Red Sea is not what is meant; but the subjugation of the Canaanites, conveyed in a language derived from that event.---Ed.

heard,'' with the last verse, as though the Prophet had said, that he had conceived dread from those evidences of God's power: for the Prophet had no occasion to fear in regarding God as armed with unexpected power for the salvation of his people; there was no reason for such a thing. Hence these things do not agree together. But he returns again to that dread which he had entertained on account of God's voice in those terrific threatenings which we before referred to. We must always bear in mind the Prophet's design---that his object was to humble the faithful, that they might suppliantly acknowledge to God their sins and solicit his forgiveness. His purpose also was to animate them with strong hope, that they might nevertheless look for deliverance. He had already said at the beginning, ``Lord, I have heard thy voice; I feared.'' He now repeats the same thing: for if he had spoken only of that terrific voice, the faithful might have been overwhelmed with despair; he therefore wished opportunely to prevent this evil, by interposing what might have comforted them. For this reason he recited these histories, by which God had proved that he was armed with invincible power to save his Church. Having done this, he applies his general doctrine to present circumstances, and says, ``I have heard.'' What had he heard? even those judgements with which God had determined to visit the contumacy of his people. Since, then, God had threatened his people with a horrible destruction, the Prophet says now, that he had heard and trembled, so that he had been confounded. He speaks in the singular number; but this was done, as we have said, because he represented the whole people, as was the case before (which escaped my notice) when he said, his enemies came like whirlwind to cast him down; for certainly he did not then speak of himself but of the ancient people. As, then, the Prophet here undertakes the cause of the whole Church, he speaks as though he were the collective body of the people: and so he says that he had heard; but the faithful speak here as with one mouth, that they had heard, and that their inside trembled

Some read, ``I was dismayed, or I feared, and my inside trembled at his voice.'' He takes {קול}, kul, voice, not for report, but, as it has been said, for threatening. The faithful, then, declare here, that they dreaded the voice of God, before he had executed his judgements, or before he inflicted the punishment which he had threatened. He says, quiver did my lips. The verb {צלל}, tsalel, means sometimes to tingle, and so some render it here, ``Tingle did my lips;'' but this is not suitable, and more tolerable is the rendering of others, ``Palpitate did my lips.'' The Hebrews say that what is meant is that motion in the lips which fear or trembling produces. I therefore render the words, ``quiver did my lips;'' as when one says in our language, Mes levres ont barbate; that is, when the whole body shakes with trembling, not only a noise is made by the clashing of the teeth, but an agitation is also observed in the lips.

Enter, he says, did rottenness into my bones and within myself I made a noise, (it is the verb {רגז}, regaz, again,) or I trembled. No doubt the Prophet describes here the dread, which could not have been otherwise than produced by the dreadful vengeance of God. It hence follows that he does not treat here of those miracles which were, on the contrary, calculated to afford an occasion of rejoicing both to the

Prophet and to the whole of the chosen people; but that the vengeance of God, such as had been predicted, is described here.

He now adds, That I may rest in the day of affliction [71] There seems to be here an inconsistency---that the Prophet was affected with grief even to rottenness, that he trembled throughout his members with dread, and now that all this availed to produce rest. But we must inquire how rest is to be obtained through these trepidations, and dreads, and tremblings. We indeed know that the more hardened the wicked become against God, the more grievous ruin they ever procure for themselves. But there is no way of obtaining rest, except for a time we tremble within ourselves, that is, except God's judgement awakens us, yea, and reduces us almost to nothing. Whosoever therefore securely slumbers, will be confounded in the day of affliction; but he who in time anticipates the wrath of God, and is touched with fear, as soon as he hears that God the judge is at hand, provides for himself the most secure rest in the day of affliction. We now then see, that the right way of seeking rest is set forth here by the Prophet, when he says, that he had been confounded, and that rottenness had entered into his bones that he could have no comfort, except he pined away as one half-dead: and the design of the Prophet, as I have already said, was to exhort the faithful to repentance. But we cannot truly and from the heart repent, until our sins become displeasing to us: and the hatred of sin proceeds from the fear of God, and that sorrow which Paul regards as the mother of repentance. (2 Corinthians 7:10.)

This exhortation is also very necessary for us in the present day. We see how inclined we are by nature to indifference; and when God brings before us our sins, and then sets before us his wrath, we are not moved; and when we entertain any fear, it soon vanishes. Let us, then, know that no rest can be to us in the day of distress, except we tremble within ourselves, except dread lays hold on all our faculties, and except all our soul becomes almost rotten. And hence it is said in Psalm 4:4, ``Tremble, and ye shall not sin.'' And Paul also shows that the true and profitable way of being angry is, when one is angry with his sins (Ephesians 4:26,) and when we tremble within ourselves. In the same manner does the Prophet describe the beginnings of repentance, when he says, that the faithful trembled in their bowels, and were so shaken within, that even their lips quivered, and, in short, (and this is the sum of the whole,) that all their senses felt consternation and fear.

[71] The word [{,אשר}] which Calvin renders ut, ``that,'' has occasioned great trouble to critics. Marckius reads qui---``who,'' ``Who shall rest,'' etc.; Henderson, ``yet,'' ``Yet I shall have rest,'' etc. But it is never found as an adversative. The construction of this line and the following is very difficult; and many have been the forms in which they have been rendered. The verb [{נוח}] means not only to rest from action or labor, but also to rest in the sense of remaining or continuing. See 2 Kings 2:15, and Isaiah 2:2. And were it taken in this latter sense here, there would be a consistency in the whole passage. The Prophet describes first the dread which seized him on hearing the report of God's vengeance; and then in the two last lines he accounts for his consternation, because he should remain to witness this vengeance; and he proceeds in verse 17 to set forth the effects of it, and in verse 18 he states that he would still rejoice in the God of his salvation. The three verses may be thus rendered,---16. I heard, --- and tremble did my bowels; At the voice my lips quivered; Enter does rottenness into my bones, And on my own account I tremble; Because I shall remain to the day of distress, To his coming up to the people, who shall invade me. 17. For the fig-tree shall not shoot forth, And no produce shall be on the vines; Fail shall the fruit of the olive, And the fields, none shall yield food; Cut off from the fold shall be the sheep, And no ox shall be in the stalls: 18. But as for me, in Jehovah will I rejoice, I will exult in the God of my salvation. ``On my own account,'' or for myself, :[{תחתי}] the preposition, ,[{תחת}] is often taken in this sense; See 2 Samuel 19:21, Proverbs 30:21. ``Invade us'' or assault us, or them, the people, ;[{יגודנו}] for [{נו}] is either us or him, but in our language them, for so we speak of people. ``And the fields, none,'' etc. There are instances of ,[{לא}] as here, in which it may be rendered ``none'' and ``nothing.'' See Ezekiel 20:38, Job 6:21, 8:9. ``In the God,'' etc.; it may be rendered, ``In my God, my Savior,'' as it is in the Septuagint and the Vulgate.---Ed.

He says, When he shall ascend: he speaks, no doubt, of the Chaldeans; When therefore the enemy shall ascend against the people, that he may cut them off: for {גדה} or {גוד}, gade or gud, means to cut off, and it means also to gather, and so some render it, ``that he may gather them:'' but the other meaning is better, ``when the enemy shall ascend, that he may cut them off.'' If one would have the word God to be understood, I do not object: for the Prophet does not otherwise speak of the Chaldeans than as the ministers and executioners of God's wrath.

In short, he intimates, that they who had been moved and really terrified by God's vengeance, would be in a quiet state when God executed his judgements. How so? because they would calmly submit to the rod, and look for a happy deliverance from their evils; for their minds would be seasonably prepared for patience, and then the Lord would also console them, as it is said in Psalm 51:17, that he despises not contrite hearts. When, therefore, the faithful are in a suitable time humbled, and when they thus anticipate the judgement of God, they then find a rest prepared for them in his bosom. It follows---

Habakkuk 3:17, 18

17. Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls:

17. Quia ficus non florebit, et nullus erit fructus in veneis; fraudabit opus olivae, et agri non producent cibum (ad verbum, non faciet cibum; est mutatio numeri, sed esset asperior illa translatio; Agri igitur non producent cibum: porro hac voce comprehendi triticum, legumina, et quae ad victum pertinent, satis liquet;) excissum est ab ovili pecus, et nullus bos in stabulis:

18. Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.

18. Ego autem in Jehova exultabo, laetabor in Deo salutis meae.

The Prophet declares now at large what that rest would be of which he had spoken; it would be even this---that he would not cease to rejoice in God, even in the greatest afflictions. He indeed foresees how grievous the impending punishment would be, and he warns also and arouses the faithful, that they might perceive the approaching judgement of God. He says, Flourish shall not the fig, and no fruit shall be on the vines; fail shall the olive. First, the fig shall not flourish; then, the fields shall produce nothing; and lastly, the cattle and the sheep shall fail. Though the figs produce fruit without flowering, it is not yet an improper use of {פרח}, perech, which means strictly to bud. [72] He means that the desolation of the land was nigh at hand, and that the people would be reduced to extreme poverty. But it was an instance of rare virtue, to be able to rejoice in the Lord, when occasions of sorrow met him on every side.

The Prophet then teaches us what advantage it is to the faithful seasonably to submit to God, and to entertain serious fear when he threatens them, and when he summons them to judgement; and he shows that though they might perish a hundred times, they would yet not perish, for the Lord would ever supply them with occasions of joy, and would also cherish this joy within, so as to enable them to rise

[72] The verb means to break forth either in buds, or germs, or shoots, and so to germinate, or to blossom. It is rendered by the Septuagint {καρποφορησει}, shall bear fruit.---Ed.

above all their adversities. Though, then, the land was threatened with famine, and though no food would be supplied to them, they would yet be able always to rejoice in the God of their salvation; for they would know him to be their Father, though for a time he severely chastised them. This is a delineation of that rest of which he made mention before.

The import of the whole is---``Though neither the figs, nor the vines, nor the olives, produce any fruit, and though the field be barren, though no food be given, yet I will rejoice in my God;'' that is, our joy shall not depend on outward prosperity; for though the Lord may afflict us in an extreme degree, there will yet be always some consolation to sustain our minds, that they may not succumb under evils so grievous; for we are fully persuaded, that our salvation is in God's hand, and that he is its faithful guardian. We shall, therefore, rest quietly, though heaven and earth were rolled together, and all places were full of confusion; yea, though God fulminated from heaven, we shall yet be in a tranquil state of mind, looking for his gratuitous salvation.

We now perceive more clearly, that the sorrow produced by the sense of our guilt is recommended to us on account of its advantage; for nothing is worse than to provoke God's wrath to destroy us; and nothing is better than to anticipate it, so that the Lord himself may comfort us. We shall not always escape, for he may apparently treat us with severity; but though we may not be exempt from punishment, yet while he intends to humble us, he will give us reasons to rejoice: and then in his own time he will mitigate his severity, and by the effects will show himself propitious to us. Nevertheless, during the time when want or famine, or any other affliction, is to be borne, he will render us joyful with this one consolation, for, relying on his promises, we shall look for him as the God of our salvation. Hence, on one side Habakkuk sets the desolation of the land; and on the other, the inward joy which the faithful never fail to possess, for they are upheld by the perpetual favor of God. And thus he warns, as I have said, the children of God, that they might be prepared to bear want and famine, and calmly to submit to God's chastisements; for had he not exhorted them as he did, they might have failed a hundred times.

We may hence gather a most useful doctrine,---That whenever signs of God's wrath meet us in outward things, this remedy remains to us---to consider what God is to us inwardly; for the inward joy, which faith brings to us, can overcome all fears, terrors, sorrows and anxieties.

But we must notice what follows, In the God of my salvation: for sorrow would soon absorb all our thoughts, except God were present as our preserver. But how does he appear as such to the faithful? even when they estimate not his love by external things, but strengthen themselves by embracing the promise of his mercy, and never doubt but that he will be propitious to them; for it is impossible but that he will remember mercy even while he is angry. It follows---

Habakkuk 3:19

19. The Lord God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places. To the chief singer on my stringed instruments.

19. Jehova Dominus fotitudo mea, et ponet pedes meos quasi cervarum, et super excelsa mea ambulare me faciet. Prefecto in Neginothai (vel, in pulsationibus meis, vel, musicis instrumentis.)

He confirms the same truth,---that he sought no strength but in God alone. But there is an implied contrast between God and those supports on which men usually lean. There is indeed no one, who is not of a cheerful mind, when he possesses all necessary things, when no danger, no fear is impending: we are then courageous when all things smile on us. But the Prophet, by calling God his strength, sets him in opposition to all other supports; for he wishes to encourage the faithful to persevere in their hope, however grievously God might afflict them. His meaning then is,---that even when evils impetuously rage against us, when we vacillate and are ready to fall every moment, God ought then to be our strength; for the aid which he has promised for our support is all-sufficient. We hence see that the Prophet entertained firm hope, and by his example animated the faithful, provided they had God propitious, however might all other things fail them.

He will make, he says, my feet like those of hinds. I am inclined to refer this to their return to their own country, though some give this explanation,---``God will give the swiftest feet to his servants, so that they may pass over all obstacles to destroy their enemies;'' but as they might think in their exile that their return was closed up against them, the Prophet introduces this most apt similitude, that God would give his people feet like those of hinds, so that they could climb the precipices of mountains, and dread no difficulties: He will then, he says, give me the feet of hinds, and make me to tread on my high places. Some think that this was said with regard to Judea, which is, as it is well known, mountainous; but I take the expression more simply in this way,---that God would make his faithful people to advance boldly and without fear along high places: for they who fear hide themselves and dare not to raise up the head, nor proceed openly along public roads; but the Prophet says, God will make me to tread on any high places

He at last adds, To the leader on my beatings. The first word some are wont to render conqueror. This inscription, To the leader, {למנצח}, lamenatsech, frequently occurs in the Psalms. To the conqueror, is the version of some; but it means, I have no doubt, the leader of the singers. Interpreters think that God is signified here by this title, for he presides over all the songs of the godly: and it may not inaptly be applied to him as the leader of the singers, as though the Prophet had said,---``God will be a strength to me; though I am weak in myself, I shall yet be strong in him; and he will enable me to surmount all obstacles, and I shall proceed boldly, who am now like one half-dead; and he will thus become the occasion of my song, and be the leader of the singers engaged in celebrating his praises, when he shall deliver from death his people in so wonderful a manner.'' We hence see that the connection is not unsuitable, when he says, that there would be strength for him in God; and particularly as giving of thanks belonged to the leader or the chief singer, in order that God's aid might be celebrated, not only privately but at the accustomed sacrifices, as was usually the case under the law. Those who explain it as denoting the beginning of a song, are extremely frigid and jejune in what they advance; I shall

therefore pass it by.

He adds, on my beatings. This word, {נגינות}, neginoth, I have already explained in my work on the Psalms. Some think that it signifies a melody, others render it beatings (pulsationes) or notes (modos;) and others consider that musical instruments are meant. [73] I affirm nothing in a doubtful matter: and it is enough to bear in mind what we have said,---that the Prophet promises here to God a continual thanksgiving, when the faithful were redeemed, for not only each one would acknowledge that they had been saved by God's hand, but all would assemble together in the Temple, and there testify their gratitude, and not only with their voices confess God as their Deliverer, but also with instruments of music, as we know it to have been the usual custom under the Law.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that as we cease not daily to provoke thy wrath against us, and as the hardness and obstinacy of our flesh is so great, that it is necessary for us to be in various ways afflicted,---O grant, that we may patiently bear thy chastisements, and under a deep feeling of sorrow flee to thy mercy; and may we in the meantime persevere in the hope of that mercy, which thou hast promised, and which has been once exhibited towards us in Christ, so that we may not depend on the earthly blessings of this perishable life, but relying on thy word may proceed in the course of our calling, until we shall at length be gathered into that blessed rest, which is laid up for us in heaven, through Christ one Lord. Amen.

[73] No satisfactory conjectures have been made by any as to the my added to this word. Hezekiah says at the end of his prayer, Isaiah 38:20, [{{נגנ, {ונגינותי} ``and my neginoth will we sing,'' or play, etc. Our version makes this my to refer to the ode or song he made to be played on the neginoth, supposed to have been a stringed instrument. In this case, ``my neginoth'' means the song he made for the neginoth. Then we might render the words,---For the leader; my song on the stringed instruments. ---Ed.

Commentary on Zephaniah

Commentary on Zephaniah

Calvin's Preface to zephaniah.

Zephaniah is placed the last of the Minor Prophets who performed their office before the Babylonian Captivity; and the inscription shows that he exercised his office of teaching at the same time with Jeremiah, about thirty years before the city was destroyed, the Temple pulled down, and the people led into exile. Jeremiah, it is true, followed his vocation even after the death of Josiah, while Zephaniah prophesied only during his reign.

The substance of his Book is this: He first denounces utter destruction on a people who were so perverse, that there was no hope of their repentance;---he then moderates his threatening, by denouncing God's judgments on their enemies, the Assyrians, as well as others, who had treated with cruelty the Church of God; for it was no small consolation, when the Jews heard that they were so regarded by God, that he would undertake their cause and avenge their wrongs. He afterwards repeats again his reproofs, and shortly mentions the sins which then prevailed among the elect people of God; and, at the same time, he turns his discourse to the faithful, and exhorts them to patience, setting before them the hope of favor, provided they ever looked to the Lord; and provided they relied on the gratuitous covenant which he made with Abraham, and doubted not but that he would be a Father to them, and also looked, with a tranquil mind, for that redemption which had been promised to them. This is the sum of the whole Book.

CHAPTER 1

Lecture One Hundred and Eighteenth

Zephaniah 1

Z

Zephaniah 1:1

1. The word of the LORD which came unto Zephaniah the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hizkiah, in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah.

1. Sermo Jehovae, qui fuit ad Zephaniam, filium Chusi, filii Gedoliae, filii Amariae, filii Chizkiae, in diebus Josiae, filii Amon, regis Jehudah.

Zephaniah first mentions the time in which he prophesied; it was under the king Josiah. The reason why he puts down the name of his father Amon does not appear to me. The Prophet would not, as a mark of honor, have made public a descent that was disgraceful and infamous. Amon was the son of Manasseh, an impious and wicked king; and he was nothing better than his father. We hence see that his name is recorded, not for the sake of honor, but rather of reproach; and it may have been that the Prophet meant to intimate, what was then well known to all, that the people had become so obdurate in their superstitions, that it was no easy matter to restore them to a sound mind. But we cannot bring forward anything but conjecture; I therefore leave the matter without pretending to decide it.

With regard to the pedigree of the Prophet, I have mentioned elsewhere what the Jews affirm---that when the Prophets put down the names of their fathers, they themselves had descended from Prophets. But Zephaniah mentions not only his father and grandfather, but also his great-grandfather and his great-great-grandfather; and it is hardly credible that they were all Prophets, and there is not a word respecting them in Scripture. I do not think, as I have said elsewhere, that such a rule is well-founded; but the Jews in this case, according to their manner, deal in trifles; for in things unknown they hesitate not to assert what comes to their minds, though it may not have the least appearance of truth. It is possible that the father, grandfather, the great-grandfather, and the great-great-grandfather of the Prophet, were persons who excelled in piety; but this also is uncertain. What is especially worthy of

being noticed is--- that he begins by saying that he brought nothing of his own, but faithfully, and, as it were, by the hand, delivered what he had received from God.

With regard, then, to his pedigree, it is a matter of no great moment; but it is of great importance to know that God was the author of his doctrine, and that Zephaniah was his faithful minister, who introduced not his own devices, but was only the announcer of celestial truth. Let us now proceed to the contents -

Zephaniah 1:2, 3

2. I will utterly consume all things from off the land, saith the Lord

2. Perdendo perdam (vel, colligendo colligam) omnia ex superficie terrae, dicit Jehova.

3. I will consume man and beast; I will consume the fowls of the heaven, and the fishes of the sea, and the stumblingblocks with the wicked; and I will cut off man from off the land, saith the Lord.

3. Perdam (vel, colligam) hominem et bestiam; perdam autem avem coelorum, et pisces maris; et offendicula erunt impiis; et excidam hominem e superficie terrae, dicit Jehova.

It might seem at the first view that the Prophet dealt too severely in thus fulminating against his own nation; for he ought to have begun with doctrine, as this appears to be the just order of things. But the Prophet denounces ruin, and shows at the same time why God was so grievously displeased with the people. We must however remember, that the Prophet, living at the same period with Jeremiah, had regard to the stubbornness of the people, who had been already with more than sufficient evidence proved to have been guilty. Hence he darts forth as of a sudden and denounces the wickedness of the people, which had been already exposed; so there was to be no more contention on the subject, for their iniquity had become quite ripe. And no doubt it was ever the object of the Prophets to unite their endeavors so as to assist one another: and this united effort ought ever to be among all the servants of God, that no one may do anything apart, but with joined efforts they may promote the same object, and at the same time strive mutually to confirm the common truth. This is what our Prophet is now doing.

He knew that God would have used various means to restore them, had not the corruption of the people become now past recovery. Having observed that all others had spent their labor in vain, he directly attacks the wicked men who had, as it were designedly, cast aside every fear of God, and shook off every shame. Since, then, it was openly evident that with determined rebellion they resisted God, it was no wonder that the Prophet began with so much severity.

But here a difficulty meets us. He said in the first verse, that he thus spoke under Josiah; but we know that the land was then cleansed from its superstitions. For we learn, that when that pious king attained manhood, he labored most strenuously to restore the pure worship of God; and when all places were full of wicked superstitions, he not only constrained the tribe of Judah to adopt the true worship of God, but he also stimulated his neighbors who had remained and were dispersed through the land of Israel. Since, then, the pious king had strenuously and courageously promoted the interest of true religion, it seems a wonder that God was still so much

displeased. But we must remember, that though Josiah sincerely worshipped God, yet the people were not really changed; for it has often happened, that God roused the chief men and leaders, while few, or hardly any, followed them, but only yielded a feigned obedience. This was no doubt the case in the time of Josiah; the hearts of the people were alienated from God and true religion, so that they chose rather to rot in their filth than to return to the true worship of God. And that this was the case soon appeared by the event; for Josiah did not reign long after he had cleansed the land from its defilements, and Jehoahaz succeeded him; and then the people immediately relapsed into their idolatry; and though for three months only his successor reigned, yet true religion was in that short time abolished. It is hence an obvious conclusion, that the people had ever been wedded to impiety, and that its roots were hidden in their hearts; though they apparently pretended to worship God, and, in order to please the king, embraced the worship divinely prescribed in their law; yet the event proved that it was a mere act of dissimulation, yea, of perfidy. Then after Jehoahaz followed Jehoiakim, and no better was their condition down to the time of Zedekiah; in short, no remedy could be found for their unhealable wound.

It hence plainly appears, that though Josiah made use of all means to revive the true and unadulterated worship of God in Judea, he did not yet gain his object. And we hence clearly learn how hard were the trials he sustained, seeing that he effected nothing, though at great hazard he attempted to restore the worship of God. When he found that he labored in vain, he no doubt had to contend with great difficulties; and this we know by our own experience. When hope of success shines on us, we easily overcome all troubles, however arduous our work may be; but when we see that we strive in vain, we become dejected: and when we see that our labor succeeds only for a few years, our spirit grows faint. Josiah surmounted these two difficulties; for the perverseness of the people was sufficiently evident, and he was also reminded by two Prophets, Jeremiah and Zephaniah, that the people would still cherish their impious perverseness. When, therefore, he plainly saw that his labor was almost in vain, he might have fainted in the middle of his course, or, as they say, at the starting-place. And since the benefit was so small during his reign, what could he have hoped after his death?

This example ought at this day to be carefully observed: for though God now appears to the world in full light, yet very few there are who submit themselves to his word; and of this small number fewer still there are who sincerely and without any dissimulation embrace sound doctrine. We indeed see how great is their inconstancy and indifference. For they who pretend great zeal for a time very soon vanish and fall away. Since then the perversity of the world is so great, sufficient to deject the minds of God's servants a hundred times, let us learn to look to Josiah, who in his own time left undone nothing, which might serve to establish the true worship of God; and when he saw that he effected but little and next to nothing, he still persevered, and with firm and invincible greatness of mind proceeded in his course.

We may also derive hence an admonition no less useful not to regard ours as the golden age, because some portion of men profess the pure worship of God: for many, by no means wicked men, think, that almost all mortals are like angels, as

soon as they testify in words their approbation of the gospel: and the sacred name of Reformation is at this day profaned, when any one who shows as it were by a nod only that he is not wholly an enemy to the gospel, is immediately lauded as a person of extraordinary piety. Though then many show some regard for religion, let us yet know that among so large a number there are many hypocrites, and that there is much chaff mixed with the wheat: and that our senses may not deceive us, we may see here, as in a mirror, how difficult it is to restore the world to the obedience of God, and utterly to root up all corruptions, though idols may be taken away and superstitions be abolished. No doubt Josiah had regard to everything calculated to cleanse the Church, and had recourse to the advice of Jeremiah and also of Zephaniah; we yet see that he did not attain the object he wished, for God now became more grievously displeased with his people than under Manasseh, or under Amon. These wicked kings had attempted to extinguish all true religion; they had cruelly raged against all God's servants, so that Jerusalem became almost drenched with innocent blood: and yet God seems here to have manifested greater displeasure under Josiah than during the previous cruelty and so many impieties. But as I have already said, there is no reason why we should despond, though the world by its ingratitude may close up the way against us; and however much may Satan also by this artifice strive to discourage us, let us still perseveringly go on according to the duties of our calling.

But it may be now asked, why God denounces his vengeance on the beasts of the field, the birds of heaven, and the fishes of the sea; for how much soever the Jews may have provoked him by their sins, innocent animals ought to have been spared. If a son is not to be punished for the fault of his father, Ezekiel 18:4, but that the soul that has sinned is to die, why did God turn his wrath against fishes and other animals? This seems to have been a hasty and unreasonable infliction. But let this rule be first borne in mind---that it is preposterous in us to estimate God's doings according to our judgment, as froward and proud men do in our day; for they are disposed to judge of God's works with such presumption, that whatever they do not approve, they think it right wholly to condemn. But it behaves us to judge modestly and soberly, and to confess that God's judgments are a deep abyss: and when a reason for them does not appear, we ought reverently and with due humility to hook for the day of their full revelation. This is one thing. Then it is meet at the same time to remember, that as animals were created for man's use, they must undergo a lot in common with him: for God made subservient to man both the birds of heaven, and the fishes of the sea, and all other animals. It is then no matter of wonder, that the condemnation of him, who enjoys a sovereignty over the whole earth, should reach to animals. And we know that the world was not made subject to corruption willingly---that is, naturally; but because the contagion from Adam's fall diffused itself through heaven and earth. Hence the sun and the moon, and all the stars, and also all the animals, the earth itself, and the whole world, bear marks of God's wrath, not because they have provoked it through their own fault, but because the whole world is involved in man's curse. The reason then is, because all things were created for the sake of man. Hence there is no ground to conclude, that God

acts with too much severity when he executes his vengeance on innocent animals, for he can justly involve in the same ruin with man whatever he has created for his use.

But the reason also is sufficiently plain, why the Prophet speaks here of the beasts of the earth, the fishes of the sea, and the birds of heaven: for we find that men grow torpid, or rather stupid in their own indifference, except they are forcibly roused. It was, therefore, necessary for the Prophet, when he saw the people so hardened in their wickedness, and that he had to do with men past recovery, to set clearly before them these judgments of God, as though he had said---``Ye lie down securely, and indulge yourselves, when God is coming forth prepared for vengeance: but his wrath shall not only proceed against you, but will also lay hold on the harmless animals; for ye shall see a horrible judgment executed on your oxen and asses, on the birds and the fishes. What will become of you when God's wrath shall be thus kindled against the unhappy creatures who have committed no sins? Shall ye indeed escape unpunished?'' We now understand why the Prophet does not speak here of men only, but collects with them the beasts of the earth, the fishes of the sea, and the birds of the air.

He says first, By removing I will remove all things from the face of the land; he afterwards enumerates particulars: but immediately after he clearly shows, that God would not act rashly and inconsiderately while executing his vengeance, for his sole purpose was to punish the wicked, There shall be, he says, stumblingblocks to the ungodly; [74] it is the same as though he said---``When I cite to God's tribunal both the fishes of the sea and the birds of heaven, think not that God's controversy is with these creatures which are void of reason, but they are to sustain a part of God's vengeance, which ye have through your sins deserved.'' The Prophet then does here briefly show, that what he had before threatened brute creatures with, would come upon them on men's account; for God's design was to execute vengeance on the wicked; and as he saw that they were extremely torpid, he tried to awaken them by manifest tokens, so that they might see God the avenger as it were in a striking picture. And at the same time he also adds, I will remove man from the face of the land. He does not speak now of fishes or of other animals, but refers to men only. Hence appears more clearly what I have said---that the Prophet was under the necessity of speaking as he did, owing to the insensibility of the people. He now adds---

Zephaniah 1:4

4. I will also stretch out mine hand upon Judah, and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and I will cut off the remnant of Baal from this place, and the name of the Chemarims with the priests;

[74] This clause stands connected with the preceding words; "the stumblingblocks" were the idols, and they were to be taken away "along with the wicked," according to Henderson, and according to the version of Symmachus, {συν} {ἀσεβέσι}, though Newcome, with less accuracy, renders the words thus,--- And the stumblingblocks of the wicked. The whole verse is poetical in its language; the collective singular, and not the plural, is used; and the first verb, ,[{אסף}] in its most common meaning, is very expressive, and denotes the manner of the ruin that awaited the Jews. They were ``gathered'' and led into captivity. The two verses may be thus literally rendered,--- 2. Gatherings I will gather everything From off the face of the land, saith Jehovah; 3. I will gather man and best; I will gather the bird of heaven and the fish of the sea, And the stumblingblocks together with the wicked; And I will cut them off, together with man, From the face of the land, saith Jehovah. ---Ed.

4. Et extendam manum meam super Jehudah, et super omnes incolas Jerusalem; et excidam ex loco hoc reliquias Baal, et nomen cultorum cum sacerdotibus.

The Prophet explains still more clearly why he directed his discourse in the last verse against the beasts of the earth and the birds of heaven, even for this end---that the Jews might understand that God was angry with them. I will stretch forth, he says, my hand on Judah and on Jerusalem. God, then, by executing his vengeance on animals, intended to exhibit to the Jews, as in a picture, the dreadfulness of his wrath, which yet they despised and regarded as nothing. The stretching forth of God's hand I have elsewhere explained; and it means even this---that he stretches forth his hand when he acts in an unusual manner, and employs means beyond what is common. We indeed know that God has no hands, and we also know that he performs all things by his command alone: but as everything seen in the world is called the work of his hands, so he is said to stretch forth his hand when he mentions a work that is remarkable and worthy of being remembered. In a like manner, when I intend to do some slight work, I only move my hand; but when I have some difficult work to do, I prepare myself more carefully, and also stretch forth my arms. This metaphor, then, is intended only for this purpose, to render men more attentive to God's works, when he is set forth as stretching forth his hand.

But he says, on Judah and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem. The kingdom of Israel had now been abolished, and the ten tribes had been led into exile; and a few only of the lowest and the poorest remained. The Jews thought themselves safe for ever, because they had escaped that calamity. This is the reason why the Prophet declares that God's judgment was impending not only over the kingdom of Judah, but also over the holy city, which thought itself exempt from all such evil, because there were the sacrifices performed, and there was the royal city, and, in short, because God had testified that his habitation was to be there for ever. Since, then, by this vain confidence the inhabitants of Jerusalem deceived themselves and others, Zephaniah specifically addresses them. And as he had before spoken of the wicked, he intended here, no doubt, sharply to reprove the Jews, as though he said by way of anticipation, There is no reason for you to enquire who are the wicked; for ye yourselves are they, even ye who are the holy people of God and God's chosen inheritance, ye who are the race of Abraham, who flatter yourselves so much on account of your excellency; ye are the wicked, who have not hitherto ceased to provoke the vengeance of God. And at the same time he shows, as it were by the finger, some of their sins, though he mentions others afterwards: but he speaks now of their superstitions.

I will cut off, he says, the remnants of Baal and the name of Chamerim. The severity of the Prophet may seem here again to be excessive, for being so incensed against superstitions which had been abolished by the great zeal and singular diligence of the king; but, as we have already intimated, he regarded not so much the king as the people. For though they dared not openly to adulterate God's worship, they yet cherished those corruptions at home to which they had before been accustomed, as we see to be done at this day. For when it is not allowed to worship idols, many mutter their prayers in secret and invoke their idols: and, in short, they are restrained only by the fear of men from manifesting their own impiety; and in the meantime,

they retain before God the same abominations. So it was in the time of Josiah; the people were wedded to their corruptions, and this we may easily conclude from the words of Zephaniah: for the remnants of Baal were not seen in the temple, nor in the streets, nor in their chapels, nor in the high places; but their hidden impiety is here discovered by the Spirit of God; and no doubt their sin was the more heinous and less excusable, because the people refused to follow their pious leader. It was indeed the most abominable ingratitude; for when they saw that the right worship was restored to them, they preferred to remain fixed in their own filth, rather than to return to God, even when they had liberty to do so, and also when that pious king extended his hand to them.

As to the word {כמרים}, chemarim, it designated either the worshipers of Baal or some such men as our monks at this day: and they are supposed by some to have been thus called, because they were clothed in black vestments; while others think that they derived this name from their fervor, because they were madly devoted to their superstitions, or because they had marks on their foreheads, or because they imposed, as is commonly the case, on the simple by the ardor of their zeal. The name is also found in 2 Kings 23:1 in the account given of Josiah: for it is said there, that the {כמרים}, chemarim, were taken away, together with other abominations of superstition. But as Zephaniah connects priests with them, it is probable that they were a kind of people like the monks, who did not themselves offer sacrifices, but were a sort of attendants, who undertook vows and offered prayers in the name of the whole people. For what some think, that they were thus called because they burnt incense, appears not to me probable; for then they must have been priests. They were then inferior to the sacrificers, and occupying a station between them and the people, like the monks and hermits of this day, who deceive foolish men by their sanctity. Such, then, were the Chemarim. [75]

But as Josiah could not attain his object, so as immediately to cleanse the land from these pollutions, we need not wonder that at this day we are not able immediately to remove superstitions from the world: but let us in the meantime ever proceed in our course. Let those endued with authority, who bear the sword, that is, all magistrates, perform their office with greater diligence, inasmuch as they see how difficult and protracted is the contest with the ministers of idolatry. Let also the ministers of the gospel earnestly cry against idolatry, and all ungodly ceremonies, and not desist. Though they may not effect as much as they wish, yet let them follow the example of Josiah. If God should in the meantime thunder from heaven, let

[75] The word is found in two other places, 2 Kings 23:5, and Hosea 10:5. In the latter text the priests of the calf of Bethaven are thus called; in the former, they are said to be those who "burnt incense in the high places." From this fact, Parkhurst concludes, that they were called scorched, as the word means, by their fumigating fires. The "priests" mentioned here were the sacrifices, while the "Chemarim" were the incense-burners. There were "altars" (not an altar) reared for Baal in the temple; one, as it seems, for sacrifices, and the other for incense. See 2 Kings 21:3. In 2 Chronicles 34:4, 5, the priests and sacrificers are alone mentioned; but in 2 Kings 23:5, where the same things are recorded, the Chemarim and incense are alone named. The Prophet in this passage mentions both. Some, as Cocceius and Henderson, have been disposed to think that the unfaithful priests of the true God are here meant. But the other view is more consistent with the whole passage. If we retain not the original word, we may thus render the line,— The name of the incense-burners with the priests; That is, those who burnt incense and those who offered sacrifices to Baal.—Ed.

them not be discouraged, but, on the contrary, know that their labor is approved by him, and never doubt of their own safety; for though all were destroyed, their godly efforts would not be in vain, nor fail of a reward before God. Thus, then, ought all God's servants to animate themselves, each in his particular sphere and vocation, whenever they have to contend with superstitions, and with such corruptions as vitiate and adulterate the pure worship of God.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that as we are so prone to corruptions, and so easily turn from the right course after having commenced it, and so easily degenerate from the truth once known,---O grant, that, being strengthened by thy Spirit, we may persevere to the end in the right way which thou showest to us in thy word, and that we may also labor to restore the many who abandon themselves to various errors; and though we may effect nothing, let us not yet be led away after them, but remain firm in the obedience of faith, until having at length finished all these contests, we shall be gathered into that blessed rest which is prepared for us in heaven, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Nineteenth

Zephaniah 1:5

5. And them that worship the host of heaven upon the housetops; and them that worship and that swear by the LORD, and that swear by Malcham;

5. Et super eos qui adorant super tecta militiam coelorum, et eos qui adorant et jurant per Jehovam, et jurant per regem suum.

Zephaniah pursues the subject contained in the verse I explained yesterday. For as the majority of the people still adhered to their superstitions, though the pure worship of the law had been restored by Josiah, the Prophet threatens here, that God would punish such ingratitude. As then he had spoken in the last verse of the worshipers of Baal and their sacrifices, so now he proceeds farther---that the Lord would execute vengeance on the whole people, who prayed to the host of heaven, or bowed themselves down before the host of heaven. It is well known that those stars are thus called in Scripture to which the gentiles ascribed, on account of their superior lustre, some sort of divinity. Hence it was, that they worshipped the sun as God, called the moon the queen of heaven, and also paid adoration to the stars. The people, then, did not only sin in worshipping Baal, but were also addicted to many superstitions, as we see to be the case whenever men degenerate from the genuine doctrine of true religion; they then seek out various inventions on all sides, so that they observe no limits and keep within no boundaries.

But he says, that they worshipped the stars on their roofs. It is probable that they chose this higher place, as interpreters remind us, because they thought that they were more seen by the stars the nearer they were to them. For as men are gross in their ideas they never think God propitious to them except he exhibits some proof or sign of a bodily presence; in short, they always seek God according to their own earthly notions. Since, then, the Jews thought that there were so many Gods as there are stars in heaven, it is no wonder that they ascended to the roofs of their houses, that they might be, as it were, in the sight of their gods, and thus not lose their labor;

for the superstitious never think that their devotion is observed by God, unless they have before their eyes, as we have just said, some sign of his presence.

We now then see how this verse stands connected with the last. God declares that he would punish all idolaters; but as the Jews worshipped Baal, the Prophet first condemned that strange religion; and now he adds other devices, to which the Jews perversely devoted themselves; for they worshipped also all the stars, ascribing to them some sort of divinity. Then he mentions all those who worshipped and swore by their own king, and swore by Jehovah

By these last words the Prophet intimates, that the Jews had not so repudiated the law of God but that they boasted that they still worshipped the God who had adopted them, and by whom they had been redeemed, who had commanded the temple to be built for him, and an altar on mount Sion. They then did not openly reject the worship of the true God, but formed such a mixture for themselves, that they joined to the true God their own idols, as we see to be the state of things at this day under the Papacy. It seems a sufficient excuse to foolish men that they retain the name of God; and they confidently boast that the true God is worshipped by them; and yet we see that they mix together with this worship many of the delusions of Satan; for under the Papacy there is no end to their inventions. When any devise some peculiar mode of worship, it is then connected with the rest; and thus they form such a mixture, that from one God, divided into many parts, they bring forth a vast troop of deities. As then at this day the Papists worship God and idols too, so Zephaniah had to condemn the same wickedness among the Jews.

We here learn that God's name was not then wholly obliterated, as though the world had openly fallen away from God; for though they worshipped Jupiter, Mercury, Apollo, and other fictitious gods, they yet professed to worship the only true and eternal God, the Creator of heaven and earth. What then was it that the Prophet condemned that they were not content with what the law simply and plainly prescribed, but that they devised for themselves various and strange modes of worship; for when men take to themselves such a liberty as this, they no longer worship the true God, how much soever they may pretend to do so, inasmuch as God repudiates all spurious modes of worship, as he testifies especially in Ezekiel 20---Go ye, he says, worship your idols. He shows that all kinds of worship are abominable to him whenever men depart in any measure from his pure word. For we must hold this as the main principle---that obedience is more valued by God than all sacrifices. Whenever men run after their own inventions they depart from the true God; for they refuse to render to him what he principally requires, even obedience.

But our Prophet speaks according to the common notions of men; for they pretended to be the true worshipers of God, while they still adhered to their own inventions. They did not, indeed, properly speaking, worship the true God; but as they thought, and openly professed to do this, Zephaniah, making this concession, says---God will not suffer his own worship to be thus profaned: ye seek to blend it with that of your idols; this he will not endure. Ye worship the true God, and ye worship your idols; but he would have himself to be worshipped alone; and this he deserves. But the partition which ye make is nothing else than the mangling of true worship;

and God will not have himself to be thus in part worshipped. We now understand what the Prophet means here; for the Jews covered their abominations with the pretext that their purpose was to worship the God of Abraham: the Prophet does not simply deny this to be done by them, but declares that this worship was useless and disapproved by God; nay, he proceeds farther, and says that this worship, made up of various inventions, was an abominable corruption which God would punish; for he can by no means bear that there should be such an alliance---that idols should be substituted in his place, and that a part of his glory should be transferred to the inventions of men. This is the true meaning.

We hence learn how greatly deceived the Papists are, who think it enough, provided they depart not wholly from the worship of the only true God; for God allows and approves of no worship except when we attend to his voice, and turn not aside either to the left hand or to the right, but acquiesce only in what he has prescribed.

It is nothing strange that he connects swearing with worship, for it is a kind of divine worship. Hence the Scripture, stating a part for the whole, often mentions swearing in this sense, as including the service due to God. But the Prophet pronounces here generally a curse on all the superstitious, who worshipped fictitious gods; and then he adds one kind of worship, and that is swearing. I shall not here speak at large, nor is it--- necessary, on the subject of swearing. We know that the use of an oath is lawful when God is appealed to as a witness and a judge, on important occasions; for God's name may be interposed when a matter requires proof, and when it is important; but God's name is not to be introduced thoughtlessly. Hence two things are especially required in an oath---that all who swear by his name should present themselves with reverence before his tribunal, and acknowledge him to be the avenger if they take his name falsely or inconsiderately This is one thing. Then the matter itself, on account of which we swear, must be considered; for if men allow themselves to swear by God's name respecting things which are trifling and frivolous, it is a shameful profanation, and by no means to be borne. For it is a singular favor on the part of God, that he allows us to take his name when there is any controversy among us, and when a confirmation is necessary. As then we thus receive through kindness the name of God, it is surely a great favor; for how great is the sanctity of that name, though it serves even earthly concerns? God then does so far accommodate himself to us, that it is lawful for us to swear by his name. Hence a greater seriousness ought to be observed by us in oaths, so that no one should dare to interpose an oath except when necessity requires; and we should also especially take heed lest God be called a witness to what is false. For how great a sacrilege it is to cover a falsehood with his name, who is the eternal and immutable truth! They then who swear falsely by his name change God, as far as they can, into what he is not. We now sufficiently understand how swearing is a kind of divine worship, because his honor is thereby given to God; for his majesty is, as it were, brought before us, and as it is his peculiar office to know and to discover hidden things, and also to maintain the truth, this his own work is ascribed to him. Now when any one swears by a mortal, or by the sun, or by the moon, or by creatures, he deprives God in part of his own honor.

We hence see that in superstitious oaths there was a clear proof of idolatry. This is the reason why the Prophet here condemns those who did swear by Jehovah and by Malkom; that is, who joined their idols with the true and eternal God when they swore. For it is a clear precept of God's law, `By the name of thy God shalt thou swear.' Deuteronomy 6:13. And when the Prophets speak of the renovation of the Church, they use this form---`Ye shall swear by the name of God;' `To me shall bend every knee;' `Every tongue shall swear to me.' What does all this mean? The whole world shall acknowledge me as the true God; and as every knee shall bow to me, so every one will submit himself to my judgment. We may hence doubtlessly conclude, that God is deprived of his right, whenever we swear by the sun, or by the moon, or by the dead, or by any creatures.

This evil has been common in all ages; and it prevails still at this day under the Papacy. They swear by the Virgin, by angels, and by the dead. They do not think that they thus take away anything from the sovereignty of the only true God; but we see what he declares respecting them. The Papists therefore foolishly excuse themselves, when they swear by their saints: for they cannot elude the charge of sacrilege, which the Holy Spirit has stamped with perpetual infamy, since he has said, that all those are abominable in the sight of God who swear by any other name than his own: and the reason is evident, for the sun, moon, and stars, and also dead or living men, are honored with the name of God, when they are set up as judges. For they who swear by the sun, do the same as though they said---The sun is my witness and judge; that is, The sun is my God. They who swear by the name of a king, or as profane men swore formerly, By the genius of their king, ascribe to a mortal what is peculiar to the true God alone. But when any one swears by heaven or the temple, and does not think that there is any divinity in the heavens or in the temple, it is the same as though he swore by God himself, as it appears from Matthew 23:20-22; and Christ, when he forbade us to swear by heaven or by the earth, did not condemn such modes of swearing as inconsistent with his word, but as only useless and vain. At the same time he showed that God's name is profaned by such expressions: `They who swear by heaven, swear also by him who inhabits heaven; they who swear by the temple, swear also by him who is worshipped in the temple, and to whom sacrifices are offered.' When one swears by his head or by his life, it is a protestation, as though he said---As my life is dear to me. But they who swear by the saints, either living or dead, ascribe to mortals what is due to God. They who swear by the sun, place a dead created thing on the throne of God himself.

As to the term {מלכם}, melkom, it may be properly rendered, their king; for {מלך}, melak, as it is well known, means a king; but it is here put in construction, {מלכם}, melkom, their king; they swear by their own, king [76] The Prophet, I doubt not, alludes

[76] It appears that this idol had two names, Moloc and Milcom, or Molcam. It is called Moloc, or Molec, in Leviticus 20:5, and in seven other places; but Milcom in 1 Kings 11:5,33; 2 Kings 23:14; as well as here, and also in Jeremiah 49:1,3, though improperly rendered in our version, "their king." The Ammonites are the people spoken of. The swearing is here differently expressed: it is to [({{[({לי Jehovah; and by [({בג})] Milcam. To swear to, is to make a promise to another by an oath, or, in this instance, to swear allegiance to God: but to swear by, is to appeal to another as witness to an engagement. We have the two forms together in Joshua 9:19. The Jews made a solemn profession of obedience to God, and yet they acknowledged Melcam as God, by appealing to him as a witness to the truth. It is called the abomination of the Ammonites, 1 Kings 11:33 The image of this god, according to the Rabbins, was hollow, made of brass, and had seven compartments. In the first, they put flour---in the

to the word {מולך}, Molok, which is derived from the verb, to reign: for though that word was commonly used by all as a proper name, it is yet certain that that false god was so called, as though he was a king: and the Prophet increases the indignity by saying---They swear by Malkom. He might have simply said, They swear by Moloch; but he says, They swear by Malkom; that is, They forget that I am their king, and transfer my sovereignty to a dead and empty image. God then does here, by an implied contrast, exaggerate the sin of the Jews, as they sought another king for themselves, when they knew that under his protection they always enjoyed a sure and real safety. Let us now proceed---

Zephaniah 1:6

6. And them that are turned back from the LORD; and those that have not sought the LORD, nor enquired for him.

6. Et qui retro aguntur, ne sequantur Jehovam, (ad verbum est, de-post Jehovam.) et qui non quaerunt Jehovam, neque investigant eum.

The Prophet seems here to include, as it were, in one bundle, the proud despisers of God, as well as those idolaters of whom he had spoken. It may yet be, that he describes the same persons in different words, and that he means that they were addicted to their own superstitions, because they were unwilling to serve God sincerely and from the heart, and even shunned everything that might lead their attention to true religion. And this view I mostly approve; for what some imagine, that their gross contempt of God is here pointed out, is not sufficiently supported. I therefore rather think that the idolaters are here reproved, that they might not suppose that they could by subterfuges wash away their guilt; for they were wont to cover themselves with the shield of ignorance, when they were overcome, and their impiety was fully proved: I did not think so; but, on the contrary, my purpose was to worship God. Since, then, the superstitious are wont to hide themselves under the covering of ignorance, the Prophet here defines the idolatry of the people, and briefly shows that it was connected with obstinacy and wickedness.

They did not seek Jehovah; but, on the contrary, they turned willfully away from him, and sought, as it were designedly, to extinguish true religion. Nor was it to be wondered at, that so grievous and severe a sentence was pronounced on them; for they had been taught by the law how God was to be served. How was it, then, that errors so gross had crept in? Doubtless, God had kindled the light of celestial truth, which clearly showed the way of true religion; but as men ever seek to perform some frivolous trifles, the Israelites and the Jews, when they felt ashamed openly and manifestly to reject the true God, labored at the same time to add many ceremonies, that their impiety might be thus concealed. This is the reason why the Prophet says that they turned back; that is, that they could not be excused on the ground of ignorance, but that they were perfidious and apostates, who had preferred their own idols to the true God; though they knew that he could not be rightly worshipped, but according to the rule prescribed in the law, they yet neglected this, and heaped

second, turtles---in the third, an ewe---in the fourth, a ram---in the fifth, a calf---in the sixth, an ox---and in the seventh, a child! All these were burnt together by heating the image in the inside! To drown the cries and noises that might be made, they used drums and other instruments. See [{מלך}] in Parkhurst. How cruel is superstition! and yet how wedded to it is man by nature! Though the Jews had knowledge of the religion of him who is the God of love and mercy; yet they preferred the religion of savages and barbarians. How strongly does this fact prove man's natural antipathy to God!---Ed.

together many superstitions.

And, doubtless, we shall find that the fountain of all false worship is this---that men are unwilling truly and from the heart to serve God; and, at the same time, they wish to retain some appearance of religion. For there is nothing omitted in the law that is needful for the perfect worship of God: but as God requires in the law a spiritual worship, hence it is that men seek hiding-places, and devise for themselves many ceremonies, that they may turn back from God, and yet pretend that they come to him. While they sedulously labor in their own ceremonies, it is indeed true that the worship of God and religion are continually on their lips: but, as I have said, it is all hypocrisy and deception; for they accumulate ceremonies, that there might be something intervening between God and them. It is not, therefore, without reason that the Prophet here accuses the Jews that they turned back from Jehovah, and that they sought him not. How so? For there was no need of a long, or of a difficult, or of a perplexed enquiry; for the Lord had freely offered himself to them. How, then, was it that they were blind in the midst of light, except that they knowingly and willfully followed their own inventions? [77]

The same is the case at this day with the Papists: for though they may glamour a hundred times that they seek to worship God, it is quite evident that they willfully go astray; inasmuch as they so delight themselves with their own inventions, that they do not purely and from the heart devote and consecrate themselves to God.

We now, then, see that this verse was added, as an explanation, by the Prophet, that he might deprive the Jews of their false plea of ignorance, and show that they sinned willfully; for they would have been sufficiently taught by the law, had they not adopted their own inventions, which dazzled their eyes and all their senses. It follows---

Zephaniah 1:7-9

7. Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord God: for the day of the Lord is at hand: for the Lord hath prepared a sacrifice, he hath bid his guests.

7. Tace a facie Domini Jehovae, quia propinquus dies Jehova, quia paravit Jehova sacrificium, (vel, ordinavit, (,[{זיכה}] sanctificavit invitatos suos.

8. And it shall come to pass in the day of the Lord's sacrifice, that I will punish the princes, and the king's children, and all such as are clothed with strange apparel.

8. Et erit, in die sacrificii Jehovae tunc visitabo super Principes, et super filios Regis, et super omnes qui induti sunt vestitu extraneo.

9. In the same day also will I punish all those that leap on the threshold, which fill their masters' houses with violence and deceit.

9. Et visitabo super omnem qui tripudiat super limen in die illo, qui replent domum dominorum suorum violentia et fraude.

The Prophet confirms here what he has previously taught, when he bids all to be silent before God; for this mode of speaking is the same as though he had said, that

[77] Calvin has omitted to notice the last words in the verse, "Nor enquire of him;" which Henderson, adopting a modern phraseology, has rendered, "nor apply to him." The reading ought to be, as many MSS. have it, [{.דרשוהו}] The verb means to enquire of, to consult, and also to regard or to care for. They did not enquire of God as to his will, or they did not show any regard for him. See Genesis 25: 22; Ezekiel 20:1; and also Deuteronomy 11:12; Job 3:4. To seek the Lord is to seek his favor and communion with him; to enquire of the Lord is to seek the knowledge of his will in any difficulty.---Ed.

he did not terrify the Jews in vain, but seriously set before them God's judgment, which they would find by experience to be even more than terrible. He also records some of their sins, that the Jews might know that he did not threaten them for nothing, but that there were just causes why God declared that he would punish them. This is the substance of the whole.

Let us first see what the Prophet means by the word, silence. Something has been said of this on the second chapter of Habakkuk. We said then that by silence is meant submission; and to make the thing more clear, we said that we were to notice the contrast between the silence to which men calmly submit, and the contumacy, which is ever clamorous: for when men seek to be wise of themselves, and acquiesce not in God's word, it is then said, that they are not silent, for they refuse to give a hearing to his word; and when men give loose reins to their own will, they observe no bounds. Until God then obtains authority in the world, all places are full of clamor, and the whole life of men is in a state of confusion, for they run to and fro in their wanderings; and there is no restraint where God is not heard. It is for the same reason that the Prophet now demands silence: but the expression is accommodated to the subject which he handles. To be silent at the presence of God, it is true, is to submit to God's authority; but the connection is to be considered; for Zephaniah saw then that God's judgment was despised and regarded as nothing; and he intimates here that God had so spoken, that the execution was nigh at hand. Hence he says, Be silent, [78] that is, Know ye, that I have not spoken merely for the purpose of terrifying you; but as God is prepared to execute vengeance, of this he now reminds you, that if there be any hope of repentance, ye may in time seek to return into favor with him; if not, that ye may be without excuse.

We now then understand why the Prophet bids them to be silent before the Lord Jehovah: and the context is a confirmation of the same view; for the reason is added, Because the day of Jehovah is nigh. For profane men ever promise to themselves some respite, and think that they gain much by delay: the Prophet, on the contrary, does now expose to scorn this self-security, and says, that the day of Jehovah was nigh at hand. It is then the same thing as though he had said, that his judgment ought to have been quickly anticipated, and even with fear and trembling.

He afterwards employs a metaphor to set forth what he taught,---that God had prepared a sacrifice, yea, that he had already appointed and set apart his guests. By the word, sacrifice, the Prophet reminded them, that the punishment of which he had spoken would be just, and that the glory of God would thereby shine forth. We indeed know how ready the world is to make complaints; when it is pressed by God's hand, it expostulates on account of too much rigor; and many in an open manner give utterance to their blasphemies. As then they own not God's justice in his punishment, the Prophet calls it a sacrifice; and sacrifices, we know, are evidences

[78] The word is הס and is evidently an interjection enjoining silence, Hush! or, Silence! 7. Silence at the presence of the Lord Jehovah! For nigh is the day of Jehovah, For prepared hath Jehovah a sacrifice, Selected hath he his guests! The passage is remarkably forcible and striking. Jehovah was coming, and everything was prepared, and all were to be silent. And then follows what is no less striking and expressive,--- 8. And it shall be in the day of Jehovah's sacrifice, That I will visit the princes and the king's sons, And all who wear foreign apparel. 9. I will also visit, in that day, Every one who leaps on the threshold, Who fill the house of their master By plunder and by fraud. There is in the last line a metonymy; the act is put for what was acquired by it: they filled the house of their master by spoils gained by plunder or violence, and by fraud or cheating.---Ed.

of divine worship, and he who offers a sacrifice to God, owns him to be just. So also by this kind of speaking Zephaniah intimates that God would not act a cruel part in cutting off the city Jerusalem and its inhabitants; for this would be a sacrifice, according to the language often employed by the Prophets, and especially by Isaiah, who says of Bozrah, `A sacrifice is prepared in Bozrah,' Isaiah 34:6;) and who says also of Jerusalem itself, `Oh! Ariel! Ariel!' Isaiah 29:1, where Jerusalem itself is represented as the altar; as though he had said, In all the streets, in the open places, there shall be altars to me; for I will collect together great masses of men, whom I shall slay as a sacrifice to me. For all who were not willing to render worship to God, and who did not freely offer themselves as spiritual victims to him, were to be drawn to the slaughter, and were at the same time called sacrifices. So the executions on the gallows, when the wicked suffer, may be said to be sacrifices to God: for the Lord arms the magistrate with the sword to restrain wickedness, that the wicked may not have such liberty as to banish all equity from the world. The cities also, which, being forcibly taken, are subject to a slaughter, and the fields, where armies are slain, become altars, for God makes the rebellious a sacrifice, because they refuse willingly to offer themselves.

So also in this place the Prophet says, Jehovah has prepared for himself a sacrifice,---Where? At Jerusalem, through the whole city, as it has appeared from the quotation from Isaiah; for as they had not rightly sacrificed to God on Mount Sion, but vitiated his whole worship, God himself declares, that he would become a priest, that he might slay, as he thought right, those beasts, who had obstinately refused his yoke: And he has prepared his guests. But I cannot finish today.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that as we continue in so many ways to provoke against us thy wrath, we may patiently bear the punishment, by which thou wouldest correct our faults, and also anticipate thy judgment: and since thou art pleased to recall us in due time to thyself, let us not turn deaf ears to thy counsels, but so obey and submit ourselves to thee, that we may become partakers of that mercy, which thou offerest to us, provided we seek to be reconciled to thee, and so proceed in thy service, that under the government of Christ thy Son, whom thou hast appointed to be our supreme and only king, we may so strive to be wholly devoted to thee that thou mayest be glorified through our whole life, until we become at length partakers of that celestial glory, which has been procured for us by the blood of thy only-begotten Son. Amen

Lecture One Hundred and Twentieth

We stated yesterday why God compares the slaughter of the wicked to a sacrifice,---because in punishing the ungodly, he shows himself to be the judge of the world: and this slaying is a sacrifice of sweet odour, because it makes known this glory. And he immediately adds, that he had prepared his guests. The word he uses is {קדש}, kodash, which means to sanctify, but is often to be taken in a different sense. It may be explained as meaning, that God had prepared his guests: but as there is an express mention made of sacrifice, Zephaniah, I have no doubt, continues the same metaphor. The meaning then is, that the Chaldeans, who were ministers of

God's vengeance, were already not only chosen for the purpose of executing it, but were divinely consecrated for that end: and this unwelcome saying was uttered by the Prophet, that he might more sharply touch the feelings of his own nation. The Jews ought indeed to have acknowledged God's judgment even when executed by heathens; but this they would not have done, had they not understood, that these were, in exercising their cruelty, as it were, the priests of God; for the royal priesthood at Jerusalem had been profaned. We now then see why the Prophet says, that those were sanctified by the Lord who had been invited to feed on the flesh of the chosen people, as they were wont to eat of the remainder of their sacrifices on festal days. [79] Let us now proceed.

I yesterday repeated this verse, And it shall be, on the day of the sacrifice of Jehovah, that I will then visit the princes, and the sons of the king, and those who are clothed with strange apparel. The Prophet shows, that he not only threatened the common people, but also the chief leaders, so that he spared not even the king's sons. He attacks then here the principal men among the people; for they were justly led to punishment in the first place, as they had been to others the cause of their errors. We indeed know, that they who excel in dignity give a much greater offense when they abuse their power in promoting what is sinful. Hence it was, that God seemed often to have sent his Prophets to them only. For though the low and the humble in the community were not exempt from punishment, yet it was but reasonable that God should more severely punish their leaders. Hence the Prophet now says, that God would visit the princes and the king's sons [80] He did not indeed intend here to flatter obscure men, as though God meant to overlook them: but as the king and his counselors had more grievously sinned, the more angry was God with them. We also know, that kings and others, who exercise power, are not easily moved, for the splendor of their fortune blinds them; and they think that they are in a manner exempt from laws, because they occupy a higher station. We now then see why the Prophet speaks especially of the princes and the king's sons.

He also adds, And those who wear foreign apparel [81] Some refer this to the worshipers of Baal, or his priests; but the context does not allow us to apply it to any but to courtiers, whose great delight was in apparel: for what Christ says is proved by the experience of all ages to be too true,---that they who wear soft clothing are in king's courts. Matthew 11:8. And it is probable, that courtiers, through a foolish affectation, often changed their clothes; as it is the case with men who seek to appear great, they devise daily some new way for spending money; and though they may be more splendidly clothed than needful, yet they think it almost too sordid to wear

[79] The first idea of the verb [{.[{קדש is evidently to set apart, to separate either men or things for a certain purpose. For this meaning Parkhurst refers to Leviticus 20:24, compared with version 26, and to Deuteronomy 19:2,7, compared with Joshua 20:7. This idea seems the most suitable here, ``I have set apart (or selected) my guests.'' Newcome renders it ``appointed,'' and Henderson, ``consecrated,'' as Calvin does. ``Segregavit---set apart,'' is the version of Drusius, and Junius has ``preparavit---prepared.'' When the verb is followed by ``war,'' it is rendered ``prepare'' in our version. See Jeremiah 6:4; Joel 3:9; Micah 3:5. The explanation given by Theodosius is {ἀφωρισε}---he separated or selected.---Ed.

[80] This was a prophecy: though the king Josiah had no children at this time, yet he had some afterwards; and they proved themselves deserving of the judgment here announced, and it was inflicted on them. Henderson's objection, that as Josiah had then no children, the prophecy could not apply to them personally, seems wholly inadmissable: it was a prophecy.—Ed.

[81] Or, literally, "the garment of a foreigner or stranger," [{.[{נכרי The singular is used poetically for the plural, instead of ``the garments of foreigners.''---Ed.

the same apparel for a whole month; and that their prodigality may be more evident, they change also the forms of their dress. This affectation prevails far too much at this day in the world. But even then in the age of the Prophet, as it appears, the courtiers and those who had power among the people, often changed their dress, that they might the more display their pomp and attract the admiration of the simple and poor people. And it was not simple ambition, but it brought with it a contempt for others; for the rich in this way upbraided the poor, that they themselves were alone worthy of this superfluity and opulence. It was not enough for them, that they were clothed for their own comfort, and also that ornament and splendor were added; but they would have willingly made bare all others: and as it was a shame to do this, they yet showed, as far as they could, by their superfluous abundance, that they were alone worthy of such display. It was then no wonder that the Lord threatened them with so much severity.

As this vice in course of time had greatly increased, this passage of the Prophet deserves particular notice. And the more luxurious men become and the more they indulge in such varieties, and thus manifest their pride, the more carefully we ought to learn to restrain the desires of our flesh, that they may not leap over the bounds of moderation; and let those who abound in wealth be contented with what is modest and becoming; and let them especially abstain from that absurd affectation, which the Prophet evidently condemns here. It may however have been, that the Jews then sought new and unusual fashions as to their clothes from remote countries, like the French at this day, who delight in the Turkish habit; for they have too much intercourse with Turkey. So also at that time a foolish desire had possessed the hearts of the people, so as to wish to ingratiate themselves with the Chaldeans, and to make friends of them by a likeness in dress. And we may learn this from a passage in Ezekiel, where he compares them to harlots or to foolish lovers Ezekiel 23:2, etc.:) for as lovers paint harlots on walls, and whoremongers and adulterers do the same; so Ezekiel accuses the Jews, that they were so inflamed with a mad desire of making a covenant with the Chaldean nation, that they had their images painted in their chambers. They also no doubt imitated their dress, in order to show that they regarded it a great happiness, if they became their friends and confederates.

Now follows what I repeated also yesterday, I will visit every one who danceth on the threshold. Some explain this of the worshipers of Baal, but improperly; for as I have already said, the context will not allow us to understand this except of the servants of princes, who cruelly harassed the people and deprived helpless men of their property, who were not able to resist them. The Prophet then, after having spoken of the chief governors of the kingdom and of the king's sons, now comes to their servants, who, like hunting dogs, were ready to seize everywhere on the prey. They who understand this to be said of the sacrifices of Baal, adduce a passage from sacred history,---that since the image of Dagon had been found on the threshold of the temple, they dared not to tread on the threshold, but leaped over it: but this is too far-fetched. Others also bring expositions of a different kind; but the Prophet, I have no doubt, refers here to the liberty they took in plundering, when he says, that they danced on the threshold, as persons triumphing; for he afterwards adds, that

they filled, by rapine and fraud, the houses of the princes. To leap or dance then on the threshold is no other thing than to take possession of the houses of other people, and insolently to triumph over them, as it is usually done by conquerors. For he who takes possession of what belongs to another, does not quietly rest there as in his own habitation, but boasts and exults. So also here, the Prophet paints to the life that wantonness, which the servants of princes showed, when they entered into the houses of others. He therefore says, that they danced, and said, This is my house; and who will dare to say a word to the contrary? Since then the servants of princes took so much liberty, the Prophet here denounces on them the vengeance of God. [82]

He then adds, that they filled their masters' houses by rapine and fraud. By rapine and fraud he means the prey gathered, partly by armed force, and partly by deceit and craft; for courtiers have their nets by which they lay in wait for helpless men. But if they cannot obtain by fraud what they hope for, they leave recourse to armed force. However this may be, they enrich themselves, sometimes by plundering, and sometimes by fraud. Hence the Prophet mentions both here. It follows---

Zephaniah 1:10

10. And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD, that there shall be the noise of a cry from the fish gate, and an howling from the second, and a great crashing from the hills.

10. Et erit in die illa, dicit Iehova, vox clamoris a porta piscium, et ululatus a secundda (ad verbum; sed multi intelligunt scholam,) et contritio magna a collibus.

He confirms here the same truth, and amplifies and illustrates it by a striking description; for we know how much a lively representation avails to touch the feelings, when the event itself is not only narrated, but placed as it were before our eyes. So the Prophet is not content with plain words, but presents a scene, that the future destruction of Jerusalem might appear in a clearer light. But as I have elsewhere explained this mode of speaking, I shall not dwell on the subject now.

He says, that there would be the voice of crying from the gate of the fishes. He names here three places in Jerusalem, and afterwards he adds a fourth. But as we do not understand the situation of the city, sufficient for us is this probable conjecture,---that he refers to parts opposite to one another; as though he had said, that no corner of the city would be in a quiet state, when the Lord roused up war. Let us then suppose it to be triangular, and let the gate of the fishes be one side, and let the second gate or the school be on the other; and let the part nigh the hills form the third side. What some say, that the hills mean palaces, I do not approve of; nor is it consistent with the context: but we ought to bear in mind what I have already stated, that the Prophet here denounces ruin on every part of the city, so that the Jews would in vain seek refuges for themselves; for by running here and there, they would find all places full of crying and howling. There shall be then the voice of crying

[82] Marckius, following the Septuagint, and some of the fathers, Cyril, Theodoret, Jerome, etc., think that the thoughtless intruders into the temple are here meant, and such as brought there as sacrifices and gifts the fruits of plunder and fraud. But the passage cannot possibly bear this meaning according to the Hebrew text: nor is such a meaning consistent with the context. The view given here is that of Kimki, Drusius, Newcome, and Henderson.—Ed.

from the gate of the fishes. Why the Prophet calls it the gate of the fishes we cannot for certainty say, except that it is a probable conjecture, that either some fish-pond was near it, or that the fish-market was nigh.

As to the word {משנה}, meshene, the majority of interpreters think that it means the place where the priests explained the law and devoted themselves to the study of it; and they adduce a passage from 2 Kings 22:14, where it seems, as there is mention made of priests, the word is taken in this sense. But as gates are spoken of here, and as the Hebrews often call whatever is second in order by this word, as the second part in buildings and also in towns and in other places, is thus called, we may take it here in this sense, that is, as meaning that gate which was next to the first in general esteem. But as the subject has little to do with the main point, I dismiss it. [83]

He says in the last place, that there would be a great breach in the hills. He refers, I have no doubt, to that part of the city which was contiguous to the mountains. However this may be, it was the Prophet's object to include here the whole city, that he might shake off from the Jews all vain confidence, and show that there would be no escape, when the Lord stretched forth his hand to punish their sins. It now follows---

Zephaniah 1:11

11. Howl, ye inhabitants of Maktesh, for all the merchant people are cut down; all they that bear silver are cut off.

11. Ululate habitatores loci concavi; quia exterminatus est populos mercatorum, excisi sunt omnes onusti pecunia.

The Prophet addresses the merchants here who inhabited the middle part of the city, and hence thought themselves farther off from all danger and trouble. As then they were concealed as it were in their hiding-places, they thought that no danger was nigh them; and thus security blinded them the more. After having spoken of the king's palace and of the princes and their servants, Zephaniah now turns his discourse to the merchants.

And he calls them the inhabitants of the hollow place, {מכתש}, mecatesh. The verb {כתש}, catash, means to be hollow; hence the Hebrews call a hollow place {מכתש}, mecatesh. So Solomon calls a mortar by this name, because it is hollow: [84]

[83] Junius, Piscator, Newcome, and Henderson think that it means the second city, a part of Jerusalem, being so called, as they supposed, in Nehemiah 11:9: where our version is considered to be wrong, and the clause ought to be, "and Judah, the son of Jeruiah, was over the second city"—[{{משנה}.[{העיר}-{על} So it is deemed improperly rendered ``college'' in 2 Kings 22:14 and 2 Chronicles 34:22; where it ought to be ``in the second city.'' But the passage in Nehemiah is not decisive on the subject; and our version is countenanced by the former part of the verse, where ``Joel'' is said to be the ``overseer,'' and ``Judah'' is mentioned as being next to him, the second in office: and it is so rendered in the Septuagint. As to the other text, the word is by itself as here. What Calvin, after Cyril and Theodoret, suggests, is the most probable solution. The word rendered by Calvin ``contritio---breach,'' and by Henderson, ``destruction,'' is .[{שבר}] As ``crying'' and ``howling'' are said to proceed from the other parts, so something similar must have proceeded from ``the hills.'' The word means breaking, and it is often applied to the heart---``a broken heart,'' Psalm 34:18; 51:19, etc. It seems to mean here the breaking out into weeping and wailing. The parallelism of the verse would thus be complete--- And there shall be in that day, saith Jehovah, The voice of crying from the fish-gate, And howling from the second gate, And great wailing from the hills. Wailing is the breaking out of anguish and pangs. The word is used in Ezekiel 21:6, for acute pain in the loins, and may be considered as used here metonymically.---Ed.

[84] This original meaning of the word is much more probable than what lexicographers generally give. The braying or pounding is evidently derived from the noun, and the noun from the form of the mortar. Most agree that the word here means the lower part of the city—the hollow, from the circumstance of being surrounded by hills. The "hills" were those on which a

and we learn also from other parts of scripture that the word means sometimes either a cavern or some low place. But we know that merchants have for the most part their streets on level ground, and it is for their advantage, as they have goods to carry. It may then have been, that at Jerusalem there was a large company of merchants in that part of the city, which was in its situation low. But they who regard it as a proper name, bring nothing either of reason or probability to confirm their opinion: and it is also evident from the context that merchants are here addressed, for cut off, he says, is the mercantile people. The word {כנען}, canon, means a merchant. Some think that the Jews are here, as often elsewhere, called Canaan, because they were become degenerate, and more like the Canaanites than the holy fathers, from whom they descended. [85] But the Prophet speaks here no doubt of merchants, for an explanation immediately follows, all who are laden with money. And he says that merchants were laden with money, because they would not transact business without making payments and counting money, and also, because merchants for the most part engrossed by their gainful arts a great portion of the wealth of the world.

We now then understand what the Prophet means: He threatens howling to the merchants, who were concealed in their hidden places, for they occupied that part of the city, as I have already said, which was below the hills; and he then makes use of the word {כנען}, canon, a trafficker; and lastly he speaks of their wealth, as it is probable that they became rich through frauds and most dishonest means, and shows that their money would be useless to them, for they would find in it no defense, when the Lord extended his hand to punish them. It now follows---

Zephaniah 1:12

12. And it shall come to pass at that time, that I will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees: that say in their heart, The LORD will not do good, neither will he do evil.

12. Et erit in tempore illo, serutabor Ierusalem in lucernis, et visitabo super homines, qui congelati sunt in faecibus suis, et dicunt in cordibus suis, Neque benefaciet Iehova, neque malefaciet.

The Prophet addresses here generally the despisers of God, who were become hardened in their wickedness. But before he openly names them, he says that the visitation would be such, that God would search every corner, so that no place would remain unexplored. For to visit with candles, or to search with candles, is so to examine all hidden places or coverts, that nothing may escape. When one intends to plunder a city, he first enters into the houses, and takes away whatever he finds; but when he thinks that there are some hidden treasures, he descends into the secret

part of the city was built, such as Zion, Moriah and Ophal.—Ed.

[85] This opinion has been entertained, because the Jews are so called in Hosea 12:8. That the word means a trader or merchant is evident from Job 41:6, (in the Hebrew Bibles, 40:30;) Isaiah 23:8; Ezekiel 17:4. In the last passage it is rendered "traffic" in our version; and it may be so rendered here—"all the people of traffic," or of trade. The version of Newcome is, "all the trafficking people." The verse may be thus literally rendered,— Howl ye, the inhabitants of the lower part, For reduced to silence have been all the people of trade, Cut off have been all the laden with silver. They are called to howl, as though their calamity had already taken place, a mode of speaking often used by the Prophets. That the event was future is clear from the context, especially from the next verse. "Reduced to silence"—[{,נדמה} is literally the meaning, not ``destroyed;'' and appropriate is the term, as people of trade create much bustle and noise. ``The laden with silver,'' may be rendered, as Newcome does, ``the bearers of silver:'' and silver is here for money.---Ed.

cells; and then if there be no light there, he lights a candle, and carefully looks here and there, that he may not overlook anything. By this comparison then God intimates, that Jerusalem would be so plundered, that nothing whatever would remain. Hence he says, I will search it with candles. We indeed know that nothing is hid from God; but it is evident, that he is constrained to borrow comparisons from the common practice of men, because he could not otherwise express what is necessary for us to know. The world indeed deal with God as men do with one another; for they think that he can be deceived by their craftiness. He therefore laughs to scorn this folly, and says, that he would have candles to search out whatever was concealed.

Now, as impiety had possessed the minds of almost all the people, he says, I will visit the men, who on their lees are congealed. This may indeed be only understood of the rich, who flattered themselves in their prosperity, and feared nothing, and were thus congealed on their lees: but Zephaniah shows in the words which follow, that he had in view something more atrocious, that is, that they said that neither good nor evil proceeded from God. At the same time, these two things may be suitably joined together---that he reproves here their self-security, produced by wealth---and that he also accuses the careless Jews of that gross contempt of God which is afterwards mentioned. And I am disposed to take this view, that is, that the Jews, inebriated with prosperity, became hardened, as men contract hardness often by labor---and that they so collected lees through too much quietness and abundance of things, that they became wholly stupid, and could be touched by no truth made known to them. Hence in the first place the Prophet says, that God would visit with punishment a carelessness so extreme, when men not only slumbered in their prosperity, but also became congealed in their own stupidity, so as to be almost void of sense and understanding. When one addresses a dead mass, he can effect nothing: and so the Prophet compares careless men to a dead and congealed mass; for stupidity had so bound up all their senses, that they could not be either allured by the goodness of God, or terrified by his threatenings. Congealing then is nothing else but that hardness or contumacy, which is contracted by self-indulgences, and particularly when the minds of men become almost stupefied. [86] And by lees he means sinful indulgences, which so infatuate all the senses of men, that no light nor sincerity remains.

He then mentions what they said in their hearts. He expresses here what that carelessness which he condemned brings with it---even that wicked men fearlessly mock God. What it is to speak in the heart, is evident from many parts of Scripture; it means to determine anything within: for though the ungodly do not openly proclaim what they determine in their minds, they yet reason within themselves, and settle this point---that either there is no God, or that he rests idly in heaven. `Said has the ungodly in his heart, No God is.' Why in the heart? Because shame or fear

[86] There is a similar meaning in Jeremiah 48:11; but the verb is different, [{שקט},], which means to be still, to rest, to settle, while the verb here is ,[{קפא}] which signifies to be condensed, or to be congealed, Exodus 15:8. But as things congelaed become fixed, the verb seems to have the meaning of fixedness here; as wines on the lees, to which allusion is made, do not become congealed, the comparison seems to be, that as wine kept still on the lees increases in strength and flavor so the Jews, settling on their dregs---their sins---became strengthened and confirmed in their wickedness and atheistic notions. But Newcome and Henderson take another view of the metaphor, and consider that ``the thoughtless tranquillity of the rich is compared to the fixed unbroken surface of fermented liquors.'' Our version favors the former idea, as the verb is rendered ``settled.''---Ed.

prevents men from openly avowing their impiety; yet they cherish such thoughts in the heart and assent to them. Now here is described by the Prophet the height of impiety, when he says, that men drunk with pleasures robbed God of his office as a judge, saying, that he does neither good nor evil. And it is probable that there were then many at Jerusalem and throughout Judea who thus insolently despised God as a judge. But Zephaniah especially speaks of the chief men; for such above all others deride God, as the giants did, and look down as from on high on his judgments. There is indeed much insensibility among the common people; but there is more madness in the pride of great men, who, trusting in their power, think themselves exempt from the authority of God.

But what I have just said must be borne in mind, that an unhealable impiety is described by the Prophet, when he accuses the Jews, that they did not think God to be the author either of good or of evil; because God is thus deprived of his dignity; for except he is owned as the judge of the world, what becomes of his dignity? The majesty, or the authority, or the glory of God does not consist in some imaginary brightness, but in those works which so necessarily belong to him, that they cannot be separated from his very essence. It is what peculiarly belongs to God, to govern the world, and to exercise care over mankind, and also to make a difference between good and evil, to help the miserable, to punish all wickedness, to check injustice and violence. When any one takes away these things from God, he leaves him an idol only. Since, then, the glory of God consists in his justice, wisdom, judgment, power, and other attributes, all who deny God to be the governor of the world entirely extinguish, as much as they can, his glory. Even so do heathen writers accuse Epicures; for as he dared not to deny the existence of some god, like Diagoras and some others, he confessed that there are some gods, but shut them up in heaven, that they might enjoy there their leisure and delights. But this is to imagine a god, who is not a god. It is then no wonder that the Prophet condemns with so much sharpness the stupidity of the Jews, as they thought that neither good nor evil proceeded from God. But there was also a greater reason why God should be so indignant at such senselessness: for whence was it that men entertained such an opinion or such a delirious thought, as to deny that God did either good or evil, except that they attempted to drive God far away from them, that they might not be subject to his judgment. They therefore who seek to extinguish the distinction between right and wrong in their consciences, invent for themselves the delirious notion, that God concerns not himself with human affairs, that he is contented with his own celestial felicity, and descends not to us, and that adversity as well as prosperity happens to men by chance.

We hence see how men seek willfully and designedly to indulge the notion, that neither good nor evil comes from God: they do this, that they may stupefy their own consciences, and thus precipitate themselves with greater liberty into sin, as though they were free to do anything with impunity, and as though there was no judge to whom an account is to be rendered.

And hence I have said, that it is the very summit of impiety when men strengthen themselves in this error, that God rests in heaven, and that whatever miseries they

endure in this world happen through fortunes and that whatever good things they have are to be ascribed either to their own industry or to chance. And so the Prophet briefly shows in this passage that the Jews were past recovery, that no one might feel surprised, that God should punish with so much severity a people who had been his friends, and whom he had adopted in preference to the whole world: for he had set apart the race of Abraham, as it is well known, as his chosen and holy people. God's vengeance on the children of Abraham might have appeared cruel or extremely rigid, had it not been expressly declared that they had advanced so far in impiety as to seek to exclude God from the government of the world, and to deprive him of his own peculiar office, even that of punishing sin, of defending his own people, of delivering them from all evils, of relieving all their miseries. Since, then, they thus shut up God in heaven, and gave the governing power on earth to fortune, it was an intolerable stupidity, nay, wholly diabolical. It was therefore no wonder that God was so severely indignant, and stretched forth his hand to punish their sin, as their disease had become now incurable.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that as almost the whole world breaks out into such excesses, that there is no moderation, no reason,---O grant, that we may learn not only to confine ourselves within those limits which thou dost approve and command, but also to delight and glory in the smallness of our portion, inasmuch as the wealth, and honors, and pleasures of the world so fascinate the hearts and minds of all, that they elevate themselves into heaven, and carry on war, as it were, avowedly with thee. Grant also to us, that in our limited portion we may be in such a way humbled under thy powerful hand, as never to doubt but that thou wilt be our deliverer even in our greatest miseries; and that ascribing to thee the power over life and death, we may feel fully assured, that whatever afflictions happen to us, proceed from thy just judgment, so that we may be led to repentance, and daily exercise ourselves in it, until we shall at length come to that blessed rest which is laid up for us in heaven, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Twenty-First

Zephaniah 1:13

13. Therefore their goods shall become a booty, and their houses a desolation: they shall also build houses, but not inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, but not drink the wine thereof.

13. Et erit substantia eorum in direptionem, et domus eorum in vastitatem; et aedificabunt domos, neque habitabunt; et plantabunt vineas, neque bibent vinum earum.

Zephaniah pursues the same subject---that God, after long forbearance, would punish his rebellious and obstinate people. Hence he says, that they were now delivered, even by God himself, into the hands of their enemies. They indeed knew that many were inimical to them; but they did not consider God's judgment, as God himself elsewhere complains---that they did not regard the hand of him who smote them. Isaiah 9:13. Our Prophet, therefore, declares now that they were given up to destruction, and that their enemies would find no trouble nor difficulty in invading

the land, since all places would be open to plunder. And he recites what is found in Leviticus 26:20; for the Prophets were interpreters of the law, and the only difference between Moses and them is, that they apply his general truth to their own time. The Prophet now pursues this course, as though he had said, that God had not in vain or to no purpose threatened this evil in his law; for the Jews would find by experience that this would really be the case, and that it had been truly said, that the fruit of the land, their habitations, and other comforts of life, would be transferred to others. It now follows---

Zephaniah 1:14

14. The great day of the Lord is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the Lord: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly.

14. Propinquus dies Jehovae magnus, propinquus et festinans valde; vox diei Jehovae amara (ut alii vertunt,) vociferabitur illic fortis (vel, amarum, aut, amare illic vociferabitur fortis; alii secus ditinguunt, Vox diei Jehovae amara vociferabitur, aut, amare; postea, illic fortis.)

The Prophet in this verse expresses more clearly what I have already stated---That God would be the author of all the evils which would happen to the Jews; for as they grew more insensible in their sins, they more and more provoked God's wrath against themselves. It is therefore no common wisdom to consider God's hand when he strikes or chastens us. This is the reason why the Prophet now calls the attention of the Jews to God, that they might not fix their minds, as it is commonly done, on men only. At the same time, he tries to shake off their torpor by declaring that the day would be terrible, and that it was also now near at hand. We indeed know that hypocrites trifle with God, except they feel the weight of his wrath, and that they protract time, and promise themselves so long a respite, that they never awake to repentance. Hence the Prophet in the first place shows, that whatever evils then impended over the Jews were not only from men, but especially from God. This is one thing; and then, in order thoroughly to touch stupid hearts, he says, that the day would be terrible; and lastly, that they might not deceive themselves by vain flatteries, he declares that the day was at hand. These three things must be noticed in order that we understand the Prophet's object.

But he says at the beginning of the verse, that the great day of Jehovah was nigh. In these words he includes the three things to which I have already referred. By calling it the day of Jehovah, he means, that whatever evils the Jews suffered, ought to have been ascribed to his judgment; and by calling it the great day, his object was to strike terror; as well as by saying, in the third place, that it was nigh. We hence see that three things are included in these words. But the Prophet more fully explains what might, on account of the brevity of his words, have seemed not quite clear.

Near, he says, is the day, and quickly hastens. Men, we know, are wont to extend time, that they may cherish their sins; for though they cannot divest themselves of every feeling as to religion, or shake it off, they yet imagine for themselves a long distance between them and God; and by such an imagination they find ease for themselves. Hence the Prophet declares the day to be nigh; and as it was hardly

credible that the destruction of which he spake was near, he adds, that the day was quickly hastening; as though he had said, that they ought not to judge by the present state of things what God would do, for in a moment his wrath would pass through from east to west like lightning. Men need long preparation when they determine to execute their vengeance; but God has no need of much preparation, for his own power is sufficient for him when he resolves to destroy the wicked. We now, then, see why it was added by the Prophet, that the day would quickly hasten.

He now repeats that the day of Jehovah and his voice would cry out bitterly. I have stated three renderings as given by interpreters. Some read thus---The day of Jehovah shall be bitter; there the strong shall cry aloud. This meaning is admissible, and a useful instruction may from it be elicited; as though the Prophet had said, that no courage could bring help to men, or be an aid to them, against God's vengeance. Others give this rendering, that the day would bitterly cry out, for there would be the strong, that is, the strength of enemies would break down whatever courage the Jews might have. But this second meaning seems forced; and I am disposed to adopt the third---that the voice of the day of Jehovah would bitterly cry out. And he means the voice of those who would have really to know God as a judge, whom they had previously despised; for God would then put forth his power, which had been an object of contempt, until the Jews had by experience felt it. [87]

As to the Prophet's design, there is no ambiguity: for he seeks here to rouse the Jews from their insensibility, who had so hardened themselves against all threatening, that the Prophets were not able to convince them. Since, then, they had thus hardened themselves against every instruction and all warnings, the Prophet here says, that the voice of God's day would be different: for God's voice had sounded through the mouth of the Prophets, but it availed not with the deaf. An awful change is here announced; for the Jews shall then cry aloud, as the roaring of the divine voice shall then terrify them, when God shall really show that he is the avenger of wickedness---When therefore he shall ascend his tribunal, then ye shall cry. His messengers now cry to you in vain, for ye close up your ears; ye shall cry in your turn, but it will be in vain.

But if one prefers to take it as one sentence, The voice of the day of Jehovah, there strong, shall bitterly cry out, the meaning will be the same as to the main point. I would not, therefore, contend about words, provided we bear in mind what I have already said---that Zephaniah sets here the cry of the distressed people in opposition to the voices of the Prophets, which they had despised, yea, and for the most part, as it appears from other places, treated with ridicule. However this may

[87] The Rabbinical punctuation has destroyed the simplicity of this passage by connecting "bitter" with the latter clause. Jerome, Pagninus, Newcome, as well as the Septuagint, connect it with the former clause. The literal rendering of the two lines is as follows— The voice of the day of Jehovah shall be grievous; Roar out there (or then) shall the brave. "The voice of the day," etc., means the voice uttered on that day, as Drusius explains it. [{[{מר is no doubt ``bitter;'' but it is often applied in scripture to express what is grievous, afflictive, or sorrowful. If we render ,[{שט} ``there,'' it refers to Jerusalem, verse 12; but it is sometimes used as an adverb of time, ``then,'' see Psalm 14:5; Nehemiah 3:15. ``The meaning is,'' says Drusius, ``that the voice of that day, which they who excel in strength of mind and body shall utter, shall be bitter.'' The whole verse is remarkably concise and emphatical,--- 14. Nigh is the great day of Jehovah, Nigh and hastening quickly: The voice of the day of Jehovah shall be grievous; Roar out then shall the brave. Then the following verse is not to begin, as in our version, which has been followed by Newcome and Henderson, ``That day is a day of wrath,'' but thus--- A day of wrath shall be that day. This is the order of the original, and as there is no verb, it must be supplied and regulated as to its tense by the context.---Ed.

have been, he indirectly condemns their false confidence, when he speaks of the strong; as though he had said, that they were strong only for their own ruin, while they opposed God and his servants; for this strength falls at length, nay, it breaks itself by its own weight, when God rises to judgment. It follows---

Zephaniah 1:15, 16

15. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness,

15. Dies excandescentiae, dies ille, dies angustiae et afflictionis, dies tumultus, et vastationis, dies tumultus et vastationis, dies tenebrarum et caliginis, dies nubis et nebulae;

16. A day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers.

16. Dies tubae et clangoris super urbes munitas, et super arces excelsas.

The Prophet shows here how foolish they were who extenuated God's vengeance, as hypocrites and all wicked men are wont to do. Hence he accuses the Jews of madness, that they thought that the way of reconciliation would be easy to them, when they had by their perverseness provoked God to come against them as an armed enemy. For though the ungodly do not promise to themselves anything of God's favor, yet they entertain vain imaginations, as though he might with no trouble be pacified: they do not think that he will be propitious to them, and yet in the meantime they deride his vengeance. Against this kind of senselessness the Prophet now inveighs. We have stated in other places, that these kinds of figurative expressions were intended solely for this end---to constrain men to entertain some fear, for they willfully deluded themselves: for the Prophets had to do, partly with open despisers of God, and partly with his masked worshipers, whose holiness was hypocrisy.

This, then, was the reason why he said, that that day would be a day of wrath, and also a day of distress and of affliction, [88] of tumult and desolation, [89] of darkness and of thick darkness, of clouds and of mist. In short, he intended to remove from the Jews that confidence with which they flattered themselves, yea, the confidence which they derived from their contempt of God: for the flesh is secure, while it has coverts, where it may withdraw itself from the presence of God. True confidence cannot exceed moderation, that is, the confidence that is founded on God's word, for thus men come nigh to God: but the flesh wishes for no other rest but in the forgetfulness of God. And we have already seen in the Prophet Amos, (Amos 5:18,) why the day of Jehovah is painted as being so dreadful; he had, as I have said, to contend with hypocrites, who made an improper use of God's name, and at the same time slumbered in gross insensibility. Hence Amos said, It will be a day, not of light, but of darkness; not of joy, but of sorrow. Why then do ye anxiously expect the day of

[88] The original words are similar in sound and meaning; the first, [{צרה}], comes from a verb which means to inclose, to confine, to straiten, and it may be rendered, narrowness, confinement, straitness, distress. The other, [{מצוקה}], is oppression, as the verb means to press down, to press close.

[89] Waste or confusion is, [{{שאה}, משואה}], derived from the same root, may be rendered desolation. The two next words, ``darkness'' and ``thick darkness,'' occur in Joel 2:2. In the same passage we have also ``the day of cloudiness and of entire darkness,'' literally, bare or naked darkness; for the word is, [{ערפל}], derived, as I conceive, from [{ער}], bare, and [{אפל}], thick darkness. There is a gradation in the words used in each line; the second word is stronger than the first.---Ed.

the Lord? For the Jews, glorying in being the chosen people of God, and trusting only in their false title of adoption, thought that everything was lawful for them, as though God had renounced his own authority. And thus hypocrites ever flatter themselves, as though they held God bound to them. Our Prophet does not, as Amos, distinctly express these sentiments, yet the meaning of the words is the same, and that is, that when God ascends his tribunal, there is no hope for pardon. He at the same time cuts off from them all their vain confidences; for though God excludes all escapes, yet hypocrites look here and there, before and behind, to the right hand and to the left.

The Prophet therefore intimates, that there would be everywhere darkness and thick darkness, clouds and mists, affliction and distress,---Why? because it would be the day of wrath; for God, after having borne patiently a long time with the Jews, and seen that they perversely abused his patience, would at length put forth his power. And that they might not set up their own strongholds against God, he says, that war was proclaimed against the fortified cities and high citadels. We hence see that he deprives the Jews of all help, in order that they might understand that they were to perish, except they repented, and thus return into favor with God. It shall then be a day of the trumpet and of shouting, [90] ---How? on all fortified cities. For the Jews, as it is usually done, compared the strength of their enemies with their own. It was not their purpose to go forth beyond their own borders: and they thought that they would be able to resist, and be sufficiently fortified, if any foreign enemy invaded them. The Prophet laughs to scorn this notion, for God had declared war against their fortified cities. It follows ---

Zephaniah 1:17

17. And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the LORD: and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung.

17. Et coarctabo hominem (vel, homines,) et ambulabunt tanquam caeci, quia contra Iehovam impie egerunt; et fundetur sanguis quasi pulvis; et caro eorum erit tanquam stercora.

He confirms what I have already stated---that though other enemies, the Assyrians or Chaldeans, attacked the Jews, yet God would be the principal leader of the war. God then claims here for himself what the Jews transferred to their earthly enemies: and the Prophet has already often called it the day of Jehovah; for God would then make known his power, which had been a sport to them. He therefore declares in this place, that he would reduce man to distress, so that the whole nation would walk like the blind ---that, being void of counsel, they would stumble and fall, and not be able to proceed in their course: for they are said to go astray like the blind, who see

[90] Rather “acclamation,” the triumphant voice of conquerors. As an attempt to preserve the distinctive character of each word in this singular passage, I offer the following version— 15. A day of extreme wrath shall be that day, A day of distress and oppression, A day of waste and of desolation, A day of darkness and of thick darkness, A day of cloudiness and of entire darkness; 16. A day of the trumpet and of acclamation Over the cities that are inclosed, And over the towers which are lofty. The word [{,עברה}] ``extreme wrath,'' means such wrath as passes over all bounds---overflowing wrath. We are obliged to use the word darkness three times for lack of suitable terms. The first is the common darkness of the night, the second is a grosser darkness, and the third is complete darkness. The words ``gloominess'' and ``obscurity,'' used by Newcome and Henderson, are not sufficiently strong, and convey not the meaning.---Ed.

no end to their evils, who find no means to escape ruin, but are held as it were fast bound. And we must ever bear in mind what I have already said---that the Jews were inflated with such pride, that they heedlessly despised all the Prophets. Since then they were thus wise in themselves, God denounces blindness on them.

He subjoins the reason, Because they had acted impiously towards Jehovah [91] By these words he confirms what I have already explained---that the intermediate causes are not to be considered, though the Chaldeans took vengeance on the Jews; for there is a higher principle, and another cause of this evil, even the contempt of God and of his celestial truth; for they had acted impiously towards God. And by these words the Prophet reminds the Jews, that no alleviation was to be expected, as they had not only men hostile to them, but God himself, whom they had extremely provoked.

Hence he adds, Poured forth shall be your blood as dust [92] They whom God delivered up to extreme reproach were deserving of this, because he had been despised by them. Their flesh, [93] he says, shall be as dung. Now, we know how much the Jews boasted of their preeminence; and God had certainly given them occasion to boast, had they made a right and legitimate use of his benefits; but as they had despised him, they deserved in their turn to be exposed to every ignominy and reproach. Hence the Prophet here lays prostrate all their false boastings by which they were inflated; for they wished to be honorable, while God was despised by them. At last he adds---

Zephaniah 1:18

18. Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy: for he shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land.

18. Etiam argentum eorum, etiam aurum eorum, nihil proficiet ad liberandos ipsos in die excandescentiae Jehovae, et in igne indignationis ejus evorabitur omnis terra; quia consumptionem et quidem definitam (vel, horribilem, vel, celerem) facet cum omnibus incolis terrae.

He repeats what he has already said---that the helps which the Jews hoped would be in readiness to prevent God's vengeance would be vain. For though men dare not openly to resist God, yet they hope by some winding courses to find out some way by which they may avert his judgment. As then the Jews, trusting in their wealth, and in their fortified cities, became insolent towards God, the Prophet here declares, that neither gold nor silver should be a help to them. Let them, he says, accumulate wealth; though by the mass of their gold and silver they form high mountains for themselves, yet they shall not be able to turn aside the hand of God, nor be able to deliver themselves,---and why? He repeats again the same thing, that it would be the day of wrath. We indeed know, that the most savage enemies are sometimes pacified by money, for avarice mitigates their cruelty; but the Prophet declares here,

[91] The Hebrew words are literally, For against Jehovah have they sinned. —Ed.

[92] "Copiously and in contempt," says Marckius; "as a thing of no value," says Grotius; "as worthless as dust," says Drusius. The comparison is evidently intended to show that their blood, or their life, would be treated with contempt, and no more regarded than dust.—Ed.

[93] The word is [{,[{טרל usually rendered food; here it means what is fed, the carcass, the body. It is rendered ``flesh'' by the Septuagint.---Ed.

that as God would be the ruler in that war, there would be no redemption, and therefore money would be useless: for God could by no means receive them into favor, except they repented and truly humbled themselves before him.

He therefore adds, that the land would be devoured by the fire of God's jealousy, or indignation. He compares God's wrath to fire; for no agreement can be made when fire rages, but the more materials there are the more will there be to increase the fire. So then the Prophet excludes the Jews from any hope of deliverance, except they reconciled themselves to God by true and sincere repentance; for a consummation, he says, he will make as to all the inhabitants of the land, and one indeed very quick or speedy. [94] In short, he means, that as the Jews had hardened themselves against every instruction, they would find God's vengeance to be such as would wholly consume them, as they would not anticipate it, but on the contrary enhance it by their pride and stupidity, and even deride it. Now follows---

CHAPTER 2

[94] Quickness rather than terror is what is evidently meant. See version 14. Most agree in this respect. Newcome renders it “speedy,” and Henderson “sudden.” The word “riddance,” for [{,כלה[{ in our version, is improper. It is rendered ``full end'' by Newcome, and ``consummation'' by Henderson, and ``{συντέλειαν}---end'' by the Septuagint. The particle [{אך}] does not mean ``altogether,'' as rendered by Henderson, but it is an asseveration---surely, indeed, certainly, doubtless. The [{את}] before ``inhabitants'' has evidently here the meaning of {κατα}, with regard to. It is rendered {επι}, upon, in the Septuagint, and ``with'' by Marckius and Newcome. The whole verse is as follows,--- 18. Neither their silver nor their gold Shall be able to deliver them In the day of the extreme-wrath of Jehovah; By the fire of his jealousy Shall be consumed the whole land; For an end, doubtless sudden, will he make, As to all the inhabitants of the land.

Zephaniah 2

Zephaniah 2:1, 2

1. Gather yourselves together, yea, gather together, O nation not desired;

1. Colligite vos, et colligite gens non amabilis;

2. Before the decree bring forth, before the day pass as the chaff, before the fierce anger of the Lord come upon you, before the day of the Lord's anger come upon you.

2. Antequam pariat decretum, sicut stipula transibit die, antequam veniat super eos furor irae Iehovae, antequam veniat super eos dies irae Iehovae.

The Prophet, after having spoken of God's wrath, and shown how terrible it would be, and also how near, now exhorts the Jews to repentance, and thus mitigates the severity of his former doctrine, provided their minds were teachable. We hence learn that God fulminates in his word against men, that he may withhold his hand from them. The more severe, then, God is, when he chastises us and makes known our sins, and sets before us his wrath, the more clearly he testifies how precious and dear to him is our salvation; for when he sees us rushing headlong, as it were, into ruin, he calls us back by threatening and chastisements. Whenever, then, God condemns us by his word, let us know that he will be propitious to us, if, touched with true repentance, we flee to his mercy; for to effect this is the design of all his reproofs and threatening.

There follows then a seasonable exhortation, after the Prophet had spoken of the dreadfulness of God's vengeance. Gather yourselves, he says, gather, ye nation not worthy of being loved. Others read---Search among yourselves, search; and interpreters differ as to the root of the verb; some derive it from {קשש}, koshesh, and others from {קוש}, kush; while some deduce the verb from the noun {קש} kosh, which signifies chaff or stubble. But however this may be, I consider the real meaning of the Prophet to be---Gather yourselves, gather; for this is what grammatical construction requires. I do not see why they who read search yourselves, depart

from the commonly received meaning, except they think that the verb gather does not suit the context; but it suits it exceedingly well. Others with more refinement read thus---Gather the chaff, gather the chaff, as though the Prophet ridiculed the empty confidence of the people. But as I have already said, he no doubt shows here the remedy, by which they might have anticipated God's judgment, with which he had threatened them. He indeed compares them to stubble, as we find in the next verse, but he shows that still time is given them to repent, so that they might gather themselves, and not be dissipated; as though he said---The day of your scattering is at hand; ye shall then vanish away like chaff, for ye shall not be able to stand at the breath of the Lord's wrath. But now while God withholds himself, and does not put forth his hand to destroy you, gather yourselves, that ye may not be like the chaff. There are then two parts in this passage; the first is, that if the Jews abused, as usual, the forbearance of God, they would become like the chaff, for God's wrath would in a moment scatter them; but the Prophet in the meantime reminds them that a seasonable time for repentance was still given them; for if they willingly gathered themselves, God would spare them. Before then the day of Jehovah's wrath shall come; gather, he says, yourselves [95]

But the way of gathering is, when men do not vanish away in their foolish confidences, or when they do not indulge their own lusts; for whenever men give loose reins to wicked licentiousness, and thus go astray in gratifying their corrupt lusts, or when they seek here and there vain confidences, they expose themselves to a scattering. Hence the Prophet exhorts them to examine themselves, to gather themselves, and as it were to draw themselves together, that they might not be like the chaff. Hence he says,---gather yourselves, yea, gather, ye nation not loved

Some take the participle {נכסף}, necasaph, in an active sense, as though the Prophet had said that the Jews were void of every feeling, and had become wholly hardened in their stupidity. But I know not whether this can be grammatically allowed. I therefore follow what has been more approved. The nation is called not worthy of love, because it did not deserve mercy; and God thus amplifies and renders illustrious his own grace, because he was still solicitous about the salvation of those who had willfully destroyed themselves, and rejected his favor. Though then the Jews had by their depravity so alienated themselves from God, that there was no reason why he should save them, he yet still continued to call them back to himself. It is therefore a remarkable proof of the unfailing grace of God, when he shows love to a nation wholly worthy of being hated, and is concerned for its safety. [96]

[95] The verb, found only in five other places—Exodus 5:7,12; Numbers 15:32,33; and 1 Kings 17:10,12, means to collect, to gather, and not "to search," as said by Kimchi, and adopted by Marckius; nor "to bind," as rendered by Henderson. The import of the passage is considered by all to be an invitation to repentance, though the words are differently rendered. It is difficult to see the meaning when it is said—"Gather yourselves, yea, gather," etc, except such an assembly is meant as is recommended by Joel 1:14; the kind of gathering being well understood, it is not mentioned. "Gather yourselves," that is, to offer prayers, says Grotius. "Be ye assembled—{συνάχθητε}," is the rendering of the Septuagint.---Ed.

[96] [{[{נכס is found as a verb in four other places, Genesis 31:30; Job 14:15; Psalm 17:12; and Psalm 84:3. It means to be or to grow pale, either through love, as in Genesis and Job, or through hunger, as in the first Psalm referred to, or through longing for God's house, as in the last, or through shame, as some---such as Grotius, Dathius, and Gesenius, suppose to be the case here; and they therefore give this rendering---``O nation without shame;'' or, ``not ashamed.'' This idea is favored by the Septuagint---``unteachable---{ἀπαίδευτον}.'' In no instance is it found in a passive sense as to the feeling through which the paleness is occasioned, and therefore ``worthy of love,'' or ``desired,'' cannot be its proper rendering. Buxtorf give its meaning

He then adds, Before the decree brings forth. Here the Prophet asserts his own authority, and that of God's other servants: for the Jews thought that all threatening would come to nothing, as it is the case with most men at this day who deride every true doctrine, as though it were nothing but an empty sound. Hence the Prophet ascribes birth to his doctrine. It is indeed true, that the word decree has a wider meaning; but the Prophet does not speak here of the hidden counsel of God. He therefore calls that a decree, which God had already declared by his servants: and the meaning is, that it is not beating the air when God denounces his vengeance on sinners by his Prophets, but that it is a fixed and unchangeable decree, which shall at length be effected. But the similitude of birth is most apposite; for as the embryo lies hid in the womb, and then emerges in due time into light; so God's vengeance, though hid for a time, will yet in due season be accomplished, when God sees that men's wickedness is past a remedy. We now understand why the Prophet says, that the time was near when the decree should bring forth.

Then he says, Pass away shall the chaff in a day. Some read, Before the day comes, when the stubble (or chaff) shall pass away. But I take {יום}, ium, in another sense, as meaning that the Jews shall quickly pass away as the chaff; the like expression we have also met in Hosea. He says then that the Jews would perish in a day, in a short time, and as it were in a moment; though they thought that they would not be for a long time conquered. Pass away, he says, shall they like chaff [97]

Then he adds, Before it comes, the fury of Jehovah's wrath; the day of Jehovah's wrath, gather ye yourselves. He says first, before it comes upon you, the fury of wrath, and then, the day of wrath. He repeats the same thing; but some of the words are changed, for instead of the fury of wrath, he puts in the second clause, the day of wrath; as though he had said, that they were greatly deceived if they thought that they could escape, because the Lord deferred his vengeance. How so? For the day, which was nigh, though not yet arrived, would at length come. As when one trusting in the darkness of the night, and thinking himself safe from the danger of being taken, is mistaken, for suddenly the sun rises and discovers his hiding-place; so the Prophet intimates, that though God was now still, it would yet be no advantage

in Niphal---``desiderio affici---to be touched with or to feel a desire.'' Hence the person spoken of is the subject, not the object, of the desire. According, then, to the use of the verb, the rendering here is to be---``Ye nation that feels no desire,'' that is, for God and his law, or, ``that feels no shame,'' that is, for its sins. The paraphrase of the Targum is---``not willing to be converted to the law,'' which corresponds with the idea which has been stated. Marckius considers that the nation is here described as having ``no desire,'' that is for that which was good, and that its torpidity and indifference as to religion is what is set forth. And such is the view of Cocceius; it had no thirst for righteousness, no desire for the kingdom of God---the mark of an unregenerated mind.---Ed.

[97] It is difficult to make the words bear this sense. Hardly a sentence has been more variously rendered. The most satisfactory solution perhaps is to regard it parenthetic, and to consider “the day” as that allowed for repentance: it was to pass away quickly, like the chaff carried away by the wind— As the chaff passing away will be the day: Both Marckius and Henderson regard this as the meaning. Then the whole verse might be thus translated— 2. Before the bringing forth of the decree, (As the chaff passing away will be the day,) Before it shall come upon you, The burning of Jehovah’s anger; Before it shall come upon you, The day of the anger of Jehovah. Literally it is, “Before it shall not come,” etc., or, “During the time when it shall not come,” etc. [{[{בטרם may be rendered ``while;'' then the version would be--- While it shall not come upon you, The burning of Jehovah's anger; While it shall not come upon you, The day of the anger of Jehovah. There are several MSS. which omit the two first lines; but evidently without reason. They are retained in the Septuagint. Possibly the second line may refer to the speedy execution of ``the decree,'' that its day would pass quickly. Its birth, or its bringing forth was its commencement; and the second line may express its speedy execution: it would be carried into effect with the quickness by which the chaff is carried away by the wind--- As the chaff passing away will be its day. The word [{עבר}] is, in either case, a participle, and the auxiliary verb is understood, as often is the case in Hebrew, and must partake of the tense of the context.---Ed.

to the Jews: for he knew the suitable time. Though then he restrained for a time his wrath, he yet poured it forth suddenly, when the day came and the iniquity of men had become ripe.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that as we continue in various ways to provoke thy wrath, we may at length be awakened by the blasting of that trumpet which sounds in our ears, when thou proclaimest that thou wilt be the judge of the world, and testifies also the same so plainly in the gospel, so that we may, with our minds raised up to thee, learn to renounce all the depraved lusts of the world, and that having shaken off our torpidity, we may so hasten to repent, that we may anticipate thy judgment, and so find that we are reconciled to thee, as to enjoy thy goodness, and ever to retain the taste of it, in order that we may be enabled to renounce all the allurements and pleasures of this world, until we shall at length come to that blessed rest, where we shall be filled with that unspeakable joy, which thou hast promised to us, and which we hope for in Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Twenty-second

Zephaniah 2:3

3. Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger.

3. Quaerite Jehovam omnes mansueti terrae, qui judicium ejus fecerunt (pro fecistis;) quaerite justitiam, quaerite mansuetudinem, si forte abscondamini in die irae Jehovae.

Here the Prophet turns his discourse to a small number, for he saw that he could produce no effect on the promiscuous multitude. For had his doctrine been addressed in common to the whole people, there were very few who would have attended. We would therefore have been discouraged had he not believed that some seed remained among the people, and that the office of teaching and exhorting had not been in vain committed to him by God. But he shows at the same time that the greater part were wholly given up to destruction. We now see why the Prophet especially addresses the meek of the land; for few undertook the yoke, though they had been already broken down by many calamities. And it hence appears that the fruit of correction was not found equal in all, for God had chastised the good and the bad, the whole people, from the least to the greatest; they had all been laid prostrate by many evils, yet the same ferocity remained, as God complains in Isaiah, that he labored in vain in punishing that refractory nation. Isaiah 1:5

But we are here taught that though ministers of the word may think that they spend their labor to no purpose, while they sing to the deaf, as the proverb is, they ought not yet to depart from the course of their vocation; for there will ever be some who will really show, after a long time, that they had been divinely and wonderfully saved, so as not to perish with others. But what the Prophet had especially in view was to show, that the faithful ought not to regard what the multitude may do, or how they live; but that when God invites them to repentance, and gives them a hope of pardon, they ought without delay to come to him, that they might not perish

with the rest. And it deserves to be noticed, that when God raises his voice, some harden others, and thus men lead one another into ruin. Thus it happens that all teaching becomes unsuccessful. Hence the Prophet applies a remedy, by showing how preposterous it is when some follow others; for in this way they increase the ranks of the rebellious; but that if there be any who are meek, they ought to be teachable, when God stretches forth his hand and shows that he will be propitious, provided they return to the right way.

He calls them meek who had profited under the scourges of God; for the Hebrews consider {ענוים}, onuim, to be the afflicted, deriving the word from {ענה}, one, to afflict, or to be humble. But as men for the most part are not subdued except by scourges, they call, by a metaphor, {ענוים}, onuim, the meek, such as have been subdued: for men grow wanton in their pleasures, and abundance commonly produces insolence; but by adversity they learn to become meek. Hence our Prophet calls those the meek of the land who were submissive to God, after having been chastised by him. For we know, that though God may smite the wicked, they yet continue to have a stiff and iron neck and a brazen front: but the faithful are tamed, as Jeremiah confesses as to himself; for he says that he was like an untamed heifer before he was chastised by God's scourges. So the Prophet directs his discourse to the few who had felt the afflicting hand of God, and had been thus humbled. [98]

He bids them to seek Jehovah, and yet he says that they had wrought his judgment. These two clauses seem inconsistent with each other; for if they had been previously alienated from God, justly might the Prophet bid them to return to the right way; but as they had devoted themselves to religion, and formed their life according to the rule of uprightness, the Prophet seems to have exhorted them without reason to seek God. But the passage is worthy of special notice; for we hence learn that even the best are roused by God's scourges to seek true religion with greater ardor than they had before done. Though then it be our object to serve God and to follow his word, yet when calamities arise and God appears as a judge, we ought to be stimulated to greater care and diligence; for it never is the case that any one of us fully performs his duty. Let us then remember, that we are roused by God whenever adversity impends over us, and when God himself shows by manifest signs that he is displeased. This is the reason why the Prophet bids the pious doers of righteousness to seek God, however much they were before devoted to what was just and upright.

There was also another reason: we know how grievously faith is tried, when the good and wicked are indiscriminately and without any difference chastised by God's hand; for the godly are then tempted to think that it avails them nothing that they have labored sincerely to serve God; they think that this has all been in vain and to no purpose, for they are brought into the same miseries with others. As then this temptation is enough to shake even the strongest, the Prophet here exhorts the

[98] Newcome renders the adjective "lowly," and the noun "lowliness;" but Marckius and Henderson render the first "humble," as the Septuagint do—{ταπεινοι}, and the second ``humility.'' They were those who had been made humble by affliction. The design of affliction is to make us humble, submissive to God's will; and this is the effect of sanctified affliction. It is somewhat singular that the verb means to afflict and to be humble, as though affliction were needful to render us humble. The word ,[{ענות}] occurs in 2 Samuel 22:36, and Psalm 18:35, and is rendered ``gentleness'' in our common version, but more correctly in our Prayer-book version ``loving correction.'' Perhaps the best rendering would be ``humbling affliction;'' and the idea of humbling affliction making great is very striking. The word used by the Septuagint is {παιδεια}---discipline; and the Vulgate is the same.---Ed.

faithful to persevere, as though he had said, that in the first confusion no difference would be found between the good and the wicked as to their circumstances, for God would afflict both alike, but that the end would be different; and that there was therefore no reason for them to despond or to think it of no advantage to seek God: for he would at length really show that he approved of their integrity; as though he had said, God will not remunerate you at the first moment; but your patience will at length find that he is a just judge, who has regard for his people, and delivers them in their extremity.

To do the judgment of God in this place is to form the life according to the righteousness of the law. The word {משפט}, meshepheth, has various meanings in Scripture. Sometimes, and indeed often, it designates the punishment which God allots to the wicked: but it frequently means equity or the rule of right living. Hence to do judgment is to observe what is righteous and just, to abstain from what is wrong and injurious. But the Prophet calls it the judgment of God, because it is what he prescribes in his word and what he approves. For we know that men blend various things, by which they would prove themselves to be just and righteous: but they deceive themselves, except they form their life especially according to what God requires. We now perceive what the Prophet means; and he afterwards defines what it is to seek God; for the latter part of the verse is added as an explanation, that the faithful might understand how God is to be sought.

For hypocrites, as soon as God invites them, accumulate many rites, and weary themselves much in things of no value. In short, they think that they have sufficiently sought God when they have performed a number of ceremonies. But by over-acting they trifle as it were with God, and thus deceive themselves. Thus we see repentance profaned. They under the Papacy prattle enough about repentance, but when they are asked to define it, they begin with contrition; and yet no displeasure at sin is mentioned by them, nor any real love of righteousness, but they talk about attrition and contrition, and then immediately they leap to confession; and this is the principal part of repentance: they afterwards come to satisfactions. Thus repentance among the Papists is nothing else but a some kind of mistaken solicitude, by which they labor to pacify God, as though they came nigh him: nay, the satisfactions of the Papacy are nothing else but obstructions between God and men.

This evil has been common in all ages. The Prophet, therefore, does not without reason define what the true and rightful way of seeking God is, and that is, when righteousness is sought, when humility is sought. By righteousness he understands the same thing as by judgment; as though he had said, Advance in a righteous and holy course of life, for God will not forget your obedience, provided your hearts grow not faint, and ye persevere to the end. We hence see that God complains, not only when we obtrude external pomps and devices I know not what, as though he might like a child be amused by us; but also when we do not sincerely devote our life to his service. And he adds humility to righteousness; for it is difficult even for the very best of men not to murmur against God when he severely chastises them. We indeed find how much their own delicacy embitters the minds of men when God appears somewhat severe with them. Hence the Prophet, in order to

check all clamors, exhorts the faithful here to cultivate humility, so that they might patiently bear the rigor by which God would try them, and might suffer themselves to be ruled by his hand. Peter had the same thing in view when he said, Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God. (1 Peter 5:6.) We now then see why the Prophet requires from the faithful not only righteousness but also humility; it was, that they might with composed minds wait for the deliverance which God had promised. They were not in the interval to murmur, nor to give vent to their own perverse feelings, however severely God might treat them.

We may hence gather a profitable instruction: The Prophet does not address here men who were depraved and had wholly neglected what was just and right, but he directs his discourse to the best, the most upright, the most holy: and yet he shows that they had no other remedy, but humbly and patiently to bear the chastisement of God. It then follows that no perfection can be found among men, such as can meet the judgment of God. For were any to object and say, that they devoted themselves to righteousness, there is yet a just reason why they should humble themselves; for we are all guilty before God, and no one can clear himself, inasmuch as when any one examines his own conscience, he finds that he is not free from sin. However conscious then we may be of acting uprightly, and God himself may be a judge to us, and the Holy Spirit the witness of our true and real integrity; yet when the Lord summons us before his tribunal, let us all, from the least to the greatest, learn to confess ourselves guilty and exposed to judgment.

He afterwards adds, If it may be (or, it may be) ye shall be concealed [99] in the day of Jehovah's anger. The Prophet speaks not doubtingly, as though the faithful were uncertain as to God's favor: but he had another thing in view,---that though no hope remained as to the perceptions of men, yet the faithful would not lose their labor, if they sought God; for in their worst circumstances they would find him propitious to them and their safety secured by his kindness. Hence we see, that the Prophet in these words points out the disastrous character of the event, but no deficiency in the love of God. Though the Lord is ready to pardon, nay, of his own self anticipates his people, and kindly invites them to himself; it is yet necessary for them to consider how wonderful is his power in preserving his elect, when all things seem desperate. It may then be, he says, when the Jews understood that all things were in a state of extreme despair: and the Prophet said this, partly that the reprobate and the perverse might know that they were to perish, and partly that the faithful might appreciate the more the favor of God, when they saw themselves delivered from death by a miracle, and found that it would be a kind of resurrection, when God became their deliverer. Hence the Prophet, in order to commend to God's children his salvation, which he offers them, and to render more illustrious God's favor, makes use of the particle {אולי}, auli, it may be. In the meantime he fulminates, as I have already said, against the reprobate, that they might understand that it was all over with them. It follows---

Zephaniah 2:4, 5

[99] The idea is not “protected,” as given by Newcome, but “secreted” or concealed as in a hiding-place. “Hid” is the version of Henderson, and also of Marckius.—Ed.

4. For Gaza shall be forsaken, and Ashkelon a desolation: they shall drive out Ashdod at the noon day, and Ekron shall be rooted up.

4. Quia Aza derelicta erit, et Aksalon in vastiationem; Asdod in meridie expellent, et Ekron dissipabitur.

5. Woe unto the inhabitants of the sea coast, the nation of the Cherethites! the word of the LORD is against you; O Canaan, the land of the Philistines, I will even destroy thee, that there shall be no inhabitant.

5. Heus habitatores funiculi maris (vel, regionis) gens Cretim; sermo Iehovae contra vos Canaan, terra Philistim; et exterminabo te, ne sit habitator.

The Prophet begins here to console the elect; for when God's vengeance had passed away, which would only be for a time against them, the heathens and foreigners would find God in their turn to be their judge to punish them for the wrongs done to his people; though some think that God's judgment on the Jews is here described, while yet the Prophet expressly mentions their neighbors: but the former view seems to me more suitable,---that the Prophet reminds the faithful of a future change of things, for God would not perpetually afflict his chosen people, but would transfer his vengeance to other nations. The meaning then is---that God, who has hitherto threatened the Jews, would nevertheless be propitious to them, not indeed to all the people, for a great part was doomed to destruction, but to the remnant, whom the Lord had chosen as a seed to himself, that there might be some church remaining. For we know, that God had always so moderated the punishment he inflicted on his people, as not to render void his covenant, nor abolish the memory of Abraham's race: for this reason he was to come forth as their Redeemer.

Since then the Prophet speaks here against Gaza, and Ashkelon, and Ashdod, and Akron, and the Philistine, and the Cretians and others, he intended no doubt to add courage to the faithful, that they might not despair of God's mercy, though they might find themselves very grievously oppressed; for he could at length put an end to his wrath, after having purged his Church of its dregs. And this admonition the faithful also need, that they may not envy the wicked and the despisers of God, as though their condition were better or more desirable. For when the Lord spares the wicked and chastens us, we are tempted to think that nothing is better than to shake off every yoke. Lest then this temptation should have assailed the faithful, the Prophet reminded them in time, that there was no reason why the heathens should flatter or congratulate themselves, when God did not immediately punish them; for their portion was prepared for them.

He mentions Gaza first, a name which often occurs in scripture. The Hebrews called it Aza; but as {ע}, oin, is the first letter, the Greeks have rendered it Gaza, and heathen authors have thought it to be a Persia word, and it means in that language a treasure. But this is a vain notion, for it is no doubt a Hebrew word. He then adds Ashkelon, a city nigh to Gaza. In the third place he mentions Ashdod, which the Greeks have translated Azotus, and the Latins have followed the Greeks. He names Ekron in the last place. All these cities were near to the Jews, and were not far from one another towards the Moabites and the Idumeans. [100]

[100] This verse, literally rendered, retains more of its poetic character,— 4. For Gaza, forsaken

He then adds, Ho! (or, woe to, {הו}) the inhabitants of the line of the sea. The region of the sea he calls Galilee; and he joins the Kerethites and the Philistine. Some think that he alludes to the troops, who carried on war under David; for he had chosen his garrison soldiers from that nation, that is, from the people of Galilee, and had called them Kerethites and Philistine. But I know not whether the Prophet spoke so refinedly. I rather think, that he refers here to those heathen nations, which had been hostile to the Jews, though vicinity ought to have been a bond of kindness. Hence he includes them all in the name of Canaan: for I do not take it here, as some do, as signifying merchants; for the Prophet evidently means, that however called, they were all Canaanites, who had been long ago doomed to destruction. Since then those regions had been enemies to the Jews, the Prophet intimates that God would become the defender of his chosen people.

The word of Jehovah is against you. God, who has hitherto threatened his own people, summons you to judgment. Think not that you will escape unpunished for having vexed his Church. For though God designed to prove the patience of his people, yet neither the Moabites, nor the rest, were excusable when they cruelly oppressed the Jews; yea, when they purposed through them to fight with God himself, the creator of heaven and earth. He afterwards adds, There shall be no inhabitant, for God would destroy them all. We now see that the Prophet had no other design but to alleviate the bitter grief of the faithful by this consolation,---that their miseries would be only for a time, and that God would ere long punish their enemies. It follows---

Zephaniah 2:6, 7

6. And the sea coast shall be dwellings and cottages for shepherds, and folds for flocks.

6. Et erit funiculus maris (id est, regio; sed metaphorice Hebraei vocant regionem, funiculum, propter distributionem) habitaculum caulis pastorum et septa ovium.

7. And the coast shall be for the remnant of the house of Judah; they shall feed thereupon: in the houses of Ashkelon shall they lie down in the evening: for the LORD their God shall visit them, and turn away their captivity.

7. Et erit regio reliquiis domus Jehudah, apud eos pascentur, in domibus Ascalon vesperi accubabunt; quia visitabit Jehova Deus ipsorum ipsos, et reducet captivitatem eorum.

The Prophet confirms what he has before said respecting the future vengeance of God, which was now nigh at hand to the Moabites and other neighboring nations, who had been continually harassing the miserable Jews. Hence, he says, that that whole region would become the habitation of sheep. It is a well known event, that

shall she be, And Ashkelon shall be a desolation; Ashdod, at mid-day shall they drive it out, And Ekron shall be rooted up. In the first and the last line there is a correspondence in the sound of the words. The following presents another instance of the nominative case absolute,— 5. Woe to the dwellers of the line of the sea, The nation of the Kerethites! The word of Jehovah is against you: Canaan, the land of the Philistines, I will even destroy thee, that there shall be no inhabitant. The line of the sea, meaning the coast along the shore, is so called, says Henderson, “from the custom of using a cord or line in measuring off or dividing a territory.” Some derive “Kerethites” from [{,[{כרת to cut off, to destroy; and so they were cutters off or destroyers. They were celebrated men of war in the time of David, 2 Samuel 8:18. ``Philistines'' mean emigrants, says Henderson; the word being derived from a verb, which signifies, in the Ethiopic language, to rove, to migrate.---Ed.

when any country is without inhabitants shepherds occupy it; for there is no sowing nor reaping there, but grass alone grows. Where, therefore, there is no cultivation, where no number of men are found, there shepherds find a place for their flocks, there they build sheep cots. It is, therefore, the same as though the Prophet had said, that the country would be desolate, as we find it expressed in the next verse. [101]

He immediately adds, but for a different reason, that the coast of the sea would be a habitation to the house of Judah. And there is here a striking divergence from the flocks of shepherds to the tribe of Judah, which was as it were, the chosen flock of God. The Prophet then, after having said that the region would be waste and desolate, immediately adds, that it would be for the benefit of the chosen people; for the Lord would grant there to the Jews a safe and secure rest. But the Prophet confines this to the remnant; for the greater part, as we have already seen, were become so irreclaimable, that the gate of mercy was completely closed against them. The Prophet, at the same time, by mentioning a remnant, shows that there would always be some seed from which God would raise up a new Church; and he also encourages the faithful to entertain hope, so that their own small number might not terrify them; for when they considered themselves and found themselves surpassed by a vast multitude, they might have thought that they were of no account. Lest then they should be disheartened the Prophet says that this remnant would be the object of God's care; for when he would visit the whole coast of the sea and other regions, he would provide there for the Jews a safe habitation and refuge.

That line then, he says, shall be for the residue of the house of Judah; feed shall they in Ashkelon, and there shall they lie down in the evening; that is, they shall find in their exile some resting-place; for we know that the Jews were not all removed to distant lands; and they who may have been hid in neighboring places were afterwards more easily gathered, when a liberty to return was permitted them. This is what the Prophet means now, when he says, that there would be a refuge in the night to the Jews among the Moabites and other neighboring nations.

A reason follows, which confirms what I have stated, for Jehovah their God, he says, will visit them. We hence see that the Prophet mitigates here the sorrow of exile and of that most grievous calamity which was nigh the Jews, by promising to them a new visitation of God; as though he had said, Though the Lord seems now to rage against you, and seems to forget his own covenant, yet he will again remember his mercy, when the suitable time shall come. And he adds, he will restore their captivity; and he added this, that he might show that his favor would prove victorious against all hindrances. The Jews might indeed have raised this objection, Why does

[101] The words, [{כרת} נות ,{רעים}], are rendered by Calvin, ``habitaculum caulis pastorum---an habitation (or a dwelling) for the sheepcots of shepherds.'' The Targum takes the two first words in the singular number; the second is evidently so, and the first may be so also: and [{כרת}] certainly does not mean sheepcots, but digging, from ,[{כרה}] to dig. The reference is either to the pits dug for watering the flock, as Piscator thinks, or to the subterraneous huts, or caves, dug for the purpose of shelter, as Drusius and Bochart suppose. Junius and Tremelius render the words, ``sheepcots, the delvings of shepherds;'' and Drusius, ``dwellings of the digging out of shepherds,'' i.e., dwellings dug out by shepherds. The most literal and the easiest construction is, ``dwellings, the digging of shepherds.'' Then the verse might be thus rendered,--- And the line of the sea shall be dwellings, Dug out by shepherds, and folds for sheep. Parkhurst quotes Harmer, who says, ``the Eastern shepherds make use of caves very frequently, sleeping in them and driving their flocks into them at night. The mountains bordering on the Syrian coast are remarkable for the number of caves, and are found particularly in the neighborhood of Ashkelon.'' How fully then was this prophecy fulfilled.---Ed.

not the Lord help us immediately; but he, on the contrary, allows our enemies to remove us into exile? The Prophet here calls upon them to exercise patience; and yet he promises, that after having been driven into exile, they should again return to their country; for the Lord would not suffer that exile to be perpetual. It now follows---

Zephaniah 2:8

8. I have heard the reproach of Moab, and the revilings of the children of Ammon, whereby they have reproached my people, and magnified themselves against their border.

8. Audivi opprobrium Moab, et contumelias filiorum Ammon, quibus exprobrarunt populo meo, et se extulerunt contra terminum ipsorum.

The Prophet confirms what I have just said of God's vengeance against foreign enemies. Though all the neighboring nations had been eager in their hostility to the Jews, yet we know that more hatred, yea and more fury, had been exhibited by these two nations than by any other, that is, by the Moabites and the Ammonites, notwithstanding their connection with them by blood, for they derived their origin from Lot, who was Abraham's nephew. Though, then, that connection ought to have turned the Moabites and the Ammonites to mercy, we yet know they always infested the Jews with greater fury than others, and as it were with savage cruelty. This is the reason why the Prophet speaks now especially of them. Some indeed take this sentence as spoken by the faithful; but the context requires it to be ascribed to God, and no doubt he reminds them that he looked down from on high on the proud vauntings of Moab which he scattered in the air, as though he had declared that it was not hidden or unknown to him how cruelly the Moabites and Ammonites raged against the Jews, how proud and inhuman they had been. And this was a very seasonable consolation. For the Jews might have been swallowed up with despair, had not this promise been made to them. They saw the Moabites and the Ammonites burning with fury, when yet they had not been injured or provoked. They also saw that they made gain and derived advantage from the calamities of a miserable people. What could the faithful think? These wicked men not only harassed them with impunity, but their cruelty and perfidy towards them was gainful. Where was God now? If he regarded his own Church, would he not have interposed? Lest then a temptation of this kind should upset the faithful, the Prophet introduces God here as the speaker,---

I have heard, he says, the reproach of Moab; I have heard the revilings of Amman: ``Nothing escapes me; though I do not immediately show that these things are regarded by me, yet I know and observe how shamefully the Moabites and the Ammonites have persecuted you: they at length shall find that I am the guardian of your safety, and that you are under my protection.'' We now apprehend the Prophet's design. Nearly the same words are used by Isaiah, Isaiah 16:1, and also by Jeremiah Jeremiah 48:1, they both pursue the subject much farther, while our Prophet only touches on it briefly, for we see that what he says is comprised in very few words. But by saying that the reproach of Moab and the revilings of the children of Amman had come into remembrance before God, what he had in view was---that the Jews might be assured and fully persuaded that they were not rejected and forsaken,

though for a time they were reproachfully treated by the wicked. The Prophet indeed takes the words reproach and revilings, in an active sense. [102]

He then adds, By which they have upbraided many people. God intimates here that he does not depart from his elect when the wicked spit, as it were, in their faces. There is indeed nothing which so much wounds the feelings of ingenuous minds as reproach; there is not so much bitterness in a hundred deaths as in one reproach, especially when the wicked licentiously triumph, and do this with the applauding consent of the whole world; for then all difference between good and evil is confounded, and good conscience is as it were buried. But the Prophet shows here, that the people of God suffer no loss when they are thus unworthily harassed by the wicked and exposed to their reproach.

He at last subjoins that they had enlarged over their border. Some consider mouth to be understood---they have enlarged the mouth against their border; and the word, it is true, without any addition, is often taken in this sense; but in this place the construction is fuller, for the words {גבולם}-{על}, ol-gebulam, over their border, follow the verb. The Prophet means that God's wrath had been provoked by the petulance of both nations, for they wished to break up, as it were, the borders, which had been fixed by God. The land of Canaan, we know, had been given to the Jews by an hereditary right;---When the Most High, says Moses, divided the nations, he set a line for Jacob. Deuteronomy 32:8. It is indeed true that the possessions of the nations were allotted to them by the hidden counsel of God; but there was a special reason as to his chosen people; for the Lord had made Abraham the true possessor of that land, even for ever. Genesis 17:8. Now the Moabites were confined, as it were, to a certain place; the Lord had assigned to them their own inheritance. When, therefore, they sought to go beyond and to invade the land of the Jews, God's wrath must have been kindled against them; for they thus fought, not against mortals, but against God himself; for by removing the borders fixed by him, they attempted to subvert his eternal decree. We now then understand why the Prophet says that the children of Moab and of Ammon had enlarged over the border of those who had been placed in the land of Canaan by God's hand; for they not only sought to eject their neighbors, but wished and tried to take away from God's hand that inheritance which the Lord had given to Abraham, and given, as I have said, in perpetuity. [103]

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast been pleased to consecrate us a peculiar people to thyself, we may be mindful of such an invaluable favor, and devote our-

[102] That is, the reproach cast by Moab, and the revilings uttered by Ammon.—Ed.

[103] There is a difference as to the meaning of the last line. Newcome adopts our common version,— And magnified themselves against their border Henderson's rendering is essentially the same— And carried themselves haughtily against their border. The verb [{גדל is transitive and intransitive in Kal---to make great and to be great; it seems to partake of a similar character in Hiphil, as it is found here, to magnify, and to grow great or proud, and hence to exult or to triumph; and when followed by ,[{על] as here, to exult over a person or a country,---see Job 19:5; Psalm 35:26; 38:17; Ezekiel 35:13. In these verses ``to exult over'' would be the best rendering; as also in the 10th verse of this chapter. The idea of enlarging or extending over, as adopted by Jerome and Dathius, as well as by Calvin, is not countenanced by any other passage. The best rendering here is--- And exulted over their border. This line corresponds with the revilings of Ammon, as the preceding does with the reproach of Moab. That it was the triumphant and exulting language of Ammon is evident, because it was what was heard---``I have heard,'' etc. The particle ,[{אשר] rendered here ``quibus---by which,'' and ``wherewith'' by Newcome, is rendered ``who'' by Marckius and Henderson---``who have reproached on my people;'' and this is the most natural construction. Some have rendered it ``because.''---Ed.

selves woody to thee, and so labor to cultivate true sincerity as to bear the marks of thy people and of thy holy Church: and as we are so polluted by so many of the defilements of our own flesh and of this world, grant that thy Holy Spirit may cleanse us more and more every day, until thou bringest us at length to that perfection to which thou invites us by the voice of thy gospel, that we may also enjoy that blessed glory which has been provided for us by the blood of thy only begotten Son. Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Twenty-third.

Zephaniah 2:9, 10

9. Therefore as I live, saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Surely Moab shall be as Sodom, and the children of Ammon as Gomorrah, even the breeding of nettles, and saltpits, and a perpetual desolation: the residue of my people shall spoil them, and the remnant of my people shall possess them.

9. Propterea vivo ego, dicit Jehova exercituum, Deus Israel, quod Moab sicuti Sodoma erit, et filii Ammon sicuti Gomorrha, productio urticae et fodina salis, et vastitas in perpetuum: reliquiae populi mei diripient eos, et residuum gentis meae possidebit eos.

10. This shall they have for their pride, because they have reproached and magnified themselves against the people of the Lord of hosts.

10. Hoc illis pro superbis sua, quia exprobrarunt et insultarunt super populum Jehovae exercituum.

In order to cheer the miserable Jews by some consolation, God said, in what we considered yesterday, that the wantonness of Moab was known to him; he now adds, that he would visit with punishment the reproaches which had been mentioned. For it would have availed them but little that their wrongs had been observed by God, if no punishment had been prepared. Hence the Prophet reminds them that God is no idle spectator, who only observes what takes place in the world; but that there is a reward laid up for all the ungodly. And these verses are to be taken in connection, that the faithful may know that their wrongs are not unknown to God, and also that he will be their defender. But that the Jews might have a more sure confidence that God would be their deliverer, he interposes an oath. God at the same time shows that he is really touched when he sees his people so cruelly and immoderately harassed, when the ungodly seem to think that an unbridled license is permitted them. God therefore shows here, that not only the salvation of his people is an object of his care, but that he undertakes their cause as though his anger was kindled; not that passions belong to him but such a form of speaking is adopted in order to express what the faithful could never otherwise conceive an idea of, that is, to express the unspeakable love of God towards them, and his care for them.

He then says that he lives, as though he had sworn by his own life. As we have elsewhere seen that he swears by his life, so he speaks now. Live do I, that is, As I am God, so will I avenge these wrongs by which my people are now oppressed. And for the same reason he calls himself Jehovah of hosts, and the God of Israel. In the first clause he exalts his own power, that the Jews might know that he was endued with power; and then he mentions his goodness, because he had adopted them as his people. The meaning then is that God swears by his own life; and that the Jews

might not think that this was done in vain, his power is brought before them, and then his favor is added.

Moab, he says, shall be like Sodom, and the sons of Ammon like Gomorrah, even for the production of the nettle and for a mire of salt; [104] that is, their lands should be reduced to a waste, or should become wholly barren, so that nothing was to grow there but nettles, as the case is with desert places. As to the expression, the mine (fodina) or quarry of salt, it often occurs in scripture: a salt-pit denotes sterility in Hebrew. And the Prophet adds, that this would not be for a short time only; It shall be (he says) a perpetual desolation. He also adds, that this would be for the advantage of the Church; for the residue of my people shall plunder them, and the remainder of my nation shall possess them. He ever speaks of the residue; for as it was said yesterday, it was necessary for that people to be cleansed from their dregs, so that a small portion only would remain; and we know that not many of them returned from exile.

The import of the whole is, that though God determined to diminish his Church, so that a few only survived, yet these few would be the heirs of the whole land, and possess the kingdom, when God had taken vengeance on all their enemies.

It hence follows, according to the Prophet, that this shall be to them for their pride. We see that the Prophet's object is, to take away whatever bitterness the Jews might feel when insolently slandered by their enemies. As then there was danger of desponding, since nothing, as it was said yesterday, is more grievous to be borne than reproach, God does here expressly declare, that the proud triumph of their neighbors over the Jews would be their own ruin; for, as Solomon says, `Pride goes before destruction.' Proverbs 16:18. And he again confirms what he had already referred to---that the Jews would not be wronged with impunity, for God had taken them under his guardianship, and was their protector: Because they have reproached, he says, and triumphed over the people of Jehovah of hosts. He might have said, over my people, as in the last verse; but there is something implied in these words, as though the Prophet had said, that they carried on war not with mortals but with God

[104] This clause is rendered differently by some. The word [{[{ממשק occurs only here. It is rendered by the Targum by a word which means a ``deserted place,'' and so Newcome renders it, ``A deserted place for the thorn:'' so also do Drusius, Grotius, Piscator, and Marckius. The Septuagint have mistaken the word for ``Damascus,'' and give a version of the whole clause wholly foreign to the context. Henderson thinks that the word has the same meaning with ,[{משך} to draw out, to extend, and gives this version, ``A region of overrunning brambles.'' This is far-fetched. The word, ,[{חרול} rendered ``nettle'' by Calvin, Grotius, and others, cannot be so taken, according to Drusius and Bochart, for in Job 30:7, men are said to gather under it. It is found besides only in Proverbs 24:31. It may be rendered either a thorn or a bramble. The other part of the sentence is literally ``a digging place for salt.'' Moab was to be like Sodom, and Ammon like Gommorah, not as to the manner of their ruin, but as to the extent of it. It was to be an entire overthrow. Their habitation was not to become a pool of water like Sodom and Gommorah, but a place where the bramble was to grow, and salt might be dug. And it was to be ``a desolation,'' ,[{עולם}-{עד] ``for ages;'' for the word means an indefinite time. So Drusius regards it here as meaning a long time. But some consider the ``desolation,'' as having reference to the people and not to the place. If so, the rendering were wholly obliterated. Moab and Ammon, as a separate people, are altogether extinct. The whole verse is as follows--- 9. Therefore, as I live, Saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, Surely Moab like Sodom shall be, And the children of Ammon like Gomorrah, The desert of the thorn and the excavation of salt, Yea, a desolation for ages; The remnant of my people shall plunder them, And the residue of my nation shall possess them. The two last lines refer to the children of Ammon, as the two preceding especially to Moab. The country of Moab was on the eastern side of the Dead Sea, and that of Ammon was north-east, of Moab. Both were subdued and led captive by Nebuchadnezzar about four or six years after the captivity of Judah. They were afterwards partially restored, especially the children of Ammon, as Tobiah was their chief in the time of Nehemiah. Nehemiah 4:3. They were ``plundered,'' as recorded in 1 Maccabees 5:35,51, by Judas Maccabeus. Of Moab we read nothing at that time: but it appears, that for ages it has been desolate. ``Not one,'' says Burckhart, the traveler, ``of the ancient cities of Moab exists as tenanted by man,'' and he speaks of ``their entire desolation.'' Another modern traveler, Seetzen, a Russian, speaking of Ammon, says, ``All this country, formerly so populous, is now changed into a vast desert.''---Ed.

himself, whose majesty was insulted, when the Jews were so unjustly oppressed. It follows---

Zephaniah 2:11

11. The Lord will be terrible unto them: for he will famish all the gods of the earth; and men shall worship him, every one from his place, even all the isles of the heathen.

11. Terribilis Iehova super eos, quia consumpsit omnes deos terrae: et adorabit eum quisque ex loco suo, omnes insulae gentium.

He proceeds with the same subject,---that God would show his power in aiding his people. But he calls him a terrible God, who had for a time patiently endured the wantonness of his enemies, and thus became despised by them: for the ungodly, we know, never submit to God unless they are constrained by his hand; and then they are not bent so as willingly to submit to his authority; but when forced they are silent. [105] This is what the Prophet means in these words; as though he had said, that the wicked now mock God, as they disregard his power, but that they shall find how terrible an avenger of his people he is, so that they would have to dread him. And then he compares the superstitions of the nations with true religion; as though he had said, that this would be to the Jews as a reward for their piety, inasmuch as they worshipped the only true God, and that all idols would be of no avail against the help of God. And this was a necessary admonition; for the ungodly seemed to triumph for a time, not only over a conquered people, but over God himself, and thus gloried in their superstitious and vain inventions. The Prophet, therefore, confirms their desponding minds; for God, he says, will at length consume all the gods of the nations

The verb {רזה}, reze, means strictly to make lean or to famish, but is to be taken here metaphorically, as signifying to consume. God then will famish all the inventions of the nations: and he alludes to that famine which idols had occasioned through the whole world; as though he had said, that God's glory would shortly appear, which would exterminate whatever glory the false gods had obtained among them, so that it would melt away like fatness.

He at last adds, that the remotest nations would become suppliants to God; for by saying, adore him shall each from his place, [106] he doubtless means, that however far off the countries might be, the distance would be no hindrance to God's name being celebrated, when his power became known to remote lands. And, for the same reason, he mentions the islands of the nations, that is, countries beyond the sea: for the Hebrews, as it has been elsewhere observed, call those countries islands which are far distant, and divided by the sea. [107] In short, the Prophet shows, that the

[105] The word, [{נורא}] is rendered ``to be feared,'' by Cocceius and Henderson, and [{עליהם}] ``above them,'' that is, ``the gods of the earth,'' mentioned in the next line; it being considered an instance of a pronoun preceding its noun. But this is forced; and it is not necessary. Moab and Ammon are evidently referred to; and what is said is, that God would be terrible to them, as well as to others, for he would famish or destroy all the gods of the earth. And then in the next verse he mentions other nations. Some extend what is here said to gospel-times; but there seems no reason for this, inasmuch as God's judgment is the subject of the Prophet.---Ed.

[106] Literally— And bow down to him, every one from his place, Shall all the islands of the nations.

[107] By the earth the Jews understood the great continent of all Asia and Africa, to which they had acces by land; and by the isles of the sea they understood the places to which they sailed

redemption of the people would be so wonderful, that the fame of it would reach the farthest bounds of the earth, and constrain foreign nations to give glory to the true God, and that it would dissipate all the mists of superstition, so that idols would be exposed to scorn and contempt. It follows---

Zephaniah 2:12

12. Ye Ethiopians also, ye shall be slain by my sword.

12. Etiam vos Ethiopes, interfecti gladio meo ipsi (alii vertunt, cum ipsis.)

The Prophet extends farther the threatened vengeance, and says, that God would also render to the Ethiopians the reward which they deserved; for they had also harassed the chosen people. But if God punished that nation, how could Ammon and Moab hope to escape? For how could God spare so great a cruelty, since he would visit with punishment the remotest nations? For the hatred of the Moabites and of the Ammonites, as we have said, was less excusable, because they were related to the children of Abraham. They ought, on this account, to have mitigated their fierceness: besides, vicinity ought to have rendered them more humane. But as they exceeded other nations in cruelty, a heavier punishment awaited them. Now this comparison was intended for this end---that the Jews might know that God would be inexorable towards the Moabites, by whom they had been so unjustly harassed, since even the Ethiopians would be punished, who yet were more excusable on account of their distance.

As to the words, some regard the demonstrative pronoun {המה}, eme, they, as referring to the Babylonians, and others, to the Moabites. I prefer to understand it of the Moabites, if we read, like them, or with them, as these interpreters consider it: for they regard the particle {את}, at, with, or {כ}, caph, like, to be understood, Ye Ethiopians shall be slain by my sword like them, or with them. It would in this case doubtless apply to the Moabites. But it seems to me that the sentence is irregular, even ye Ethiopians, and then, they shall be slain by any sword. The Prophet begins the verse in the second person, summoning the Ethiopians to appear before God's tribunal; he afterwards adds in the third person, they shall be slain by my sword. [108]

God calls whatever evils were impending over the Ethiopians his sword; for though they were destroyed by the Chaldeans yet it was done under the guidance of God himself. The Chaldeans made war under his authority, as the Assyrians did, who had been previously employed by him to execute his vengeance. It follows---

Zephaniah 2:13

13. And he will stretch out his hand against the north, and destroy Assyria; and will make Nineveh a desolation, and dry like a wilderness.

13. Et extendet manum suam ad Aquilomen, et perdet Assyriam, et ponet Ninevem in vastitatiem, desolationem instar deserti.

The Prophet proceeds here to the Assyrians, whom we know to have been special enemies to the Church of God. For the Moabites and the Ammonites were fans only,

by sea, particularly all Europe. Sir I. Newton on Daniel, p. 276."—Newcome.

[108] Newcome cuts the knot, here by an emendation, by [{,[{אתם ye, for ,[{המה}] they; and Houbigant, by ,[{תהיו}] ye shall be,---``the wounded of my sword shall ye be.'' This is according to the Septuagint; but the former is more in accordance with the Hebrew idiom; for the pronoun is often used without the auxiliary verb. Some take [{המה}] as ipsi in Latin, connected with vos, ye yourselves. Then the rendering would be--- Also ye Cushites, The slain of my sword shall ye yourselves be. But what Calvin says is not uncommon in the Prophet, the abrupt change of persons.---Ed.

as we have elsewhere seen, as they could not do much harm by their own strength. Hence they stirred up the Assyrians, they stirred up the Ethiopians and remote nations. The meaning, then, is, that no one of all the enemies of the Church would be left unpunished by God, as every one would receive a reward for his cruelty. He speaks now of God in the third person; but in the last verse God himself said, that the Ethiopians would be slain by his sword. The Prophet adds here, He will extend his hand to the north; that is, God will not complete his judgments on the Ethiopians; but he will go farther, even to Nineveh and to all the Assyrians.

Nineveh, we know, was the metropolis of the empire, before the Assyrians were conquered by the Babylonians. Thus Babylon then recovered the sovereignty which it had lost; and Nineveh, though not wholly demolished, was yet deprived of its ruling power, and gradually lost its name and its wealth, until it was reduced into a waste; for the building of Ctesiphon, as we have elsewhere seen, proved its ruin. But the Prophet, no doubt, proceeds here to administer comfort to the Jews, lest they should despair, while the Lord did not interfere. And the extension of the hand means as though he said, that his own time is known to the Lord, and that he would put forth his power when needful. Assyria was north as to Judea: hence he says, to the north will the Lord extend his hand, and will destroy Assyria; he will make Nineveh a desolation, that it may be like the desert. It follows---

Zephaniah 2:14

14. And flocks shall lie down in the midst of her, all the beasts of the nations: both the cormorant and the bittern shall lodge in the upper lintels of it; their voice shall sing in the windows; desolation shall be in the thresholds: for he shall uncover the cedar work.

14. Et cubabunt in medio ejus greges, omnes bestiae gentium: etiam onocrotalus, etiam noctua (alii vertunt, pro onocrotalo, ibin, alii, cuculum; alii, pro noctua, ericium) in postibus ejus pernoctabunt; vox cantabit in fenestra, in poste vastitatis (alii vertunt, corvum; sed nomen vastitatis, quod postulat ratio grammaticae, retinendum nobis est,) quia nudavit cedrum (vel, contignationem.)

The Prophet describes here the state of the city and the desolation of the country. He says, that the habitations of flocks would be in the midst of the city Nineveh. The city, we know, was populous; but while men were so many, there was no place for flocks, especially in the middle of a city so celebrated. Hence no common change is here described by the Prophet, when he says, that flocks would lie down in the middle of Nineveh; and he adds, all wild beasts. For beasts, which seek seclusion and shun the sight of men, are wont to come forth, when they find a country desolate and deserted; and they range then at large, as it is the case after a slaughter in war; and when any region is emptied of its inhabitants, the wolves, the lions, and other wild beasts, roam here and there at full liberty. So the Prophet says, that wild beasts would come from other parts and remote places, and find a place where Nineveh once stood. [109] He adds that the bitterns, or the storks or the cuckoos, and similar wild birds would be there. [110] As to their various kinds, I make no laborious research;

[109] It is literally, "every wild beast of the nation,"—[{of`---,[{גוי the land," in the Septuagint. What is meant is, every wild beast that belonged to that country.---Ed.

[110] Both Newcome and Henderson render the two words, "the pelican and the porcupine."

for it is enough to know the Prophet's design: besides, the Jews themselves, who boldly affirm that either the bittern or the stork is meant, yet adduce nothing that is certain. What, in short, this description means, is---that the place, which before a vast multitude of men inhabited, would become so forsaken, that wild beasts and nocturnal birds would be its only inhabitants.

But we must bear in mind what I have stated, that all these things were set before the Jews, that they might patiently bear their miseries, understanding that God would become their defender. For this is the only support that remains for us under very grievous evils, as Paul reminds us in the first chapter of the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians; for he says, that the time will come when the Lord shall give to us relief and refreshment, and that he will visit our adversaries with punishment 2 Thessalonians 1:6.

The Prophet mentions especially Nineveh, that the Jews might know that there is nothing so great and splendid in the world which God does not esteem of less consequence than the salvation of his Church, as it is said in Isaiah, I will give Egypt as thy ransom. So God threatens the wealthiest city, that he might show how much he loved his chosen people. And the Jews could not have attributed this to their own worthiness; but the cause of so great a love depended on their gratuitous adoption. It afterwards follows---

Zephaniah 2:15

15. This is the rejoicing city that dwelt carelessly, that said in her heart, I am, and there is none beside me: how is she become a desolation, a place for beasts to lie down in! every one that passeth by her shall hiss, and wag his hand.

15. Haec urbs exultabunda, quae sedebat confidenter, quae dicebat in corde suo, Ego et non praeter me amplius: quomodo facta est in vastationem, cubile animalibus? Quisquis transierit (vel, omnis viator) super eam subilabit, agitabit manum suam.

He seems to have added this by way of anticipation, lest the magnificent splendor of the city Nineveh should frighten the Jews, as though it were exempt from all danger. The Prophet therefore reminds them here, that though Nineveh was thus proud of its wealth, it could not yet escape the hand of God; nay, he shows that the greatness, on account of which Nineveh extolled itself, would be the cause of its ruin; for it would cast itself down by its own pride: as a wall, when it swells, will not long stand; so also men, when they inwardly swell, and vent their own boastings, burst; and though no one pushes them down, they fall of themselves. Such a destruction the Prophet denounces on the Ninevites and the Assyrians.

This, he says, is the exulting city, which sat in confidence. Isaiah reprobates in nearly the same words the pride of Babylon: but what Isaiah said of Babylon our Prophet justly transfers here to Nineveh. But he no doubt had respect to the Jews, and exhibits Nineveh in its state of ruin, lest the power of that city should dazzle their

The former says that [{,[{קאת ``pelican,'' comes from ,[{קאה}] to vomit, because it casts up fish or water from its membranaceous bag; and ,[{קפד}] ``porcupine,'' according to Bochart, is from the verb, which means to cut off as by a bite, or rather, he says, from its Syriac meaning, to dread, for it is a solitary animal. See Newcome. But Parkhurst contends that it is the hedgehog, and both the Septuagint and Vulgate render it so. What Calvin translates ``in postibus ejus,'' ,[{בכפתויה}] is rendered by Newcome, ``in the carved lintels thereof,'' by Henderson, ``in her capitals,'' and by Parkhurst, ``in her door-porches,'' i.e. when thrown down.---Ed.

eyes; for we are seized with wonder, when anything grand and splendid presents itself to us. Here then Zephaniah makes a representation of Nineveh and sets it before the Jews: Behold, he says, ye see this city full of exultation; ye also see that it rests as in a state of safety; for it is conscious of no fear; it regards itself exempt from the common lot of men, as though it was built in the clouds. This city, he says, is above all others celebrated; but let not frail and evanescent splendor terrify you; for God will doubtless in his own time overthrow it and reduce it to nothing.

Let us also in the meantime observe what I have lately referred to,---that the cause of the ruin of Nineveh is described, which was, that it had promised to itself a perpetuity in the world. But let us remember, that in this city is presented to us an example, which belongs in common to all nations,---that God cannot endure the presumption of men, when inflated by their own greatness and power, they do not think themselves to be men, nor humble themselves in a way suitable to the condition of men, but forget themselves, as though they could exalt themselves above the heavens.

But it is necessary to examine the words: Nineveh said in her heart, I, and besides me no other. By these words the Prophet means, that Nineveh was so blinded by its splendor that it now defied every change of fortune. Had Babylon spoken thus, it would have been no wonder, for it had taken from Nineveh its sovereignty. But we see that the same pride infatuates people as well as superior kings; for each thinks himself to be great alone, and when he compares himself with others, he looks on them as far below him, as though they were placed beneath his feet. Thus then the Prophet shows in few words what was the cause of the ruin of Nineveh: it thought that its condition on the earth was fixed and perpetual. If then we desire to be protected by God's hand, let us bear in mind what our condition is, and daily, yea, hourly prepare ourselves for a change, except God be pleased to sustain us. Our stability is to depend only on the aid of God, and from consciousness of our infirmity, to tremble in ourselves, lest a forgetfulness of our state should creep in.

He afterwards adds, How has it become a desolation? The Prophet accommodates his words to the capacities of men: for the ruin of Nineveh might have appeared incredible. Hence the Prophet by a question rouses the minds of the faithful, that they might not doubt the truth of what God declared, for he would work in an extraordinary manner. This how then intimates, that the Jews ought not to be incredulous, while thinking that Nineveh was on all sides fortified, so as to prevent the occurrence of anything disastrous: for God would, in a wonderful manner and beyond what is usual, overthrow it. How, then, has it become a desolation, a resting-place for beasts?

He then subjoins, Every one who passes by will hiss and shake his hand. The Prophet seems to point out the future reproach of Nineveh, and to confirm also by a different mode of speaking what he had before said, that its ruin would be wonderful; for the shaking of the hand and hissing are marks of reproach: Behold Nineveh, which so much flattered itself! we now see only its sad ruins. The Prophet, I have no doubt, means here by hissing and the shaking of the hind, that Nineveh would become an ignominious spectacle to all people: and the same mode of speaking often occurs

in the Prophets. All shall hiss at thee; that is, I will make thee a reproach and a disgrace. Then the Prophet, as I have already said, still declares the same truths that the ruin of Nineveh would be like a miracle; for all those who pass by would be amazed; as though he had said, Behold, they will hiss---What is this? and then they will shake the hand---What can be firm in this world? We see the principal seat of empire demolished, and differing nothing from a desert. We now perceive the meaning of the Prophet.

As this doctrine is also necessary for us at this day, we must notice the circumstances to which we have referred. If, then, our enemies triumph now, and their haughtiness is intolerable, let us know, that the sooner the vengeance of God will overtake them; if they are become insensible in their prosperity, and secure, and despise all dangers, they thus provoke God's wrath, and especially if to their pride and hardness they add cruelty, so as basely to persecute the Church of God, to spoil, to plunder, and to slay his people, as we see them doing. Since then our enemies are so wanton, we may see as in a mirror their near destruction, such as is foretold by the Prophet: for he spoke not only of his own age, but designed to teach us, by the prophetic spirit, how dear to God is the safety of his Church; and the future lot of the ungodly till the end of the world will no doubt be such as Nineveh is described here to have been that though they swell with pride for a time, and promise themselves every success against the innocent, God will yet put a stop to their insolence and check their cruelty, when the proper time shall come. I shall not today begin the third chapter, for it contains a new subject.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou triest us in the warfare of the cross, and arouses most powerful enemies, whose barbarity might justly terrify and dishearten us, were we not depending on thine aid,---O grant, that we may call to mind how wonderfully thou didst in former times deliver thy chosen people, and how seasonably thou didst bring them help, when they were oppressed and entirely overwhelmed, so that we may learn at this day to flee to thy protection, and not doubt, but that when thou becomest propitious to us, there is in thee sufficient power to preserve us, and to lay prostrate our enemies, how much soever they may now exult and think to triumph above the heavens, so that they may at length know by experience that they are earthly and frail creatures, whose life and condition is like the mist which soon vanishes: and may we learn to aspire after that blessed eternity, which is laid up for us in heaven by Christ our Lord. Amen.

CHAPTER 3

Lecture One Hundred and Twenty-fourth

Zephaniah 3

Zephaniah 3:1, 2

1. Woe to her that is filthy and polluted, to the oppressing city!

1. Vae pollutae et inquinatae, urbi direptrici (vel, fraudatrici.)

2. She obeyed not the voice; she received not correction; she trusted not in the LORD; she drew not near to her God.

2. Non audivit ad vocem; non suscepit disciplinam (vel, correctionem;) in Iehova non est confisa; ad Deum suum non appropinquarit.

The Prophet speaks here again against Jerusalem; for first, the Jews ought ever to have been severely reproved, as they were given to many sins; and secondly, because there was always there some seed which needed consolation: and this has been the way pursued, as we have hitherto seen, by all the Prophets. But we must also bear in mind, that the books now extant were made up of prophetic addresses, that we might understand what was the sum of the doctrine delivered.

The Prophet here makes this charge against the Jews, that they were polluted and become filthy. And he addresses Jerusalem, where the sanctuary was; and it might therefore seem to have been superior to other cities; for God had not in vain chosen that as the place for his worship. But the Prophet shows how empty and fallacious was any boasting of this kind; for the city which God had consecrated for himself had polluted itself with many sins. The Prophet seems to allude to the ancient rites of the law, which, though many, had been prescribed, we know, by God, that the people might observe a holy course of life: for the ceremonies could not of themselves wash away their filth; but the people were instructed by these external things to worship God in a holy and pure manner. As then they often washed themselves with water, and as they carefully observed other rites of outward sanctity, the Prophet derides their hypocrisy, for they did not regard the real design of the ceremonies. Hence he says, that they were polluted, though in appearance they might be deemed the

most pure; for they were defiled as to their whole life. [111]

He adds that the city was {היונה}, eiune; some render it the city of dove, or, a dove; for the word has this meaning: and they take it metaphorically for a foolish and thoughtless city, as we find it to be so understood in Hosea 7:11; where Ephraim was said to be a dove, because the people were void of reason and knowledge, and of their own accord exposed themselves to traps and snares. Some then consider this place to have this meaning,---that Jerusalem, which ought to have been wise, was yet wholly fatuitous and foolish. But it may be easily gathered from the context, that the Prophet means another thing, even this,---that Jerusalem was given to plunder and fraud; for the verb {ינה}, ine, signifies to defraud and to take by force what belongs to another; and it means also to circumvent as well as to plunder. He therefore means no doubt, that Jerusalem was a city full of every kind of iniquity, as he had before called it a polluted city; and then he adds an explanation.

The Prophet in the first verse seems to have in view the two tables of the law. God, we know, requires in the law that his people should be holy; and then he teaches the way of living justly and innocently. Hence when the Prophet called Jerusalem a polluted city, he meant briefly to show that the whole worship of God was there corrupted, and that no regard for true religion flourished there; for the Jews thought that they had performed all their duty to God, when they washed away their filth by water. Such was the extremely foolish notion which they entertained: but we know and they ought to have known that the worship of God is spiritual. He afterwards adds, that the city was rapacious, under which term he includes every kind of injustice.

It follows, She heard not the voice, she received not correction. The Prophet now explains and defines what the pollution was of which he had spoken: for true religion begins with teachableness; when we submit to God and to his word, it is really to enter on the work of worshipping him aright. But when heavenly truth is despised, though men may toil much in outward rites, yet their impiety discovers itself by their contumacy, inasmuch as they suffer not themselves to be ruled by God's authority. Hence the Prophet shows, that whatever the Jews thought of their purity at Jerusalem, it was nothing but filth and pollution. He says, that they were unteachable, because they did not hear the Prophets sent to them by God.

This ought to be carefully noticed; for without this beginning many torment themselves in the work of serving God, and do nothing, because obedience is better than sacrifice. If, then, we wish our efforts to be approved by God, we must begin with faith; for except the word of God obtains credit with us, whatever we may offer to him are mere human inventions. It is, in the second place, added, that they did not

[111] The first word, [{,מוראה}] is rendered ``rebellions'' by Newcome and Henderson. The Vulgate is nearly the same, ``provocatrix---provoking.'' The verb is ,[{מרא}] once in Hiphil in Job 39:8; and to take it to be the same with ,[{מרה}] to rebel, is gratuitous. The context in Job shows its idea to be that of raising up or swelling; and Parkhurst very properly renders the participle here, swelling, arrogant, insolent; and this notion entirely corresponds with the character given of the city in the next verse; being arrogant, it did ``not hear the voice'' of God. The verse may be rendered thus --- Woe to the arrogant and polluted, The city, which is an oppressor! Then follows a specification as to her conduct,--- She has not hearkened to the voice, She has not received instruction; In Jehovah has she not trusted, To her God has she not drawn nigh. To ``obey the voice,'' as given in our version and by Newcome, is not quite correct; she was too arrogant even to hear or attend to the voice. ``Correction,'' as in our version, and by Calvin, is rendered ``instruction'' by Newcome and Henderson; for [{מוסר}] has often this meaning. The Septuagint have {παιδαιαν}---discipline. But the same phrase occurs in verse 7, where the word necessarily means instruction, by way of warning, communicated by the example of others.---Ed.

receive correction; and this was no superfluous addition. For when God sees that we are not submissive, and that we do not willingly come to him when he calls us, he strengthens his instruction by chastisements. He allures us at first to himself, he employs kind and gentle invitations; but when he sees us delaying, or even going back, he begins to treat us more roughly and more severely: for teaching without the goads of reproof would have no effect. But when God teaches and reproves in vain, it then appears that our disposition is wicked and perverse. So the Prophet intended here to show the wickedness of his people as extreme, by saying, that they heard not the voice nor received correction; as though he had said, that the wickedness of his people was unhealable, for they not only rejected the doctrine of salvation, when offered, but also obstinately rejected all warnings, and would not bear any correction.

But we must bear in mind, that the Prophet had to do with that holy people whom God had chosen as his peculiar treasure. There is therefore no reason why those who profess the name of Christians at this day should exempt themselves from this condemnation; for our condition is not better than the condition of that people. Jerusalem was in an especial manner, as we have already said, the sanctuary, as it were, of God: and yet we see how severely the Prophet reproves Jerusalem and all its inhabitants. We have no cause to flatter ourselves, except we willingly submit to God, and suffer ourselves to be ruled by his word, and except we also patiently bear correction, when his teaching takes no suitable effect, and when there is need of sharp goads to stimulate us.

He afterwards adds, that it did not trust in the Lord, nor draw nigh to its God. The Prophet discovers here more clearly the spring of impiety---that Jerusalem placed not the hope of salvation in God alone; for from hence flowed all the mass of evils which prevailed; because if we inquire how it is that men burn with avarice, why they are insatiable, and why they wantonly defraud and plunder one another, we shall find the cause to be this---that they trust not in God. Rightly then does the Prophet mention this here, among other pollutions at Jerusalem, as the chief---that it did not put its trust in God. The same also is the cause and origin of all superstitions; for if men felt assured that God alone is enough for them, they would not follow here and there their own inventions. We hence see that unbelief is not only the mother of all the evil deeds by which men willfully wrong and injure one another, but that it is also the cause of all superstitions.

He says, in the last place, that it did not draw nigh to God. The Prophet no doubt charges the Jews that they willfully departed from God when he was nigh them; yea, that they wholly alienated themselves from him, while he was ready to cherish them, as it were, in his own bosom. This is indeed a sin common to all who seek not God; but Jerusalem sinned far more grievously, because she would not draw nigh to God, by whom she saw that she was sought. For why was the law given, why was adoption vouchsafed, and in short, why had they the various ordinances of religion, except that they might join themselves to God? `And now Israel,' said Moses, `what does the Lord thy God require of thee, except to cleave to him?' God thus intended his law to be, as it were, a sacred bond of union between him and the Jews. Now when they

wandered here and there, that they might not be united to him, it was a diabolical madness. Hence the Prophet here does not only accuse the Jews of not seeking God, but of withdrawing themselves from him; and thus they were ungovernable. The Lord sought to tame them; but they were like wild beasts. It now follows---

Zephaniah 3:3

3. Her princes within her are roaring lions; her judges are evening wolves; they gnaw not the bones till the morrow.

3. Principes ejus in medio ejus, leones rugientes; judices ejus lupi vespertini, non lacerant ad mane (alii non differunt, nempe ossa comminuere; sed ,[{מרג}] proprie significat, conterere vel, frangere ergo de ossibus loquitur Propheta, quod scilicet non expectarent usque ad mane, ut ipsa contererent dentibus; sed prae fame, vel potius rabie praedam statim lacerarent; imo etiam contererent ossa dentibus.)

The Prophet now explains what we have stated respecting plunder and fraud. He confirms that he had not without reason called Jerusalem {היונה}, eiune, a rapacious city, or one given to plunder; for the princes were like lions and the judges like wolves. And when he speaks of judges, he does not spare the common people; but he shows that all orders were then corrupt: for though no justice or equity is regarded by the people, there will yet remain some shame among the judges, so as to retain the people at least within some limits, that an extreme licentiousness may not prevail: but when robbery is practiced in the court of justice, what can be said of such a city? We hence see that the Prophet in these words describes an extreme confusion: The princes of Jerusalem, he says, are lions. And we have elsewhere similar declarations; for the Prophets, when it was their object to condemn all from the least to the greatest, did yet direct their discourse especially to the judges.

And this is worthy of being noticed, for there was then no Church of God, except at Jerusalem. Yet the Prophet says, that the judges, and prophets, and priests, were all apostates. What comfort could the faithful have had? But we hence see that the fear of God had not wholly failed in his elect, and that they firmly and with an invincible heart contended against all offenses and trials of this kind. Let us also learn to fortify ourselves at this day with the same courage, so that we may not faint, however much impiety may everywhere prevail, and all religion may seem extinct among men.

But we may also hence learn, how foolishly the Papists pride themselves in their vain titles, as though they thought that God was bound as it were to them, because they have bishops and pastors. But the Prophet shows, that even those who performed the ordinary office of executing the laws could yet be the wicked and perfidious despisers of God. He also shows, that neither prophets nor priests ought to be spared; for when God sets them over his Church, he gives them no power to tyrannize, so that they might dare to do anything with impunity, and not be reproved. For though the priesthood under the law was sacred, we yet see that it was subject to correction. So let no one at this day claim for himself a privilege, as though he was exempt from all instruction and reproof, while occupying a high station among the people of God.

He distinguishes between princes and judges; and the reason is, because the kingdom was as yet standing. So the courtiers, who were in favor and authority with

the king, drew a part of the spoil to themselves, and the judges devoured another part. Though Scripture often makes no difference between these two names, yet I doubt not but he means by {שרים}, sherim, princes, the chiefs who were courtiers; and he calls them {שפטים}, shepthim, judges, who administered justice. And he says that the judges were evening wolves, that is, hungry, for wolves become furious in the evening when they have been roaming about all day and have found nothing. As their want sharpens the savageness of wolves, so the Prophet says that the judges were hungry like evening wolves, whose hunger renders them furious. And for the same purpose he adds, that they broke not the bones in the morning; that is, they waited not till the dawn to break the bones; [112] for when they devoured the flesh they also employed their teeth in breaking the bones, because their voracity was so great. We now apprehend the Prophet's meaning. It afterwards follows---

Zephaniah 3:4

4. Her prophets are light and treacherous persons: her priests have polluted the sanctuary, they have done violence to the law.

4. Prophetae ejus leves (vel, futiles,) viri transgressionum; sacerdotes ejus polluerunt sanctum (vel, sanctuarium,) sustulerunt legem.

The Prophet again reverts to the pollution and filth of which he has spoken in the first verse. He shows that he had not without reason cried against the polluted city; for though the Jews used their washings, they could not yet make themselves clean in this manner before God, as the whole of religion was corrupted by them.

He says that the Prophets were light. He alone speaks here, and he condemns the many. We hence see that there is no reason why the ungodly should allege their great number, when God by his word accuses them, as the Papists do at this day, who deny it to be right in one or two, or few men, to speak against their impiety, however bad the state of things may be; there must be the consent of the whole world, as though the Prophet was not alone, and had not to contend with a great many. It is indeed true that he taught at the same time with the Prophet Jeremiah, as we have elsewhere seen; but yet hardly two or three did then discharge faithfully their office of teaching; and from this and other places we learn that the false Prophets, relying on their number, were on that account bolder. But Zephaniah did not for this reason cease to cry against them. However much then the false Prophets raged against him, and terrified him by the show of their number, he still exercised his liberty in condemning them. So at this day, though the whole world should unite in promoting impiety, there is yet no reason why the few should be disheartened when observing the worship of God perverted; but they ought on the contrary to encourage themselves by this example, and strenuously to resist thousands of men if necessary; for no union formed by men can possibly lessen the authority of God.

It now follows that they were men of transgressions. What we render light, others

[112] This is the explanation of Grotius, Mede, and Henderson. The latter's version is—"They gnaw no bones in the morning;" i.e., all is devoured in the night. Newcome, adopting the conjecture of Houbigant, supposes the true reading to be [{,[{ימו and gives this rendering---``They wait not until the morning,'' which seems to have no meaning in this connection. What Cocceius proposes is more probable---``Who have not gnawed in the morning;'' and on this account they were exceedingly voracious in the evening. But the idea of our common version is very appropriate; it implies that they were like wild beasts prowling all night, and carrying as it were their prey to their dens, that they might devour it there in the morning. This is the view taken by Henry. ``They devour the flesh,'' says Adam Clarke, ``in the night, and gnaw the bones, and extract the marrow afterwards.''---Ed.

render empty; (vacuous;) but the word {פוחזים}, puchezim, means strictly men of nought, and also the rash, and those who are void of judgment as well as of all moderation. In short, it is the same as though the Prophet had said that they were stupid and blind; and he says afterwards that they were fraudulent, than which there is nothing more inconsistent with the Prophetic office. But Zephaniah shows that the whole order was then so degenerated among the people, that the thickest darkness prevailed among those very leaders whose office it was to bring forth the light of celestial truth. And he makes a concession by calling them Prophets. The same we do at this day when we speak of Popish bishops. It is indeed certain that they are unworthy of so honorable a title; for they are blinder than moles, so that they are far from being overseers. We also know, that they are like brute beasts; for they are immersed in their lusts: in short, they are unworthy to be called men. But we concede to them this title, in order that their turpitude may be more apparent. The Prophet did the same, when he said, that the Jews did not draw nigh to their God; he conceded to them what they boasted; for they ever wished to be regarded as the holy and peculiar people of God: but their ingratitude did hence become more evident, because they went back and turned to another object, when God was ready to embrace them, as though they designedly meant to show that they had nothing to do with him. It is then the same manner of speaking, that Zephaniah adopts here, when he says, that the Prophets were light and men of transgressions. [113]

He then adds, The priests have polluted the holy place. The tribe of Levi, we know, had been chosen by God; and those who descended from him, were to be ministers and teachers to others: and for this reason the Lord in the law ordered the Levites to be dispersed through the whole country. He might indeed have given them as to the rest, a fixed habitation; but his will was, that they should be dispersed among the whole population, that no part of the land should be without good and faithful ministers. The Prophet now charges them, that they had polluted the holy place. By the word {קדש}, kodash the Prophet means whatsoever is holy; at the same time he speaks of the sanctuary. Moreover, since the sanctuary was as it were the dwelling-place of God, when the Prophets speak of divine worship and religion, they include the whole under the word, Temple, as in this place. He says then that the sanctuary was polluted by the priests, and then that they took away or subverted the law. [114]

[113] Her prophets are light, they are treacherous men.—Newcome. Her prophets are vainglorious, hypocritical men.—Henderson. The word rendered "light," as a river, and not "unstable," as in our version. It is applied as a participle in Judges 9:4, to designate persons overflowing in wickedness, dissolute, licentious, dissipated; and as a noun in Jeremiah 23:32, to set forth the licentious conduct of the false prophets, who like the priests under the Papacy, were given to lasciviousness, and "committed adultery with their neighbors' wives," Jeremiah 29:23. See also Jeremiah 23:14. As Zephaniah was contemporary with Jeremiah, his description of the Prophets is thus seen to be the same, "Her Prophets are licentious," or lascivious. Men of dissimulations or deceits, [{בגדות} ,{אנשי}] signify, that under the pretense of telling the truth, they delivered what was false; or in the words of Jeremiah, they ``caused the people to err by their lies,'' while they pretended to deliver true messages from God: so that Jeremiah 23:32, contains an explanation of this clause. ``Deceiving men'' would perhaps be the best rendering. Though they were licentious, yet they deceived men, and made them to believe that they were true Prophets. They were impostors, and notwithstanding their immoral character, they persuaded deluded men that they were true and faithful.---Ed.

[114] The word, [{קדש} ,] as Calvin intimates, does not specifically mean the sanctuary, but holiness, or, as Henderson renders it, ``what is sacred,'' or holy. Both our version and Newcome improperly render it ``the sanctuary.'' The explanation of what is meant may be found in Ezekiel 12:2. The word for sanctuary is [{מקדש}] See Ezekiel 23:38,39 The words, {חמסו} ,[] {תורה} have been taken to mean,---either, ``They violated the law,'' as the words are rendered in Ezekiel 12:26, that is, transgressed it by acting contrary to it; or, ``They perverted the law,'' forcing it, as it were, out of its plain meaning by subtle glosses. The

We here see how boldly the Prophet charges the priests. There is then no reason why they who are divinely appointed over the Church should claim for themselves the liberty of doing what they please; for the priests might have boasted of this privilege, that without dispute everything was lawful for them. But we see that God not only calls them to order by his Prophets, but even blames them more than others, because they were less excusable. Now the Papists boast, that the clergy, even the very dregs collected from the filthiest filth, cannot err; which is extremely absurd; for they are not better than the successors of Aaron. But we see what the Prophet objects now to them,---that they subverted the law: he not only condemns their life, but says also, that they were perfidious towards God; for they strangely corrupted the whole truth of religion. The Papists confess, that they indeed can sin, but that the sin dwells only in their moral conduct. They yet seek to exempt themselves from all the danger of going astray. Though the Levitical priests were indeed chosen by the very voice of God, we yet see that they were apostates. But God confirms the godly, that they might not abandon themselves to impiety, though they saw their very leaders going astray, and rushing headlong into ruin. For it behaved the faithful to fortify themselves with constancy, when the priests not only by their bad conduct withdrew the people from every fear of God, but also perverted every sound doctrine; it behaved, I say, the faithful to remain then invincible. Though then at this day those who hold the highest dignity in the Church neglect God and even despise every celestial truth, and thus rush headlong into ruin, and though they attempt to turn God's truth into falsehood, yet let our faith continue firm; for John has not without reason declared, that it ought to be victorious against the whole world. 1 John 5:4. It follows---

Zephaniah 3:5

5. The just Lord is in the midst thereof; he will not do iniquity: every morning doth he bring his judgment to light, he faileth not; but the unjust knoweth no shame.

5. Iehova justus in medio ejus, non faciet iniquitatem: mane, mane judicium suum proferet in lucem, non deficiet: neque tamen congnoscet iniquus pudorem.

Here the Prophet throws back against hypocrites what they were wont to pretend, when they sought wickedly to reject every instruction and all warnings; for they said, that God dwelt in the midst of them, like the Papists at the present day, who raise up this as their shield against us,---that the Church is the pillar of the truth. Hence they think that all their wicked deeds are defended by this covering. So the Jews at that time had this boast ever on their lips,---We are notwithstanding the holy people of God, and he dwells in the midst of us, for he is worshipped in the Temple, which has been built, not according to men's will, but by his command; for that voice proceeded not from earth, but came from heaven, `This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell.' Psalm 132:14. Since then the Jews were inflated with this presumption, the Prophet concedes what they claimed, that God dwelt among them; but it was for a

Septuagint render the verb {ηθετησαν}---set aside or abolished, in Ezekiel, and here {ἀσεβουσι}---act impiously. ``Trangressed,'' says Grotius; ``Do violence to,'' say Piscator and Drusius, that is, by wresting its words. It occurs much oftener as a noun than as a verb, and it commonly means a wrong or injustice done in an outrageous and violent manner. According to this general idea, we may render the phrase here, ``they have outraged the law,'' either by their conduct, or by their comments. It was in either case a wrong done to the law, that was enormous, passing all reason and decency. So that to transgress or to violate, or to do violence to, or to pervert the law, does not convey the full meaning.---Ed.

far different purpose, which was, that they might understand, that his hand was nigh to punish their sins. This is one thing.

Jehovah is in the midst of them; Granted, he says; I allow that he dwells in this city; for he has commanded a temple to be built for him on Mount Sion, he has ordered a holy altar for himself; but why does God dwell among you, and has preferred this habitation to all others? Surely, he says, he will not do iniquity. Consider now what the nature of God is; for when he purposed to dwell among you, he certainly did not deny himself, nor did he cease to be what he is. There is therefore no reason for you to imagine, as though God intended, for the sake of those to whom he bound himself, to throw aside his own justice, or intended to pollute himself by the defilements of men. He warns the Jews, that they absurdly blended these things together. God then who dwells in the midst of you, will not do iniquity; that is, He will not approve of your evil deeds; and though he may for a time connive at them, he will not yet bear with them continually. Do not therefore foolishly flatter yourselves, as though God were the approver of your wickedness.

Some apply this to the people,---that they ought not to have done iniquity; but this is a strained exposition, and altogether foreign to the context. Most other interpreters give this meaning, that God is just and will do no iniquity, for he had sufficient reasons for executing his vengeance on a people so wicked. They hence think, that the Prophet anticipates the Jews, lest they murmured, as though the Lord was cruel or too rigid. He will not do iniquity, that is, Though the Lord may inflict on you a most grievous punishment, yet he cannot be arraigned by you as unjust; and ye in vain contend with him, for he will ever be found to be a righteous judge. But this also is a very frigid explanation. Let us bear in mind what I have already said,---that the Prophet here, by way of irony, concedes to the Jews, that God dwelt among them, but afterwards brings against them what they thought was a protection to them,---God dwells in the midst of you; I allow it, he says; but is not he a just God? Do not then dream that he is one like yourselves, that he approves of your evil deeds. God will not do iniquity; ye cannot prevail with him to renounce himself, or to change his own nature. Why then does God dwell in the midst of you? In the morning, in the morning, he says, his judgment will he bring forth to light; the Lord will daily bring forth his judgment. How this is to be understood, we shall explain tomorrow.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that inasmuch as thou hast deigned to favor us with an honor so invaluable, as to adopt us for a holy people to thee, and to separate us from the world,---O grant, that we may not close our eyes against the light of thy truth, by which thou showest to us the way of salvation; but may we with true docility follow where thou callest us, and never cast away the fear of thy majesty, nor mock thee with frivolous ceremonies, but strive sincerely to devote ourselves wholly to thee, and to cleanse ourselves from all defilements, not only of the flesh, but also of the spirit, that by thus seeking true holiness, we may aspire after and diligently labor for that heavenly perfection, from which we are as yet far distant; and may we in the meantime, relying on the favor of thy only-begotten Son, lean on thy mercy; and while depending on it, may we ever grow up more and more into that true and

perfect union, reserved for us in heaven, when we shall be made partakers of thy glory, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Twenty-fifth

We began yesterday to explain the passage, where the Prophet says, that God dwelt at Jerusalem, but that he was notwithstanding just, and could not possibly associate with the ungodly and the wicked, because he changes not his nature to suit the humor of men.

It now follows, In the morning, in the morning, his judgment will he bring forth to light: by which words he means, either that God would be the avenger of wickedness, which seems to escape, as it were, his eyes, while he delays his punishment, or that he is ready to restore his people, whenever they are attentive to instruction. If the former view be approved, the sense will be this,---that hypocrites foolishly flatter themselves, when God spares them; for he will suddenly ascend his tribunal that he may visit them with punishment. Some however choose to apply this to the judgments executed on the Gentiles, of which the Jews had not once nor twice been reminded, but often, that they might in time repent. But there is no doubt but that the Prophet refers here to a judgment belonging to the Jews.

Let us now see whether this judgment is pronounced or inflicted. It would not ill suit the passage to understand it of the vengeance which God was hastening to execute, for the Jews were worthy of what had been severely threatened, because they falsely professed his name; and while they absurdly boasted that he dwelt among them, they withdrew themselves very far from him. It is however no less suitable to refer this to teaching, so that the Prophet thus enhanced the sin of the people, because they had hardened themselves after so many and so constant warnings, which continually sounded in their ears, as God elsewhere complains, that though he rose early, and indeed daily, this solicitude had been without its fruit. The verb in the future tense will thus signify a continued act, for God ceased not to exhort to repentance those wretched beings who had ears which were deaf. And this view strikingly corresponds with what immediately follows, that he fails not; for such a perseverance was a proof of unwearied mercy, when God continued to send Prophets one after the other.

He now adds, The wicked knows no shame. He means what he has just referred to---that the people had become so hardened in their wickedness that they could not be reformed, either by instruction or by threats, or by the scourges of God.

If we refer judgment to teaching, which I approve, the meaning will be---that though God, by making known daily his law, kindled as it were a lamp, which discovered all evils, yet the ungodly were not ashamed. But if we understand it, as they say, of actual judgment, the meaning will be in substance the same---that the ungodly repented not, though the hand of God openly appeared; and though he rose to judgment, yet he says, they knew not what it was to feel ashamed. As to the main subject there is no ambiguity; for the Prophet means only that the people were past recovery; for though God proved himself a judge by manifest evidences, and even by his own law, they yet felt no shame, but went on in their wicked courses. The word judgment, in the singular number, seems to have been put here in the sense

of a rule, by which men live religiously and justly, and a rule which ought to make men ashamed. [115] It now follows---

Zephaniah 3:6, 7

6. I have cut off the nations: their towers are desolate; I made their streets waste, that none passeth by: their cities are destroyed, so that there is no man, that there is none inhabitant.

6. Excidi gentes; vastate sunt arces earum; perdidi vicos earum, ut nemo transeat; vastatae sunt urbes earum, ut non sit vir, no sit qui habitet.

7. I said, Surely thou wilt fear me, thou wilt receive instruction; so their dwelling should not be cut off, howsoever I punished them: but they rose early, and corrupted all their doings.

7. Dixi, certe timebis me, suscipies disciplinam; et non excidetur habitatio ejus, quicquid visitavi super eam: certe properarunt, corruperunt omnia studia sua.

Here the Prophet shows in another way that there was no hope for a people, who could not have been instructed by the calamities of others, to seek to return to God's favor. For God here complains that he had in vain punished neighboring nations, and made them examples, in order to recall the Jews to himself. Had they been of a sane mind they might have been led, by their quiet state, while God spared them, to consider what they had deserved---If this is done in the green tree, what at length will be done in the dry? They might then have thought within themselves, that a most grievous calamity was at hand, except they anticipated God's wrath, which had grown ripe against them; and God also testified that he intended by such examples to stay the judgment which he might have already justly executed on them. As they then even hastened it, it is evident that their wickedness was past remedy. This is the sum of the whole.

He says first, I have cut off nations; by which words he shows that he warned the Jews to repent, not only by one example, but by many examples; for not one instance only of God's wrath had appeared, but God had on all sides manifested himself to be a judge, in inflicting punishment on one nation after another. Since then they had been so often warned, we may hence learn that they were wholly blinded by their wickedness.

He now enhances the atrocity of the punishment inflicted, and says, that citadels had been demolished and streets cut off, that no one passed through; and then, that cities had been reduced to solitude, so that there was no inhabitant. For when punishment is of an ordinary kind, it is wont, for the most part, to be disregarded; but when God showed, by so remarkable proofs, that he was displeased with the nations, that is, with the ignorant, who in comparison with the Jews were innocent, how could such an instance as this be disregarded by the Jews, whom God thus recalled to

[115] The verbs here are in the future tense, but evidently express, as Calvin observes, a continued act. The same is exactly the case in Welsh; the verbs are in the future tense, but are understood as expressing a present act or a continued act, or what is continually or habitually done. In English the present must be adopted— The righteous Jehovah is in the midst of her, He doeth no injustice: Every morning his judgment He bringeth to light — it fails not; Yet the unjust knoweth no shame. “Injustice” in the second, and “unjust” in the fifth line, come from the same root. “Judgment” here is what God judges and determines to be right and just; and it is set forth here as the sun rising every day from morning to morning, and as never failing to appear.—Ed.

himself, except that they were of a disposition wholly desperate and irreclaimable? We now then see why the Prophet enlarges on the punishments which, having been inflicted on the nations, ought to have been considered by the Jews. [116]

He now subjoins the object which God had in view, I said, Surely thou wilt fear me. Here God assumes the character of man, as he does often elsewhere: for he does not wait for what is future, as though he was doubtful; but all things, as we know, are before his eyes. Hence God was not deceived, as though something had happened beyond his expectation; but as I have already said, he undertakes here the character of man; for he could not otherwise have sufficiently expressed how inexcusable the Jews were who had despised all his warnings. For what was God's design when he punished the heathens, one nation after another, except that the Jews might be awakened by the evils of others, and not provoke his wrath against themselves? Paul makes use of the same argument.

`On account of these things,' he says,
`the wrath of God comes upon all the unbelieving.'
Romans 1:17 [Ephesians 5:6, Colossians 3:6].

Inasmuch as men for the most part deceive themselves by self-flatteries and cherish with extreme indulgence their own wickedness, Paul says, that the wrath of God comes on the unbelieving: and it is a singular proof of God's love, that he does not immediately assail us, but sets before us the examples of others. As when any one lays hold of his servant in the presence of his son, and punishes him severely, the son must be moved by the sight, except he be wholly an abandoned character: however, in such a case the father's love manifests itself; for he withholds his hand from his son and inflicts punishment on the servant, and this for the benefit of his son, that he may learn wisdom by what another suffers. God declares in this place that he had done the same; but he complains that it had been without benefit, for the Jews had frustrated his purpose.

It may be here asked, whether men so frustrate God that he looks for something different from what happens. I have already said, that God speaks after the manner of men, and in a language not strictly correct: and hence we ought not here to enter or penetrate into the secret purpose of God, but to be satisfied with this reason,---that if we profit nothing when God warns us either by his word or by his scourges, we are then equally guilty, as though he was deceived by us: and hence also the madness of those is reproved, who are unwilling to ascribe anything to God but what is conveyed in these common forms of speech: God says, that he wills the salvation of all, 1 Timothy 2:4;) hence there is no election, which makes a distinction between one man and another; but the Lord leaves the whole human race to their free-will, so that every one may provide for himself as he pleases; otherwise the will of God must be twofold. So unlearned men vainly talk; and such not only show their ignorance in religion, but are also wholly destitute of common sense. For what is more absurd

[116] This verse, literally rendered, is as follows,— I have cut off nations; Desolate are become their towers; I have made solitary their streets, without a passenger; Deserted are become their cities, Without a man, without an inhabitant. It is not the destruction. The nations being cut off, then the towers became desolate, the streets empty, and the cities forsaken. The last line but one is literally—"Hunted have been their cities," so that no man was left behind.—Ed.

than to conclude, that there is a twofold will in God, because he speaks otherwise with us than is consistent with his incomprehensible majesty? God's will then is one and simple, but manifold as to the perceptions of men; for we cannot comprehend his hidden purpose, which angels adore with reverence and humility. Hence the Lord accommodates himself to the measure of our capacities, as this passage teaches us with sufficient clearness. For if we receive what the fanatics imagine, then God is like man, who hopes well, and finds afterwards that he has been deceived: but what can be more alien to his glory? We hence see how these insane men not only obscure the glory of God, but also labor, as far as they can, to reduce his whole essence to nothing. But this mode of speaking ought to be sufficiently familiar to us,---that God justly complains that he has been deceived by us, when we do not repent, inasmuch as he invites us to himself, and even stimulates us, I said, Surely thou wilt fear me

This word said, ought not then to be referred to the hidden counsel of God, but to the subject itself, and that is, that it was time to repent. Who would not have hoped but that you would have returned to the right way? When the next house was on fire, how was it possible for you to sleep, except ye were extremely stupid? And when so many examples were presented before your eyes without any advantage, it is evident that there is no more any hope of repentance. Thou, then, wilt fear me; that is, God might have hoped for some amendment, though he had not yet touched you even with his smallest finger; for ye beheld, while in a tranquil state, how severely he punished the contempt of his justice as to the heathens. He uses a similar language in Isaiah 5:4,

`My vine, what have I done to thee? or what could I have done to thee more than what I have done? I expected thee to bring forth fruit; but, behold, thou hast brought forth wild grapes.'

God in that passage expostulates with the Jews as though they had by their perfidiousness deceived him. But we know, that whatever happens was known to him before the creation of the world: but, as I have already said, the fact itself is to be regarded by us, and not the hidden judgment of God.

He afterwards adds, Thou wilt receive correction; that is, thou wilt be hereafter more tractable: for monstrous is our stupidity, when we fear not God's vengeance; when yet it evidently appears that we are warned, as I have already said, to repent, by all the examples of judgments which are daily presented to us. But if we proceed in our wickedness, what else is it but to kick against the goad, as the old proverb is? In short, we here see described an extreme wickedness and obstinacy, which admitted of no remedy.

Hence the Prophet adds again, And cut off should not be her habitation, howsoever I might have visited her; that is, though the Jews had already provoked me, so that the punishment they have deserved was nigh; yet I was ready to withdraw my hand and to forgive them, if they repented: not that God ever turns aside from his purpose, for there is no shadow of turning in him; but he sets before them the fact as it was; for the subject here, as I have said, is not respecting the secret purpose of God, but we ought to confine ourselves to the means which he employs in promoting our salvation. God had already threatened the Jews for many years; he had as yet

deferred to execute what he had threatened. In the meantime his wrath had been manifested through the whole neighborhood; the heathen nations had suffered the severest judgments. God here declares, that he had been so lenient to his people as to give time to repent; and he complains that he had delayed in vain, for they had gone on in their wickedness, and had mocked, as it were, his patience. When, therefore, he says, Cut off should not be her habitation, howsoever I might have visited her, or have visited her, he pursues still the same mode of speaking, that is, that he was prepared to forgive the Jews, though he had before destined them to destruction; not that he, as to himself, would retract that sentence; but that he was still reconcilable, if the Jews had been touched by any feeling of repentance. [117]

He at last adds, Surely, (some render it, but,) surely they have hastened. The verb {שכם}, shecam, means properly to rise early, but is to be taken metaphorically in the sense of hastening; as though he had said, They run headlong to corrupt their ways. God had said that he had been indulgent to them for this end---that he might lead them by degrees to repentance: now he complains, that they on the contrary had run another way, when they saw that he suspended his judgments, as though it was their designed object to accelerate his wrath. Thus they hastened to corrupt their ways. The meaning, then, is that this people were not only irreclaimable in their obstinacy, but that they were also sottish and presumptuous, as though they wished to hasten the judgment, which the Lord was ready for a time to defer. It now follows---

Zephaniah 3:8

8. Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the Lord, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy.

8. Propterea expectate me, dicit Jehova, usque ad diem quo surgam ad praedam; quia judicium meum (hoc est, decretum est mihi,) ut colligam gentes, ut congregem regna; ut effundam super ipsa (regna, vel, super ipsas gentes) indignationem meam, totum furorem irae meae; quia igne zeli (vel, indignationis meae) vorabitur tota terra.

God here declares that the last end was near, since he had found by experience that he effected nothing by long forbearance, and since he had even found the Jews becoming worse, because he had so mercifully treated them. Some think that the address is made to the faithful, that they might prepare themselves to bear the cross; but this view is foreign to the subject of the Prophet: and though this view has gained

[117] The last clause has been variously rendered. There is no assistance from the Septuagint, as the whole text is very different. Marckius, after Drusius, connects it, not with the preceding, but with the following line, in this sense, that how much soever God had punished the city, yet its inhabitants were the more best to corrupt their ways. But the words can hardly admit of this meaning. Henderson supposes [{[{כ to be understood before ,{כל}] and gives this rendering of the two lines--- That her habitation might not be cut off, According to all that I had appointed concerning her. Newcome differs as to the last line--- After all the punishment with which I had visited her. None of these are satisfactory. Grotius, taking the sense of the Targum, means to have given the best meaning. He says that ,{פקד}] followed by ,{על}] means sometimes to appoint or constitute, and refers to 2 Chronicles 36:23, ``All the good which I have appointed to her,'' or promised; but he unnecessarily supposes ``shall come'' to be understood; for the word, ``all which,'' may be considered to be in apposition with ``habitation.'' I give the following version of this whole verse--- I said, ``Surely thou wilt fear me, Thou wilt receive instruction;'' Then cut off should not be her habitation --- All that I have committed to her: Yet they rose up early, they corrupted all their doings. To rise up early is a Hebrew phrase, which means a resolved and diligent attention to a thing. The import of the line is, that they with full-bent purpose and activity corrupted all their doings.---Ed.

the consent of almost all, I yet doubt not but that the Prophet, as I have now stated, breaks out into a complaint, and says, that God would not now deal in words with a people so irreclaimable.

Look for me, he says; that is, I am now present fully prepared: I have hitherto endeavored to turn you, but your hearts have become hardened in depravity. But inasmuch as I have lost all my labor in teaching, warning, and exhorting you, even when I presented to you examples on every side among heathen nations, which ought to have stimulated you to repentance, and inasmuch as I have effected nothing, it is now all over with you---Look for me: I shall no more contend with you, nor is there any ground for you to hope that I shall any more send Prophets to you.

Look then for me, until I shall rise ---for what purpose? to the prey. Some render the word {לעד}, laod, forever; but the Prophet means, that God was so offended with the contumacy of the people, that he would now plunder, spoil and devour, and forget his kindness, which had been hitherto a sport to them---I shall come as a wild beast; as lions rage, lacerate, tear, and devour, so also will I now do with you; for I have hitherto too kindly and paternally spared you. We hence see that these things are not to be referred to the hope and patience of the godly; but that God on the contrary does here denounce final destruction on the wicked, as though he had said---I bid you adieu; begone, and mind your own concerns; for I will no longer contend with you; but I shall shortly come, and ye shall find me very different from what I have been to you hitherto. We now see that God, as it were, repudiates the Jews, and threatens that he would come to them with a drawn sword; and at the same time he compares himself to a savage and cruel wild beast.

He afterwards adds---For my judgment is; that is, I have decreed to gather all nations. We have elsewhere spoken of this verb {אסף}, asaph; it is the same in Hebrew as the French trousser. It is then my purpose to gather, that is, to heap together into one mass all nations, to assemble the kingdoms, so that no corner of the earth may escape my hand. But he speaks of all nations and kingdoms, that the Jews might understand that his judgment could no longer be deferred; for if a comparison be made between them and the heathen nations, judgment, as it is written, is wont to begin with the house of God, 1 Peter 4:17; and further, they were less excusable than the unbelieving, who went astray, which is nothing strange, in darkness, for they were without the light of truth. God then threatens nations and kingdoms, that the Jews might know that a most dreadful punishment was impending over their heads, for they had surpassed all others in wickedness and evil deeds. [118]

[118] This verse is considered by Newcome and Henderson to be addressed to the godly, to encourage them at the approaching calamities, while Piscator, Grotius, Marckius, and Dathius, agree with Calvin that it is an awful warning to the wicked Jews, spoken of in the preceding verse. Differing somewhat from Calvin, they regard the "nations" and "kingdoms" to be the Babylonians, who were composed of various nations and kingdoms, and "upon them" to be the Jews, and "the whole land" to be that of Judea. This view, no doubt, is the most consistent with the context. The objection made by Henderson, that the words expect, or wait for me, are ever used in a good sense, seems to have no force, for these words by themselves can mean neither what is good nor what is bad, the whole depends on the context. The verb [{חכה simply means to tarry, to wait---{μενειν}. The word ``therefore'' seems to connect this with the preceding verse, and there is nothing in the foregoing part of the chapter that alludes to the godly. Besides, the words which follow ``wait for me'' explain them, as will be seen by the following literal rendering of the whole verse--- 8. Therefore wait for me, saith Jehovah, For the day of my rising to the prey! For my purpose is to gather nations, To assemble kingdoms, In order to pour on them my indignation, All the heat of my anger; For by the fire of my jealousy Shall be consumed the whole land. The ``fire of God's jealousy'' sufficiently proves that

He afterwards adds---

Zephaniah 3:9

9. For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent.

9. Certe tunc convertam ad populos labium purum, ut invocent omnes nomen Jehovae, ut serviant ei humero uno.

The Prophet now mitigates the asperity of his doctrine, which might have greatly terrified the godly; nay, it might have wholly disheartened them, had no consolation been applied. God then moderates here what he had previously threatened; for if the Prophet had only said this---My purpose is to gather all the nations, and thus the whole earth shall be devoured by the fire of indignation, what could the faithful have concluded but that they were to perish with the rest of the world? It was therefore necessary to add something to inspire hope, such as we find here.

We must at the same time bear in mind what I have reminded you of elsewhere---that the Prophet directs his discourse one while to the faithful only, who were then few in number, and that at another time he addresses the multitude indiscriminately; and so when our Prophet threatens, he regards the whole body of the people; but when he proclaims the favor of God, it is the same as though he turned his eyes towards the faithful only, and gathered them into a place by themselves. As for instance, when a few among a people are really wise, and the whole multitude unite in hastening their own ruin, he who has an address to make will make a distinction between the vast multitude and the few; he will severely reprove those who are thus foolish, and live for their own misery; and he will afterwards shape his discourse so as to suit those with whom he has not so much fault to find. Thus also the Lord changes his discourse; for at one time he addresses the ungodly, and at another he turns to the elect, who were but a remnant. So the Prophet has hitherto spoken by reproofs and threatening, for he addressed the whole body of the people; but now he collects, as I have said, the remnant as it were by themselves, and sets before them the hope of pardon and of salvation.

Hence he says, But then [119] (for I take {כי}, ki, as an adversative) will I turn to the people a pure lip. God intimates that he would propagate his grace wider, after having cleansed the earth; for he will be worshipped not only in Judea, but by foreign nations, and even by the remotest. For it might have been objected, Will God then extinguish his name in the world? For what will be the state of things when Judea is

what is meant is the land of Judea. (See chapter 1:18.)---Ed.

[119] [{כי ,[{אז} ``For then,'' Henderson; ``Surely then,'' Newcome; ``Postea vero---but afterwards,'' Dathius and Grotius. And Newcome says, that [{אז}] is used here largely, for ``afterwards.'' It refers to the time after the execution of the judgments previously mentioned. ``The pure lip'' is evidently not the language which God would adopt in addressing the nations, but the language they would adopt in addressing him. What is meant is a pure heart; what gives utterance to the heart is mentioned for the heart itself; as the ``shoulder'' is afterwards used for the service that is rendered to God. The verb ,[{הפך}] to turn, means to change the form, condition, or course of a thing, conveying perhaps here the idea, that the pure lip is substituted for that which is impure: ``I will give them as a change, instead of what they have, a pure lip.'' {Μεταστρεψω}---``I will change,'' Sept. and Sym.; {στρεψω}---``I will turn,'' Aq. and Theod. It is rendered ``reddam`` and ``restituam`` by Drusius and Grotius Newcome, following the conjecture of Houbigant, reads ,[{אשפך}] ``I will pour out,'' contrary to all the ancient versions, and without the countenance of a single MS. Though the word, ,[{עמים}] peoples, most frequently means the nations, yet there are instances in which it means the people of Israel, inasmuch as they were composed of various tribes. See 1 Kings 22:28; Joel 2:6. And if we render the verb, ``restore,'' with Drusius and Grotius, then we must adopt this meaning. Eleven MSS. have ``and,'' ,[{ו}] before the verb to ``serve:'' and as there is no preposition before ``shoulder,'' we may render the verse--- But I will then restore to the people a pure lip, That they may, all of them, call on the name of Jehovah, --- And one shoulder, that they may serve him. ---Ed.

overthrown and other nations destroyed, except that God's name will be exposed to reproach! It will nowhere be invoked, and all will outvie one another in blasphemies against him. The Prophet meets this objection, and says, that God has in his own hand the means by which he will vindicate his own glory; for he will not only defend his Church in Judea, but will also gather into it nations far and wide, so that his name shall be everywhere celebrated.

But he speaks first of a pure lip, I will turn, he says, to the nations a pure lip. By this word he means, that the invocation of God's name is his peculiar work; for men do not pray through the suggestion of the flesh, but when God draws them. It is indeed true, that God has ever been invoked by all nations; but it was not the right way of praying, when they heedlessly cast their petitions into the air: and we also know, that the true God was not invoked by the nations; for there was no nation then in the world which had not formed for itself some idol. As then the earth was full of innumerable idols, God was not invoked except in Judea only. Besides, though the unbelieving had an intention to pray to God, yet they could not have prayed rightly, for prayer flows from faith. God then does not without reason promise, that he would turn pure lips to the nations; that is, that he would cause the nations to call on his name with pure lips. We hence then learn what I have stated---that God cannot be rightly invoked by us, until he draws us to himself; for we have profane and impure lips. In short, the beginning of prayer is from that hidden cleansing of the Spirit of which the Prophet now speaks.

But if it be God's singular gift, to turn a pure lip to the nations, it follows that faith is conferred on us by him, for both are connected together. As God then purifies the hearts of men by faith, so also he purifies their lips that his name may be rightly invoked, which would otherwise be profaned by the unbelieving. Whenever they pretend to call on God's name, it is certain that it is not done without profanation.

As to the word all, it is to be referred to nations, not to each individual; for it has not been that every one has called on God; but there have been some of all nations, as Paul also says in the first chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians 1 Corinthians 1:1: for in addressing the faithful, he adds, `With all who call on the name of the Lord in every place'---that is, not only in Judea; and elsewhere he says,

`I would that men would stretch forth hands to heaven in every place.'
(1 Timothy 2:8.)

He afterwards adds, That they may serve him with one shoulder; that is, that they may unitedly submit to God in order to do him service; for to serve him with the shoulder is to unite together, so as to help one another. The metaphor seems to have been derived from those who carry a burden; for except each assists, one will be overpowered, and then the burden will fall to the ground. We are said then to serve God with one shoulder when we strive by mutual consent to assist one another. And this ought to be carefully noticed, that we may know that our striving cannot be approved by God, except we have thus the same end in view, and seek also to add courage to others, and mutually to help one another. Unless then the faithful thus render mutual assistance, the Lord cannot approve of their service. [120]

[120] The expression “with one shoulder” is rendered by the Septuagint, “under one yoke”—{ὑπὸ}

We now see how foolishly they talk who so much extol free-will and whatever is connected with it: for the Lord demands faith as well as other duties of religion; and he requires also from all, love and the keeping of the whole law. But he testifies here that his name cannot be invoked, as the lips of all are polluted, until he has consecrated them, cleansing by his Spirit what was before polluted: and he shows also that men will not undertake the yoke, unless he joins them together, so as to render them willing. I must not proceed farther.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that since it is the principal part of our happiness, that in our pilgrimage through this world there is open to us a familiar access to thee by faith,---O grant, that we may be able to come with a pure heart to thy presence: and when our lips are polluted, O purify us by thy Spirit, so that we may not only pray to thee with the mouth, but also prove that we do this sincerely, without any dissimulation, and that we earnestly seek to spend our whole life in glorifying thy name, until being at length gathered into thy celestial kingdom, we may be truly and really united to thee, and be made partakers of that glory, which has been procured for us by the blood of thy only-begotten Son. Amen.

Lecture One hundred and Twenty-sixth

Zephaniah 3:10

10. From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia my suppliants, even the daughter of my dispersed, shall bring mine offering.

10. Trans fluvios Ethiopiae supplicantes mihi (vel, supplices mei;) filia dispersorum meorum offerent munus meum (hoc est, mihi; nam [{י}] affixum accipitur loco pronominis (.[{ילא}]

Interpreters agree not as to the meaning of this verse; for some of the Hebrews connect this with the former, as though the Prophet was still speaking of the calling of the Gentiles. But others, with whom I agree, apply this to the dispersed Jews, so that the Prophet here gives hope of that restoration, of which he had before spoken. They who understand this of the Gentiles, think that Atharai and Phorisai are proper names. But in the first place, we cannot find that any nations were so called; and then, if we receive what they say, these were not separate nations, but portions of the Ethiopians; for the Prophet does not state the fact by itself, that Atharai and Phorisai would be the worshipers of God; but after having spoken of Ethiopia, he adds these words: hence we conclude, that the Prophet means this,---that they would return into Judea from the farthest region of the Ethiopians to offer sacrifices to God. And as he mentions the daughter of the dispersion, we must understand this of the Jews, for it cannot be applied to the Ethiopians. And this promise fits in well with the former verse: for the Prophet spoke, according to what we observed yesterday, of the future calling of the Gentiles; and now he adds, the Jews would come with the Gentiles, that they might unite together, agreeing in the same faith, in the true and pure worship of the only true God. He had said, that the kingdom would be enlarged, for the Church was to be gathered from all nations: he now adds, that the elect people would be restored, after having been driven away into exile.

{ζυγὸν} {ἕνα}. The idea is that of oxen drawing together. To serve God under one yoke, is to do the same service unitedly. ``A metaphor,'' says Newcome, ``from the joint efforts of yoked beasts.''---Ed.

Hence he says, Beyond the rivers of Ethiopia shall be my suppliants: for {עתר}, otar, means to supplicate; but it means also sometimes to be pacified, or to be propitious; and therefore some take {עתרים}, otarim, in a passive sense, they who shall be reconciled to God; as though he had said, God will at length be propitious to the miserable exiles, though they have been cast away beyond the rivers of Ethiopia: they shall yet again be God's people, for he will be reconciled to them. As David calls Him the God of his mercy, because he had found him merciful and gracious, (Psalm 59:17,) so also in this place they think that the Jews are said to be the {עתרי}, the reconciled of Jehovah, because he would be reconciled to them. But this exposition is too forced: I therefore retain that which I have stated,---that some suppliants would come to God from the utmost parts of Ethiopia, not the Ethiopians themselves, but the Jews who had been driven there.

To the same purpose is what is added, The daughter of my dispersed; for {פוץ}, puts, means to scatter or to disperse. [121] Hence by the daughter of the dispersed he means the gathered assembly of the miserable exiles, who for a time were considered as having lost their name, so as not to be counted as the people of Israel. These then shall again offer to me a gift, that is, they are to be restored to their country, that they may there worship me after their usual manner. Now though this prophecy extends to the time of the Gospel, it is yet no wonder, that the Prophet describes the worship of God such as it had been, accompanied with the ceremonies of the Law. We now then perceive what Zephaniah means in this verse,---that not only the Gentiles would come into the Church of God, but that the Jews also would return to their country, that they might together make one body. It follows,---

Zephaniah 3:11

11. In that day shalt thou not be ashamed for all thy doings, wherein thou hast transgressed against me: for then I will take away out of the midst of thee them that rejoice in thy pride, and thou shalt no more be haughty because of my holy mountain.

11. In die illo non erubesces ob omnia facta tua, quibus praevaricata es contra me; quia tunc auferam e medio tui qui exultant superbia tua; et non adijicies ad superbiendum posthac (hoc est, non adjicies superbire) in monte sanctitatis meae.

Here the Prophet teaches us, that the Church would be different, when God removed the dross and gathered to himself a pure and chosen people: and the Prophet stated this, that the faithful might not think it hard that God so diminished his Church that hardly the tenth part remained; for it was a sad and a bitter thing, that of a vast multitude a very few only remained. It could not then be, but that the ruin of their brethren greatly affected the Jews, though they knew them to be reprobate. We indeed see how Paul felt a sympathy, when he saw that his own nation were alienated from God. Romans 9:6-8. So it was necessary that some consolation should be given to the faithful, that they might patiently bear the diminution of the Church, which had been previously predicted. Hence the Prophet, that he might moderate their grief,

[121] It is more consonant with the style of the Prophets to render the clauses apart, as Calvin does, than as it is done in our version, and by Newcome and Henderson. The auxiliary verb, as is often the case, is to be understood in the first clause,— From beyond the rivers of Cush shall be my suppliants; The daughter of my dispersed shall bring my offering.

says, that this would be for their good; for in this manner the reproaches were to be removed, by which the Jewish name had been polluted, and rendered abominable.

Thou shalt not be ashamed, he says, for the sins by which I have been offended. Why? For thou shalt be cleansed; for it is God's purpose to reserve a few, by whom he will be purely worshipped. Some think that he does not speak here of the remission of sins, but on the contrary, of a pure and holy life, which follows regeneration; as though he had said, ``There will be no reason any more for thee to be ashamed of thy life; for when I shall chasten you, ye will then fear me, and your correction will be conducive to a newness of life: since then your life will not be the same as formerly, and since my glory shall shine forth among you, there will be no cause why ye should be ashamed.'' But this is a strained view, and cannot be accommodated to the words of the Prophet; for he says, Thou shalt no more be ashamed of the sins by which thou hast transgressed against me. We hence see that this cannot be otherwise applied than to the remission of sins. But the last clause has led interpreters astray, for the Prophet adds, For I will take away from the midst of thee those who exult: but the Prophet's design, as I have stated, was different from what they have supposed; for he shows that there was no reason for the Jews to lament and deplore the diminution of the Church because the best compensation was offered to them, which was, that by this small number God would be purely served. For when the body of the people was complete, it was, we know, a mass of iniquity. How then could Israel glory in its vast number, since they were all like the giants carrying on war against God? When now God collects a few only, these few would at length acknowledge that they had been preserved in a wonderful manner, in order that religion and the true worship of God should not be extinguished in the earth.

We now perceive the Prophet's design; but I will endeavor to render this clearer by a comparison: Suppose that in a city licentiousness of life so prevails that the people may seem to be irreclaimable; when it happens that the city itself falls away from its power and pristine state, or is in some other way reformed, not without loss, and is thus led to improve its morals, this would be a compensation to the good, and would give courage to the godly and ease their grief, so that they would patiently submit, though the city had not the same abundance, nor the same wealth and enjoyments. How so? because they who remained would form a body of people free from reproach and disgrace. When disease is removed from the human body, the body itself is necessarily weakened; and it is sometimes necessary to amputate a member, that the whole body may be preserved. In this case there is a grievous diminution, but as there is no other way of preserving the body, the remedy ought to be patiently sustained. In a similar manner does the Prophet now speak of the city Jerusalem: Thou shalt not be ashamed of the sins by which thou hast transgressed against me. How so? Because they were to be separated from the profane and gross despisers of God; for as long as the good and the evil were mixed together, it was a reproach common to all. Jerusalem was then a den of robbers; it was, as it were, a hell on earth; and all were alike exposed to the same infamy, for the pure part could not be distinguished, as a mass of evil prevailed everywhere. The Prophet now says, Thou shalt not be ashamed of thy former infamy. Why? ``Because God will separate

the chaff from the wheat, and will gather the wheat; ye shall be, as it were, in the storehouse of God; the chosen seed shall alone remain; there will be such purity, that the glory of the Lord shall shine forth among you: ye shall not therefore be ashamed of the disgraceful deeds by which ye are now contaminated.''

We now apprehend the meaning of the words. But it may seem strange that the Prophet should say, that sins should be covered by oblivion, which the Jews ought indeed to have thought of often and almost at all times, according to what Ezekiel says,

`Thou wilt then remember thy ways, and be ashamed,'
(Ezekiel 16:61)

that is, when God shall be pacified. Ezekiel says, that the fruit of repentance would be, that the faithful, covered with shame, would condemn themselves. Why so? Because the reprobate proceed in their wicked courses, as it were, with closed eyes, and as it has been previously said, they know no shame: though God charges them with their sins, they yet despise and reject every warning with a shameless front; yea, they kick against the goads. Since it is so, justly does Ezekiel say, that shame would be the fruit of true repentance, according to what Paul also says in the sixth chapter to the Romans (Romans 6:21), ``Of which ye are now ashamed.'' He intimates, that when they were sunk in their unbelief, they were so given to shameful deeds, that they perceived not their abomination. They began therefore to be ashamed, when they became illuminated. The Prophet seems now to cut off this fruit from repentance: but what he says ought to be otherwise understood, that is, that the Church would be then free from reproach; for the reprobate would be separated, all the filth would be taken away, when God gathered only the remnant for himself; for in this manner, as it has been said, the wheat would be separated from the chaff. Thou shalt not then be ashamed in that day of evil deeds; for I will take away from the midst of thee those who exult. He shows how necessary the diminution would be; for all must have perished, had not God cut off the putrid members. How severe soever then and full of pain the remedy would be, it ought yet to be deemed tolerable; for the Church, that is the body, could not otherwise be preserved.

But it may be again objected---That the Church is cleansed from all spots, inasmuch as the reprobate are taken away; for he says, Thou shalt not be ashamed of the evil deeds by which thou hast sinned, literally, against me, that is, by which thou hast transgressed against me. God here addresses, it may be said, the faithful themselves: He then does not speak of the evil deeds of those whom the Lord had rejected. But the answer is easy: When he says, that the Church had sinned, he refers to that mixture, by which no distinction is made between the wheat and the chaff. We may say that a city is impious and wicked, when the majority so much exceeds in number the good, that they do not appear. When therefore among ten thousand men there are only thirty or even a smaller number who are anxious for a better state of things, the whole number will be generally counted wicked on account of the larger portion, for the others are hid, and, as it were, covered over and buried. Justly then and correctly does Zephaniah declare, that the Jews had transgressed

against God; for in that mixed multitude the elect could not have been distinguished from the reprobate. But he now promises that there would be a distinction, when God took away the proud, who exulted in vain boasting. For he says, I will take away from the midst of thee those who exult in thy pride

Some render the word in the abstract, the exultations of thy pride: but the term {עליזים}, found here, is never in construction rendered exultations. It is therefore no doubt to be understood of men. He then names the pride of the people; and yet he addresses the elect, who were afterwards to be gathered. What does this mean? even what we have already stated, that before the Church was cleansed from her pollution and filth, there was a common exultation and insolence against God; for these words were everywhere heard---

``We are God's holy people,
we are a chosen race,
we are a royal priesthood,
we are a holy inheritance.''
Exodus 19:6.

Since, then, these boastings were in the mouth of them all, the Prophet says, that it was the pride of the whole people. I will then take away, he says, from the midst of thee those who exult in thy pride [122]

He afterwards adds, Thou shalt no more add to take pride in my holy mountain. Here the Prophet points out the main spring of the evil, because the Jews had hardened themselves in a perverse self-confidence, as they thought that all things were lawful for them, inasmuch as they were God's chosen people. Jeremiah also in a similar manner represents their boasting as false, when they pretended to be the temple of God. Jeremiah 7:4. So our Prophet condemns this pride, because they concealed their sins under the shadow of the temple, and thought it a sufficient defense, that God dwelt on Mount Sion. To show, then, that the people were unhealable, without being cleansed from this pride, the Prophet says, I will take away those who exult ---How did they exult? in thy pride: and what was this pride? that they inhabited the holy mount of God, besides which there was no other sanctuary of God on earth. As then they imagined that God was thus bound to them, they insolently despised all admonitions, as though they were exempt from every law and restraint. Thou shalt not then add to take pride in my holy mountain

We now then see how careful we ought to be, lest the favors of God, which ought by their brightness to guide us to heaven, should darken our minds. But as we are extremely prone to arrogance and pride, we ought carefully to seek to conduct ourselves in a meek and humble manner, when favored with God's singular benefits;

[122] This may be rendered, "Those who exult in thy exaltation:" the Targum has it, "in thy glory." This "glory" or "exaltation," as explained in the next verse, was Mount Sion. There was a preeminence, but it was made an object of unholy boasting. The paraphrase of Henderson, "thy proud exulters," completely leaves out the character of their exultation. The whole verse may be thus rendered,— In that day thou shalt not be ashamed of thy doings, By which thou hast transgressed against me; For then will I remove from the midst of thee Those who exult in thy exaltation; And thou shalt no more be elevated On account of the mount of my holiness. The word [{גאות means exaltation or glory in a good as well as in a bad sense. See Psalm 93:1; Isaiah 12:5. What they exulted in was in itself good, but they exulted only in an outward privilege, without connecting it with God, as many have done in all ages. This is the essence of Pharisaism. Vatables and Drusius regard the word as having this sense here.---Ed.

for when we begin falsely to glory in God's name, and to put on an empty mask to cover our sins, it is all over with us; inasmuch as to our wickedness, to our contempt of God, and to other evil lusts and passions, there is added perverseness, for we persevere in our course, as it were, with an iron and inflexible neck. Thus, indeed, it happens to all hypocrites, who elate themselves through false pretenses as to their connection with God. It follows---

Zephaniah 3:12, 13

12. I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord.

12. Et residuum faciam in medio tui populum afflictum et pauperem; et sperabunt in nomine Iehovae.

13. The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth: for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid.

13. Residuum Israel non perpetrabunt iniquitatem (hoc est, reliquae; ad verbum est, residuum; sed quia nomen est collectivum, ideo mutatur numerus,) et non loquentur mendacium, et non invenietur in ore ipsorum lingua dolosa (vel, lingua fraudis;) quoniam ipsi pascentur et accubabunt; et nemo erit exterrens.

Here the Prophet pursues the same subject---that God would provide for the safety of his Church, by cutting off the majority of the people, and by reserving a few; for his purpose was to gather for himself a pure and holy Church, as the city had previously been full of all uncleanness. It ought, then, to have been a compensation to ease their grief, when the godly saw that God would be propitious to them, though he had treated them with great severity. And we must bear in mind what I have before stated---that the Church could not have been preserved without correcting and subduing that arrogance, which arose from a false profession as to God. Zephaniah takes it now as granted, that pride could not be torn away from their hearts, except they were wholly cast down, and thus made contrite. He then teaches us, that as long as they remained whole, they were ever proud, and that hence it was necessary to apply a violent remedy, that they might learn meekness and humility; which he intimates when he says, that the residue of the people would be humble and afflicted; for if they had become willingly teachable, there would have been no need of so severe a correction. In short, though the faithful lament that God should thus almost annihilate his Church, yet in order that they might not murmur, he shows that this was a necessary remedy. How so? because they would have always conducted themselves arrogantly against God, had they not been afflicted. It was, therefore, needful for them to be in a manner broken, because they could not be bent. I will, then, he says, make the residue an afflicted and a poor people

The word, {ענו}, oni, means humble; but as he adds the word {דל}, dal, he no doubt shows that the Jews could not be corrected without being stripped of all the materials of their glorying. [123] They were, indeed, extremely wedded to their boast-

[123] The first word, [{עכי},] means one made humble by distress or affliction, the humbled, rather than the humble. The second word, ,[{דל}] is one exhausted, or reduced in number, or reduced to poverty. Newcome renders it ``lowly,'' but improperly. Jerome has ``pauperem et egenum---poor and needy;'' the Septuagint, ``{πραυν} {και} {ταπεινον}---meek and humble;'' Marckius, ``afflictum et attenuatum---afflicted and diminished.'' Perhaps the best rendering would be, ``a people

ings; yea, they were become hardened in their contempt of God. He therefore says, that this fruit would at last follow, that they would trust in the Lord, that is, when he had laid them prostrate.

This verse contains a most useful instruction: for first we are taught that the Church is subdued by the cross, that she may know her pride, which is so innate and so fixed in the hearts of men, that it cannot be removed, except the Lord, so to speak, roots it out by force. There is then no wonder that the faithful are so much humbled be the Lord, and that the lot of the Church is so contemptible; for if they had more vigor, they would soon, as is often the case, break out into an insolent spirit. That the Lord, then, may keep his elect under restraint, he subdues and tames them by poverty. In short, he exercises them under the cross. This is one thing.

We must also notice the latter clause, when he says, They shall trust in the Lord, that is, those who have been reduced to poverty and want. We hence see for what purpose God deprives us of all earthly trust, and takes away from us every ground of glorying; it is, that we may rely only on his favor. This dependence ought not, indeed, to be extorted from us, for what can be more desirable than to trust in God? But while men arrogate to themselves more than what is right, and thus put themselves in the place of God, they cannot really and sincerely trust in him. They indeed imagine that they trust in God, when they ascribe to him a part of their salvation; but except this be done wholly, no trust can be placed in God. It is hence necessary that they who ascribe to themselves even the smallest thing, should be reduced to nothing: and this is what the Prophet means. Let us further know, that men do not profit under God's scourges, except they wholly deny themselves, and forget their own power, which they falsely imagine, and recomb on him alone.

But the Prophet speaks of the elect alone; for we see that many are severely afflicted, and are not softened, nor do they put off their former hardihood. But the Lord so chastises his people, that by the spirit of meekness he corrects in them all pride and haughtiness. But by saying, They shall trust in the name of Jehovah, he sets this trust in contrast with the pride which he had previously condemned. They indeed wished to appear to trust in the name of God, when they boasted of Mount Sion, and haughtily brought forward the adoption by which they had been separated from heathen nations; but it was a false boasting, which had no trust in it. To trust, then, in the name of Jehovah is nothing else than sincerely to embrace the favor which he offers in his word, and not to make vain pretenses, but to call on him with a pure heart and with a deep feeling of penitence.

For the same purpose he adds, The residue of Israel shall no more work iniquity nor speak falsehood; nor shall there be found a deceitful tongue in their mouth. The Prophet continues the same subject---that the Church is not to be less esteemed when it consists only of a few men; for in the vast number there was great filth, which not only polluted the earth by its ill savor, but infected heaven itself. Since then Jerusalem was full of iniquities, as long as the people remained entire, the

humbled and reduced.'' The idea of being ``afflicted'' or distressed, is excluded by what is expressed at the end of the next verse, and also that of being ``poor'' in a worldly respect. The reference seems to be to a humbled state of mind, occasioned by calamities, and to a reduced number---a remnant. ``I will leave'' for ,[{השארתי}] as in our version, is not its full meaning. It means to reserve as a remnant. ``I will cause to remain,'' or, ``I will reserve,'' would be the proper rendering.---Ed.

Prophet adduces this comfort, that there was no reason for sorrow, if from a vast number as the sand of the sea, and from a great multitude like the stars, God would only collect a small band; for by this means the Church would be cleansed. And it was of great importance that the filth should be cleansed from God's sanctuary; for what could have been more disgraceful than that the holy place should be made the lodging of swine, and that the place which God designed to be consecrated to himself, should be profaned? As then Jerusalem was the sanctuary of God, ought not true religion to have flourished there? But when it became polluted with every kind of filth, the Prophet shows that it ought not to have seemed grievous that the Lord should take away that vast multitude which falsely boasted that they professed his name. They shall not then work iniquity

Under one kind of expression he includes the whole of a righteous life, when he says, They shall not speak falsely, nor will there be found a deceitful tongue. It is indeed sufficient for the practice of piety or integrity of life to keep the tongue free from frauds and falsehood; but as it cannot be that any one will abstain from all frauds and falsehood, except he purely and from the heart fears God, the Prophet, by including the whole under one thing, expresses under the word tongue what embraces complete holiness of life.

It may be now asked, whether this has ever been fulfilled. It is indeed certain, that though few returned to their own country, there were yet many hypocrites among that small number; for as soon as the people reached their own land, every one, as we find, was so bent on his own advantages, that they polluted themselves with heathen connections, that they neglected the building of the temple, and deprived the priests of their tenths, that they became cold in the worship of God. With these things they were charged by Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. Since these things were so, what means this promise, that there would be no iniquity when God had cleansed his Church? The Prophet speaks comparatively; for the Lord would so cleanse away the spots from his people that their holiness would then appear more pure. Though then many hypocrites were still mixed with the good and real children of God, it was yet true that iniquity was not so prevalent, that frauds and falsehood were not so rampant among the people as they were before.

He afterwards adds, For they shall feed and lie down, and there will be none to terrify them. He mentions another benefit from God---that he will protect his people from all wrongs when they had repented. We must ever bear in mind what I have stated---that the Prophet intended here to heal the sorrow of the godly, which might have otherwise wholly dejected their minds. That he might then in some measure alleviate the grief of God's children, he brings forward this argument---``Though few shall remain, it is yet well that the Lord will cleanse away the filth of the holy city, that it may be justly deemed to be God's habitation, which was before the den of thieves. It is not then a loss to you, that few will dwell in the holy land, for God will be a faithful guardian of your safety. What need then is there of a large multitude, except to render you safe from enemies and from wild beasts? What does it signify, if God receives you under his protection, under the condition that ye shall be secure, though not able to resist your enemies? Though one cannot defend another, yet if

God be your protector, and ye be made to live in peace under the defense which he promises, there is no reason why ye should say, that you have suffered a great loss, when your great number was made small. It is then enough for you to live under God's guardianship; for though the whole world were united against you, and ye had no strength nor defense yourselves, yet the Lord can preserve you; there will be no one to terrify you

And this argument is taken from the law; for it is mentioned among other blessings, that God would render safe the life of his people; which is an invaluable blessing, and without which the life of men, we know, must be miserable; for nothing is more distressing than constant fear, and nothing is more conducive to happiness than a quiet life: and hence to live in quietness and free from all fear, is what the Lord promises as a chief blessing to his people.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that since the depravity of our nature is so great, that we cannot bear prosperity without some wantonness of the flesh immediately raging in us, and without becoming even arrogant against thee,---O grant, that we may profit under the trials of the cross; and when thou have blest us, may we with lowly hearts, renouncing our perverseness, submit ourselves to thee, and not only bear thy yoke submissively, but proceed in this obedience all our life, and so contend against all temptations as never to glory in ourselves, and feel also convinced, that all true and real glory is laid up for us in thee, until we shall enjoy it in thy celestial kingdom, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Twenty-seventh

Zephaniah 3:14, 15

14. Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem.

14. Exulta filia Sion (vel, jubila; exulta Israel; gaude et exulta toto corde filia Ierjusalem.

15. The Lord hath taken away thy judgments, he hath cast out thine enemy: the king of Israel, even the Lord, is in the midst of thee: thou shalt not see evil any more.

15. Abstulit Iehova judicia tua, purgando avertit inimicos tuos; rex Israel Iehova in medio tui; non videbis malum amplius.

The Prophet confirms what he has been teaching, and encourages the faithful to rejoice, as though he saw with his eyes what he had previously promised. For thus the Prophets, while encouraging the faithful to entertain hope, stimulate them to testify their gratitude, as though God's favor was already enjoyed. It is certain, that this instruction was set before the Jews for this purpose,---that in their exile and extreme distress they might yet prepare themselves to give thanks to God, as though they were already, as they say, in possession of what they had prayed for. But we must remember the design of our Prophet, and the common mode of proceeding which all the Prophets followed; for the faithful are exhorted to praise God the same as if they had already enjoyed his blessings, which yet were remote, and seemed concealed from their view.

We now then perceive what the Prophet meant in encouraging the Jews to praise

God: he indeed congratulates them as though they were already enjoying that happiness, which was yet far distant: but as it is a congratulation only, we must also bear in mind, that God deals so bountifully with his Church as to stimulate the faithful to gratitude; for we pollute all his benefits, except we return for them, as it has been stated elsewhere, the sacrifice of praise: and as a confirmation of this is the repetition found here, which would have otherwise appeared superfluous. ``Exult, daughter of Sion, shout, be glad; rejoice with all thine heart, daughter of Jerusalem.'' [124]

But the Prophet was not thus earnest without reason; for he saw how difficult it was to console the afflicted, especially when God manifested no evidence of hope according to the perception of the flesh; but his purpose was by this heap of words to fortify them, that they might with more alacrity struggle with so many hard and severe trials.

He then adds, that God had taken away the judgments of Zion. By judgments, he means those punishments which would have been inflicted if it had been the Lord's purpose to deal according to strict justice with the Jews, as when any one says in our language, J'ai brule tous tes proces. He intimates then that God would no more make an enquiry as to the sins of his people. The word {משפט}, meshiphath, we know, has various meanings in Hebrew; but in this place, as I have said, it means what we call in French, Toutes procedures. In short, God declares that the sins of his people are buried, so that he in a manner cuts off his character as a judge, and remits his own right, so that he will no more contend with the Jews, or summon them, as they say, to trial. Jehovah then will take away thy judgments [125]

Then follows an explanation, By clearing he has turned aside all enemies; [126] for we know that war is one of God's judgments. As then God had punished the Jews by the Assyrians, by the Egyptians, by the Chaldeans, and by other heathen nations, he says now, that all enemies would be turned away. It hence follows, that neither the Assyrians nor the Chaldeans had assailed them merely through their own inclination, but that they were, according to what has been elsewhere stated, the swords, as it were, of God.

It afterwards follows, The king of Israel is Jehovah in the midst of thee. Here the Prophet briefly shows, that the sum of real and true happiness is then possessed, when God declares, that he undertakes the care of his people. God is said to be in the midst of us, when he testifies that we live under his guardianship and protection. Properly speaking, he never forsakes his own; but these forms of speech, we know, are to be referred to the perception of the flesh. When the Lord is said to be afar

[124] To give the words their specific meaning, they may be thus rendered,— Cry aloud thou daughter of Zion, Shout ye Israel; Rejoice and exult with all thine heart, Thou daughter of Jerusalem. The first two lines encourage the fullest expression of feelings, loud crying, and shouting like a trumpet; and then is set forth the character of these feelings; they were to be those of job and exultation. Our version, Newcome and Henderson, render the second line correctly, but not the first; and "Be glad and rejoice" are too feeble to express what the third line contains: for the exhortation is to "rejoice" and to "exult." It was to be the loud cry of joy, and the shouting of exultation or triumph.—Ed.

[125] Turned aside hath Jehovah thy judgments.—Ed.

[126] The words are, [{אויבך},{פנה} ``he hath turned away thine enemy.'' Many copies have ,[{אויבך}] ``thine enemies;'' but it may be regarded as the poetical singular.---Ed.

off, or to dwell in the midst of us, it is to be understood with reference to our ideas: for we think God to be then absent when he gives liberty to our enemies, and we seem to be exposed as a prey to them; but God is said to dwell in the midst of us when he protects us by his power, and turns aside all assaults. Thus, then, our Prophet now says, that God will be in the midst of his Church; for he would really and effectually prove that he is the guardian of his elect people. He had been indeed for a time absent, when his people were deprived of all help, according to what Moses expresses when he says, that the people had deluded themselves, because they had renounced God, by whose hand they had been safely protected, and were also to be protected to the end. Exodus 32:25

He lastly adds, Thou shalt not see evil. Some read, ``Thou shalt not fear evil,'' by inserting {י}, iod; but the meaning is the same: for the verb, to see, in Hebrew is, we know, often to be taken in the sense of finding or experiencing. Thou shalt then see no evil; that is, God will cause thee to live in quietness, free from every disturbance. If the other reading, Thou shalt not fear evil, be preferred, then the reference is to the blessing promised in the law; for nothing is more desirable than peace and tranquillity. Since then this is the chief of temporal blessings, the Prophet does not without reason say, that the Church would be exempt from all fear and anxiety, when God should dwell in the midst of it, according to what he says in Psalm 46:1. It now follows---

Zephaniah 3:16, 17

16. In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not: and to Zion, Let not thine hands be slack.

16. In die illa dicitur Jerosolymae, Ne timeas; Sion, ne pigrescant (vel, solvantur, name [{הפר}] significat lentum esse, vel, remissum, vel, dissolutum; ne ergo pigrescant) manus tuae.

17. The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.

17. Iehova Deus tuus in medio tui fortis servabit; exultabit (vel, gaudebit) super te in laetitia; quiescet (silebit ad verbum, vel, quietus erit) in amore suo; exultabit super te cum jubilatione.

The Prophet proceeds still to confirm the same truth, but employs a different mode of speaking. It shall, he says, be then said everywhere to Zion, Fear not, let not thine hands be let down, etc. For these words may no less suitably be applied to the common report or applause of all men, then to the prophetic declaration; so that the expression, It shall be said, may be the common congratulation, which all would vie to offer. The import of the whole is, that Jerusalem would be so tranquil that either the Prophets, or all with common consent would say, ``Thou enjoyest thy rest: for God really shows that he cares for thee; there is therefore no cause for thee hereafter to fear.'' For there is expressed here a real change: since the Jews had been before in daily fear, the Prophet intimates, that they would be so safe from every danger, as to be partakers of the long-wished-for rest, with the approbation even of the whole world. Hence, it shall be said---by whom? either by the Prophets, or by common report: it makes no great difference, whether there would be teachers to announce

their state joyful and prosperous, or whether all men would, by common consent, applaud God's favor, when he had removed from his people all wars, troubles, and fears, so as to make them live in quietness.

It shall then be said to Jerusalem, fear not; Sion! let not thine hands be relaxed. By saying Fear not, and let not thine hands be relaxed, he intimates, that all vigor is so relaxed by fear, that no member can perform its function. But by taking a part for the whole, he understands by the word hands, every other part of the body; for by the hands men perform their works. Hence in Scripture the hands often signify the works of men. The meaning then is---that God's Church would then be in such a state of quietness as to be able to discharge all its duties and transact its concerns peaceably and orderly. And it is what we also know by experience, that when fear prevails in our hearts we are as it were lifeless, so that we cannot raise even a finger to do anything: but when hope animates us, there is a vigor in the whole body, so that alacrity appears everywhere. The Prophet, no doubt, means here, that God thus succors his elect, not that they may indulge in pleasures, as is too often the case, but that they may, on the contrary, strenuously devote themselves to the performance of their duties. We ought therefore to notice the connection between a tranquil state and diligent hands; for, as I have said, God does not free us from all trouble and fear, that we may grow torpid in our pleasures, but that we may, on the contrary, be more attentive to our duty. Sion, then! let thine hands be no more torpid ---Why?

Jehovah, he says, in the midst of thee strong, will save. He repeats what he had said, but more fully expresses what might have appeared obscure on account of its brevity. He therefore shows here more at large the benefit of God's presence---that God will not dwell idly in his Church, but will be accompanied with his power. For what end? To save. We hence see that the word {גבור}, gebur, ascribed to God, is very emphatical; as though he had said, that God would not be idle while residing in the midst of his Church, but would become its evident strength. And it is worthy of notice, that God exhibits not himself as strong that he may terrify his elect, but only that he may become their preserver.

He afterwards adds, He will rejoice over thee with gladness. This must be referred to the gratuitous love of God, by which he embraces and cherishes his Church, as a husband his wife whom he most tenderly loves. Such feelings, we know, belong not to God; but this mode of speaking, which often occurs in Scripture, is thus to be understood by us; for as God cannot otherwise show his favor towards us and the greatness of his love, he compares himself to a husband, and us to a wife. He means in short---that God is most highly pleased when he can show himself kind to his Church.

He confirms and shows again the same thing more clearly, He will be at rest (or silent) in his love. The proper meaning of {חרש}, charesh, is to be silent, but it means here to be at rest. The import is, that God will be satisfied, as we say in French, Il prendra tout son contentement; as though he had said that God wished nothing more than sweetly and quietly to cherish his Church. As I have already said, this feeling is indeed ascribed to God with no strict correctness; for we know that he can instantly accomplish whatever it pleases him: but he assumes the character of

men; for except he thus speaks familiarly with us, he cannot fully show how much he loves us. God then shall be at rest in his love; that is, ``It will be his great delight, it will be the chief pleasure of thy God when he cherishes thee: as when one cherishes a wife most dear to him, so God will then rest in his love.'' He then says, He will exult over thee with joy [127]

These hyperbolic terms seem indeed to set forth something inconsistent, for what can be more alien to God's glory than to exult like man when influenced by joy arising from love? It seems then that the very nature of God repudiates these modes of speaking, and the Prophet appears as though he had removed God from his celestial throne to the earth. A heathen poet says,---

Not well do agree, nor dwell on the same throne,
Majesty and love. (Ovid. Met. Lib. 2: 816-7.)

God indeed represents himself here as a husband, who burns with the greatest love towards his wife; and this does not seem, as we have said, to be suitable to his glory; but whatever tends to this end---to convince us of God's ineffable love towards us, so that we may rest in it, and being weaned as it were from the world, may seek this one thing only, that he may confer on us his favor---whatever tends to this, doubtless illustrates the glory of God, and derogates nothing from his nature. We at the same time see that God, as it were, humbles himself; for if it be asked whether these things are suitable to the nature of God, we must say, that nothing is more alien to it. It may then appear by no means congruous, that God should be described by us as a husband who burns with love to his wife: but we hence more fully learn, as I have already said, how great is God's favor towards us, who thus humbles himself for our sake, and in a manner transforms himself, while he puts on the character of another. Let every one of us come home also to himself, and acknowledge how deep is the root of unbelief; for God cannot provide for our good and correct this evil, to which we are all subject, without departing as it were from himself, that he might come nigher to us.

And whenever we meet with this mode of speaking, we ought especially to remember, that it is not without reason that God labors so much to persuade us of his love, because we are not only prone by nature to unbelief, but exposed to the deceits of Satan, and are also inconstant and easily drawn away from his word: hence it is that he assumes the character of man. We must, at the same time, observe what I have before stated---that whatever is calculated to set forth the love of God, does not derogate from his glory; for his chief glory is that vast and ineffable goodness by which he has once embraced us, and which he will show us to the end.

What the Prophet says of that day is to be extended to the whole kingdom of Christ. He indeed speaks of the deliverance of the people; but we must ever bear in

[127] This is a very remarkable passage. Perhaps the more literal version would be the following,— 16. In that day he will say to Jerusalem, "Fear thou not; Sion! relaxed let not thy hands be: 17. He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will renew thee in his love, He will exult over thee with acclamation." The verb [{יאמר} is rendered as above by the Septuagint, {ερει}, meaning the Lord. The last line but one is according to the Septuagint and the Syriac; and this sense has been adopted by Houbigant, Dathius, and Newcome. There is the difference only of one letter, [{ד}] for ,[{ר}] which are very alike. The law of parallelism is in favor of this meaning. The verse contains four lines: there is an evident correspondence of meaning in the second and the last line; and so there is between the first and the third according to the preceding version, but not otherwise. The word rendered ``acclamation'' is a noun from the verb ,[{רכה}] to cry aloud, used at the beginning of verse 14.---Ed.

mind what I have already stated---that it is not one year, or a few years, which are intended, when the Prophets speak of future redemption; for the time which is now mentioned began when the people were restored from the Babylonian captivity, and continues its course to the final advent of Christ. And hence also we learn that these hyperbolic expressions are not extravagant, when the Prophets say, Thou shalt not afterwards fear, nor see evil: for if we regard the dispersion of that people, doubtless no trial, however heavy, can happen to us, which is not moderate, when we compare our lot with the state of the ancient people; for the land of Canaan was then the only pledge of God's favor and love. When, therefore, the Jews were ejected from their inheritance, it was, as we have said elsewhere, a sort of repudiation; it was the same as if a father were to eject from his house a son, and to repudiate him. Christ was not as yet manifested to the world. The miserable Jews had an evidence, in figures and shadows, of that future favor which was afterwards manifested by the gospel. Since, then, God gave them so small an evidence of his love, how could it be otherwise but that they must have fainted, when driven far away from their land? Though the Church is now scattered and torn, and seems little short of being ruined, yet God is ever present with us in his only-begotten Son: we have also the gate of the celestial kingdom fully opened. There is, therefore, administered to us at all times more abundant reasons for joy than formerly to the ancient people, especially when they seemed to have been rejected by God. This is the reason why the Prophet says, that the Church would be lessened by calamities, when God again gathered it. But that redemption of the people of Israel ought at this day to be borne in mind by us; for it was a memorable work of God, by which he intended to afford a perpetual testimony that he is the deliverer of all those who hope in him. It follows---

Zephaniah 3:18

18. I will gather them that are sorrowful for the solemn assembly, who are of thee, to whom the reproach of it was a burden.

18. Afflictos a tempore (vel, pro tempore, vel, ad tempus, ut alii vertunt) congregabo qui ex te erunt: onus (vertunt quidam, sed active accipere Propheta potius, qui sistinuerunt ergo) super eam opprobrium.

He proceeds here with the same subject, but in different words; for except some consolation had been introduced, what the Prophet has hitherto said would have been frigid; for he had promised them joy, he had exhorted the chosen of God to offer praise and thanksgiving; but they were at the same time in a most miserable state. It was hence necessary to add this declaration respecting the exiles being gathered.

But he says at the time. Some read, in respect to time; but this is obscure and strained. Others render it, at the time; but it means strictly from the time; though {מ}, mem, may sometimes be rendered as a particle of comparison. Interpreters do not seem to me rightly to understand the Prophet's meaning: for I do not doubt but that he points out here the fixed time of deliverance, as though he had said, I will again gather thine afflicted, and those who have endured thy reproach. When? at the time, {ממועד}, memuod; that is, at the determined or fixed time: for {מועד}, muod, is not taken in Hebrew for time simply, but for a predetermined time, as we say

in French, Un terme prefix I will then gather thine afflicted, but not soon. Our Prophet then holds the faithful here somewhat in suspense, that they might continue in their watch tower, and patiently wait for God's help; for we know how great is our haste, and how we run headlong when we hope for anything; but this celerity, according to the old proverb, is often delay to us. Since, then, men are always carried away by a certain heat, or by too much impetuosity, to lay hold on what may happen, the Prophet here lays a restraint, and intimates that God has his own seasons to fulfill what he has promised, that he will not do so soon, nor according to the will of men, but when the suitable time shall come. And this time is that which he has appointed, not what we desire.

He then adds, Who have sustained reproach for her. In this second clause the Prophet no doubt repeats the same thing; but at the same time he points out, not without reason, their condition---that the Jews suffered reproach and contumely at the time of their exile, and that on account of being the Church; that is, because they professed to worship their own God; for on account of his name the Jews were hated by all nations, inasmuch as their religion was different from the superstitions of all heathens. It could not hence be, but that the unbelieving should vex them with many reproaches, when they were carried away into exile, and scattered in all directions. [128]

He had said before, I will gather the afflicted; but he now adds, I will gather those who have sustained reproach. I have stated that some read, A burden upon her is reproach; but no sense can be elicited from such words. The Prophet does here no doubt obviate a temptation which awaited God's children, who would have to experience in exile what was most grievous to be borne; for they were to be exposed to the taunts and ridicule of all nations. Hence he seasonably heals their grief by saying, that though for a time they would be laughed at by the ungodly, they would yet return to their own country; for the Lord had resolved to gather them. But we must ever remember what I have said---that God would do this in his own time, when he thought it seasonable. It follows---

Zephaniah 3:19

19. Behold, at that time I will undo all that afflict thee: and I will save her that halteth, and gather her that was driven out; and I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame.

[128] This verse presents considerable difficulties, and has been variously rendered. The Septuagint and the Targum differ as much from one another, as they do from the Hebrew. None regard the former as at all suitable; but some, as Grotius and Dathius, take the meaning of the latter, though to reconcile it with the Hebrew is difficult. Marckius seems to have given the most probable meaning— Remotos a festivitate collegi, Ex to sunt, onus super eam opprobrium. Those driven away from festivity have I gathered, From thee they are — a burden on her is reproach. The word [{נוגי},{נוגה he derives from .}] In this case it is literally, ``my driven away,'' or, ``my removed'' ones. [{מועד}] is assembling or meeting, as well as a fixed time or season; and the assembling was that on festal days: it may therefore be rendered, ``festivals.'' ``From thee'' is ``Sion'' in verse 16. Instead of ``on her,'' more than ten copies, as well as the Targum, have ``on thee,'' ;[{עליך}] but an abrupt change of person is of frequent occurrence in the Prophets. Following the sense of the Targum, we may, perhaps, give the following version--- The grieved for the festivals have I gathered from thee; They were a burden on thee, a reproach. The paraphrase of the Targum, as given by Dathius, is the following--- Those who among thee have impeded the seasons of thy festivity, I will expel from thee; woe to them who have carried arms against thee, and loaded thee with reproaches. The ``grieved for the festivals'' were those who disliked them, who grudged the offerings that were to be made. The words are in the past tense, but future as to what is said; for the Prophets declare things as exhibited to them in a vision.---Ed.

19. Ecce ego conficiens omnes oppressores tuos (qui te humiliant, ad verbum) in tempore illo; et servabo claudicantem, et reducam expulsam ad faciendum eos in laudem et nomen in terra opprobrii ipsorum.

He confirms here what I have referred to in the last verse that God would overcome all obstacles, when his purpose was to restore his people. On this the Prophet, as we have said, dwells, that the Jews might in their exile sustain themselves with the hope of deliverance. As, then, they could not instantly conceive what was so incredible according to the perceptions of the flesh, he testifies that there is sufficient power in God to subdue all enemies.

At that time, he says, he repeats what had been stated before---that his people must wait as long as God pleases to exercise them under the cross; for if their option had been given to the Jews, they would have willingly continued at their ease; and we know how men are wont to exempt themselves from every trouble, fear, and sorrow. As therefore men naturally desire rest and immunity from all evil, the Prophet here exhorts the faithful to patience, and shows, that it cannot be that God will become their deliverer, except they submit to his chastisement; at that time then. It is ever to be observed, that the Prophet condemns that extreme haste which usually takes hold of men when God chastises them. However slowly then and gradually God proceeds in the work of delivering his own, the Prophet shows here, that there was no reason for them to despair, or to be broken down in their spirits. [129]

He then subjoins, that he would save the halting, and restore the driven away. By these words he means, that though the Church would be maimed and torn, there would yet be nothing that could hinder God to restore her: for by the halting and the driven away he understands none other than one so stripped of power as wholly to fail in himself. He therefore compares the Church of God to a person, who, with relaxed limbs, is nearly dead. Hence, when we are useless as to any work, what else is our life but a languor like to death? But the Prophet declares here, that the seasonable time would come when God would relieve his own people: though they were to become prostrate and fallen, though they were to be scattered here and there, like a torn body of man, an arm here and a leg there, every limb separated; yet he declares that nothing could possibly prevent God to gather his Church and restore it to its full vigor and strength. In short, he means that the restoration of the Church would be a kind of resurrection; for the Lord would humble his people until they became almost lifeless, so as not to be able to breathe: but he would at length gather them, and so gather them that they would not only breathe but be replenished with such new vigor as though they had received no loss. I cannot finish the whole today.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that as we are at this day so scattered on account of our sins, and even they who seem to be collected in thy name and under thy authority,

[129] The first clause in this verse is amended by Newcome and some other in conformity with the Septuagint: but this is a very unsafe process. Henderson's version is—Behold, I will deal with all thine oppressors at that time. "Deal," [{;[{עשה ``interficiam---I will slay,'' Vulg.; ``conficiam---I will make an end,'' Drusius; but to ``deal with,'' or ``act against,'' is the literal rendering. More is implied than what is expressed, which is often the case with words used in every language.---Ed.

are yet so torn by mutual discords, that the safety of thy Church hangs as it were on a thread, while in the meantime thine enemies seem with savage cruelty to destroy all those who are thine, and to obliterate thy gospel,---O grant, that we may live in quietness and resignation, hoping in thy promises, so that we may not doubt, but that thou in due time will become our deliverer: and may we so patiently bear to be afflicted and cast down by thee, that we may ever raise up our groans to heaven so as to be heard through the name of thy Son, until being at length freed from every contest, we shall enjoy that blessed rest which is laid up for us in heaven, and which thine only begotten Son has procured for us. Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Twenty-eighth

We stopped yesterday at the latter clause of the last verse but one of the Prophet Zephaniah, where God promises that the Jews, who had been before not only obscure, but also exposed to all kinds of reproaches, would again become illustrious; for to give them for a name and for a praise, is no other thing than to render them celebrated, that they might be, as they say, in the mouth of every one.

And he says, in the land of their shame, or reproach; for they had been a mockery everywhere; as the unbelieving thought that they deluded themselves with a vain hope, because they boasted that God, under whose protection they lived, would be their perpetual guardian, though they were driven away into exile. Hence an occasion for taunt and ridicule was given. But a change for the better is here promised; for all in Assyria and Chaldea would have to see that this was a people chosen by God; so that there would be a remarkable testimony among all nations, that all who trust in God are by no means disappointed, for they find that he is faithful in his promises. The last verse follows---

Zephaniah 3:20

20. At that time will I bring you again, even in the time that I gather you: for I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the LORD.

20. In tempore illo reducam vos, in tempore illo colligam vos; quia ponam vos in nomen et laudem per cunctos populos terrae, (vel, inter cunctos populos terrae,) quam reducam captivitates vestras in oculis vestris, dicit Jehova.

He repeats the same things, with some change in the words; and not without reason, because no one of them thought that the Jews, who were cast as it were into the grave, would ever come forth again, and especially, that they would be raised unto such dignity and unto so elevated an honor. As then this was not probable, that Prophet confirms his prediction---I will restore you, says God, I will gather you, even because I have given you a name; that is, it is my resolved and fixed purpose to render you celebrated: but here again are laid down the words we have already noticed.

He afterwards adds---When I shall restore your captivities. The plural number is to be noticed; and not rightly nor prudently is what has been done by many interpreters, who have rendered the word in the singular number; for the Prophet mentions captivities designedly, as the Jews had not only been driven into exile, but had also been scattered through various countries, so that they were not one captive people, but

many troops of captives. Hence his purpose was to obviate a doubt; for it would not have been enough that one captivity should be restored, except all who had been dispersed were collected into one body by the wonderful power of God. And hence he adds before your eyes, that the Jews might be convinced that they should be eye-witnesses of this miracle, which yet they could hardly conceive, without raising up their thoughts above the world.

Commentary on Haggai

Commentary on Haggai

Calvin's Preface to Haggai

After the return of the people, they were favored, we know, especially with three Prophets, who roused their fainting hearts, and finished all predictions, until at length the Redeemer came in his appointed time. During the time of The Babylonian Exile the office of teaching was discharged among the captives by Ezekiel, and also by Daniel; and there were others less celebrated; for we find that some of the Psalms were then composed, either by the Levites, or by some other teachers. But these two, Ezekiel and Daniel, were above all others eminent. Then Ezra and Nehemiah followed them, the authority of whom was great among the people; but we do not read that they were endued with the Prophetic gift.

It then appears certain that three only were divinely inspired to proclaim the future condition of the people.

Daniel had before them foretold whatever was to happen till the coming of Christ, and his Book is a remarkable mirror of God's Providence; for he paints, as on a tablet, three things which were to be fulfilled after his death, and of which no man could have formed any conjecture. He has given even the number of years from the return of the people to the building of the Temple, and also to the death of Christ. But we must come to the other witnesses, who confirmed the predictions of Daniel. The Lord raised up three witnesses---Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. [130]

The first [131] condemned the sloth of the people; for, being intent on their own advantages, they all neglected the building of the Temple; and he shows that they were deservedly suffering punishment for their ingratitude; for they despised God

[130] "Prophecy ceased with these Prophets until the time of Christ. For it was God's purpose, by this famine of the word, (according to the prophetic language,) to render the Jews more desirous (appetentiores) of the Messiah, who was to surpass all the Prophets in the power of doing miracles."—Grotius.

[131] "We know nothing of the parentage of Haggai. He was probably born in Babylon during the captivity. He was sent particularly to encourage the Jews to proceed with the building of the temple, which had been interrupted for about fourteen years."—Adam Clarke.

their Deliverer, or at least honored him less than they ought to have done, and deprived him of the worship due to him. He then encouraged them to hope for a complete restoration, and showed that there was no reason for them to be disheartened by difficulties, and that though they were surrounded by enemies, and had to bear many evils, and were terrified by threatening edicts, they ought yet to have entertained hope; for the Lord would perform the work which he had begun---to restore their ancient dignity to his people, and Christ also would at length come to secure the perfect happiness and glory of the Church.

This is the sum of the whole. I now come to the words.

Chapter 1

Haggai 1

H

Haggai 1:1

1. In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month, came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet unto Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, saying,

1. Anno secundo Darii regis, mense sexto, die primo mensis, datus fuit sermo Jehovae in manum Chaggai Prophetae ad Zerubbabel, filium Sealtiel, ducem Jehudah, et ad Jehosuah, filium Jehosadak, sacerdotem magnum, dicendo---

The Prophet mentions here the year, the month, and the day in which he began to rouse up the people from their sloth and idleness, by the command of God; for every one studied his own domestic interest, and had no concern for building the Temple.

This happened, he says, in the second year of Darius the king. Interpreters differ as to this time; for they do not agree as to the day or year in which the Babylonian captivity began. Some date the beginning of the seventy years at the ruin which happened under Jeconiah, before the erasing of the city, and the destruction of the Temple. It is, however, probable, that a considerable time had passed before Haggai began his office as a Prophet; for Babylon was taken twenty years, or little more, before the death of king Cyrus; his son Cambyses, who reigned eight years, succeeded him. The third king was Darius, the son of Hystaspes, whom the Jews will have to be the son of Ahasuerus by Esther; but no credit is due to their fancies; for they hazard any bold notion in matters unknown, and assert anything that may come to their brains or to their mouths; and thus they deal in fables, and for the most part without any semblance of truth. It may be sufficient for us to understand, that this Darius was the son of Hystaspes, who succeeded Cambyses, (for I omit the seven months of the Magi; for as they crept in by deceit, so shortly after they were destroyed;) and it is probable that Cambyses, who was the first-born son of Cyrus, had no male heir.

Hence it was that his brother being slain by the consent of the nobles, the kingdom came to Darius. He, then, as we may learn from histories, was the third king of the Persians. Daniel says, in the fifth chapter, that the city of Babylon had been taken by Cyrus, but that Darius the Mede reigned there.

But between writers there is some disagreement on this point; though all say that Cyrus was king, yet Xenophon says, that Cyaxares was ever the first, so that Cyrus sustained only the character, as it were, of a regent. But Xenophon, as all who have any judgement, and are versed in history, well know, did not write a history, but fabled most boldly according to his own fancy; for he invents the tale that Cyrus was brought up by his maternal grandfather, Astyages. But it is evident enough that Astyages had been conquered in war by Cyrus. [132] He says also that Cyrus married a wife a considerable time after the taking of Babylon, and that she was presented to him by his uncle Cyaxares, but that he dared not to marry her until he returned to Persia, and his father Cambyses approved of the marriage. Here Xenophon fables, and gives range to his own invention, for it was not his purpose to write a history. He is a very fine writer, it is true; but the unlearned are much mistaken who think that he has collected all the histories of the world. Xenophon is a highly approved philosopher, but not an approved historian; for it was his designed object fictitiously to relate as real facts what seemed to him most suitable. He fables that Cyrus died in his bed, and dictated a long will, and spoke as a philosopher in his retirement; but Cyrus, we know, died in the Scythian war, and was slain by the queen, Tomyris, who revenged the death of her son; and this is well known even by children. Xenophon, however, as he wished to paint the image of a perfect prince, says that Cyrus died in his bed. We cannot then collect from the Cyropaeda, which Xenophon has written, anything that is true. But if we compare the historians together, we shall find the following things asserted almost unanimously:---That Cambyses was the son of Cyrus; that when he suspected his younger brother he gave orders to put him to death; that both died without any male issue; and that on discovering the fraud of the Magi, [133] the son of Hystaspes became the third king of the Persian. Daniel calls Darius, who reigned in Babylon, the Mede; but he is Cyaxares. This I readily admit; for he reigned by sufferance, as Cyrus willingly declined the honor. And Cyrus, though a grandson of Astyages, by his daughter Mandane, was yet born of a father not ennobled; for Astyages, having dreamt that all Asia would be covered by what proceeded from his daughter, was easily induced to marry her to a stranger. When, therefore, he gave her to Cambyses, his design was to drive her to a far country, so that no one born of her should come to so great an empire: this was the advice of the Magi. Cyrus then acquired a name and reputation, no doubt, only by his own efforts;

[132] According to the opinions of Plato and Cicero, the Cyropaedia of Xenophon was a moral romance; and these venerable philosophers suppose, that the historian did not so much write what Cyrus had been, as what every true, good, and virtuous monarch ought to be."—Lempriere's Class. Dict.

[133] The account of the Magi is briefly this:—Cyrus had two sons, Cambyses and Smerdis. When Cambyses ascended the throne, suspecting the fidelity of his brother, he caused him to be secretly put to death. This was known to some of the Magi. On the death of Cambyses, one of them, named Smerdis, who resembled the deceased prince, was by the Magi declared king, under the pretense of being the brother of Cambyses. The imposition was detected, and seven of the nobles of Persia dethroned him after six months' reign, and on themselves, Darius Hystaspes, was made king, in the year before Christ 521.—Ed.

nor did he venture at first to take the name of a king, but suffered his uncle, and at the same time his father-in-law, to reign with him; and yet he was his colleague only for two years; for Cyasares lived no longer than the taking of Babylon.

I come then now to our Prophet: he says, In the second year of Darius it was commanded to me by the Lord to reprove the sloth of the people. We may readily conclude that more than twenty years had elapsed since the people began to return to their own country. [134] Some say thirty or forty years, and others go beyond that number; but this is not probable. Some say that the Jews returned to their country in the fifty-eighth year of their captivity; but this is not true, and may be easily disproved by the words of Daniel as well as by the history of Ezra. Daniel says in the ninth chapter Daniel 9:1 that he was reminded by God of the return of the people when the time prescribed by Jeremiah was drawing nigh. And as this happened not in the first year of Darius, the son of Hystaspes, but about the end of the reign of Belshasar before Babylon was taken, it follows that the time of the exile was then fulfilled. We have also this at the beginning of the history, `When seventy years were accomplished, God roused the spirit of Cyrus the king.' We hence see that Cyrus had not allowed the free return of the people but at the time predicted by Jeremiah, and according to what Isaiah had previously taught, that Cyrus, before he was born, had been chosen for this work: and then God began openly to show how truly he had spoken before the people were driven into exile. But if we grant that the people returned in the fifty-eighth year, the truth of prophecy will not appear. They therefore speak very thoughtlessly who say that the Jews returned to their country before the seventieth year; for thus they subvert, as I have said, every notion of God's favor.

Since then seventy years had elapsed when Babylon was taken, and Cyrus by a public edict permitted the Jews to return to their country, God at that time stretched forth his hand in behalf of the miserable exiles; but troubles did afterwards arise to them from their neighbors. Some under the guise of friendship wished to join them, in order to obliterate the name of Israel; and that they might make a sort of amalgamation of many nations. Then others openly carried on war with them; and when Cyrus was with his army in Scythia, his prefects became hostile to the Jews, and thus a delay was effected. Then followed Cambyses, a most cruel enemy to the Church of God. Hence the building of the Temple could not be proceeded with until the time of this Darius, the son of Hystaspes. But as Darius, the son of Hystaspes, favored the Jews, or at least was pacified towards them, he restrained the neighboring nations from causing any more delay as to the building of the Temple. He ordered his prefects to protect the people of Israel, so that they might live quietly in their country and finish the Temple, which had only been begun. And we may hence conclude that the Temple was built in forty-six years, according to what is said in the second chapter of John [135] (John 2:20); for the foundations were laid immediately on

[134] Adam Clark says, that is was in the sixteenth year after their return from Babylon.—Ed.

[135] The reference in John 2:19,20, seems to have been made not to the time in which it was built then, but to the time in which it was built or rebuilt by Herod the Great. For this temple was finished in the sixth year of Darius (see Ezra 6:15,) and about twenty-one years after the temple was finished in 515. It was about four years in building under Darius.—Ed.

the return of the people, but the work was either neglected or hindered by enemies.

But as liberty to build the Temple was given to the Jews, we may gather from what our Prophet says, that they were guilty of ingratitude towards God; for private benefit was by every one almost exclusively regarded, and there was hardly any concern for the worship of God. Hence the Prophet now reproves this indifference, allied as it was with ungodliness: for what could be more base than to enjoy the country and the inheritance which God had formerly promised to Abraham, and yet to make no account of God, nor of that special favor which he wished to confer---that of dwelling among them? An habitation on mount Sion had been chosen, we know, by God, that thence might come forth the Redeemer of the world. As then this business was neglected, and each one built his own house, justly does the Prophet here reprove them with vehemence in the name and by the command of God. Thus much as to the time. And he says in the second year of Darius, for a year had now elapsed since liberty to build the Temple had been allowed them; but the Jews were negligent, because they were too much devoted to their own private advantages.

And he says, that the word was given by his hand to Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, and to Joshua, the son of Josedech. We shall hereafter see that this communication had a regard without distinction to the whole community; and, if a probable conjecture be entertained, neither Zerubbabel nor Joshua were at fault, because the Temple was neglected; nay, we may with certainty conclude from what Zechariah says, that Zerubbabel was a wise prince, and that Joshua faithfully discharged his office as a priest. Since then both spent their labor for God, how was it that the Prophet addressed them? and since the whole blame belonged to the people, why did he not speak to them? why did he not assemble the whole multitude? The Lord, no doubt, intended to connect Zerubbabel and Joshua with his servant as associates, that they three might go forth to the people, and deliver with one mouth what God had committed to his servant Haggai. This then is the reason why the Prophet says, that he was sent to Zerubbabel and Joshua.

Let us at the same time learn, that princes and those to whom God has committed the care of governing his Church, never so faithfully perform their office, nor discharge their duties so courageously and strenuously, but that they stand in need of being roused, and, as it were, stimulated by many goads. I have already said, that in other places Zerubbabel and Joshua are commended; yet the Lord reproved them and severely expostulated with them, because they neglected the building of the Temple. This was done, that they might confirm by their authority what the Prophet was about to say: but he also intimates, that they were not wholly free from blame, while the people were thus negligent in pursuing the work of building the Temple.

Zerubbabel is called the son of Shealtiel: some think that son is put here for grandson, and that his father's name was passed over. But this seems not probable. They quote from the Chronicles a passage in which his father's name is said to be Pedaiah: but we know that it was often the case among that people, that a person had two names. I therefore regard Zerubbabel to have been the son of Shealtiel. He is said to have been the governor [136] of Judah; for it was necessary that some

[136] [{;פחה it is a word current in several languages, Chaldee, Persic, etc. Parkhurst derives it from ,[{פה] to extend. Theod.

governing power should continue in that tribe, though the royal authority was taken away, and all sovereignty and supreme power extinguished. It was yet God's purpose that some vestiges of power should remain, according to what had been predicted by the patriarch Jacob,

`Taken away shall not be the scepter from Judah, nor a leader from his thigh, until he shall come;' etc. (Genesis 49:10.)

The royal scepter was indeed taken away, and the crown was removed, according to what Ezekiel had said, `Take away the crown, subvert, subvert, subvert it,' (Ezekiel 21:26, 27;) for the interruption of the government had been sufficiently long. Yet the Lord in the meantime preserved some remnants, that the Jews might know that that promise was not wholly forgotten. This then is the reason why the son of Shealtiel is said to be the governor of Judah. It now follows---

Haggai 1:2-4

2. Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built.

2. Sic dicit Iehova exercituum, dicendo, Populus isti dicunt (hoc est, dicit,) Non venit tempus domui Iehovae ad aedificandum.

3. Then came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet, saying,

3. Et datus fui sermo Iehovae in manu Chaggai Prophetae, dicendo,

4. Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste?

4. An tempus vobis, ut habitatis vos in domibus vestris tabulatis, et domus haec deserta?

They who think that seventy years had not passed until the reign of Darius, may from this passage be easily disproved: for if the seventy years were not accomplished, an excuse would have been ready at hand,---that they had deferred the work of building the Temple; but it was certain, that the time had then elapsed, and that it was owing to their indifference that the Temple was not erected, for all the materials were appropriated to private uses. While then they were thus taking care of themselves and consulting their own interest, the building of the Temple was neglected. That the Temple was not built till the reign of Darius, this happened, as we have said, from another cause, because the prefects of king Cyrus gave much annoyance to the Jews, and Cambyses was most hostile to them. But when liberty was restored to them, and Darius had so kindly permitted them to build the Temple, they had no excuse for delay.

It is however probable that they had then many disputes as to the time; for it may have been, that they seizing on any pretext to cover their sloth, made this objection,---that many difficulties had occurred, because they had been too precipitate, and that they had thus been punished for their haste, because they had rashly undertaken the building of the Temple: and we may also suppose that they took another view of the time as having not yet come, for easily might this objection occur to them,---``It is indeed true that the worship of God is deservedly to be preferred to all other

Aq. and Syn. render it {ἡγούμενον}, governor. He is called Sheshbazzar in Ezra 5:14; and Cyrus is said to have made him ,[{פחה}] governor or deputy. It is the name of a person endued with authority by a sovereign. Zerubbabel, ,[{זרבבל}] has been derived from ,[{זר}] a stranger, and ,[{בבל}] Babylon, a stranger or sojourner at Babylon. It deserves to be noticed, that the civil governor is put here before the chief priest; and we find from Ezra that it was to the civil governor that Cyrus delivered the holy vessels of the temple. See Ezra 5:14.---Ed.

things; but the Lord grants us this indulgence, so that we are allowed to build our own houses; and in the meantime we attend to the sacrifices. Have not our fathers lived many ages without a Temple? God was then satisfied with a sanctuary: there is now an altar erected, and there sacrifices are offered. The Lord then will forgive us if we defer the building of the Temple to a suitable time. But in the meantime every one may build his own house, so that afterwards the Temple may at leisure be built more sumptuously.'' However this may have been, we find that true which I have often stated,---that the Jews were so taken up with their own domestic concerns, with their own ease, and with their own pleasures, that they made very little account of God's worship. This is the reason why the Prophet was so greatly displeased with them.

He declares what they said, This people say, The time is not yet come to build the house of Jehovah [137] He repeats here what the Jews were wont to allege in order to disguise their sloth, after having delayed a long time, and when they could not, except through consummate effrontery, adduce anything in their own defense. We however see, that they hesitated not to promise pardon to themselves. Thus also do men indulge themselves in their sins, as though they could make an agreement with God and pacify him with some frivolous things. We see that this was the case then. But we may also see here, as in a mirror, how great is the ingratitude of men. The kindness of God had been especially worthy of being remembered, the glory of which ought to have been borne in mind to the end of time: they had been restored from exile in a manner beyond what they had ever expected. What ought they to have done, but to have devoted themselves entirely to the service of their deliverer? But they built, no, not even a tent for God, and sacrificed in the open air; and thus they wilfully trifled with God. But at the same time they dwelt at ease in houses elegantly fitted up.

And how is the case at this day? We see that through a remarkable miracle of God the gospel has shone forth in our time, and we have emerged, as it were, from the abodes below. Who does now rear up, of his own free-will, an altar to God? On the contrary, all regard what is advantageous only to themselves; and while they are occupied with their own concerns, the worship of God is cast aside; there is no care, no zeal, no concern for it; nay, what is worse, many make gain of the gospel, as though it were a lucrative business. No wonder then, if the people have so basely disregarded their deliverance, and have almost obliterated the memory of it. No less shameful is the example witnessed at this day among us.

But we may hence also see how kindly God has provided for his Church; for his purpose was that this reproof should continue extant, that he might at this day stimulate us, and excite our fear as well as our shame. For we also thus grow frigid in promoting the worship of God, whenever we are led to seek only our own advantages. We may also add, that as God's temple is spiritual, our fault is the more atrocious when we become thus slothful; since God does not bid us to collect either wood, or stones, or cement, but to build a celestial temple, in which he may be truly

[137] The words literally are,— This people say, Not come is the time, The time for the house of Jehovah to be built. —Ed.

worshipped. When therefore we become thus indifferent, as that people were thus severely reproved, doubtless our sloth is much more detestable. We now see that the Prophet not only spoke to men of his age, but was also destined, through God's wonderful purpose, to be a preacher to us, so that his doctrine sounds at this day in our ears, and reproves our torpor and ungrateful indifference: for the building of the spiritual temple is deferred, whenever we become devoted to ourselves, and regard only what is advantageous to us individually. We shall go on with what follows tomorrow.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that as we must carry on a warfare in this world, and as it is thy will to try us with many contests,---O grant, that we may never faint, however extreme may be the trials which we shall have to endure: and as thou hast favored us with so great an honor as to make us the framers and builders of thy spiritual temple, may every one of us present and consecrate himself wholly to thee: and, inasmuch as each of us has received some peculiar gift, may we strive to employ it in building this temple, so that thou mayest be worshipped among us perpetually; and especially, may each of us offer himself wholly as a spiritual sacrifice to thee, until we shall at length be renewed in thine image, and be received into a full participation of that glory, which has been attained for us by the blood of thy only-begotten Son. Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Twenty-ninth

When the Prophet asks, whether the time had come for the Jews to dwell in splendid and well furnished houses, and whether the time had not come to build the Temple, he intimates, that they were trifling in a very gross manner with God; for there was exactly the same reason for building the Temple as for building the city. How came they to be restored to their country, but that God performed what he had testified by the mouth of Jeremiah? Hence their return depended on the redemption promised to them: it was therefore easy for them to conclude, that the time for building the Temple had already come; for the one could not, and ought not to have been separated from the other, as it has been stated. He therefore upbraids them with ingratitude, for they sought to enjoy the kindness of God, and at the same time disregarded the memorial of it.

And very emphatical are the words, when he says, Is it time for you to dwell in houses? [138] For there is implied a comparison between God, whose Temple they set no value on, and themselves, who sought not only commodious, but sumptuous dwellings. Hence the Prophet inquires, whether it was consistent that mortal men, who differ not from worms, should possess magnificent houses, and that God should be without his Temple. And to the same purpose is what he adds, when he says, that their houses were boarded; for {סְפוּנִים}, saphunim, means in Hebrew what we express by Cambrisees [139] Since then they were not satisfied with what was com-

[138] There is a double pronoun, [{אתם} {לכם} העת,] ``Is it time for you, even you,'' or, ``you yourselves?'' The Welsh often use two pronouns in this way, for the sake of emphasis. The rendering is very flat, as in our version, and adopted by Henderson, ``Is it time for you, O ye?'' etc. Houbigant, who always amends, proposes ,[{אתה}] to come, ``Is the time come for you?'' etc. This is suitable, but without authority. Dathius suggests the place, but it is no more than a conjecture. There is no doubt an emphasis is intended by the repetition.---Ed.

[139] It is rendered “wainscoted” by Henderson; “{κοιλοσταθμοις}---ceiled,'' by the Sept.; ``{ωροφωμενοις}---

modious, without splendor and luxury being added, it was extremely shameful for them to rob God at the same time of his Temple, where he was to be worshipped. It now follows---

Haggai 1:5, 6

5. Now therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways.

5. Et nunc sic dicit Iehova exercituum, Adjicite cor vestrum ad vias vestras;

6. Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes.

6. Seminastis multum, et intulistis parum; comedere, et non ad satietatem; bibere, et non ad ebrietatem; vestire, et non ad calorem cuique; et qui colligit mercedem, colligit mercedem in sacculum perforatum.

Here the Prophet deals with the refractory people according to what their character required; for as to those who are teachable and obedient, a word is enough for them; but they who are perversely addicted to their sins must be more sharply urged, as the Prophet does here; for he brings before the Jews the punishments by which they had been already visited. It is commonly said, that experience is the teacher of fools; and the Prophet has this in view in these words, apply your hearts to your ways; [140] that is, ``If the authority of God or a regard for him is of no importance among you, at least consider how God deals with you. How comes it that ye are famished, that both heaven and earth deny food to you? Besides, though ye consume much food, it yet does not satisfy you. In a word, how is it that all things fade away and vanish in your hands? How is this? Ye cannot otherwise account for it, but that God is displeased with you. If then ye will not of your own accord obey God's word, let these judgements at least induce you to repent.'' It was to apply the heart to their ways, when they acknowledged that they were thus famished, not by chance, but that the curse of God urged them, or was suspended over their heads. He therefore bids them to receive instruction from the events themselves, or from what they were experiencing; and by these words the Prophet more sharply teaches them; as though he had said, that they profited nothing by instruction and warning, and that it remained as the last thing, that they were to be drawn by force while the Lord was chastising them.

He says that they had sown much, and that small was the produce. They who render the clause in the future tense, wrest the meaning of the Prophet: for why did he say, apply your heart to your ways, if he only denounced a future punishment? But, as I have already stated, he intimates, that they very thoughtlessly champed the bridle, for they perceived not that all their evils were inflicted by God's hand, nor did they regard his judgement as righteous. Hence he says, that they had sowed much, and that the harvest had been small; and then, that they ate and were not satisfied; that they drank and had not their thirst quenched; that they clothed themselves and were not warmed. How much soever they applied those things which seemed

roofed,'' by Aquila. It was the custom in the east, says Parkhurst, to cover or line the roof with boards or wainscot.---Ed.

[140] Literally it is, “Set your heart on your ways.” An idiomatic phrase, but very expressive. They were to fix their attention on their conduct, not merely to take a glance, but seriously and steadily to reflect on their ways.

necessary for the support of life, they yet availed them nothing. And God, we know, does punish men in these two ways either by withdrawing his blessings, by rendering the earth and and the heavens dry; or by making the abundant produce unsatisfying and even useless. It often happens that men gather what is sufficient for support, and yet they are always hungry. It is a kind of curse, which appears very evident when God takes away their nourishing power from bread and wine, so that they supply no support to man. When therefore fruit, and whatever the earth produces for the necessities of man, give no support, God proves, as it were by an outstretched arm, that he is an avenger. But the other curse is more frequent; that is, when God smites the earth with drought, so that it produces nothing. But our Prophet refers to both these kinds of evils. Behold, he says, Ye have sown much and ye gather little; and then he says, Though ye are supplied with the produce of wine and corn, yet with eating and drinking ye cannot satisfy yourselves; nay, your very clothes do not make you warm. They might have had a sure hope of the greatest abundance, had they not broken off the stream of God's favor by their sins. Were they not then extremely blind this experience must have awakened them, according to what is said in the first chapter of Joel.

He says at the end of the verse, He who gains wages, gains then for a perforated bag. By these words he reminds them, that the vengeance of God could not only be seen in the sterility of the earth, and in the very hunger of men, who by eating were not satisfied; but also in their work, for they wearied themselves much without any profit, as even the money cast into the bag disappeared. Hence he says, even your work is in vain. It was indeed a most manifest proof of God's wrath, when their money, though laid up, yet vanished away. [141]

We now see what the Prophet means: As his doctrine appeared frigid to the Jews and his warnings were despised, he treats them according to the perverseness of their disposition. Hence he shows, that though they disregarded God and his Prophets, they were yet sufficiently taught by his judgements, and that still they remained indifferent. He therefore goads them, as though they were asses, that they might at length acknowledge that God was justly displeased with them, and that his wrath was conspicuous in the sterility of the land, as well as in everything connected with their life; for whether they did eat or abstained from food, they were hungry; and when they diligently labored and gathered wages, their wages vanished, as though they had cast them into a perforated bag. It follows---

Haggai 1:7, 8

7. Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways.

7. Sic dicit Iehova exercituum, Ponite cor vestrum super vias vestras;

8. Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the Lord.

[141] There seems to be an irregularity in the construction of the whole verse. Literally it is as follows— Ye have sown much, but the coming in is little; There is eating, but not to satisfaction; They drink, but not to fullness; There is clothing, but there is no warmth in it; And earn does the earner for a perforated bag. This change in the mode of construction takes away the monotony which would have otherwise appeared. The word [{,{אכול}, הבא}] and [{לבוש}] are not infinitives, as some suppose, but participles used as nouns; which is often the case in Hebrew, as well as in Welsh, and often too in English, such as teaching, drinking, clothing, etc.---Ed.

8. Ascendite in montem et afferte lignum, et aedificate domum (vel, hance domum;) et propitius ero in ea (vel, mihi placebit in ea;) et glorificabor, dicit Iehova.

The Prophet now adds, that since the Jews were thus taught by their evils, nothing else remained for them but to prepare themselves without delay for the work of building the Temple; for they were not to defer the time, inasmuch as they were made to know, that God had come forth with an armed hand to vindicate his own right: for the sterility of which he had spoken, and also the famine and other signs of a curse, were like a drawn sword in the hand of God; by which it was evident, that he intended to punish the negligence of the people. As God then had been robbed of his right, he not only exhorted the people by his Prophets, but also executed his vengeance on this contempt.

This is the reason why the Prophet now says, Apply your heart, and then adds, Go up to the mountain, bring wood, etc. And this passage strikingly sets forth why God punished their sins, in order that they might not only perceive that they had sinned, but that they might also seek to amend that which displeased God. We may also, in the second place, learn from what is said, how we are to proceed rightly in the course of true repentance. The beginning is, that our sins should become displeasing to us; but if any of us proceed no farther, it will be only an evanescent feeling: it is therefore necessary to advance to the second step; an amendment for the better ought to follow. The Prophet expresses both here: He says first, Lay your heart on your ways; that is, ``Consider whence comes this famine to you, and then how it is that by laboring much ye gain nothing, except that God is angry with you.'' Now this was what wisdom required. But he again repeats the same thing, Lay your heart on your ways, that is, ``Not only that sin may be hated by you, but also that this sloth, which has hitherto offended God and provoked his wrath, may be changed into strenuous activity.'' Hence he says, Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and let the house be built

If any one is at a loss to know why the Prophet insists so much on building the Temple, the ready answer is this: that it was God's design to exercise in this way his ancient people in the duties of religion. Though then the Temple itself was of no great importance before God, yet the end was to be regarded; for the people were preserved by the visible Temple in the hope of the future Christ; and then it behaved them always to bear in mind the heavenly pattern, that they might worship God spiritually under the external symbols. It was not then without reason that God was offended with their neglect of the temple; for it hence clearly appeared, that there was no care nor zeal for religion among the Jews. It often was the case that they were more sedulous than necessary in external worship, and God scorned their assiduity, when not connected with a right inward feeling; but the gross contempt of God in disregarding even the external building, is what is reprehended here by the Prophet.

He afterwards adds, And I will be propitious in it, or, I will take pleasure in it. Some read, It will please me; and they depart not from the real meaning of the verb: for {רצה}, retse---is to be acceptable. But more correct, in my view, is the opinion of those who think that the Prophet alludes to the promise of God; for he had said, that

he would on this condition dwell among the Jews, that he might hear their prayers, and be propitious to them. As, then, the Jews came to the Temple to expiate their sins, that they might return to God's favor, it is not without reason that God here declares that he would be propitious in that house.

`If any one sin,' said Solomon, `and entering this house, shall humbly pray, do thou also hear from thy heavenly habitation.'
(1 Kings 8:30.)

We further know that the covering of the ark was called the propitiatory, because God there received the suppliant into favor. This meaning, then, seems the most suitable---that the Prophet says, that if the Temple was built, God would be there propitious. But it was a proof of extreme impiety to think that they could prosper while God was adverse to them: for whence could they hope for happiness, except from the only fountain of all blessings, that is, when God favored them and was propitious to them? And how could his favor be sought, except they came to his sanctuary, and thence raise up their minds by faith to heaven? When, therefore, there was no care for the Temple, it was easy to conclude that God himself was neglected, and regarded almost with scorn. We then see how emphatically this was added, I will be propitious there, that is, in the Temple; as though he had said, ``Your infirmity ought to have reminded you that you have need of this help, even of worshipping me in the sanctuary. But as I gave you, as it were, a visible mirror of my presence among you, when I ordered a Temple to be built for me on mount Sion, when ye despise the Temple, is it not the same as though I was rejected by you?''

He then adds, And I shall be glorified, saith Jehovah. He seems to express the reason why he should be propitious; for he would then see that his glory was regarded by the Jews. At the same time, this reason may be taken by itself, and this is what I prefer. [142] The Prophet then employs two goads to awaken the Jews: When the Temple was built, God would bless them; for they would have him pacified, and whenever they found him displeased, they might come as suppliants to seek pardon; this was one reason why it behaved them strenuously to undertake the building of the Temple. The second reason was, that God would be glorified. Now, what could have been more inconsistent than to disregard God their deliverer, and so late a deliverer too? But how God was glorified by the Temple I have already briefly explained; not that it added anything to God; but such ordinances of religion were then necessary, as the Jews were as yet like children. It now follows---

Haggai 1:9

9. Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the Lord of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste,

[142] The whole verse may be thus rendered— Ascend the mountains, for ye have brought wood; And build the house, that I may delight in it, That I may be glorified, saith Jehovah. The [{,[{ו vau, here in two instances may have the meaning of ut, that; but before ,[{הבאתם}] a verb in the perfect tense, it must be rendered ``for,'' or, ``as;'' and the clause seems to be a parenthesis. The ,[{ו}] vau, is not conversive when preceded by a verb in the imperative mood, as it appears from the end of the verse. The mount was not Libanus, as many have supposed, but Sion, where wood had been previously brought, but was not used. See Ezra 3:7. As to the verb ,[{רצה}] followed by ,[{ב}] it means to approve, to be pleased with, or to take pleasure or delight in, a thing. See 2 Chronicles 29:3; Psalm 147:10; Micah 6:7. Probably the best rendering of the two last lines is the following--- And build the house, and I shall delight in it And render it glorious, saith Jehovah. To take the last verb in a causative sense is more consistent with the tenor of the passage. This is the meaning given by the Targum, and is adopted by Dathius.---Ed.

and ye run every man unto his own house.

9. Respexistis ad multum, et ecce parum; et intulistis ad domum, et sufflavi in illud: cur hoc? dicit Iehova exercituum: Propter domum meam quae est deserta, et vos curritis (vel, addicti estis quisque domi suae) quisque in domum suam.

Here the Prophet relates again, that the Jews were deprived of support, and that they in a manner pined away in their distress, because they robbed God of the worship due to him. He first repeats the fact, Ye have looked for much, but behold little [143] It may happen that one is contented with a very slender portion, because much is not expected. They who are satisfied with their own penury are not anxious though their portion of food is but scanty, though they are constrained to feed on acorns. Those who are become hardened in enduring evils, do not seek much; but they who desire much, are more touched and vexed by their penury. This is the reason why the Prophet says, Ye have looked for much, and, behold, there was but little; that is, ``Ye are not like the peasants, who satisfy themselves with any sort of food, and are not troubled on account of their straitened circumstances; but your desire has led you to seek abundance. Hence ye seek and greedily lay hold on things on every side; but, behold, it comes to little.''

In the second place he adds, Ye have brought it home. He farther mentions another kind of evil---that when they gathered wine, and corn, and money, all these things immediately vanished. Ye have brought it home, and I have blown upon it. By saying that they brought it home, he intimates that what they had acquired was laid up, that it might be preserved safely; for they who had filled their storehouses, and wine-cellars, and bags, thought that they had no more to do with God. Hence it was that profane men securely indulged themselves; they thought that they were beyond the reach of danger, when their houses were well filled. God, on the contrary, shows that their houses became empty, when filled with treasures and provisions. But he speaks still more distinctly---that he had blown upon them, that is, that he had dissipated them by his breath: for the Prophet did not deem it enough historically to narrate what the Jews had experienced; but his purpose also was to point out the cause, as it were, by the finger. He therefore teaches us, that what they laid in store in their houses did not without a cause vanish away; but that this happened through the blowing of God, even because he cursed their blessing, according to what we shall hereafter see in the Prophet Malachi.

He then adds, Why is this? saith Jehovah of hosts. God here asks, not because he had any doubts on the subject, but that he might by this sort of goading rouse the Jews from their lethargy,---``Think of the cause, and know that my hand is not guided by a blind impulse when it strikes you. You ought, then, to consider the reason why all things thus decay and perish.'' Here again is sharply reproved the stupidity of the people, because they attended not to the cause of their evils; for they ought to have

[143] The first word in this verse, [{,[{פנה is evidently a participle noun; similar instances we find in verse 6. The verse, literally rendered, is as follows--- Looking for much, and behold little! And you brought it home, and I blew upon it; On what account this, saith Jehovah of hosts? On account of my house, because it is waste, And ye are running, each to his own house. The first line is put in an absolute form, as is sometimes the case in Hebrew; ``There has been,'' or some such words being understood. Both the Targum and the Septuagint read [{היה}] instead of ,[{הנה}] which would be more suitable to the word which follows, which has [{ל}] before it. The line would then be--- There has been looking for much, but it came to little. The ``blowing'' seems to be a metaphor taken from scorching wind, blowing on vegetation, and causing it to wither. The last line may be thus rendered--- And ye are delighted, each with his own house. ---Ed.

known this of themselves.

But God gives the answer, because he saw that they remained stupefied---On account of my house, he says, because it is waste [144] God here assigns the cause; he shows that though no one of them considered why they were so famished, the judgement of his curse was yet sufficiently manifest, on account of the Temple remaining a waste. And you, he says, run, every one to his own house. Some read, You take delight, every one in his own house; for it is the verb {רצה}, retse, which we have lately noticed; and it means either to take pleasure in a thing, or to run. Every one, then, runs to his house, or, Every one delights in his house. But it is more suitable to the context to give this rendering, Every one runs to his house. For the Prophet here reminds the Jews that they were slow and slothful in the work of building the Temple, because they hastened to their private houses. He then reproves here their ardor in being intent on building their own houses, so that they had no leisure to build the Temple. This is the hastening which the Prophet blames and condemns in the Jews.

We may hence learn again, that they had long delayed to build the sanctuary after the time had arrived: for, as we have mentioned yesterday, they who think the Jews returned in the fifty-eighth year, and that they had not then undergone the punishment denounced by Jeremiah, are very deluded; for they thus obscure the favor of God; nay, they wholly subvert the truth of the promises, as though they had returned contrary to God's will, through the permission of Cyrus, when yet Isaiah says, that Cyrus would be the instrument of their promised redemption. (Isaiah 45:1.) Surely, then, Cyrus must have been dead before the time was fulfilled! and in that case God could not have been the redeemer of his people. Therefore Eusebius, and those who agree with him, did thus most absurdly confound the order of time. It now follows---

Haggai 1:10, 11

10. Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit.

10. Propterea prohibiti super vos sunt coeli a rore, et terra a proventu suo prohibita est.

11. And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon that which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labour of the hands.

11. Et vocavi siccitatem super terram, et super montes, et super triticum, et super mustum (aut, vinium,) et super omne quod profert terra, et super hominem, et super animal, et super omnem laborem manuum.

He confirms what the last verse contains---that God had made it evident that he was displeased with the people because their zeal for religion had become cold, and, especially, because they were all strangely devoted to their own interest and manifested no concern for building the Temple. Hence, he says, therefore the heavens are shut up and withhold the dew; that is, they distil no dew on the earth; and he adds, that the earth was closed that it produced no fruit; it yielded no increase, and

[144] This is the literal rendering—"On account of my house, because it is waste." [{[{אשר is not ``which'' here, for it is followed by ,[{הוא}] ``it;'' but a conjunction, ``because.'' The word quod, in Latin, admits of two similar meanings.---Ed.

disappointed its cultivators. As to the particle {כן}-{על}, ol-can, we must bear in mind what I have stated, that God did not regard the external and visible Temple, but rather the end for which it was designed; for it was his will then that he should be worshipped under the ceremonies of the law. When, therefore, the Jews offered mutilated, lame, or diseased sacrifices, they manifested impiety and contempt of God. It is yet true, that it was the same thing as to God; but he had not commanded sacrifices to be offered to him for his own sake, but that by such services they might foster true religion. When, therefore, he says now, that he punished their neglect of the Temple, we ought ever to regard that as a pattern of heavenly things, so that we may understand that the coldness and indifference of the Jews were reproved; because it hence evidently appeared that they had no care for the worship of God.

With respect to the withholding of dew and of produce, we know that the Prophets took from the law what served to teach the people, and accommodated it to their own purposes. The curses of the law are general. (Deuteronomy 11:17.) It is therefore the same thing as though the Prophet had said, that what God had threatened by Moses was really fulfilled. It ought not to have been to them a new thing, that whenever heaven denied its dew and rain it was a sign of God's wrath. But as, at this day, during wars, or famine, or pestilence, men do not regard this general truth, it is necessary to make the application: and godly teachers ought wisely to attend to this point, that is, to remind men, according to what the state of things and circumstances may require, that God proves by facts what he has testified in his word. This is what is done by our Prophet now, withheld have the heavens the dew and the earth its produce [145]

In a word, God intimates, that the heavens leave no care to provide for us, and to distil dew so that the earth may bring forth fruit, and that the earth also, though called the mother of men, does not of itself open its bowels, but that the heavens as well as the earth bear a sure testimony to his paternal love, and also to the care which he exercises over us. God then shows, both by the heavens and the earth, that he provides for us; for when the heavens and the earth administer and supply us with the blessings of God, they thus declare his love towards us. So also, when the heaven is, as it were, iron, and when the earth with closed bowels refuses us food, we ought to know that they are commissioned to execute on us the vengeance of God. For they are not only the instruments of his bounty, but, when it is necessary, God employs them for the purpose of punishing us. This is briefly the meaning.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou kindly and graciously invites us to thyself,

[145] Calvin seems to have overlooked [{,עליכם}, ``on your account.'' The verse is--- Therefore, on your account, withheld have the heavens from dew, And the earth has withheld its produce. The verb ,[{כלא}] to restrain, to keep back, to withhold, is used here twice, and in the first line in an intransitive sense, and in the second in a transitive sense, as it is often the case in other languages, when the same verb is both neuter and active. The 11th verse is passed by without any particular remarks. The word [{חרב}] is rendered ``Siccitas---drought,'' as Jerome does, and also our version, as well as Newcome and Henderson; but Grotius and also Marckius very justly observe, that it means here ``waste,'' or ``desolation,'' it being the same word as is applied to God's house in verse 9. They left his house a waste; by a just retribution he had brought or called for a waste on the land, etc. The contrast is so evident that it cannot be denied. The ideal meanings of the word is to be waste or desolate: it is then applied to various things which produce desolation, the sword, drought, pestilence, etc.; but it is used here in its primary sense, and the contrast is very striking: ``My house has been left waste; I have caused a waste to come upon every thing else.'' The verse may be thus rendered--- And I have called for a waste On the land and on the mountains, And on the corn and on the wine and on the oil, And on whatever the ground produces, And on man and on the cattle, And on all the labor of the hands. ---Ed.

we may not wait until thou stimulates us with goads, but cast aside our sloth and run quickly to thee. And when our torpor so possesses us as to render punishment necessary, permit us not to harden ourselves; but being at length effectually warned, and we return to the right way, and strive so to render all we do approved by thee, that we may find a door opened to thy grace and favor: and being made partakers of those blessed, by which thou affordest a taste of that goodness which we shall enjoy in heaven, may we ever aspire thither, and be satisfied with the abundant blessings which we daily and even continually receive from thine hand, in such a manner as not to be detained by this world; but may we, with minds raised up to heaven, ever tend upwards, and labor for that perfect happiness which is there laid up for us by Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lecture One hundred and Thirtieth

Haggai 1:12

12. Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the Lord their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the Lord their God had sent him, and the people did fear before the Lord.

12. Et audivit Zerubbabel, filius Sealtiel, et Jehoasua, filius Jehosadak, sacerdos magnus, et omnes reliquiae populi vocem Iehovae Dei sui, et ad verba Chaggai Prophetae; quemadmodum miserat ipsum Iehova Deus eorum; et timuerunt populus a conspectu Iehovae.

The Prophet here declares that his message had not been without fruit, for shortly after the whole people prepared themselves for the work. And he names both Zerubbabel and Joshua; for it behaved them to lead the way, and, as it were, to extend a hand to others. For, had there been no leaders, no one of the common people would have pointed out the way to the rest. We know what usually happens when a word is addressed indiscriminately to all the people: they wait for one another. But when Joshua and Zerubbabel attended to the commands of the Prophet, the others followed them: for they were dominant, not only in power, but also in authority, so that they induced the people willingly to do their duty. One was the governor of the people, the other was the high priest; but the honesty and faithfulness of both were well known, so that the people spontaneously followed their example.

And this passage teaches us that though God invites all to his service, yet as any one excels in honor or in other respects, so the more promptly he ought to undertake what is proposed by the authority of God. Our Prophet, no doubt, meant to point out this due order of things, by saying, that he was heard first by Zerubbabel and Joshua, and then by the whole people.

But as all had not returned from exile, but a small portion, compared with that great number, which, we know, had not availed themselves of the kindness allowed them---this is the reason why the Prophet does not simply name the people, but the remnant of the people, {העם} {שארית}, sharit eom. As also the gift of prophecy had been for a long time more rare, and few appeared among the people who had any decided evidence of their call, such as Samuel, Isaiah, David, and others possessed, the Prophet, for this reason, does here more carefully commend and honor his own

office: he says that the people attended to the voice of Jehovah ---How? By attending, he says, to the words of Haggai the Prophet, inasmuch as Jehovah their God had sent him. He might have said more shortly that his labor had not been without fruit; but he used this circuitous mode of speaking, that he might confirm his own call; and he did this designedly, because the people had for a long time been without the opportunity of hearing God's Prophets, for there were none among them.

But Haggai says nothing here but what belongs in common to all teachers in the Church: for we know that men are not sent by divine authority to speak that God himself may be silent. As then the ministers of the word derogate nothing from the authority of God, it follows that none except the only true God ought to be heard. It is not then a peculiar expression, which is to be restricted to one man, when God is said to have spoken by the mouth of Haggai; for he thus declared that he was God's true and authorised Prophet. We may therefore gather from these words, that the Church is not to be ruled by the outward preaching of the word, as though God had substituted men in his own place, and thus divested himself of his own office, but that he only speaks by their mouth. And this is the import of these words, The people attended to the voice of Jehovah their God, and to the words of Haggai the Prophet. For the word of God is not distinguished from the words of the Prophet, as though the Prophet had added anything of his own. Haggai then ascribed these words to himself, not that he devised anything himself, so as to corrupt the pure doctrine which had been delivered to him by God, but that he only distinguished between God, the author of the doctrine, and his minister, as when it is said,

``The sword of God and of Gideon,'' (Judges 7:20,)

and also,

``The people believed God and Moses his servant.''

(Exodus 14:31.)

nothing is ascribed to Moses or to Gideon apart from God; but God himself is placed in the highest honor, and then Moses and Gideon are joined to him. In the same sense do the Apostles write, when they say, that ``it had pleased the Holy spirit'' and themselves. (Acts 15:22.)

And hence it is evident how foolish and ridiculous are the Papists, who hence conclude that it is lawful for men to add their own inventions to the word of God. For the Apostles, they say, not only alleged the authority of the Holy Spirit, but also say, that it seemed good to themselves. God then does not so claim, they say, all things for himself, as not to leave some things to the decision of his Church, as though indeed the Apostles meant something different from what our Prophet means here; that is, that they truly and faithfully delivered what they had received from the spirit of God.

It is therefore a mode of speaking which ought to be carefully marked, when we hear, that the voice of God and the words of Haggai were reverently attended to by the people.---Why? Inasmuch, he says, as God had sent him; as though he had said, that God was heard when he spoke by the mouth of man. And this is also worthy of being noticed, because many fanatics boast, that they allow regard to the word of the Lord, but are unwilling to give credit to men, as that would be even preposterous;

and they pretend, that in this way what belongs to the only true God is transferred to creatures. But the Holy Spirit most easily reconciles these two things---that the voice of God is heard when the people embrace what they hear from the mouth of a Prophet. Why so? because it pleases God thus to try the obedience of our faith, while he commits to man this office. For if the Lord was pleased to speak himself, then justly might men be neglected: but as he has chosen this mode, whosoever reject God's Prophets, clearly show that they despise God himself. There is no need of inquiring here, why it is that we ought to obey the word preached or the external voice of men, rather than revelations; it is enough for us to know that this is the will of God. When therefore he sends Prophets to us, we ought unquestionably to receive what they bring.

And Haggai says also expressly, that he was sent by the God of Israel; as though he had said, that the people had testified their true piety when they acknowledged God's Prophet in his legitimate vocation. For he who clamorously objects, and says that he knows not whether it pleases God or not to send forth men to announce his word, shows himself to be wholly alienated from God: for it ought to be sufficiently evident to us that this is one of our first principles.

He afterwards adds, that the people feared before Jehovah [146] Haggai confirms here the same truth---that the people received not what they heard from the mouth of mortal man, otherwise than if the majesty of God had openly appeared. For there was no ocular view of God given; but the message of the Prophet obtained as much power as though God had descended from heaven, and had given manifest tokens of his presence. We may then conclude from these words, that the glory of God so shines in his word, that we ought to be so much affected by it, whenever he speaks by his servants, as though he were nigh to us, face to face, as the Scripture says in another place. It now follows---

Haggai 1:13, 14

13. Then spake Haggai the Lord's messenger in the LORD'S message unto the people, saying, I am with you, saith the Lord

13. Et dicit Chaggai, legatus Iehovae in legatione Iehovae, dicendo (vel, dicens) populo, Ego vobiscum sum, dicit Iehova.

14. And the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and did work in the house of the Lord of hosts, their God,

14. Et excitavit Iehova spiritum Zerubbabel, filli Sealtiel, ducis Jehudah, et spiritum Jehosuae, filii Jehozadak, sacerdotis magni, et spiritum omnium reliquiarum (hoc est, totius residuae multitudinis) populi; et venerunt et fecerunt opus in templo (in domo, ad verbum) Iehovae exercituum Dei sui.

The Prophet tells us here, that he had again roused the leaders as well as the common people; for except God frequently repeats his exhortations, our alacrity

[146] This clause may be thus rendered,— And fear him did the people on account of Jehovah. This comports better with the previous clause, that Jehovah had sent him. The [{[{ affixed to ``fear'' is a pronoun, otherwise the verb is plural; and ``people'' seldom, if ever, has a verb in the plural number. To fear sometimes means to respect, to reverence: the people honored him as God's servant, by obeying his message.---Ed.

relaxes. Though then they had all attended to God's command, it was yet necessary that they should be strengthened by a new promise: for men can be encouraged, and their indifference can be corrected, by no other means, to such a degree, as when God offers and promises his help. This, then, was the way in which they were now encouraged, I am with you. And experience sufficiently shows, that we never really and from the heart obey, except when we rely on his promises and hope for a happy success. For were God only to call us to our work, and were our hope doubtful, all our zeal would doubtless die away. We cannot then devote our services to God, except he supports and encourages us by promises. We also see, that it is not enough that God should speak once, and that we should once receive his word, but there is need that he should rouse us again and again; for the greatest ardor grows cold when no goads are applied.

And the Prophet makes known again his vocation, for he says, that he spake in the message of Jehovah, for he was his messenger. The word {מלאך}, malak, means a messenger; and as angels are called {מלאכים}, melakim, some foolish men have thought that Haggai was one of the celestial angels, clothed with the form of man: but this is a most frivolous conjecture; for priests, we know, are honored with this title in the second chapter of Malachi, Malachi 2:1, and God in many other places calls his Prophets messengers or ambassadors. There is, therefore, no doubt but that Haggai meant simply to testify, that he brought forward nothing presumptuously, but was a faithful dispenser of the word; for he knew that he was sent by God; and that he might attain attention, he was able justly to testify that his message came from heaven.

Hence he says, that he spake as a messenger of Jehovah in the message of Jehovah; that is, he spoke according to his calling, and not as a private individual, but as one who derived his authority from heaven, and could call to order the whole people; for he was to give way neither to the chief priest nor to Zerubbabel the ruler of the people, inasmuch as he was superior to them on this account, because he had a message which had been committed to him by God. [147] We now then understand the design of the Prophet.

And we hence learn that there is no dignity which exempts us from obedience common to all, when God's word is addressed to us. Doubtless Joshua the high priest was superior to all the rest in matters of religion, and he was the chief angel or messenger of the God of hosts; and yet he refused not to submit himself to God's Prophet, for he understood that he was in a special manner appointed by God to this office. Zerubbabel, the governor of the people, followed also his example. Let us, then, know that God's word is proclaimed under this condition, that no eminence, either in honor or in dignity, exempts us, as it were, by a sort of privilege, from the obligation of receiving it.

The Prophet at length adds, that the people hastened quickly to the work, because

[147] The verse literally is— Then said Haggai, the messenger of Jehovah in the message of Jehovah to the people, saying, I am with you, saith Jehovah. The word for "messages" is in the plural number, preceded by the preposition [{.[{ב Why commentators have generally rendered it in the singular number, does not appear. Haggai is expressly said to be God's messenger in, or with regard to, the messages or communications he made to the people. To connect the word, as some do, with ``said,'' hardly gives a meaning, except the clause be rendered, as it is done by Newcome, ``by the message of Jehovah,'' that is, by his command; but then a plural word is made singular.---Ed.

God had given encouragement to them all. He had lately spoken of the fruit of his doctrine; but he now declares that his voice had not so penetrated into the hearts of all, as though it had been of itself efficacious, but that it had been connected with the hidden influence of the Spirit.

And this passage is remarkable; for the Prophet includes both these things---that God allows not his word to be useless or unfruitful---and yet that this proceeds not from the diligence of men, but from the hidden power of the Spirit. The Prophet, then, did not fail in his efforts; for his labor was not in vain, but brought forth fruit. At the same time, that that saying might remain true,

`He who plants and he who waters is nothing,'
(1 Corinthians 3:7,)

he says, that the Israelites were ready for the work, because the Lord roused them; Jehovah, he says, stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel, the spirit of Joshua, and of the whole people. It is not right to restrict the influence of the Spirit to one thing only, as some do, who imagine that the Israelites were confirmed in their good resolution, as they say, having before spontaneously obeyed the word of God. These separate, without reason, what ought to be read in the Prophet as connected together. For God roused the spirit of Zerubbabel and of the whole people; and hence it was that they received the message of the Prophet, and were attentive to his words. Foolishly, then, do they imagine that the Israelites were led by their own free-will to obey the word of God, and then that some aid of the Holy Spirit followed, to make them firmly to persevere in their course. But the Prophet declared, in the first place, that his message was respectfully received by the people; and now he explains how it was, even because God had touched the hearts of the whole people. [148]

And we ought to notice the expression, when it is said that the spirit of Zerubbabel and of all the people was stirred up. For much sloth, we know, prevailed, especially among the multitude. But as to Zerubbabel and Joshua, they were, as we have said, already willing, but delayed until the coldness under which they labored was reproved. But the Prophet here simply means, that they became thus obedient through the hidden impulse of God, and also that they were made firm in their purpose. God does not form new souls in us, when he draws us to his service; but changes what is wrong in us: for we should never be attentive to his word, were he not to open our ears; and there would be no inclination to obey, were he not to turn our hearts; in a word, both will and effort would immediately fail in us, were he not to add his gift of perseverance. Let us, then, know that Haggai's labors produced fruits, because the Lord effectually touched the hearts of the people; for we indeed know that it is his special gift, that the elect are made disciples, according to that

[148] It is sometimes the case, that a doctrine is illegitimately drawn from a passage, and then that it is unfairly opposed. The building of the Temple had nothing to do with the first movement of the spiritual life: and therefore to draw an argument from the willingness of the people to undertake that work in favor of free-will in the great business of salvation, is by no means legitimate. It would have been, then, better to deny the application, than to turn the passage from its regular course. But we shall not do violence to the passage, if we render the [{[{ı at the beginning of this verse, ``Thus,'' and refer ``the stiring up'' to the threatening and the promise previously announced. The object seems not to have been to set forth the direct influence of the Spirit on the minds of the people, but to show the effect produced on them by the message conveyed to them from the Lord by the Prophet. God stirs up the minds of men both by his word and by his Spirit, both outwardly and inwardly. The former may more properly be meant here.---Ed.

declaration,

`No one comes to me, except my Father draw him.'
(John 6:44.)

It is therefore said that they came and did the work in the house of Jehovah

We may also hence learn, that no one is fit to offer sacrifices to God, or to do any other service, but he who has been moulded by the hidden operation of the Spirit. Willingly, indeed, we offer ourselves and our all to God, and build his temple; but whence is this voluntary action, except that the Lord subdues us, and thus renders us teachable and obedient? It is afterwards added---

Haggai 1:15

15. In the four and twentieth day of the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king.

15. In die vicesimo quarto mensis sexti, anno secundo Darii regis.

The Prophet mentions even the time when they commenced the building of the temple. Three-and-twenty days interposed between the first message and the beginning of the work. It hence appears how ignorant he was who divided the chapters, having begun the second chapter at this verse, where the Prophet shows, as it were by his finger, how much was the distance between the day in which he began to exhort the people, and the success of which he speaks. He then simply tells us here when the Temple began to be built---that is, in the second year of Darius the king, and in the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month. He had previously said that a message was given to him in the second year of Darius the king, and in the sixth month, and on the first day. Then from that day to the twenty-fourth the people delayed; not that they disregarded the command of the Prophet, but because it was not so easy a thing to persuade them all, that they might unanimously undertake the work. Though then the promptitude of the people is commended, we must yet observe that there was some mixture of weakness; for the effect of the doctrine did not appear till the twenty-fourth day. [149] It afterwards follows---

CHAPTER 2

[149] The reasons assigned here for a different division is by no means satisfactory. The fact is that this verse necessarily belongs to the last of the previous chapter, as it specifies the time when the people began the work as there mentioned; and what follows this verse is another message, and at another time. The usual division is no doubt the best.

Haggai 2

H

Haggai 2:1-5

1. In the seventh month, in the one and twentieth day of the month, came the word of the Lord by the prophet Haggai, saying,

1. In septimo et vicesimo uno mensis (hoc est, septimo mense, vicesima prima die mensis) fuit sermo Iehovae in manu Chaggai Prophetae, dicendo.

2. Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and to the residue of the people, saying,

2. Dic nunc ad Zerubbabel, filium Sealtiel, ducem Jehudah, et ad Jehosuah, filium Jehosadak, sacerdotem magnum, et ad reliquias populi, dicendo.

3. Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?

3. Quis in vobis superstes (vel, residuus, ad verbum) qui viderit domum hanc in gloria sua priore, et quam vos videtis hanc nunc, annon prae illa sicut nihilum in oculis vestris?

4. Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the LORD; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the Lord, and work: for I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts:

4. Et nunc (vel, nunc tamen) fortis sis Zerubbabel, dicit Iehova, et fortis sis Jehosuah, fili Jehosadak, sacerdos magne, et fortis sis omnis populus terrae, dicit Iehova, et operamini, quia ego vobiscum, dicit Iehovah exercituum,

5. According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not.

5. Secundum verbum quod pepigi vobiscum dum egressi estis ex Egypto; et spiritus meus stabit (vel, perseverabit) in medio vestri, ne timeatis.

The Prophet now states another reason why he had been sent by God, in order that he might obviate a temptation which might have hindered the work that was begun. We have seen that they were all stirred up by the celestial spirit to undertake

the building of the Temple. But as Satan, by his many arts, attempts to turn back the godly from their course, so he had devised a reason by which the desire of the people might have been checked. Inasmuch as the old people, who had seen the splendor of the former temple, considered this temple no better than a cottage, all their zeal evaporated; for, as we have said, without a promise there will continue in men no ardor, no perseverance. Now we know what had been predicted by Ezekiel, and what all the other Prophets had testified, especially Isaiah, who had spoken highly of the excellency of the Church, and shown that it was to be superior to its ancient state. (Isaiah 33:21.) Besides, Ezekiel describes the form of the Temple, and states its dimensions. (Ezekiel 41:1.) As then the faithful had learnt from these prophecies that the new Temple would be more splendid than the ancient, they were in danger, not only of becoming cold in the business, but also of being wholly discouraged, when they perceived that the new Temple in no respect reached the excellency and grandeur of the ancient Temple. And these things are described at large by Josephus.

But we may easily conclude, from the words of the Prophet, that there was then a danger lest they should lay aside the work they had begun, except they were encouraged by a new exhortation. And he says that this happened in the seventh month, and on the first day of the month.

Here arises a question, How was it that they so soon compared the new with the old building. Seven or eight days had passed since the work was begun: nothing, doubtless, could have been then constructed, which might have afforded a ground of comparison. It seems then strange, that the Prophet had been so soon sent to them. An answer to this will be easily found, if we bear in mind, that what I have stated at the beginning of the first chapter, that the foundations of the Temple had been previously laid, but that there had been a long interruption: for the people had turned to their own private concerns, and all had become so devoted to their own advantages, that they neglected the building of the Temple. For it is wholly a false notion, that the people had returned from exile before the appointed time, and it has been sufficiently refuted by clear proofs; for scripture expressly declares, that both Cyrus and Darius had been led by a divine impulse to allow the return of the people. Hence, when the Jews returned to their country, they immediately began to build the Temple; but afterwards, as I have said, either avarice, or too anxious a desire for their own private benefit, laid hold on their minds. As then the building of the Temple had been for some time neglected, they were again encouraged, as our Prophet has shown to us. They had now hardly applied their hands to the work, when, through the artifice of Satan, such suggestions as these crept in---``What are ye doing, ye miserable men! Ye wish to build a Temple to your God; but what sort of Temple will it be? Certainly it will not be that which all the Prophets have celebrated. For what do we read in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel? Have not all these testified that the Temple which would be rebuilt after our return from Babylonian exile would be more splendid than the other? But we now build a shed. Surely this is done without authority. We do not then fight under the guidance of God; and it would be better for us to leave off the work; for our service cannot be approved of God, except it be founded on his Word. And we see how far this Temple comes short of what God has

promised.''

We now hence learn, that it was not without reason that Haggai was sent on the eighth day to recover the people from their indifference. And hence also we may learn how necessary it is for us to be constantly stimulated; for Satan can easily find out a thousand impediments, by which he may turn us aside from the right course, except God often repeats his exhortations to keep us awake. Eight days only have elapsed, and the people would have ceased from their work, had not Haggai been sent to encourage them again.

Now the cause of this cessation, which the Prophet designed to obviate and to remove, ought to be especially noticed. The people had before ceased to work, because they were immoderately devoted to their own interest, which was a proof of base ingratitude and of profane impiety: for those who had no care for building the Temple were most ungrateful to God; and then their impiety was intolerable, inasmuch as they sought boarded houses to dwell in, being not content with decent houses without having them adorned, while the Temple was left, as it were, a wilderness. But the cause was different, when Haggai was sent the second time; for their indifference then arose from a good principle and a genuine feeling of religion. But we hence see what a subtle contriver Satan is, who not only draws us away openly from God's service, but insinuates himself in a clandestine manner, so as to turn us aside, under the cover of zeal, from the course of our vocation. How was it that the people became negligent after they had begun the work? even because it grieved the old men to see the glory of the second, so far inferior to the first Temple. For though the people animated themselves by the sound of trumpets, yet the old among them drowned the sound by their lamentations. Whence was this? even because they saw, as I have said, that this Temple was in no way equal to the ancient one; and hence they thought that God was not as yet reconciled to them. Had they said, that so great an expense was not necessary, that God did not require much money to be laid out, their impiety should have been openly manifested; but when they especially wished that the splendor of the Temple would be such, as might surely prove that the restoration of the Church was come, such as had been promised by all the Prophets, we doubtless perceive their pious feeling.

But we are thus reminded, that we ought always to beware of the intrigues of Satan, when they appear under the cover of truth. When, therefore, our minds are disposed to piety, Satan is ever to be feared, lest he should stealthily suggest to us what may turn us aside from our duty; for we see that some leave the Church because they require in it the highest perfection. They are indignant at vices which they deem intolerable, when they cannot be corrected: and thus, under the pretext of zeal, they separate themselves and seek to form for themselves a new world, in which there is to be a perfect Church; and they lay hold on those passages in which the Holy Spirit recommends purity to the Church, as when Paul says, that it was purchased by Christ, that it might be without spot or wrinkle. As then these are inflamed with a zeal so rigid that they depart from God himself and violate the unity of the Church; so also there are many proud men who despise the Church of God, because it shines not forth among them in great pomp; and they think that God does

not dwell in the midst of us, because we are obscure and of no great importance, and also because they regard our few number with contempt.

In all these there is some appearance of piety. How so? Because they would have God to be reverenced, so that they would have the whole world to be filled with the fear of his majesty; or they would have much wealth to be gathered, so that sumptuous offerings might be made. But, as I have already said, Satan thus cunningly insinuates himself; and hence we ought to fear his intrigues, lest, under plausible pretences, he should dazzle our eyes. But the best way of caution is to regard what God commands, and so to rely on his promises as to proceed steadily in our course, though the accomplishment of the promises does not immediately correspond with our desires; for God designedly keeps us in suspense in order to try our faith. Though then he may not as yet fulfill what he has promised, let it yet be our course to attempt nothing rashly, while we are obeying his command. It will then be our chief wisdom, by which we may escape all the crafts of Satan, simply to obey God's word, and to exercise our hope so as patiently to wait the seasonable time, when he will fulfill what he now promises.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that as we are not only alienated in mind from thee, but also often relapse after having been once stirred up by thee, either into perverseness, or into our own vanity, or are led astray by various things, so that nothing is more difficult than to pursue our course until we reach the end of our race,---O grant that we may not confide in our own strength, nor claim for ourselves more than what is right, but, with our hearts raised above, depend on thee alone, and constantly call on thee to supply us with new strength, and so to confirm us that we may persevere to the end in the discharge of our duty, until we shall at length attain the true and perfect form of that temple which thou commandest us to build, in which thy perfect glory shines forth, and into which we are to be transformed by Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Thirty-first

The Prophet, after having declared why it was necessary to add new stimulants, now exhorts Zerubbabel and Joshua, and also the people, to be courageous, and thus to proceed with the work. And he again repeats what he had said, that the Lord was with them; I am with you, he says. Now this one thing is enough for us, that is, when God declares that he is with us; for his aid, we know, is stronger than the whole world, however Satan may on every side attempt to resist us.

He also adds, that his Spirit would be in the midst of them; and then he says, that there was no reason for them to fear. By his Spirit God means the power by which he strengthened their minds, that they might not give way to their trials, or, that fear might not hinder them. And what is particular is joined to what is general; for God is present with his own in various ways: but he especially shows, that he is present when, by his Spirit, he confirms weak minds. He then bids them all to be of a courageous mind. This is one thing. But he also shows whence this courage proceeded; for he sustained them by his Spirit when they were growing faint, or when they were not able to resist fears. The Prophet reminds them by these words, that courage was to be sought from God.

We hence learn that what belongs to our calling and duty is not required from us as though we were able to perform everything; but when the Lord, according to his own right, commands, he offers the help of his Spirit; and thus we ought to connect the promise of grace with the precept, of which foolish men take no notice, who deduce free will from what is commanded: for they thus reason---that it is in vain to require from us what is above our ability, and that as God requires us to form our life according to the rule of the highest perfection, it is therefore in our power to perform the highest justice. But the Prophet here, in the first place, exhorts Joshua and Zerubbabel, and the whole people, to be courageous, and then, he immediately adds, that the Spirit of God would be in the midst of them; as though he had said, that there was no reason for them to despond, though they had not sufficient strength in themselves; for courage was to be sought from the Spirit of God, who would dwell among them. In short, the Prophet teaches us that the faithful are so to strive as not to arrogate anything to themselves, but to offer themselves to be ruled by the Lord, that he may supply them with weapons as well as with strength, and thus conquer in them; for though the victory is ascribed to us it is yet certain that God conquers in us.

He then adds, According to the word; for so I render the particle {את}, at [150] They who think that the Jews are here reminded that it was their duty to obey God, and purely to serve him, and truly to keep his law, according to what he had commanded them when he brought them out of the land of Egypt, far depart from the design of the Prophet; for the Prophet pursues the same subject; and in the latter clause he confirms what I have just mentioned---that the Spirit of God would be in the midst of them. He therefore shows that he promises nothing new, but what God had formerly engaged to give to their fathers. If any one prefers taking the particle {את}, at in an explicative sense, I do not object; for the meaning would be the same---that this is the word which he had promised. The object of the Prophet is by no means doubtful; for he means to teach us that God is faithful and constant in his promises, and that the Jews would find this to be the case, for he would perform what he had formerly promised to their fathers. The word, he says, which I had covenanted with you when I brought you out of Egypt. For the Prophets were wont to remind the faithful of the ancient covenant, that they might gain more credit to their special prophecies. We indeed know that whatever God had promised to the Jews, was founded on their first adoption. When, therefore, the Prophets brought forward the ancient covenant, it was the same as though they led the Jews back to the fountain itself; for the promises, which now and then occurred, were like streams which flowed from the first spring, even their gratuitous covenant.

[150] This is the most approved manner. There is no instance in which it means "according." It may be rendered—"This is the word," etc. There were two things which were intended to dispel their fear—the covenant made with the fathers, and the Spirit of God—the spirit of prophecy, "standing," or existing among them. The Chaldee Paraphrase is—"My Prophets are teaching among you." The verse may be thus translated— This is the word which I covenanted with you At your coming forth from Egypt, And my Spirit is continuing among you; fear not. Junius and Tremelius render the [{,את}[``with,'' and the verse thus--- With the word (i.e., having the word) which I covenanted with you When ye came forth from Egypt, And with my Spirit standing among you, fear not. Henderson considers ``the word,'' and ``my Spirit,'' to be nominatives to the particle ``standing,'' or rather to the auxiliary verb which is to be understood before it, and that ``standing'' is in the singular number, on account of the nearer nominative ``my Spirit.'' Newcome follows our version, and views [{את}] as a preposition---``according to.''---Ed.

We now then see why an express mention is made of the ancient compact which God had made with the chosen people at their departure out of Egypt.

It must also be observed, that God became then the Redeemer of his people, in order to be their eternal Father, and thus to be the perpetual guardian of their safety. Hence the design of what the Prophet says is to show that their fathers were not formerly redeemed, that their children might reject God, but that he might continue his favor to his people to the end. But the ultimate issue is to be found in Christ, that is, the full accomplishment; for God does not cease to show kindness in him to his chosen people, but performs much more fully and abundantly what he had previously exhibited under types and shadows. For whatever he conferred on his ancient Church, was, as it were, a prelude of his vast bounty, which was at length made known by the coming of Christ.

We now clearly apprehend what the Prophet meant: For he upbraided the Jews for their stupidity, because they did not consider that their fathers were formerly delivered from Egypt, that God might defend them to the end. Hence he bids them maturely to examine the design and character of the covenant which God made at their departure from Egypt; for he entered into covenant with them, that he might be their Redeemer, and confer on them the fullness of all blessings. Since it is so, he says, the time is now come when God will perform what he then promised to your fathers; and whatever faithfulness ye have hitherto found in God, ought to be applied for this end---that ye may feel assured that ye have been now restored to your country, in order that he might re-establish his Church, and that ye might not continue in that low condition, which now depresses your minds. As then ye ought to look for that fullness of happiness which God formerly promised, either his covenant is void and he unfaithful, or ye ought with cheerfulness and alacrity to proceed with the work. It follows---

Haggai 2:6-9

6. For thus saith the LORD of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land;

6. Quia sit dicit Iehova exercituum, Adhuc unum modicum hoc, et ego commovebo coelos et terram et mare et aridam;

7. And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts.

7. Et commovebo omnes gentes, et venient, desiderium omnium gentium; et implebo domum hance gloria, dicit Iehova exercituum.

8. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the LORD of hosts.

8. Meum argentum, et meum aurum, dicit Iehova exercituum.

9. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the LORD of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of hosts.

9. Major erit gloria domus hujus secundae (posterioris, ad verbum,) quam prioris dicit Iehova exercituum: et in loco hoc dabo pacem, dicit Iehova exercituum.

Here the Prophet expresses more clearly, and confirms more fully, what I have said---that God would in time bring help to the miserable Jews, because he would not disappoint the assurance given to the fathers. This declaration, then, depends

on the covenant before mentioned; and hence the causative particle is used, For thus saith Jehovah of hosts, as yet a small one it is, or, yet shortly, I will fill this house with glory. The expression a small thing, most interpreters apply to time. Yet there are those who think the subject itself is denoted. The more received opinion is, that it means a small duration, a short time, because God would soon make a change for the better. ``Though then there does not as yet appear the accomplishment of the promises, by which ye have hitherto supported your faith and your hope, yet after a short time God will really prove that he has spoken nothing falsely to you.''

There are yet some, as I have said, who think that the matter itself is denoted by the Prophet, even that the Temple did not yet appear in splendor before the eyes of men, a small one it is, that is, Ye see not indeed a building such as that was, before the Assyrians and the Chaldeans took possession of the city; but let not your eyes remain fixed on the appearance of this Temple. Let then this small one as yet pass by; but in a short time this house will be filled with glory

With regard to the main object, it was the Prophet's design to strengthen the minds of the godly, that they might not think that the power of God was inefficient, though he had not as yet performed what they had hoped. In short, they were not to judge by present appearances of what had been previously said of their redemption. We said yesterday that the minds of the godly were heavily depressed, because the Prophets had spoken in high terms of the Temple as well as of the kingdom: the kingdom was as yet nothing; and the temple was more like a shed than what might have been compared in glory with the former Temple. It was hence necessary for the Prophet to meet this objection; and this is the reason why he bids them to overlook the present appearance, and to think of the glory which was yet hidden. As yet, he says, it is a small one; that is, ``There is no reason for you to despair, though the grandeur of the Temple does not as yet appear to be so great as you have conceived; but, on the contrary, let your minds pass over to that restoration which is still far distant. As yet then a small one it is; and I will move the heavens and the earth.'' [151]

In a word, God here bids them to exercise patience, until he should put forth the ineffable power of his hand to restore fully his Church; and this is what is meant by the shaking of the heaven and the earth.

But this is a remarkable passage. The Jews indeed, who are very absurd in everything connected with the kingdom of Christ, pervert what is here said by the Prophet, and even reduce it to nothing. But the Apostle in Hebrews 12:1 reminds us of what God means here. For this passage contains an implied contrast between the law and the gospel, between redemption, just mentioned here, and that which was to be expected, and was at length made known by the coming of Christ. God, then, when he redeemed his people from Egypt, as well as from Babylon, moved the earth: but

[151] Our common version is no doubt the best, and is materially followed by Newcome, Henderson, and many others. Retaining the tense of the passage, I would render the clause thus, Yet once, shortly will it be, And I will shake, etc. "Shortly will it be," [{מעט} {היא}] (shortly it) may be taken as a parenthesis. Yet once more, in a short time---Newcome. Yet once, within a little,---Henderson. The shaking of the heavens, earth, sea, and dry land is explained, according to the common manner of the Prophets, in the next verse, by shaking of all nations: the material world is named in the first instance, while its inhabitants are intended. So Henderson very properly renders the [{נ}] at the beginning of the seventh verse, ``Yea.''---Ed.

the Prophet announces here something greater---that God would shake the heaven and the earth. But that the meaning of the Prophet may appear more evident, each sentence must be examined in order.

He says first, this once, shortly. I am inclined to apply this to time, that I may not depart from what is commonly received. But there is no reason for us to contend on the subject, because it makes little or no difference as to the main point. For we have said that what the Prophet had in view was to show that the Jews were not to fix their eyes and their minds on the appearance of the Temple at the time: ``Allow,'' he says, ``and give place to hope, because your present state shall not long remain; for the Lord will shake the heaven and the earth; think then of God's power, how great it is; does he not by his providence rule both the earth and the heaven? And he will shake all things above and below, rather than not to restore his Church; he will rather change the appearance of the whole world, than that redemption should not be fully accomplished. Be not then unwilling to be satisfied with these preludes, but know what God's power can do: for though it may be necessary to throw the heaven and the earth into confusions, yet this shall be done, rather than that your enemies should prevent that full restoration, of which the Prophets have so often spoken.'' But the Apostle very justly says, that the gospel is here set in contrast with the law; for God exhibited his wonderful power, when the law was promulgated on mount Sinai; but a fuller power shone forth at the coming of Christ, for then the heaven, as well as the earth, was shaken. It is not, then, without reason that the Apostle concludes that God speaks now to us from heaven, for his majesty appears more splendid in the gospel than formerly in the law: and hence we are less excusable, if we despise him now speaking in the person of his only begotten Son, and thus speaking to show to us that the whole world is subject to him.

He then adds, I will move all the nations, and they shall come. After having mentioned the heaven and the earth, he now shows that he would arrest the attention of all mortals, so as to turn them according to his will, in any way it may please him: Come, he says, shall all nations---How? because I shall shake them. Here again the Prophet teaches us that men come not to Christ except through the wonderful agency of God. He might have spoken more simply, I will lead all nations, as it is said elsewhere; but his purpose was to express something more, even that the impulse by which God moves his elect to betake themselves to the fold of Christ is supernatural. Shaking seems a forcible act. Lest men, then, should obscure the power of God, by which they are roused that they may obey Christ, and submit to his authority, it is here by the Prophet expressed by this term, in order that they might understand that the Lord does not work in an usual or common manner, when they are thus changed.

But it must be also observed, that men are thus powerfully, and in an extraordinary or supernatural manner influenced, so that they follow spontaneously at the same time. The operation of God is then twofold; for it is first necessary to shake men, that they may unlearn their whole character, that is, that forgetting their former nature, they may willingly receive the yoke of Christ. We indeed know how great is our perverseness, and how unnameable we are, until God subdues us by

his Spirit. There is need in such a case of a violent shaking. But we are not forced to obey Christ, as lions and wild beasts are, who indeed yield, but still retain their inward ferocity, and roar, though led in chains and subdued by scourges and beatings. We are not, then, so shaken, that our inward rebellion remains in us; but we are shaken, so that our disposition is changed, and we receive willingly the yoke of Christ. This is the reason why the Prophet says, I will shake all nations, and they shall come; that is, there will be indeed a wonderful conversion, when the nations who previously despised God, and regarded true religion and piety with the utmost hatred, shall habituate themselves to the ruling power of God: and they shall come, because they shall be so drawn by his hidden influence, that the obedience they shall render will be voluntary. We now perceive the meaning of the Prophet.

He afterwards adds, The desire of all nations. This admits of two explanations. The first is, that nations shall come and bring with them everything that is precious, in order to consecrate it to the service of God; for the Hebrews call whatever is valuable a desire; so that under this term they include all riches, honors, pleasures, and everything of this kind. Hence some render the passage thus, I will shake all nations, and come shall the desire of all nations. As there is a change of number; others will have {ב}, beth, or {מ}, mem, to be understood, They shall come with what they desire; that is, the nations shall not come empty, but shall gather all their treasures to be a holy oblation to God. But we may understand what he says of Christ, Come shall the desire of all nations, and I will fill this house with glory. We indeed know that Christ was the expectation of the whole world, according to what is said by Isaiah. And it may be properly said, that when the desire of all nations shall come, that is, when Christ shall be manifested, in whom the wishes of all ought to center, the glory of the second Temple shall then be illustrious; but as it immediately follows, Mine is the silver, and mine is the gold, the more simple meaning is that which I first stated---that the nations would come, bringing with them all their riches, that they might offer themselves and all their possessions as a sacrifice to God.

It is, then, better to read what follows as an explanation, Mine is the silver, mine is the gold, saith Jehovah; that is, ``I have not through want of money deferred hitherto the complete building of the Temple; for what can hinder me from amassing gold and silver from all quarters? Should it so please me, I could in a short time build a Temple by all the wealth of the world. Is it not indeed in my power to create mountains of gold and silver, by which I might erect for myself a Temple? Ye hence see that wealth is not wanting to me to build the Temple which I have promised; but the time is not arrived. Therefore they who believe the preceding predictions, ought to wait and to look forward, until the suitable time shall come.'' This is the import of the passage. [152]

[152] Many have been the criticisms on this clause, both as to its grammatical construction and as to the import of the word rendered "desire." The verb "come" is plural, and the word for "desire" is singular. The easiest solution, and countenanced by the Septuagint, where the word is rendered {τὰ} {ἐκλεκτὰ}---``choice things,'' is to consider [{חמדת}] as a plural, the [{ו}] being omitted. This would remove the grammatical anomaly, and the sentiment, as Calvin says, woud be more consonant with the context. And come shall the choice things of all nations. There is no ground for the objection which Bishop Chandler states, that to ``come'' is in this case an improper expression; for there are other similar instances. See Joshua 6:12; Isaiah 60:5. It is also applied to trees, Isaiah 60:13; and to incense, Jeremiah 6:20. Newcome takes the word as a plural, but applies it as deliciae in Latin to a person, and refers to Daniel 9:23; where Daniel is called ,[{חמודות}] rendered in our version ``greatly beloved.'' The version of Henderson

He at length declares that the glory of the second Temple would be greater than that of the first, and that there would be peace in that place. As to the words there is nothing obscure; but we ought especially to attend to what is said.

It must, indeed, be first observed, that what is said here of the future glory of the Temple is to be applied to the excellency of those spiritual blessings which appeared when Christ was revealed, and are still conspicuous to us through faith; for ungodly men are so blind that they see them not. And this we must bear in mind, lest we dream like some gross interpreters, who think that what is here said was in part fulfilled when Herod reconstructed the Temple. For though that was a sumptuous building, yet there is no doubt but that it was an attempt of the Devil to delude the Jews, that they might cease to hope for Christ. Such was also, probably, the craft of Herod. We indeed know that he was only a half-Jew. He professed himself to be one of Abraham's children; but he accommodated his habits, we know, to those of the Jews, oddly for his own advantage. That they might not look for Christ, this delusive and empty spectacle was presented to them, so as almost to astound them. Though this, however, may not have entered into the mind of Herod, it is yet certain that the Devil's design was to present to the Jews this deceptive shade, that they might not raise up their thoughts to look for the coming of Christ, as the time was then near at hand.

God might, indeed, immediately at the beginning have caused a magnificent temple to be built: as he had allowed a return to the people, so he might have given them courage, and supplied them with materials, to render the latter Temple equal or even superior to the Temple of Solomon. But Cyrus prohibited by an edict the Temple to be built so high, and he also made its length somewhat smaller: Why was this done? and why also did Darius do the same, who yet liberally helped the Jews, and spared no expense in building the Temple? How was it that both these kings, though guided by the Spirit of God, did not allow the Temple to be built with the same splendor with which it had been previously erected? This did not happen without the wonderful counsel of God; for we know how gross in their notions the Jews had been, and we see that even the Apostles were entangled in the same error; for they expected that the kingdom of Christ would be no other than an earthly one. Had then this Temple been equally magnificent with the former, and had the kingdom become such as it had been, the Jews would have acquiesced in these outward pomps; so that Christ would have been despised, and God's spiritual favor would have been esteemed as nothing. Since, then, they were so bent on earthly happiness, it was necessary for them to be awakened; and the Lord had regard to their weakness, by not allowing a splendid Temple to be built. But in suffering a counterfeit Temple to be built by Herod, when the manifestation of Christ was nigh, he manifested his vengeance by punishing their ingratitude, rather than his favor; and I call it counterfeit, because its splendor was never approved by God. Though Herod spent great treasures on that building, he yet profaned rather than adorned the Temple. Foolishly, then, do some

is the following--- And the things desired by all nations shall come. He considers that they are the blessings of the kingdom of Christ, and thinks that the Prophet refers to the general expectation which pervaded the world of some better state of things, and especially of some deliverer. But the most tenable is the view of Calvin, which has been held by Kimchi, Drusius, Vitringa, and others.---Ed.

commemorate what Helena, queen of Adiabenians, had laid out, and think that thus a credit is in some measure secured to this prophecy. But it was on the contrary Satan who attempted to deceive by such impostures and crafts, that he might draw away the minds of the godly from the beauty of the spiritual Temple.

But why does the prophet mention gold and silver? He did this in conformity with what was usual and common; for whenever the Prophets speak of the kingdom of Christ, they delineate or describe its splendor in figurative terms, suitable to their own age. When Isaiah foretells the restoration of the Church, he declares that the Church would be all gold and silver, and whatever glittered with precious stones; and in Isaiah 60:1 he especially sets forth the magnificence of the Temple, as though nations from all parts were to bring for sacrifice all their precious things. But Isaiah speaks figuratively, as all the other Prophets do. So then what we read of gold and of silver ought to be so explained as to be applied mystically to the kingdom of Christ; as we have already observed respecting Malachi 1:11---

`They shall offer to me, saith the Lord,
pure sacrifices from the rising to the setting of the sun.'

What are these sacrifices? Are heifers yet to be offered, or lambs, or other animals? By no means; but we must regard the spiritual character of the priesthood; for as the gold of which the Prophet now speaks, and the silver, ought to be taken in a spiritual sense; for since Christ has appeared in the world, it is not God's will to be served with gold and silver vessels; so also there is no altar on which victims are to be sacrificed, and no candlestick; in a word, all the symbols of the law have ceased. It hence follows that the Prophet speaks of the spiritual ornaments of the Temple. And thus we perceive how the glory of the second Temple is to be greater than that of the first.

It then follows, that God would give peace in this place; as though he had said that it would be well with the Jews if they only waited patiently for the complete fulfillment of redemption. But it must be observed, that this peace was not so evident to them that they could enjoy it according to the perception of the flesh; but it was that kind of peace of which Paul speaks, and which, he says, exceeds all understanding (Philippians 4:7.) In short, the people could not have comprehended what the Prophet teaches here respecting the future splendor of the Temple, except they leaped over all the obstacles which seemed to obstruct the progress of complete redemption; and so it was ever necessary for them to have recourse to this truth---yet a little while; as though he said that they were patiently to endure while God was exercising their faith: but that the time would come, and that shortly, when the Lord would fill that house with glory that is, when Christ would bring witch him all fullness of glory; for though they were to gather the treasures of a thousand worlds into one mass, such a glory would yet be corruptible; but when God the Father appeared in the person of his own Son, he then glorified indeed his Temple; and his majesty shone forth so much that there was nothing wanting to a complete perfection.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that since we are by nature extremely prone to superstition, we may carefully consider what is the true and right way of serving thee, such as thou

dost desire and approve, even that we offer ourselves spiritually to thee, and seek no other altar but Christ, and relying on no other priest, hope to be acceptable and devoted to thee, that he may imbue us with the Spirit which has been fully poured on him, so that we may from the heart devote ourselves to thee, and thus proceed patiently in our course, that with minds raised upwards we may ever go on towards that glory which is as yet hid under hope, until it shall at length be manifested in due time, when thine only-begotten Son shall appear with the elect angels for our final redemption. Amen.

Lecture one hundred and Thirty-second

Haggai 2:10-14

10. In the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying,

10. Vicesimo quarto noni (mensis, subaudiendum,) anno secundo Darii, fuit sermo Iehovae ad Chaggai Prophetam, dicendo.

11. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Ask now the priests concerning the law, saying,

11. Sic dicit Iehova exercituum, Interroga Sacerdotes de Lege, dicendo,

12. If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat, shall it be holy? And the priests answered and said, No.

12. Si sustulerit vir (quispiam) carnem sanctam in ala vestis suae, et tetegerit ala sua panem, et coctionem, et vinum, et olcum, et quodvis edulium, an sanctificabitur? Et responderunt Sacerdotes et dixerunt, Non.

13. Then said Haggai, If one that is unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean.

13. Et dixit Chaggai, Si tetegerit pollutus in anima omne hoc, an polluetur? Responderunt Sacerdotes, et dixerunt, Polluetur.

14. Then answered Haggai, and said, So is this people, and so is this nation before me, saith the LORD; and so is every work of their hands; and that which they offer there is unclean.

14. Et respondi Chaggai et dixit, Sic populus iste, et sic gens ista in conspectu meo, dicit Iehova: et sic omne opus manuum ipsorum, et quod obtulerint illic, pollutum erit.

Though interpreters seem to perceive the meaning of the Prophet, yet no one really and clearly expresses what he means and intends to teach us: nay, they adduce nothing but what is jejune and frigid; for they refer all these things to this point,---that sacrifices were not acceptable to God before the people had begun to build the Temple, but that from that time they were pleasing to God, because the people, in offering sacrifices in a waste place, proved by such negligence that they disregarded the command of God: but when their hands were applied to the work, God was appeased, and thus he began to accept their sacrifices which before he had rejected. This is, indeed, a part of what is meant, but not the whole; and the Prophet's main object seems to me to be wholly different. He has been hitherto exhorting the people to build the Temple; he now exhorts them to build from a pure motive, and not to think that they had done everything when the Temple assumed a fine appearance

before the eyes of men, for God required something else. Hence, I have no doubt but that the Prophet intended here to raise up the minds of the people to the spiritual worship of God.

It was, indeed, necessary diligently to build the Temple, but the end was also to be regarded; for God never cared for external ceremonies; nor was he delighted with that building as men are with their splendid houses. As the Jews absurdly ascribed these gross feelings to God, the Prophet here shows why so strict a command had been given as to the building of the Temple; and the reason was,---that God might be worshipped in a pure and holy manner.

I will repeat again what I have said, that the explanation may be more familiar to you. When the people neglected the building of the Temple, they manifested their impiety and their contempt of Divine worship: for what was the cause of their delay and tardiness, except that each of them regarded nothing but just his own private interest? Now, when all of them strenuously undertook the work of building the Temple, their industry was indeed laudable, for it was a proof of their piety: but when the people thought that God required nothing more than a splendid Temple, it was manifest superstition: for the worship of God, we know, is corrupted when it is confined to external things; for, in this manner God is transformed into a nature not his own: as he is a Spirit, so he must be spiritually worshipped by us. Whosoever then obtrudes on him only external pomps in order to pacify him, most childishly trifles with him. This second part, in my view, is what the Prophet now undertakes to handle. From the seventh to the ninth month they had been diligently engaged in the work which the Lord had commanded them to do: but men, as we know, busy themselves with external things and neglect spiritual worship; hence it was necessary to join what is said here, that the people might understand, that it was not enough to satisfy God, though they spared neither expense nor labor in building the Temple; but that something greater was required, even to worship God in it in a pure and holy manner. This is the design of the whole passage. But we must first examine the Prophet's words, and then it will be easier to gather the whole import of his doctrine.

He says then that he was ordered by God, on the twenty fourth day of the month, in the same year, in the second year of Darius, to ask the priests concerning the law [153] Haggai is not bid to inquire respecting the whole law, but only that the priests should answer a question according to the Word of God, or the doctrine of the law according to what is commonly said---What is law, is the question: for it was not allowed to the priests to allege anything they pleased indiscriminately; but they were only interpreters of the law. This is the reason why God bids his Prophet to inquire what the law of Moses defines as to the ceremony mentioned here. And the design was, that the people, being convinced as to the legal ceremonies, might not contend nor glamour, but acknowledge that all sorts are condemned as sinful which flow not from a pure and sincere heart.

Haggai asks first, If a man takes holy flesh ---that is, some part of the sacrifice,---if

[153] This clause is literally rendered by Newcome—"Ask now the law from the priests;" or, according to the order of the words, "Ask now from the priests the law."—Ed.

any one takes and carries it in a sleeve or skirt, that is, in any part of his vestment, and then touches bread, or oil, or any eatable thing, will anything connected with that holy flesh be sanctified by mere touch? The priests answer, No. Here also interpreters grossly mistake: for they take sanctified as meaning polluted, altogether falsely; for there is here a twofold question proposed. Whether holy flesh sanctifies anything it may touch? and then, whether an impure and a polluted man contaminates whatever he may touch? As to the first question, the priests wisely and truly answer, that there is no such efficacy in sacrifices, as that they can sanctify what they may touch: and this is true. The second definition is also most proper, that whatever is touched by an unclean man is polluted, as the law everywhere declares.

The Prophet then accommodates this to his present case, So, he says, is this people, and this nation, and the work of their hands. For as long as they are polluted, however they may spend money in sacrifices, and greatly weary themselves in worshipping God, not only is their labor vain, but whatever they offer is polluted, and is an abomination only. We now understand the words of the Prophet, and so we may now consider the subject.

But before I speak generally of the present subject, I shall first notice what the Prophet says here, that he inquired respecting the law; for it was not allowed to the priests to allege anything they pleased. We indeed know, that they had advanced into such licentiousness, as arbitrarily to demand what God had never commanded, and also to forbid the people what was lawful, the use of which had been permitted by God's law. But Haggai does not here allow such a liberty to the priests; he does not ask what they thought, but what was required by the law of the Lord. And this is worthy of being noticed; for it is a pernicious evil to exercise an arbitrary control over the conscience. And yet the devil has ever corrupted the worship of God, and the whole system of religion, under the pretense of extolling the authority of the Church. It is indeed true, that the sacerdotal office was very honorable and worthy of respect; but we must ever take heed lest men assume too much, and lest what is thoughtlessly conceded to them should deprive God of what belongs to him; as the case is, we know, under the Papacy. When the Pope seeks to show that all his commands ought without any dispute to be obeyed, he quotes what is found in Deuteronomy 17:8 ---

`If a question arises about the law,
the high priest shall judge between what is sacred and profane.'

This is indeed true; but was it permitted to the high priest to disregard God's law, and foolishly to allege this or that according to his own judgement? Nay, the priest was only an interpreter of the law. Whenever then God bids those pastors to be heard whom he sets over his Church, his will is, as it has been before stated, that he himself should be heard through their mouth. In short, whatever authority is exercised in the Church ought to be subjected to this rule---that God's law is to retain its own pre-eminence, and that men blend nothing of their own, but only define what is right according to the Word of the Lord. Now this is by the way; I come now to the main point.

The priests answered, that neither flesh, nor oil, nor wine, was sanctified by touch-

ing a piece or part of a sacrifice. Why? because a sacrifice sanctifies not things unclean, except by way of expiation; for this, we know, was the design of sacrifices---that men who were polluted might reconcile themselves to God. A right answer was then given by the priests, that unclean flesh or unclean oil is not sanctified by the touch of holy flesh. Why? because the flesh itself was not dedicated to God for this end---to purify what was unclean by a mere touch. Yet, on the other hand, it is most true, that when a man was unclean he polluted whatever he touched. It is commonly thought, that he is said to be unclean in his soul who had defiled himself by touching a corpse; but I differ from this. The word soul is often taken in the law for man himself.---

`The soul that eats of what died of itself is polluted;
the soul that touches a corpse is polluted.'
(Leviticus 17:15.)

Hence he is here said to be polluted in his soul, who had an outward uncleanness, as we say in French, Pollu en sa personne. Whosoever then is unclean pollutes by touch only whatever might have been otherwise clean; and the conclusion sufficiently proves that this is the purport of this passage. [154] I have said enough of what the design of the Prophet is, but the subject must be more fully explained.

We know how heedlessly men are wont to deal with God; for they trifle with him like children with their puppets. And this presumption has been condemned, as it is well known, even by heathens. Hardly a Prophet could have inveighed more severely against this gross superstition than Persius, who compares sacrifices, so much thought of by all, to puppets, and shows that other things are required by God, even

A well ordered condition and piety of soul, and an inward purity
of mind, and a heart imbued with generous virtue. [155]

He means then that men ought to be imbued with true holiness, and that inwardly, so that there should be nothing fictitious or feigned. He says that they who are such, that is, who have imbibed the true fear of God, do rightly serve him, thought they may bring only a crumb of incense, and that others only profane the worship of God, though they may bring many oxen; for whatever they think avails to cover their filth is polluted by new and repeated filth. And this is what has been expressed by heathen authors: another poet says, -

An impious right hand does not rightly worship the celestials. [156]

So they spoke according to the common judgement of natural knowledge. As to the Philosophers, they ever hold this principle---that no sacrifice is rightly offered to God except the mind be right and pure. But yet the Philosophers, as well as the Poets, adopted this false notion, by which Satan beguiled all men, from the least to

[154] The words are [{,[{נפש}-{טמא polluted of soul, or polluted soul. When pollution by a carcase or a dead body is meant, the preposition [{ל}] is put before .[{נפש}] See Numbers 5:2; 9:6,7,10. A polluted person seems to be intended here, without any reference to the way in which he became so; and this is sufficient for the purpose of the Prophet. Theodoret takes this sense---{ἀκάθαρτόν} {τινα}---``an unclean person.'' But most agree with our version; so do Jerome, Dathius, Newcome, Henderson, and others---``the polluted by a dead body.''---Ed.

[155] Compositum jus, fasque animi, sanctosque recesssus Mentis, et incoctum generoso pectus honesto.—Per. Sat. 2. 74.

[156] Non ben celestes impia dextra colit.

the greatest---that God is pacified by ceremonies: hence have proceeded so many expiations, in which foolish men trusted, and by which they thought that God would be propitious to them, thought they obstinately continued daily to procure for themselves new punishments, and, as it were, avowedly to carry on war with God himself.

They admit at this day, under the Papacy, this principle that the true fear of God is necessary, as hypocrisy contaminates all the works of men; nor will they indeed dare to commend those who seek feignedly and triflingly to satisfy God, when they are filled with pride, contempt, and impiety. And yet they will never receive what the Prophet says here---that men not only lose all their labor, but also contract new pollution, when they seek to pacify God by their sacrifices, unaccompanied by inward purity. For whence is that partial righteousness which the Papists imagine? For they say, that if one does not keep the whole law, yet obedience in part is approved by God; and nothing is more common among them than this expression, partial righteousness. If then an adulterer refrains from theft, and lays out in alms some of his wealth, they will have this to be charity, and declare it to be acceptable. Though it proceeds from an unclean man, it is yet made a covering, which is deemed sufficient in some way or another to pacify God. Thus the Papists seek, without exercising any discrimination, to render God bound to them by their works, though they may be full of all uncleanness. We hence see that this error has not sprung up today or yesterday for the first time; but it is inherent in the bones and marrows of men; for they have ever thought that their services please God, though they may be unclean themselves.

Hence this definition must be borne in mind---that works, however splendid they may appear before our eyes, are of no value or importance before God, except they flow from a pure heart. Augustine has very wisely explained this in his fourth book against Julia. He says, that it would be an absurd thing for the faithful to judge of works by the outward appearance; but that they ought to be estimated according to the fountain from which they proceed, and also according to their design. Now the fountain of works I consider to be integrity of heart, and the design or end is, when the object of men is to obey God and to consecrate their life to him. Hence then we learn the difference between good and evil works, between vices and virtues, that is, from the inward state of the mind, and from the object in view. This is the subject of the Prophet in the first clause; and he drew an answer from the priests, which was wholly consistent with the law; and it amounted to this, that no work, however praised and applauded by the world, is valued before God's tribunal, except it proceeds from a pure heart.

Now as to the second part, it is no less difficult to convince men of its truth---that whatever they touch is contaminated, when they are themselves unclean; and yet this is what God had plainly made known to the Jews: and the priests hesitated not nor doubted, but immediately returned an answer, as though the matter was well known---that an unclean man contaminates whatever thing he touches. But when we come to apply the subject, men then reject what they had been clearly taught; nay, what they are forced to confess, until they see the matter brought home to them, and then they begin to accuse God of too much rigour: ``Why is this, that whatever

we touch is polluted, though we might leave some defilement? Are not our works still deserving of some praise, as they are good works?'' And hence also is the common saying, That works, which are in their kind good, are always in a measure meritorious, and though they are without faith, they yet avail to merit the gift of faith, inasmuch as they are in themselves praiseworthy, as chastity, liberality, sobriety, temperance, beneficence, and all alms giving. But God declares that these virtues are polluted, though men may admire them, and that they are only abominable filth, except the heart be really cleansed and purified. Why so? because nothing can flow from an impure and polluted fountain but what is impure and polluted.

It is now easy to understand how suitably the Prophet had led the priests and the whole people to see this difference. For if he had abruptly said this to them---that no work pleased God, except the doer himself had been cleansed from every defilement, there would have arisen immediately many disputations: ``Why will God reject what is in itself worthy of praise? When one observes chastity, when another liberally lays out a part of his property, when a third devotes himself wholly to promote the good of the public, when magnanimity and firmness shine forth in one, when another cultivates the liberal arts---are not these such virtues as deserve some measure of praise!'' Thus a great glamour would have been raised among the people, had not Haggai made this kind of preface---that according to the law what is unclean is not sanctified by the touch of holy flesh, and also that whatever is touched by an unclean person is polluted. What the law then prescribed in its rituals silenced all those clamours, which might have immediately arisen among the people. Moreover, though ceremonies have now ceased and are no longer in use, yet what God has once declared still retains its force---that whatever we touch is polluted by us, except there be a real purity of heart to sanctify our works.

Let us now inquire how our works please God: for no one is ever found to be pure and perfect, as the most perfect are defiled with some vices; so that their works are always sprinkled with some spots and blemishes, and contract some uncleanness from the hidden filth of their hearts. In answer to this, I say first, that all our works are corrupt before God and abominable in his sight, for the heart is naturally corrupt: but when God purifies our hearts by faith, then our works begin to be approved, and obtain praise before him; for the heart is cleansed by faith, and purity is diffused over our works, so that they begin to be pleasing to God. For this reason Moses says, that Abel pleased God with his sacrifices,

``The Lord had respect to Abel and to his gifts.''
(Genesis 4:4.)

Had Moses said only, that the sacrifices of Abel were approved by God, he would have spoken unadvisedly, or at least obscurely; for he would have been silent on the main thing. But he begins with the person, as though he had said, that Abel pleased God, because he worshipped him with an upright and sincere heart. He afterwards adds, that his sacrifices were approved, for they proceeded from the true fear of God and sincere piety. So Paul, when speaking of the real keeping of the law, says, that the end of the law is love from a pure heart and faith unfeigned. (1 Timothy 1:5.) He shows then that no work is deemed right before God, except it proceeds from

that fountain, even faith unfeigned, which is always connected with an upright and sincere heart. This is one thing.

Secondly, we must bear in mind how God purifies our hearts by faith. There is indeed a twofold purification: He first forms us in his image, and engraves on us true and real fear, and an obedient disposition. This purity of the heart diffuses itself over our works; for when we are imbued with true piety, we have no other object but to offer ourselves and all we have to God. Far indeed are they who are hypocrites and profane men from having this feeling; nay, they are wholly alienated from it: they offer liberally their own things to God, but they wish to be their own masters; for a hypocrite will never give up himself as a spiritual sacrifice to God. We hence see how faith purifies our hearts, and also purifies our works: for having been regenerated by the Spirit of God, we offer to him first ourselves and then all that we have. But as this purgation is never found complete in man, it is therefore necessary that there should come an aid from gratuitous acceptance. Our hearts then are purified by faith, because God imputes not to us that uncleanness which remains, and which defiles our works. As then God regards with gracious acceptance that purity which is not as yet perfect, so he causes that its contagion should not reach to our works. When Abel offered sacrifices to God, he was indeed perfect, inasmuch as there was nothing feigned or hypocritical in him: but he was a man, we know, encompassed with infirmity. It was therefore necessary for his remaining pollution to have been purified by the grace of Christ. Hence it was that his sacrifices were accepted: for as he was accepted, so God graciously received whatever proceeded from him.

We now then see how men, while in a state of nature, displease God by their works, and can bring nothing but what is corrupt, filthy, and abominable. We farther see how the children of God, after having been renewed by his Spirit, come pure to him and offer him pure sacrifices: they come pure, because it is their object to devote themselves to God without any dissimulation; but as this devotedness is never perfect, God supplies the defect by a gratuitous imputation, for he embraces them as his servants in the same manner as though they were entirely formed in all righteousness. And in the same way he approves of their works, for all their spots are wiped away, yea, those very spots, which might justly prevent all favor; were not all uncleanness washed away by the blood of Christ, and that through faith.

We hence learn, that there is no ground for any one to deceive himself with vain delusions, by attempting to please God with great pomp: for the first thing of which the Prophet treats here is always required, that is, that a person must be pure in his heart, that inward purity must precede every work. And though this truth meets us everywhere in all the Prophets, yet as hypocrisy dazzles our eyes and blinds all our senses, it ought to be seriously considered by us; and we ought to notice in an especial manner not only this passage but other similar passages where the Prophets ridicule the solicitude of the people, when they busied themselves with sacrifices and outward observances, and neglected the principal thing---real purity of heart.

We must also take notice of what the Prophet says in the last verse, that so was every work of their hand and whatever they offered [157] It seems apparently a hard

[157] The literal rendering of the verse would be as follows,— Then answered Haggai and said,

matter, that the very sacrifices were condemned as polluted. But it is no wonder that fictitious modes of worship, by which profane men dishonor God, should be repudiated by him; for they seek to transform him according to their own fancy, as though he might be soothed by playthings or such trifles. It is therefore a most disgraceful mockery when men deal thus with God, offering him only external ceremonies, and disregarding his nature: for they make no account of spiritual worship, and yet think that they please him. We must then, in a word, make this remark---that the Prophet teaches us here, that it is not enough for men to show obedience to God, to offer sacrifices, to spend labor in building the Temple, except these things were rightly done---and how rightly? by a sincere heart, so there should be no dissimulation, no duplicity.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that inasmuch as we come from our mother's womb wholly impure and polluted, and afterwards continually contract so many new defilements,---O grant that we may flee to the fountain, which alone can cleanse us. And as there is no other way by which we can be cleansed from all the defilements of the flesh, except we be sprinkled by the blood of thy only begotten Son, and that by the hidden power of thy Spirit, and thus renounce all our vices,---O grant that we may so strive truly and sincerely to devote ourselves to thee, as daily to renounce more and more all our evil affections, and to have nothing else as our object, but to submit our minds and all our affections to thee, by really denying ourselves, and to exercise ourselves in this strenuous effort as long as we are in this world, until we attain to that true and perfect purity, which is laid up for us in thine only-begotten Son, when we shall be fully united to him, having been transformed into that glory into which he has been received. Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Thirty-third

Haggai 2:15-19

15. And now, I pray you, consider from this day and upward, from before a stone was laid upon a stone in the temple of the LORD:

15. Et nunc ponite quaeso (vel, agedum) super cor vestrum a die hac et supra, antequam poneretur lapis super lapidem in templo Iehovae:

16. Since those days were, when one came to an heap of twenty measures, there were but ten: when one came to the pressfat for to draw out fifty vessels out of the press, there were but twenty.

16. Ante haec quum veniret quis ad acervum viginti, fuit decem; quum veniret ad torcular ut hauriret quinquaginta e torculari, fuit summa viginti.

17. I smote you with blasting and with mildew and with hail in all the labours of your hands; yet ye turned not to me, saith the LORD.

17. Percussi vos orientali vento (vel, urente) et rubigene, et grandine in omni

— Such is this people and such is this nation, Before me, saith Jehovah; Yea, such is every work of their hands, And what they offer there, polluted it is. The Prophet seems to have pointed to the altar on which they offered their sacrifices, when he says, “What they offer there.” Both Newcome and Henderson are evidently wrong in rendering the passage in the past tense. The last verb is future, used, as it is often, as a present. So we render it in Welsh, yr hyn a aberthant yna; but we understand it as a present act. We may notice here what is often the character of the Prophetic style; the two last lines explain more particularly what the two first contain.—Ed.

opere manuum vestrarum (alii vertunt, et omne opus, sed male, et potius hic debet resolvi quemadmodum dictum est, in omni ergo opere) et vos non ad me, dicit Iehova.

18. Consider now from this day and upward, from the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, even from the day that the foundation of the LORD'S temple was laid, consider it

18. Ponite quaeso super cor vestrum a die hac et supra, a die vicesimo quarto noni mensis, a die quo fundatum fuit templum Iehovae, ponite super cor vestrum.

19. Is the seed yet in the barn? yea, as yet the vine, and the fig tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive tree, hath not brought forth: from this day will I bless you

19. An adhuc semen in horreo? et adhuc vitis, et ficus, et malusgranata, et arbor olivae non protulit; a die hac benedicam vobis.

I am under the necessity of joining all these verses together, for the Prophet treats of the same thing: and the import of the whole is this---that the Lord had then openly punished the tardiness of the people, so that every one might have easily known that they acted very inconsistently in attending only to their private concerns, so as to neglect the Temple. The Prophet indeed speaks here in a homely manner to earthly men, addicted to their own appetites: had they really become wiser, or made greater progress in true religion, he might have addressed them differently, and would have no doubt followed the rule mentioned by Paul,

`We speak wisdom among those who are perfect.'
(1 Corinthians 2:6.)

But as they had their thoughts fixed on meat and drink, and were intent on their private advantages, the Prophet tells them what they could comprehend that God was angry with them, and that the proofs of his curse were evident, as the earth did not produce fruit, and they themselves were reduced to want. We hence perceive the object of the Prophet: but I shall run over the words, that the subject may become more evident.

Lay it, he says, on your heart. Here the Prophet indirectly condemns their insensibility, as they were blind in things quite manifest; for he does not here direct their thoughts to heaven, nor announce deep mysteries, but only speaks of food and daily support. Since God, then, impressed clear marks of his wrath on their common sustenance, it was an intolerable stupidity in them to disregard these. And the Prophet often repeats the same thing, in order to shame the Jews; for their tardiness being so often reproved, ought to have made them ashamed. Lay it on the heart, he says; that is, Consider what I am going to say; from this day and heretofore, [158] he says,

[158] Supra, [{;l{{ מעלה ``upward,'' Newcome; ``backward,'' Henderson; ``forward,'' Secker. The last refers to 1 Samuel 16:13, and 30:25, as the only places besides here and in verse 18, where it is applied to time: and clearly in Samuel it means ``forward,'' or hereafter. It means the same when applied to age, Numbers 1:20, and when applied to place, Deuteronomy 28:43 If we retain this meaning, we must consider this verse, and its repetition in verse 18, as the commencement of a sentence, which is completed at the end of verse 19, as intervening clauses. Then the passage would be as follows--- 15. And now take, I pray, notice; From this day and forward, From the time of setting a stone on a stone In the Temple of Jehovah, 16. From the time you came to a heap of twenty, And it was ten, And came to the vat to draw fifty measures, And there were twenty; 17. I smote you with blight, and with mildew, And with hail, even all the work of your hands; But ye turned not to me, saith Jehovah;--- 18. Take, I pray, notice; From this day and forward, From the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, From the day in which was founded The Temple of Jehovah;---take notice; 19. Is yet the seed in the granary?--- And as yet the vine and the fig tree, And the pomegranate and the olive, it hath not borne;--- From this day will I bless you. I prefer ``Take notice,'' or, ``mark,'' to ``consider,'' as the

before a stone was laid on a stone; that is, from that day when I began to exhort you to build the Temple, consider what has happened to this very day.

Then he adds, Before ye began, he says, to build the Temple, was it not that every one who came to a heap of twenty measures found only ten? that is, was it not, that when the husband men expected that there would be twenty measures in the storehouse or on the floor, they were disappointed? because God had dried up the ears, so they yielded not what they used to do; for husband men, by long experience, can easily conjecture what they may expect when they see the gathered harvest; but this prospect had disappointed the husband men. God, then, had in this case given proofs of his curse. Farther; when any one came to the vat, and expected a large vintage, had he not also been disappointed? for instead of fifty casks he found only twenty.

He afterwards adds, I have smitten you with the east wind: for {שדפון}, shidafun, is to be taken for a scorching wind; and the east wind proved injurious to Judea by its dryness. So also {ירקון}, irkun, is mildew, or a moist wind, from which mildew proceeds; for we know that corn, when it has much wet, contracts mildew when the sun emits its heat. As to the meaning of the Prophet there is no ambiguity, for he intended to teach them that they were in various ways visited, that they might clearly perceive that God was displeased with them. He then mentions the hail: for when famine happens only from the cold or from the heat, it may be ascribed to chance or to the stars: but when God employs various scourges, we are then constrained to acknowledge his wrath, as though he were determined to awaken us. This is the reason why the Prophet records here various kinds of judgements. And he says, In every work of your hands. Some read, And every work, etc., which is improper; for they were not smitten in their own bodies, but in the produce of the earth. Then he adds, And you returned not to me, that is, ``During the whole of that time I effected nothing, while I was so often and in such various ways chastising you. And yet what good has the obduracy of your hearts done you? ye have not returned to me.''

Lay it, he says, on your heart from this day, and heretofore, etc. He repeats what he had said, even from the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month. We have seen before, that the Prophet was sent on that day to reprove the people for their sins. Lay it then on your heart, he says, from this day, etc. We see how emphatical is this repetition, because in things evident the Jews were so insensible that their want and famine could not touch them: and we know that there is no sharper goad to stimulate men than famine. Since then the Lord snatched away their food from their mouth, and they remained inattentive to such a judgement, it was a sure evidence of extreme stupidity. It is on this account that the Prophet often declares, that the

meaning of {לבבכם} ,[{שימו}] ``set or fix your heart.'' In favor of ``your'' instead of ``their'' in verse 16, there are three MSS.; and it is more consistent with the context. The expression literally is, ``From your being to come,'' i.e from the time in which you came, and found out the deficiency. ``Fifty measures;'' [{פורה}] is rendered by the Septuagint {μετρητὰς}---``baths;'' by Jerome, ``Lagenas---flagons.'' The word means here evidently a vessel to measure the wine from the vat; what quantity it contained is not known. It is here in the singular number, while the numeral, ``fifty,'' is in the plural; deugain, which literally in English is, ``ten measure and forty.'' In verse 17, ``even all the work of your hands,'' is in apposition with ``you,'' and explanatory of it, according to what we often find in the Prophets; for by ``you'' was meant their ``work,'' and not themselves personally. ``But ye turned not to me,'' literally, ``But ye not to me;'' perhaps the meaning is, ``Ye ascribed it not to me,'' that is, the judgment previously mentioned, or, ``Ye attended not to me:'' but the verb [{שבתם}] is commonly thought to be understood. See Amos 4:9. The question in verse 19 is to be taken negatively, to correspond with the negative declaration in what follows.---Ed.

Jews were extremely insensible; for they did not consider the judgements of God, which were so manifest. He now subjoins, Is there yet seed in the barn? Jerome reads, in the bud; and the probable reason why he thus rendered the word was, that he thought that the clauses would not correspond without giving the meaning of bud to {מגורה}, megure; but, as I think, he was mistaken. The Hebrews propose what I cannot approve, for some of them read the sentence as an affirmation, For there is seed in the barn; because they dared not to commit the seed to the ground in their state of want. And others read it as a question, as though he had said, that the time of harvest was far off, and that what they had remaining was so small that it was not enough to support them. But, in my judgement, the seed refers not to what had been gathered, but to what had been sown. I therefore doubt not but that he speaks of God's blessing on the harvest which was to come after five months, to which I shall presently refer. Some, indeed, render the words in the past tense, as though the Prophet had said, that the Jews had already experienced how great the curse of God was; but this is a forced view. The real meaning of the Prophet is this, Is there yet seed in the barn? that is, Is the seed, as yet hid in the ground, gathered?

He then adds affirmatively, neither the vine, nor the fig tree, nor the pomegranate, nor the olive had yet produced any thing; for it was the ninth month of the year; and the beginning of the year, we know, was in the month of March. Though then they were nearly in the midst of winter, they remained uncertain as to what the produce would be. In the month of November no opinion could be formed, even by the most skillful, what produce they were to expect. As then they were still in suspense, the Prophet says, that God's blessing was in readiness for them. What he had in view was, to show that he brought a sure message from God; for he speaks not of a vintage the prospect of which had already appeared, nor of a harvest when the ears had already made their appearance. As then there was still danger from the hail, from scorching winds, and also from rains and other things injurious to fruit and produce of the land, he says, that the harvest would be most abundant, the vintage large, that, in a word, the produce of the olive and the fig tree would be most exuberant. The truth of the prophecy might now be surely known, when God fulfilled what he had spoken by the mouth of his servant. I now return to the subject itself

As I have before observed, the Prophet deals with the Jews here according to their gross disposition: for he might in a more refined manner have taught the godly, who were not so entangled with, or devoted to, earthly concerns. It was then necessary for him to speak in a manner suitable to the comprehension of the people, as a skillful teacher who instructs children and those of riper age in a different manner. And he shows by evidences that the Jews were unthankful to God, for they neglected the building of the Temple, and every one was diligently and earnestly engaged in building his own house. He shows by proofs their conduct,---How? Whence has it happened, he says, that at one time your fruit has been destroyed by mildew, at another by heat, and then by the hail, except that the Lord intended thus to correct your neglect? It then follows, that you are convicted of ingratitude by these judgements; for you have neglected God's worship, and only pursued your own private advantages. This is one thing.

The latter clause contains a promise; and by it the instruction given was more confirmed, when the people saw that things suddenly and unexpectedly took a better turn. They had been for many years distressed with want of sustenance; but, when fruitfulness of a sudden followed, did not this change manifest something worthy of their consideration? especially when it was foretold before it happened, and before any such thing could have been foreseen by human conjectures? We see then, that the Prophet dwells on two things,---he condemns the Jews for their neglect, and proves that they were impious and ungrateful towards God, for they disregarded the building of the Temple; and them, in order to animate them and render them more active in the work they had begun, he sets before them, as I have said, what had taken place. God had, indeed, abundantly testified, by various kinds of punishment that he was displeased with them: but when he now promises that he would deal differently with them, there hence arises a new and a stronger evidence.

But someone may here raise an objection and say, that these evidences are not sure or unvaried; since it often happens, that when people devote themselves faithfully to the service of God they are pressed down by adverse events; yea, that God very often designedly tries their faith by withholding from them for a time his blessing. But the answer to this may be readily given: I indeed allow that it often happens that those who sincerely and from the heart serve God, are deprived of earthly blessings, because God intends to elevate their minds to the hope of eternal reward. God then designedly withdraws his blessing often from the faithful, that they may hunger and thirst in this world; as though they lost all their labor in serving him. But it was not the Prophet's design to propound here an evidence of an unvarying character, as he counted it sufficient to convince the Jews by experience, that nothing prevented them from acknowledging that their avarice displeased God, except their extreme stupidity. The Prophet then does here reprove their insensibility; for, while they greatly labored in enriching themselves, they did not observe that their labor was in vain, because God from heaven poured his curse on them. This then might have been easily known by them had they not hardened themselves in their vices. And what the Prophet testifies here respecting the fruitful produce of wine, and corn, and oil, and of other things, was still, as I have said, a stronger confirmation.

Now, if any one objects again and says---that this was of no value, because a servile and mercenary service does not please God: to this I answer---that God does often by such means stimulate men, when he sees them to be extremely tardy and slothful, and that he afterwards leads them by other means to serve him truly and from the heart. When therefore any one obeys God, only that he may satisfy his appetite, it is as though one labored from day to day for the sake of wages, and then disregards him by whom he has been hired. It is certain that such a service is counted as nothing before God; but he would have himself to be generously worshipped by us; and he loves, as Paul says, a cheerful giver. (2 Corinthians 9:7.) But as men, for the most part, on account of their ignorance, cannot be led at first to this generous state of mind, so as to devote themselves willingly to God, it is necessary to begin by using other means, as the Prophet does here, who promises earthly and daily sustenance to the Jews, for he saw that they could not immediately, at the first

step, ascend upwards to heaven; but it was not his purpose to stop short, until he elevated their minds higher. Let us then know, that this was only the beginning, that they might learn to fear God and to expect whatever they wanted from his blessing, and also that they might shake off their stupor, under which they had previously labored. In short, God deals in one way with the rude and ignorant, who are not yet imbued with true religion; and he deals in another way with his own disciples, who are instructed in sound doctrine. When I say that the Prophet acted thus towards the Jews, I speak not of the whole nation; but I regard what we have observed at the beginning of this book---that the Jews cared for nothing then but to build their own houses, and that there was no zeal for religion among them. As then the recollection of God was nigh buried among them, the Temple being neglected, and every one's anxiety being concentrated in building his own house, we hence learn how grossly earthly their affections were. It is therefore no wonder that the Prophet treated them in the manner stated here. Let us proceed -

Haggai 2:20-23

20. And again the word of the LORD came unto Haggai in the four and twentieth day of the month, saying,

20. Et fuit (postea fuit) sermo Iehovae secundo ad Chaggai vicesimo quarto mensis, dicendo,

21. Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I will shake the heavens and the earth;

21. Dic ad Zerubbabel, ducens Iehudah, dicendo, Ego concutiam coelos et terram;

22. And I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen; and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them; and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother.

22. Et evertam solium regnorum, et perdam robur regnorum gentium; et evertam quadrigam et sessores ejus evertam quadrigam et sessores ejus; et descendent equi et sessores eorum, quisque in gladio fratris sui.

23. In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith the LORD, and will make thee as a signet: for I have chosen thee, saith the LORD of hosts.

23. In die illa, dicit Iehova exercituum, sumam te Zerubbabel, fili Sealtiel, serve mi, dicit Iehova; et ponam to quasi annulum, quia elegi te, dicit Iehova exercituum.

The Prophet now proceeds still farther; for there is here a really gratuitous and spiritual promise, by which God affirms that he will have a care for his people to the end. He does not now speak of wine and corn, in order to feed the hungry; but he shows that he would be an eternal Father to that people; for he could not and would not forget the covenant he made with their fathers. There is no doubt but he points out Christ in the person of Zerubbabel, as we shall presently see. So that it is right to distinguish this prophecy from the last; for God has before shown, that the worship which the Jews had for a time disregarded was pleasing to him, as a reward was in readiness, and also that he was offended with the negligence previously reproved, as he had inflicted manifest punishment, not once, nor for a

short time, but for many years, and in various ways. What then does follow? In this second prophecy he addresses Zerubbabel, and promises to be a Savior to the people under his authority.

With regard to these words, some think that a continued act is signified when he says, I shake the heavens and the earth; and they give this explanation---That though it belongs to me to shake the heaven and the earth, and I am wont to subvert kingdoms, yet I will render firm the sacred kingdom which I have raised among my people. But this view is very frigid: and we see even from this chapter what is meant by the shaking of the heaven and of the earth, of which mention is made. The Apostle also rightly interprets this passage, when he teaches us, that this prophecy properly belongs to the kingdom of Christ. (Hebrews 12:26.) There is therefore no doubt, but that the Prophet means here something special, when he introduces God as saying, Behold, I shake the heavens and the earth. God then does not speak of his ordinary providence, nor simply claim to himself the government of the heaven and of the earth, nor teach us that he raises on high the humble and the low, and also brings down the high and the elevated; but he intimates, that he has some memorable work in contemplation, which, when done, would shake men with fear, and make heaven and earth to tremble. Hence, the Prophet no doubt intended here to lead the Jews to the hope of that redemption, some prelude of which God had then given them; but its fullness could not as yet be seen---nay, it was hid from the view of men: for who could have expected such a renovation of the world as was effected by the coming of Christ? When the Jews found themselves exposed to the wrongs of all men, when so small a number returned, and there was no kingdom and no power, they thought themselves to have been as it were deceived. Hence the Prophet affirms here, that there would be a wonderful work of God, which would shake the heaven and the earth. It is therefore necessary that this should be applied to Christ; for it was, as it were, a new creation of the world, when Christ gathered together the things scattered, as the Apostle says, in the heaven and in the earth. (Colossians 1:20.) When he reconciled men to God and to angels, when he conquered the devil and restored life to the dead, when he shone forth with his own righteousness, then indeed God shook the heaven and the earth; and he still shakes them at this day, when the gospel is preached; for he forms anew the children of Adam after his own image. This spiritual regeneration then is such an evidence of God's power and grace, that he may justly be said to shake the heaven and the earth. The import of the passage is, that it behaved the Jews to form a conception in their minds of something greater than could be seen by their eyes; for their redemption was not yet completed.

Hence he subjoins---I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms; I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations; and I will overthrow the chariot and him who sits in it; come down shall the horses and their riders; every one shall fall by the sword of his brother. He confirms here the former sentence---that nothing would be an hindrance that God should not renew his Church. And rightly he adds this by way of anticipation; for the Jews were surrounded on all sides by inveterate enemies; they had as many enemies as they had neighbors; and they were hated even by the

whole world. How then could they emerge into that dignity which was then promised to them, except God overturned the rest of the world? But the Prophet here meets this objection, and briefly shows that God would rather that all the nations should perish, than that his Church should remain in that dishonorable state. We then see that the Prophet here means no other thing then that God would overcome all those impediments, which Satan and the whole world may throw in the way, when it is his purpose to restore his Church.

We now perceive the Prophet's designs, and we also perceive the application of his doctrine. For whenever impediments and difficulties come in our way, calculated to drive us to despair, when we think of the restoration of the Church, this prophecy ought to come to our minds, which shows that it is in God's power, and that it is his purpose to overturn all the kingdoms of the earth, to break chariots in pieces, to cast down and lay prostrate all riders, rather then to allow them to prevent the restoration of his Church.

But in the last verse the Prophet shows why God would do this---even that Zerubbabel might prosper together with the whole people. Hence he says---In that day saith Jehovah, I will take thee, Zerubbabel, and will set thee as a signet, for I have chosen thee. As we have before said, God addresses Zerubbabel here, that in his person he might testify that he would bless the people whom he intended to gather under that sacred leader; for though Zerubbabel never had a kingdom, nor ever wore a crown, he was yet of the tribe of Judah; and God designed that some spark of that kingdom should exist, which he had raised in the family of David. Since, then, Zerubbabel was at that time a type of Christ, God declares here that he would be to him as a signet---that is, that his dignity would be esteemed by him. This comparison of a signet is found also in other places. It is said in Jeremiah 22:24---``Though this Coniah were a signet on my right hand I would pluck him thence.'' But here God says that Zerubbabel would be to him a signet---that is, Thou shalt be with me in high esteem. For a sealing signet is wont to be carefully preserved, as kings seek in this way to secure to themselves the highest authority, so that more trust may be placed in their seal than in the greatest princes. The meaning, then, of the similitude is, that Zerubbabel, though despised by the world, was yet highly esteemed by God. But it is evident that this was never fulfilled in the person of Zerubbabel. It hence follows that it is to be applied to Christ. God, in short, shows, that people gathered under one head would be accepted by him; for Christ was at length to rise, as it is evident, from the seed of Zerubbabel.

But this reason is to be especially noticed---Because I have chosen thee. For God does not here ascribe excellencies or merits to Zerubbabel, when he says that he would hold him in great esteem; but he attributes this to his own election. If, then, the reason be asked why God had so much exalted Zerubbabel, and bestowed on him favors so illustrious, it can be found in nothing else but in the goodness of God alone. God had made a covenant with David, and promised that his kingdom would be eternal; hence it was that he chose Zerubbabel after the people had returned from exile; and this election was the reason why God exalted Zerubbabel, though his power at that time was but small. We indeed know that he was exposed to the

contempt of all nations; but God invites here the attention of the faithful to their election, so that they might hope for more than what the perception of the flesh could conceive or apprehend; for what he has decreed cannot be made void; and in the person of Zerubbabel he had determined to save a chosen people; for from him, as it has been said, Christ was to come.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that as we are still restrained by our earthly cares, and cannot ascend upward to heaven with so much readiness and alacrity as we ought---O grant, that since thou extendest to us daily so liberal a supply for the present life, we may at least learn that thou art our Father, and that we may not at the same time fix our thoughts on these perishable things, but learn to elevate our minds higher, and so make continual advances in thy spiritual service, until at length we come to the full and complete fruition of that blessed and celestial life which thou hast promised to us, and procured for us by the blood of thy only begotten Son. Amen.

Commentary on Zechariah

Commentary on Zechariah

The Commentaries
of John Calvin
on the Prophet
ZECHARIAH

calvin's preface to zechariah

The Prophecies of Zechariah come next. He was a fellow-helper and colleague Of Haggai, and also of Malachi, as it will presently appear. These three, then, were sent by God nearly at the same time, that they might assist one another, and that they might thus by one consent and one mouth confirm what God had committed to them. It was indeed of great service that several bore their testimony: their prophecies gained thus greater authority; and this was needful, for the people had to contend with various and most grievous trials. Satan had already raised up great opposition to them; but there were still greater evils at hand. Hence, to prevent them from despairing, it was necessary to encourage them; by many testimonies.

But what our Prophet had especially in view was, to remind the Jews why it was that God dealt so severely with their fathers, and also to animate them with hope, provided they really repented, and elevated their minds to the hope of true and complete deliverance. He at the same time severely reproves them; for there was need of much cleansing, as they still continued in their filth. For though the recollection of their exile ought to have restrained them, and to have made them careful to fear and obey God, yet it seemed to have been otherwise; and it will appear more fully as we proceed, that being not conscious of having been punished for their sins, they were so secure, that there was among them hardly any fear of God, or hardly any religion. It was therefore needful to blend strong and sharp reproofs with promises of favor, that they might thus be prepared to receive Christ. This is the substance of

the whole [159] I shall now proceed to the words.

CHAPTER 1

Lecture One Hundred and Thirty-fourth

[159] The following is taken from The Assembly's Annotations, slightly altered: —

Zechariah 1

Z

Zechariah 1:1-3

1. 1 In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the Lord unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying,

1. Mense octavo, [160] anno secundo Darii, fuit sermo Iehovae ad Zachariam, filium Barachiae, filii Addo (Iddo, ad verbum) prophetae, (vel, prophetam,) [161] dicendo,

2. The Lord hath been sore displeased with your fathers.

2. Iratus est Iehova erga patres vestros ira.

3. Therefore say thou unto them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Turn ye unto me, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the Lord of hosts.

3. Dices igitur ad eos, Sic dicit Iehova exercituum, Revertimini ad me, dicit Iehova exercituum; et revertar ad vos, dicit Iehova exercituum.

We here learn what we have already stated, --- that Haggai and Zechariah were by God joined together, that they might confirm each other's doctrine, for they had to do with a refractory people: besides, the people had to endure hard and arduous trials, so that they needed more than a common testimony to confirm them. Haggai commenced the work of his office in the sixth month; Zechariah shortly followed him, in the eighth month of the same year. It has already been shown who was the Darius mentioned here; though some interpreters dissent, we may yet learn from certain and indubitable proofs, that he was the son of Hystaspes. We shall again speak of this Darius, when a better occasion will offer itself: I wished only in passing to say thus much.

[160] "This month, according to the sacred reckoning, which begins the year with the month Abib or Nizan, (Exodus 12:2,) falls in with the latter part of October and the beginning of November." — Blayney.

[161] This refers no doubt to Zechariah, and not to Ido, according to the usual order adopted in Hebrew, and also because the object is to show that Zechariah, and not Ido, was a prophet. It is a name give, as Cocceius observes, not only to him who announces future things, but to every one who as God's minister proclaims his words, explains spiritual things, and applies them to the conscience. — Ed.

The word of Jehovah came to Zechariah. We have already said that the word of God comes in two ways to men. God addresses all from the least to the greatest; but in the first place he sends his word especially to his Prophets, to whom he commits the office of teaching. The word of God thus comes to private individuals, and it comes also to teachers, who sustain a public character, and become God's interpreters or messengers. It was thus that God's word came to Zechariah, not that he might keep to himself what God had said, but that he might be a faithful dispenser of his truth.

With regard to Zechariah, they are mistaken who regard him as the son of Jehoiadah, they are mistaken by Christ in Matthew 23:35. Zechariah is indeed said there to have been killed between the temple and the altar, and he is called the son of Barachiah: [162] but the counting of years will easily prove their mistake, who would have him to be the same Zechariah. The former, who is called in sacred history the son of Jehoiadah the priest, was slain under Joash. Let us now see how many kings succeeded him, and also how many years he reigned. That Zechariah must have been almost two hundred years old at the Babylonian exile, if he was alive, had be been a boy when he was stoned. Now this Zechariah, of whom we now speak, performed the office of a Prophet after the return of the people from exile. He must then have been not only more than a hundred and fifty years of age, but must have exceeded two hundred years when he died. The idea respecting the renascence of men, being a reverie of the Jews, is not worthy of a record, much less of a refutation. He is however called the son of Barachiah; but the probable conjecture is that Jehoiadah the priest had two names, and it does not appear that he was a prophet. However this may be, the Zechariah who was stoned in the temple by the order of the king, was the son of the high priest, and died more than a hundred years before the Babylonian exile. For we have said that this Darius was not the Mede who reigned with Cyrus, but the son of Hystaspes, who reigned a long time after, that is, after Cambyses and the Magi. Their want of knowledge is easily proved, who think that these Prophets were sent by God before the completion of the time mentioned by Jeremiah. As then the seventy years had elapsed, this Prophet was no doubt born after the time when the city was destroyed, the temple pulled-down, and the people led captive into Babylon. I come now to the doctrine itself.

Angry was Jehovah with anger against your fathers [163] The Prophet here refers to the severity of the punishment with which the Jews had been visited, in order that posterity might know that God, who so rigidly punishes the despisers of his word and instruction, ought not to be provoked. For by saying that God was angry with anger, he means, that God was in no common measure offended with the Jews, and that the very grievousness of their punishment was a clear evidence how displeased God was with them. But the object of the Prophet was to rouse the Jews, that they might begin seriously to fear God on seeing how dreadful is his wrath. The Apostle states

[162] He is called the son of Ezra, chapter 5:1; but the word son, in Hebrew, means often a grandson or a descendant: "Omnes qui in gradibus descendentibus sunt Hebraei filios vocant." — Grotius.

[163] The words may be thus rendered, — Wroth was Jehovah, With your fathers was he wroth. This is more consistent with the characters of the Hebrew language than the usual rendering.

it as a general truth, that it is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, (Hebrews 10:30:) so also the Scripture speaks everywhere. But Zechariah mentions here to his own people a signal evidence of God's wrath, which ought to justly to have smitten all of them with terror. He does not then speak here of a thing unknown, but reminds them seriously to consider how terrible is God's vengeance; as a proof of this, their fathers had been deprived of their perpetual inheritance, they had suffered many degradations, and had also been harassed and oppressed by tyrants; in short, they had been nearly sunk in the lowest depths. Since then God has so severely dealt with their fathers, the Prophet bids them to know that God ought to be feared, lest they should grow wanton or indulge themselves in their usual manner, but that they might from the heart repent, and not designedly provoke God's wrath, of which their fathers had so severe an experience.

It then follows, Thou shalt say to them, Return ye to me, and I will return to you [164] The Prophet now expresses more clearly for what purpose he had spoken of God's vengeance, with which he had visited his chosen people, even that their posterity might take heed to themselves; for the common proverb, ``Fools by adversity become wise,'' ought in this case to have been verified. For where there is really a teachable spirit, men become instantly attentive to what God says: but even when they are sluggish and slothful, it is a wonder, that when they are smitten, the strokes which they feel do not shake off at least in some degree their torpor. Hence the Prophet, after having spoken of the punishments which God had inflicted, exhorts the Jews to repentance.

It ought however to be observed, that our Prophet not only speaks of repentance, but shows also its true character, that the Jews might not seek carelessly to please God, as is commonly the case, but that they might sincerely repent; for he says, return ye to me, and I will return to you. And this was not said without reason, when we consider in what sort of delusions the Jews indulged themselves immediately after their return. We have seen that they became devoted to their private concerns, while the temple remained desolate; and we also know what sacred history relates, that they married heathen women, and also that many corruptions prevailed among them, so that religion almost disappeared. They indeed retained the name of God, but their impiety showed itself by clear signs. It is then no wonder that the Prophet sharply stimulates them to repentance.

It must at the same time be noticed, that we cannot enjoy the favor of God, even when he kindly offers to be reconciled to us, except we from the heart repent. However graciously, then, God may invite us to himself, and be ready to remit our sins, we yet cannot embrace his offered favor, except our sins become hateful to us; for God ceases not to be our judge, except we anticipate him, and condemn ourselves, and deprecate the punishment of our sins. Hence we then pacify God when real grief wounds us, and we thus really turn to God, without dissimulation or

[164] The verb, [{,ו שב means to turn, and to return. Newcome retains our version, ``turn,'' but Marckius and Henderson adopt with Calvin the word ``return,'' though Henderson, in verse 4, has ``turn.'' The most suitable rendering seems to be ``return,'' as it intimates a departure, which was the case in both instances, with respect to the people, and also with respect to God. They had departed from God, and God had departed from them; they had also departed from God's ways. ``Return'' therefore is the most appropriate term. --- Ed.

falsehood. Now the experience of God's wrath ought to lead us to this; for extremely heedless are they who, having found God to be a Judge, do carelessly disregard his wrath, which ought to have filled their hearts with fear. ``Let no one deceive you with vain words,'' says Paul, ``for on account of these things comes the wrath of God on the children of unbelief,'' or on all the unbelieving. (Ephesians 5:6.) Paul bids us to consider all the evidences which God gives of his wrath in the world, that they may instruct us as to the fear of God; how much more then should domestic examples be noticed by us? For the Prophet speaks not here of foreign nations; but says, angry has God been with anger against your fathers. Since, then, it appeared evident that God had not spared even his chosen people, they ought, unless they were in the extreme refractory, to have carefully continued in obedience to the law. Hence the Prophet here condemns their tardiness, inasmuch as they had made so little progress under the chastisements of God.

We thus see that no excuse can be brought before God, if we do not make a right use of all the punishments by which he designs to recover us from our sins. We have referred to that general truth announced by Paul, that God's judgment, executed on the unbelieving, ought to be feared; it hence follows that our insensibility is extreme, if we are not thoroughly moved when God teaches us by our own experience, or at least when he sets domestic examples before us, as when he punishes our fathers and others connected with us; for this mode of teaching comes much nearer to us.

But when the Prophet says, return ye to me, and I will return to you, he means, as I have before stated, that though God meets sinners, and is ready with extended arms to embrace them, his favor cannot come to those to whom it is offered, except a real feeling of penitence leads them to God. In short, the Prophet means, that though they had returned from exile, they could not expect a permanent state of safety, except they turned from the heart to him; for if they imitated their fathers, God had in readiness far severer scourges to chastise them; and they might also be again driven into exile. he then briefly reminds them, that if they wished to enjoy the incomparable kindness with which God had favored them, it was necessary for them seriously to return to him. Though, then God had already in part returned to them, that is, he had really proved that he was pacified and propitious to them, yet he had begun by many evidences to show that he was again offended with them; for their fruit had either withered through heat, or had been smitten by hail, as we have found elsewhere; (Haggai 2:17;) so that they had already labored for several years under want and other evils. God then had not so blessed them, that they could in every way recognize his paternal favor. This is the reason why the Prophet says, I will return to you when ye return to me.

We now perceive the meaning of the Prophet to be, that though God had delivered his people, they ought yet to have feared lest his wrath should suddenly burn against the ungrateful and the wicked, and that being not in full favor, they ought also to have known that God was still offended with them. So the Prophet shortly reminded them, that it was no wonder that God treated them with no great kindness, for they allowed no place for his favor, but provoked his wrath, like their fathers, inasmuch as they did not from the hear repent.

The Papists allege this passage in defense of free-will; but it is a most puerile sophistry. They say that the turning of God to men is the same as their turning to him, as though God promised the grace of his Spirit as a help, when men anticipate him. They imagine then that free-will precedes, and then that the help of the Spirit follows. But this is very gross and absurd. The Prophet indeed means that God would return to the Jews; for he shows that God would in every respect be a father to them, when they showed themselves to be dutiful and respectful children. We must therefore remember that God does not here promise the aid of his Spirit to assist free-will, and to help the efforts of man, as these foolish and senseless teachers imagine, but that he promises to return to the Jews to bless them. Hence the return of God here is nothing else than the prosperity which they desired; as though he had said --- ``Fear me from the heart, and ye shall not labor under hunger and thirst; for I shall satisfy you, as neither your fields nor your vines shall hereafter disappoint your hopes. Ye shall find me most bountiful, when ye deal with me in a faithful manner.'' This is the meaning.

We must further bear in mind, that, according to the common usage of Scripture, whenever God exhorts us to repentance, he does not regard what our capacity is, but demands what is justly his right. Hence the Papists adopt what is absurd when they deduce the power of free-will from the command or exhortation to repent: God, they say, would not have commanded what is not in our power to do. It is a foolish and most puerile mode of reasoning; for if everything which God requires were in our power, the grace of the Holy Spirit would be superfluous; it would not only be as they say a waiting-mind, but it would be wholly unnecessary; but if men need the aid of the Spirit, it follows that they cannot do what God requires of them. But it seems strange that God should bid men to do more than what they can. It seems so indeed, I allow, when we form our judgment according to the common perception of the flesh; but when we understand these truths --- that the law works wrath --- that it increases sin --- that it was given that transgression might be made more evident, then the false notion --- that God requires nothing but what men can perform, comes to nothing. But it is enough for us to know, that God in exhorting us to repentance requires nothing but what nature dictates ought to be done by us. Since it is so, however short we are in the performance, it is not right to charge God with too much strictness, that he demands what is beyond our power.

The frequent repetition of God's name by the Prophet is emphatical; it was done, that what he taught might more sharply goad the hearts of the people. Had he simply said, that he had a commission from above to remind the people of the punishments which their fathers had endured, and also to call them to repentance, this mode of teaching would not have so penetrated into their hearts, as when the name of God is so often brought before them --- Thou shalt say, Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, Return to me, saith Jehovah of hosts, and I will return to you, saith Jehovah of hosts. It surely behoved the Jews, when they heard God's name pronounced three times, to awake and to consider with whom they had to do. For what can be more base or more disgraceful than for men, when God anticipates them and desires to be united to them, to refuse to respond and to devote themselves to his service?

It is at the same time evident, that the Prophet adopted a mode of speaking then in use: and we know that the language of the Jews underwent a change after their Babylonian exile. It lost that clearness and elegance which it possessed before: as it clearly appears from the style of those who wrote after the exile. I allow also that previously the Prophets exhibited not the same degree of eloquence; for Isaiah differs greatly from Jeremiah and from Amos. It is yet quite evident from the writings of the last Prophets, that the language had become somewhat muddy after the return of the people from exile. Let us now proceed ---

Zechariah 1:4

4. Be ye not as your fathers, unto whom the former prophets have cried, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Turn ye now from your evil ways, and from your evil doings: but they did not hear, nor hearken unto me, saith the Lord

4. Ne sitis sicut patres vestri, quia clamarunt ad eos Prophetae superiores, sic dicit Iehovah exercituum, Revertimini quaeso a viis vestris malis, et ab operibus vestris malis; et mom audierunt, neque attenderunt ad me, dicit Iehovah.

In order to correct and to subdue the obstinacy of the people, he here upbraids them with having descended from wicked and perverse parents. The Jews, we know, too much flattered themselves; and we know that they were especially inflated with the vain boasting that they derived their origin from the holy fathers. But the Prophets had something else in view. We indeed know that when anything becomes customary, almost all become hardened and flatter themselves in their vice; for immorality is then counted almost as the law, and what is sanctioned by public consent seems lawful. Since then they had not ceased for many years to provoke the wrath of God, it was necessary to add this reproof, Be not like your fathers: for they no doubt imagined that God approved of them, as they were not worse than their fathers. But God shows that their fathers had been very wicked and perverse.

Let us learn from this passage, that the examples which are wont to be set up as a shield are so far from being of any weight before God, that they enhance our guilt: and yet we see that this folly infatuates many; for at this day the religion of the Papists seems to them holy and irreprehensible, because it has been handed down to them by their fathers. Hence, whenever they bring forward the fathers, they think it a sufficient defense against the charge of any errors. But nothing occurs more frequently in the Prophets than the truth, that examples tend more to kindle the wrath of God, when some men become the occasion of sin to others, and when posterity think that whatever has proceeded from their fathers is lawful.

But we must at the same time bear in mind the design of the Prophet, for he did not intend simply to show, that the Jews in vain alleged the examples of the ancient; but, as I have said, he intended to shake off their self-flatteries by which they lulled themselves asleep; and he intended especially to put down those evil practices, which by long use had prevailed among them. This then is the reason why he says, Be not like your fathers. The Spirit employs the same sentiment in many other places, especially in the ninety- fifth Psalm (Psalm 95:1), and also in other Psalms.

Then he says, that the Prophets, who had been sent by God, had cried to their

fathers, but that they did not attend. As then contempt of the truth had for so many ages prevailed among the Jews, and as this impiety was not duly abhorred by them, since they thought themselves to be as it were in perpetual possession --- these are the reasons why the Prophet expressly upbraids them with this, that God's word had been formerly despised by their nation --- cry then did the former Prophets. He also exaggerates again their crime and their sin, because God had often recalled them to himself but without success. Had the Prophets been silent, and had God applied no remedy for their defection, their ingratitude would not indeed have been excusable; but since Prophets had often been sent to them, in succession, one after the other, and each had endeavored to restore the wretched men to a state of safety, not to attend to their holy and serious admonitions, by which God manifested his care for their well-being, was a much more atrocious crime.

We hence learn, that when we find any people prone to this or that vice, it ought to be resisted with greater diligence; for Satan almost always employs this artifice --- that when he finds us prone to this or that vice, he directs all his efforts to drive us headlong into it.

As then the Prophets had been for a long time despised by the Jews, Zechariah designedly brings before them that perverseness which had been too long known. cry then did the former Prophets, [165] saying Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, return ye, I pray, from your evil ways, and from your evil works; but they heard not nor attended. After having spoken of God's kind invitation, which was a singular pledge of his love, since he thus manifested his concern for their safety, he shows on the other hand how unworthily the Jews had conducted themselves, for they obstinately rejected this favor of God. They were indeed more than sufficiently proved guilty; for by saying, Return ye, I pray, from your evil ways and from your evil works, he assumes it as a fact that the reproofs given were just. And he farther says, that they refused to hear. Hence their perverseness was less endurable; for though they were self-condemned, they did not yet repent, nor deigned to hearken to God. And he subjoins the words, nor did they attend; for by this repetition [166] is more fully expressed, not only their stupidity, but their strange madness, inasmuch as they had so rejected God, and closed up the door of his favor, as though they sought designedly to drive him far from them, lest he should come to them.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast not only once embraced us in thy paternal bosom, when it pleased thee to offer to us the salvation obtained by the death of thine only-begotten Son, but continuest also daily to invite us to thyself, and also to recall the wandering to the right way --- O grant, that we may not always remain

[165] This sentence is peculiar in its construction. Our version, "unto whom the former Prophets have cried," gives the meaning, but not the form of the sentence, which perhaps can hardly be done except in Welsh; but in that language the idiom is exactly the same. The relative "whom," [{אשר}] comes first, then the verb, followed by a pronoun having a preposition prefixed to it --- ``to them,'' .[{שמע}] The literal rendering in English would be, ``whom they called (or cried) to them, the Prophets the former.'' The rendering in Welsh would be the Hebrew word for word --- Y rhai y galwodd arnynt y prophwydi blaenorol Calvin in his version renders ,[{אשר}] ``quia,'' which is not correct; it ought to have been ``ouibus.'' --- Ed.

[166] It is not perhaps exactly a repetition. Newcome retains our version, "hear" and "hearken;" but Henderson has "hearken" and "give heed." The first, [{,[{שמע is the mere act of hearing; but the second, ,[{קשב}] means attention; it signifies to incline the ear so as to listen. The Jews had been unwilling to hear, or to give the least attention to what had been said to them. --- Ed.

deaf and hardened against thy warnings, but bring to thee hearts really submissive, and study so to devote ourselves to thee, that it may be evident that we have not received thy grace in vain; and may we also continue in the constant fruition of it, until we shall at length fully attain that blessed glory, which having been obtained for us, id daily set before us by the teaching of the Gospel, that we may be confirmed in it. May we therefore make such continual advances, through the whole course of our life, that having at last put off all the corruptions of our flesh, we may be really united to thee in that perfect purity to which thou invitests us, and which we hope for, through the grace of thine only Son. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Thirty Five

Zechariah 1:5, 6

5. Your fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever?

5. Patres vestri, ubi sunt? et prophetas, an in perpetuum vivent?

6. But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not take hold of your fathers? and they returned and said, Like as the Lord of hosts thought to do unto us, according to our ways, and according to our doings, so hath he dealt with us.

6. Atqui verba mea et statuta mea, quae mandavi servis meis prophetis, annon apprehenderunt patres vestros? et reversi sunt et dixerunt, Sicut cogitaverat Iehova exercituum facere nobis secundum vias nostras, et opera nostra, ita fecit nobiscum.

In what we considered yesterday Zechariah reminded the Jews of the conduct of their fathers, in order that they might not, by their continued sins, bring on themselves new punishments. Many interpreters think that the sentiment contained at the beginning of the fourth verse is now confirmed, your fathers, where are they? for it seems t them that God is here exulting over the Jews --- ``Think now what has happened to your fathers; are they not all gone and destroyed?'' They suppose also that the Jews answer, taking the latter clause as spoken by them, ``The Prophets also, have they not perished? Why do you mention to us the fathers? There is no difference between them and the Prophets; it is not therefore a suitable argument.'' And then in the third place, they consider that God refutes the answer given by the Jews, ``But my word and my statutes, what I had entrusted to the Prophets, have not been without their effect.'' This view of the passage has been adopted by many, and by all of the most ancient interpreters; and those who followed them have been disposed to subscribe to it. [167] But more probable is the opinion of Jerome, who understands the latter clause of false Prophets, --- ``Your fathers and your Prophets, where are they?'' as though God thus reproved the Jews: ``See now, have not your fathers miserably perished, and also the Prophets by whom they were deceived?'' Thus Jerome thinks that the object in both clauses is to shake off the delusions of the Jews, that they might not harden themselves against God's judgments, or give ear to flatterers. This interpretation comes nearer to the design of the Prophet, though he seems to me to have something else in view.

I join the two clauses together, as they may be most fitly united --- ``Your fathers

[167] This notion was originated by the Targum. The second was adopted by Cyril and others, as well as by Jerome; but Drusius, Grotius, Mede, Marckius, Newcome, and Henderson agree with the view given by Calvin. — Ed.

and my Prophets have both perished; but after their death, the memory of the doctrine, which has not only been published by my servants, but has also been fully confirmed, is to continue, so that it ought justly to terrify you; for it is very foolish in you to enquire whether or not the Prophets are still alive; they performed their office to the end of life, but the truth they declared is immortal. Though then the Prophets are dead, they have not yet carried away with them what they taught, for it never perishes, nor can it at any age be extinguished. The ungodly are also dead, but their death ought not to obliterate the memory of God's judgments; but after their death these judgments ought to be known among men, and serve to teach them, in order that posterity may understand that they are not presumptuously to provoke God.'' This seems to be the real meaning of the Prophet.

By saying, Your fathers where are they? and the Prophets do they live for ever? he makes a concession, as though he had said, ``I allow that both your fathers and my Prophets are dead; but my words are they dead?'' God, in a word, distinguishes between the character of his word and the condition of men, as though he had said, that the life of men is frail and limited to a few years, but that his truth never perishes. And rightly does he mention the ungodly as well as the Prophets; for we know that whenever God punishes the despisers of his word, he gives perpetual examples, which may keep men in all ages within the boundaries of duty. Hence, though many ages have passed away since God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, yet that example remains, and retains its use to this day; for the ruin of Sodom is a mirror in which we may see at this time that God is the perpetual judge of the world. Since then the ungodly have perished, the punishment with which God visited their sins ought not to be buried with them, but to be ever remembered by men. This is the reason why he says, ``your fathers are dead: this you must admit; but as they had been severely chastised, ought ye not at this day to profit by such examples?'' Then he says, ``my Prophets also are dead; but it was my will that they should be the preachers of my truth, and for this end, that after their death posterity might know that I had once spoken through them.'' To the same purpose are the words of Peter, who says, that he labored that the memory of what he taught might continue after he was removed from his tabernacle.

``As then,'' he says, ``the time of my dissolution is at hand, I endeavor as far as I can, that you may remember what I teach after my death.'' (2 Peter 1:15.)

We now perceive the object of the Prophet.

He then immediately adds, But my words and my statutes [168] which I have committed to my Prophets, have they not laid hold on your fathers? We have seen that he made a concession in the last verse; but here God expressly declares what I have stated --- that though men vanish, or are hence removed after a short time, yet heavenly truth is ever firm, and retains its own power. But the Prophet uses another form of expression, My words, he says, which I have committed to my servants, the

[168] "Statuta mea," [{;[{חקי ``decreta,'' Dathius; ``decrees,'' Henderson. The word means what is defined or appointed, as an order or a course, or a portion. It signifies here the portion defined and allotted to the Jews, the judgments denounced on them, which had been executed. They were God's defined and allotted portions, what he had exactly described and defined by his Prophets. He says first, ``my words,'' a general term, and then, to express more distinctly what was intended, he adds, ``my decrees,'' or my appointments, or my allotted portions. --- Ed.

Prophets, have they not laid on [169] your father? that is, ``ought the remembrance of the punishment, by which I intended to teach you, and your children, and your grandchildren, that ye might not provoke my wrath as your fathers did, to be lost by you? Since the ye see the effect of my doctrine in your fathers, why do ye not consider, that as I am always the same, my words cannot possibly be in vain at the present day, or be without effect?'' We now see how clearly the Prophet distinguishes between the word of God and the condition of men; for God does not declare what is empty, nor give utterance to words which produce no effect; but he executes whatever he has committed to his Prophets.

He then adds, They returned and said, [170] As Jehovah of hosts had purposed to do to us on account of our ways and our works, so he hath done. Added here is a confession, which ought to have perpetually stimulated the Jews, while they saw that the obstinacy of their fathers had been subdued by the scourges of God. It is indeed true, that though they been sharply chastised, many of them did not yet really repent. God however extorted from them the confession that they were justly punished. Even the ungodly then had been constrained to give glory to God, and to confess that they were justly treated as guilty; but their children became immediately forgetful --- was this a stupidity capable of being excused? He at the same time indirectly warns posterity that they might not imitate the negligence of their fathers, who would not have repented had they not been severely chastised; but that they might, on the contrary anticipate the judgment of God. We then see why the Prophet mentions that the Jews, who had been severely treated, freely confessed that they had been chastised by the hand of God; but we must notice the words.

He says, that the fathers had returned. Though their repentance was not sincere, yet God intimates that such was their punishment that it drew from them the confession that is here mentioned. What then could their posterity mean? or how could they become so audaciously mad against God, when they saw that their fathers and their obstinacy had been, as it were, broken down by the severe strokes by which God had smitten them? He then subjoins, and said, As Jehovah hath prepared to do. They confessed that they suffered evils not through chance, but that the purpose of God was thus fulfilled, which they had previously despised and almost derided. They further confessed, that they justly suffered; and they referred to their works and to their course of life. Since, then, the father had made this confession, who had hardened themselves long in their sins, their posterity were wholly without excuse in going on still to their own ruin, in containing impenitent, though warned by examples so memorable. This is the import of the passage. It now follows ---

Zechariah 1:7-11

7. Upon the four and twentieth day of the eleventh month, which is the month

[169] "Overtake" is adopted by Newcome and Henderson; "supervenerunt" — came upon," Grotius. God's judgments pursued and overtook them as a hunter his prey, or an enemy a flying enemy. — Ed.

[170] "Adeo ut reversi dixerint — so that when they returned they said," Jun. et Trem., and Piscator; "so that they turned and said," Henderson. Newcome continues the question from the preceding line, "and did they not return and say?" The "return" here seems not to have been from a sinful course, but from exile. The confession was made by those who returned from Babylon. The sentence may be thus rendered, "when they returned, they said." — Ed.

Sebat, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the Lord unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying,

7. Die vicesima quarta undecimi mensis, hic est mensis Sebath, anno secundo Darii, fuit sermo Iehovae ad Zachariam, filium Berechiae, filii Addo (vel, Iddo,) Prophetae, (vel, Prophetam; sed melius quadrat accusativus,) dicendo,

8. I saw by night, and behold a man riding upon a red horse, and he stood among the myrtle trees that were in the bottom; and behind him were there red horses, speckled, and white.

8. Vidi nocte, et ecce vir equitans super equum rufum, (vel, rubicundum,) et ipse stabat inter myrtos quae erant in profundo: post eum equi rufi, (vel, rubicundi, idem est nomen,) varii, (vel, medii coloris,) et albi.

9. Then said I, O my lord, what are these? And the angel that talked with me said unto me, I will shew thee what these be

9. Et dixi, Qui isti, Domine mi? Et dixit mihi Angelus qui loquebatur mecum, Ego ostendam tibi quinam isti sint.

10. And the man that stood among the myrtle trees answered and said, These are they whom the Lord hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth.

10. Et respondit vir qui stabat inter myrtos et dixit, Hi sint quos misit Iehova ad perambulandum in terra.

11. And they answered the angel of the Lord that stood among the myrtle trees, and said, We have walked to and fro through the earth, and, behold, all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest.

11. Et responderunt Angelo Iehovae qui stabat inter myrtos et dixerunt, Perambulavimus in terra, et ecce tota terra quiescit et transquilla est.

Here is related a second prophecy, connected with a vision. At the beginning God alone spoke and gave commission to his Prophet to reprove the Jews: he now confirms the prediction as to the reduction of the city; for to the word is added a vision, which is, as we have seen elsewhere, a sort of seal. As the vision is obscure it may be variously explained, but I shall endeavor to accommodate it, without any refinements, to our use; and so no ambiguity will remain, provided we seek to be soberly and moderately wise, that is, provided we aim at no more than what edification requires.

The Prophet says, that a vision was given him; and he saw a horseman among the myrtles sitting on a red horse; and with him there were horses red, variegated [171] and white, and having no doubt riders. So I understand the passage; for extremely gross is the idea that the horses spoke. There were then, as it were, a troop of horsemen; but the Prophet says, that one appeared as the chief leader, who was accompanied by others. In the meantime an angel stood at the side of the Prophet, who led him, and showed to him his concern for the holy city and the chosen people. He then adds, that these horsemen had returned from an expedition; for they had been sent to review the whole world and its different parts. He therefore says, that

[171] "Varii" — [{;[{שרקים ``{ψαροι} --- variegated, parti-colored,'' Sept.; ``dun,'' Newcome; ``bay,'' Henderson; ``gilvus-ash color,'' Bochart; ``brown,'' Blayney. It seems to have been a mixed color, between red and white, to denote a mixed state of things. ``They had horses to show their power and celebrity, and horses of different colors to intimate the difference of their ministries.'' --- Newcome.

they had returned from their journey, and also that the whole earth was quiet, that men enjoyed peace and tranquillity everywhere. At length he adds, that the angel of God cried out, How long, Jehovah, wilt thou not show mercy to Jerusalem? For the angel, touched with grief on hearing that all the heathens were enjoying rest, expostulates with God; for it seemed a very unbecoming and strange thing that the faithful alone should be oppressed with adversities, while others lived in peace and enjoyed their pleasures. There follows at length an answer from God, as we shall presently see.

But let us now enquire the Prophet's design. I regard this as the object --- that horsemen were presented to the Prophet, that he might know that God does not remain shut up in heaven and neglect the affairs of men; but that he has, as it were, swift horses, so that he knows what things are everywhere carried on. As then kings having horses at command, send their riders here and there, and bid them soon to return to them that they may know what to do; so the Prophet ascribes here to God the character of a chief sovereign, who inquires respecting all the affairs of men. It is indeed certain, that God receives no information from angels, for nothing is hid from him: nay, all things were fully known to him before he created angels. God, therefore, needs no such helps in order to know what is going on from the rising to the setting sun; but such a mode of speaking often occurs in scripture; and it is a common thing, that God assumes the character of man in order that he may more familiarly instruct us. Let us then especially bear in mind, that the riders who appeared to the Prophet were angels, who are ever ready to serve God. And they were sent here and there, not that they might declare to God any thing unknown to him, but that we may believe that God cares for human affairs; and that though angels appear not to us they are always engaged, and survey the world, so that nothing is done without the knowledge and will of God. This is one thing.

The Prophet says also, that the vision was given him in the night: he refers no doubt to what actually took place, and also to the manner in which he was taught; for though the vision was not given in vain, yet God meant that it should not be plain, in order that he might give by little and little a glimpse of hope to the Jews. As then God did not intend to exhibit in full light what he afterwards in due time taught them, the vision appeared in the night. And to the same purpose is what he says respecting the angels, that they were in a dark or deep place, and that they were among the myrtles. For to consider what is here said allegorically seems to me frivolous. I will, therefore, not refinedly discuss here the nature of myrtles: but as we know that the trees are dark and afford a thick shade, God intended, I have no doubt, by the sight of them, to produce an effect on the Prophet's mind, so that he might understand that the prophecy was yet obscure, and that the time for a plain and clear revelation was not come. There were then horsemen among the myrtles, that is, under these dark and shady trees; and also in a deep place and in a thick shade. We see how aptly these things correspond. Some think that by their colors is designated the state of the people, being that of sorrow and of joy; for though quietness in part was restored to the people, yet much darkness remained and much perplexity in their affairs: but as this idea is probable, I do not reject it, provided we retain what I have stated, that

the obscurity of the Prophecy is noted by the deep valley and the myrtles.

There was one more eminent than the rest, and in this there is nothing unusual; for when God sends forth a company of angels, he gives the lead to some one: and this is the reason why one is described here as more illustrious than all the others. If we regard this angel to be Christ, the idea is consistent with the common usage of Scripture; for Christ, we know, being the head of angels, ever exercises such dominion over them, that in obeying God they do nothing but under his authority. It may be then that one angel assumed here a pre-eminence over the rest, that the Prophet might think of the Redeemer, who exercises power over angels and the whole Church.

With regard to the different colors the Prophet no doubt understood that they designated the offices allotted to angels, as some convey God's benefits, and others come armed with scourges and swords. For what was the design of the vision in which some riders appeared on white horses, some on red, and some on bay, (or, on those of a mixed color, which is more probable,) except that God intended to show that he sent angels, not only that they might survey the state of things, but that they might also come to chastise men, or to be ministers of his benefits? Besides, it was God's purpose, as I have already hinted, to make it known, that nothing is carried on in this world but what is known by angels, who are his emissaries and agents.

They said that the whole earth was then quiet, [172] that is, the countries bordering on Judea, or the oriental regions. Hence a greater confidence might be entertained by the Jews, for with the prayer of the angel is connected a complaint --- ``God of hosts, what is thy purpose?'' that is, ``Is it thy will that all others should enjoy quietness and peace, while enemies are continually hostile and troublesome to thy people? Is it right that thy Church should be ever miserably distressed, while heathens, who have no care for religion, should be so bountifully favored by thee? Is it not better that the memory of thy name should be extinguished, and that all worship should fall to the ground, than that so unjust a reward should be returned to thy servants?'' We now see the design of the vision, even that the Jews might be assured that the distresses which they endured would not be perpetual. How so? because God slept not in heaven, but had his runners; and further, since his will was that all nations should be tranquil, he would no doubt have at length a regard for his own people, so as to deliver them from their troubles.

Though then the vision is obscure, yet its design is not doubtful. Besides, if we are content with what is moderate, there will be found here nothing so perplexing but that we may easily learn at least the import of the Prophecy. But the curiosity of those interpreters has done much harm, who by examining every single syllable have advanced many puerile things. There is therefore nothing better than to attend to the design of the Prophet, and then to regard the circumstances of the time, and thirdly, to follow the analogy between the signs and things signified.

I have said that angels are here introduced, because it would be difficult for us to ascend to the highest glory of God. God, we know, is not constrained by necessity

[172] The literal rendering is “All the earth sits and rests.” It is represented as a man sitting and quietly taking his rest. There was then peace throughout the Persian empire, which is set forth here as the whole earth.

to employ angels as ministers to execute his judgments, to punish men, or to confer benefits: for God himself is sufficient for all these things. Why then does he employ angels and make use of their ministration, if it be superfluous? The obvious answer is this --- as we are prone to unbelief, we ever tremble in dangers, except we know that God is prepared with many forces to help us in time of need. When it is said in Psalm 24 that angels encamp around those who fear God, is it not a much more effectual relief than if it had been simply said that God is our citadel? It is indeed said in many places that God is an unassailable fortress; but as many still continue to doubt when they hear that there is a sufficient defense for them in God, he consults now their weakness, and adds, ``I come with a great host; I am not alone your helper, but there is a great army ready at my bidding. Whenever then it may please me a troop of angels, yea, many myriads shall assemble together.'' When therefore God thus speaks, it is a mode of teaching suitable to the capacities of men. So now, when Zechariah sees many runners, who have been sent by God to perambulate and to survey the earth, it may with greater certainty be learnt that nothing is carried on without design or by chance in the world, but that all things come before God, and that the manner in which all things occur is set forth by the angels. In the same way is the representation given in the first chapter of Job (Job 1:1) All the sons of God, that is, angels, came before his throne; and also among them Satan came; for though he does not willingly obey God, yet while he perambulates the earth, he at the same time executes God's judgments, though unwillingly. We now then see the reason why God did not himself appear, and testified to the Prophet, that whatever took place among the nations was known to him; but he shows that his runners rode swiftly through the whole earth, and returned afterwards to the heavenly tribunal, and proved that they had carefully performed their office.

Now the Prophet says, that he had this vision in the eleventh month, called Sebat, [173] and on the twenty-fourth day of the month; that is, in the third month after his first Prophecy. He had in the eighth month sharply reproved the Jews: now a consolation is added, lest they should despair, but know that they were still the objects of God's care. And possibly the reproof referred to had been effectual; nay, it is probable, that the Prophet did not labor in vain in exhorting the Jews to true and sincere repentance. When therefore they had given some evidence of religion, we see that God afterwards treated them more kindly, and set before them the hope of a future deliverance.

With regard to the night time, it is of importance to observe, that though God does not always set forth with full clearness his predictions, they are not yet without instruction, provided we be attentive, and provided also we suffer ourselves, while in darkness, to be ruled by the spirit of knowledge. By whatever different means then God may teach his faithful people, he always teaches them something useful, provided they murmur not when any thing is for a time obscure, but wait for the day of full revelation. And this is the design of Paul's admonition, ``If ye think otherwise, this also will God reveal to you.'' Let us then know that God's manner of teaching is

[173] "This month corresponded with the latter end of January and beginning of February." — Blayney.

not always the same, but that his teaching is always profitable, provided the faithful retain due moderation and sobriety, and suffer themselves to be guided step by step by God. This observation is to be applied to the whole verse, when it is said, that the horses and the horsemen stood under the myrtles, and also in a low place.

And, then, as to the various colors of the horses, it ought not to be deemed strange, that God should thus allot different offices to angels; for he does not always punish us by the ministry of Satan. He has celestial angels, when it pleases him, as executioners of his vengeance; and he sometimes employs devils for this purpose. However this may be, it is in his power to delegate angels as ministers of his kindness, or to send them to execute his vengeance, so that they appear in red color, or in some other. In conclusion, it ought also to be borne in mind, that angels do stand before the tribunal of God, after having diligently perambulated the earth, not after the manner of men: for it would be gross and puerile to imagine angels sitting on horses, inasmuch as they are spirits who are confined to no certain place; but as we cannot understand, according to our capacities, the celestial mysteries of God, it is necessary that such representations should be set before our eyes. however this may be, it ought to remain a fixed principle, that angels are always employed, for they survey the earth, that nothing may be done or carried on without design; and they are also sent with power and authority, so that they are, as it were, the hand of God: and at one time they execute his judgments, inflict punishments, as it has been said; and at another they come with blessings from God. This then is the meaning as to the horsemen. I cannot proceed farther: the rest I shall defer.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that since we live here as in thick darkness, and are also surrounded with so much darkness of ignorance, that we often entertain doubts as to thy providence, and think ourselves forsaken by thee whenever thou dost not immediately succor us, --- O grant, that with our minds raised above, we may contemplate those things which thou hast once revealed to thy servant Zechariah, and not doubt, but thou lookest on us also and commandest thy angels to take care of us, and to raise us up in their hands, and to guide us in all our ways, yea, in all the crooked windings of this life, so that we may learn to commit ourselves to be wholly ruled by thee, and thus suffer ourselves to be drawn and turned here and there in the world, so as still to follow the way which thou hast pointed out to us, and to proceed straight towards the mark which thou hast been pleased to set before us, until we shall at length be gathered into that eternal rest, which has been obtained for us by the blood of thine only-begotten Son. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Thirty-sixth

Zechariah 1:12

12. Then the angel of the Lord answered and said, O Lord of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years?

12. Et respondit Angelus Iehovae et dixit, Iehova exercituum, quousque tu non misereberis Ierusalem et urbium Iehudah, quas sprevisti (vel, detestatus es; alii vertunt, quibus iratus fuisti; [{זעם}] utrumque significat; sed videtur melius quadrare

prior ille sensus, quas ergo sprevisti) his septuaginta annis?

The Prophet now shows that the angel who was his guide and teacher, became even a suppliant before God in behalf of the welfare of the Church. Hence the probable opinion is, that this angel was Christ the Mediator. For they who say that it was the Holy Spirit, who forms prayers in our hearts, seem to depart very far from the meaning of the Prophet: and it is nothing new, that Christ should exercise care over his Church. But if this view be disapproved, we may take any one of the angels to be meant. It is certain that it is enjoined them all to minister to the salvation of the faithful, according to what the Apostle says in the first chapter of the Hebrews Hebrews 1:1; and indeed the whole Scripture is full of evidences, which prove that angels are guardians to the godly, and watch over them; for the Lord, for whose service they are ever ready, thus employs them: and in this we also see the singular love of God towards us; for he employs his angels especially for this purpose, that he might show that our salvation is greatly valued by him.

There is then nothing wrong, if we say that any one of the angels prayed for the Church. But absurdly, and very foolishly do the Papists hence conclude, that dead saints are our advocates before God, or that they pray for us; for we never read that it is an office committed to the dead to intercede for us; nay, the duties of love, we know, are confined to the present life. When, therefore, the faithful remove from this world, having finished their course, they enter on a blessed life. Though then the case is different, yet the Papists foolishly pass from angels to the dead: for as it has been stated, the case of the faithful has been committed to angels, and they ever watch over the whole body, and over every member of it. It is then nothing strange that they offer prayers for the faithful; but it does not hence follow, that angels are to be invoked by us. Why does Scripture testify, that angels supplicate God for us? Is it that each of us may flee to them? By no means; but that being assured of God's paternal love, we may entertain more hope and confidence; yea, that we may courageously fight, being certain of victory, since celestial hosts contend for us, according to what appears from many examples. For when the servant of Elisha saw not the chariots flying in the air, he became almost lost in despair; but his despair was instantly removed, when he saw so many angels ready at hand for help, (2 Kings 6:17;) so whenever God declares that angels are ministers for our safety, he means to animate our faith; at the same time he does not send us to angels; but this one thing is sufficient for us, that when God is propitious to us, all the angels have a care for our salvation. And we must further notice what is said by Christ,

``hereafter ye shall see angels ascending and descending,''
(John 1:51,)

which means, that when we are joined to the head, there will thence proceed a sacred union between us and angels; for Christ, we know, is equally Lord over all. When, therefore, we are united to the body of Christ, it is certain that angels are united to us, but only through Christ. All this favor then depends on the one true Mediator. Far then is it from being the case, that Scripture represents angels as patrons to whom we may pray. The meaning then is what we have stated, when Zechariah says, that the angel thus prayed, O Jehovah of hosts, how long wilt thou

not have mercy on Jerusalem and the cities of Judah?

The angel seems in this place to have indirectly blamed God for having too much delayed to bring help to his Church: but this mode of speaking, we know, frequently occurs in the prayers of the saints; they in a manner charged God with delay, that is, according to the perception of their flesh. But this is not inconsistent with the obedience of faith, since the faithful submit at length to the counsel of God. Hence, however familiarly they may often expostulate with God, when he seems to delay and to withhold his aid, they yet restrain themselves, and at length feel assured that what God has appointed is best. But they thus pour forth their cares and their sorrows into the bosom of God, in order to disburden themselves. The angel now adopts this form when he says, ``How long wilt thou not show mercy?'' It is not however the complaint of unreasonable fervor, as that of the ungodly, who in praying accuse God, rage against him, and quarrel with his judgments. The angel then was not moved by any turbulent feeling, nor were the saints, when they adopted this mode of praying; but they did what God allows us all to do; they thus disburndened their cares and sorrows.

We ought at the same time to notice the special import of the words, ``how long,'' {מתי}-{עד}, od-mati? The angel indeed afterwards explains himself, when he expressly mentions the term of seventy years. [174] It was not then without design, or through a strong impulse of feeling, that the angel said, How long? but he had regard to a memorable prophecy, which was in the mouth of all the godly; for God had fixed seventy years for the exile of the people. Since the people knew that a time had been predetermined by God, he does net here supplicate God according to his own will, but only alleges the promise itself: and it is an usual thing with the saints to plead before God what he has promised to them. What indeed can better sustain our hope? and what can give us a greater encouragement in praying, than when we plead with God according to his promises? For God will have our prayers to be founded first on his gratuitous goodness, and then on the constancy of his faithfulness and truth. When therefore they thus address God, ``O Lord, thou art true, and thou hast promised this to us; relying on thy word, we dare ask what otherwise we could not,'' --- they certainly do not exceed the limits as though they prescribed to God a law, but anxiously seek to obtain what had been freely offered. We have seen that the angel does not here complain of delay, but that he founded his plea on that remarkable prophecy, in which God had fixed the term of seventy years for his people.

The angel seems in this place to have indirectly blamed God for having too much delayed to bring help to his Church: but this mode of speaking, we know, frequently occurs in the prayers of the saints; they in a manner charged God with delay, that is, according to the perception of their flesh. But this is not inconsistent with the obedience of faith, since the faithful submit at length to the counsel of God. Hence, however familiarly they may often expostulate with God, when he seems to delay and to withhold his aid, they yet restrain themselves, and at length feel assured that

[174] The Hebrew literally is “this seventies year.” A similar anomaly is found in Welsh, “this ten year and sixty,” or “this sixty year and ten.” — Ed.

what God has appointed is best. But they thus pour forth their cares and their sorrows into the bosom of God, in order to disburden themselves. The angel now adopts this form when he says, ``How long wilt thou not show mercy?'' It is not however the complaint of unreasonable fervor, as that of the ungodly, who in praying accuse God, rage against him, and quarrel with his judgments. The angel then was not moved by any turbulent feeling, nor were the saints, when they adopted this mode of praying; but they did what God allows us all to do; they thus disburdened their cares and sorrows. [175]

I have said, that it is more suitable to the passage to say, that the cities had been despised by God: but if any prefers the other view, I will not contend; yet whosoever will minutely consider the intention of the Prophet, will, I think, readily assent to the idea, that the cities had been despised or rejected by God, because he gave them no sign of his mercy. [176] It now follows ---

Zechariah 1:13

13. And the Lord answered the angel that talked with me with good words and comfortable words.

13. Et respondit Iehova angelo mecum loquenti verba bona (vel, dulcia) verba consolatoria.

The Prophet shows here, that though God did not immediately on the first day stretch forth his hand to the miserable Jews, he was yet propitious to them. But we must notice, that God speaks only, and does not yet manifest his power. The Prophet's design must be here observed; for first he reminds the faithful that there was no reason for them to despair, or to be cast down with sorrow; for celestial angels prayed to God for them, and pleaded for their salvation. This is one thing. But a greater and fuller confirmation is added; for God testifies that he is ready to deliver the Jews, though he does not declare this immediately at first. And here we may remark, that it ought to be sufficient to sustain our hope and patience, when God testifies and affirms that he favors us, and that our salvation is dear to him, however miserable our condition may apparently be. God might indeed have immediately given a real proof to the Jews that the time had come to restore them to full prosperity: this he did not, but only made a promise. He gave words only: but his purpose was, by an actual trial, to prove the patience and obedience of his people, when he said that he had not forgotten his covenant, on which depended all

[175] This point has been frequently referred to by Calvin: but mistakes have arisen from not considering that no less than three events are coincident with this number, as it is clearly proved by Petavius, Prideaux, Bishop Newton, and others. From the first invasion of Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel 1:1; Jeremiah 25:1-11, to the edict of Cyrus, 2 Chronicles 36:22, there were seventy years; the same time transpired from the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, Jeremiah 52:13, eighteen years after, to the second year of Darius Hystaspes, when a decree was made to rebuild the temple; and there were seventy years from the last captivity by Nebuzar-adan, Jeremiah 52:30, to the time when the temple was finished. “So that taking it,” says Prideaux, “which way you will, and at what stage you please, the prophecy of Jeremiah will be fully and exactly accomplished concerning this matter.” Probably the second period is what is here intended. — Ed.

[176] The contrast seems to show that displeasure, or wrath, or flaming wrath, which [{,[{ pity or compassion, is what is prayed for. God had been as it were angry or indignant, but now his pity is solicited. He is asked to show pity to a people to whom he had manifested extreme displeasure. ``Compassionate'' and ``angry'' are the two words used by Henderson; and ``have mercy'' and ``had indignation,'' by Newcome. The former appears to be the most appropriate rendering. Compassion or pity, and anger or wrath, seem to be the contrasts. --- Ed.

the promises previously made.

But the Prophet seems to allude to a prophecy of Isaiah in the fortieth chapter,

``Comfort ye my people, saith your God.'' Isaiah 40:1

The Prophets had been for a long time silent: it was indeed right that the Jews should remain long struggling, as they had for so many years hardened themselves against all threatening, and even despised all God's judgments, according to what is said by Isaiah,

``Let us eat and drink, tomorrow we shall die.''

(Isaiah 22:13.)

As then the obstinacy of the people had been so great, it was proper that they should long mourn without comfort. But Isaiah says, that the time would come when God would command his servants to comfort his people again as in former times. Zechariah says now, that God spoke consoling words. We hence learn, that the desires of the godly and the prayer of the angel had been heard; for redemption was now nigh at hand, according to what is said in the hundred and second Psalm, ``It is time for thee, O God, to have mercy on Sion, for its time is come;'' that is, ``The seventy years are completed, which it has pleased thee to assign for our exile.'' It now follows ---

Zechariah 1:14

14. So the angel that communed with me said unto me, Cry thou, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy.

14. Et dixit angelus qui loquebatur mecum, Clama dicendo, sic dicit Iehova exercituum, Zelatus sum Ierusalem et Sion zelo magno.

Zechariah now mentions the chief consolation to which he had referred; for it would not have been sufficient to say in general, and in a few words without explanation, that God gave a kind answer to the angel. For we know how strong were those temptations with which the faithful had to struggle. It was then needful for them to be furnished, not with light weapons, in so arduous a contest. This is the reason why Zechariah more fully expressed the words by which God then strengthened the faith of his people.

He says that the angel had spoken; and he thus intimates that the consolation was not given privately to the angel that he might keep it in his own bosom, but convey it to the whole people. This was not then a secret consolation but what the Lord intended to be proclaimed by his Prophets, according to what is said by Isaiah in the passage to which we have already referred --- ``Comfort ye, comfort ye my people saith your God.''

What God says, that he was moved with great zeal for Jerusalem and Sion, [177] is according to the common language of Scripture. For as God cannot otherwise sufficiently express the ineffable favor which he has towards his elect he is pleased to adopt this similitude, that he undertakes the defense of his people according to

[177] Marckius and Henderson have followed this rendering of Calvin, and on the ground of a distinction between [קנא] and [חמה] following the verb here when followed by [ל] as well as by ,[ב] see 1 Kings 20:10,14; Psalm 106:16. Our version, followed by Blayney and Newcome, is to be preferred here. There are two kinds of jealousy, as observed by Blayney: the one for disloyalty an unfaithful wife, Proverbs 6:34; and another for the honor and welfare of those whom we love when they are oppressed and wronged, Joel 2:18. God might have been said to be jealous for Jerusalem on either of these accounts. --- Ed.

what is done by a husband who fights with the greatest zeal for his own wife. This is the reason why he says that he was zealous for Jerusalem. And we ought especially to notice this mode of speaking, that we may not think that God is indifferent when he delays and defers his aid: for as we are hasty in our wishes so we would have God to be precipitant in the same manner; and we impute to him indifference when he does not hasten according to our desires. These doubts God checks when he testifies that he is zealous: for he intimates that his slowness did not proceed from neglect or because he despised or disregarded them; but that there was another reason why he held them in suspense. We may therefore be fully persuaded that even when God withholds his aid he is not otherwise affected towards us than the best of fathers towards his own children; and further that the signs of his love do not appear because it is not always expedient for us to be delivered soon from our troubles. Let this then be our shield against all hasty desires, so that we may not indulge our too ardent wishes, or think that our salvation is neglected by God, when he hides himself for a time and does not immediately stretch forth his hand to help us. It follows ---

Zechariah 1:15

15. And I am very sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease: for I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction.

15. Et ira magna ego irascor contra gentes has quietas; quia ego iratus fui parum, et adjuverunt in malum.

God here obviates the doubt which might have easily crept into the minds of the godly. ``Why should he then give up the miserable Jews to the will of the Gentiles, and suffer these heathens at the same time to be in a quiet state and to enjoy their pleasures?'' This indeed at the first view seemed very strange: if God had such a zeal towards Jerusalem, why did he not give some token at least of his favor? He therefore gives this answer, --- That though the condition of the Gentiles was now better, there was yet no reason for the Jews to be discontented in their troubles, because they were to look forward to the end that was to come. It must further be noticed, that God speaks only here, and is not going forth prepared to execute his vengeance: and it is a real and just trial of faith, when God bids us to depend on his word.

The manner of speaking, used here deserves notice, God was angry with the quiet nations. It is not a superfluous repetition, when it is said, that the nations were quiet. Some render the word wealthy, but not so suitably; for as we have said before, the angel complained that while the whole world was tranquil, God severely chastised his Church alone. God then does here anticipate a temptation which would have otherwise distressed and even wholly disheartened the faithful; and he in effect says, ``It is indeed true that the Gentiles all around are quiet, that there are no calamities, that there is no enemy, and that they are subject to no evils: this is no doubt true; but as I am angry, their happiness, while I am opposed to and displeased with them, is a curse.'' God, then, does here elevate the thoughts of the godly, that they might know that happiness is to be found in his favor alone, and that whenever he is angry or displeased, though men may think themselves happy, and flatter themselves and

exult in their condition, they are yet in a most miserable state; for all happiness is ruinous which does not flow from the fountain of God's gratuitous love; in short, when God is not our Father, the more we abound in all kinds of blessings, the deeper we sink in all kinds of miseries. This then is the meaning, when God says that he was angry with the quiet nations.

What, then, is the application of this doctrine? That it behaved the Jews, though their condition was very hard according to the perception of men, to have yet acquiesced in the love of God, for they knew that he was their Father, and also, that though they saw their enemies happy, they were yet to regard it no otherwise than a cursed happiness. so also in the thirty-seventh Psalm, the faithful are bid not to envy the unbelieving, while they saw them flourishing in wealth and rolling in pleasures; for it behaved them to regard their end. Let us hence learn to raise up our thoughts to the contemplation of God's hidden love, when he deals severely with us, and to be satisfied with his word, as we have there an indubitable evidence of his favor: nor let us envy our enemies and the wicked, however the whole world may applaud them, and they themselves luxuriate in their blessings, for we know that God is adverse to them.

A reason also follows, Because God was a little angry, and they helped forward the evil; that is, they exceeded moderation. The meaning is, that the reward of cruelty would be repaid to all the enemies of the Church, because they had exercised immoderate severity, when it was God's purpose to chastise his children in a gentle and paternal manner.

It may be here first asked, How is it that God declares that he had been a little angry with his people, since his judgment, as pronounced by his servants, was most severe?

``Whosoever shall escape the famine, shall fall by the sword;
whosoever shall escape the sword, shall fall among wild beasts.''
(Ezekiel 14:14.)

And in many other places he declares the same, that there would be no hope of pardon to the people, but that they were all to perish; that is, the whole body: ``Though Noah, Daniel, and Job,'' he says, ``were in this city, they shall deliver only their lives; but I will not hear their prayers for this irreclaimable people.'' But the particle little, {מעט}, mot, must be applied to the elect: for though God in his dreadful vengeance consumed almost the whole people, yet a remnant, as we know, was preserved. This is the reason why God says, that he was but little angry with his people; for he speaks not of the reprobate and of that impure mass from which he purposed to cleanse his own house; but he has respect to his covenant. We now perceive for what purpose Zechariah says, that God was but moderately angry with his people.

But another difficulty meets us --- In what sense did the nations help on the evil? For it hence follows, that the heathens were not restrained from raging immoderately and at their pleasure. And this place has been also laid hold of by that miscreant, who has been lately writing against God's providence, holding that the wicked become wanton by means of God's hand and power, and are not thereby restrained. But

this is extremely foolish; for the Prophet here does not regard what the nations were able to do or had done; but, on the contrary, he speaks of their cruelty, that they thought that there ought to have been no end until the memory of that people had been obliterated. And this is the reason why Isaiah says, ``Thou hast not seen her end.'' He therefore upbraids the unbelieving, that they did not calculate rightly as to the end of the Church; for the unbelieving furiously attempted to destroy it, as though that promise could be made void, ``My mercy I will not take away.'' Since the unbelieving did not see her end, because it was the Lord's will ever to preserve some remnant among his chosen people, the Prophet says, that they helped forward the evil. We now then perceive the intention of the Prophet, and see that the object is no other but to sustain the hope of the faithful, until what they heard from the mouth of God really took place. Let us proceed -

Zechariah 1:16

16. Therefore thus saith the Lord; I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies: my house shall be built in it, saith the Lord of hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem.

16. Propterea sic dicit Iehovah, Reversus sum ad Ierusalem in miserationibus; domus mea aedificabitur in ea, dicit Iehovah exercituum; et linea extendetur super Ierusalem.

This is a confirmation of the last prophecy, --- that God purposed to put an end to his chastisement, as it is said by Isaiah, ``They have received at Jehovah's hand double for all their sins.'' For in these words God reminds us that he was satisfied with the punishment he had inflicted on his people, like a father, who thinks that he had been sufficiently severe and rigid in punishing his son. So now, Thus saith Jehovah, I have returned to Jerusalem in mercies: for it was necessary to give the people the hope of pardon and reconciliation, that they might look forward with confidence. Hypocrites very quickly raise up their crests as soon as a kind word is addressed to them; but the faithful, being conscious of what is wrong, and having their sins before their eyes, do not so easily take courage; nor can they do so, until they are convinced that their sins are buried, and that they themselves are freed from guilt. Hence the Prophet says, that God had turned to Jerusalem, that the Jews might know that the punishment with which God had visited them was to be only for a time.

But in the meantime he exhorts them to humility: for the people could not from this prophecy entertain any hope, except they duly considered that they had suffered justly, because they had provoked God's wrath. Hence the Prophet reminds them that what they had hitherto endured was to be imputed to their sins; but that God yet intended to treat them in a paternal manner; for, as I have already stated, he had promised that his mercy towards his elect and faithful would be perpetual. Hence he says, that he had returned in mercies to Jerusalem

He then adds, My house shall be built in it; and over Jerusalem shall a line be stretched forth. Line, {קוה}, kue, is to be taken for a perpendicular line, as in Isaiah 28:17, and in other places. There is here an addition of {ה}, he, for as it has been elsewhere said, the language had become somewhat degenerated. The import of the whole is, that there was a hope of the temple and of the city being built, because

God had returned into favor with the people. There are then two things to be noticed, --- that God was now pacified towards Jerusalem, --- and that the fruit of reconciliation would be the building of the temple, the establishment of divine worship and of the dignity of the kingdom. The Prophet teaches us at the same time, that the building of the temple was not to be expected but as an instance of God's gratuitous favor, so that the Jews might know that every hope would have been cut off, had not God been pleased to abolish their guilt.

This doctrine ought also to be extended to the state of the Church at all times: for whence comes it that the Church remains safe in the world? Nay, how is it that it sometimes increases, except that God indulges us according to his infinite goodness? For we cease not daily to provoke him, and deserve to be wholly exterminated from the world. There would then be no Church, were not God to preserve it in a wonderful manner through his goodness and mercies, and also to restore it when it seems to have wholly fallen. He at length adds ---

Zechariah 1:17

17. Cry yet, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; My cities through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad; and the LORD shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem.

17. Adhuc clama, dicendo, Sic Iehova exercituum, Adhuc conterentur (alii vertunt, dispergentur, vel, se diffundent, vel, segregabuntur; sed dicemus de proprio sensu, conterentur ergo) urbes prae bono; et consolabitur Iehova adhuc Sion, et eliget adhuc Ierusalem.

I cannot finish today.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that though we are continually tossed here and there by various trials, and Satan ceases not to shake our faith, --- O grant, that we may yet stand firm on the promise that thou hast once given us, and which thou hast also confirmed through thine only-begotten Son, even that thou wilt ever be propitious and reconcilable to us, so that we may not despair in our greatest troubles, but relying on thy goodness may utter our groans to thee, until the ripened time of our deliverance shall come: nor let us in the meantime envy the evanescent happiness of thy enemies; but patiently wait, while thou showest that the chief object of desire is to have thee propitious to us, and that accursed is every good thing which the ungodly receive while they provoke thee and make thee angry, until Christ shall at length reveal to us the real happiness and glory of thy Church, when he shall appear at the last day for our salvation --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Thirty-seventh

I was not able in my last lecture fully to explain the verse in which the Prophet says that he was commanded by the angel to cry again, that God had returned to Jerusalem in mercies. The design of the words is this, --- that though it was difficult to believe the restoration of Jerusalem, it was yet to be fully expected, for the Lord had so appointed. But he enlarges on what I have before stated; for the blessing of God is extended to the cities of Judah, though an express mention is made only of Jerusalem. Yet cities, he says, shall wear out through abundance of blessings; for so I

think the verb {תפוצנה}, tephutzne, is to be taken, as futs means to spread, and also to wear out, and to break. Some elicit a forced meaning, that cities would spread themselves; others, that they would be separated, that is, that security would be so great, that cities, though distant from one another, would be in no danger or fear. But the meaning of the Prophet is clear, unless we designedly pervert it in a matter so manifest and easy. The cities, he says, shall be worn out or wearied through abundance of blessings, or as we say, elles seront entassees; for where there is a great heap, there is crushing. He therefore says, that so great and so full would be the abundance of all things, that the corn would press down itself, and that the vessels would hardly contain the vintage. We now perceive what the Prophet means, --- that Jerusalem would yet be made complete, and also that other cities would be filled with all good things, because God would extend his favor to the whole people. 178

He then adds, Comfort Zion will yet Jehovah, and he will yet choose Jerusalem. The particle {פוף}, oud, yet, is repeated; for the suspension of favor, of which we have before spoken, might have somewhat prevented the faithful from realising the promise. As then God's favor was for a time hid, the angel declares, that such would be the change, that God's goodness and love towards his chosen people would again shine forth as in former days.

As to the word ``chosen,'' it must be observed, that it is applied, not in its strict sense, to the effect or the evidence of election; for God had chosen before the creation of the world whom he had designed to be his own. But he is said to choose whom he receives into favor, because their adoption seems obliterated in the eyes of men, when there appears no evidence of his paternal favor. As for instance, whenever we read that God had repudiated his own people, it is certain, as Paul says, that the calling of God is without repentance, (Romans 11:29:) nor does he declare this only of the secret election of each, but also of that general election, by which God had set apart the race of Abraham from the rest of the nations. At the same time many of Abraham's children were reprobates, as he instances in the case of Esau and of others: yet the election of God was unchangeable; and hence it was that there remained still some hope as to that people, that God would at length gather to himself a Church from the Jews as well as from the Gentiles, so that those who were then separated might be hereafter united together. Since then the calling of God is without repentance, {αμετα} {μελητος}, how is it that the Lord is often said to choose, and is also said to reject his chosen? These expressions refer to the outward appearance of things. God therefore will secure his own election to the end; but as we cannot otherwise perceive but that we are rejected by God when he turns away his face from us, he is said to choose again those whom he has repudiated, that is, when he really and by a clear evidence proves that he has not forgotten their first

178 The verb here used is rendered, “shall be filled,” by the Targum; “shall abound,” by Jerome; “{διαχυθησονται} --- shall be spread out,'' by the Septuagint; ``shall spread themselves,'' by Grotius; ``shall be spread abroad,'' by Newcome; ``shall overflow,'' by Henderson. There are here two ideas; one derived from the Targum, and the other from the Septuagint. The original verb means properly to burst out, to dilate, to spread; and the line may be rendered. Burst out again shall my cities through abundance. The reference seems to be to their enlargement, and not to their multiplicity, as Newcome thinks, and that through abundance of blessings, literally, ``though good,'' ,[{מטוב}] or good things, the poetical singular instead of the plural. --- Ed.

adoption, but that he continues unchangeable in his purpose.

We now then understand what the Prophet means. I have more fully dwelt on this point, because it is necessary to understand this great truth, --- that whatever blessings God confers on his own people proceed from eternal election, that this is a perpetual fountain, and yet that election is catachrestically [179] applied to its evidences or effects, as also rejection is to be taken in the same sense for outward punishment, which seems at the first view to be an evidence of rejection, though it be not really so. Let us now proceed -

Zechariah 1:18-21

18. Then lifted I up mine eyes, and saw, and behold four horns.

18. Et sustuli oculos meos, et vidi, et ece quatuor cornua.

19. And I said unto the angel that talked with me, What be these? And he answered me, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem.

19. Et dixi ad angelum, qui loquebatur mecum, Qui isti? (hoc est, Qui sunt isti?) et dixit ad me, Haec sunt cornua quae ventilarunt Iehudah, Israel, et Ierusalem. (Ego conjungam etiam proximos versus)

20. And the LORD shewed me four carpenters.

20. Et ostendit mihi Iehova quatuor fabros.

21. Then said I, What come these to do? And he spake, saying, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, so that no man did lift up his head: but these are come to fray them, to cast out the horns of the Gentiles, which lifted up their horn over the land of Judah to scatter it.

21. Et dixi, Cur isti? quid isti veniunt ad faciendum? (ad verbum, hoc est, Quorsum isti veniunt ut faciant?) et dixit dicendo, Haec sunt cornua quae ventilarunt Iehudah, ita ut nemo tolleret caput suum: et veniunti isti (fabri scilicet) ad terrendum (addo, cornua, quoniam relativum [{אותם}] obscurum per se esset,) ut projiciant cornua gentium, quae sustulerunt cornu terram Iehudah, ut ventilarent eam.

Now follows another vision, by which God confirms what he had before testified to his Prophet. He then says, that though enemies should on every side rise up against the Church and cause it many troubles, there was yet a remedy in God's hand, as he would break in pieces all horns by his hammers. He compares the Gentiles, who had been hostile to the Jews, to horns; and he afterwards compares to workmen the other enemies, whose hand and labor God would use for the purpose of breaking down the efforts of all those who would be troublesome to the Church. The import of the whole then is, --- that though the Church would not be exempt and free from troubles, and those many, yet God would have in his hand those remedies by which he would check all the assaults of the wicked, however impetuously and violently they may rage against his miserable Church.

But let us see in the first place why the Prophet mentions four horns. The Jews refer to the Assyrians and the Babylonians, to the Persian, the Grecians, and the Romans; because we find in other places, and Daniel especially shows very clearly, (Daniel 2:32,) that there were to be four principal monarchies, by which God intended to give clear and memorable examples of his judgments. But the Prophet, I have no

[179] {Καταχρηστικως}, forcedly, contrary to usage or what is strictly correct. --- Ed.

doubt, speaks here of the Moabites and of the Syrians, and of other nations, as well as of the Assyrians or Chaldees. They are then mistaken, as I think, who suppose that these four monarchies are intended here: [180] but Zechariah says that they were four horns, because they arose from the four quarters of the world; for we know that the Jews were not harassed only on one side, but on the east and the west, on the north and the south. Since then enemies on every side joined their strength and their forces against the Jews, so that there was a cause for trembling from the four quarters of the world, that is, from all places around them, the Prophet says, that they had been scattered by four horns

This view, however, seems still frigid, because it was not necessary for the Prophet to state what was well known to all: but God intended to show that the nations which had been inimical and hostile to the Jews, had done nothing but through his hidden impulse, in order that the Jews might understand that these were so many scourges by which he purposed to chastise them.

But we must join the latter part, --- that God showed also to the Prophet four smiths, for these two visions are connected together. Whosoever then takes only the first part, acts very absurdly, for the meaning of the prophecy will not be thus evident. If then we would not mutilate what is connected, we must not separate what is added respecting the four smiths. Inasmuch then as the Jews had been on every side oppressed, God shows that he has remedies enough, and even from various quarters. The Prophet had seen four horns; he now sees four smiths, that is, he is made to know that God can immediately find means to check all disorders and tumults; for he can beat as it were on an anvil these horns, and break in pieces those which had previously scattered the Jews. The same view then is to be taken of the number four as in the former instance: for as the Chaldeans had raged against the Jews, so the Lord shows that he had enemies ready at hand, as he had already in part made it evident; for how was it that the Persian and Medes had so suddenly taken possession of Babylon, had they not been workmen whom God had employed to strike down the Babylonian horn? And whence was it that the Syrians, the Egyptians, and other nations had been made prostrate? It was because they were horns. But the Lord broke down the ferocity of so many nations by his many workmen, for he employed these as though they were hired and ready to do his service. We now apprehend the real object of the Prophet.

But though the Prophet intended by this prophecy to encourage and animate to patience his own nation, as the Spirit of God had given him this office; yet there is here set before us by the Lord as in a mirror, the real condition of the Church at this day. Let us not then wonder if the world rage on every side against the Church and if storms and tempests arise from the east as well as from the west: nor is it a new thing that many enemies from various parts unite together; and that God's Church

[180] Some of the Rabbins, Jerome, Vatablus, and latterly Blayney, have adopted this view; but it is wholly inadmissible. The single reason that the past enemies of the Jews are here referred to, is a sufficient refutation. The number four is differently accounted, for by Cyril and some others. It is explained of the four principal enemies of the Jews — Pul, Shalmenezar, Sennacherib, and Nebuchadnezzar. But what Calvin says seems most satisfactory. "Why four? to denote that these kingdoms had many enemies, enemies on every side, Ezra 4:1; Nehemiah 4:7." — Newcome. With this view Theodoret, Marckius, and Henderson also agree. — Ed.

should thus have to bear many assaults. This is one thing. In the meantime let this be our consolation, --- that God has many smiths at hand. Very apposite is the Prophet's metaphor; for the hardiness of the horns was formidable LO the Jews; but the Prophet intimates that there is hardness in the hammers, capable of breaking in pieces all horns. God then, though we may be struck by our enemies, will find smiths to break them in pieces; and this indeed is what we have found by experience. How comes it, that the small number of those who purely worship God continue to exist, notwithstanding the rage of enemies, and in spite of so many consultations and devices? For what do all monarchies desire more, or with greater avidity, than to extinguish the memory of the gospel? If then we enquire, what is the condition of the whole world at this day, we shall find that there is hardly a city or a people, or a monarch, or even one of the least princes, whose race is not exhibited against the Church. How then comes it, that they do not put forth their strength and demolish the Church, which by one breath might a hundred times fall to the ground? How is this, except that God by his handlers breaks the horns, and that by means of smiths?

And who are these smiths? They are also horns; for they all wish to destroy as much as they can the Church; but God does not permit them; on the contrary he excites them to mutual wars to destroy one another. Though then all these are horns, ready to assault the Church, and though it appears evident from the comparison that they are as it were furious and vicious bulls, and as much as they can unite together to scatter the Church, yet God gives hammers to two or three of them, and bids them to check the ferocity of their associates. While all these are intent on striking and dispersing the Church by their horns, the Lord calls them to a different work, and as I have said, bids them to be smiths that they may strike and break in pieces these horns, even their associates, with whom they had previously wickedly conspired. And it is certainly a wonderful instance of God's providence, that amidst so violent and turbulent commotions the Church should take breath, though under the cross; for except these hammers had broken the horns, we must have been pierced through, not only a hundred but a thousand times, and had been dashed into fragments. But God has turned aside their strokes and assaults by his hammers, and, as I have said, has employed his enemies for this purpose.

We now then see that this prophecy was not only useful in the age of Zechariah, but that it has been so in all ages, and that it ought not to be confined to the ancient people, but extended to the whole body of the Church.

But the Prophet, by saying that he asked the angel, sets before us an example of a truly teachable disposition. Though the Lord then may not immediately explain to us his messages, there is yet no reason for us in disdain to reject what is obscure, as we see to be done by many in our day; for when any thing seems ambiguous to them, they immediately reject it, and also complain that God's word is extremely difficult; and such blasphemies are uttered by many at this day. But the Prophet, though perplexed, did not yet morosely reject what God had showed; on the contrary, he asked the angels. Though the angels are not nigh us, or at least do not appear to us in a visible form, yet God can by other means afford us help when there is any perplexity in his word: he promises to give us the spirit of understanding and

wisdom, whenever there is need; and we also know that the preaching of the word and the sacraments are helps to lead us to himself. If then we neglect not these helps which God affords us, and especially if we ask him to guide us by his Spirit, there will certainly be nothing obscure or intricate in the prophecies, which he will not, as far as it is necessary, make known to us. He does not indeed give the Spirit in an equal degree to all; but we ought to feel assured, that though prophecies may be obscure, there will yet be a sure profit derived, if we be teachable and submissive to God; for we find that Zechariah was not deprived of his request, as the angel gave him an immediate answer.

It must also be observed, that in one place he calls him Jehovah, and in another angel; and indeed he speaks thus indiscriminately of one and the same person. It hence follows that God appeared among the angels. But we must remember what I have already said, that this chief angel was the Mediator and the Head of the Church; and the same is Jehovah, for Christ, as we know, is God manifested in the flesh. There is then no wonder that the Prophet should indiscriminately call him angel and Jehovah, he being the Mediator of the Church, and also God. He is God, being of the same essence with the Father; and Mediator, having already undertaken his Mediatorial office, though not then clothed in our flesh, so as to become our brother; for the Church could not exist, nor be united to her God without a head. We hence see that Christ, as to his eternal essence, is said to be God, and that he is called an angel on account of his office, that is, of a Mediator.

The meaning is now evident: God declares that the horns were those which dispersed or scattered Judah as well as Jerusalem, and the kingdom of Israel: but that he had as many smiths, [181] who would by force and by hammers, shatter these horns in pieces, though for a time they would greatly harass the Church. It must be also noticed that horn is to be taken differently when the number is changed: the Gentiles are called horns in the plural number to show their hardness or their strength; and they are then said to lift up their horn in the singular number to show that they ferociously exerted all their power to lay prostrate or to scatter the people of God. Then follows ---

Chapter 2

[181] The word, [{חרשים}] is of general import, and means artificers, or workmen either in iron, brass, stone, or wood. It is rendered ``workmen'' by Newcome and Henderson, and ``carpenters'' in our version. They may be viewed here as signifying skillful men, fitted to do the work assigned to them. The terms used to designate what they were to do, would lead us to this supposition; they were to ``drive away'' and to ``thrust away.'' It was not then a work suitable to any particular trade: hence, ``skillful men,'' would be perhaps the most suitable rendering. To give the meaning of terrifying to [{להחריד}] seems not suitable here: the idea must be similar to that included in [{לידות}], which is not introduced as explanatory. To cause to fly or to move quickly, is the most common meaning of the first verb, so that it may be rendered, ``drive or hurry away:'' and the other verb means to throw or cast out, to hurl, to thrust forth or away. It seems to note a stronger action, or a greater force than the former. There is here an evident instance in which [{אלה}] being repeated must be rendered, those and these; there is otherwise a confusion in the passage. I offer the following version: --- 21. And I said, ``What are these coming to do?'' And he said, saying, ``Those are the horns which have scattered Judah, so that no one lifted up his head; and these are come to drive them away, --- to thrust away the horns of the nations, which have raised the horn over the land of Judah, to scatter it abroad.'' Notwithstanding this difference as to the literal rendering of this verse, yet the general drift of Calvin's remarks remains the same. --- Ed.

Zechariah 2

Z

Zechariah 2:1-4

1. I lifted up mine eyes again, and looked, and behold a man with a measuring line in his hand.

1. Et sustuli oculos meos et vidi; et ecce vir in ejus manu funiculus mensurae.

2. Then said I, Whither goest thou? And he said unto me, To measure Jerusalem, to see what is the breadth thereof, and what is the length thereof.

2. Et dixi, Quo tu vadis? et dixit mihi, Ad metiendum Ierusalem, ut videam quanta latitudo ejus, et quanta longitudo ejus.

3. And, behold, the angel that talked with me went forth, and another angel went out to meet him,

3. Et ecce angelus qui loquebatur mecum egressus est, et alter angelus egressus est in occursum ejus;

4. And said unto him, Run, speak to this young man, saying, Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls for the multitude of men and cattle therein:

4. Et dixit ad eum, Curre, dic puero huic, dicendo, In villis (vel, pagis) habitabitur Ierusalem prae multitudine hominis et pecoris (id est, honinum et pecorum) in medio ejus.

Added now is another vision for the same end; not that the former was difficult to be understood, but because there was need of confirmation in a state of things so disturbed; for though the return of the people was no common evidence of the goodness and favor of God yet as Jerusalem was not flourishing as formerly, as the temple was like a cottage as there was no form of a kingdom and no grandeur, it was difficult to believe what had been already exhibited. This is the reason why God confirms by many proofs the same thing; for we know how difficult the contest is, owing to the infirmity of the flesh, when grievous and sharp trials assail us.

Hence Zechariah says, that he saw in the hand of a man a measuring line. He calls him a man, who appeared in the form of man; and it is well known, and a common

thing, that angels are called men. For though they put on a human form only for a time, yet as it was the Lord's will that they should be seen in that form, they are called men, though with no propriety. If it be asked, whether angels did really put on human nature? the obvious answer is, that they never, strictly speaking, became really men. But we know that God treats us as children; and there is the same reason for the expression as for the thing itself. How was it that angels appeared in human form? even that their access to men might be easier. Hence God calls them men as in this place. Zechariah then says, that an angel appeared to him in the form of a man, having in his hand a measuring line.

He then asks him where he was going; the answer given is, to measure Jerusalem, to see what was its breadth and its length. The design of the prophecy is then stated, Behold, inhabited shall be Jerusalem throughout all its villages, [182] as it could not contain within its walls so large a multitude of men. God then would so increase his people, that they could not be contained within its walls, but that the limits of the Church would be spacious. Inhabited then shall be Jerusalem throughout all its villages, that is, through the whole country around. This is the meaning.

We now see the design of the Holy Spirit. As a small portion only had returned from exile, the faithful might have become disheartened when they found that the restoration of the Church was very far from being so splendid as what had been so often predicted and promised. It was therefore necessary that they should be encouraged, in order that they might patiently wait while God was performing by degrees, and step by step, what he had testified. That they might not then confine God's favor to a short period, or to a few days, the Prophet says here, that the measure of Jerusalem was different in the sight of God from what it was in the sight of men. With regard to the ``line'', it was according to the ancient custom; for we know that they did not then use a ten foot pole or some such measure, but a line.

The Prophet, by saying that he raised up his eyes and saw this man, reminds us that Jerusalem was to be regarded prospectively: for they could hardly be induced then to build the city as a small and obscure town. We hence see that a difference is to be here noticed between the external aspect of Jerusalem, such as it was then, and its future condition, for which they were to look though not then visible. This then is the design of the prophecy, when it is said, that when Zechariah raised up his eyes, he saw a measure or a line in the hand of a man. He further reminds us that he was attentive to these visions, for by asking he proves that he was not asleep or indifferent, as many are who extinguish every light by their sloth; and I wish there was no such torpor prevailing among us in the present day! for we justly suffer punishment for our contempt, whenever we heedlessly and negligently attend to what God sets before us. Let us then learn greater attention and diligence from the Prophet's example.

He asks where he was going, the answer given is, to measure: and then he shows what would be the measure of Jerusalem, that it would hereafter extend beyond the walls, as that compass would not contain the vast number of the people. ``God

[182] Literally it is, “villages shall Jerusalem inhabit;” Jerusalem is to be taken, as “land” in chapter 1:21, for its inhabitants. [{[{פרזות were villages, open, unwalled, not fortified. --- Ed.

will extend,'' he says, ``far and wide the holy city; it will no longer be confined as before to its own walls, but will be inhabited through all its villages.'' There is then no doubt but that God intended here to bear witness respecting the propagation of his Church, which was to follow a long time afterwards, even after the coming of Christ. For though Jerusalem became wealthy and also large in its compass, and, as it is well known, a triple city, and heathen writers say that it was among the first of the cities of the East when Babylon was still existing, yet this prophecy was not verified in the state of Jerusalem, for it was not inhabited without its walls, nor did it spread through the whole of Judea. We hence conclude, that the spiritual Jerusalem is here described, which differs from all earthly cities.

It is said, that the angel went forth, and that another angel met him. It hence appears as from the whole of what the Prophet says, how carefully God provides for the safety of his Church; for he has ever angels as his emissaries, who hasten at his nod, and aid the Church in its necessities. Since then angels thus unite to secure the well-being of the Church, we hence perceive how dear to God are the faithful, in whose favor he thus employs all his angels; and we also see, that it was the Lord's will that this prophecy should be clear and manifest to all the godly: go, and run to that young man, he says, and tell him. Zechariah had indeed asked for an explanation of the measure in the man's hand, but from the fact that another angel met him, it appears, as I have already said, that God does not neglect the request and prayers of his people, provided only that they are desirous of learning; he will then perform the part of a true and faithful teacher towards them. But the word ``run,'' ought especially to be noticed: ``go,'' he says, ``and even hasten, lest the youth should longer doubt, and explain the purpose of this prophecy.'' He calls the Prophet a youth, because he was then among angels. He would not call him a man of full age, because he had before called an angel man. What rank could the Prophet hold among angels except that of a youth? This circumstance ought therefore to be observed as the reason why Zechariah spoke disparagingly or humbly of himself.

Now as to the import of the prophecy, we have already said, that here is described the heavenly Jerusalem, which is surrounded by no walls, but is open to the whole world, and which depends not on its own strength, but dwells safely though exposed on all sides to enemies; for the Prophet says not without reason, ``through the villages shall Jerusalem be inhabited;'' that is, it shall everywhere be inhabited, so that it will have no need of defense to restrain or hinder enemies to come near; for a safe rest shall be given to it, when every one shall quietly occupy his own place. It follows ---

Zechariah 2:5

5. For I, saith the LORD, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her.

5. Et ego illi, dicit Iehova, murus ignis (vel, igneus) in circuitu, et in gloriam ero in medio ejus.

He confirms in this verse what I have just mentioned --- that Jerusalem would be safe, though without any fortifications; for God alone would be sufficient for walls, for towers, for fortresses, according to what is said by other Prophets: ``God will be to

thee a wall and a fortress'', (Isaiah 26:1), again, ``he will be to thee a stronghold''. It is, therefore, a sentence in accordance with other prophecies when Jehovah testifies, that he would be a wall of fire. We indeed know, that though walls may be high and thick, they may be scaled by enemies; but who will dare to throw himself into the fire? It is then the same as though God had spoken thus --- ``Though there will be no watchmen to defend Jerusalem, no soldiers to protect it, in short, no guardians whatever, yet I alone shall be sufficient; for I shall not only be a wall to keep off enemies, but I shall be also a fire to fill them with terror.''

He then adds, I will be for glory in the midst of her: as though he had said, ``the real happiness of Jerusalem, within and without, will be in me alone and in my favor: within, in the midst of her I will be for glory; I will adorn her with every thing praiseworthy; and when there shall be any fear from the assault of enemies, I will be to her a wall of fire. For though she will not excel in strongholds and towers, and be without walls and fortresses, and shall be thus exposed to many evils, I shall yet strike all enemies with terror, so that they shall be kept afar off; and my Church shall be thus preserved safe, though destitute of all human aids, and without any defense.''

We now then perceive the meaning of the Prophet to be this --- that though the Jews saw that they were but few in number, weak in strength, wretched and despised, they had yet reason to entertain hope; for though few returned from exile God was yet able to increase the Church and to make it a vast multitude, and that this was certain and decreed, for it was shown by the vision, that however unequal they were to their enemies, God was still sufficiently strong and powerful to defend them; and that however destitute they were of all blessings, God was still rich enough to enrich them, provided they relied on the blessing which he had promised; for he had engaged to render them happy and blessed within, and safe from enemies from without.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that as we are on every side surrounded by many enemies, and as Satan never ceases to kindle the fury of many, not only to be hostile to us, but also to destroy and consume us, --- O grant that we may learn to raise up our eyes to heaven, and trusting in thy protection may boldly fight in patience, until that shall appear which thou hast once testified in this remarkable prophesy, that there are many smiths in thine hall, and many hammers, by which thou breakest in pieces those horns which rise up to scatter us, and until at length, after having overcome all the devices of Satan, we shall reach that blessed rest which has been provided for us by the blood of thine only begotten Son. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Thirty-eighth

Zechariah 2:6

6. Ho, ho, come forth, and flee from the land of the north, saith the LORD: for I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the heaven, saith the LORD.

6. Heus! Heus! et fugite e terra Aquilonis, dicit Iehova; quia in quatuor ventos coelorum dispersi vos, dicit Iehova.

That the design of the Prophet may be more clear, we must especially bear in mind the history of the case. When it was allowed the Jews, by the edict of Cyrus

and of Darius, to return to their own land, that kindness was suspected by many, as though the two kings had a wish suddenly to oppress them when they had pained their object in their return. Some who dwelt comfortably among the Chaldeans and in other places, preferred to enjoy their rest rather than to return with so much trouble to their own country, where there were no houses prepared, and where there were only dreary desolations. As then the greater part of the people thus slighted the singular favor of God, of which the Prophets had so often spoken, it was necessary that this sloth, connected as it was with great impiety, should be reproved. For if any religion had touched their hearts, they must have preferred Jerusalem to the whole world, and the service of God to all earthly advantages and pleasures. Hence the self-indulgence in which the Jews had become torpid, deserved a sharp and severe reproof. This is the reason why the Prophet treats them here with so much sharpness, for otherwise they could not have been roused.

Ho! Ho! he says, as though he had said, ``What means this delay? for when God has opened the door for you, ye still take your rest, as though Judea were not your inheritance, as though there were no difference between you and the profane heathens.'' We now understand the object of the Prophet.

The particle {הוי}, eui, is used for stimulating them; and by it the Prophet reprehends their indifference, which was a proof, as I have said, of ingratitude; for the Jews in this way showed their contempt of that favor, which ought to have been preferred far before all the wealth and the pleasures of the world.

But the reason which is added seems far-fetched, or even unsuitable --- For to the four winds of heaven have I scattered you; for this could not have served to rouse the Jews to leave Babylon, and to return to the holy land promised to them by God. Yet it was very efficacious towards producing an impression on their minds; for the Lord shows, in these words, that it was in his power to restore them in safety, inasmuch as they had not been scattered here and there, except through his just vengeance. Had their enemies prevailed against them, or had they without reason been expelled from their country, a doubt might have crept in whether the promise could be relied on; but when it appeared evident that their exile was a punishment inflicted by God, they might safely conclude that he would become the author of their restoration; for he who had inflicted the wound was able to heal it.

We now then see what the Prophet had in view: he intimates that the Jews had hitherto suffered punishment from God, because they obeyed not his word, but provoked by their obstinacy his extreme vengeance; they ought then now to entertain hope, because God was pacified towards them and ready to forgive them. As then their exile was from God, the Prophet intimates that their return would not be difficult when God became reconciled to them, because the Jews had to do only with the heavenly Judge himself. In short, the Prophet designs to show that the Jews acted foolishly by continuing in exile, when liberty was given them to return; and therefore he exhorts them to hasten in time, lest the season of God's favor should pass away, and thus the door be again closed against them. That they might not hesitate whether this was possible, he shows that it was in God's power, for he had driven them from their country; it would not therefore be difficult for him to open a way for

their return whenever he pleased. [183] He now adds ---

Zechariah 2:7

7. Deliver thyself, O Zion, that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon.

7. Heus Sion! Servare, quae habitas apud filiam Babylonis.

The Prophet repeats the same thing, though briefly, and in other words: but while he briefly touches on what he meant to say, he confirms and renders more plain the contents of the former verse. He shows that it was a very great disgrace that Babylon should become as it were the grave of Sion; for God had chosen that mount as the place where he was to be worshipped. Babylon, we know, was a filthy cavern, accursed by God. It was therefore to subvert, as it were, the order of nature, for the Jews to bury, so to speak, the holy mount of God in that infernal region. This mode of speaking appears on the first view somewhat harsh, but it is yet most suitable; for by Sion the Prophet means the Jews, who were still dispersed in Chaldea. The temple had not indeed been moved from its place, but only burnt and destroyed by the Chaldeans, and there was no other temple built among the Babylonians. What then does the Prophet mean by saying, O Sion, who dwellest with the daughter of Babylon, return to thine own place? He even reminds the Jews that they were bound, as it were, to the temple; for it was a sacred and an indissoluble bond of mutual union between God and them. (1 Kings 6:13.) For when God proposed that a temple should be built for him on mount Sion, he at the same time added,

``I will dwell among you; this is my rest.'' (Psalm 132:14.)

Since the Jews, then, became united to their God, the temple ass introduced as a pledge of this sacred union. Thus justly and fitly does the Prophet give the name of Sion to the Jews; for they were, as it has been said, tied as it were to the temple, except they meant to deny God. Hence he says, ``Is it right that you should dwell among the Chaldeans? for ye are as it were the stones of God's temple. There is therefore for you no fixed and permanent abode except on mount Sion, as you are in a sense that very mount itself.'' Therefore he says, ``Sion, hasten and return to thine own place; for it is strange and preposterous that thou shouldest dwell with the daughter of Babylon.''

In short, the Prophet shows that God's favor ought not to have been rejected, when he stretched forth his hand, and gave them a free liberty to return. As then God thus appeared as the deliverer of his people, the Jews ought not to have remained exiles, but immediately to ascend to Jerusalem, that they might again worship God. And why did the Prophet mention this? that the Jews might know that they had nothing to fear, though surrounded with dangers; that though Satan suggested many perils, many difficulties, many troubles, yet the grace of God would not be defective,

[183] Provided we adopt [{,[{ כ countenanced by several MSS., and the Syriac, instead of [{כ}] in the received text, that is before the number ``four,'' this explanation is the most satisfactory. But if we take the received text, countenanced by a greater number of MSS., there will be another meaning to the sentence. Henderson's version is --- For as the four winds of heaven Have I spread you abroad, saith Jehovah. But its connection with the foregoing he does not clearly print. The view taken by Drusius, followed by Grotius and Marckius, seems most satisfactory. They take the verb [{פרש}] in the sense of expanding, enlarging, setting at liberty, and that the reference is to the previous liberty granted to the Jews; and thus the connection with the foregoing line is obvious and natural --- He! He! Flee now from the land of the north, saith Jehovah; For as the four winds of heaven Have I expounded you, (or set you free,) saith Jehovah. They had been allowed liberty to go to any part of the world, which is signified by the four winds. The next verse is --- He! Sion, escape, Thou who dwellest with the daughter of Babylon. The two nations are compared to two women, dwelling one with another. --- Ed.

or evanescent, or fallacious, but that he would complete his work, and not disappoint those to whom he had once testified, that there would be to them again a quiet habitation in the land of Judah. It now follows ---

Zechariah 2:8

8. For thus saith the LORD of hosts; After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye.

8. Quia sic dicit Iehova excercituum, Post gloriam misit me ad gentes quae spoliant vos; quia qui tangit vos tangit pupillam oculi sui (vel, ejus.)

The Prophet pursues the same subject; for he shows that the way was not opened to the Jews that they might soon after repent of their return, but that the Lord might be with them, as their deliverance was a signal proof of his kindness, and an evidence that he would commence what he had begun. He then says, that by God's order the Gentiles would be restrained from effecting any thing in opposition to the Jews; as though he had said, ``Your liberty has been granted by Cyrus and by Darius; many rise up to hinder your return, but whatever they may attempt they shall effect nothing; for God shall check all their efforts, and frustrate all their attempts.'' But God's herald does here publicly testify, that he was commissioned to prevent the nations from doing any injury, and to declare that the people brought back to Judea were holy to the Lord, and that it was not permitted that they should be injured by any. This is the import of the whole.

But a difficulty occurs here, for the context seems not consistent: Thus saith Jehovah, Jehovah sent me; for it is not the Prophet who receives here the office of a herald; but it seems to be ascribed to God, which appears inconsistent; for whose herald can God be? and by whose order or command could he promulgate what the Prophet here relates? It seems not then suitable to ascribe this to God, though the words seem to do so --- Thus saith Jehovah, After the glory he sent me to the nations: Who is the sender? or who is he who orders or commands God? We hence conclude that Christ is here introduced, who is Jehovah, and yet the Angel or the messenger of the Father. Though then the being of God is one, expressed by the word Jehovah, it is not improper to apply it both to the Father and to the Son. Hence God is one eternal being; but God in the person of the Father commands the Son, who also is Jehovah, to restrain the nations from injuring the Jews by any unjust violence. The rabbis give this explanation --- that the Prophet says that he himself was God's herald, and thus recites his words; but this is forced and unnatural. I indeed wish not on this point to contend with them; for being inclined to be contentious, they are disposed to think that we insist on proofs which are not conclusive. But there are other passages of Scripture which more clearly prove the divinity and the eternal existence of Christ, and also the distinction of persons. If however any one closely examines the words of the Prophet, he will find that this passage must be forcibly wrested, except it be understood of Christ. We then consider that Christ is here set forth as the Father's herald; and he says that he was sent to the nations.

What he adds --- After the glory, is understood by some to mean, that after the glory had ceased, in which the Jews had hitherto boasted, the message of Christ would then be directed to the Gentiles. The meaning, then, according to them is

this --- that shortly after the glory of the chosen people should depart, Christ, by the Father's command, would pass over to the nations to gather a Church among them. But this passage may be also applied to the nations, who had cruelly distressed the Church of God; as though he had said --- ``Though your enemies have had for a time their triumphs, yet their glory being brought to an end, God will send his messenger, so that they who have spoiled you may become your prey.'' It still seems probable to me that the Prophet speaks of the glory which he had shortly before mentioned. We may then view him as saying, that as God had begun to exercise his power, and had in a wonderful manner restored his people, there would be no intermission until he had fully established his Church, so as to make the priesthood and the kingdom to flourish again. Then after the glory, imports as much as this --- ``Ye see the beginning of God's favor, by which his power shines forth.'' For doubtless it was no common instance of the Lord's glory, which he had manifested in restoring his people; and thus the Prophet encourages their confidence, inasmuch as God had already in part dealt in a glorious manner with them. He then takes an argument from what had been commenced, that the Jews might hope to the end, and fully expect the completion of their deliverance. ``The Lord,'' as it is said elsewhere, ``will not forsake the work of his own hands.'' (Psalm 138:8.) So the Prophet says now, After the glory, that is, ``since God has once shone upon you in no common manner, ought you not to entertain hope; for he intended not to disappoint you of a full return to your country, but to fulfill what he had promised by his Prophets?''

As God had spoken of the restoration of his Church, and also of its perpetual condition, the Prophet here indirectly reproves the ingratitude of those who were not convinced that God would be faithful to the end, by seeing performed the commencement of his work. For as God had included both the return of his people and their continued preservation, so also his people ought to have included both favors: ``The Lord, who has already begun to restore his people, will defend to the end those whom he has gathered, until their full and perfect redemption will be secured.'' As then the Jews did not look for the end, though God led them as it were by the hand to the land of hope, the Prophet says to them, After the glory

We may farther observe, that the glory mentioned here was not as yet fully conspicuous; it had begun, so to speak, to glimmer, but it did not shine forth in full splendor until Christ came. It is then the same as though the Prophet had said, ``God has already emitted some sparks of his glory, it will increase until it attains a perfect brightness. The Lord in the meantime will cause, not only that the nations may restrain themselves from doing and wrong, but also that they may become a prey to you''. [184]

[184] It would be almost endless to give the expositions which have been offered on the phrase. "After the glory," [{{כבוד}} אחר]. Henderson very justly rejects what has been proposed by Newcome, Blayney, and Gesenius, and other German divines, who, following Castalio and Cocceius, render the line --- After glory (i.e. to obtain glory) hath he sent me. Some of the fathers, such as Eusebius, Jerome, Cyril, and Theodoret, viewed the ``glory'' here as that which the Son enjoyed with the Father before he became incarnate; but this view in no degree comports with the context, though most divines, ancient and modern, consider that Christ is the Jehovah of hosts in this area. The paraphrase of the Targum is the following --- ``After the glory which he has said he would bring to you;'' and this is substantially the meaning given by Calvin, and adopted by Henderson. Without altering the general meaning, another construction may be given --- For thus saith Jehovah of hosts, ``Another glory!'' --- he has sent me to the nations, Who have plundered you; For he who touched you Touched the apple of his eye. ``Another glory'' is an allusion to the glory mentioned in verse 5: he would not only be a glory in the midst of them, but would confer on them another glory by destroying their enemies. Blayney seemed ``certain'' that the eye refers to every

The reason for the order follows, Whosoever touches you, touches the apple of his own eye, or, of his eye; for the pronoun may be applied to any one of the heathen nations as well as to God himself; and the greater part of interpreters prefer taking it as referring to any one of the nations. Whosoever touches you touches the apple of his own eye; we say in French, Ils se donnent en l'oeil; that is, ``Whosoever will assail my people will strike out his own eyes; for whatever your enemies may devise against you, shall fall on their own heads''. It will be the same as though one by his own sword should pierce his own heart. When therefore the nations shall consider you to be in their poser, the Lord shall cause that they shall pierce their own eyes, or wound their own breasts, for the import is the same. Whosoever then touches you, touches the apple of his own eye; there is no reason why you should fear, for however powerful your enemies may be, yet their fury shall not be allowed to rage against you; for God shall cause them to kill themselves by their own swords, or to pull out their eyes by their own fingers. This is the meaning, if we understand the passage of the enemies of the Church.

But it may also be suitably applied to God: Whosoever touches you, touches the apple of his eye; and to this view I certainly am more inclined; for this idea once occurs in Scripture,

``He will protect us as the apple of his eye.'' (Psalm 17:8.)

As then the Holy Spirit has elsewhere used this similitude, so I am disposed to regard this passage as intimating, that the love of God towards the faithful is so tender that when they are hurt he burns with so much displeasure, as though one attempted to pierce his eyes. For God cannot otherwise set forth how much and how ardently he loves us, and how careful he is of our salvation, than by comparing us to the apple of his eye. There is nothing, as we know, more delicate, or more tender, then this is in the body of man; for were one to bite my finger, or prick my arm or my legs, or even severely to would me, I should feel no such pain as by having my eye or the pupil of my eye injured. God then by this solemn message declares, that the Church is to him like the apple of his eye, so that he can by no means bear it to be hurt or touched. It afterwards follows: ---

Zechariah 2:9

9. For, behold, I will shake mine hand upon them, and they shall be a spoil to their servants: and ye shall know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me.

9. Quia ecce ego agitans (vel, agito) manum meam super eos; et erunt praeda servis suis; et scietis quod Iehova exercituum miserit me.

Christ continues to relate the commands of the Father: for he speaks in his person, when he says, Behold, I shake my hand over them, that is, enemies; and they shall be a prey to their own servants. He means, that however numerous and strong the enemies would be who would seek to injure the Jews, they would yet be safe; for they would be protected by the hand of God, and not only so, but that whatever their enemies would attempt to do would be in vain, for the Lord would degrade them, and

enemy of the Jews, and not to God; but the greater certainty seems to be on the other side; it is the most natural and obvious construction of the passage. See Deuteronomy 32:10. Not only Calvin give the preference to this view, but also Grotius, Marckius, and Henderson. --- Ed.

render them a prey to the Jews themselves: for by servants [185] he doubtless means the Jews, who, for a time, had been oppressed by the tyranny of their enemies.

It is certain that this prophecy was not fulfilled at the time when the Jews thought that they were in a flourishing state, and enjoying prosperity; for their condition was even then very wretched and degrading. For whence had they their kings? Certainly not from the tribe of Judah; and we all know how tyrannically they were governed, and also that the kingdom was filled with many abominable sins and cruelties. They were become parricides almost all; and whosoever will read their history will find, that brethren were oppressed by brethren, and that even parents were cruelly and wickedly treated. In short, not to say of other things, nothing could have been more abominable than the family of Herod. We cannot then apply this prophecy to that time which intervened between the return from the Babylonian exile, and the coming of Christ. It is then only under the kingdom of Christ that God accomplished what is here said, --- that enemies became a prey to his spiritual people, that is, when they were subdued and brought under the yoke of Christ, for as we have said elsewhere, the government of the Church is vested in its Head. Hence where Christ shines, there the Church, which is his body, is said to reign; for Christ's will is, that he should have nothing apart from his members.

We now see the intention of the Prophet: he wished to dispel the fear of the Jews, that they might not hesitate to return to their country; for not only a way was opened for them, but confirmed also and certain was their happiness under God's protection; as he had not in vain begun a glorious work, but fully purposed to carry it on to the end.

He says, Behold, I shake my hand. The shaking of the hand shows that God has no need of many forces to put to flight his enemies, nor of a large expedition; for as soon as he raises up his hand, he lays them all prostrate. In short, the Prophet reminds us, that God has hands which extend far, for he can by mere shaking conquer all enemies, however distant they may be. And then we see that the facility with which God executes his purpose was mentioned, in order that the Jews might feel assured, that as soon as it would please God to put forth his strength, he would have no difficulty; for by the single motion of his finger he could destroy all the enemies who might rise up against them.

He afterwards adds, And ye shall know that Jehovah of hosts has sent me. To consider this as an address to the faithful, may not seem suitable; for faith is connected with knowledge, as we are taught by John,

``We know that we are the children of God,'' (1 John 3:2;)

for the certainty which rests on God's word exceeds all knowledge. Why then does the Prophet say, And we shall know that Jehovah has sent me? for the faithful ought to have been previously certain respecting the mission of Christ; otherwise an approach to God was closed up; for an access, we know, to his favor is opened

[185] [{,עבדיהם}] ``their slaves,'' Henderson. The Jews had been held in a state of slavery by the nations. Newcome considers that the nations who oppressed the Jews are meant, that they were to be reduced by other nations to the condition of slaves, as the Babylonians were to the Meds and Persians, and he refers to Haggai 2:23. But as the Jews are especially addressed in the next line, it is obvious to consider them as here intended. And Grotius refer the literal fulfillment of what is here said to the time of the Maccabees. --- Ed.

by faith. The Jews must have then been assured from the beginning respecting the mission of Christ. But it is to be observed, that there are two kinds of knowledge, --- the knowledge of faith, and what they call experimental knowledge. The knowledge of faith is that by which the godly feel assured that God is true --- that what he has promised is indubitable; and this knowledge at the same time penetrates beyond the world, and goes far above the heavens, that it may know hidden things; for our salvation is concealed; things seen, says the Apostle, are not hoped for. (Romans 8:24.) It is then no wonder that the Prophet says, that the faithful shall then know that Christ has been sent by the Father, that is, by actual experience, or in reality: Ye shall then know that Jehovah has sent me. He afterwards adds ---

Zechariah 2:10

10. Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord.

10. Exulta et laetare filia Sion, quia ecce ego venio, et habitabo in medio tui, dicit Iehova.

He continues the same subject. The meaning is, that God begins nothing which he does not determine to bring to its end. Since then he had already begun to gather his people, that they might dwell in the Holy Land, it was a work in progress, at length to be completed; for the Lord's will was not to be a half Redeemer. This is the purport of what the Prophet says.

But he now exhorts Sion to rejoice, as though the happiness which he predicts was already enjoyed. This mode of speaking, as we have seen elsewhere, is common among the Prophets. When they intended to animate God's servants to a greater confidence, they brought them as it were into the midst of what was promised, and dictated a song of thanksgiving. We are not wont to congratulate ourselves before the time. When, therefore, the Prophets bade the Church to sing to God and to give thanks, they thus confirmed the promises made to them; as though the Prophet had said, that as yet indeed the brightness and glory of God was in a great measure laid, but that the faithful were beyond the reach of danger, and that therefore they could boldly join in a song of thanks to God, as though they were already enjoying full redemption; for the Lord will perfect what he begins.

Rejoice then and exult, thou daughter of Sion, --- Why? For I come. God had already come; but here he expresses the progress of his favor, by declaring that he would come; as though he had said, ``I have already given you obscure tokens of my presence; but you shall find another coming which will be much more effectual to confirm your faith.'' Though then God had already appeared to the Jews, yet he says that he would come, that is, when Christ would come forth, in whom dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and in whom God's perfect glory and majesty shines forth. And hence also does it more evidently appear what I have already said, that this address cannot be applied without perversion to the Prophet, nor be suitably applied to the person of the Father. It then follows that Christ speaks here: but he does not speak as a man or an angel; he speaks as God the Redeemer. We hence see that the name Jehovah is appropriated to Christ, and that there is no difference between the Father and the Son as to essence, but that they are only to be

distinguished as to their persons. Whenever then Christ announces his own divinity, he takes the name Jehovah; but he also shows, that there is something peculiar and distinct belonging to him as the messenger of the Father. For this reason, and in this respect, he is inferior to the Father; that is, because he is sent as a messenger, and executes what has been entrusted to him. These things do not militate the one against the other, as many unlearned and turbulent men think, who entangle themselves in many vain imaginations, or rather in mere ravings, and say, ``How can it be, that there is one eternal God, and yet that Christ, who is distinct from the Father, and is called his angel, is a true God?'' So they imagine that the origin of divinity is God the Father, as though the one true God had begotten, and thus produced another God from himself, as by propagation. But these are diabolical figments, by which the unity of the Divine essence is destroyed. Let us then bear in mind what the Prophet teaches here clearly and plainly, --- that Christ is Jehovah, the only true God, and yet that he is sent by God as a Mediator.

Behold I come, he says, and I will dwell in the midst of thee. God dwelt then among the Jews, for the building of the temple had been begun, and sacrifices had been already offered; but this dwelling was typical only. It hence follows, that some new kind of presence is here pointed out, when God was to reveal himself to his people, not under ceremonial figures and symbols, but by dwelling, at the fullness of time, substantially among them; for Christ is the temple of the Godhead, and so perfectly unites us to God the Father, that we are one with him. And it ought further to be carefully borne in mind, that the Prophet does here also make a distinction between the ancient types of the law and the reality, which was at length exhibited in Christ; for there is no need now of shadows, when we enjoy the reality, and possess the completion of all those things which God only shadowed forth under the law.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou sees that we continually tremble in the midst of dangers, and often stumble and fall through the infirmity of our flesh, --- O grant, that we may learn so to rely on the strength and help which thou promisest to us, that we may not hesitate to pass through all kinds of dangers, and boldly and firmly to fight under thy banner; and may we be thus gathered more and more into the unity of thy Church, until having, finished all our troubles and contests, we shall at length reach that blessed and celestial rest which has been obtained for us by the blood of thine only-begotten Son. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Thirty-ninth

Zechariah 2:11

11. And many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people: and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto thee.

11. Et adjungent se gentes multae, (vel, magnae) ad Iehovam in die illa; et erunt illi in populum, et habitabo in medio tui; et scies quod Iehova exercituum miserit me ad te.

The Prophet describes here the voluntary surrender of the nations, who would so join themselves to the Church of God, as to disown their own name and to count

themselves Jews: and this is what the Prophet borrowed from those who had predicted the same thing; but he confirms their testimony, that the Jews might know that the propagation of the Church had not been promised to them in vain by so many witnesses. That what is said here refers to the calling of the nations who would willingly surrender themselves to God, is quite evident; for it is said that they would be a people to God. This could not be, except the nations surrendered their own name, so as to become one body with the Jews. He then repeats what he had said, that God would dwell in the midst of Judea. Of this dwelling something was said yesterday; for as they had already begun to offer sacrifices in the temple, it follows that God was already dwelling among them. We must then necessarily come to another kind of dwelling, even that which God, who had before testified by many proofs that he was nigh the Jews, had at length accomplished through Christ; for Christ is really Emmanuel, and in him God is present with us in the fullness of his power, justice, goodness, and glory.

He at last adds, Thou shalt know that Jehovah of hosts has sent me to thee. Something has also been said on this sentence: the Prophet means, that it would be evident by what would really take place, that these things had not been in vain foretold, as the prophecy would be openly fulfilled before the eyes of all. Then shalt thou know, not by the assurance of faith, which is grounded on the word, but by actual experience. But he expresses more than before, for he says, ``Thou shalt know that Jehovah of hosts has sent me to thee.'' The particle {אליך}, alik, ``to thee,'' is not superfluous; for he said a little while before, that he was sent to the nations. As he now says, that he would be the guardian of the chosen people, he also declares that his mission was to them; and he gives to God the name of Jehovah of hosts, that the Jews might feel assured that there would be no difficulty sufficient to hinder or delay the word of God, as he possessed supreme power, so that he could easily execute whatever he had decreed. I will not repeat now what I said yesterday of Christ; but we ought nevertheless to remember this, that he who declares that he was sent, is often called Jehovah. It hence appears that one and the same divine eternal essence is in more persons than one. Let us go on -

Zechariah 2:12

12. And the LORD shall inherit Judah his portion in the holy land, and shall choose Jerusalem again.

12. Et haereditario accipiet Iehova Iehudah partem suam in terra sancta; et eliget adhuc Ierusalem.

The Prophet confirms the former doctrine, but removes offenses, which might have occurred to the Jews and prevented them from believing this prophecy: for they had been for a time rejected, so that there was no difference between them and other nations. The land of Canaan had been given them as a pledge of their heirship; but they had been thence expelled, and there had been no temple, no public worship, no kingdom. The Jews then might have concluded from all these reasons, that they were rejected by God. Hence the Prophet here promises that they were to be restored again to their former state and to their own place. Jehovah, he says, will take Judah as his hereditary portion; that is, God will really show that

he has not forgotten the election by which he had separated the Jews for himself; for he intended them to be to him a peculiar people. They were now mixed with the nations; their dispersion seemed an evidence of repudiation; but it was to be at length manifest that God was mindful of that adoption, by which he once purposed to gather the Jews to himself, that their condition might be different from that of other nations. When therefore he says, that Judah would be to God for an heritage or for an hereditary portion, he brings forward nothing new, but only reminds them that the covenant by which God chose Judah as his people would not be void, for it would be made evident in its time.

And the following clause is to the same purpose, And he will again choose Jerusalem; for it was not then for the first time that Jerusalem became the city of God when restoration took place, but the election, which existed before, was now in a manner renewed conspicuously in the sight of men. It is then the same as though the Prophet had said, ``The course of God's favor has indeed been interrupted, yet he will again show that you have not been in vain chosen as his people, and that Jerusalem, which was his sanctuary, has not been chosen without purpose.'' The renovation of the Church, then, is what the Prophet means by these words.

What we have said elsewhere ought at the same time to be noticed, that the word choose is not to be taken here in its strict sense; for God does not repeatedly choose those whom he regards as his Church. God's election is one single act, for it is eternal and immutable. But as Jerusalem had been apparently rejected, the word choose imports here that God would make it evident, that the first elections had ever been unchangeable, however hidden it may have been to the eyes of men. He then adds ---

Zechariah 2:13

13. Be silent, O all flesh, before the LORD: for he is raised up out of his holy habitation.

13. Sile (vel, sileat) omnis caro a facie Iehovae; quia excitatus est ex habitaculo sanctitatis suae (hoc est, ex loco suo sancto.)

Here is a sealing of the whole prophecy. The Prophet highly extols the power of God, that the Jews might not still doubt or fear as with regard to things uncertain. He says that whatever he had hitherto declared was indubitable; for God would put forth his power to succor his Church and to remove whatever hindrance there might be. We have seen similar expressions elsewhere, that is, in the second chapter of Habakkuk and in the first of Zephaniah; (Habakkuk 2:1 Zephaniah 1:1) and these Prophets had nearly the same object in view; for Habakkuk, after having spoken of the restoration of the people, thus concludes, --- that God was coming forth to bid silence to all nations, that no one might dare to oppose when it was his will to redeem his Church. So also Zephaniah, after having, described the slaughter of God's enemies, when God ordered sacrifices to be made to him as it were from the whole world, uses the same mode of expression, as though he had said, that there would be nothing to resist the power of God. It is the same here, Silent, he says, let all flesh be before Jehovah. It is, in short, the shout of triumph, by which Zechariah exults over all the enemies of the Church, and shows that they would rage in vain,

as they could effect nothing, however clamorous they might be.

By silence we are to understand, as elsewhere observed, submission. The ungodly are not indeed silent before God, so as willingly to obey his word, or reverently to receive what he may bid or command, or humbly to submit under his powerful hand; for these things are done only by the faithful. Silence, then, is what especially belongs to the elect and the faithful; for they willingly close their mouth to hear God speaking. But the ungodly are also said to be silent, when God restrains their madness: and how much soever they may inwardly murmur and rage, they yet cannot openly resist; so that he completes his work, and they are at length made ashamed of the swelling, words they have vomited forth, when they pass off in smoke. This is the sense in which the Prophet says now, silent be all flesh. He means, in short, by these words, That when God shall go forth to deliver his Church, he will be terrible; so that all who had before furiously assailed his chosen people, shall be constrained to tremble.

With regard to the habitation of holiness, I explain it of the temple rather than of heaven. I indeed allow that heaven is often thus called in Scripture: and it is called the palace or temple of God, for we cannot think as we ought of God's infinite glory, except we are carried above the world. This is the reason why God says that he dwells in heaven. But as the Church is spoken of here, Zechariah, I doubt not, means the temple. It is indeed certain that there was no temple when God began to rise as one awakened from sleep, to restore his people: but as the faithful are said in Psalm 102 to pity the dust of Sion, because the place continued sacred even in its degradation and ruin; so also in this passage Zechariah says, that God was roused --- Whence? from Sion, from that despised place, exposed to the derision of the ungodly: yet there God continued to dwell, that he might build again the temple, where his name was to be invoked until Christ appeared. We now see that the temple or Sion is intended rather than heaven, when all circumstances are duly weighed. Now follows ---

Chapter 3

Zechariah 3

Zechariah 3:1, 2

1. And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him.

1. Et ostendit mihi Iehosuah sacerdotem magnum stantem in conspectu angeli Iehovae, et Satan stantem ad dexteram ejus, ut adversaretur illi.

2. And the Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?

2. Et dixit Iehova ad Satan, increpet te Iehova, Satan, et increpet (hoc est, iterum increpet) te Iehova, qui elegit Ierusalem: annon hic torris erutus ex igne?

We have said at the beginning that Zechariah was sent for this end --- to encourage weak minds: for it was difficult to entertain hope in the midst of so much confusion. Some, but a small portion of the nation, had returned with the tribe of Judah: and then immediately there arose many enemies by whom the building of the city and of the temple was hindered; and when the faithful viewed all their circumstances, they could hardly entertain any hope of a redemption such as had been promised. Hence Zechariah labored altogether for this end --- to show that the faithful were to look for more than they had reason to expect from the aspect of things at the time, and that they were to direct their eyes and their thoughts to the power of God, which was not as yet manifested, and which indeed God purposely designed not to exercise, in order to try the patience of the people.

This is the subject which he now pursues, when he says, that Joshua the priest was shown to him, with Satan at his right hand to oppose him [186] God was, however,

[186] To retain the alliteration of the Hebrew, the words may be thus rendered — "and the opponent standing on his right hand to oppose him," or, "the accuser standing on his right hand to accuse him." The word Satan is rendered here and in Job by the Septuagint, "the accuser," or "the devil," {ὁ} {διαβολος}. The station on the right hand was that of the plaintiff, or the accuser, or of the pleader, as Grotius thinks. See Psalm 109:6. The word ,[{שטן}] according to its use as a verb, participle, or a noun, means an opponent or adversary, rather than an accuser. See Psalm 38:20; Numbers 22:22; Genesis 26:21 Blayney, as well as Kimchi, thinks that Sanballat is meant by ;[{השטן}] but the article ,[{ה}] as it has been observed by Marckius and Henderson, seems to

there also. But when Zechariah says, that the priest Joshua was shown to him as here represented, it was not only done in a vision, but the fact was known to all; that is, that Joshua was not adorned with a priestly glory, such as it was before the exile; for the dignity of the priest before that time was far different from what it was after the return of the people; and this was known to all. But the vision was given to the Prophet for two reasons --- that the faithful might know that their contest was with Satan, their spiritual enemy, rather than with any particular nations --- and also that they might understand that a remedy was at hand, for God stood in defense of the priesthood which he had instituted. God, then, in the first place, purposed to remind the faithful that they had to carry on war, not with flesh and blood, but with the devil himself: this is one thing. And then his design was to recall them to himself, that they might consider that he would be their sure deliverer from all dangers. Since we now perceive the design of this prophecy, we shall proceed to the words of the Prophet.

He says that Joshua was shown to him. This was done no doubt in a prophetic vision: but yet Zechariah saw nothing by the spirit but what was known even to children. But, as I have already said, we must observe the intentions of the vision, which was, that the faithful might understand that their neighbors were troublesome to them, because Satan turned every stone and tried every experiment to make void the favor of God. And this knowledge was very useful to the Jews, as it is to us at this day. We wonder why so many enemies daily rage against us, and why the whole world burn against us with such implacable hatred; and also why so many intrigues arise, and so many assaults are made, which have not been excited through provocation on our part: but the reason why we wonder is this, --- because we bear not in mind that we are fighting with the devil, the head and prince of the whole world. For were it a fixed principle in our minds, that all the ungodly are influenced by the devil, there would then be nothing new in the fact, that all unitedly rage against us. How so? Because they are moved by the same spirit, and their father is a murderer, even from the beginning. (John 8:44.)

We hence see that the faithful were taught what was extremely necessary, --- that their troubles arose from many nations, because Satan watched for their ruin. And though this vision was given to the Prophet for the sake of his own age, yet it no doubt belongs also to us; for that typical priesthood was a representation of the priesthood of Christ, and Joshua, who was then returned from exile, bore the character of Christ the Son of God. Let us then know that Christ never performs the work of the priesthood, but that Satan stands at his side, that is, devises all means by which he may remove and withdraw Christ from his office. It hence follows, that they are much deceived, who think that they can live idly under the dominion of Christ: for we all have a warfare, for which each is to arm and equip himself. Therefore at this day, which we see the world seized with so much madness, that it assails us, and would wholly consume us, let not our thoughts be fixed on flesh and blood, for Satan is the chief warrior who assails us, and who employs all the rage of the world to destroy us, if possible, on every side. Satan then ever stands at Christ's right

point out the great enemy of God and man, as {ὁ} {διαβολος} in Greek. --- Ed.

hand, so as not to allow him in peace to exercise his priestly office.

Now follows another reason for the prophecy, --- that God interposes and takes the part of his Church against Satan. Hence he says, Rebuke thee Satan let Jehovah, [187] rebuke thee let Jehovah, who has chosen Jerusalem. God speaks here; and yet he seems to be the angel of Jehovah: [188] but this is not inscrutable; for as in the last verse, where Zechariah says that Joshua stood before the Angel of Jehovah, Christ is doubtless meant, who is called an angel and also Jehovah; so also he may be named in this verse. But that no contentious person may say that we refine on the words too much, we may take them simply thus, --- that God mentions here his own name in the third person; and this mode of so speaking is not rare in Scripture,

``Jehovah rained from God.'' (Genesis 19:24).

Why did Moses speak thus? Even to show that when God fulminated against Sodom, he did not adopt a common mode of proceeding, but openly showed that it was an unusual and a singular judgment. Thus the expression here is emphatic, Rebuke thee let Jehovah, that is, I myself will rebuke thee. However, were any one to consider well the whole context, he could not but allow that the words may properly be applied to Christ, who is the portion of his Church, and that therefore he was the angel before whom Joshua stood; and he himself shows afterwards that the Church would be safe under his patronage. Let Jehovah then rebuke thee, Satan, let him rebuke thee. The repetition more fully confirms what Zechariah meant to show, even that sufficient protection would be found in God alone for the preservation of the Church, how much soever Satan might employ all his powers for its ruin, and that though God would not immediately give help and restrain Satan, yet a firm hope was to be entertained, for this would be done in time the most seasonable. The import of the whole is, --- that though God had hitherto let loose Satan to assail the Church as to the priesthood, yet God would be the faithful guardian of his Church, and would check Satan, that he might not execute what he intended; and further, that many contests must be patiently endured, until the period of the warfare be completed. We now then see what the Prophet had in view in these words.

But the rebuke of God is not to be regarded as being only in words, but must be referred to that power by which God subverts and lays prostrate all the attempts of Satan. At the same time he mentions the end for which this rebuke was given; it was, that the Church might continue safe and secure, Let Jehovah, who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke thee. These words are to be read, not apart, but as joined with the former, as though he had said, ``Let God raise up his hand for the salvation of his chosen people, so as to put thee, Satan, to flight with all thy furies.'' This is the meaning. Let us therefore know, that God is not simply the enemy of Satan, but also

[187] We may render the words, — Rebuke thee, Satan, will Jehovah, Yea, rebuke thee will Jehovah, Who hath chosen Jerusalem. Thus Dathius and Blayney render the passage. Adam Clarke and Henderson adopt the notion that Jude 1:9, refers to this vision, taking evidently for just reasons, rejects this opinion. — Ed.

[188] Newcome introduces the word angel at the beginning of the second verse unnecessarily, merely on the authority of the Syriac; for in the preceding visions, “Jehovah” and “the angel of Jehovah” are used indiscriminately. It is impossible not to see that here and in the first chapter a person is mentioned as being Jehovah, and the angel or messenger of Jehovah. See on this subject M’Caul’s observations in his translation of Kimchi on Zechariah, from page 9 to 27. — Ed.

one who has taken us under his protection, and who will preserve us safe to the end. Hence God, as our Redeemer and the eternal guardian of our salvation, is armed against Satan in order to restrain him. The warfare then is troublesome and difficult, but the victory is not doubtful, for God ever stands on our side.

But we are at the same time reminded, that we are not to regard what we have deserved in order to gain help from God; for this wholly depends on his gratuitous adoption. Hence, though we are unworthy that God should fight for us, yet his election is sufficient, as he proclaims war against Satan in our behalf. Let us then learn to rely on the gratuitous adoption of God, if we would boldly exult against Satan and all his assaults. It hence follows, that those men who at this day obscure, and seek, as far as they can, to extinguish the doctrine of election, are enemies to the human race; for they strive their utmost to subvert every assurance of salvation.

He at last adds, Is not this a brand snatched from the fire? [189] Here God makes known the favor he had manifested towards the high priest, that the faithful might be convinced that Joshua would overcome his enemies, as God would not forsake his own work; for the end ever corresponds with the beginning as to God's favor; he is never wearied in the middle course of his beneficence. This is the reason why he now objects to Satan and says, ``Why! God has wonderfully snatched this priest as a brand from the burning: as then the miraculous power of God appears in the return of the high priest, what dost thou mean, Satan? Thou risest up against God, and thinkest it possible to abolish the priesthood, which it has pleased him in his great favor hitherto to preserve. See whence has the priest come forth. While he was in Chaldea, he seemed to be in the lower regions; yet God delivered him from thence: and now, when he sits in the temple and is performing his office, is it possible for thee to pull down from heaven him whom thou could not detain in hell?'' We now perceive the meaning of the Prophet as to this similitude. He then adds ---

Zechariah 3:3, 4

3. Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel.

3. Et Iehosuah erat induts vestibus sordidis; et stabat in conspectu angeli.

4. And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment.

4. Et respondit et dixit his qui stabant coram ipso, dicendo, Tollite vestes sordidas ab eo (de super eo, ad verbum;) et dixit ad eum, Ecce transire feci (hoc est, abstuli) abs te iniquitatem tuam, et vestiam te mutatoriis.

Zechariah adds here another thing, --- that Joshua had on mean garments, but that new garments were given him by the angel's command. And by this he means, that though the priesthood had been for a time contemptible, it would yet recover whatever dignity it had lost. But he ever leads the minds of the faithful to this point, --- to look for what they did not then see, nor could conjecture from the state of things at that time. It is certain that the sacerdotal vestments, after the return from exile, were not such as they were before; for they were not sumptuously woven, nor had attached to them so many precious stones. Though Cyrus had bountifully supplied

[189] "Out of Ur of the Chaldees, out of the Babylonian fiery furnace." — Ass. Annot.

great abundance of gold and silver for the worship of God, yet the chief priest did not so shine with precious stones and the work of the Phrygians as before the exile. Hence, what was shown to Zechariah was then well known to all. But we ought to notice the latter clause, --- that the angel commanded a change of garments. The Prophet then bids the faithful to be of good cheer, though the appearance of the priesthood was vile and mean, because God would not overlook its contemptible state; but the time of restoration had not yet come; when it came, the ancient dignity of the priesthood would again appear.

With regard to the words, the first thing to be observed is the fact, that Joshua stood before the angel, having on sordid or torn garments [190] The repetition seems to be without reason; for he had said before that Joshua stood before the angel of God. Why then does he now repeat that he stood before the angel? That the faithful might take courage; because it was God's evident purpose that the chief priest should remain there in his sordid garments; for we think that God forgets us when he does not immediately succor us, or when things are in a confused state. Hence Zechariah meets his doubt by saying, that Joshua stood before the angel. He further reminded them, that though the whole world should despise the priesthood, it was yet under the eyes of God. Conspicuous were other priests in the eyes of men, and attracted the admiring observation of all, as it is well known; but all heathen priesthoods, we know, were of no account before God. Hence though heathen priesthoods shone before men, they were yet abominations only in the sight of God; but the priesthood of Joshua, however abject and vile it may have been, was yet, as Zechariah testifies, esteemed before God.

We now see that he who is often said to be Jehovah is called an angel: the name therefore of Angel as well as of Jehovah, I doubt not, ought to be applied to the person of Christ, who is truly and really God, and at the same time a Mediator between the Father and the faithful: and hence he authoritatively commanded the angels who were present; for Christ was there, but with his hosts. While therefore the angels were standing by, ready to obey, he is said to have bidden them to strip the high priest of his mean garments.

Afterwards the angel addresses Joshua himself, See, I slave made to pass from thee thine iniquity, and now I will clothe thee with new or other garments [191] When the angel said that he had taken away iniquity, he justly reminded them of the filthiness contracted by the priest as well as by the people; for they had denuded themselves of all glory by their iniquities. We hence see that the mouths of the Jews were here closed, that they might not clamor against God, because he suffered them still to continue in their sordid condition, for they deserved to continue in such a state; and the Lord for this reason called their filth, iniquity. He further teaches us, that though the Jews fully deserved by their sins to rot in their struggle and filthiness,

[190] The word, [{צואים}], does not mean what is shabby, mean, or tattered, but what is filthy, dirty, as opposed to what is clean. Our version, ``filthy,'' adopted by Newcome and Henderson, is the most suitable. --- Ed.

[191] [{מחלצות}], from [{חלף}], to set loose, or to put off. Both Parkhurst and Blayney think that they were the garments which the high priest wore on particular and solemn occasions, and which he put off when he had performed his office. ``Holy garments'' would perhaps be the best rendering. Newcome has ``goodly apparel;'' and Henderson, ``costly habiliments;'' garments of the high priest. And that they were the holy garments, such as the high priest wore on especial occasions, appears probable from what follows respectng the mitre, which formed a part of the high priest's dress. --- Ed.

yet the Lord would not finally allow their unworthiness to prevent him from affording relief.

The import of the prophecy then is this, --- That however much the mean outward condition of the high priest might offend the Jews, they were still to entertain hope; for the remedy was in God's power, who would at length change the dishonor and reproach of the high priest into very great glory, even when the time of gratuitous remission or of good pleasure arrived.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast made us a royal priesthood in thy Son, that we may daily offer to thee spiritual sacrifices, and be devoted to thee, both in body and soul, --- O grant, that we, being endued with thy power, may boldly fight against Satan, and never doubt but that thou wilt finally give us the victory, though we may have to undergo many troubles and difficulties: and may not the contempt of the world frighten or dishearten us, but may we patiently bear all our reproaches, until thou at length stretches forth thine hand to raise us up to that glory, the perfection of which now appears in our head, and shall at last be clearly seen in all the members, in the whole body, even when he shall come to gather us into that celestial kingdom, which he has purchased for us by his own blood. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Fortieth

Zechariah 3:5

5. And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head. So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the LORD stood by.

5. Et dixit, Ponant cidarim puram (aut, diadema purum) super caput ejus: et posuerunt didema super caput ejus, et induerant (id est, postquam induerant) illum vestibus: et angelus Iehovae stabat.

The Prophet had said that Joshua was clothed in splendid and beautiful garments, who had on before such as were sordid, and that this was done by the command of the angel: he now adds, that he wished that a still greater glory should be bestowed on him, for he saw that something was wanting. He therefore desired that the high priest should be adorned with a crown, so that his dress might in every way correspond with the dignity of his office. But what is here stated, that the Prophet spoke, [192] is not to be taken as spoken authoritatively, but rather expressed as a wish, as though he had said, that it was indeed a pleasant and delightful spectacle to see the high priest decently and honorably clothed; but that it was also desirable, that a crown or a diadem should be added, as a symbol of the priesthood, and not of royalty. There is indeed no disadvantage in considering royalty also as signified; for the kingly office, we know, is united with the priestly in the person of Christ: but

[192] Calvin has followed the punctuists as to the verb "said," in the beginning of the verse, and regarded it as in the first and not in the third person. It is omitted in the Septuagint, (except in the comp. ed., where it is in the third person,) but the sentence is continued as the words of the angel. Jerome has et dixit, and he said, that is, the angel. It appears that the Targum, the Syriac, and the Vulgate retain the third person; and Dathius, Newcome, and Henderson so render the verb, "And he said," that is, the angel; and this seems more consistent with the general tenor of the passage; for it is more reasonable to suppose that the words which follow are those of the angel than the words of the Prophet, and that the command to put on the mitre issued from the same as the command to clothe the high priest with holy garments. — Ed.

I take the crown here to be the priest's mitre; for we know that this was the chief ornament whenever the priest came to the altar of incense. But as to the main point, we must bear in mind the design of the Prophet, --- that the high priest was adorned with splendid vestments, and yet his dignity appeared only in part; therefore the Prophet desires that a pure crown or mitre should be added: and he says that this took place even in the presence of the angel, thereby intimating that his wish was by God approved.

Now we ought first to contemplate the zeal and godly concern of the Prophet, which he had for the glory and honor of the priesthood; for though he regarded with joy the splendid dress of the high priest, he could not restrain himself from wishing that the highest ornament should be added. And this example is exhibited to us for imitation, so that we ought to desire the increase of those favors of God, by which the priesthood of Christ is signalised, until it arrives at the most perfect state. But we see that many are against such a wish; for at this day there are those who profess some zeal for true religion, but are satisfied with a mere shadow; or at least, it would abundantly satisfy them to see the Church half purified: and the world is full of men who indeed confess that the Church is defiled by many pollutions, but wish only for some small measure of reformation. But the Prophet seems to invite us to do a very different thing: he saw that the high priest was already adorned with new garments; but when he considered that the honor of the priesthood was not fully restored, he wished the mitre to be also added. And by saying that the angels seconded his wish, he encourages us fully to believe, that if we desire from the heart that his glory should be given to Christ, God will hear our prayers: for the Prophet, when he sighed, did not in vain ask the angel to put a mitre on the high priest.

The expression, that the angel of God stood, is not without meaning. He was not an idle spectator; and it is intimated that God had not only once a care for the priesthood, but that the angel was always watching to defend Joshua; for it would not be enough to be once adorned by God, who presides over the Church, except his guardianship were perpetual. We now then understand the import of the words. It follows ---

Zechariah 3:6-7

6. And the angel of the Lord protested unto Joshua, saying,

6. Et contestatus est Angelus Iehovae Iehosuam dicendo,

7. Thus saith the Lord of hosts; If thou wilt walk in my ways, and if thou wilt keep my charge, then thou shalt also judge my house, and shalt also keep my courts, and I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by.

7. Sic dicit Iehova exercituum, Si in viis meis ambulaveris, et custodiam meam custodieris, tu quoque judicabis domum meam (vel, gubernabis; [{דוז}] est judicare, sed verbum illud refertur ad quodlibet regimen, ut alibi visum; gubernabis ergo domum meam, hoc est, praeris Templo meo;) atque etiam custodies atria mea: et dabo tibi transitus inter istos qui adstant.

Here the Prophet shows for what purpose he gave Joshua his appropriate dress and splendor; and he teaches us, that it was not done simply as a favor to man, but because God purposed to protect the honor of his own worship. This is the reason

why the angel exhorts Joshua; for it behaves us ever to consider for what end God deals so liberally with us and favors us with extraordinary gifts. All things ought to be referred to his glory and worship, otherwise every good thing he bestows on us is profaned. And this is especially to be regarded when we speak of his Church and its government; for we know how ready men are to turn what God gives to his Church to serve the purpose of their own tyranny.

It is God's will that he should be attended to when he speaks by his servants and those whom he has appointed as teachers. But we see from the beginning of the world how ambitious and proud men under this pretense exercised great tyranny, and thus expelled God from his own government: nay, the vassals of Satan often arrogate to themselves a full and unlimited power over all the faithful, because God would have the priesthood honored, and approves of a right discipline in his Church. As then Satan has in all ages abused the high eulogies by which God commends his Church, this exhortations, now briefly given by the Prophet, ought always to be added; for it is not God's will to extol men, that he himself might be as a private individual and give up his own place and degree, but that the whole excellency bestowed on the Church is intended for this purpose --- that God may be purely worshipped, and that all, not only the people, but also the priest, may submit to his authority. Whatever glory then belongs to the Church, God would have it all to be subservient to his purpose, so that he alone may be the supreme and that rightly. We now then perceive the Prophet's design.

And to give some weight to what is taught, he says, that the angel bore witness; for the word used is forensic or legal: one is said to bear witness to another, when he uses, so to speak, a solemn protestations. In short, bearing witness differs from a common declaration, as an oath, or an appeal to lawful authority, is interposed, so that the words are sacred. It was then the design of the holy spirit by this expression to render us more attentive, so that we may know that not a common thing is said, but that God interposes an oath, or some such thing, in order to secure more reverence to his order or command.

Protest then did the angel of Jehovah to Joshua, saying, Thus saith Jehovah, If thou wilt walk in my ways, and if my charge thou wilt observe, etc. The angel now briefly teaches us, that the priests do not excel, that they may exult at pleasure; but he interposes a condition, that they are to exercise faithfully their office, and to obey the call of God. We then see that those two things are united --- the dignity of the priesthood, and the faithfulness which God's ministers, who have been called to that office, are to exhibit. Hence they who seek to domineer without control, do thereby sufficiently show that they are not the lawful priests of God; for Joshua typified Christ, and yet we see how God bound him by a certain condition, lest relying on his honor and title he should take to himself more than what was lawful or right.

If Joshua, who was a type of Christ, together with his successors, was not to regard himself dignified, but in order to obey God, we hence see how foolish and even abominable is the arrogance of the Pope, who, being content with a naked title, seeks to reduce the whole world to himself, as if God had given up his own right.

But let us at the same time see what he means by ways and by charge. These two

words ought, no doubt, to be confined to the office of the priest. God commands us all in common to follow where he leads us; and whatever he prescribes as to the way of leading a godly and righteous life may be called a charge; for the Lord suffers us not to wander and go astray, but anticipates errors and shows what we are to follow. There is then a general charge with regard to all the faithful; but the priestly charge, as I have already stated, is to be confined to that office. We yet know that men are not raised on high by God, that he may resign his own authority. He indeed commits to men their own offices, and they are rightly called the vicars of God, who purely and faithfully teach from his mouth: but the authority of God is not diminished when he makes use of the labors of men and employs them as his ministers. We hence see that the priestly charge is this --- to rule the Church according to the pure Word of God.

He therefore adds, Thou also shalt govern my house. This condition then is ever to be observed, when the governors of the Church demand a hearing, even that they keep the charge of God. It is indeed true, that all the ministers of the Word are adorned with honorable titles; but, as I have said, their dignity is degraded if it obscures the glory of God. As then God would have men to be heard, so that nothing may be taken from him, this condition ought ever to be observed, ``Thou shalt govern my house, if thou wilt walk in my ways.''

It may however be asked, can priests be rightly deprived instantly of their office when they depart from their duty? To this I answer, that the Church ought, as far as possible, to be reformed; but yet legitimate means ought to be used, so that the Church may reject all the ungodly, who respond not to their duty, nor exhibit due sincerity, nor discharge their office in obedience to God. All then who depart or turn aside from the right course ought rightly to be rejected, but by legitimate authority. But when the majority desire to have pastors, such as cannot but be deemed really wolves, they must be borne with, though unworthy of the honor, and yet so borne with that they be not allowed to oppress the Church with their tyranny, or to take to themselves what belongs to God alone, or to adulterate the worship of God or pure doctrine.

However this may be, none are lawful priests before God, except those who faithfully exercise their office and respond to the calling of God, as we shall hereafter see in the second chapter of Malachi Malachi 2:1. But I am not disposed to enlarge; it is enough to adduce what an explanation of the passage may require. In short, pastors divinely appointed are so to rule over the Church as not to exercise their own power, but to govern the Church according to what God has prescribed, and in such a manner that God himself may always rule through the instrumentality of men.

What he adds, Thou shalt keep my courts, appears not to be an honor to the priest, for it was an humble service to wait in the courts of the temple. But taking a part for the whole, the Prophet includes the charge of the whole temple: and it was no common honor to have the charge of that sacred habitation of God. It is not then improperly added that Joshua would be the keeper of the temple, if he walked in the ways of the Lord. Nevertheless we see at this day how the masked rulers of the Church, under the Papacy, not only disregard the keeping of the temple, but wholly

repudiate it, as it seems to be unworthy of their high dignity. I call the charge of the temple, not that which is the duty of overseers, but whatever belongs to the worship of God: but to feed the flock, to discharge the office of pastors, and to administer the sacraments, is to these a sordid employment. Hence the Pope, with all his adherents, can easily bear to be relieved from the charge of the temple; but yet he seeks to rule in a profane and tyrannical manner, and according to his own pleasure. But we here see that the charge of the temple is especially intrusted to the priest, as it was a special honor. We also see on what condition God allowed the priests to continue in their dignity, even on that of walking in his ways.

He afterwards adds, I will give thee passages (intercourses) among those who stand by, [193] that is, I will cause all the godly to admit and freely to receive thee. The angels who stood there, no doubt, represented the body of the Church; for they are mingled with the faithful whenever they meet together in the name of Christ, as Paul teaches us in 1 Corinthians 11:10. Angels alone then stood by; but it is the same as though God had said, ``Thee will all the faithful acknowledge, so that a free passage will be open to thee among them, provided thou walkest in my ways.'' And he puts passages in the plural number, for he speaks of continued homage and regard.

The meaning is, that the priest is ever worthy of regard and honor when he faithfully performs his office and obeys the call of God. We may, on the other hand, conclude that all masked pastors ought justly to be excluded, when they not only are apostates and perfidious against God, but seek also to destroy the Church; yea, when they are also voracious wolves and spiritual tyrants and slaughterers. All those who are such, the angel clearly intimates, are not only unworthy of being received, but ought also to be excluded and exterminated from the Church. We now then perceive what I have stated, that whatever excellency belongs to the pastors of the Church ought not to be separated from the honor due to God; for God does not resign his authority to mortals, nor diminish anything from his own right; but he only constitutes men as his ministers, that he may by them govern his Church alone, and be alone supreme. It hence follows, that they are unworthy of honor who perform not faithfully their office; and when they rob God of what belongs to him, they ought to be deprived of their very name; for it is nothing else but the mask of Satan, by

[193] This is a difficult sentence. Kimchi, Marckius, Dathius, Newcome, Scott, and others, take the meaning given in our version, and regard [{{{מהלכים as a noun, signifying places to walk in, walkings. It is nowhere else found except in the singular number, [{מהלך], a walk, or a journey: Jonah 3:4; Ezekiel 42:4: but as a participle, signifying walking, we meet with it in Ecclesiastes 4:15, and in the singular number in Psalms 104:3; Proverbs 6:11 Vatables, Pagninus, and Castalio render it ``incessus, vias, aditus,'' words of similar import with ``transitus`` of Calvin and of Mede. The meaning is thus given by Drusius, ``I will give thee the privilege of walking among these;'' that is, the angels who stood there. Jerome's version is, ``Et dabo tibi ambulantes de his qui nunc hic assistant --- And I will give thee walkers of those who now stand here.'' The same is given by Grotius, who explains ``walkers'' in the sense of protectors, and refers to Psalm 91:11, and Matthew 4:6. To the same purpose, as to the meaning, is the version of Henderson; only he renders [{מהלכים], guides, conceiving it to be a hiphil of participle, ``causing to walk,'' a designation of leaders, guides, or contractors. According to this view, the promise made is, that angels would be the guardians and protectors of Joshua and his associates, and not according to the former view, that Joshua would have a place among angels in heaven, in which sense the Targum, as well as the Jewish Rabbins, understand the passage. Blayney renders ``walkers,'' ministers, being persons ready to go and come when bidden: and by those who stood by, he understands the inferior priests, who are here promised to Joshua as his assistants, and are mentioned in the next verse as his ``companions.'' There is nothing in the verb [{עמד], or [{ישב], to prevent this meaning, as they do not necessarily denote a position but a presence. May not ``walkers,'' or those who walk or perambulated, be the same as those mentioned in the first vision, chapter 1:10,11? If so, we may render the sentence thus --- And I will appoint for thee those who walk to and fro From among those who stand here. Angels have different offices; and the most probable meaning of the passage is, that it contains the promise of angels as guardians. --- Ed.

which he seeks to deceive the simple. He afterwards adds ---

Zechariah 3:8

8. Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they are men wondered at: for, behold, I will bring forth my servant the Branch

8. Audi nunc Jehoshua, sacerdos magne, tu et socii tui qui stant (vel, habitant) in conspectu tuo; quia viri portenti sunt isti; quia ecce prodire facio servum meum Gramen. (Ubi verti, quoniam viri portent sunt, potest ita resolvi oratio, quamvis sint viri portenti; sed de sensu Prophetae statim dicam.)

The angel shows here, that what had been hitherto shown to Zechariah was typical; for the reality had not as yet come to light, but would appear in its time. We have said that God's design was to lead the godly to the expectation of Christ; for these beginnings of favor were obscure. It behaved them, therefore, to hope for far more than they saw; and this appears evident from the verse before us, in which the angel says, hear now. He makes this preface to gain attention, as though he said, that he was going to speak of something remarkable. Then he adds, thou and thy associates who stand before thee; I will send my servant the Branch

Let us notice this, which is the main part of the verse, Behold, I send my servant, the Branch. The God of hosts no doubt refers to the priest, who is eminent beyond the common comprehension of men. He is called a Branch, because he was to come forth as a stem, according to what is said in Isaiah, the eleventh chapter, Isaiah 11:1 and in other places. It is then the same as though he had said, ``this priesthood is as yet disregarded, nevertheless my servant, the priest, shall come forth like a branch which arises from the earth, and it will grow.'' The word {צמח}, tsamech means a shoot. He then compares Christ to a shoot, for he seemed, as we say, to rise up from nothing, because his beginning was contemptible. For what excellency had Christ in the estimation of the world when he was born? how did he commence his kingdom? and how was he initiated into his priesthood? Doubtless, whatever honor and glory the Father had given him was regarded we know with contempt. It is then no wonder that he is on this account called a Branch.

Now the reason for the similitude is apparent enough: and though the angel speaks indefinitely, the person of Christ is no doubt intended. How so? We may judge by the event itself. What priest succeeded Joshua who equalled him in honor, or who in the tenth degree approached him? We know that nearly all were profane and ungodly men; we know that the priesthood became venal among them; we know that it was contended for with the most cruel hatred; nay, we know that a priest was slain in the temple itself; ambition was burning so furiously that no success could be gained without shedding innocent blood. After the death of Joshua nothing could have been more base and more disgraceful than the Jewish priesthood. Where then is to be found this servant of God, the Branch? This principle must also be ever borne in mind, that the reformation of the temple was to be made by Christ: we must, therefore, necessarily come to him, that we may find the servant mentioned here. [194] And why he is called a servant has been stated elsewhere; for he humbled

[194] Grotius and Newcome, (not Blayney, as misstated by Henderson,) following Theodoret and Kimchi, strangely consider that Zerubbabel is meant by the "Branch." The Targum, Cyril, Drusius, and almost all modern divines, regard the Messiah as intended. See Isaiah 4:2; 11:1;

himself that he might be not only the minister of his Father, but also of men. As then Christ condescended to become the servant of men, it is no wonder that he is called the servant of God.

Let us now enquire why the angel bids Joshua and his companions to hear. He indirectly reproves, I doubt not, the common unbelief, for there were very few then who had any notion of a future and spiritual priesthood. Indeed, the people had the promises in their mouths, but nearly all had their thoughts fixed on the earth and the world. This is the reason why the angel directed his words especially to Joshua and his companions: he saw that the ears of others were almost closed; he saw so much indifference in the people, that hardly any one was capable of receiving his doctrine: and thus he intended to obviate a trial which might have weakened the courage of Joshua. For we know how ready we are to faint when the whole world would drive us to apostasy; for when any of us is weak, we wish to be supported by others; and when there is no faith, no religion, no piety among men, every one is ready to quail. In short, we can hardly believe God, and continue firm in his word, except we have many companions, and a large number in our favor; and when unbelief prevails everywhere our faith vacillates. Hence the angel now addresses Joshua and his companions apart; as though he had said, that there was no reason for them to depend on the multitude, but, on the contrary, to look to God, and by relying on his word to wait patiently for what he promised, though all the rest were to reject his favor: Thou then and thy friends who stand before thee

He adds, for they are men of wonder; or though they are men of wonder; but the meaning is the same. For God means, that though the whole people rejected what he now declares as to the renewal of the priesthood, it would yet be found true and confirmed in its own time. Some render the words, ``men of prodigy,'' because they were objects of wonder and they think that the companions of Joshua were signalised by this title or encomium, because their faith was victorious and surmounted all hindrances. [195] But the meaning of the prophet seems to me to be wholly different: and, I doubt not, but that this passage is the same with another in Isaiah, the eighth chapter, Isaiah 8:1 where he says, that the faithful were men of prodigy, or, that they were for a sign or prodigy, because they were objects of hatred, ``what do these seek for themselves?'' As then all were astonished as at a spectacle new and unwonted, when any one of the faithful met them, the Prophet says, that the true servants of God were then for a sign and prodigy. So here they are men of prodigy, for we see clearly, that the companions of Joshua were separated from the rest, or the common multitude. Why? not because they were objects of

Jeremiah 23:5; 33:15,16. “The same person must needs by intended here as in Jeremiah 23:5. Besides, it is evident that the Branch is promised as one that was to come, and not as one that had already enjoyed his estate, such as it was, for many years past.” — Blayney. Christ is thus called, says Menochius, “because he came forth as a new shoot from the almost dead root of the Patriarchs.” — Ed.

[195] The word [{מופת has two meanings --- a miracle, such as those performed in Egypt, Exodus 7:9 --- and a sign, such as Isaiah 20:3, and Ezekiel 12:6; who performed a particular action which was to be a sign or token of something else. If we render the words here, ``the men of miracle,'' the reference seems to be to their miraculous or extraordinary deliverance from captivity; but if we adopt the version of Menochius, Marckius, Blayney, and Henderson, ``men of sign,'' or symbolical men, the meaning is, that in their office they represented Christ, that what they did was a sign which foreshowed and prefigured what Christ, the Branch, was to do; and this is the explanation which Parkhurst offers. The reading of Adam Clarke is not amiss, ``figurative men, men whose office and ministry prefigured the Lord Jesus Christ.'' --- Ed.

wonder, for that would be frigid, but because they were objects of reproach to all; and they were hardly borne with by the people, who clamored, ``what do these seek for themselves? they seek to be wiser than the Church.''

In the same way we find ourselves at this day to be condemned by the Papists. ``Oh! these, forsooth, will create a new world, they will create a new law: the rule of our great men will not satisfy these; we have a Church founded for so many ages, antiquity is in our favor. In short these men tear asunder what has been sanctioned from the beginning until now.'' But in the time of Joshua and in the time of Isaiah, all who simply believed God were regarded as strange men; for the people had become then so unrestrainedly licentious, that to retain the pure worship of God was viewed as a strange thing on account of its novelty.

We now apprehend the meaning of the words, when the angel bids Joshua and his companions to attend, and when he calls them the men of prodigy, and when at last he promises that a priest should arise like a Branch, for God would make Christ to rise up, though hid, not only under the feet, but under the earth itself, like a shoot which comes forth from the root after the tree has been cut down. It follows ---

Zechariah 3:9

9. For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone shall be seven eyes: behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.

9. Quia ecce lapis quem posui coram Iehosua, super lapidem unum septem oculi: ecce ego sculpo sculpturam ejus (lapidis) dicit Iehova exercituum: et aufero iniquitatem terrae hujus die una.

He more fully sets forth what we have observed in the last verse; but he speaks figuratively. He says that there were seven eyes on the stone which was set before Joshua; and that God would in one day take away the iniquity of the land, so that nothing would prevent it from recovering its ancient glory. This is the import of the whole; but interpreters vary, especially as to the eyes.

Almost all Christians agree as to the stone; for they think Christ to be meant; and we know that there are many similar passages, where Christ is called a stone, because the Church is on him founded; ``Behold, I lay in Zion a precious stone,'' says Isaiah in the Isaiah 28:1; and in Psalm 118:1 and in other places there are similar words. I yet think that the Prophet alludes to the temple, which was then begun to be built; but at the same time I take this as admitted, that Christ is called metaphorically a stone, as before he was called a Branch. But we must bear in mind that the external figure of the visible temple is applied to Christ himself. Behold, says God, the stone which I have set before Joshua has seven eyes; and further, I will engrave it with sculptures, that it may appear wonderful before the whole world. We now perceive what the subject is, and the mode of speaking here adopted.

As to the subject, the angel says, that the temple which Joshua had begun to build, was a celestial building; for God here declares himself to be its founder and builder, --- The stone, he says, which I have set; and he says this, that Joshua might know that he labored not in vain in building the temple. For had it been the work of men, it might have fallen, and might have been pulled down a hundred times by the

hand of enemies; but God declares that the temple was founded by his own hand. He, at the same time, as I have said, raises up the thoughts of the godly to Christ, which is the substance and reality of the temple. Hence he says, I set a stone before Joshua; that is, ``Though Joshua builds, and workmen diligently labor with him, yet I am the chief framer and architect of the temple.''

He then says, on this stone shall be seven eyes. Some apply this to the seven graces of the Spirit: but the definition which they make, who have said, that the grace of the Spirit is sevenfold, is puerile; they know not about what they prattle and vainly talk; for Scripture speaks of many more. They also falsely adduce a passage from the Isaiah 11:1 for they mistake there as to the number: the Latin version has led them astray. Others think that the seven eyes have a reference to the whole world; as though the angel had said, that all will direct their eyes to this stone, according to what is said by Christ, that he was raised up on high, that he might draw all men to himself: then seven eyes, that is the eyes of all men, shall be turned to this stone. [196] Some again apply this to the fullness of grace which has been given to Christ. But I think that the simpler view is, that his glory is set forth, according to what immediately follows, --- I will engrave its engravings. For it is a vain refinement to say, that God engraved engravings when the side of Christ was pierced, when his hands and his feet were perforated: this is to trifle, and not seriously to explain Scripture. But the Prophet by engraving, means the valuable and extraordinary character of this stone; as though he had said, ``It will be a stone remarkable for every excellency; for God will adorn this stone with wonderful engravings; and then it will be a stone having eyes, that is, it will not only turn to itself the eyes of others, but it will illuminate them, and exhibit as it were such brightness as will, by its own reflection, lead men to behold it.'' [197] We now understand the full meaning of the Prophet. What remains I cannot finish now.

Prayer

[196] "Seven eyes looking to it," is the explanation of Kimchi. "Seven being taken for an indefinite number." "The eyes of Patriarchs, Prophets, and of all Christians," says Menochius. The words may indeed admit of this construction, that is, that "seven" or many "eyes" are fixed on the same; but the probability is that eyes are ascribed to the stone, which betoken vigilance and care. See Psalm 32:8. — Ed.

[197] With this view correspond the remarks of Marckius, and also of Drusius, Piscator, and Pemble. The address of the Angel of Jehovah from verse 7 to the end, seems to consist of two parts; the first is spoken to Joshua and his associates, to the middle of verse 8, — and the second, to the Prophet, beginning with the words, "Verily men of sign are these," or "they," as though he pointed to Joshua and his companions. Then the "Branch" and the "stone," are proofs of the men being symbolical persons. To separate the two, as Henderson does, does not appear right. I give the following version of the whole passage: — 7. Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, — If in my ways thou wilt walk, And if my charge thou wilt keep, Then shalt thou also rule my house, And keep also my courts, And I will give to thee perambulators From among those who stand here: 8. Hear this now, Joshua, the high priest, Thou and thy associates. Verily men of sign are these; For behold, I will bring my servant, the Branch; 9. For behold the stone, which I have set before Joshua, On one stone seven eyes; Behold, I engrave its engraving, And will remove the iniquity of that land in one day: In that day saith Jehovah of hosts, 10. Ye shall invite every one his neighbor, Under the vine and under the fig-tree. The "Branch" and the "Stone," as designative of the Messiah, were symbols well known to the Jews, as they had been used by former Prophets. Vitringa, Blayney, and others have rendered "eyes" fountains, and the following line thus, "Behold I open its opening," that is, the orifice through which the fountains were to flow; they conceived the allusion to be to the rock smitten by Moses in the wilderness. The main objection to this, as observed by Marckius and Henderson, is, that the word rendered "eyes" is masculine, and means "fountains" only when in the feminine gender. — Ed.

Grant, Almighty God, that as by nature we do not willingly submit to the reproach and contempt of the world, --- O grant, that with our hearts lifted up to heaven, we may become indifferent to all reproaches, and that our faith may not succumb nor vacillate, though profane men may ridicule us while serving thee under the cross: but may we patiently wait, until Christ shall at length appear in the splendor of his priesthood and kingdom; and may we, in the meantime, contemplate the excellency with which thou hast adorned thy Church, and be thus encouraged to connect ourselves with those few and despised men, who faithfully and sincerely follow thy word, and disregard the arrogance of the whole world, and never doubt, but that if we remain grounded in the pure doctrine of the gospel, thou wilt raise us up to heaven, yea, and above all heavens, where we shall enjoy that blessedness which thine only-begotten Son has obtained for us by his own blood. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Forty-first

We have to consider the last words of the ninth verse, in which God promises to remove the iniquity of the land in one day. Some refinedly take the one day for the one sacrifice, by which Christ once for all expiated for ever for the sins of the world; but the Prophet in my view speaks in a simpler manner; for he mentions one day for suddenly or quickly. I indeed allow that expiation was to be sought through the one sacrifice of Christ; but the Prophet intimates, that God would be so propitious to the Jews, as to deliver them from all the wrongs and molestations of their enemies. He then assigns a reason why he purposed to deal so bountifully with his people, even because he would not impute their sins. And we know this to be the fountain of all the blessings which flow from God to us, that is, when he forgives us and blots out our sins.

We now then apprehend the Prophet's meaning: I will take away the iniquity of the land in one day, that is, ``Though hitherto I have in various ways punished this people, I shall of a sudden be pacified towards them, so that no iniquity shall come to an account before me, or prevent me from favoring this people.'' It now follows in the Prophet -

Zechariah 3:10

10. In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, shall ye call every man his neighbour under the vine and under the fig tree.

10. In illo die, dicit Iehova exercituum, vocabitis quisque proximum suum sub vite et sub ficu.

We see from this verse that a particular time is signified by one day; for the Prophet wished to inspire the Jews with confidence, lest they should think that their misery would continue, because God had hitherto treated them with rigor and severity. Here then is shown to them a sudden change. He therefore adds, In that day, ye shall call every one his neighbor under his vine and under his fig-tree; that is, ``Ye shall dwell secure, beyond the reach of fear or of danger; for no one will be incensed against you.'' This kind of expression signifies a safe and quiet state, that is, when it is said; that neighbors meet together under the vine and under the fig-tree. For they who fear, either remain inclosed in cities, or seek, when in the country, some fortified place and difficult of access, or watch their own doors that they may not be

exposed to injuries; but they who joyfully meet together under the vine or under the fig-tree, show that they are free from every anxiety and fear.

The sum of the whole then is, --- that when God shall openly make himself the guardian of his Church, the faithful shall be relieved from every fear, and shall cheerfully enjoy their freedom, so that they shall venture to have their repast under the vine and under the fig-tree, that is, in the open air and on the public road, as there will be none to terrify them. But as this promise is to be extended to the whole kingdom of Christ, what is said ought to be applied to that spiritual peace which we enjoy, when we are fully persuaded that God is reconciled to us; for then also us become reconciled among ourselves, so that we no longer seek to injure one another, according to what we have observed in Micah, (Micah 4:4,) and according to what Isaiah says in the second chapter Isaiah 2:1. Let us now proceed-

Chapter 4.

Zechariah 4

Zechariah 4:1-6

1. And the angel that talked with me came again, and waked me, as a man that is wakened out of his sleep,

1. Et reversus et angelus, qui loquebatur mecum, et excitavit me, quasi virum qui excitatur (vel, evigilat) a somno suo.

2. And said unto me, What seest thou? And I said, I have looked, and behold a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which are upon the top thereof:

2. Et dixit ad me, Quid tu vides? et dixit, Video, et ecce candelabrum ex auro totum (hoc est, ex solido auro,) et pelvis super caput ejus; et septem lucernae super ipsum; septem et septem infusoria lucernis, quae sunt super caput ejus;

3. And two olive trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side thereof.

3. Et duae oleae super ipsum, una a dextera pelvis, et una ad sinistram ejus.

4. So I answered and spake to the angel that talked with me, saying, What are these, my lord?

4. Et respondit et dixi angelo, qui loquebatur mecum, dicendo, Quid ista, Domine mi?

5. Then the angel that talked with me answered and said unto me, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord.

5. Et respondit angelus, qui loquebatur mecum, et dixit mihi, Annon cognoscis quid sint haec? Et dixi, Non, Domine mi.

6. Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.

6. Et respondit et dixit mihi dicendo, Hic sermo Iehovae ad Zerubbabel, dicendo, Non in exercitu, et non in fortitudine, sed in Spiritu meo, dicit Iehova exercituum.

Another vision is narrated here, --- that a candlestick was shown to the Prophet, on which there were seven lights. He says that the candlestick was formed all of gold: and he says that to the seven lamps there were as many cruses, (infusoria --- pourers,) or, as some think, there were seven cruses to each lamp: but the former view is what I mostly approve, that is, that every lamp had its own cruse. He further says, that there were two olive-trees, one on the right, the other on the left hand, so that there was no deficiency of oil, as the olive-trees were full of fruit. Since then there was a great abundance of berries, the oil would not fail; and the lamps were continually burning. This is the vision, and the explanation is immediately added, for God declares that his Spirit was sufficient to preserve the Church without any earthly helps, that is, that his grace would always shine bright, and could never be extinguished.

There is, moreover, no doubt but that God set forth to Zechariah a figure and an image suitable to the capacities of the people. The candlestick in the temple, we know, was made of gold; we know also, that seven lamps were placed in the candlestick, for it had six branches; and then there was the trunk of the candlestick. As then the seven lamps shone always in the temple on the golden candlestick, it was the Lord's design here to show that this ceremonial symbol was not superfluous or insignificant; for his purpose was really to fulfill what he exhibited by the candlestick: and such analogy is to be seen in many other instances. For it was not the Lord's purpose simply to promise what was necessary to be known; but he also designed to add at the same time a confirmation by ceremonial types, that the Jews might know that their labor was not in vain when they lighted the lamps in the temple; for it was not a vain or a deceptive spectacle, but a real symbol of his favor, which was at length to be exhibited towards them. But we may more fully learn the design of the whole, by considering the words, and each part in order.

He says that the Angel returned; by which we understand that God, without any request or entreaty on the part of the Prophet, confirmed by a new prophecy what we have already observed; for the Prophet confesses that he was as it were overcome with astonishment, so that it was necessary to awake him as it were from sleep. The Prophet was not therefore able to ask any thing of God when under the influence of amazement; but God of his own free will came to his aid, and anticipated his request. We hence see that the faithful were not in one way only taught to entertain confidence as to the restoration of the Church; but as there was need of no common confirmation, many visions were given; and it must at the same time be added, that though no one interposed, yet God was of his own self solicitous about his Church, and omitted nothing that was necessary or useful to support the faith of his people. And farther, as the Prophet says that he was awakened by the Angel, let us learn, that except God awakens us by his Spirit, torpor will so prevail over us, that we cannot raise our minds above. Since God then sees that we are so much tied down to the earth, he rouses us as it were from our lethargy. For if the Prophet had need of such help, how much more have we, who are far below him in faith? Nay, if he was earthly, are we not altogether earth and ashes? It must yet be observed, that the Prophet was not so overwhelmed with drowsiness as with astonishment; so that

he was hardly himself, as it is the case with men in an ecstasy.

The Prophet was also reminded to be attentive to the vision --- What seest thou? Then there was presented to him a sight which we have described; but the Prophet by seeing could have seen nothing, had he not been instructed by the Angel. We must also observe, that this tardiness of the Prophet is useful to us; for we hence more surely conclude, that nothing was represented without a design; but that the whole was introduced for his benefit, though he overlooked, as with closed eyes, what God showed to him by the Angel. We then conclude that there was nothing done by chance, but that the Prophet was really under a divine guidance, so that he might learn what he was afterwards faithfully to deliver to others.

The vision is then narrated --- that a candlestick of God was shown to him. The substance of the candlestick was intended to set forth a mystery. It is indeed true that gold is corruptible; but as we cannot otherwise understand what exceeds the things of the world, the Lord, under the figure of gold, and silver, and precious stones, sets forth those things which are celestial, and which surpass in value the earth and the world. It was for this purpose that God commanded a candlestick to be made of gold for him, not that he needed earthly wealth or riches, or was pleased with them as men are, whose eyes are captivated by the sight of gold and silver. We indeed know that all these things are counted as nothing before God; but regard was had in these symbols to this --- that they might know that something sublime and exalted was to be understood whenever they looked on the golden candlestick. Hence by the gold the Prophet must have learnt, that what was here set forth was not worthless or mean, but unusual and of great importance.

He afterwards says that there was a vessel, or some render it a pot; but it was a round vessel, and it was on the top of the candlestick; for the lamps burned on the very summit of the candlestick. Now there was a pot or bowl; and here there was a little difference between the candlestick of the temple and that of which the Prophet speaks now; for in the candlestick of the temple there were many pots or bowls, but here the Prophet says that there was but one; and also that there were seven pourers or postings; for by this term we may understand the very act of pouring, as well as the instruments themselves. But it is better to refer this to the pourers, which distilled the oil continually, that the wick might not become dry, but gather always new strength. He says that there were seven pourers to the lamps on the top; [198] and also that there were two olive-trees, which supplied new abundance, so that the oil was always flowing.

We must now then enquire the meaning of the vision. Many understand by the candlestick the Church; and this may be allowed. At the same time I think that God here simply testified to the Jews, that in having commanded them to set up a candlestick, he did not appoint an empty, or a deceptive, but a real symbol. God

[198] Literally it is, "seven and seven pourers," or pipes, or tubes "to the lamps" or lights. Some, as Henderson, regard the first "seven" as an interpolation, and it is not in the Septuagint nor Vulgate. Others, as Newcome, receive it, and place it before lamps — "to the seven lamps." If "seven and seven" be taken as a form to express fourteen, then there were two pipes to convey the oil from the bowl to each lamp, answerable to the two olive-trees which supplied the oil; and it may be that this was expressed in order to intimate with more distinctness that the oil proceeded equally to each lamp from the two olive-trees. — Ed.

no doubt represented by the lamps the graces, or the various gifts of his Spirit; yet the idea of a sevenfold grace is a mere fancy; for God did not intend to confine to that number the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the variety of which is manifold, even almost infinite. Hence the number seven designates perfection, according to the common usage of Scripture. God then intended by placing the candlestick in the midst of the temple, to show that the grace of his Spirit always shines in his Church, not of one kind only, but so that there was nothing wanting as to its perfection. Some think that teachers are represented by the lamps; but as I have already said, it is better to take a simple view of the meaning than refinedly to philosophise on the subject. There is indeed no doubt but that God pours forth his graces to illuminate his Church by his ministers; this we find by experience; but what I have stated is sufficient that God never forsakes his Church, but illuminates it with the gifts of his Spirit; while yet the variety of these gifts is set forth by the seven lamps. This is one thing.

It afterwards follows, that the Prophet inquired of the Angel, What does this mean? We hence learn again, that the Prophet was instructed by degrees, in order that the vision might be more regarded by us; for if the Prophet had immediately obtained the knowledge of what was meant, the narrative might be read by us with no attention; we might at least be less attentive, and some might probably think that it was an uncertain vision. But as the Prophet himself attentively considered what was divinely revealed to him, and yet failed to understand what God meant, we are hereby reminded that we ought not to be indifferent as to what is here related; for without a serious and diligent application of the mind, we shall not understand this prophecy, as we are not certainly more clear-sighted than the Prophet, who had need of a guide and teacher. There is also set before us an example to be imitated, so that we may not despair when the prophecies seem obscure to us; for when the Prophet asked, the Angel immediately helped his ignorance. There is therefore no doubt but that the Lord will supply us also with understanding, when we confess that his mysteries are hid from us, and when conscious of our want of knowledge, we flee to him, and implore him not to speak in vain to us, but to grant to us the knowledge of his truth. The angel's question to the Prophet, whether he understood or not, is not to be taken as a reproof of his dullness, but as a warning, by which he meant to rouse the minds of all to consider the mystery. He then asked, Art thou ignorant of what this means, in order to elicit from the Prophet a confession of his ignorance. Now if the Prophet, when elevated by God's Spirit above the world, could not immediately know the purpose of the vision, what can we do who creep on the earth, except the Lord supplies us with understanding? In short, Zechariah again recommends to us the excellency of this prophecy, that we may more attentively consider what God here declares.

He calls the angel his Lord, according to the custom of the Jews; for they were wont thus to address those who were eminent in power, or in anything superior. He did not call him Lord with the intention of transferring to him the glory of God; but he thus addressed him only for the sake of honor. And here again we are reminded, that if we desire to become proficient in the mysteries of God, we must not arrogate any thing to ourselves; for here the Prophet honestly confesses his own want of

knowledge. And let us not at this day be ashamed to lie down at God's feet, that he may teach us as little children; for whosoever desires to be God's disciple must necessarily be conscious of his own folly, that is, he must come free from a conceit of his own acumen and wisdom, and be willing to be taught by God.

Now follows the explanation the angel gives this answer --- This is the word of Jehovah to Zerubbabel, saying, etc. Here the angel bears witness to what I have shortly referred to that the power of God alone is sufficient to preserve the Church, and there is no need of other helps. For he sets the Spirit of God in opposition to all earthly aids; and thus he proves that God borrows no help for the preservation of his Church, because he abounds in all blessings to enrich it. Farther, by the word spirit we know is meant his power, as though he had said, ``God designs to ascribe to himself alone the safety of his Church; and though the Church may need many things, there is no reason why it should turn its eyes here and there, or seek this or that help from men; for all abundance of blessings may be supplied by God alone.'' And host and might, [199] being a part for the whole, are to be taken for all helps which are exclusive of God's grace. It is indeed certain that God acts not always immediately or by himself, for he employs various means, and makes use in his service of the ministrations of men; but his design is only to teach us that we are very foolish, when we look around us here and there, or vacillate, or when, in a word, various hopes, and various fears, and various anxieties affect us; for we ought to be so dependent on God alone, as to be fully persuaded that his grace is sufficient for us, though it may not appear; nay, we ought fully to confide in God alone, though poverty and want may surround us on every side. This is the purport of the whole.

But God intended also to show that his Church is built up and preserved, not by human and common means, but by means extraordinary and beyond all our hopes and all our thoughts. It is indeed true, as I have just said, that God does not reject the labors of men in building up and in defending his Church; but yet he seems as though he were not in earnest when he acts by men; for by his own wonderful power he surpasses what can be conceived by human thought. To be reminded of this was then exceedingly necessary, when the Church of God was despised, and when the unbelieving haughtily ridiculed the miserable Jews, whom they saw to be few in number and destitute of all earthly aids. As then there was nothing splendid or worthy of admiration among the Jews, it was needful that what we find here should have been declared to them --- even that his own power was enough for God, when no aid came from any other quarter. The same also was the design of what we have noticed respecting the seven pourers and the olive-trees; for if God had need of earthly helps, servants must have been at hand to pour forth the oil; but there were seven pourers to supply the oil continually. Wherefrom? even from the olive-trees. As then the trees were fruitful, and God drew from them the oil by his hidden power, that the lamps might never be dry, we hence clearly learn, that what was exhibited

[199] {Ουκ} {ἐν} {δυνάμει} {μεγάλῃ} {ὀυδὲ} {ἐν} {ἰσχυι}, Septuagint.; ``non in exercitu nec in robore,'' Jerome; ``non virtute neque vi,'' Jun. et Trem Newcome and Henderson adopt our version, ``not by might nor by power.'' The first word, [{חיל}] seems to mean combined force, either of wealth or of armies; and the second, ,[{כח}] is the strength or vigor of men --- courage or valor. It was not by the united power of the world, nor by individual strength or courage, that the work was to be effected --- ``not by power nor by strength.'' --- Ed.

is that which the angel now declares, namely, that the Church was, without a host and without might, furnished with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and that in these there was a sufficient defense for its preservation, in order that it might retain its perfect state and continue in vigor and safety.

When therefore we now see things in a despairing condition, let this vision come to our minds --- that God is sufficiently able by his own power to help us, when there is no aid from any other; for his Spirit will be to us for lamps, for pourers, and for olive-trees, so that experience will at length show that we have been preserved in a wonderful manner by his hand alone.

We now then understand the design of the Prophet, and the reason why this vision was shown to him --- that the faithful might be fully induced to entertain a firm hope as to that perfect condition of the Church which had been promised; for no judgment was to be formed of it according to earthly means or helps, inasmuch as God had his own power and had no need of deriving any assistance from others. And Zechariah says also, that this word was to Zerubbabel, even that he might take courage and proceed with more alacrity in the work of building the temple and the city. For Zerubbabel, we know, was the leader of the people, and the Jews returned to their country under his guidance; and in the work of building the city his opinion was regarded by all, as peculiar honor belonged to him on account of his royal descent. At the same time God addressed in his person the whole people: it was the same as though the angel had said, ``This word is to the Church.'' The head is here mentioned for the whole body, a part being specified for the whole.

Now as Zerubbabel was only a type of Christ, we must understand that this word is addressed to Christ and to all his members.

Thus we must remember that all our confidence ought to be placed on the favor of God alone; for were it to depend on human aids, there would be nothing certain or sure. For God, as I have said, withdraws from us whatever may add courage according to the judgment of the flesh, in order that he may invite or rather draw us to himself. Whenever, then, earthly aids fail us, let us learn to recumb on God alone, for it is not by a host or by might that God raises up his Church, and preserves it in its proper state; but this he does by his Spirit, that is, by his own intrinsic and wonderful power, which he does not blend with human aids; and his object is to draw us away from the world, and to hold us wholly dependent on himself. This is the reason why he says that the word was addressed to Zerubbabel. The rest I shall consider tomorrow.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou shinest on us by thy word, and showest to us the way of salvation, we may with open eyes look on that light; and as we are blind also at mid-day, open thou our eyes, and may the inward light of thy Spirit lead us to the light of thy word, that we may not doubt but that thou alone art sufficient to supply us with all those things which are necessary for the enjoyment of celestial life, that by thus distilling on us frequently and continually thou mayest refresh us, so that the light of faith, which has been once kindled in our hearts by thy grace, may never be extinguished, until at length we shall attain to that fullness which has

been laid up for us in heaven: and may we thus now in part be satisfied with the measure of knowledge which thou hast given us, until we shall at length see thee face to face, that being thus transformed to thine image, we may enjoy the fullness of that glory into which Christ our Lord has been received. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Forty-second

Zechariah 4:7

7. Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it.

7. Quis tu mons magne coram Zerubbabel? in planitiem; et educat lapidem capitis ejus, clamores, gratia, gratia ei.

Here the angel pursues the same subject which we have been already explaining --- that though the beginning was small and seemed hardly of any consequence and importance, yet God would act in a wonderful manner as to the building of the temple. But as this was not only arduous and difficult, but also in various ways impeded, the angel now says, that there would be no hindrance which God would not surmount or constrain to give way. He compares to a mountain either the Persian monarchy or all the hosts of enemies, which had then suddenly arisen in various parts, so that the Jews thought that their return was without advantage, and that they were deceived, as the event did not answer to their wishes and hopes.

We now then perceive the design of the Holy Spirit: as Satan attempted by various artifices to prevent the building of the temple, the angel declares here that no obstacle would be so great as to hinder the progress of the work, for God could suddenly reduce to a plain the highest mountains. What art thou, great mountain? The expression has more force than if the angel had simply said, that all the attempts of enemies would avail nothing; for he triumphs over the pride and presumption of those who then thought that they were superior to the Jews: ``Ye are,'' he says, ``like a great mountain; your bulk is indeed terrible, and sufficient at the first view not only to weaken, but also to break down the spirits; but ye are nothing in all your altitude.''

But the text may be read in two ways, ``What art thou, great mountain? A plain before Zerubbabel;'' or, ``What art thou, great mountain before Zerubbabel? A plain.'' The latter rendering is the best, and it is also what has been universally received. And he says that this mountain was before Zerubbabel, that is, in his presence, for it stood in opposition to him.

Now this doctrine may be fitly applied to our age: for we see how Satan raises up great forces, we see how the whole world conspires against the Church, to prevent the increase or the progress of the kingdom of Christ. When we consider how great are the difficulties which meet us, we are ready to faint and to become wholly dejected. Let us then remember that it is no new thing for enemies to surpass great mountains in elevation; but that the Lord can at length reduce them to a plain. This, then, our shield can cast down and lay prostrate whatever greatness the devil may set up to terrify us: for as the Lord then reduced a great mountains to a plain, when Zerubbabel was able to do nothing, so at this day, however boldly may multiplied

adversaries resist Christ in the work of building a spiritual temple to God the Father, yet all their efforts will be in vain.

He afterwards adds, He will bring forth the stone of its top. The relative is of the feminine gender, and must therefore be understood of the building. Zerubbabel shall then bring forth the stone, which was to be on the top of the temple. By the stone of the top, I understand the highest, which was to be placed on the very summit. The foundations of the temple had been already laid; the building was mean and almost contemptible: it could not however be advanced, since many enemies united to disturb the work, or at least to delay it. Nevertheless the angel promises what he afterwards explains more fully --- that the temple would come to its completion, for Zerubbabel was to bring forth and raise on high the stone of the top, which was to be on the very summit of the temple. [200] And then he subjoins, shoutings, Grace, grace, to it; that is, God will grant a happy success to this stone or to the temple. The relative here again is feminine; it cannot then be applied to Zerubbabel, but to the temple or to the stone: it is however more probable that the angel speaks of the temple. And he says that there would be shoutings; for it was necessary to encourage the confidence of the faithful and to excite them to prayer, that they might seek, by constant entreaties, a happy and prosperous issue to the building of the temple. The angel, then, bids all the godly with one voice to pray for the temple; but as all prosperous events depend on the good pleasure of God, he uses the word {ן}, chen, grace, which he repeats, that he might more fully encourage the faithful to perseverance, and also that he might kindle their desire and zeal.

We now then see what this verse on the whole contains: first, the angel shows that however impetuously the ungodly might rage against the temple, yet their attempts would be frustrated, and that though they thought themselves to be like great mountains, it was yet in the power and will of God to reduce them to a plain, that is, suddenly to lay them prostrate. This is one thing. Then secondly, he adds, that a happy success would attend the building of the temple; for Zerubbabel would bring forth the top-stone, the highest. And lastly, he subjoins, that the faithful ought unanimously to pray, and so to persevere with the greatest ardor and zeal, that God might bless the temple, and cause the building of it to be completed. It now follows ---

Zechariah 4:8, 9

8. Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

8. Et factus est sermo Iehovae ad me dicendo,

9. The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto you.

[200] The Targum seems here to have given a false view of this stone, regarding it as the chief corner-stone of the foundation; and this view has been adopted by Jerome, Cyril, Drusius, Grotius, and Henderson. But the context is wholly opposed to it. The ninth verse is decisive on the subject, as noticed by Marckius. This stone Zerubbabel was to bring forth; he had already laid the foundation-stone. It is considered as "the topmost stone" by Theodoret, Cocceius, Pemble, and Newcome. See Psalm 118:22. The last renders the distich thus, And he shall bring forth the head-stone, With shoutings, cryings, Favor, favor, unto it. The last line is rendered by Marckius — Acclamations of favor, — of favor (shall be) to it. "Favor," or grace, here seems to be a metonymy, prosperity or success being the effect of God's favor: and this is the view given by Calvin. — Ed.

9. Manus Zerubbabel fundarunt domum hanc, et manus ejus perficient eam; et congnosces quia Iehova exercituum miserit me ad vos.

He confirms in this passage what I lately stated --- That there was no reason for the faithful to entertain doubts or to feel anxious, because they saw that the beginning of the building was mean and despised by the world; for the Lord would at length show that it was built by his sanction and command, and that it would succeed far better than all of them had thought.

But he says that the word of Jehovah came to him; [201] and yet at the end of the next verse he shows that this address came from the mouth of the angel. But it is a well-known and a common mode of speaking, that God himself is said to speak, when he employs either angels or men as his agents; for the person of the messenger lessens in no degree the reverence due to the word: the majesty, then, of God ought to remain inviolable in his word, whether brought to us by men or by angels. Now the Prophet felt assured that nothing was adduced by the angel, but what he conveyed as the minister of God.

The sum of the whole is, that the temple, though some interruptions happened, was yet so begun that its completion was at length to be expected; as God had made use of the labors of Zerubbabel, so he would not forsake the work of his hands. Since, then, God was the chief founder of the building, it could not be but that the temple would at length be completed.

This is what the angel had in view in these words, The hands of Zerubbabel have founded this house. Of the foundation there was indeed no doubt; but many believed that the building would ever remain unfinished, for Satan had already by means of the most powerful enemies impeded its progress. As then despair had laid hold on the minds of almost all, the angel declares that Zerubbabel would gain his object in finishing the temple which he had begun.

He afterwards adds, Thou shalt know that God has sent me to you. Of this knowledge we have spoken elsewhere. The meaning is, that the event would be a sure and suitable proof, that nothing had been rashly undertaken by them, but that the temple was built by God's command, for his power would be evident in its completion. And he addresses the Prophet, who though he was fully persuaded of the event and of the fulfillment of this prophecy, yet learnt by what took place that the angel who gave the promise was sent from above. We have said elsewhere that there are two kinds of knowledge; one is of faith, which we derive from the word, though the thing itself does not appear; the other is of experience, when God adds accomplishment to the promise, and proves that he had not spoken in vain and this is the knowledge which the angel means when he says, Thou shalt know that I have been sent from above to you.

Now if this be applied to Christ, it may, as I have said, be justly done; for it is certain that angels were then sent in such a manner that Christ was the chief. Since, then, nothing was undertaken as to the building of the temple without Christ being the leader, he rightly says here that he was sent by the Father. It afterwards follows

[201] That is, what follows was especially addressed to the Prophet. The former part, beginning at the sixth verse, was a communication to Zerubbabel, and may be considered as parenthetic; the angel now proceeds to give an answer to the Prophet. — Ed.

Zechariah 4:10

10. For who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel with those seven; they are the eyes of the LORD, which run to and fro through the whole earth.

10. Quia quis contempsit diem parvitatum (parvorum; sed hic acciptitur pro parvitate?) gaudabunt et videbunt (ad verbum) lapidem stanneum in manu Zerubbabel (sed ita resolvi debet oratio, certe gaudabunt ubi viderint lapidem in manu Zerubbabel:) septem hi, oculi Iehovae sunt, circumeuntes (vel, qui discurrunt) per totam terram.

Here the angel reproves the sloth and fear of the people, for the greater part were very faint-hearted; and he also blames the Jews, because they formed a judgment of God's work at the first view, Who is he, he says, that has despised the day of paucities? He does not ask who it was, as though he spoke only of one, or as though they were few in number or insignificant but he addresses the whole people, who were chargeable with entertaining this wrong feeling; for all were cast down in their minds, because they thought that the work begun would be a sport to the ungodly, and would come to nothing, according to what we read in Nehemiah 3:12, that the old men wept, so that nearly all threw down their tools, and left off the building of the temple. We hence see that not a few despised the small beginnings, and that the minds of all the people were dejected, for they thought that they labored in vain while building the temple, which made no approach to the glory and splendor of the former temple: ``What are we doing here? we seek to build a temple for God; but what is it? does it correspond to the temple of Solomon? No, not in the tenth degree; yet God has promised that this temple would be most glorious.'' While then they were considering these things, they thought either that the time was not come, or that they toiled in vain, because God would not dwell in a tent so mean. This is the reason why the Prophet now says, Who is he that has despised the day of paucities? [202]

God then sets himself in opposition to an ungrateful and ill- disposed people, and shows that they all acted very foolishly, because they cast and fixed their eyes only on the beginning of things, as though God would not surpass by his power what human minds could conceive. As then God purposed in a wonderful manner to build the temple, the angel reproves here the clamors of the people.

He then adds, They shall rejoice when they shall see the workman's plummet in the hard of Zerubbabel [203] Though he had adopted a severe and sharp reproof, he yet mitigates here its severity, and promises to the Jews that however unworthy they were of such kindness from God, they would yet see what they had by no means expected, even Zerubbabel furnished with everything necessary for the completion

[202] "The day of small beginnings," says Drusius. It is explained by Blayney with reference to the time when the resources of the nation appeared in the eyes of many inadequated to the building of the temple. — Ed.

[203] Literally it is, "But they shall rejoice and see the tin-ore (or plummet) in the land of Zerubbabel." The regular order would have been "see" and "rejoice;" but it is according to the manner of statement often observed in the Prophets: they frequently mention first the effect, and then the cause. — Ed.

of the temple. Hence they shall see Zerubbabel with his tin-stone; [204] that is, with his plummet. As builders in our day use a plumb-line, so he calls that in the hand of Zerubbabel a tin-stone, which he had when prepared to complete the temple.

This doctrine may be also applied to us: for God, to exhibit the more his power, begins with small things in building his spiritual temple; nothing grand is seen, which attracts the eyes and thoughts of men, but everything is almost contemptible. God indeed could put forth immediately his power, and thus rouse the attention of all men and fill them with wonder; he could indeed do so; but as I have already said, his purpose is to increase, by doing wonders, the brightness of his power; which he does, when from a small beginning he brings forth what no one would have thought; and besides, his purpose is to prove the faith of his people; for it behaves us ever to hope beyond hope. Now when the beginning promises something great and sublime, there is no proof and no trial of faith: but when we hope for what does not appear, we give due honor to God, for we depend only on his power and not on the proximate means. Thus we see that Christ is compared to a shoot, which arises from the stem of Jesse. (Isaiah 11:1.) God might have arranged that Christ should have been born when the house of David was in its splendor, and when the kingdom was in a flourishing state: yet his will was that he should come forth from the stem of Jesse, when the royal name was almost cut off. Again, he might have brought forth Christ as a full-grown tree; but he was born as an insignificant shoot. So also he is compared by Daniel to a rough and unpolished stone cut off from a mountain. (Daniel 2:45.) The same thing has also been accomplished in our age, and continues still at this day to be accomplished. If we consider what is and has been the beginning of the growing gospel, we shall find nothing illustrious according to the perceptions of the flesh; and on this account the adversaries confidently despise us; they regard us as the off-scourings of men, and hope to be able to cast us down and scatter us by a single breath.

There are many at this day who despise the day of paucity, who grow faint in their minds, or even deride our efforts, as though our labor were ridiculous, when they see us sedulously engaged in promoting the truth of the gospel; and we ourselves are also touched with this feeling: there is no one who becomes not sometimes frigid, when he sees the beginning of the Church so mean before the world, and so destitute of any dignity. We hence learn how useful it is for us at this day to be reminded, that we shall at length see what we can by no means conjecture or hope for according to present appearances; for though the Lord begins with little things, and as it were in weakness, yet the plummet will at length be seen in the hand of the Architect for the purpose of completing the work. There is at this day no Zerubbabel in the world, to whom the office of building the temple has been committed; but we know that Christ is the chief builder, and that ministers are workmen who labor under him. However then may Satan blind the unbelieving with pride and haughtiness, so that they disdain and ridicule the building in which we labor; yet the Lord himself will show that he is the chief builder, and will give to Christ the power to complete the

[204] "It seems strictly to mean a piece of tin-ore, (compare Deuteronomy 8:9,) which is heavier than that of any other metal, and so more proper for a plummet. — Parkhurst.

work.

He afterwards adds, These seven are the eyes of Jehovah, going round through the whole earth. The angel calls the attention of Zechariah to what we have before observed; for the discourse was respecting the plummet, and Zechariah said, that there were shown to him seven eyes in that stone. The angel explains what those seven eyes meant, even that the Lord by his providence would conduct the work to its completion. But we have said that seven eyes are attributed to God, that we may be assured that nothing is hid from him; for no one among men or angels possesses so great a clear-sightedness but that he is ignorant of some things. Many of Gods mysteries, we allow, are hid from angels; but when they are sent forth, they receive as much revelation as their office requires. But the angel shows here, that we ought by no means to fear that anything will happen which God has not foreseen; for the seven eyes, he says, go around through the whole earth: not that God has need of seven eyes; but we know what the number seven means in Scripture; it signifies perfection. [205]

The meaning then is --- that God would sufficiently provide that nothing should happen that might disturb him, or turn him aside, or delay him in the execution of his work. How so? because there were seven eyes; that is, he by his providence would surmount all difficulties, and his eyes went round through the whole earth, so that the devil could devise nothing behind or before, on the right hand or on the left, above or below, which he could not easily frustrate. We now then perceive the object of the Prophet.

With regard to the words, some render {אלה}, ale, in the neuter gender, ``These are seven, they are the eyes of God.'' But as to the sense, there is no ambiguity: for the angel would have the faithful to recumb on God's providence, in order that they might be secure and fear no danger; as the Lord would remove whatever was contrary to his purpose. It now follows ---

Zechariah 4:11-14

11. Then answered I, and said unto him, What are these two olive trees upon the right side of the candlestick and upon the left side thereof?

11. Et respondi et dixi ad eum, Quid duae oleae istae ad dextram candelabri et ad sinstram ejus?

12. And I answered again, and said unto him, What be these two olive branches which through the two golden pipes empty the golden oil out of themselves?

12. Et respondi secundo et dixi ad eum, Quid duo alvei (vel, cursus, vertunt alii, spicas) olearum, quae sunt inter duas fistulas auri, fundentes a se aurum?

[205] This verse has been variously rendered. Marckius and Henderson consider the nominative case to "rejoice" to be the "seven eyes," according to the marginal reading of our version; but Dathius and Newcome agree with Calvin, and regard the people who despised the day of small thing to be intended. The latter's version is the following, — 10. For who hath despised the day of small things? They shall rejoice and shall see The plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel. These seven are the eyes of Jehovah: They run to and fro through the whole earth. There is so much inversion in our marginal reading that is wholly inconsistent with the general character of the Hebrew language. "These seven," according to Dathius, were "the lamps," and not the "eyes" on the stone mentioned in chapter 3:9, as some think; for the explanation belongs to the present vision, and not the former. Here is the direct answer to the question asked in verse 4. The two last lines are literally as follows, — These seven, they eyes of Jehovah are they, Which run to and fro through the whole earth. — Ed.

13. And he answered me and said, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord.

13. Et dixit mihi dicendo, Annon cognoscis quid haec sunt? Et dixi, Non, Domine mi.

14. Then said he, These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth.

14. Et dixit, Hi sunt duo filii olei qui astant apud Dominatorem cunctae terrae.

The same vision is again related, at least one similar to that which we have just explained; only there is given a fuller explanation, for the Prophet says that he asked the angel what was meant by the two olive-trees which stood, one on the right, the other on the left side of the candlestick, and also by the two pipes of the olive-trees. Some render {שבלים}, shebelim, ears of corn, thinking that the branches of the olive-trees are compared to ears of corn, because they were full and loaded with berries; but the metaphor seems to me immaterial. The word in Hebrew is indeed ambiguous; but it often means a pipe, or a running or flowing; and this sense best suits this passage; and I wonder that this meaning has been overlooked by all interpreters; for no doubt necessity constrained them to retake themselves to this metaphor, however unnatural it was. But we know that this spectacle was presented to Zechariah in order to show that the olive-tree continually supplied abundance of oil, lest the wick should become dry, and lest the lamps should thus fail. Since then on every side there were pourers or pipes, and three tubes received the oil from one olive-tree, and four received it from the other, so that great abundance thus flowed from the two olive-trees, and since there were also seven pipes, we see how suitable it was that they should be between the olive-trees on the right and on the left, and also that their tubes for the oil should be between the pourers and the two pipes. As then the oil ran through the pourers and passed through the two pipes, he asks the angel what these flowing meant? The answer was, These are the two sons of oil, who stand before the Lord of all the earth; that is, they are the two fountains which supply oil from God himself, lest the lamps should fail through the want of it. [206] This is the import of the whole.

I have said that there is some difference in the visions though the angel relates hardly anything new, except respecting the flowing and the tubes; but as a new explanation is given, Zechariah no doubt more fully considered what he had slightly looked on before. The more attentive then to the vision the Prophet became, the more confirmed he was; for God showed to him now what he had not sufficiently

[206] The second questions, which seems to be a modification of the first, has been variously explained. The word [{,שבלים}, except in the feminine gender, has not the meaning attached to it by Calvin. It is rendered, ``branches,'' {κλαδοι}, by the Septuagint, Piscator, Newcome, Henderson, and by our own version; ``berries,'' by Jun. and Trem., Drusius and Pemble; and ``tubes'' by Grotius. As it is a repetition of the former question, it is probable that the branches in immediate connection with the candlestick are intended: the oil proceeded from them by means of tubes or pipes to the bowl or the reservoir at the top of the candlestick, and hence by means of seven tubes, or pourers to the seven lamps. The question now is respecting the olive-trees or the branches from which the oil proceeded; and the answer is, that they are ``the sons of oil.'' What is said of these ``sons of oil,'' that they ``stand with (or before) the Lord,'' can hardly comport with the explanation given by Calvin: but it is more suitable to regard them as persons annointed, as rendered in our version, and by Kimchi, Drusius, Dathius, Newcome, and Henderson. They are considered here to mean Zerubbabel and Joshua; but yet as types of Christ in his twofold character of a king and priest. Blayney takes another view; he renders ,[{שבלים}] ``orderers,'' deriving it from the Syriac, in which language the verb signifies to direct, to guide in the way. He conceives them to be two persons, guiding the oil to the channels or tubes which conveyed it to the lamps, and that they were types of Moses and of Christ, the authors of the two dispensations. The preceding view seems the most probable. --- Ed.

observed before, namely, that there were pipes or tubes through which the oil flowed into each of the pourers, and further, that these flowing or a continual running of the oil, was like that of a river, which runs through its own channel. But God intended to instruct his Prophet by degrees, that we may learn at this day to apply our thoughts to the understanding of his doctrine; for the instruction to be derived from it is not of an ordinary kind, as I have already reminded you. Indeed the state of things in our time is nearly the same with that of his time: for Christ now renews by the power of his Spirit that spiritual temple which had been pulled down and wholly demolished; for what has been the dignity of the Church for many ages? Doubtless, it has been for a long time in a dilapidated state; and now when God begins to give some hope of a new building, Satan collects together many forces from all parts to prevent the progress of the work. We are also tender and soft, and even faint-hearted, so that hardly one in a hundred labors so courageously as he ought.

We hence then learn how necessary for us is this doctrine: it was not, therefore, to no purpose that the Prophet did not apprehend at once and in an instant what was presented to him in the vision, but made progress by degrees.

We have also mentioned before, that the desire of improvement observed in Zechariah ought to be noticed. For though we attain not immediately what God teaches, yet the obscurity of a passage ought not to damp our ardor; but we ought rather to imitate the Prophet, who, in things difficult and unknown to him, asked explanations from the angel. Angels are not indeed sent now to us from heaven to answer our questions; but yet no one shall be without benefit who will humbly and with a sincere desire ask of God; for God will either by his ministers so elucidate what seems obscure to us and full of darkness, that we shall know that there is nothing but what is clear in his word; or he will by the Spirit of knowledge and judgment supply what is deficient in the ministrations of men.

And this is also the reason why the angel replies, Dost thou not know what these mean? For he does not upbraid Zechariah with ignorance, but rather reminds all the faithful, that they ought to quicken themselves, and to exert all their ardor to learn, lest sloth should close up the way against them. This reply, then, of the angel no doubt belongs to us all, ``Dost thou not know what these mean?'' We ought to remember that the things we esteem as common far exceed our thoughts. It indeed often happens that one runs over many parts of Scripture, and thinks that he reads nothing but what is clear and well known, while yet experience teaches us that we are inflated with too much self-confidence; for we look down, as it were from on high, on that doctrine which ought, on the contrary, to be reverently adored by us. Then let every one of us, being warned by this sentence of the angel, acknowledge that he as yet cleaves to first principles, or, at least, does not comprehend all those things which are necessary to be known; and that therefore progress is to be made to the very end of life: for this is our wisdom, to be learners to the end.

I come now to the answers of the angel, These are the two sons of oil. Some understand by the two sons of oil a king and a priest; but this is by no means suitable. There is no doubt but that he calls the perpetual flowing the two sons of oil; as though he had said, that it could not possibly be that the grace of God should ever fail to

preserve the Church, as God possesses all abundance, and bids his grace so to flow, as that its abundance should never be diminished.

He therefore says, that they stand with the Lord of the whole earth: for {על}, ol, sometimes means with, and sometimes concerning; but I prefer taking its simple meaning; therefore, stand do the sons of oil with the Lord. Some render, ``nigh the Lord,'' but improperly; for they pervert the Prophet's meaning, inasmuch as the angel means that these two sons of oil stood with God, as though he had said, that there is such fullness of grace in God, that it could never be exhausted. Though then the oil flowed, it would yet be sufficient to replenish the seven lamps, that is, fully; so that God would raise up his Church, preserve it safe, and lead it to the highest perfection. Hence God is not so poor but that he can continually supply as much grace as will be sufficient for the preservation of his Church. How so? because there are two sons of oil, that is, two continual flowing from him, so that the faithful shall really find, that when they are enriched by the gifts of God, they are in no danger of being in want. This is the meaning.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that since Satan at this day sets against us many terrors to cast us down, and we are very weak, --- O grant, that with our eyes lifted above we may meditate on that invincible power which thou possesses, and by which thou canst overcome all the hindrances of this world: and then, when nothing in this world but what is contemptible appears to us as capable to confirm and support our faith, may we, by the eye of faith, behold thine hidden power, and never doubt but that thou wilt at length perform what the world at this day thinks to be impossible and therefore ridicules; and may we so constantly persevere in this confidence, that every one of us may devote to thee his labor to the end, and never faint in the work of promoting the spiritual building, until at length we ourselves shall be gathered, and others shall be gathered through our labors, to offer to thee not only spiritual sacrifices, such as thou receives now from us, but also to offer to thee, together with the angels, eternal sacrifice of praise and triumphant thanksgiving, on seeing perfected what at this day is only weakly begun. --- Amen.

Chapter 5

Lecture One Hundred and Forty-third

Zechariah 5

Z

Zechariah 5:1-4

1. Then I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a flying roll.

1. Et reversus sum et extuli oculos meos, et aspexi, et ecce volumen volans.

2. And he said unto me, What seest thou? And I answered, I see a flying roll; the length thereof is twenty cubits, and the breadth thereof ten cubits.

2. Et dixit mihi, Quid tu vides? Et dixit, ego video volumen volans; longitudo ejus viginti in cubito (hoc est, ad viginti cubitos,) et latitudo ejus decem in cubito (hoc est, ad decem cubitos.)

3. Then said he unto me, This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole earth: for every one that stealeth shall be cut off as on this side according to it; and every one that sweareth shall be cut off as on that side according to it.

3. Et dixit mihi, Haec est maledictio, quiae egreditur super faciem universae terrae; quia quisquis furatur, ex hac sicut illa punietur; et quisquis pejerat, ex hac sicut illa punietur.

4. I will bring it forth, saith the LORD of hosts, and it shall enter into the house of the thief, and into the house of him that sweareth falsely by my name: and it shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it with the timber thereof and the stones thereof.

4. Emittam (vel, producam) eam, dicit Iehova exercituum; et veniet ad domum furantis, et ad domum jurantis in nomine meo fallaciter; et residebit in medio domus ejus, et consumet eam et ligna et lapides ejus.

The angel shows in this chapter, that whatever evils the Jews had suffered, proceeded from the righteous judgment Of God; and then he adds a consolation --- that the Lord would at length alleviate or put an end to their evils, when he had removed afar off their iniquity. Interpreters have touched neither heaven nor earth in their explanation of this prophecy, for they have not regarded the design of the Holy Spirit. Some think that by the volume are to be understood false and perverted glosses,

by which the purity of doctrine had been vitiated; but this view can by no means be received. There is no doubt but that God intended to show to Zechariah, that the Jews were justly punished, because the whole land was full of thefts and perjuries. As then religion had been despised, as well as equity and justice, he shows that it was no wonder that a curse had prevailed through the whole land, the Jews leaving by their impiety and other sins extremely provoked the wrath of God. This is the import of the first part. And, then, as this vision was terrible, there is added some alleviation by representing iniquity in a measure, and the mouth of the measure closed, and afterwards carried to the land of Shinar, that is, into Chaldea, that it might not remain in Judea. Thus in the former part the Prophet's design was to humble the Jews, and to encourage them to repent, so that they might own God to have been justly angry; and then he gives them reason to entertain hope, and fully to expect an end to their evils, for the Lord would remove to a distance and transfer their iniquity to Chaldea, so that Judea might be pure and free from every wickedness, both from thefts and acts of injustice, by which it had been previously polluted. But every sentence must be in order explained, that the meaning of the Prophet may be more clearly seen.

He says, that he had returned; [207] and by this word this vision is separated front the preceding visions, and those also of which we have hitherto spoken, were not at the same time exhibited to the Prophet, but he saw them at different times. We may hence learn that some time intervened before the Lord presented to him the vision narrated in this chapter. He adds, that he raised up his eyes and looked; and this is said that we may know that what he narrates was shown to him by the prophetic Spirit. Zechariah very often raised up his eyes though God did not immediately appear to him; but it behaved God's servants, whenever they girded themselves for the purpose of teaching, to withdraw themselves as it were from the society of men, and to rise up above the world. The raising up of the eyes then, mentioned by Zechariah, signified something special, as though he had said, that he was prepared, for the Lord had inwardly roused him. The Prophets also, no doubt, were in this manner by degrees prepared, when the Lord made himself known to them. There was then the raising up of the eyes as a preparation to receive the celestial oracle.

He afterwards adds, that he was asked by the angel what he saw. He might indeed have said, that a roll flying in the air appeared to him, but he did not as yet understand what it meant; hence the angel performed the office of an interpreter. But he says, that the roll was twenty cubits long, and ten broad. The Rabbis think that the figure of the court of the temple is here represented, for the length of the court was twenty cubits and its breadth was ten; and hence they suppose, that the roll had come forth from the temple, that there might be fuller reason to believe that God had sent forth the roll. And this allusion, though not sufficiently grounded, is yet more probable than the allegory of the puerile Jerome, who thinks that this ought to be applied to Christ, because he began to preach the gospel in his thirtieth year. Thus he meant to apply this number to the age of Christ, when he commenced his

[207] Some, such as Piscator, Drusius, Dathius, Newcome, and Henderson, think that the verb [{שוב is used here adverbally, which is sometimes the case, and render the sentence, ``And I lifted up mine eyes again.'' The Septuagint, Jerome, and our version, have rendered it, ``I turned,'' that is, from one vision to another, or from one direction to another. ``Returned'' seems not so suitable.---Ed.

office as a teacher. But this is extreme trifling. I do not feel anxious to know why the length or the breadth is mentioned; for it seems not to be much connected with the main subject. But if it be proper to follow a probable conjecture, what I have already referred to is more admissible --- that the length and breadth of the roll are stated, that the Jews might fully understand that nothing was set before them but what God himself sanctioned, as they clearly perceived a figure of the court of the temple.

The angel then says, that it was the curse which went forth [208] over the face of the whole land. We must remember what I have just said, that God's judgment is here set forth before the Jews, that they might know how justly both their fathers and themselves have been with so much severity chastised by God, inasmuch as they had procured for themselves such punishments by their sins. From the saying of the angel, that the roll went through the whole land, we learn, that not only a few were guilty, or that some corner of the land only had been polluted, but that the wrath of God raged everywhere, as no part of the land was pure or free from wickedness. As then Judea was full of pollutions, it was no wonder that the Lord poured forth his wrath and overwhelmed, as it were with a deluge, the whole land.

It afterwards follows, for every thief, or every one that steals, shall on this as on that side, be punished, or receive his own reward; and every one who swears, shall on this as on that side be punished. As to the words, interpreters differ with regard to the particles, {כמוה} {מזה}, mese camue; some take the meaning to be, ``by this roll, as it is written;'' others, ``on this side of the roll, as on the other;'' for they think that the roll was written on both sides, and that God denounced punishment on thieves as well as on perjurers. But I rather apply the words to the land, and doubt not but that this is the real meaning of the Prophet. As then there is no respect of persons with God, the Prophet, after having spoken of the whole land, says, that no one who had sinned could anywhere escape unpunished, for God would from one part to the other summon all to judgment without any exception. [209]

Now the Prophet says, that all perjurers, as well as thieves, shall be punished; and there is nothing strange in this, for God, who has forbidden to steal, has also forbidden to forswear. He is therefore the punisher of all transgressions. Those who think that this roll was disapproved, as though it contained false and degenerate doctrine, bring this reason to prove its injustice, that the thief is as grievously punished as the perjurer: but this is extremely frivolous. For, as I have said already, God shows here that he will be the defender of his law in whatever respect men may have transgressed it. We must therefore remember that saying of James,

``he who forbids to commit adultery, forbids also to steal: whosoever then offends in one thing is a transgressor of the whole law:'' (James 2:11)

[208] "From the temple," says Jerome; "from God," says Drusius. On the previous words, "this is the curse," Henderson makes the remark, that it is a similar phrase to "this is my body," that is, signifies my body; which is a mode of speaking quite common in Scripture, and it is very strange that any should attach to the phrase any other meaning.—Ed.

[209] This is no doubt the best construction. Newcome retains our version instead of "on this side;" so does Marckius; but Henderson follows it in both instances. To render [{[{נקה ``punished,'' is not quite correct, though the general meaning is given. It means to be cleared or swept away, and so Henderson correctly renders it, ``shall be cleared away.'' See Isaiah 3:26; Jeremiah 30:11; 46:28. There is no necessity whatever for the emendation of Houbigant, who thinks that it ought to be ;[{נקם}] nor for the conjecture of others, that it is put here for ,[{נכה}] ``to be cut off.'' Nor is Blayney's version to be admitted, ``because, on the one hand, every one that stealeth is as he that is guiltless,'' for it is wholly inconsistent with the context. He regards it as a description of the state of things which the curse was to rectify.---Ed.

for we ought not simply to regard what God either commands or forbids, but we ought ever to fix our eyes on his majesty, as there is nothing so minute in the law which all ought not reverently to receive; for the laws themselves are not only to be regarded, but especially the lawgiver. As then the majesty of God is dishonored, when any one steals, and when any one transgresses in the least point, he clearly shows that the word of God is not much regarded by him. It is hence right that thieves and perjurers should be alike punished: yet the Scripture while it thus speaks, does not teach that sins are equal in enormity, as the Stoics in former times foolishly and falsely taught. But the equality of punishment is not what is here referred to; the angel means only, that neither thieves nor perjurers shall go unpunished, as they have transgressed the law of God.

We must also observe, that the mode of speaking adopted here is that of stating a part for the whole; for under the word theft is comprehended whatever is opposed to the duties of love; so that it is to be referred to the second table at the law. And the Prophet calls all those perjurers who profane the worship of God; and so perjury includes whatever is contrary to the first table of the law, and tends to pollute the service due to God. The meaning is, --- that God, as I have said, will be the punisher of all kinds of wickedness, for he has not in vain given his law. Much deceived then are those who flatter themselves, as though by evasions they can elude the judgment of God, for both thieves and perjurers shall be brought before God's tribunal, so that no one can escape, that is, no wickedness shall remain unpunished; for not in vain has he once declared by his own mouth, that cursed are all who fulfill not whatever has been written. (Deuteronomy 27:26.)

And the same thing the Prophet more clearly expresses in the following verse, where God himself declares what he would do, that he would cause the curse to go forth over the whole land; as though he had said, ``I will really show, that I have not given the law that it may be despised; for what the law teaches shall be so efficacious, that every one who violates it shall find that he has to do, not with a mortal man, nor with sounds of words, but with the heavenly judge; I will bring forth the curse over the whole land.''

I have said, that the Prophet was instructed in the import of this vision, that all the Jews might know that it was nothing strange that they had been so severely chastised, inasmuch as they had polluted the whole land by their sins, so that no part of the law was observed by them; for on the one hand they had corrupted the worship of God and departed from true religion; and on the other, they distressed one another by many wrongs, and oppressed them by frauds. As then no equity prevailed among the people, nor any true religion, God shows that he would punish them all, as none were guiltless.

He afterwards adds, It shall come into the house of the thief, and into the house of him who swears in my name falsely; and there will it reside, and it shall consume the hoarse, both the wood and the stones. Here the Prophet further stimulates the Jews to repentance, by showing that the curse would so fly as to enter into all their houses; as though he had said, ``In vain shall they, who deserve punishment, fortify or shut up themselves; for this curse, which I send forth, shall come to each individual, and

with him it shall remain.'' We know that hypocrites so flatter themselves, as though they could escape for the moment while God is angry and displeased; but the Prophet shows here that vain is such a hope, for the curse would overtake all the ungodly, and wholly overthrow them; yea, it would consume their houses, both the wood and the stones. In short, he intimates, that punishment ends not until men are reconciled to God. And by these words he reminds us how terrible it is to fall into the hands of God, for he will punish the ungodly and the wicked until he reduces them to nothing. We now then comprehend the design of the Prophet and the meaning of the words. It now follows ---

Zechariah 5:5-8

5. Then the angel that talked with me went forth, and said unto me, Lift up now thine eyes, and see what is this that goeth forth.

5. Et egressus est angelus, qui loquebatur mecum, et dixit mihi, Tolle nunc oculos tuos, et aspice quidnam sit illud quod egreditur.

6. And I said, What is it? And he said, This is an ephah that goeth forth. He said moreover, This is their resemblance through all the earth.

6. Et dixi, Quid hoc? et dixit, Hoc modius egrediens (id est, hoc quod egreditur est modius, ad verbum.) Et dixit, Hic oculus eorum in tota terra.

7. And, behold, there was lifted up a talent of lead: and this is a woman that sitteth in the midst of the ephah.

7. Et ecce massa plana plumbi ferebatur (vertunt alii, talentum; et [{כבר}] significat talentum, et significat planitiam etiam Hebrais; ideo non dubito, quin Propheta intelligat lamaniam plumbi, vel massam planam et contusan malleo, ita ut faceret totum operculum, une planque, ut icinus lingua nostra;) et hoc mulier una habitans in medio modii.

8. And he said, This is wickedness. And he cast it into the midst of the ephah; and he cast the weight of lead upon the mouth thereof.

8. Et dixit, Haec est impietas, et projecit eam in medium modii, et projecit lapidem plumbi (vel, pondus; id est, massam illam extentam instar operculi; projecit ergo) super os ejus (id est, super os modii.)

Here I stop; I intended to add all the verses, but I can hardly finish the whole today. It will be enough for us to understand that this is the second part of the vision, in which the Prophet, in order to relieve or in some measure to mitigate the sorrow of the Jews, shows, that God would not treat them with extreme rigor, so as to punish them as they deserved, but would chastise them with paternal moderation. Hence he says, that a measure appeared to him and a woman in the measure. The woman was wickedness; [210] there was also a covering of lead, a wide or an extended piece. The plate of lead was borne upwards when the woman was seen in the measure. He then says, that the measure was closed up, and that there impiety was kept hid as a

[210] Impietas; [{הרשעה}] rendered ``wickedness'' in our version, and by Newcome and Henderson; ``the wicked one,'' by Blayney; and [{ανομια}]---lawlessness, by the Septuagint. It is a general term, which means what is unjust, wrong, wicked or sinful, everything contrary to the will and command of God. Leigh renders the adjective ``Ungodly, lewd, turbelent, wavering, irreligious towards God, debauched in morals, turbelent in the commonwealth, unsettled in all things.'' So the noun here may be regarded as including sin universally, as committed against God and man. But Henderson thinks, and perhaps not without reason, that idolatry is what is especially intended, as the article [{ה}] is prefixed; and this had been the chief sin or wickedness of the people, the mother of many other sins: and this was certainly removed from the people after the Babylonian captivity, as they had never been since guilty of idolatry, though of many other sins.---Ed.

captive in prison. He afterwards adds, that it was driven away into the land of Shinar, very far from Judea, and that wickedness was thus turned over to the enemies of the chosen people.

We see that God, as I have already noticed, gives here a token of favor; for he says that wickedness was shut up in a measure. Though then he had spoken hitherto severely, that he might shake the Jews with dread, it was yet his purpose soon to add some alleviation: for it was enough that they were proved guilty of their sins, that they might humble themselves and suppliantly flee to God's mercy, and also that repentance might really touch them, lest they should murmur, as we know they had done, but submit themselves to God and confess that they had suffered justly. Since then the angel had already shown that the curse had deservedly gone over the face of the whole land, because no corner was free from wickedness, the angel now adds, that he came to show a new vision, Raise, he says, now thine eyes, and see what this is which goes forth. The Prophet was no doubt cast down with fear, so that he hardly dared to look any longer. As then the curse was flying and passing freely here and there, the Prophet was struck with horror, and not without reason, since he beheld the wrath of God spreading everywhere indiscriminately. This is the reason why the angel now animates him and bids him to see what was going forth. And he tells what was exhibited to him, for he saw a measure; which in Hebrew is {איפה}, aiphe: [211] and some render it measure or bushel; others, firkin or cask; but in this there is no difference. When the Prophet saw this measure, he asked the angel what it was: for the vision would have been useless, had he not been informed what the measure and the woman sitting in it signified, and also the lead covering. He therefore asked what they were.

Then the angel answered, This is the measure that goes forth, and this is their eye in all the earth. By saying that the measure is their eye, he no doubt means that the ungodly could not thus be carried away at their own pleasure, but that God restrained them whenever it seemed good to him; for they could not escape his sight. For by their eyes he understands passively the power of seeing in God, by which he notices all the sins of the ungodly, that he may check them when he pleases, when they hurry on without restraint. [212]

But that the meaning of the Prophet may be made more clear, let us first see what wickedness means, --- whether it is to be taken for those sins which provoked God's wrath against the Jews, --- or whether for those wrongs which heathen enemies had done. The last is the view I prefer, though if we take it for the wickedness which had previously reigned in Judea, the meaning would not be unsuitable. For as wickedness is hateful to God, his vengeance against the Jews could not have ceased except by cleansing them from their sins, and by renewing them by his Spirit. For they had

[211] It is translated "[{μετρόν}]---measure," by the Septuagint, and ``modius---a bushel,'' by Grotius; and he says that an ephah was a measure nearly the size of a bushel.---Ed.

[212] Respecting this "eye" there are various opinions. Newcome and Blayney follow the Septuagint and the Syriac, and render it, "their iniquity," [{עונם}]; the difference being only of a vau instead of a iod; and there is one MS. in which it is so found. Then the sentence would be ``This is their iniquity in all the land.'' But Castalio, Grotius, Dathius, and Henderson follow the received text, only they give to [{עין}] a similar meaning to that of our version, --- form, appearance, resemblance, or emblem, that is, what is seen, what the eye observes; and this sense it evidently has in Leviticus 13:55; Numbers 11:7; Proverbs 23:31; Ezekiel 1:4,7,16. ``The meaning is,'' says Grotius, ``that which thou seest symbolizes those things which the Jews have done and which they have suffered.''---Ed.

carried on war with him in such a way, that there was no means of pacifying him but by departing from their sins. And whenever God reconciles himself to melt, he at the same time renews them by his Spirit; he not only blots out their sins, as to the guilt, but also regenerates those who were before devoted to sin and the devil, so that he may treat them kindly and paternally.

With regard then to the subject in hand, both views may be suitably adopted. We may consider the meaning to be, --- that God would take away iniquity from Judea by cleansing his Church from all defilements, since the Jews could not partake of his blessing except iniquity were driven afar off and banished. As God then designed to be propitious to his people, he justly says, that he would cause wickedness to disappear from the midst of them. Yet the other view, as I have said, is more agreeable to the context, --- that wickedness would not be allowed freely to prevail as before; for we know that loose reins had been given to the cruelty of their enemies, inasmuch as the Jews had been exposed to the wrongs of all. As then they had been so immoderately oppressed, God promises that all unjust violence should be driven afar off and made to depart into the land of Shinar, that is, that the Lord would in turn chastise the Babylonians and reward them as they had deserved. The import of the whole is, that God, who had chosen the seed of Abraham, would be propitious to the Jews, so as to put an slid at length to their calamities.

Now the Prophet says that wickedness, when first seen, was in mid air, and in a measure; but at the same time he calls the measure the eye of the ungodly, for though wickedness extends itself to all parts, yet God confines it within a hidden measure; and this he designates by eyes, whereby he seems to allude to a former prophecy, which we have explained. For he had said that there were seven eyes in the stone of the high priest, because God would carry on by his providence the building of the temple. So also he says, that God's eyes are upon all the ungodly, according to what is said in the book of Psalms ---

``The eyes of the Lord are over the wicked, to destroy their memory from the earth.''
(Psalm 34:17.)

And this mode of speaking often occurs in Scripture. The meaning then is, that though wickedness spreads and extends through the whole earth, it is yet in a measure; but this measure is not always closed up. However this may be, still God knows how to regulate all things, so that impiety shall not exceed its limits. And this is most true, whatever view may be taken; for when enemies harass the church, though they may be carried along in the air, that is, though God may not immediately restrain their wrongs, they yet sit in a measure, and are ruled by the eyes of God, so that they cannot move a finger, except so far as they are permitted. Let us in a word know, that in a state of things wholly disordered, God watches, and his eyes are vigilant, in order to put an end to injuries. The same also may be said when God gives up to a reprobate mind those who deserve such a punishment; for though he cast them away, and Satan takes possession of them, yet this remains true --- that they sit in a measure. They are not indeed shut in; but we ought not, as I have said, to suppose that God is indifferent in heaven, or that sins prevail in the world, as though he did

not see them; for his connivance is not blindness. The eyes of God then mark and observe whatever sins are done in the world.

Now the angel adds, that a thin piece of lead was cast over the mouth of the measure, and that wickedness was cast into the measure. The expression, that wickedness was thrown into the measure, may be explained in two ways --- either that God would not permit so much liberty to the devil to lead the Jews to sin as before; for how comes it that men abandon themselves to every evil, except that God forsakes them, and at the same time delivers them up to Satan, that he may exercise his tyranny over them? or, that a bridle would be used to restrain foreign enemies, that they might not in their wantonness oppress the miserable people, and exercise extreme violence. God, then, intending to deliver them from their sins, or to check wrongs, shuts up wickedness, as it were, in a measure; and then he adds a cover; and it is said to have been a thin piece, or a weight of lead, because it was heavy; as though the Prophet had said, that whenever it pleased God iniquity would be taken captive, so that it could not go forth from its confinement or its prison. It afterwards follows ---

Zechariah 5:9-11

9. Then lifted I up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came out two women, and the wind was in their wings; for they had wings like the wings of a stork: and they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heaven.

9. Et extuli oculos meos et aspexi, et ecce duae mulieres egressae, et Spiritus erat in alis ipsarum, et ipsis alae erant quasi alae milvi (alii vertunt, ciconiam; et mihi magis placet, quanquam parum est momenti;) et extulerunt modium inter terram et inter coelum.

10. Then said I to the angel that talked with me, Whither do these bear the ephah?

10. Et dixi angelo qui loquebatur mecum, Quonam istae deferunt modium?

11. And he said unto me, To build it an house in the land of Shinar: and it shall be established, and set there upon her own base.

11. Et dixit mihi, Ad aedificandum ei domum in terra Sinear; et statuetur et stabilietur illic super basim suam. (Ego potero absolvere paucis verbis hoc vaticinum.)

The Prophet says here that such would be the change of things, that God would in turn afflict the Chaldeans, who had so cruelly treated the chosen people. And this is the reason why I think that iniquity is to be taken for the violent injustice and plunder which heathen enemies had exercised towards the Jews. For when he says that a house would be for iniquity in the land of Shinar, it is as though he had said, ``as Judea has been for a long time plundered by enemies, and has been exposed to their outrages, so the Chaldeans in their turn shall be punished, not once, nor for a short time, but perpetually; for God will fix a habitation for wickedness in their land.'' We hence see the design of the vision, that is, that when God had mercy on his Church its enemies would have to render an account, and that they would not escape God's hand, though he had employed them to chastise his people.

He says then, that wickedness was taken away, that a house might be made for it, that is, that it might have a fixed and permanent dwelling in the land of Shinar, which means among the Chaldeans, who had been inveterate enemies to the Jews; and as

Babylon was the metropolis of that empire, he includes under it all the ungodly who opposed or persecuted the children of God. Why God represents the measure as carried away by women rather than by men does not appear to me, except it was that the Jews might know that there was no need of any warlike preparations, but that their strongest enemies could be laid prostrate by weak and feeble instruments; and thus under the form of weakness his own power would be made evident. The Prophet saw women with wings, because sudden would be the change, so that in one day, as we shall presently see, wickedness was taken away. By the wings of a stork either celerity or strength is indicated. This is the sum of the whole. [213]

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou threatens us with severe punishment to restrain us from sin, we may regard thy judgment, and not abuse thy long-suffering in sparing us for a time; and also that, whenever thou chastises us, we may seriously consider that we deserve thy displeasure, as we have in various ways provoked thy wrath: and may we not at the same time despair or be broken down, but learn so to recomb on thy mercy as not to doubt but that there will be a seasonable end to our evils, and that thou wilt not only mitigate the rigor of punishment as far as necessary for our comfort, but wilt also punish our enemies, so that we may know that nothing is better for us, or more desirable, than to be chastised by thy hand, not that thou mayest destroy us, but recall us to the way of salvation, until we be at length made capable of receiving that favor which has been laid up for us in heaven, through Jesus Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Chapter 6

Lecture One Hundred and Forty-fourth

[213] Henry, Marckius, and Scott, and also Newcome, take a different view of this vision, and consider it as symbolizing the final destruction of the Jews by the Romans. The woman, according to them, represents the apostate people, the two women who carried the measure the Roman armies, the land of Shinar the land of their dispersion, so called on account of their first captivity. Henderson regards the vision as symbolic of the banishment of the sin of idolatry from the land of Israel. “In this striking hieroglyphic,” he says, “we are taught how idolatry, with all its accompanying atrocities, was removed from the land of the Hebrews, which it had desecrated, to a country devoted to it, and where it was to commingle with its native elements, never to be reimported into Canaan. How exactly has the prediction been fulfilled! From the time of the captivity to the present, a period of more than 2000 years, the Hebrewpeople have never once lapsed into idolatry!” This seems to be the most satisfactory view; and I would adopt the reading of the Septuagint and the Syriac, taking [{[{עונם to be ,[{עונם] not ``their eye,'' or, ``their appearance,'' but ``their iniquity,'' and I would render verse 8 somewhat different from others, as having been spoken by the angel while he was casting the woman into the ephah. I give the following version of the sixth, seventh, and eighth verses,--- 6. And I said, ``What is it?'' And he said, ``This is an ephah that is going forth:'' he said also, ``That (pointing to a woman) 7. is their iniquity through the whole land. And, behold, a talent of lead was lifted up, and a woman was sitting in the midst of the ephah: and he said, ``This is the wicked one,'' when he cast her into the midst of the ephah, and cast the leaden weight on its mouth. ``What is it?'' signifies here, What does it mean? for the Prophet of course knew it to be an ephah. [{זאת}] repeated is to be rendered ``this'' and ``that.'' See 1 Kings 3:23. The ``two women'' who carried away the ephah were probably, as Newcome observes, ``mere agents in the symbolic vision,'' not designed to set forth anything in particular; but Grotius and Henderson think that they designated the Assyrian and the Babylonian powers, through whom idolatry had been removed from the land of Canaan.---Ed.

Zechariah 6

Zechariah 6:1-3

1. And I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came four chariots out from between two mountains; and the mountains were mountains of brass.

1. Et conversus sum, et levavi oculos meos, et aspexi; et ecce quatuor quadrigae egressae e mdio duorum montium; et montes illi, montes aenei.

2. In the first chariot were red horses; and in the second chariot black horses;

2. In quadriga prima equi rufi, et in quadriga secunda equi nigri,

3. And in the third chariot white horses; and in the fourth chariot grisled and bay horses.

3. Et in quiadriga tertia equi albi, et in quadriga quarta equi grandinei. (vel, varii; {מיצומא} robusti, sed potius subscribo eorum sententiae qui vertunt subrufos.)

Here we have another vision; and the Prophet distinguishes it from the former visions by saying, that he turned, as though he had said, that there had been some intervening time. They were not then continued visions, but he turned himself elsewhere, and then he raised up his eyes, and the Lord revealed to him what he now relates. But as the vision is obscure, interpreters have given it different meanings. They who think that the four Gospels are designated by the four chariots, give a very frigid view. I have elsewhere reminded you, that we are to avoid these futile refinements which of themselves vanish away. Allegories, I know, delight many; but we ought reverently and soberly to interpret the prophetic writings, and not to fly in the clouds, but ever to fix our foot on solid ground. Others think that those changes are meant which we know happened in Chaldea and Assyria. As Nineveh was overthrown that Babylon might be the seat of the empire, they suppose that this is meant by the first chariot, the horses of which were red. Then they think that the Persian empire is intended by the second chariot, as the Jews had at the beginning suffered many grievous evils. Afterwards by the white horses are signified, as they suppose,

the Macedonian power, as Alexander treated the Jews with humanity and kindness. By the fourth chariot they understand the Roman Empire, and think that the horses are of different colors, because some of the Caesars raged cruelly against the Jews and the Church of God, and some of them showed more lenity. [214] But I know not whether these things are well founded.

We see that the fourth chariot went to the south, and wandered through various regions, and almost through the whole world. As then this cannot be applied to Chaldea, the simpler view seems to be --- that the four chariots signify the various changes which happened not only in Chaldea and among the Babylonians, but also in Judea and among other nations: and this may be easily gathered from the context. But as all these things cannot be stated at the same time, we shall treat them in the order in which the Prophet relates them. I shall now repeat what I have elsewhere said respecting the words, that he raised up his eyes, as intimating the divine authority of what is predicted. The words indeed signify that he did not bring forward what he had vainly imagined, nor adduce tales which he had himself fabricated, but he was attentive to what was revealed to him; and also that he was somewhat separated from common life in order to be an interpreter between God and men. Hence authority is here ascribed to the prophecy, as Zechariah did not come forth to speak of uncertain things, but as one sent by heaven, for he delivered nothing but what he had received from above.

He now says, that four chariots appeared to him, which came forth from mountains, and that the two mountains where the chariots were seen were mountains of brass. The Prophet no doubt understood by these mountains the providence of God, or his hidden counsel, by which all things have been decreed before the creation of the world; and hence he says, that they were mountains of brass, as they could not be broken. The poets say, that fate is unavoidable (ineluctable); but as this sentiment is profane, it is enough for us to understand it of God's eternal providence, which is immutable. And here is most fitly described to us the counsel of God; for before things break forth into action they are inclosed as it were between the narrow passes of mountains, inasmuch as what God has decreed is not apparent, but lies hid as it were in deep mountains. Hence we then begin to acknowledge the counsel of God when experience teaches us, that what was previously hid from us has been in this or in that manner decreed. But it was not in vain that Zechariah adds, that they were mountains of brass; it was to teach us that God's counsel is not changeable as foolish men imagine, who think that God is doubtful as to the issue, and is, as it

[214] This is the view taken by Jerome, Cyril, Kimchi, Newcome, Blayney, and also by Grotius and Parkhurst, only that they consider the fourth chariot to represent, not the Romans, but the Syrians and Egyptians. See Parkhurst's Lex., under [{.[{אמף Henderson confines all the chariots to the Medes and Persians, as referring to various changes and events until the reduction of Egypt by Xerxes, ``the south country'' being that land. The basis of every view which may be taken of the chariots, as Marckius justly observes, must be the interpretation given by the angel in verse 5; which some translate, ``these are the four spirits of the heavens,'' that is, angels, as in our version, followed by Newcome and Henderson; and others, such as Marckius and Blayney, ``these are the four winds of heaven;'' winds being rendered as a metaphorical expression for God's judgments. See Jeremiah 49:36; Revelation 7:1-3; and also Psalm 148:8 These are the only two renderings of which the words are capable; and the first seems the most appropriate. That God employs angels to execute his purpose both of mercy and of judgment, is a doctrine often taught in Scripture. See Psalm 104:4; Ezekiel 1:6; 23:24; Daniel 7:10; 10:21; Hebrews 1:7, 14. That angels are intended is the view taken by Piscator, Drusius, Henry, Scott, Newcome, and Henderson. It may be said, the chariots represented God's purposes; the horses, the angels, and their different colors, the different works which they had to execute. See Revelation 6:1-8. ``The mountains of brss'' designate, as Calvin, Blayney, and many others think, ``the firm and unalterable decrees of the Almighty.---Ed.

were, kept in suspense: for according to their notions, events depend on the free-will of men. They entertain the idea that God foreknows what is to come conditionally: as this or that will not be, except it shall please men. And though they confess not that God is changeable, yet we gather from their dotages that there is in God nothing sure and certain. The Prophet therefore says here, that they were mountains of brass, because God has fixed before all ages what he has purposed to be done, and thus fixed it by an immutable decree, which cannot be broken by Satan, nor by the whole world.

We hence see how suitable is this representation when the Prophet says, that chariots went forth from mountains.

With regard to the chariots, we have seen elsewhere that angels are compared to horsemen; for these ride swiftly as it were through the whole world to execute what God commands them: so also whatever changes take place, they are called the chariots of God; for either angels are ready at hand to do anything in obedience to God, or the very events themselves are God's chariots, that is, they are as it were swift heralds, who announce to us what was before unknown. Let us then know that all fortuitous events, as they are called by the unbelieving, are God's chariots, are his messengers, who declare and proclaim what was before concealed from us. And there is not in this similitude or metaphor anything strained.

As to the color of the horses, interpreters, as I have already intimated, have toiled with great anxiety; and though I venture not to assert anything as certain, yet the probable conjecture is, that by the black and white horses are designated the Babylonians rather than the Persians, but for a purpose different from what interpreters have thought. For the reference must be to the Jews, when it is said, that black horses and then white horses went forth towards Babylon; for the Holy Spirit intimates, that liberty was given to the Chaldeans to harass the Jews and to fill all places with darkness. The blackness then of which the Prophet speaks signifies the calamities brought on the Jews. The whole of that time was dark, full of grief and sorrow, during which the Chaldeans possessed the oriental empire, and Babylon was the supreme seat of government or of the monarchy. A very different time afterwards succeeded, when the Babylonians were conquered and the Persian enjoyed the oriental empire. The color then was white, for the favor of God shone anew on the Jews, and liberty was immediately given then to return to their own country. We hence see that the Prophet rightly subjoins, that the color of the horses was white; for such was the favor shown to the Jews by the Persian, that the sun of joy arose on them, which exhilarated their hearts. But the Prophet makes no mention of the first chariot as going forth, and for this reason, as interpreters think, because the empire of Babylon was shell overthrown. But they are mistaken in this, as I have already hinted, because they refer not the colors to the state of God's Church. Hence the Prophet, I doubt not, designedly omits the mention of the going forth of the first chariot, because the Jews had experienced the riding of God's judgment in their own land, for they had been severely afflicted. As God then is wont to execute his judgment first on his own household, and as it is written, ``judgment begins at his own house,'' (1 Peter 4:17,) so he purposed to observe the same order in this case, that

is, to chastise the sins of the chosen people before he passed over to the Chaldeans and other nations.

As to the last chariot, the Prophet says, that it went forth toward the south, and then it went elsewhere, and even through the whole world, for God had so permitted.

Now as to the meaning of this Prophecy nothing will remain obscure, if we hold these elements of truth --- that all events are designated by the chariots, or all the revolutions which take place in the world --- and that the blind power of fortune does not rule, as fools imagine, but that God thus openly makes known to us his own counsel. And why the horses are said to have been, some red, some black, some white, and some somewhat red, [215] the plain answer is this --- because God had sent forth his chariots over Judea, which was full of blood: by this then is meant the red color. But he shows also, that their enemies would have their time, and this had been in part fulfilled; for God had ridden over them with his chariots, having driven his wheels over their land when Nineveh was overthrown. And though the Spirit had not simply a reference to the Assyrians or the Chaldeans, as though he meant by the black color to designate the wars carried on among then, but rather the calamities brought by them on the Jews, yet I consider the black color to mean in general the terrible disturbances which took place through the whole of the least; and the Jews could not expect anything agreeable from that quarter, for shortly after a heavier weight fell on their heads. But in the third place the Prophet adds, that there were white horses, that is, when the time was accomplished in which God intended to deliver his Church.

But he says, that the chariots not only went forth to the East, or to Babylon; but he says, that they also ran through the south, and then visited the whole world. That we may more fully understand this, we must regard the design of the Prophet. He meant here, no doubt, to bring some comfort to the Jews, that they might not succumb under their evils, however sharply God might chastise them. And Zechariah sets before them here two things --- first, that no part of the earth, or no country, would be exempt from God's judgments, for his chariots would pass through all lands; and secondly, that though the chariots of God, terrible in their appearance on account of the black and red color, had visited Judea as well as the north, yet the time had already come in which God, having been pacified, would change the state of things; and therefore, in the third place, he sets before them another color; for God's chariot had been sent forth through Judea, and then God's vengeance had visited Nineveh, and afterwards Babylon: only this had rested, because it had been already in part fulfilled, for God had removed the darkness and brought sunshine to the Jews, and that from Chaldea, inasmuch as the Persian, who then possessed the empire, had

[215] There are two words to designate the character of the horses belonging to the fourth chariot. The first is commonly rendered “grisled” or spotted, and by Henderson, “piebald:” and the second word is translated “bay” in our version and by Newcome; “grey,” by Henderson; and “strong” in the Vulgate, and by Jerome, Dathius, and Blayney. Strong, vigorous, robust, is its common meaning, and in no other instance it is found to designate a color. The Septuagint and the Targum have given it this sense; and it is rendered by the former, “particolored—[{ψαρους}],'' the color of a starling, and by the latter, ``ash-color---cinereos.'' But there is no need in this case to depart from the ordinary meaning of the word, strong, robust; these horses being different from the others not only in color, but also in strength. The rendering of Aquila is ``[{κραταιοί}]---strong.'' Marckius would apply this term to all the horses, as it stands without a conjunction; but this cannot be, for in verse 7th ``the strong ones'' are evidently the same with the speckled or ``the grisled ones'' at the end of the 6th verse.---Ed.

begun to treat the Jews with kindness. It now follows ---

Zechariah 6:4, 5

4. Then I answered and said unto the angel that talked with me, What are these, my lord?

4. Et respondi et dixi ad Angelum, qui loquebatur mecum, Quid haec sunt, Domine mi?

5. And the angel answered and said unto me, These are the four spirits of the heavens, which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth.

5. Et respondi Angelus et dixit mihi, Hi quatuor spiritus sunt coelorum, egredientes e statione apud dominatorem cunctae terrae, (alii vertunt, Hi, vel, hae quadrigae, ad quatuor ventos coelorum egrediuntur e loco ubi stant apud dominatorem, etc.)

The Prophet asks the angel again; and by his example we are taught to shake off every indifference, and to render ourselves both teachable and attentive to God if we desire to make progress in the knowledge of these predictions; for if Zechariah, who had separated himself from the world and raised up his eyes and his mind to heaven, stood in need of the teaching and guidance of the angel to instruct him, how much folly and arrogance is it in us to trust in ourselves and to despise the gift of interpretation. But as angels are not sent to us from heaven to explain to us the prophecies, let us avail ourselves of those helps which we know is offered to us by God. There is here prescribed to us both docility, and reverence, and attention. Let us also remember, that as soon as men submit themselves to God, the gift of revelation is prepared for them; for it is not in vain that God is often called the teacher of babes. Whosoever then shall be disposed to learn with real meekness and humility, shall not be disappointed of his desire; for we see here that the angel performed his part in teaching Zechariah.

I come now to the words, The angel answered, These are four spirits, etc. Some give another rendering, These chariots go forth to the four winds, or parts of heaven; but this is forced, and the words simply mean, ``these are four spirits.'' The word spirit, I have no doubt, has led interpreters astray, for they have thought it frigid to call different events winds or quarters of the world. But I take this word in a different sense, that is, as designating the impulses of God. I do not then understand them to be four winds, but the secret emotions produced by God. Though God's Spirit is one, yet all actions proceed from him, and whatever is done in the world can with no impropriety be attributed to his Spirit. It is yet certain, that the Prophet alludes to the four quarters of the world, as though he had said, that nothing happens in the world which has not been decreed in heaven; for God's providence includes under it the whole world. Though then the universe is designated here, yet by the Spirit the Prophet means those secret movements which proceed from the eternal counsel and providence of God. And it is a very apt metaphor; for the word Spirit is set in opposition to fortune. We have already said, that profane men imagine that fortune possesses a blind power, but the Prophet says, that all revolutions seen in the world proceed from the Spirit of God, and that they are as it were his spirits or ambassadors.

We now then perceive the real meaning of the Prophet when the angel says, that these were the four spirits of heaven. And the word heaven is by no means added in vain, for the Prophet seems here to exclude all other causes, so that sovereignty might remain with God only. For though God works often by instruments, or intermediate causes, as they say, yet his own hidden decree ought to be placed first. This is the reason why he says that they were the spirits of heaven; he says it, that we may not think that God is dependent on the will of men, or is blended with the intervening causes, but that he himself has fixed whatever he has in his good pleasure determined. We hence see, that they who render the words, ``into the four parts of heaven,'' have not sufficiently considered the intention of the Prophet.

He then says, that they went forth from their station before the Lord of the whole earth. Now the Prophet calls that space between the two mountains of brass their station before God. Let us hence know that God does not adopt suddenly new counsels, and that he is not like us who, in emergencies or on occasions unlooked for, attempt this and then that; but that his course is very different, and that things in heaven do not revolve up and down, for the chariots here had a fixed and undisturbed station. For though they were chariots capable of moving quickly, they yet remained still and, as it were, fixed, until God permitted their going forth. We hence learn that when God seems to us to rest, he does not sit idly in heaven, as ungodly men foolishly talk, but that he there determines whatever he intends at a suitable time to do. And then when he says, that the chariots stood before God, we may hence conclude, that what seems to be contingently to us is fixed in God's counsel, so that there is a necessity at the same time. How comes it, that the greater part of mankind think that all things are contingent, except that they continue looking at nature only? The will of man is changeable; then changeable is everything that proceeds from the will of man. The tree also either becomes scorched through heat, or dies through cold, or brings forth fruit. They hence conclude that everything is contingent, for there appears to be a changeable variety. When men thus judge of things by nature alone, it is no wonder that they think that contingency reigns in the world. But the Prophet distinguishes here between the things of nature and the counsel of God; for he says, that the chariots stood, and went forth when God commanded them. Was there no motion in the wheels? nay, the chariots were from the first ready to move, how was it then that they rested? even because they were detained by the secret purpose of God. Now when he sends them forth they show that celerity which was naturally in them. We hence clearly learn, that those things happen by nature which seem capable of being done in two ways, and that yet the

[216] Provided we adopt [{,[{ו countenanced by several MSS., and the Syriac, instead of [{כ}] in the received text, that is before the number ``four,'' this explanation is the most satisfactory. But if we take the received text, countenanced by a greater number of MSS., there will be another meaning to the sentence. Henderson's version is --- For as the four winds of heaven Have I spread you abroad, saith Jehovah. But its connection with the foregoing he does not clearly print. The view taken by Drusius, followed by Grotius and Marckius, seems most satisfactory. They take the verb [{פרש}] in the sense of expanding, enlarging, setting at liberty, and that the reference is to the previous liberty granted to the Jews; and thus the connection with the foregoing line is obvious and natural --- He! He! Flee now from the land of the north, saith Jehovah; For as the four winds of heaven Have I expounded you, (or set you free,) saith Jehovah. They had been allowed liberty to go to any part of the world, which is signified by the four winds. The next verse is --- He! Sion, escape, Thou who dwellest with the daughter of Babylon. The two nations are compared to two women, dwelling one with another. --- Ed.

counsel of God is always fulfilled, so that immutable necessity presides, which is at the same time hid from us. The Prophet adds, that the first chariot had red horses. I have now explained the whole of this: what is subjoined remains ---

Zechariah 6:6, 7

6. The black horses which are therein go forth into the north country; and the white go forth after them; and the grisled go forth toward the south country.

6. In qua sunt equi nigri, exeunt ad terram Aquilonis, et albi exeunt post eos, et variegati, (aspersi vario colore,) exunt ad terram Australem.

7. And the bay went forth, and sought to go that they might walk to and fro through the earth: and he said, Get you hence, walk to and fro through the earth. So they walked to and fro through the earth.

7. Et subrufi (dicam iterum de voce) exierunt, et postularunt ut perambularent in terra: et dixit, Ite, perambulate in terra; et pereambularunt in terra.

Zechariah explains here each part of the prophecy; but he shows at the same time that two of the chariots hastened towards Chaldea, that it might not be grievous to the Jews that they in the first place had to experience God's judgment. He then shows that God sent his messengers to all parts; but that there had been, or were to be, remarkable and extraordinary changes, especially among the Babylonians. It hence appeared evident, that God had a care for his own people, who had been driven there into exile. And I leave already stated the reason why he speaks here of red horses; for they are mistaken who think that the first chariot was sent into Chaldea; for I consider that this refers to the Jews, with whom God's judgment commenced. He then says, that two chariots went towards Babylon, the first was drawn by black horses, and the other by white, because of the kindness shown by the Persian, by whom a new light of joy was brought to the Jews.

With regard to the land of the south, the Prophet no doubt alludes to the Egyptians. But he afterwards adds, that the last chariot was conveyed elsewhere, even through the whole world. Some render {אמוצים}, amustim, strong; and this is the proper meaning of the word, for {אמץ}, amets, properly means to fortify, to strengthen; but as color is intended here, it seems probable to me that it means somewhat red, as some of the Rabbis teach us; for the Prophet mentioned another word before, {ברדים}, beredim, grilled. Hence some interpreters join together the two, and say that the horses were grisled, or spotted like hail, and then that they were {אמוצים}, amutsim, somewhat red. Jerome seems to me to have sufficiently refuted this opinion, because the other horses were {אדמים}, ademim, red, but these were of different colors. And further, it can hardly be suitable to say, that these alone were strong horses who drew this chariot; for we know that God so wonderfully exercised his power against the Chaldeans that two chariots went forth to them, and they would not have been drawn by weak and feeble horses. I hence think that their color is here designated, and the Prophet calls them once grilled, and then somewhat red.

But he says, that being not satisfied with the land of the south, they asked of God permission to go to and fro through the whole world. And though neither the devil nor the wicked regard God's bidding, but are led, without knowing and against their will, wherever God drives them; yet the Prophet says, that they asked; for they

could not overstep the limits prescribed to them. Though Satan asked, as to Job, to be allowed to do this and that, we are not yet too curiously to inquire whether Satan asks leave of God whenever he intends to attempt anything; for there is no doubt but that he is carried away by his violent rage to try in every way to overturn the government of God. But this only ought to satisfy us --- that neither Satan nor the wicked can advance one inch, except as God permits them. The meaning then is, that after the last chariot went forth first to the land of the south, a permission was given to it to go through the whole world. He now adds ---

Zechariah 6:8

8. Then cried he upon me, and spake unto me, saying, Behold, these that go toward the north country have quieted my spirit in the north country.

8. Et vocavit me et locutus est mecum, dicendo, Vide, qui egrediuntur ad terram Aquilonis quiescere fecerunt spiritum meum in terra Aquilonis.

From this verse we learn that the chief object of the vision was --- that the Jews might know that the dreadful tumults in Chaldea, which had in part happened, and were yet to take place, were not excited without a design, but that all things were regulated by God's hidden counsel, and also that God had so disturbed and embarrassed the state of that empire, that the end of it might be looked for. There is therefore no reason for any one too anxiously to labor to understand the import of every part of the prophecy, since its general meaning is evident. But why does the angel expressly speak of the land of the south rather than of the land of the north, or of the whole world? Even because the eyes of all were fixed on that quarter; for Chaldea, we know, had been as it were the grave of the Church, whence the remnant had emerged, that there might be some people by whom God might be worshipped. The angel then invites the Jews here to consider the providence of God, so that they might know that whatever changes had taken place in that country, had proceeded from the hidden counsel of God.

The words, they have quieted my spirit, are understood by interpreters in two ways. Some think that God's favor towards his people is here designated, as though he had said, that he was already pacified; but others, by the word spirit, understand the vengeance of God, because he had sufficiently poured forth his wrath on the Chaldeans; and both meanings are well adapted to the context. For it was no common solace to the Jews, that God had poured forth his wrath on the Babylonians until it was satiated, as when one ceases not to be angry until he has fulfilled his desire, and this mode of speaking often occurs in Scripture. I am therefore disposed to embrace the second explanation --- that God began to be quieted after the second chariot had gone forth; for he was then reconciled to his chosen people, and their deliverance immediately followed. That the Jews might know that God would be propitious to them, he bids them to continue quiet and undisturbed in their minds, until these chariots had run their course through the whole of Chaldea; for what the angel now says would be fulfilled, even that the Spirit of God would be quieted, who seemed before to be disturbed, when he involved all things in darkness, even in Judea itself. [217]

[217] Grotius, Dathius, Newcome, and Henderson agree in the view given by Calvin, regarding

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that since we are here exposed to so many evils, which often suddenly arise like violent tempests, --- O grant, that with hearts raised up to heaven, we may acquiesce in thy hidden providence, and be so tossed here and there according to the judgment of our flesh, as yet to remain fixed in this truth, which thou wouldest have us to believe --- that all things are governed by thee, and that nothing takes place except through thy will, so that in the greatest confusions we may always clearly see thine hand, and that thy counsel is altogether right, and perfectly and singularly wise and just; and may we ever call upon thee, and flee to this port --- that we are tossed here and there, that thou mayest ever sustain us by thine hand, until we shall at length be received into that blessed rest which has been procured for us by the blood of thine only-begotten Son. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Forty-fifth

Zechariah 6:9-11

9. And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

9. Et fuit sermo Iehovae ad me, dicendo,

10. Take of them of the captivity, even of Heldai, of Tobijah, and of Jedaiah, which are come from Babylon, and come thou the same day, and go into the house of Josiah the son of Zephaniah;

10. Sume ex transmigratione, nempe ab Heldai, et a Tobia, et a Jedaia; et vade tu die illo, inquam, ad domum Josiae filii Zephaniae, qui venerunt e Babylone;

11. Then take silver and gold, and make crowns, and set them upon the head of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest;

11. Et sume argentum et aurum, et fac coronas, et ponc super caput Iehosuae filii Iozedec, sacerdotis magni.

This vision was given to Zechariah that he might inspire weak minds with better hope; for the Jews found that they were hardly pressed on every side by their neighbors, inasmuch as enemies rose up against them before and behind, so that there was no end to their troubles. Hence they who had returned from exile thought themselves wretched in such a state of things. They might indeed have lived in quietness among the Babylonians, and they had become accustomed to that kind of life, so that exile was not so very grievous to them. Thus then the favor of God was turned unto loathing, and was almost hated by them; for they thought it better to be deprived of their country, than to be daily exposed to new assaults. And further, the possession of the land was not of itself desirable, except with reference to the hope given them; that is, because God had promised by his Prophets that the kingdom of David would again be made glorious, and also that the grandeur and glory of the temple would be greater than ever before. When the Jews found themselves continually harassed by their enemies, they thought that all that had been promised was in vain. There is therefore no doubt but that many complaints and many clamors

"spirit" here in the sense of wrath or vengeance. See Judges 8:3; Isaiah 33:11. But Marckius and Blayney render it "wind," as in verse 5th, in the sense of judgment. The latter renders the sentence thus — "See those that went forth against the north country have caused my wind to rest on the north country;" and he adds, "So [{[{רוח is used in Jeremiah 4:11,12; and [{הנוח}] signifies to cause to rest or abide, that is, to inflict. See Isaiah 30:32; Ezekiel 5:13; 24:13. And the same verb in Kal signifies to rest or settle upon, as a calamity doth. Exodus 10:14."---Ed.

were everywhere raised. Hence that they might cease thus to murmur against God, this vision was given to the Prophet, in which he is bid to take silver and gold from four men, and to make two crowns to be set on the head of Joshua the high priest. The design was to make the Jews to feel assured, that the state of the people would be as safe as it was formerly, when the kingly office and the priesthood flourished: for these were the chief ornaments, or the two eyes, as it were, of the body --- the priest, a mediator between God and men --- and the king, sustaining the person of God in governing the people.

We hence see that by the two crowns is set forth the restoration of the Church: but we must also observe that the two crowns are placed on the head of Joshua, which was new and unusual. A mitre, we know, was given to the priests; and we know also that kings were adorned with a diadem; but no one individual was to wear a royal diadem and a sacerdotal mitre. Here then we find a union of royalty and priesthood in the same person, which had never before been the case; for God had in his law made a distinction between the two offices. We hence see that something unknown before is set forth by this prophecy, even this, that the same person would be both a king and a priest. For what Jerome says, among other things, that there might have been many crowns, is weak and frivolous; and further, he contradicts the words of the Prophet; for shortly after he subjoins, that there would be a counsel of peace between the two; that is, between royalty and priesthood. As to what the same author thinks, that there was one crown given to the high priest, it is also false; besides, he subverts as far as he can the whole doctrine of the Prophet. But I leave these trifles; for there is no ambiguity in Zechariah's words when he says, that God commanded him to take silver and gold, that he might make two crowns to set on the head of the high priest. We now perceive the design of the Prophet as to the object of the prophecy, and also the meaning of the words.

Let us now inquire, why the Prophet was bid to take gold from four men; for he says, Take from the transmigration. The word {הגולה}, egule, is to be taken in a collective sense, as in many other places. Take then from the exiles, who have now returned from Babylon to their own country. But he afterwards mentions four men; and there is some abruptness in the passage, but nothing that obscures the meaning of the Prophet; for he says, Take frown Heldai, and from Tobiah, and from Jedaiah; and then he adds, go in that day, enter the house of Josiah, the son of Zephaniah. The Prophet no doubt had been commanded to go to these four, and to enter the house of one of them; and this is evident from the end of the tenth verse, where he says, who have come from Babylon [218] He had spoken only of Josiah the son

[218] It is better to take the following words as a paranthesis, “and go thou on that day, go even into the house of Josiah the son of Zephaniah;” then the whole paragraph might be thus rendered,— 10. Take from the exiles from Heldai, from Tobiah, and from Jedaiah, (and go thou on that day, go even into the house for Josiah the son of Zephaniah,) who have come from Babylon; 11. Yea, take from them silver and gold, and make a large (or, a double) crown, and set it on the head of Joshua, the son of Josedech, the high priest. The first part is rendered by Henderson as above, and according to Calvin’s translation; but Newcome and Blayney follow our version, which does not seem to be correct; for the first “Take” is repeated, an dthen what the Prophet was to take is mentioned, having previously named the persons from whom the silver and the gold was to be taken. As to the crown or crowns, various opinions have been entertained. The most consistent with the whole passage is that of Marckius, adopted by Hengstenberg and M‘Caul. He thinks that the plural here is used, as it is often in Hebrew, to express what is large,

of Zephaniah; and then he adds, that they had come from Babylon. I come now to the answer. Some interpreters think that these four men supplied the gold and the silver, because they were chief men among the people, and excelled others in piety. Hence they think that these four men were chosen, as a mark of distinction, to supply the gold and the silver to make the crowns: but I conjecture from the end of the chapter that their weakness is here pointed out, even because they were weak in faith and did not believe the promises of God, and thus disheartened others by their example. It is indeed certain that they were men in high authority, and excelled all others, so that the eyes of all were fixed on them; this is certain. But yet their want of faith is what is here reproved, because they did not attend sufficiently to God's promises, and thought themselves disappointed of their hope; for they had left Babylon, where they enjoyed great abundance, and returned to the holy land, and found it uncultivated and desolate. There was indeed required great patience, when they had to plow among thorns and brambles; for that land, as I have already said, had not been regularly cultivated. Those indeed who had been sent from the East, dwelt here and there in it; but lions and wild beasts had come into it, so that the desolation of the land rendered much work necessary, when the Jews returned. I hence doubt not but that the Holy Spirit does here reprove these four men, who ought to have been leaders and standard-bearers to others; on the contrary, they broke down the confidence of the common people. And this, I say, may be learnt from the end of the chapter, where God commands the two crowns to be placed in the temple, to be a memorial to them, that they might see there the condemnation of their unbelief, as we shall show in its place.

The Prophet is bid to set the two crowns on the head of the high priest. This, as I have said, was intended as a symbol to denote the union of the two dignities in the person of Christ. It was necessary until the coming of Christ to select the high priest from the posterity of Aaron; and it was also required that the kings should be from the seed of David; so that we observe a distinction between the royal office and the priesthood, not only as to the persons, but also as to the families. It would have indeed been a strange thing to see a king from the tribe of Levi; and it would have been contrary to God's appointed order to see a priest from the tribe of Judah and from the family of David. Since then the king was adorned with his own diadem, and since the high priest had his own proper mitre, what could this mean, but that the same man was to wear two crowns? Doubtless we observe that there is here some change in the past order of things, and that there is something unusual set forth. But there is nothing new in this, --- that the Redeemer, who had been promised, should be eminent as a king and a priest; for this had been predicted in the hundred and tenth Psalm, ``Jehovah said to my Lord, sit on my right hand,'' --- this is what belongs

splended, great, or extraordinary, according to the following examples: [{,[{שמחות gladnesses---great gladness, Psalm 45:15; ,[{חכמות] wisdoms---chief wisdom or true wisdom, Proverbs 1:20; ,[{חסדים] mercies---great mercy, Lamentations 3:22; ,[{מוצאת] goings forth---remarkable going forth, Micah 5:2. To which instances may be added these two: ,[{כהמות] beasts---a great beast, Psalm 73:22; and ,[{עגלות] calves---a great calf, Hosea 10:5. In confirmation of this we find the very word here used in its plural form rendered ``a crown'' in Job 31:36; and it is followed here, in verse 14, by a verb in the singular number. A large, or a splendid, or a double crown is evidently what is meant. Joshua had his sacerdotal mitre before, see Joshua 3:5; and around this was a crown of gold, not of silver, see Exodus 28:36; 39:30; but in the present instance there was to be silver as well as gold. It was therefore an extraordinary crown, and designed clearly to denote what was extraordinary---a priest ruling on a royal throne.---Ed.

to the right of a king; it afterwards follows, ``Thou art a priest for ever, according to the order of Melchizedec.'' Though kings must then have been chosen from the family of David and the tribe of Judah, and though priests must have then been taken from the Levitical tribe, yet the Spirit foretold, that a king would come who was to be a priest, as had been the case with Melchisedec. This very thing is what the Prophet now confirms.

Zechariah being ordered to set the crowns on the head of Joshua, we are not so to regard this, as though Joshua had immediately undertaken the two offices of a king and a priest; for he was satisfied with his own: but the Prophet shows in the type what was to be looked for at the coming of the Messiah; for the time had not yet come, when Christ should receive the royal diadem, as it is said in Ezekiel, ---

``Take away the diadem; set it aside, set it aside, set it aside, until he shall come, whose it is.'' (Ezekiel 21:26,27.)

We here see that the Prophet points out a length of time, during which the royal diadem was to be trodden as it were under foot. Though the royal crown had not yet laid in the dust sufficiently long, yet the Prophet did nothing presumptuously; for the Jews could not have conceived in their mind what is here promised, had not the typical priest come forth, wearing the two crowns. Nor could this have been so suitable to the person of Zerubbabel; for though he was of the family of David, and was a type of Christ, he had not yet the name of a king, nor had he any regal power: he could not therefore have been so suitable a person. It is then no wonder that God brought forth the high priest Joshua, who was a type and representative of Christ; and he brought him forth with a double crown, because he who was to come would unite, according to what follows, the priesthood with the kingly office.

Zechariah 6:12, 13

12. And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The Branch; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord:

12. Et dic ad eum, dicendo (loquere ad eum, dicendo; repetitur bis idem verbum;) sic dicit Iehova exercituum, dicendo, Ecce vir, Germen nomen ejus; et e loco suo germinabit, et aedificabit templum Iehovae;

13. Even he shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.

13. Et ipse aedificabit templum Iehovae, et ipse gestabit decus (vel, gloriam) et sedebit, et dominabitur super solium suum; et erit sacerdos super solium suum, et consilium pacis erit inter hos duos (vel, inter utrumque.)

The vision is now explained; for if the chief priest, without this explanation, had been adorned with two crowns, there must have been much talk among the people, ``What means this?'' God here shows that what he has commanded to be done to Joshua does not belong to him, but has a reference to another, Thou shalt say to him, Behold the Man, Branch is his name. It is the same as though the Prophet had expressly testified that Joshua was not crowned, because he was worthy of such an honor, or because he could look for royal dignity; but that he was to bear this honor

for a time, in order that the Jews might understand that one was to arise who would be both a king and a priest. Hence he says, that there would be a man, whose name was to be Branch

As to this name, it has been explained elsewhere. I omit those refinements with which some are delighted; but as I have shown in another place, the simple and true reason why Christ is so called, is, because he was not like a tall tree, with deep and strong roots, but like a small plant. He is indeed called in another place, ``a shoot from the root of Jesse.'' (Isaiah 11:1.) But the meaning is the same; for that root of Jesse was obscure and of no repute. Besides, this kind of shoot has nothing in it that is illustrious. We hence see that Christ is called Branch, because his beginning was contemptible, so that he was of hardly any repute among heathens; nay even among his own nation. But God intimates at the same time, that this little plant would be set, as it were, by his own hand, and thus would gather strength. Though then the beginning of Christ was humble, yet God declares, that he would give vigor for continued growth, until he should attain to a great height. In this sense it is that Christ is called Branch: and we clearly conclude, that the minds of the people were transferred to Christ who was to come, that they might not fix their attention on Joshua, who was then but a typical priest. Say to Joshua, Behold the man, whose name is Branch. Where is that man? He does not speak of Joshua; he does not say, ``Thou art the man;'' but he says, Behold the man, whose name is Branch, that is, who comes elsewhere. We then hence learn, that these crowns were those of Christ, but given to Joshua, that the Jews might see in the type, what was as yet hid under hope.

He afterwards adds, He shall arise from himself, or grow up from his own place, literally, from under himself. Here also some have too refinedly philosophised, --- that Christ arose from himself by his own power, because he is the eternal God. I think, on the contrary, that all human means are only excluded, as though the Prophet had said, that though Christ was like a little plant, he would yet grow up as though he had roots deeply fixed in the earth. There is indeed no doubt, but that Christ grew up by his own celestial power, and this is what the words of the Prophet include; but what he meant was this, --- that Christ had nothing in his beginning calculated to draw the admiration of men. Though then Christ was only a shoot, yet God had sufficient power, that he should grow from his own place, [219] that though human means were absent, it would yet be enough, that God should bless this branch, so as to cause it to grow to its proper height.

He then says, And he shall build the temple of Jehovah. This is a remarkable passage: it hence appears that the temple which the Jews had then begun to build, and which was afterwards built by Herod, was not the true temple of which Haggai had prophesied, when he said,

``The glory of the second house shall be greater

[219] And he shall branch out from his place,—Newcome. Henderson follows our version. The Targum's version is remarkable, "Behold the man, Messiah is his name; who shall be revealed." The metaphor is dropped, and revelation or manifestation was understood to be the meaning of "growing out of his place." "Out of his place," that is, "out of Bethlehem," says Henry. "Out of David's root, tribe and family," says Adam Clarke.—Ed.

than that of the first.'' (Haggai 2:9.)

For though the temple of Herod was splendid, yet we see what the Spirit declares in this place, --- that to build the temple would be Christ's own work. Hence no one, had he heaped together all the gold and the silver of the world, could have built the true temple of which Haggai prophesied, and of which Ezekiel has so largely spoken near the end of his book. Christ alone then has been chosen by the Father to build this temple. Christ indeed himself was a temple as to his body, for the fullness of the Godhead dwelt in him, (Colossians 2:6;) but he built a temple to God the Father, when he raised up everywhere pure worship, having demolished superstitions, and when he consecrated us to be a royal priesthood.

We now then see what was shown to the Prophet, --- that though the Jews were then exposed to many evils, to reproaches and wrongs, yet Christ would come to restore all things to a perfect order, that he would be not only a king but also a priest; and further, that his beginning would be obscure and despised by the world, and yet that he would attain without any earthly helps his own elevation; and, lastly, that his own proper office would be to build a temple to God.

He repeats the last thing which he had said, Even he shall build the temple of Jehovah. The Prophet seems here to reiterate to no purpose the same words without any additions of light: but it seems evident to me, that he meant in this way to confirm and sanction what seemed difficult to be believed. As the temple, then, begun at that time to be built, had but little splendor and glory connected with it, and could hardly be expected to become a better or more adorned building, the Prophet reiterates this promise, He, he shall build the temple of Jehovah; by which he means, ``Let not your eyes remain fixed on this temple, for to look at it weakens your faith and almost disheartens you; but hope for another temple which ye see not now, for a priest and a king shall at length come to build a better and a more excellent temple.''

He afterwards subjoins, Bear shall he the glory, and shall sit and rule on his throne. He fully confirms what we have already referred to --- that this man, who was to grow by God's hidden power, would be made both a king and a priest, but by no earthly instrumentality. In the words, bear shall he the glory, there is no doubt an implied contrast between Joshua and Christ, the true priest. For Joshua, though he discharged in his time the office of a priest, was yet despised; but the Prophet bids his people to hope for more than what could have been conceived from the view of things at that time; for an illustrious priest was to come, full of royal dignity. And hence he adds, sit shall he and rule on his throne. This did not properly belong to the priesthood; but the Prophet affirms, that the man who was to come from above, would be a king, though he exercised the priestly office. He was then to be a priest, and yet to be on his throne and to rule as a king; and ruling is what belongs to a king and not to a priest.

At length he concludes by saying, The counsel of peace shall be between the two. I do not think that the discords which had been between kings and priests are here indirectly reproved. I indeed allow that such discords had often been seen among that ancient people; but the Prophet had regard to something far different, even this

--- that the priesthood would be united with the kingly office. He therefore did not refer to different persons who were to be at peace together; but, on the contrary, spoke of things or of the two offices; there shall then be the counsel of peace between the two, that is, between the kingly office and the priesthood. [220] We hence learn that which I have already stated --- that what is here promised had not been found under the law, and could not have been expected under it; and that the fulfillment of this prophecy is the renovation which took place at the coming of Christ. It follows ---

Zechariah 6:14

14. And the crowns shall be to Helem, and to Tobijah, and to Jedaiah, and to Hen the son of Zephaniah, for a memorial in the temple of the LORD.

14. Et coronae erunt ipsi Chelem (pro Chadai, probabilis conjectura est fuisse hunc binomium, sicut etiam Iosia filius Zephaniae vocatur etiam Chen; erunt ergo tam ipsi Chelem quam) Tobiae et Iodaiae filio Zephaniae in memoriale in Templo Iehovae.

They who think that the crowns were deposited with these four men, pervert the meaning of the Prophet; for they were, on the contrary, placed in God's temple to be a memorial to them. It hence appears; that, as I have already said, they were not required to supply the gold, because they excelled all others in piety and holiness, but because it was necessary to condemn their want of faith, inasmuch as they thought that their hope was disappointed, as God did not immediately fulfill what he had promised. Let then these crowns, saith the Spirit, be a memorial to them, that is, that whenever they look on these crowns they may check themselves and know that their expectations are very unreasonable, and that they themselves are too hasty when they wish all prophecies to be accomplished in one day; and also that the whole people may know that they had complained without reason, as these suspended crowns shall be a memorial and a testimony. We now then see more clearly why the Prophet had been ordered to take gold and silver from these four men: it was, that he might make crowns, which were afterwards to be deposited in God's temple. At length he adds ---

Zechariah 6:15

15. And they that are far off shall come and build in the temple of the Lord, and ye shall know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto you. And this shall come to pass, if ye will diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God.

15. Et longinqui venient, et aedificabunt in templo Iehovae; et scietis quod Iehova ed Iehova exercituum miserit me ad vos: et erit si audiendo audieritis vocem Iehovae Dei vestri.

The Prophet also states, that men would come from remote lands to contribute labor or wealth towards the building of the temple; for the word building may refer

[220] There are especially two interpretations of this sentence; the one adopted by Calvin, and also by Jerome, Marckius, Drusius, Dathius, Scott, and Henderson; and the other is, that the "two" are Jehovah, and the Branch or Messiah, and that the "throne" mentioned is the throne of Jehovah. This is the interpretation of Vitringa, Cocceius, Henry, M'Caul, and Adam Clarke. The objection of Dathius to the last view, that is, that Jehovah is the speaker, and therefore cannot be understood here as the third person is used, seems not to be valid, for the third person is used before in the words, "the temple of Jehovah." But the first interpretation seems the most appropriate and significant — the concord and agreement between the two offers.—Ed.

to either of these two things. Come then shall those from far. Before this time gifts had been presented by Gentile nations, but the temple was not built but by Solomon and his people. God then promises here something more, and that is, that helpers would assist in building the temple, who had been till then wholly aliens. It is indeed certain, that in the age of Zechariah contributions had been made by Cyrus; but the Prophet refers to nothing of this kind: he promises something more. It hence follows that this prophecy must necessarily be referred to the promulgation of the gospel; for then it was that strangers began to contribute their labor and their wealth towards building a temple to God. Though then Cyrus gave a large sum of money towards the erection of the temple, yet the allusion here is not to his liberality. And after Cyrus no stranger had been so liberal: for Herod, who raised up a great and a very splendid building, was not from far; nay, he wished to be thought one of the people. We then see that this prophecy cannot be otherwise referred than to the building of the spiritual temple, when Gentiles, formerly remote from God's people, joined them as friends, and brought their labor to the work of building the temple, not with stones or wood, or with other corruptible materials, but with the doctrine and the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

He then adds, ye shall know that Jehovah of hosts has sent me to you. Of this kind of knowledge we have spoken elsewhere. It indeed behaved the Jews from the first to feel assured respecting the truth of this prophecy; but when the effect or experience itself was added, they then began to know more clearly. It is then the same as thought the Prophet had said, ``God, who speaks by my mouth, will not disappoint you, as he will at length accomplish what I now declare; and experience itself will be a witness that I have been a true and faithful Prophet.'' And he calls Him the God of hosts, that the Jews, hearing that what he had said proceeded from Him whose power is infinite, might be confirmed in their faith. There was then no reason for them to doubt as to the accomplishment, for there is nothing that can resist God, when it pleases him to unfold his power.

It follows, If by hearing ye will hear the voice of Jehovah your God. Zechariah promises to the Jews here conditionally --- if they became obedient to God, and continued in obedience to his word and in his doctrine; for unbelief deprives men of all participation in God's favor. It is indeed true that had all become unbelieving, Christ would have come; for God as he is true would not change his purpose were the whole world to become false. Since then the faithfulness of God depends not on men, we ought not so to take what the Prophet says here, If ye will hear the voice of Jehovah, as though they could, by being unfaithful to God, have rendered void the accomplishment of this prophecy. Their defection, then, yea, that of the whole nation, could not have prevented Christ from coming forth in his own appointed time. But the Prophet had another thing in view, even this --- that the Jews would become partakers of this blessing, or would enjoy, so to speak, this favor, if they embraced God's promise, and obediently submitted to his law. For though Christ has already come as the Redeemer of the world, yet we know that this benefit is not come to all, and why? Because many through unbelief close the door against God and his grace through Christ. Hence the faithful alone really know that God has spoken, and really

partake of his favor, and for this reason, because they hear his voice; that is, they first by faith receive what God offers, and then they fall not away from his truth, but continue in the obedience of faith to the end.

What the Prophet then had in view, was to show to the Jews that those things were spoken in vain, as to them, if they did not attend to God. And he shows the way in which they were to be attentive, even by hearing the voice of God, that is, by renouncing their own thoughts, and by not esteeming God untrue, though he promised what seemed incredible. If then they denied themselves, banished their own imaginations, wholly attended to God's word, and believed what he had said as a Prophet, he assures them that they would really find that which he taught them to be true to their own salvation, even this --- that Christ would come to be a king and a priest, to secure perfect happiness to his people.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that since thy Son has been made known to us, through whom is brought to us the perfection of all blessings and of true and real glory, --- O grant, that we may continue settled in him, and never turn here and there, nor fluctuate in any way, but be so satisfied with his kingship and priesthood, as to deliver up ourselves wholly to his care and protection, and never doubt but that we are so sanctified by his grace as to be now acceptable to thee, and that relying on him as our Mediator, we may offer ourselves as a sacrifice to thee with full confidence of heart, and thus strive to glorify thee through the whole course of our life, that we may at length be made partakers of that celestial glory which has been obtained for us by the blood of thy only-begotten Son. --- Amen.

Chapter 7

Lecture One Hundred and Forty-sixth

Zechariah 7

Z

Zechariah 7:1-3

1. And it came to pass in the fourth year of king Darius, that the word of the LORD came unto Zechariah in the fourth day of the ninth month, even in Chisleu;

1. Et factus est (datus est,) anno quarto Darii regis, sermo Iehovae ad Zachariam, quarta die mensis noni Chisleu;

2. When they had sent unto the house of God Sherezer and Regemmelech, and their men, to pray before the LORD,

2. Nam miserat in domum Dei (hoc est, Templum) Sareezer et Regem-melech et viros ejus ad deprecandam faciem Iehovae (aut, Miserat in domum Dei Sareezer et Regem-melech, in nominativo casu, et viri ejus ad deprecandam faciem Iehovae:)

3. And to speak unto the priests which were in the house of the LORD of hosts, and to the prophets, saying, Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself, as I have done these so many years?

3. Ad dicendum sacerdotibus qui erant in domo Iehovae exercituum, et Prophetis, dicendo, An flebo mense, quinto? Separabo me? quemadmodum feci his annis? (est turbata series verborum, quemadmodum solitus sum facere his annis?)

There is no vision here, but the answer which Zechariah was commanded to give to the messengers of the captives: for he says that some had been sent from Chaldea to offer sacrifices to God, and at the same time to inquire whether the fast, which they had appointed when the city was taken and destroyed, was to be observed. But there is some ambiguity in the words of the Prophet, for it is doubtful whether the two whom he names, even Sherezer and Regem-melech, together with the others, had sent the messengers of whom mention is made, or they themselves came and brought the message from the captives. But this is a matter of no great moment. As to the question itself, I am disposed to adopt their view, who think that these two came with their associates to Jerusalem, and in the name of them all inquired

respecting the fast, as we shall hereafter see. [221] The Jews think that these were Persian princes; but this opinion is frivolous. They are thus accustomed to draw whatever occurs to the glory of their own nation without any discretion or judgment, as though it had been an object much desired by the Jews, that two Persian should go up to the temple. But there is no need here of a long discussion; for if we regard the Prophet's design, we may easily conclude that these were Jews who had been sent by the exiles, both to offer gifts and to inquire about the fast, as the Prophet tells us. The sum of the whole then is, that Sherezer and Regem-melech, and their companions, came to the temple, and that they also asked counsel of the priests and Prophets, whether the fast of the fifth month was still to be observed.

It must first be observed, that though all had not so much courage as to return to their own country as soon as leave was given them, they were not yet gross despisers of God, and wholly destitute of all religion. It was indeed no light fault to remain torpid among the Babylonians when a free return was allowed them; for it was an invaluable kindness on the part of God to stretch forth his hand to the wretched exiles, who had wholly despaired of a return. Since then God was prepared to bring them home, such a favor could not have been neglected without great ingratitude. But it was yet the Lord's will that some sparks of grace should continue in the hearts of some, though their zeal was not so fervid as it ought to have been. The same sloth we see in the present day to be in many, who continue in the filth of Popery; and yet they groan there, and the Lord preserves them, so that they do not shake off every concern for religion, nor do they wholly fall away. All then are not to be condemned as unfaithful, who are slothful and want vigor; but they are to be stimulated. For they who indulge their torpor act very foolishly; but at the same time they ought to be pitied, when there is not in them that desirable alacrity in devoting themselves to God, which they ought to have. Such an instance then we see in the captives, who ought to have immediately prepared themselves for the journey, when a permission was given them by the edicts of Cyrus and Darius. They however remained in exile, but did not wholly renounce the worship of God; for they sent sacred offerings, by which they professed their faith; and they also inquired what they were to do, and showed deference to the priests and Prophets then at Jerusalem. It hence appears, that they were not satisfied with themselves, though they did not immediately amend what was wrong. There are many now, who, in order to exculpate themselves, or rather to wipe away (as they think) all disgrace, despise God's word, and treat us with derision; nay, they devise crimes with which they charge us, with the view of vilifying the word

[221] Grotius, Newcome, and others adopt this view; but Blayney justly says that [{בית}-{אל}] is nowhere used in Scripture for the temple; and therefore he, in accordance with the Septuagint for the temple; and therefore it as the name of the city so called, and situated in the tribe of Benjamin. So Drusius, Henderson, and others. Then the true version of the whole passage, and the most literal, would be the following:--- 2. When Bethel sent Sherezer and Regem-melech and its men to entreat the face of Jehovah, and to speak to the priests who were 3. over the house of Jehovah of hosts, and to the prophets, saying, ``Shall I weep in the fifth month, separating myself as I have done 4. these so many years?'' then came the word of Jehovah of hosts to 5. me, saying, ``Speak to all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying,''--- ``When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and in the seventh, even 6. these seventy years, fasting did ye fast to me, even to me? and when ye ate and when ye drank, were not ye yourselves the eaters 7. and ye yourselves the drinkers? Were not these the words which Jehovah proclaimed by the former Prophets, when Jehovah was inhabited and peacable, and her cities around her, and when the south and the plain were inhabited?'' ``Bethel'' here means the town; and therefore ``its,'' and not ``his men,''--- ``When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and in the seventh, even 6. these seventy years, fasting did ye fast to me, even to me? and when ye ate and when ye drank, were not ye yourselves the eaters 7. and ye yourselves the drinkers? Were not these the words which Jehovah proclaimed by the former Prophets, when Jehovah was inhabited and peacable, and her cities around her, and when the south and the plain were inhabited?'' ``Bethel'' here means the town; and therefore ``its,'' and not ``his men,''--- ``When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and in the seventh, even 6. these seventy years, fasting did ye fast to me, even to me? and when ye ate and when ye drank, were not ye yourselves the eaters 7. and ye yourselves the drinkers? Were not these the words which Jehovah proclaimed by the former Prophets, when Jehovah was inhabited and peacable, and her cities around her, and when the south and the plain were inhabited?'' ``Bethel'' here means the town; and therefore ``its,'' and not ``his men,'' is the proper version; and instead of ``Shall I weep,'' the most suitable rendering would be, ``Shall we weep.'' That the inhabitants of Judea are intended, and not messengers from Babylon, is quite evident from the fifth verse, ``Speak to all the people of the land.'' --- Ed.

of the Lord in the estimation of the simple. But the Prophet shows that the captives of whom he speaks, though not so courageous as they ought to have been were yet true servants of God; for they sent sacrifices to the temple, and also wished to hear and to learn what they were to do.

He says first, that messengers were sent to entreat the face of Jehovah. Here by the word entreating or praying, the Prophet means also sacrifices. For it is certain that the Jews prayed in exile, as there could have been no religion in them had they not exercised themselves in prayer. But the mention made here is of that stated prayer, connected with sacrifices, by which they professed themselves to be God's people. We may hence also learn, that sacrifices of themselves are of no great importance, since prayer, or calling on God, has ever the first place. Sacrifices then, and other offerings, were, as we may say, additions; (accessoria --- accessions;) for this command ought ever to be regarded by the faithful,

``offer to me the sacrifice of praise.'' (Psalm 50:14.)

He says, in the second place, that messengers were sent, that they might learn from the priests and the Prophets what was to them doubtful. We hence conclude, that it was no gross dissimulation, such as is found in hypocrites who pretend to pray to God, but that there was a real desire to obey. And, doubtless, when God's word and celestial truth are despised, there is then neither any real prayer, nor any other religious exercise; for unbelief pollutes and contaminates whatever is otherwise in its nature sacred. Whosoever then desires rightly to pray to God, let him add faith, that is, let him come to God in a teachable frame of mind, and seek to be ruled by his word. For the Prophet in telling us what was done, no doubt keeps to the method or the order observed by the captives. It was then worthy of praise that they not only were anxious to seek God's favor by prayers and sacrifices, but that they also sought to know what was pleasing to Cod. Nor was it a matter of wonder that they sent to Jerusalem on this account, for they knew that that place had been chosen by God as the place from which they were to seek the right knowledge of religion. Since then Jerusalem was the sanctuary of God, the captives sent there their messengers, particularly as they knew that the priests were the ambassadors of God, and that the interpretation of the law was to be sought from their mouth. They indeed knew that the time was not yet come when the doctrine of salvation was to be disseminated through the whole world.

But the Prophet says, that the captives not only inquired of the priests, but also of the Prophets. It hence appears, that it was a thing commonly known, that God had raised up Prophets, which he had ceased to do for a long time. For it was not without reason that Isaiah said, that God would yet speak by his Prophets, when he would again comfort his people. (Isaiah 40:1.) There had been then a mournful silence for seventy years, when no Prophets were sent forth, according to what is said in the book of Psalms,

``our signs we see not, nor is there a Prophet among us.''
(Psalm 74:9.)

God indeed had been accustomed to lead the people as by an erected banner when they dwelt in the holy land, and Prophets continually succeeded one another

in regular order, according to what the Lord had promised by Moses,

``A Prophet will I raise up in the midst of thee,'' etc.
(Deuteronomy 18:15.)

From the time then in which they had been driven into exile, while looking there on one another, they could hear no voice to encourage them with hope, until new Prophets were again raised up beyond what they expected. And it was God's will that the Prophets should have their abode and habitation at Jerusalem, in order that he might gather the dispersed Israel; for had there been Prophets in Chaldea, many might hence lay hold of a pretext for their slothfulness: ``Does not God dwell in the midst of us? what need is there of undertaking a difficult and toilsome journey? we shall indeed find nothing better at Jerusalem than in this exile; for God shows that he is present with us by his Prophets.'' It would have therefore been a great evil to the Jews to have Prophets in their exile. But when the captives heard that the gift of prophecy appeared again in the temple, they might have called to mind what their fathers had heard from the mouth of Isaiah, and also from the mouth of Micah, ``from Zion shall go forth a law, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem.'' (Isaiah 2:3 Micah 4:3.) We now perceive why Zechariah joined Prophets to priests.

But we must bear in mind what we have stated elsewhere that the prophetic was, as it were, an extraordinary office, when God took others as the ministers of his word besides the priests. For their work was sacerdotal; but God meant to condemn the priests by transferring the work of teaching to others, that is, when Prophets were taken from the common people, or from other families, and not from the Levitical tribe. It is not indeed true that all the priests were Prophets; but the office itself would not have been transferred to any other tribe, had not God thus punished the ingratitude of those who bestowed more labor on their own private concerns than on teaching the people. However this case may have been, it was an illustrious testimony of God's favor, that Prophets at that time had again been raised up. And this fact has been added --- that they dwelt nowhere else but at Jerusalem, in order to encourage the dispersed to return, and to show to them that the place had not in vain been previously chosen by God. This is the reason why the Prophet expressly says, that the Prophets, as well as the priests, were in the house or in the temple of the Lord of hosts.

The time is also mentioned, the fourth year of Darius, and the ninth month and the fourth day [222] The beginning of the year, we know, was in March; hence the month Chisleu was November, or a part of October and November, for they were wont to commence their months at the new moons. Of king Darius we have spoken elsewhere. He was not, indeed, the first Darius, the father-in-law of Cyrus, who transferred the monarchy to the Persian, but Darius the son of Hystaspes. Passed away then had the seventy years, for this, as it has been stated before, was the fourth king.

Let us now consider the question which the captives proposed to the priests. They asked whether they were to weep in the fifth month, and whether they were to separate themselves as they had done for seventy years and more; for some

[222] Two years had elapsed since the “visions” recorded in the former chapters. — Ed.

years, as we have seen, had elapsed beyond that number. We hence learn that a regular fast was observed from the time in which the temple was burned and the city destroyed. He speaks here only of the fifth month, but shortly after mention is made of the seventh month. It is evident from sacred history that the city was demolished and the temple pulled down in the fifth month. It is therefore probable that there was a day of mourning observed by the people in memory of that sad event. In the seventh month, though not in the same year, Gedaliah was slain, and the remainder of the people were driven into exile. As the land became then desolate, it is also probable that another fast was appointed, that they might yearly humble themselves before God, and suppliantly seek his pardon. Since then there was a reason for both fasts, it is evident that they could not have been condemned by the priests: nor is there a doubt, but that it was by the public consent of all, that they every year kept these days of weeping. We also see the end which God has in view in prescribing a fast, --- that men in coming to him may feel true penitence, and remind themselves by their external appearance of their own guilt. As then the Jews observed this rule in their fasts, we must conclude that they pleased God; for these were religious exercises, by which they might have been led to repentance.

Now they inquired, whether they were to continue their weeping; for the temple had now been begun to be built as well as the city. Since the reason for their mourning had been, that the temple no longer stood where they might offer their sacrifices, and that the holy city had been demolished, it was then doubtless right to give thanks to God, and to feel joy, when an end came to their calamities. However, the captives ventured not to change anything without the authority and consent of the priests, so that they might all agree together. And thus they also testified that they were true members of the Church, as they had no desire to have anything different from others.

The word fast is not mentioned; but they asked, ``Shall we weep?'' Hence also it appears, that they were not so gross in their ideas as to think that the chief part of religion is fasting, as hypocrites do, who imagine that they honor God by abstaining from food, and thus mock God, who is a Spirit, with mere trifles, when it is his express will to be spiritually worshipped. We then plainly see, that the Jews were not imbued with this gross and foolish thought, when they established this annual fast; for they put weeping in the place of fasting. And why was this weeping, except that they went into God's presence conscious of their guilt and in a suppliant manner, and testified by external signs that they acknowledged their sins, so that they might obtain mercy and forgiveness?

They mentioned also consecration. The word {נזר}, nezar, which means to separate, is variously explained: but here many interpreters confine it to abstinence from food, as though they had said, ``Shall we separate ourselves from food?'' [223] This seems forced to me: I therefore prefer to apply it to sanctification; for we know that when a day was prescribed for fasting or for offering sacrifices, there was sanctifica-

[223] The word means literally "nazariting." It was to do after the manner of the Nazarites, who abstained from all delicacies, and from society. It appears to have been abstinence as betokened grief and mourning; for so we find from the answer, "when ye fasted and mourned," etc. The Targum's version is, "When I restrained my soul from pleasures." — Ed.

tion added. For though it became the Jews through their whole life to abstain from all defilements, yet we know that when a fast or any particular sacrifice was appointed, they were more diligent and solicitous to cast aside every pollution. We now then understand what the Jews had in view, and what they meant by these words. It now follows ---

Zechariah 7:4-9

4. Then came the word of the LORD of hosts unto me, saying,

4. Et datus sermo Iehovae exercituum mihi fuit, dicendo,

5. Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even to me?

5. Dic ad totum populum terrae et ad sacerdotes, dicendo, Quum jejunastis et planxistis in quinto et septimo (mense, subaudiendum est) et his septuaginta annis, an jejunando jejunastis mihi, mihi?

6. And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did not ye eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves?

6. Et quum comedistis, et quum bibistis, annon vos comedistis et vos bibistis?

7. Should ye not hear the words which the LORD hath cried by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and in prosperity, and the cities thereof round about her, when men inhabited the south and the plain?

7. Annon ad sermones quos clamavit Iehova in manu prophetarum priorum, quum esset Ierusalem quieta et opulenta (vel, quieta et tranquilla; diximus enim alibi de hac voce [{ישבת}] et urbes ejus per circuitus ejus, et meridies, et campestris regio quieta?

8. And the word of the LORD came unto Zechariah, saying,

8. Et factus est sermo Iehovae ad Zachariam, dicendo,

9. Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother:

9. Sic dicit Iehova exercituum, dicendo, judiciam veritatis (hoc est, verum; non fallax, sincerum et integrum) judicate, et beneficentiam et misericordias facite quisque cum fratre suo.

Here the Prophet tells us that he was sent to the people and to the priests, not so much to teach the messengers who came from distant lands, as to correct the vices of his own nation; for the Jews had then begun, according to their usual manner, to dissemble with God, and had glided, as it has elsewhere appeared, into many evil practices. And it appears evident, that God did not commit to Zechariah what the messengers might bring back to Chaldea; but that an occasion was taken to remind the Jews, that they were to look to themselves. It may have been the case, that the priests themselves and all the rest had begun to raise a controversy, ``How is this? our brethren inquire, whether the fast is to be still observed:'' and the opinions might have been various. But as this is doubtful, I leave it as such. We however see that the Prophet does not speak here respecting the captives, nor does he address to their messengers anything which they might convey to Chaldea, but turns his discourse to the priests and to the people. The sum of the whole is, that while the

captives gave no mean testimony of their religion, God reproved the Jews, who had returned to their own country, for ingratitude, as they had already begun to pollute themselves.

He therefore brings this charge against them, Have ye fasted to me? have ye eaten to me? as though he had said, ``God regards not fastings, except they proceed from a sincere feeling and tend to a right and lawful end.'' It was then the object of the Prophet to awaken the Jews, that they might not imagine that God was pacified by fasting or by any other frigid ceremonies, but that they might know that something more was required. And we see how prone mankind are to rely on external rites, and to think that they have rightly performed their duty to God when they have fasted. As then human nature labors under this disease, the Prophet is here sent to dissipate this delusion; which he does by declaring that fasting does not please God, or is acceptable to him, as though it were something meritorious, or as though there was in it any holiness.

He says first, that the word of Jehovah was given to him, that he might go to the people of the land and to the priests. We see the truth of what I have already said, that the answer was not directed to the captives, but to the very inhabitants of the land and to the citizens of Jerusalem, and for this reason, --- because they thought that when the question respecting fasting was moved, the first and chief part of all religion was the subject of inquiry. Hence God, that he might strip them of this superstition, says, When ye fasted in the fifth month and in the seventh month, and during the seventy years, did ye fast to me --- to me? for he has put an affix to the verb, {צמתני}, tsametni, and afterwards added {אני}, ani: as though he had said, ``Was it to me that ye fasted? Shall I approve of such fasting?'' There is an emphasis in the repetition, as though he had said, that there was no reason for the Jews to boast that they faithfully served God, and fully performed their duty, because they fasted twice in the year, for they had to do with that God who rejected such trifling things.

We hence learn that nothing is more preposterous than for men to judge of God's worship according to their own notions, and to trust in themselves. It is indeed easy for us to deceive ourselves; for as we are earthly, so we may think that whatever glitters before our eyes is most acceptable to God. But the Prophet here reminds us, by one sentence, how frivolous are such self-pleasing thoughts; for God meets us with this question, *``Have ye fasted to me?* Are ye to be judges, and is it right for you at your pleasure to invent various modes of worship? But I remain always like myself, and not transform me according to what pleases you; for I repudiate everything of this kind.''

By saying, that to themselves they did eat and drink, he intimates that to eat and to drink, or to abstain from eating and drinking, are things wholly unconnected with the worship of God. Another sense may indeed be elicited, --- that the Jews did eat as heathens did: and there will be in this case an indirect reproof, --- that they sought to pacify God only twice in the year, and that during the rest of the time they were heedless and indulged themselves in excesses. We ought indeed to bear in mind what Paul says, that

``whether we eat or drink, all things ought to be done

to the praise of God.'' (1 Corinthians 10:31.)

The law also expressly commanded the Jews to ``feast before the Lord,'' that is, not to taste food without thanksgiving, as though God were present. When, therefore, the Jews fasted themselves without any regard to God, it is no wonder that their fastings where rejected; for their course was not consistent. For though the godly do not always fast, yet while they partake most freely of meat and drink, they turn not away their thoughts from God, but on the contrary rejoice before him. They therefore eat and drink to God, as well as abstain on God's account. But the Prophet shows here that the Jews did eat to themselves, and that hence their fasting was not regarded before God. This latter sense is not unsuitable: but as to the subject itself, it is enough for us to know, that the Prophet, as he had to deal with hypocrites, ridicules their superstition in their fastings, inasmuch as they thought that these were expiations by which their sins were blotted out, and that if they abstained for a day or two from meat and drink, God was thereby pacified.

And the Prophet's object is more evident from the next verse, when he says, Are not these the words which Jehovah proclaimed by the former Prophets? He confirms here his doctrine by many testimonies, that is, that God had already through successive ages exhorted the Jews to true repentance, and condemned their dissimulation, that they might not think that true religion was made up of fasting and of similar things. And this the Prophet did, not only to gain or secure to himself more credit, but also to render double the wickedness of the Jews; as though he had said, that they were apparently very anxious not to offend God, but that it was merely a false pretense; for had they from the heart wished to please God, they might have long ago learnt that fastings were of themselves of no moment, but that a beginning ought to be made with true religion and spiritual worship.

I have already mentioned, that possibly, when the question was raised by the captives, much disputing, as it is commonly the case, prevailed among the people. But as the Jews ever reverted to their old ways, being blindly attached to their frigid ceremonies, and thinking in this manner to propitiate God, the Prophet, for this reason, derides their preposterous labor and toil. ``See,'' he says, ``the only question now is, whether there should be fasting, as though this were the principal thing before God; in the meantime godliness is neglected, and neglected is real calling on God, and the whole of spiritual worship is also esteemed by you as nothing, and no integrity of life prevails: for ye bite one another, plunder one another, wrong one another, and are guilty of lying: ye heedlessly close your eyes to such vices as these; and at the same time when fasting is neglected, ye think that the whole of religion falls to the ground. These are your old ways, and such were commonly the thoughts and doings of your fathers; and it appears evident that ye trifle with God, and that ye are full of deceits, and that there is not in you a particle of true religion. For God formerly spoke loudly in your ears, and his words were not obscure when he exhorted you by his Prophets; he showed to you what true repentance was, but effected nothing. Is it not then quite evident that ye are now acting deceitfully, when ye so carefully enquire about fasting?'' We now perceive what force there is in this sentence, Are not these the words which Jehovah formerly proclaimed? For it was

not enough to remind the Jews of true repentance; but this reproof was needful, in order more sharply to stimulate them; and it was wholly necessary to discover their hypocrisy, that they might not be too much pleased with external performances.

That they might not then object, that what they asked respecting God's counsel was done with a good intention, the Prophet answers them, ``Where are the words by which God had testified as to what can please him?'' And for the same purpose he uses the word, {קרא}, kora, proclaimed: for he does not say, that God merely declared words by his Prophets, but that he uttered them loudly, and as it were with a full mouth. ``See,'' he says, ``ye enquire as though ye were in doubt, and that the knot could hardly be untied, and as though it were a matter of great moment. God has indeed not only spoken, but has also cried aloud in the ears of your fathers; in the meantime ye tread under foot his teaching, or pass it by with closed eyes.'' What does this mean? to enquire so anxiously about fasting, and at the same time to despise what is far more important? In a similar manner does Christ also condemn hypocrites, because they hesitated not to swallow a camel, while they were wont to strain at a gnat, (Matthew 23:24;) for in trifling things they dared not to attempt anything; but as to gross wickedness, they leaped over it as it were with the audacity of wild beasts. The object then of the Prophet's words was to show that the Jews did not seriously and in earnest enquire respecting God's will, but pretended to be very attentive to religion, while they openly, and with gross and headless audacity, rejected the true doctrine, which was by no means ambiguous, as God had by his many Prophets clearly taught them and their fathers what he required from them.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that as we are so inclined to dissimulation, we may learn strictly to examine ourselves, and to descend into our own consciences, so that none of us may sleep in self-delusion, but be so displeased with our hidden vices, as in the meantime to aspire after, and with every care and labor, to attain true religion, and so strive to devote ourselves wholly to thee, that we may groan under the burden of our sins, and so suppliantly flee to thy mercy, as at the same time to be touched with true penitence, until having at length put off the corruptions of our flesh, we shall be received into that purity which has been prepared for us in heaven by Jesus Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Forty-seventh

Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, [224] saying, The judgment of truth judge, and kindness and mercies show, every one to his brother. We have seen what the Prophet said of fasting, when messengers were sent by the exiles to enquire on the subject. It was a suitable opportunity for handling the question. For, as we then said, the people were so devoted to their ceremonies, as to think that the whole of religion consisted in fasting and in similar exercises. And as we are by nature prone to this evil, we ought carefully to consider what the Prophet has taught us --- that fasting is not simply, or by itself, approved by God, but on account of the end designed by it. Having already shown to the Jews their error, in thinking that God could be pacified

[224] Both Newcome and Henderson render the verb [{אמר here in the past tense --- ``Thus spake Jehovah of hosts;'' and this seems right, as the reference is made to what the Lord had spoken by the former Prophets, as it appears from the 11th verse. --- Ed.

by ceremonies, he now reminds them of what God mainly requires in his law --- that men should observe what is just and right towards one another. It is indeed true that the first part of the law refers to the service due to God; but it is a way which God has commonly adopted, to test the life of men by the duties of the second Table, and to show what this part of the law especially requires God then in this passage, as in many others, does not commend righteousness towards men so as to depreciate godliness; for as this far excels everything in the whole world, so we know that in rightly forming the life, the beginning ought ever to be made by serving God aright. But as the Prophet had to do with hypocrites, he shows that they only trifled with God, while they made much of external things, and at the same tinge neglected uprightness, and the duties of love

We now then understand the Prophet's object. He had said in the last lecture that he brought forward nothing new, but only reminded them of what had been taught by other Prophets; and here he pursues the same subject --- that God made more account of uprightness and kindness than of those legal shadows, which in themselves were of no moment.

The judgment of truth, he says, judge. This could not have been extended indiscriminately to the whole people; but by these words the Prophet indirectly reproved the judges, because they committed plunder, either through favor or hatred, so that they decided cases not in a just and equitable manner. We then learn from the Prophet's words, that judgments were then given corruptly, so that the judge either decided in favor of a friend, or was bought by a price or a reward. As then there was no truth in the judgments given, but false pretences and colourings, the Prophet here exhorts them to execute the judgment of truth, that is, true judgment, when no respect of persons is shown, and when neither hatred nor favor prevails, but equity alone is regarded.

He then addresses the whole people in common, and says, Show, or exercise, kindness and mercies [225] every one towards his brother. He not only bids them to abstain from doing any wrong, but exhorts them to show kindness; for it would not be enough to do no harm to any one, except each of us were also solicitous to assist our neighbors; inasmuch as it is the dictate of benevolence to help the miserable when necessity so requires. But we must recollect that a part is given twice for the whole in what the Prophet says: in the first place, he refers only to the second Table of the law, while he includes in general the rule by which our life is to be formed; and in the second place, he enumerates not every thing contained in the second Table, but mentions only some things as instances. It is however certain, that his design was to show that men are greatly deceived when they seek to discharge their duties towards God by means of external rites and ceremonies; and farther, that it is a true and substantial evidence of piety, when and one observes what is just and equitable towards his neighbor. He afterwards adds ---

Zechariah 7:10

10. And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor;

[225] Rendered “kindness and mercy” by Henderson, but more correctly “mercy and compassion” by Newcome; or they may be rendered “mercy and sympathies.” The meaning is, “Do acts of mercy and of compassions,” or sympathies. — Ed.

and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart.

10. Et viduam et pupillum, peregrinum et pauperem ne deripiatis, et vir malum fratris ne cogitatis in corde vestro, (hoc est, ne singuli vestrum cogitent in corde suo, vel, machinentur, malum fratribus suis.)

He mentions here some other duties, but for the same purpose of showing, that the fear of God is not proved by ceremonies, but by acting justly towards our brethren, and not by abstaining only from doing wrong, but by being ready to help the miserable. As widows, and orphans, and strangers are exposed as it were to plunder, Moses often in the law recommends them to favor, and shows that God cares for them, and will be their defender, when by one injured. So also the Prophet speaks here expressly of widows, and orphans, and strangers, that the Jews might understand, not only that they were to take heed, lest any one, being wronged, should complain, or lest any one should retaliate an injury, but that they were to observe integrity before God; for the ungodly are often terrified by fear, and refrain from doing mischief, because they know that there will be an avenger. Hence it comes that the rich and the opulent are safe from all injuries, because they are surrounded and fortified by strong defences; but the widows and the orphans are not thus able to repel wrongs. This is the reason why the Prophet prefers here to mention widows, and orphans, and strangers, rather than to speak indiscriminately of all the people. For the import of the whole is, as I have reminded you, that the fear of God is not really proved, except when a person cleaves to what is just and right, and is not restrained by fear or shame, but discharges his duty as it were in the presence of God and of his angels, so that he shows favor to the poor and miserable, who are without any to help them. But as I have elsewhere explained this subject more at large, it is enough now briefly to touch on it. [226] Let us proceed

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Zechariah 7:11-12

11. But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear.

11. Et renuerent attendere, et posuerunt humerum declinationis, et aures suas aggravarunt ne audirent.

12. Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant-stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the LORD of hosts hath sent in his spirit by the former prophets: therefore came a great wrath from the LORD of hosts.

12. Et cor suum posuerunt adamantem, ne audirent verba quae miserat Iehova exercituum in Spiritu suo, in manu prophetarum superiorum; et fuit ira magna a Iehova exercituum.

The Prophet here by referring to the fathers more sharply reproves the Jews of his age; for he saw that they differed but little from their fathers. The sum of what he

[226] There is one sentence passed by unnoticed, rendered thus by Newcome,— Neither imagine in your heart Every man evil againsthis brother. Verbatim it is— And the evil of (or, evil to) man, his brother, Devise ye not in your heart. They were not to devise or contrive in their hearts any evil or wrong to man, he being a brother. This sense is given in the Targum, and by Grotius, Henry, and others; but Henderson, following the Septuagint, gives another meaning; and his version or rather paraphrase is — And think not in your heart of the injury Which one hath done to another. But the original can hardly admit of such a construction: the former, no doubt, is the true meaning. — Ed.

says is, that the Jews in all ages dealt unfaithfully and perversely with God; for how much soever they boasted of their care and zeal for religion they yet sought to satisfy God only by vain trifles. This then was the Prophet's object. For it is certain that there ever had been some pretense to religion in that nation but it was mere dissimulation for they were in the mean time intent on their ceremonies and when God seriously remonstrated with them their obstinacy and perverseness before concealed instantly appeared.

He therefore says that they refused to hear. He does not now accuse the dead except for this purpose to teach the people of his acre. He saw that they were solicitous about fasting at appointed seasons, while at the same time they regarded almost as nothing the main requirements of the law, even mercy, and justice, and uprightness. These are indeed the three things, which Christ mentions. (Matthew 23:23.) He then intimates that this doctrine was not new, and that their fathers had been sufficiently warned and instructed, but that they wilfully, and as it were designedly rebelled against God. In short, he pulls off their mask of ignorance; for as men for the most part seek to extenuate their sins by the plea, that they had not been clearly or seasonably taught, the Prophet declares that there was not any excuse of this kind, because they had been refractory and untameable, they had refused to hear

To set forth more fully this perverseness, he afterwards says, that the shoulder of withdrawing had been presented by them. The Hebrews say that men serve with the shoulder, when they are submissive, and tractable, and willingly undergo the burden laid on them, according to what we have seen in Zephaniah 3:1. The Prophet now, on the contrary, says that the Jews had a refractory shoulder, as they refused to bear the yoke, but shook off every fear of God. The reason for the metaphor is this --- that as burdens are carried on the shoulder, so the Lord lays the law on our shoulders, that the flesh may not lasciviate at pleasure, but be kept under restraint. He hence says, that they had presented a rebellious shoulder. The word {סררת}, sarret, is properly rendered declining; but some render it perverse, and others contumacious: since the meaning is the same, I contend not about the word. It is enough to know that the contumacy of the Jews is what is here condemned; for they had been wholly unteachable, and had refused to submit to God and to his word. [227]

He afterwards mentions their ears, They made heavy their ears, lest they should hear. In short, the Prophet sought by all means to prove the Jews guilty, that they

[227] And withdraw the shoulder,—Newcome. He adds, "The line occurs in Nehemiah 9:29. The metaphor is taken from beasts that decline the yoke. See Hosea 4:16." And turned their back rebelliously,—Henderson He observes that "to turn the shoulder is equivalent to turning the back upon any one. The cause of such action is traced to a refractory, rebellious, and intractable disposition." Literally it is— And gave (or presented) the shoulder of turning away. It is a metaphor taken, as some say, from refractory children or servants, who being admonished, despise and reject what is commanded them, as Drusius observes, by turning their backs. This is the most suitable view according to the context. Non-attendance to God's word, and not insubordination, is the subject. They refused to hear, turned their backs, and pretended deafness, or conducted themselves as though they were deaf. Then the source of this conduct is mentioned; the heart was made as hard as adamant, so that they would not hear the law and the words sent by the Prophets. The want of attention is throughout the subject; and the evident fact is first referred to, in the various ways in which it displayed itself; and then it is traced up to an adamantine heart. This is often the way in which things are stated by the Prophets — the most palpable acts are first stated, then the most hidden participles. — Ed.

might not adduce anything to extenuate their sin: for they had in every way, with the most determined wickedness, refused to obey God, when his teaching was sufficiently clear and intelligible.

He then comes to the heart, They made, he says, their heart adamant, or the very hardest stone. Some render it steel, and others flint. It means sometimes a thorn; but in this place, as in Ezekiel 3:9, and in Jeremiah 17:1, it is to be taken for adamant, or the hardest stone. [228] We now see that the Prophet's object was to show that the Jews had no excuse, as if they had fallen away through error or ignorance, but had ever wilfully and perversely rejected sound doctrine. The Prophet then teaches us that hypocrisy had been the sole hindrance to prevent them from understanding and following what was right.

But it may be useful to notice the manner of speaking which the Prophet adopts in condemning the perverseness of the Jews, when he says, that they had refused attention to God. For we ought here to observe the connection between the fear of God and obedience, and on the other hand, between the contempt of the law and wilful rebellion. If then we would not be condemned for contumacy before God, attention must in the first place be given to his word, and afterwards the shoulders must be put under, so that we may bear submissively the yoke laid on us; and thirdly, we must listen with the ears, so that the word of God, preached to us, may not be lost, but strike in us deep roots; and lastly, our hearts must be turned to obedience, and all hardness corrected or softened. Then Zechariah adds, that the Jews had a stonily or an iron heart, so that they repudiated the law of God and all his Prophets. He gives the first place to the law, for they ought to have sought from it the whole doctrine of religion; and the Prophets, as it has been often stated, were only interpreters of the law.

He afterwards mentions the words which had been sent by Jehovah through his Spirit and through his Prophets [229] By saying that God spoke by his Prophets, he meets an objection by which hypocrites are wont to cover themselves, when they reject the truth. For they object and say, that they would be willingly submissive to God, but that they cannot bear the authority of men, as though God's word changed its nature by coming through the mouth of man. But as hypocrites and profane men are wont to lessen the authority of the word, the Prophet here shows, having this pretext in view, that God designed to be heard, though he employed ministers. Hence by this kind of concession it is implied, that Prophets are middle persons, and yet that God so speaks by their mouth, that contempt is offered to him when no due honor is shown to the truth. And further, lest the baseness of men should withhold regard from the word, he mentions also the Spirit, as though he had said, that God had spoken not only by his servants, even mortal men, but also by his Spirit. There is then no reason for hypocrites deceitfully to excuse themselves, by saying, that they rebel not against God, when they depreciate his Prophets; for the power and majesty

[228] It occurs in this sense only here and in the two places referred to. Jerome says that it is a stone which breaks every metal, and can be broken by none; and that hence in Greek it is rendered [{αδαμας}], which means unconquerable. --- Ed.

[229] Literally it is, "By his Spirit, by the hand of the former Prophets." Henderson justly remarks, "The double agency by which the divine will was communicated is recognised—that of the inspiring Spirit and that of the instruments inspired. — Ed.

of the Holy Spirit appear and shine forth in the doctrine itself, so that the condition of men takes nothing away from its authority. This part was also added in order to condemn the Jews, because they had from the very beginning been seasonably warned, and it was only their own fault that they did not repent. For if the Lord had allowed them for a long time to go astray, there would have been some pretense for their evasions: but since God had tried to recall them to the right way, and Prophets, one after another, had been continually sent to them, their unfaithfulness, yea their iron perverseness, in obstinately refusing to obey God, was more fully discovered. This is the reason why Zechariah mentions here the former Prophets.

He then adds, that there was great wrath from Jehovah of hosts; by which sentence he reminded them, that it was no matter of dispute, as in case of a doubtful thing, whether their fathers had been wicked and disobedient to God; for he had sufficiently proved be punishments that he abominated their conduct; for this principle is to be held true that God does not deal unjustly with men when he chastises them, but that the demerit of crimes is to be estimated by the punishment which he inflicts. As then God had so severely chastised the ancient people, the natural conclusion is, that their wickedness had become intolerable. We now then see why the Prophet said that there had been great wrath from God; the reason was, that the Jews might not think that he had been lightly offended, as he had not been satisfied with a moderate punishment; for since his wrath had been so great, and since he had in so dreadful a manner punished the sins of the people, it follows, that their wickedness had been more grievous than what men considered it to have been.

There is also here an implied comparison; for the unfaithfulness of those who then lived was the worse, for this reason --- because they took no warning from the calamities of their fathers, so as to deal with more sincerity with God. They knew that their fathers had been carefully and in various ways admonished; they knew that exile followed, which was an evidence of the dreadful vengeance of God. As then they were like their fathers, and had not put off their perverse disposition, they proved themselves guilty of greater and more refractory baseness, for they ought to have been influenced at least by fear, when they saw that God's judgment had been so dreadful against obstinate men. It afterwards follows ---

Zechariah 7:13

13. Therefore it is come to pass, that as he cried, and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear, saith the Lord of hosts.

13. Et fuit, sicuti clamavit et non audierunt, sic clamabunt et non audiam, dicit Iehova exercituum.

The Prophet sets forth more fully the dreadfulness of this punishment --- that they in vain groaned and complained, for God was deaf to their complaints and cryings. When God in some measure fulminates and becomes soon reconciled, he does not seem to be greatly incensed, but when the miserable whom he afflicts by his hand, avail nothing by their entreaties and prayers, it then appears evident that God is in no common degree offended. This then is what the Prophet meant by saying, that they were not heard by God when they cried.

But we must notice what is said of their perverseness; for he says, that God had

called, and that he was not heard by them. Now it cannot be deemed an unjust reward, that God should punish the contempt of his word; for how great is the honor by which he favors miserable wretches, when he invites them to himself, and most expressly invites them? When, therefore, the calling of God is thus rejected and despised, do not they who are so refractory deserve what the Prophet declares here --- that they would have to cry in vain, as God would be deaf to their groanings?

As to the words, the change of person may embarrass the unlettered, but it is a mode of speaking common to the Prophets, for they assume the person of God in order to gain more authority to their doctrine; and they spoke sometimes in the third and sometimes in the first person: when in the first God himself speaks, and when in the third it is in the character of ministers, who declare and deliver, as it were from hand to hand, what had been committed to them by God. Hence the Prophet in the first clause speaks as God's minister; he afterwards assumes his person, as though he were God himself. But this, as it has been said, was done with regard to the word delivered. It was, that as he called and they heard not, etc. Who called? It is not right to apply this, as some do, to the Prophet; he, therefore, charges here the Jews, no doubt, with the sin of turning a deaf ear to God's word. So, he says, they shall call, and I will not hear. It might have been said, ``so they shall call, and the Lord will not hear.'' There is in the meaning, as we see, nothing obscure or ambiguous. [230]

The import of the whole then is, that God had not threatened in vain by his ancient Prophets; but that as he had denounced vengeance by the mouth of Isaiah, so it had been executed on the Jews, for they had without effect cried, and found God a severe judge, whose voice they had previously despised. We indeed know, that it is a truth often repeated, that the ungodly are not heard by God; nay, that their prayers are abominable; for they profane God's name by an impure heart and mouth whenever they flee to him, as they approach him without faith and repentance. We then learn from these words, that those who perversely despise God's word deservedly rot in their own calamities; for it is by no means right or reasonable that the Lord should be ready to hear the crying of those who turn a deaf ear to his voice. It follows ---

Zechariah 7:14

14. But I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations whom they knew not. Thus the land was desolate after them, that no man passed through nor returned: for they laid the pleasant land desolate.

14. Et affligar cum illis (vertunt quidam) super omnes gentes, (alii melius, dispellam illos ad omnes gentes,) quas non noverunt; (alii vertunt, quae non noverunt eos;) et terra desolata erit post eos, ne sit transiens, nec revertens; et posuerunt

[230] The verse may be thus literally rendered — 13. And it was, as he had called, and they heard not, So "call shall they do, and I will not hear," Said Jehovah of hosts. The Prophet relates what Jehovah had said when the Jews refused to hear him. The verb [{אמר}] here, as in a former instance, is to be rendered in the past tense. It is improperly rendered ``saith'' in our version, and also by Newcome and Henderson. The past tense is observed by Marckius. Then the beginning of the following verse is a continuation of what Jehovah had said--- 14. ``And I will drive them as by a whirlwind Among all the nations whom they know not;'' And the land became desolate after them, Without a passenger and without an inhabitant; Yea, they made the land of delight a desolation. The first two lines are literally thus--- ``And I will whirlwind them Over all the nations whom they know not.'' In the three last lines the Prophet states what the effect had been. Newcome says, that ,[{ם}] ``them,'' after ``know,'' is redundant. It is an instance of two pronouns, relative and personal, ``whom they knew them not.'' It is the same in Welsh, ``Y rhai nad adwaenant hwynt.'' --- Ed.

terram desiderabilem in vastitatem.

Here the Prophet concludes what he had been speaking of God's vengeance, by which he had fully proved, that the sins of that nation had arrived to such a pitch, that there was no room for pardon. Hence he says, that they had been dispersed; for so I prefer to render the word, and the context seems to require this. Interpreters vary as to its meaning; and, indeed, the Hebrews themselves say, that this is a difficult passage, for, according to the rules of grammar, the word can hardly be made suitable to the context. But let us first see what the Prophet treats of; and secondly, what meaning, as the word signifies various things, is the most suitable.

The Prophet no doubt refers here to God's vengeance, as evidenced by the dispersion of the Jews among many nations, not only when they were driven into exile, but also when scattered in various parts of the world. The verb, taken transitively, is by no means doubtful in its meaning, for {סער}, sor, means to move one from a place, or to expel, and that by force, inasmuch as it is derived from whirlwind. As it may therefore be here a transitive verb, I see no reason why we should seek other meanings at variance with the design and object of the Prophet. He then says, that the Jews had been dispersed --- how? among all nations, that is, through all parts of the world; and then among unknown nations. Now we know, that the farther the exile, the more severe it is, for neighbors for the most part are the most humane; and when one is removed far to a barbarous nation, he would rather a hundred times to die on his journey than to live at a great distance from his country, and among a people of new and strange habits. The meaning is, that the Jews had been severely visited by God, not only because they had departed from his true worship and holy fear, but because they had been perverse, had rejected all sound doctrine, and had been deaf and indifferent to all admonitions. It was then for this reason that they had been dispersed among all nations

He afterwards adds, that the land after them became desolate that no one passed through it. This circumstance also, that God devoted the land to desolation, proved more fully his wrath: for when God imprints marks of his vengeance on the land, and on other harmless things, necessary for man's support, it becomes evident that he is not lightly displeased with men. He then intimates, that God was not satisfied with the exile and dispersion of that people, but that he intended that there should be also visible marks of their wickedness in the sterility and desolation of the land itself: and that land, we know, was very fruitful, both by nature and by God's blessing; for he had promised to give to the Israelites a land flowing with milk and honey. When this fruitfulness was turned to sterility, such a change ought to have roused the minds of all to consider the dreadful judgment of God. We now then see why the Prophet says, that the land after them, that is, after their departure, became desolate; for they had polluted the land so far as to constrain it, though innocent, to bear the judgment of God.

And he says further, that the desirable land became a waste, even through their fault. God was indeed the author of that waste, but Zechariah imputes this calamity to the people, because they had provoked God's wrath, and procured this evil for themselves; yea, they had involved the land itself as it were in the same guilt, for it

was cursed by God, though they had been driven hence to another country. Desirable land was a name often given to Judea, not only on account of its fruitfulness, and the abundance of its produce, but because God had chosen it for himself: for though that land excelled other lands in many respects, it is yet certain that its chief excellency consisted in this, --- that God honored it with peculiar favor.

Zechariah then condemns the Jews, not only because they had by their own fault extinguished the favor as to the produce of the land, but because they had corrupted the land itself, which had been so singularly favored as to have become the habitation of God. And hence we more fully learn how great was the enormity of their sins, which caused God to devote to desolation a land chosen by himself; for, as we have said, it was no common honor for that land, in which God designed to be worshipped by his chosen and holy people, to have been destined by him to be made like Paradise. But when such an honor was turned to shame and perpetual reproach, it was clearly a remarkable sign of God's wrath: and hence also becomes evident the impiety of that people who, as it had been said, turned aside God's favor from the land, that not only it did not bring forth its usual produce, but that it also became, as it were, a disgraceful spectacle, and filled all with horror on seeing it so desolate, where was previously seen the temple and the worship of God.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast adopted us for this end, that we may show brotherly kindness one towards another, and labor for our mutual benefit, --- O grant, that we may prove by the whole tenor of our life, that we have not been called in vain by thee, but that we may so live in harmony with each other, that integrity and innocence may prevail among us; and may we so strive to benefit one another, that thy name may be thus glorified by us; until having at length finished our course, we reach the goal which thou hast set before us, that having at last gone through all the evils of this life, we may come to that blessed rest which has been prepared for us in heaven by Christ our Lord. --- Amen

Chapter 8

Lecture One Hundred and forty-eighth

Zechariah 8

Zechariah 8:1, 2

1. Again the word of the Lord of hosts came to me, saying,

1. Et fuit sermo Jehovae exercituum, dicendo, ---

2. Thus saith the Lord of hosts; I was jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I was jealous for her with great fury.

2. Sic dicit Iehova exercitumm, Zelatus sum pro Sion zelo magno (vel, aemulatione magna,) et indignatione magna aemulatus sum pro ea (vel, zelatus sum.)

Some think that at the beginning of this chapter the people are reproved for their unfaithfulness, because they conducted themselves towards God in a way they ought not to have done, as they had violated that sacred marriage which God had been pleased to contract with them; for it is a common mode of speaking for God to compare himself to jealous husbands, when he sees his Church dealing with him unfaithfully. But this meaning is inadmissible: for the verb {קנא}, kona, connected as it is here, is to be taken in a good sense, as signifying concern or affection, inasmuch as {ל}, lamed, means, ``on account of,'' or ``for;'' and we have in the first chapter a similar sentence; Zechariah 1:1 and it is evident that in many other places the meaning is no other, but that God burned with wrath against all the enemies of his Church, as he regarded his Church with singular love. Emulation then here does not mean jealousy, but is to be taken in a different sense, as signifying that concern which God had for the protection of his Church. The whole then of this chapter proves that God would be the defender of his people, and that such was his care for the safety of all the godly, that he resolved to oppose the whole world, if necessary, for their protection. This is the sum of the whole.

He then says, that the word of Jehovah came to him; [231] we hence learn, that this was a distinct prophecy. He adds, I have been zealous for Sion (for as we have

[231] Many MSS. have [{,[{אליו ``to me,'' after ``hosts,'' a reading confirmed by the Targum, Syriac, and the Septuagint. Barb. MS.; and it is no doubt the true one.---Ed.

said, the letter {ל}, lamed, is to be thus taken) with great zeal [232] This was indeed an incredible change, for God had for a time restrained himself, while the ungodly at their pleasure harassed the Church, so that they thought that they could do so with impunity. As God then had for some time remained at rest, what the Prophet says here could not have been easily believed, that is, that God would, through a sudden jealousy, undertake the cause of the Church. Hence the indignation, immediately subjoined, must be regarded with reference to enemies, as though he had said, that all the ungodly would now perceive what they had by no means expected, --- that God was the protector of Jerusalem. It now follows ---

Zechariah 8:3

3. Thus saith the Lord; I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; and the mountain of the Lord of hosts, the holy mountain.

3. Sic dicit Iehova exercituum, Reversus sum ad Sion, et habitabo in medio Ierusalem; et vocabitur Ierusaelm urbs vertiatis; et mons Iehovae exercituum, mons sanctitatis.

The Prophet now more clearly explains what he intended; but it was necessary to preserve this order --- that enemies were to be by force ejected from their possession, and the Church delivered, before God could dwell in the midst of it; for how could God have proved that Jerusalem was under his guardianship and protection without having first subdued its enemies? It was not then without reason that the Prophet commenced with this promise --- that God was prepared for war, and was burning with wrath, that he might deliver his Church from the hands of enemies. Then follows the fruit of the victory; for it would not have been enough for God to avenge the wrongs done to his chosen people, without gathering the dispersed and restoring the Church to its ancient condition. For it often happens that those who have been cruelly treated find an avenger; but no comfort, or very little comfort, comes to them, as they are made nothing better; but the Lord here refers to these two things --- that he would take up arms to defend his chosen people, and also that he would become, as the case was, the defender and protector of the holy city.

The repetition of the sentence, Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, almost in every verse, was no doubt intended for the purpose of strengthening their faith; for it was, as I have already said a thing incredible. It was then necessary to bring forward often the name of God, that the faithful might more readily give assent to the prophecy which they knew proceeded from God, even the God of hosts, whose power is infinite, and to whom nothing is difficult, as we shall find it presently stated.

And he says that he had returned; not that the accomplishment of this prophecy

[232] Newcome has followed our version. The rendering of Henderson is the same with that of Calvin, — I have been zealous for Zion with great zeal. The comparison is evidently what Calvin refers to above; it is the jealousy of a husband for the honor of his wife. Blayney has no good reason for saying that this verse refers to what was past, and the following to the state of things at that time; for the verbs in both instances are in the same tense, the perfect, which often includes the present, that is, the perfect up to the present time; as the future in Hebrew, and also in Welsh, includes the present as well as what is to come. If we say, "I have been jealous," etc., we must add in the next verse, "I have returned," etc. But it would be better in our language to use in both instances the present tense, "I am jealous," etc., and, "I am retained," etc. — Ed.

was then visible, but the decree is put for the reality. God had been, as it were, for a long time silent, while his people were exposed as a sport to their enemies; and he seemed then to be far away from Jerusalem, for the place was desolate and waste, yea, it was a scene of dreadful vengeance. God, then, during the whole of that time, seemed to have forsaken the place, according to the testimony of Ezekiel, who says, that God had removed from the temple, and that it was an empty place, and as it were profane. On this account he says now that he had returned; for he intended openly to show that it had not in vain been made the seat of his glory, when he had commanded his name to be there invoked. It is indeed true that mount Sion had never been forsaken by God; but no other opinion could have been formed, when there were there no altar, no sacrifices, and no people to worship God; for this is said with reference to divine worship; and the holiness of the mount was also nothing, except as far as God had consecrated it to himself. Hence these two things were connected --- the holiness of the mount and the presence of God. It therefore follows that God, according to the judgment of men, was absent, when no religion appeared there, and the Jews offered there no sacrifices.

He further says, that he had returned, that he might dwell in the midst of Jerusalem [233] It was necessary to add this, that the Jews might be convinced that his return was not in vain; for many said that they foolishly made too much haste, and that though the commencement had been favorable, yet many troubles would come upon them in future, and that their building would be only for a short time, and that though they spent much toil and labor in rebuilding the city, it would yet be only for a season, as their enemies would shortly come and destroy their new edifices. Since then reports of this kind were spreading, it was necessary to support the minds of the godly, that they might be fully persuaded that God had returned to his people, and had become the restorer of his exiles for this end --- that he might as before dwell at Jerusalem.

We now apprehend the Prophet's object; it was as though he had said, that the people had not returned in vain to their country, but that they had been delivered by the authority of God, and that his dwelling at Jerusalem would be fixed and perpetual, as it had before been his habitation. We indeed know that the stability of the Church is not otherwise secured than by the presence of God, as it is said in Psalm 46, ``God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved;'' for the Church would not be less exposed to sudden and frequent destruction than other things, were it not that God, her support, dwells in her. And this is what our Prophet means here when he says, that God would dwell there.

He adds, And called shall be Jerusalem the city of truth, and the mount of Jehovah the mount of holiness [234] By the first clause the Prophet reminds us why God had for a time forsaken Jerusalem, even because it was a city given to falsehoods, wicked devices, deceits, and perverse counsels. As then the Jews had wholly de-

[233] "The walls of the city were not dedicated, Nehemiah 12:27, till above sixty years after this prophecy."—Newcome.

[234] This verse presents an example of an inverted order in the words, often met with in Scripture. Zion and Jerusalem are first mentioned, then Jerusalem and Zion. "Truth" here seems especially to mean faithfulness, as opposed to perfidy; for Jerusalem had become unfaithful and broken her covenant with God. "Holiness" included what was moral and ceremonial. — Ed.

generated from true religion, the Prophet intimates that the city became destitute of its guardian and protector, even of God himself. And for the same purpose are added the words, the mount of Jehovah shall be called the mount of holiness. For however proudly the Jews boasted that they worshipped God, they yet had profaned both the temple and the altar by their sins, as we have seen it proved by the Prophet Haggai. (Haggai 2:15.) Here then Zechariah indirectly reproves the Jews for having corrupted all purity by their frauds, and also for having, by the defilements of their sins, polluted Sion and the temple of God. At the same time he teaches us that God dwells in his Church where he sanctifies it.

Hence God is never idle while he dwells in his people; for he cleanses away every kind of impurity, every kind of deceit, that where he dwells may ever be a holy place. Therefore the Prophet not only promises here an external blessing to the Jews, but also shows that God performs what is far more excellent --- that he cleanses the place where he intends to dwell, and the habitation which he chooses, and casts out every kind of filth. And since God promises to do this, we hence see that it is his own peculiar work and gift to cleanse all our impurities, and also to dissipate everything false and deceitful. The import of the whole is, that when God reconciles his people to himself, he not only brings an outward blessing of an earthly kind, but also something better and far more excellent, even the renewal of the heart and mind, and that when all things are polluted and filthy, he restores true and perfect cleanness and integrity.

We must further bear also in mind what I have already stated --- that their sins are here intimated to the Jews, that they might be touched with shame, and seek repentance; for we have seen that they were very slow and tardy in this respect. It was then necessary to stimulate them that they might repent. For what the Prophet says clearly intimates that mount Sion had been profaned, though God had consecrated it to himself; for God's worship had been there vitiated, and there was there no integrity; and that the faithful city, such at least as it ought to have been, had become full of falsehood and treachery; for truth is not to be confined to that fidelity which men ought to observe one towards another, but is to be extended to that sincerity which the faithful ought to possess as to the pure and sincere worship of God. This is the sum of the whole. It now follows ---

Zechariah 8:4

4. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age.

4. Sic dicit Iehova exercituum, Adhuc habitabunt vetuli et vetulae (vel, senes et anus, sed est idem nomen) in plateis Ierosolymae, et viro baculus ejus in manu sua prae multitudine dierum.

He confirms what we have already stated, that the Jews would be safe under the hand and protection of God, as he would dwell among them. The cause of a safe and quiet state he made to be the presence of God. For when we have peace with the whole world, we may yet disturb one another, except the God of peace restrains us; inasmuch as mutual and intestine discord may harass us, though we may be spared by external enemies. It is then necessary in the first place, that the God of

peace and salvation should dwell in the midst of us. But when we have the presence of God, then comes full security. Suitably then does the Prophet now say, that yet dwell would old men and old women the midst of Jerusalem: for since the time the Jews had returned, they had been harassed, we know, by continual wars; and it could hardly be expected that they could live long in a state of incessant troubles, while new fears were daily disturbing them. Since then they were thus in incessant and endless dangers, the Prophet gives them relief, and promises that there would be to them yet a quiet habitation, so that both men and women would live to extreme old age. Hence he says, There shall yet dwell, etc

Then he adds, a staff shall be to man for his age, or on account of multitude of days. This seems indeed to have been said with no great propriety; for it would have been much better had vigor been given them, so that men failed not through old age. Hence the weakness mentioned here seems to have been a sign of God's curse rather than of his favor; and on this account the Lord promises by Isaiah, that old men would be vigorous and strong, (Isaiah 65:20;) so that they felt not the disadvantage of age. But the design of Zechariah, as we have already reminded you, was here different; for many by their daily complaints depressed the minds of the godly, declaring that they were deceived, and saying that Jerusalem would not long stand, as they were surrounded by so many enemies. Hence Zechariah shows, that the Jews would be in no danger of falling by the hand of enemies, as they would live securely without any external disturbances; for we know that many old men, half alive through age and supporting themselves by a staff, cannot be anywhere seen, except in a state of peace and quietness, undisturbed by enemies. [235]

We now then perceive the design of the Prophet, which was to show, that Jerusalem would be tranquil and in peace, and that this would be the fruit of God's presence; for its citizens would die through years, and not through the violence of eternal enemies. To the same purpose is what follows ---

Zechariah 8:5

5. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof.

5. Et plateae urbis plenae erunt pueris et puellis, ludentibus in plateis ejus.

He repeats and confirms the same thing by another representation --- that boys and girls would play in the streets and on the public roads, which could not be during the troublous time of war; for when arms clatter, the sound of trumpets is heard, and assaults of enemies are dreaded, every one keeps his children at home, and in public there is sad confusion, and few are found abroad; in short there is no cheerfulness even in children when fear is hanging over them. We hence see, that what is here promised is a state of quietness to Jerusalem; for God would keep off the onsets of enemies --- not that Jerusalem was ever exempt from all evils, but that God's defense was so effectual as to render them safe amidst many and various dangers.

It is not needful here anxiously to raise the questions --- Whether it is lawful to play during times of peace? for the Prophet here took his language from the common

[235] "Longevity and a numerous offspring were especially promised under the old dispensation, but uniformly in connection with obedience to the law. Deuteronomy 4:40; 5:16,33; 6:2; 33:6,24; Isaiah 65:20." — Henderson.

habits of men, and even from the very nature of things; for we know that men give way to cheerfulness when no fear lays hold on their minds, and that play and sport are allowed to children. The Prophet meant only this, that though the Jews might then have something to do with various enemies, they would yet be in a state of peace and safety. He afterwards adds ---

Zechariah 8:6

6. Thus saith the Lord of hosts; If it be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, should it also be marvellous in mine eyes? saith the Lord of hosts.

6. Sic dicit Iehovae exercituum, Si mirabile est hoc in oculis reliquiarum populi hujus in diebus illis, etiam in oculis meis mirabile erit? dicit Iehova exercituum.

He sharply reproves here the lack of faith in the people; for as men are wont to measure whatever is promised by their own understanding, the door of entrance for these prophecies was nearly closed up when they saw that the fury of their enemies could by no means be pacified. They had indeed tried in various ways to check them, or at least to conciliate them; and we know that many edicts had been proclaimed in favor of the Jews by the kings of Persia; but such was the common hatred to them, that new enemies arose continually. On this account it is that the Prophet now blames their want of faith; and he points out, as by the finger, the source of their unbelief when he says, that they had no faith in God who spoke to them, because he promised more then what they could conceive to be possible. And this deserves notice, for if we wish to pull up unbelief by the roots from our hearts, we must begin at this point --- to raise up our thoughts above the world; yea, to bid adieu to our own judgment, and simply to embrace what God promises; for his power ought to carry us up to such a height that we may entertain no doubt but that what seems to us impossible will surely be accomplished. What the Prophet calls ``wonderful'' is the same as impossible; for men often wonder at God's worlds without believing them, and even under the false pretense of wonder deny his power. Hence when God promises anything, doubts immediately creep in --- ``Can this be done?'' If a reason does not appear, as the thing surpasses our comprehension, we instantly conclude that it cannot be. We thus see how men pretending to wonder at God's power entirely obliterate it.

When therefore the Prophet now says, If this be wonderful in your eyes, shall it be so in mine? it is the same as though he had said, ``If you reject what I promise to you, because it is not in accordance with your judgment, is it right that my power should be confined to what you can comprehend?'' We hence see that nothing is more preposterous than to seek to measure God's power by our own understanding. But he seems to say at the same time, that it is useful for us to raise upwards our minds, and to be so filled with wonder, while contemplating God's infinite power, that nothing afterwards may appear wonderful to us. We now perceive how it behaves us to wonder at God's works, and yet not to regard anything wonderful in them. There is no work of God so minute, but that it contains something wonderful, when it is considered as it ought to be; but yet when raised up by faith we apprehend the infinite power of God, which seems incredible to the understanding of the flesh, we

look down as it were on the things below; for our faith ascends far above this world.

We now see the true source of unbelief and also of faith. The source of unbelief is this --- when men confine God's power to their own understanding; and the source of faith is --- when they ascribe to God the praise due to his infinite power, when they regard not what is easy, but being satisfied with his word alone they are fully persuaded that God is true, and that what he promises is certain, because he is able to fulfill it. So Paul teaches us, who says, that Abraham's faith was founded on this assurance --- that he doubted not but that he who had spoken was able really to accomplish his word. (Romans 4:20.) Hence, that the promises of God may penetrate into our hearts and there strike deep roots, we must bid adieu to our own judgment; for while we are wise in ourselves and rely on earthly means, the power of God vanishes as it were from our sight, and his truth also at the same time disappears. In a word, we must regard, not what is probable, not what nature brings, not what is usual, but what God can do, what his infinite power can effect. We ought then to emerge from the confined compass of our flesh, and by faith, as we have said, ascend above the world.

And he says, In the eyes of the remnant of this people, etc. By this sentence he seems to touch the Jews to the quick, who had already in a measure experienced the power of God in their restoration; for thirty years before their freedom had been given them by Cyrus and Darius, they regarded as a fable what God had promised them; they said that they were in a grave from which no exit could have been expected: they had experienced how great and incredible was God's power; and yet as people astonished, they despaired of their future safety. This ingratitude then is what Zechariah now indirectly reproves by calling them the remnant of his people. They were a small number, they had not raised their banner to go forth against the will of their enemies; but a way had been suddenly opened to them beyond all expectation. Since then they had been taught by experience to know that God was able to do more than they could have imagined, the Prophet here justly condemns them for having formed so unworthy an idea of that power of God which had been found by experience to have been more than sufficient. He afterwards adds ---

Zechariah 8:7, 8

7. Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Behold, I will save my people from the east country, and from the west country;

7. Sic dicit Iehova exercituum, Ecce ergo servans populum meum e terra orientis et e terra occasus solis;

8. And I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness.

8. Et reducam eos, et habitabunt in medio Ierosolymae; et erunt mihi in populum, et ego ero illis in Deum, in veritate et justitia.

He pursues the same subject, and introduces a preface, very necessary in so confused a state of things; for it was very difficult to raise up desponding minds and to inspire them with confidence, when pressed down with fear and trembling. This is the reason why Zechariah repeats so often, that he declared nothing but God's commands only.

Behold, he says, I will save, or deliver my people. As dispersion took away hope, the Prophet restores it, and says, that it would not be difficult to gather the people from all parts of the world, when God stretched forth his hand; and emphatical is the expression, I will deliver my people. God then does here exalt himself, that we may learn to exalt his power, and not to judge of it according to our own comprehension. I will deliver my people, he says, from the rising as well as from the setting of the sun. This sentence then is connected with the preceding, in which the Prophet briefly shows that the Jews erred and acted perversely, when they ascribed no more to God than what the judgment of their own flesh dictated, or what seemed probable according to the course of nature. As then he had taught them that great wrong is done to God except he is separated from men, and shines eminent above the whole world, he now adds, that God, with whom nothing is wonderful or difficult, had resolved to gather his people, and from their dispersion to restore them again to Jerusalem. The Prophet then says here nothing new, but rightly applies what he had just said of God's infinite and incomprehensible power, which men absurdly attempt to inclose in their own brains, and to attach to earthly instrumentalities.

He then adds, I will restore them, and they shall dwell, he says, in the midst of Jerusalem. He again confirms what I have already stated, --- that their return would not be in vain, though many said, that the Jews had done foolishly in having returned so quickly into their own country; and they condemned their determination, as though they had been suddenly carried away by extreme ardor. Hence the Prophet, in order to show that God had dealt faithfully with his people, promises them here a safe and a perpetual habitation at Jerusalem. They shall dwell, he says; that is, ``As you now see that you have been gathered, so expect that God will be your protector, so as to render you safe, and to make Jerusalem to be again inhabited, as it had been formerly.''

He afterwards adds, They shall be to me for a people, and I shall be to them for a God. By these words the Prophet confirms what he has hitherto taught, when he now speaks of the renewal of the covenant; for the whole hope of the people depended on this one thing, --- that God remembered the covenant which he had made with them. This covenant had indeed been broken, according to the usual language of Scripture; for the people, when removed into exile, thought that they were cast away and forsaken by God. As then the memory of this covenant had been buried as to the effect, or as they say, apparently, the Prophet, in order to confirm what he has already said, expressly declares, that they would be God's people, and that he would be their God. We now then understand why he adds, ``I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people''.

In the last place he says, in truths and righteousness; that is, ``settled and permanent shall be this felicity'': for when God shows that he cares for his people, then follow outward blessings, which are evidences of his favor. The Prophet adds, that this shall be in truth and righteousness; for God will not be propitious and kind to his people only for a short time, but will continue his favor to them to the end. As then God intended to establish the safety of the city, he testifies that he would be its God in righteousness, even in sincerity, in good faith, and without dissimulation,

and also without any danger of changing. [236] And how this was to be fulfilled we shall hereafter see.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that though we daily depart from thee by our sins, we may not yet be wholly removed from the foundation on which our salvation depends; but do thou so sustain us, or even raise us up when fallen, that we may ever continue in our degree, and also return to thee in true repentance, and whatever may happen to us, may we learn ever to look to thee, that we may never despair of thy goodness, which thou hast promised to be firm and perpetual, and that especially while relying on thy only-begotten Son our Mediator, we may be able to call on thee as our Father, until we shall at length come to that eternal inheritance, which has been obtained for us by the blood of thine only Son. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Forty-ninth

Zechariah 8:9-11

9. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Let your hands be strong, ye that hear in these days these words by the mouth of the prophets, which were in the day that the foundation of the house of the LORD of hosts was laid, that the temple might be built.

9. Sic dicit Iehova exercituum, Roborentur manus vestrae, qui auditis in diebus his verba haec ex ore Prophetarum, qui (fuerunt) in die quo fundata est domus Iehovae exercituum, et templum extrueretur.

10. For before these days there was no hire for man, nor any hire for beast; neither was there any peace to him that went out or came in because of the affliction: for I set all men every one against his neighbour.

10. Quia ante dies istos merces hominis non fuit, et merces jumenti nulla, et egredienti et venienti nulla pax ab angusta (vel, prae afflictione,) et emisi cunctos homines, quemque in socium suum.

11. But now I will not be unto the residue of this people as in the former days, saith the LORD of hosts.

11. At nunc non secundum dies superiores ego (agam) cum reliquiis populi hujus (agam non est in contextu, sed supplendum est,) dicit Iehova exercituum.

The Prophet having taught us that God was reconciled to his people, does now seasonably exhort the Jews to prepare themselves for work and strenuously to exert themselves in erecting the temple, and also in building the city: for as we have stated, many were then become slothful, as they thought that they were soon to be destroyed by their enemies, and that what they built with great labor, toil, and expense, would be presently demolished. Hence it was that sloth had crept in, so that many had left off the building both of the temple and of the city: and we have also seen elsewhere, that they were too intent on building their own houses, and at the same time neglected the temple; for each looked to his own private advantage,

[236] Blayney and Henderson consider these words, "truth" and "righteousness," as belonging as equally to the two foregoing sentences, as applying to the people as well as to God. But they seem more properly as applying to God, as truth connected with righteousness refers to his faithfulness, confirmed by his justice in the performance of his promise. God is true or faithful, and further, he is righteous or just, so that what he has promised will surely be fulfilled. See 1 John 1:9. — Ed.

and also to his own pleasures. The Prophet Haggai sharply reproved this indifference, (Haggai 1:4;) and the Lord clearly showed that he had punished this their sloth; for they preferred their own houses to the temple, and through want of faith trembled, as though their restoration was a mockery. As then the people by their ingratitude had almost wiped away the recollection of their deliverance, the Prophet Haggai severely reproved them; and Zechariah now touches on the same subject.

Hence he says, that before they had begun the work of building the temple, the land was sterile, as though it was cursed by God, and that they were deprived of their hope, and that whatever they attempted proved useless; but that after they had begun, through the encouragement given them by the Prophets, to take courage to build the temple, things changed for the better, and that openly, so that it was easy to conclude, that God had been previously displeased with them, but that now he was favorable, as all things went on prosperously. This change then was a clear token both of God's displeasure and of God's favor; for he had justly chastised his people as long as they were under the influence of unbelief, so as not to proceed with the work of building the temple; and afterwards the favor of God had begun to shine on them, as God gave them abundance of provisions, and proved in various ways that he was now favorable to them. Zechariah therefore mentions these things, that they might proceed more cheerfully with their work, and not provoke God's wrath, which they had previously found to have been so much to their loss, and that they might seek to enjoy his blessing, which was now so manifest before their eyes. This is the import of the whole.

He says, Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, Strengthened let be your hands. He exhorts them to perseverance: but as men become weak, and many things occur which enfeeble or break down their courage, he uses the word, strengthen; for it is often necessary to gather new strength, and to confirm a pious resolution. Let us now then learn to apply this doctrine to our own benefit, and let us understand what experience sufficiently teaches us, even this --- that our hands, though at first well prepared, are yet soon relaxed, and as it were loosed, and even entirely fail, unless new strength be now and then attained; and that this is effected when we are animated by God's word, and rise superior to the trials which enfeeble us. And Zechariah will presently inform us whence this strength was to be sought, even from the promises which they had already heard from the Prophets; for he would have in vain exhorted them to persevere, had not the ground of confidence been mentioned. For when God is silent, our minds, though before abundantly ready and willing, must languish, and at length wholly fail.

We then see that there can be no courage in men, unless God supports them by his word, so that they may recover their lost strength and regain their alacrity. Had the Prophet only bidden them to take courage, they might have replied, that there was nothing in their circumstances to encourage them; but when the word of God was set before them, every excuse was taken away; and they were now to gird up the loins, and boldly to fight, inasmuch as God supplied them with weapons.

Be strong, he says, ye who hear in these days these words from the mouth of the Prophets. Though Zechariah is not often concise in his words, but in many parts

diffuse, yet he is so here, and the whole verse is very emphatical; for after having said that they were not destitute of God's promises, he adds, ``in these days,'' and also ``these words.'' He intimates that they were not only taught a general truth, that they were to render obedience, but that God himself would be their leader to direct their steps and to show them the way: in a word, he omits nothing to enable them to proceed without difficulty with the work which they had begun. There is then an emphasis intended by the demonstrative, ``these,'' ``these;'' for the Prophet intimates that God was continually speaking to them, and that he announced not only a general truth, but specific words, by which they might guide their feet and their hands in every action. And he says, that those words were heard from the mouth of the Prophets, for God intended honor to be done to his servants; and it is, as it has been often stated, a true test of faith, when God descends not himself from heaven, or does not appear to us in a visible form, but makes use of men as his ministers. Yet Zechariah briefly intimates, that the Prophets are not the authors of the promises, which are necessary to raise up, support, and stimulate our minds; for the Lord only employs their service; and this is what he means by the word mouth

He now adds, Who were in that day in which was founded the house of Jehovah, in order to build the temple. Not much time had elapsed since they had begun again to build the temple, and the foundations had been laid; but the work had been discontinued through the unbelief of them all, and also through the private regard of each to his own interest. For as they were in suspense and doubtful, there arose sloth and indifference, and avarice possessed them, so that they despised the temple of God. But he says now that during that short time God often spoke to them by his Prophets with the view of correcting their delay and tardiness, for the Prophet mentions here as it were but one day, for the purpose of expressing how short the time had been. Less excusable then was their sloth, since God daily spoke to them and confirmed by new Prophets what the former ones had said. [237]

It follows, For before these days there was no hire for man, and no hire for beast, no peace to passengers, because I had sent forth all men, each one against his friend. The Prophet mentions here, as I have already said, evidences of God's curse, by which the Jews might have learnt that he was displeased with their neglect in disregarding the building of the temple, for while omitting that they paid attention to their domestic affairs. He therefore reminds them of what might have made them to fear, lest they should go on still to provoke God; for they had been taught, to their great loss, not to excite in this manner his displeasure: and Zechariah, no doubt, as well as Haggai and Malachi, had often addressed the people on this subject; for we see how prone is the disposition of us all to relapse into forgetfulness when God in any measure relaxes in his discipline. We presently shake off every fear when exempt from evils. This is the reason why it is needful for us to be often reminded of those judgments of God which we have experienced, according to what is done

[237] The verse may be thus rendered— Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, Strengthened be your hands, Who hear in these days Those very words from the mouth of the Prophets, Which ye heard in the day of founding the house Of Jehovah of Hosts, the temple, that it might be built. As in a former instance, chapter 2:4, [{,[{אלה repeated, should be rendered ``these'' and ``those.'' Blayney borrows after ``which'' the verb ``ye heard,'' from the former line; but Henderson considers [{דברו}] to be understood, ``which were spoken.'' The former is the most obvious. --- Ed.

here by Zechariah.

Before these days, he says, there was no hire for man, and no hire for beast; that is, there was no profit from the labor of men or of beasts. He takes it as granted, that men were not tardy in their work, and that beasts performed their labors, but that no fruit appeared. And whence was it the labor of men and of beasts was unprofitable, except from God's curse, as the law testifies? (Deuteronomy 28:8.) For when the Prophets speak of God's curse they refer to the law, and only apply to their present purpose what is stated generally in the law. As then God declares in the law that he will bless the work of the hands, Zechariah draws this inference that God was displeased when men and beasts toiled laboriously without any advantage.

He then adds, There was no peace. When men labor in vain, thirst and want of all things must follow; for though the labor of man, we know, is of itself of no value, yet when blessed by God it is the means of promoting fertility, so that the earth may supply us with food. On the other hand, when the labor of man is barren, even the earth itself refuses to bring forth fruit. It was then no light calamity when God visited the people with poverty and famine. But another evil is added, no less dreadful and even more grievous that the land was so harassed by enemies that no travelling was safe. Hence he says, that there was no peace to him who went out or to him who came in; that is, there was no free or peaceable travelling, but they were exposed to pillage and plunder. In a word, Zechariah teaches us here, that the Jews were under a curse both within and without, for the land disappointed those who cultivated it, as it yielded no fruit, and then they were exposed to hostile assaults.

With regard to the words, {הצר} {מן}, men etsar, some render them, on account of distress, ``there was no peace on account of distress.'' But we may retain the proper meaning of the preposition {מן}, mem, ``there was no peace from distress;'' that is, there were none safe from inconvenience and molestation. [238]

The reason is added, Because God had sent forth all men, each one against his neighbor. The Prophet designedly subjoined this, that the Jews might know that these evils could not be ascribed to fortune, as though men did rise up thoughtlessly one against another. Hence he reminds them that their quietness was disturbed by the just and hidden judgment of God, for he can turn as he pleases the hearts of men; he now inclines them to humanity or to mercy, and then he turns them to madness and ferocity. That the Jews might know that they had to do with God, the Prophet declares here that men had been sent forth, that they might mutually rage and assault one another.

Hence they who use the word permit, not only take away from what the Prophet means, but wholly pervert his doctrine and extinguish its light altogether: for God

[238] Calvin has in this instance followed the Septuagint, and so has Newcome; but the Targum has "propter hostem — on account of the enemy;" and the same is the most common meaning of the Hebrew; and such is the rendering of Drusius, Marckius, Dathius, and Henderson. We may give this literal version of the whole verse,— 10. For before those days, The hire of man, it was nothing; And the hire of beast, not any; And to the goer and the comer, No peace from the enemy; And I sent forth every man, Each one against his neighbor. The word [{צר is perhaps more strictly an oppressor than an enemy, though it be often rendered by the latter word. The verb means to straiten, to confine, and thus to distress, to afflict, or to oppress. Not a foreign but a domestic enemy is here meant, as intimated in the two last lines. The ``sending forth'' shows that these enemies were robbers; and this is also evident from the statement that ``goers'' and ``comers'' were not safe. Hence our version and that of Newcome are wrong, in which ``I set'' is found instead of ``I sent forth,'' the proper meaning of the verb used here. ``I sent'' of Henderson is not quite correct, for the idea is not fully expressed. --- Ed.

does not say here that he was still when the Jews ill-treated one another; but he meant to have this attributed to his judgment. For when almost the whole world was hostile to a few men, and those related to one another, they ought surely to have been united among themselves; for necessity conciliates even the most alienated, and even pacifies those who have been previously the most violent enemies. Since, then, the Jews were assailed by foreign enemies, they ought to have been friends among themselves, or at least to have been so softened as not to be so hostile towards one another. As then they raged against their own bowels, so that no one spared his own friends, God more fully shows by this circumstance that he was the author of these confusions. And how God kindles the hearts of men to ferocity, and is yet free from all blame, has been explained elsewhere. God indeed executes his righteous judgments, when he sets men one against the other; and if we inquire into the cause and the end, we shall find that men are in this way justly punished. As then in God's judgments there ever shines forth the highest equity, there is no reason for men to try to implicate him in their own perdition, or to devolve on him a part of the blame. God then justly excites the hearts of men into madness, and yet men themselves bear the whole blame, though God draws them here and there against their will, and makes use of them as his instruments; for the hidden purpose of God does not excuse them, while nothing is less their object than to obey his word, though they are guided by his hidden operation. We know that no work pleases God, but when there is a willing obedience, which none of the reprobate ever render; and we also know that all works are to be judged according to the end designed. We must therefore consider what was the reason that God thus set men against one another, and what end he had in view. But we have elsewhere discussed this subject at large.

Let us then now, in short, bear this in mind, that the Jews mutually harassed and distressed one another, not by chance, but because the Lord, who was their enemy and whose wrath they had provoked, had sent them forth as enemies among themselves.

He afterwards adds, But now, not according to former days, shall I be to the remnant of this people, saith Jehovah of hosts. Zechariah now reminds them that things had changed for the better, as it was evident that God was propitious to them. And if the cause of this change be asked, the answer is, the building of the temple. If nothing had been said by the Prophets, the Jews might have only conjectured, but every doubt had been removed; for God had threatened then with punishment which he afterwards inflicted, and then he exhorted them to repentance, and said that he would be reconciled to them: when the Jews rightly considered these things, they had no need of having recourse to conjectures. It was indeed fully evident that God regarded them with favor, and that the fruits of his favor were before their eyes; and they were thus encouraged to proceed with the work of building the temple. It now follows ---

Zechariah 8:12

12. For the seed shall be prosperous; the vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things

12. Quia semen pacis, vitis proferet fructum suum, et terra proferet fructum suum (est quidem aliud nomen, sed idem significat,) et coeli dabunt rorem suum; et possidere faciam reliquias populi hujus omnia haec.

Here Zechariah promises the continuance of God's favor, which the Jews had now begun to taste. God then had in part openly showed that he was a Father to the Jews, by dealing liberally with them: but in order more fully to strengthen them in their perseverance, Zechariah says that this favor would be continued.

And he says first, that there would be the seed of peace. Some think that it is called the seed of peace because the cultivation of the fields, while the assaults of enemies were dreaded, was deserted; no one dared to bring out his oxen or his horses, and then even when the husbandmen sowed their fields, it was not done as in seasons of quietness and security. As then the fields, when badly cultivated in times of war, do not produce a full crop, so they think that it is called the seed of peace, when husbandmen are permitted to employ necessary labor, when they are free from every fear, and devote securely their toils on the cultivation and the sowing of their fields. Others explain the seed of peace to be this --- that it is so when neither storms, nor tempests, nor mildew, nor any other evils do any harm to the corn and fruit. But as {שלום}, shelum, means often in Hebrew prosperity, we may so take it here, that it would be the seed of peace, that is, that the seed would be prosperous; and this interpretation seems to me less strained. It shall then be the seed of peace, that is, it shall prosper according to your labor; what is sown shall produce its proper fruit. [239]

There is added an explanation --- The vine shall yield its fruit, and the earth shall yield its increase, and the heaven shall yield its dew. We hence conclude that it was called the seed of peace, because the husbandmen gained their object when the earth, irrigated by the dew of heaven, was not sterile, and when the produce was abundant, when there was plenty of corn and wine, and of other things. There is then peace or prosperity as to the seed, when the corn grows according to our wishes, and comes to maturity, and when heaven responds to the earth, and withholds not its dew, as we have seen in another place. In short, God testifies that the remnant of his people should abound in all good things, for the heaven would not withhold from them its rain, nor the earth shut up its bowels.

But God ever recalls his people to himself, that they may depend on his blessing; for it would be a cold doctrine were we not persuaded of this --- that the earth is not otherwise fruitful than as God gives it the power of generating and of bringing forth.

[239] It is not easy to know the precise meaning of this phrase, capable as it is of various explanations. Jerome, Grotius, and Marckius consider "the remnant," mentioned in the preceding verse, as meant by the seed, "For the seed shall be peace," or peacable, instead of being rebellious as before. The verse, as stated by Marckius, may be thus rendered, — For to the seed of peace Shall the vine yield its fruit, etc. But what seems most consonant with the whole passage, is to regard [{[{זרע as meaning seed-time or sowing, (Genesis 8:22,) and to consider [{שלום}] to be, in its ordinary sense, as signifying peace or peacable. It was said before, in verse 10, that there was no peace to goers and comers, such as went forth to labor in the field: but now there was to be a different state of things. Then the version would be, --- 12. For the sowing-time will be peacable; The vine shall give its fruit, And the land shall give its increase, And the heavens shall give their dew: Yea, I will cause the remnant of this people To inherit all these things. But most follow Calvin's view: so do Newcome and Henderson. Blayney considers [{זרע}] a participle, and construes the words in connection with the former verse, ``I will not be to the residue of this people such as I was in former days,'' (that is, a sower of discord, as verse 10,) ``but a sower of peace.'' This certainly makes the construction easier. --- Ed.

We ought therefore ever to regard the blessing of God, and to ask of him to supply us with food, and to pray him every day, as we are taught, to give us our daily bread. But few do this from the heart, and hardly one in a hundred so turns his thoughts to God's hand as firmly to believe that he daily receives from him his daily food. We now understand what the Prophet means in these words. It now follows ---

Zechariah 8:13

13. And it shall come to pass, that as ye were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing: fear not, but let your hands be strong.

13. Et erit, quemadmodum fuistis maledictio inter gentes, domus Iehudah, et domus Israel; sic servabo vos et eritis benedictio: ne timeatis, roborentur manus vestrae.

He goes on with the same subject, and in this verse he states two contrary things, in order to render more clear what he teaches here --- that while God was angry the earth was barren, and all things went on unhappily with the Jews; but that when God had begun to be reconciled, the earth had as it were changed its nature, and brought forth plentifully, and that they were in every way made blessed.

Hence he says, As ye have been a curse, etc. Here again he mentions and reminds them how miserable they were while they minded only their private interest, and by neglecting the temple manifested their impiety and ingratitude; for what ought they to have been more ready to do when they returned to their country than to build the temple, and to offer there sacrifices to God, in order to avow him as the author of their deliverance? But the temple was neglected; and the Prophet concludes that they must have been extremely forgetful, if they did not consider what their condition was as long as they had no care for the temple; and he says that they had been a curse among the nations; that is, that they were an example of a curse, according to the threatening of the law. For it is a mode of speaking frequent in Scripture, that the people were a curse; and the common formula of cursing was --- ``Let the Lord curse thee as he does the Jews.'' Zechariah then says that the Jews had been a curse, that they had not only been smitten by God's hand, but that they had been given up to calamities, in order that they might become to all detestable, and bear in a manner signs of God's wrath imprinted on them. Whoever then at that time looked on a Jew, he might see that he had the appearance of bearing a curse. In short, Zechariah means that the Jews had been punished in a manner not common or usual, but that God had executed on them dreadful judgments, which made it evident to all that he was grievously offended with them. Ye have been then a curse among all nations [240]

He then adds, So I will save you, as ye shall be a blessing. The word save is introduced that God might more clearly set forth his favor, lest the Jews should think

[240] Calvin takes no notice of the words "House of Judah, and house of Israel." This has occasioned difficulty to some interpreters. But Newcome thinks that "many of the ten tribes" returned with "the house of Judah" from captivity, and are here addressed. Henderson is of the same opinion, and adds these remarks — "They also (that is the house of Israel) returned to Palestine, [{{בימים}}, {{האלה}}] in the very days (verse 15) to which it (the prophecy) refers. All attempts to discover them at more recent periods have proved utterly fruitless; and the idea that they must still exist somewhere in the world, and are still to be restored in their tribal state, has arisen from misconstruction of those prophecies which refer to the return from Babylon.'' --- Ed.

that the change had been effected by fortuitous change; for we know that men's thoughts soon change, and they feign this or that cause that they may obscure God's providence. God then, before he promises that they should be a blessing, says that he would save them. What it is to be a blessing may be easily learnt from the opposite clause. They are then said to be a blessing who bear evident tokens of God's favor and kindness. So the Prophet means, that when people wished to be prayed for, or when they wished well to one another, this would be the common form of their requests --- ``May God bless us as he blesses his chosen people: as the Jews are dear to God, so may he favor us with the same or similar kindness.'' Thus then we see that the Jews were a curse, when exposed to extreme reproaches; and that they became a blessing when God manifested towards them tokens of favor, and showed in reality, or by the effect, that he was pacified towards them.

He says, in the last place, Fear ye not; strengthened be your hands. He exhorts them to entertain hope, for fear stands opposed to confidence; and fear, proceeding from unbelief, cannot be otherwise dissipated but by God's promises made to us, which chase away all doubts. Rightly then does the Prophet teach us that the Jews had no reason to fear, for he declares that God was propitious to them. We indeed know that all fear cannot be wholly driven away from the hearts of men; for it would be necessary to deprive us of every feeling before we could regard dangers without fears. But though fear is natural to us, and occasions of fear ever occur to us, yet the fear of unbelief may be dispelled by faith; and hence it is no wonder that God condemns fear, when he promises salvation to his elect. But as I have said, we ought to observe that there is here a contrast between condemnable fear and that confidence which relies on God's word. We must also add, that the confidence of God's children is never so complete that they are free from all fear, even the fear of unbelief; but still we ought to struggle against it, so as not to be hindered in the course of our calling. And this we learn more fully from the end of the verse.

Strengthened be your hands. But why does the Prophet forbid the Jews to fear? even for this purpose, --- that they might arouse themselves for the work which the Lord had allotted to them, and not allow fear to retard them or to prevent them to persevere.

We now then perceive how the faithful become prepared and ready to render service to God: sloth must first be shaken off --- but how? even by having fear removed. What is the remedy for healing fear? even to recomb on the promises of God; for when our minds are composed, the hands and the feet and all the members will be ready to do their office. Alacrity both of mind and heart and of all the members follows, when fear is shaken off, and when men begin so to rely on God's word, as to know that his help is enough for them against all dangers, and to dread nothing, being convinced that the Lord will by his power remove all hindrances.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou sees us to be cold and frigid, when all our actions ought to be consecrated to thee, and all our members to be devoted to thy service in obedience to thy word, --- O grant, that we may every day courageously strive against our natural indifference, and contend with all hindrances, and boldly

repel all assaults which Satan may make, so that though our fervor may not be such as it ought to be, we may yet with sincere desire and genuine affection of heart ever advance in the course of our calling, until we reach the goal and be gathered into thy kingdom to enjoy the victory which thou hast promised to us, and with which thou also daily favourest us, until at length it be fully enjoyed, when we shall be gathered into thy celestial kingdom, through Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Fiftieth

Zechariah 8:14, 15

14. For thus saith the LORD of hosts; As I thought to punish you, when your fathers provoked me to wrath, saith the LORD of hosts, and I repented not:

14. Quia sic dicit Iehovah exercituum, Quemadmodum cogitavi malum inferre vobis dum me inflammarunt (aut, provocarunt) patres vestri, dicit Iehova exercituum; et non poenituit me;

15. So again have I thought in these days to do well unto Jerusalem and to the house of Judah: fear ye not.

15. Sic conversus sum, cogitavi diebus istis benefacere Ierosolymae et domui Iehudah, ne timeatis.

The Prophet confirms the truth in the preceding verse, when he said that there would be a wholly different lot to the Jews, as they would in every way be blessed. He shows the cause of the change; for God would begin to favor them, who had been before displeased with them. We indeed know that the Holy Spirit everywhere calls men before God's tribunal, that they may know that no adversity happens to them, except through their sins. So also in this place Zechariah reminds us, that God had been angry with the Jews, because they had provoked his wrath. But now a promise is added, that God had turned; not that he had changed his mind, but he meant to show that he was pacified. [241] We indeed know that we are to judge of God's love or hatred to us by outward things; for when God treats us severely, manifest tokens of his wrath appear; but when he deals kindly with us, then the fruit of reconciliation seems evident. According to this view does he now say, that God was of another mind than formerly towards the Jews; for he designed to show them kindness, having before sharply and severely chastised them. But we must more particularly consider each part.

He says, that as God had previously resolved to punish the Jews, he was now inclined to show mercy, and that they would find him as it were changed and different from what he had been. These verses, as I have said, are explanatory; for the Prophet had briefly promised that the Jews would be a remarkable example of being a blessed people, but he now shows why God had previously inflicted on them so many evils

[241] Some, as Drusius, Newcome, and Henderson, as well as our own translators, have regarded this verb "turned" as used here adverbially, as it is evidently in some places, "So again have I thought," or purposed: but the construction here is not the same as when it occurs in that sense; and it is to be taken here in contrast to the not repenting in the preceding verse. God in the former instance did not turn, or change, or repent; but now he is said to have turned. I render the two verse thus,— 14. For thus saith Jehovah of hosts,— As I fully purposed to render evil to you, Because your fathers made me extremely angry, Saith Jehovah of hosts, And I did not repent; 15. So have I turned, and fully purposed in these days To do good to Jerusalem, And to the house of Judah; fear not. The verb [{זמם is more than to think or to purpose; it being a reduplicate verb, it signifies to purpose firmly or fully. The Septuagint and the Syriac version supply and before it in verse 15. --- Ed.

and calamities, even because their fathers had provoked his wrath. And when he says that he had visited them on account of the crimes or sins of their fathers, we must understand this of the body of the people. Superfluous then is the question which some interpreters moot, Whether God punished the children for the sins of their fathers, when yet he declares in another place, that the soul that sins shall die: for in this place the Prophet does not distinguish the fathers from the children, but intimates that God had not been propitious to the Jews, because they had before greatly provoked his wrath. There is yet no doubt, but that every one justly suffered the punishment of his iniquity. The import of the whole is, that the Jews gained nothing by evasion, for God had not without reason visited them, but had rendered a just reward for their sins. This is one thing.

What he adds, that God repented not for being thus angry, means the same as though he had said, that the Jews through their perverseness had only rendered God's rigour inflexible. Zechariah then reminds us, that when men cease not to add evils to evils, and obstinately rush on as though they would make war with God, he then becomes as it were obstinate too, and according to what is said in the eighteenth Psalm, ``deals perversely with the perverse.'' The reason then why God declares that he had been implacable to his people, is, because the wickedness of those whom he had spared and long tolerated was become unhealable; for when he saw that they were wholly perverse, he armed himself for vengeance.

And hence we may gather a general truth, --- that God cannot be intreated by us, except when we begin to repent; not that our repentance anticipates God's mercy, for the question here is not, what man of himself and of his own inclination can do; as the object of Zechariah is only to teach us, that when God designs to forgive us, he changes our hearts and turns us to obedience by his Spirit; for when he leaves us in our hardness, we must necessarily be ever afflicted by his hand until we at last perish.

We must at the same time notice what I have also referred to, --- that God here closes the mouths of the Jews, that they might not murmur against his severity, as though he had dealt cruelly with them. He then shows that these punishments were just which the Jews had endured; for it had not been for one day only, but for a continued succession of time, that the fathers had excited his wrath. The reason why he speaks of the fathers rather than of themselves is, because they had for a long series of years hardened themselves in their wickedness, and corruption had become in them as it were hereditary. He now says that he had turned; not that he was of another mind, as we have already said, but this is to be understood of what the people experienced; for God seemed to be in a manner different, when he became kind to them and showed them favor, having before manifested many tokens of vengeance.

Now at the end of the verse the Prophet reminds us of the application of his doctrine, even to encourage the Jews, that they might go on with alacrity in the work of building the temple. But we have said that we ought to be armed with God's promises, so that we may with courageous hearts follow wherever he may call us; for we shall all presently faint except we find that the hand of God is present with

us. Since then we are by nature slothful and tender, and since inconstancy often creeps in, this is our only remedy, --- that when we seek to go on in the course of our calling to the end, we know that God will be ever a help to us; and this is what the Prophet now teaches us. He then applies what he had before promised to its legitimate purpose, --- to encourage the Jews to lay aside their fear, courageously to undertake their work, and to expect what was not yet evident, even a complete restoration. It follows ---

Zechariah 8:16, 17

16. These are the things that ye shall do; Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates:

16. Haec verba quae facieties (Haec sunt, nam nomen [{דברים}] est supervacuum, Haec sunt igitur quae facietis,) Loquimini veritatem, quisque cum socio suo; veritatem et judicium pacis judicate in portis vestris;

17. And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour; and love no false oath: for all these are things that I hate, saith the Lord

17. Et vir (et quisque) malum socio suo ne cogitetis in cordibus vestris; et jusjurandum mendacii ne diligatis; quia omnia haec sunt quae odio habeo, dicit Iehova.

Zechariah exhorts them here to true repentance, by showing that more things were to be hoped for than what they saw with their eyes; and at the same time he shows that it was not enough for them assiduously to build the city and the temple; but he requires other things, even that they should observe integrity and justice towards one another. We indeed know that the Jews were so given to their own ceremonies, that they thought that holiness existed in them: and this error Zechariah had before condemned, and now he inculcates the same truth, --- that if they wished to have God propitious to them, and also wished to enjoy continually that goodness which they had already tasted, they were to strive to secure it not only by sacrifices and other ceremonies, but especially by attention to justice and equity.

But the Prophet does not here mention every part of an upright life, but only refers to some things. This mode of speaking is quite common, as we have already often noticed. The Prophet then states a part for the whole; but still he includes generally the whole of the second table, when he says that these things were to be observed, [242] even that they should speak the truth; that is, deal faithfully with one

[242] Literally it is, "These the words which ye shall do." The term "words" means here what the words contain, and may therefore be rendered, "commands," or "do" may be translated "observe:" — These are the commands which ye shall do, — Speak the truth, each one to his neighbor; The truth and the judgment of peace Pronounce in your gates. Instead of "Pronounce," Newcome has "Determine," and Henderson, as in our version, "Execute;" the more literal rendering is "Judge:" but the verb often means to decide, to determine, to declare a thing as a judge, or to pronounce sentence in a cause. What they were required here was to pronounce what was true and right according to the law, an dto give such a judgment as was calculated to promote peace and concord, "by deterring the litigious," as Newcome observes, "and punishing the evil doer." Jerome, Drusius, Pemble, Henry, and Grotius, give the same view of "the judgment of peace;" but Henderson agrees with Calvin, and renders it "sound judgment." The former view is most to be approved, as the latter is less distinct, for "true" and "sound" are nearly the same. "Let the judges," observes Henry, "that sit in the gates, in all their judicial proceedings have regard both to truth and to peace; let them take care to do justice, and to accommodate differences, and prevent vexatious suits. It must be a judgment of truth in order to peace; and a judgment of peace as far as is consistent with truth, and no further." The words, "speak the truth," Kimchi very beautifully explains thus, — "Speak not with one thing in your mouth and another thing in your heart." — Ed.

another, abstain from every falsehood and deceit, and from every kind of craftiness, --- and also that they should execute justice in their gates. And because he names neighbors here, it would be very absurd for anyone hence to conclude, that it is lawful to defraud strangers, or those with whom we have no near connection: but the Prophet by this term meant only to set forth the atrocious conduct of the Jews, who spared not even their friends and their brethren. Though then it is a wicked thing to deceive any one, even the farthest from us, it is yet a greater crime when one lies in wait for his near neighbor and brother: and we know that this mode of speaking occurs everywhere in the law; for God, in order to restrain us from evil deeds, has set before us that kind of sin which we are constrained by the impulse of nature to detest. Thus he speaks of secret hatred as being murder. Then the Prophet in this place meant more sharply to reprove the Jews, because such barbarity had prevailed among them, that no one regarded his neighbor, but raged as it were against his own bowels.

As to the words, truth and the judgment of peace, he intimates by them, that not only individuals were privately given to evil deeds, but that also the court of justice was full of frauds and wrong acts, while it ought to have been the sanctuary of justice. Though many may be perversely wicked among the people, yet their audacity and wickedness are always restrained, when the laws are put in force, and incorrupt judges rule. But the Prophet shows that the judges had become like robbers, for there was no integrity in the gates. He mentions truth first, for the judges craftily perverted all truth by misrepresentations, as it is commonly the case. For even the worst of men do not openly say that they approve of a wicked deed; but they find out disguises by which they cover their own baseness, and that of those who do wrong, whom they favor, when bribed with money. It is then necessary that truth should have the first place in courts of justice. By the judgment of peace he understands, when his own is given to every one. Some think that what is right is called the judgment of peace, because when mercenary judges condemn and oppress the innocent, and for gain's sake patronise what is wrong, many tumults often arise, and then open war ensues: but as the word peace has a wide meaning in Hebrew, we may take the judgment of peace as meaning only a calm and a rightly formed judgment. The Jews, we know, administered justice in the gates.

He afterwards adds, And think not evil every one against his friend. Here the Prophet not only condemns open wrongs, but also the hidden purposes of evil. We hence learn, that the law was not only given to restrain men as it were by a bridle, and that it not only contains a rule of life as to outward duties, but that it also rules their hearts before God and angels. The law is indeed really spiritual; and extremely gross and foolish are they who think that they satisfy the law of Moses, when they abstain from murder and theft and other evil deeds; for we see that the Prophets everywhere required a right feeling in the hearts as Zechariah does in this place, who reminds the Jews, that they were not to devise evil against their friends, no, not in their hearts. He might have omitted the last words; but he meant to condemn those frauds which were wont to be covered by many and various disguises. Though then men may not bring forth their wickedness, yet Zechariah shows that God will

punish it; for whatever dwells within, however concealed it may be from the eyes of men, however hidden it may be in the depth of the heart, it must yet come to an account before God.

He adds another kind of evil, even perjury, And love not the oath of falsehood. He might have said, swear not to the injury of thy neighbor; but there is to be observed here a contrast between the perverted love of men and the hatred of God. As then God hates a false oath as all other frauds and falsehoods, so he forbids us to desire it: for if we wish to please God, we must see what he requires from us, inasmuch as we designedly provoke his wrath when we desire or covet what he declares that he hates. In a word, Zechariah shows that God would be propitious and kind to the Jews, provided they truly and from the heart repented, and attended to what was right and just --- not only to build the temple, to offer sacrifices, and to observe other rites, but also to form their life according to what integrity required; to labor not only by external acts to discharge their duties towards their neighbors; but also to cleanse their hearts from all hatred, all cruelty, and all depraved affections. It now follows ---

Zechariah 8:18, 19

18. And the word of the Lord of hosts came unto me, saying,

18. Et fuit sermo Iehovae exercituum ad me, dicendo,

19. Thus saith the Lord of hosts; The fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts; therefore love the truth and peace.

19. Sic dicit Iehova exercituum, Iejunium quarti et jenunium quinti, et jejunium septimi, et jejunium decimi (mensis,) erit domui Iehudah in gaudium et laetitiam et dies festos bonos; ergo veritatem et pacem diligite.

He confirms the same truth, that such would be the restoration of the Church that all the memory of their sorrows would be obliterated. We have already said, that some fasts were observed by the Jews after the destruction of their city. Before two only were mentioned, but now the Prophet names four. In the fourth month the city was taken, and in the fifth the temple was destroyed and burnt down; in the seventh was Gedaliah slain, who had remained with the residue of the people who had been gathered by him; and the fast of the tenth month, as some think, was appointed when the city was besieged. If so, the fast of the tenth month preceded the rest, then followed the fast of the fourth month, in the third place the fast of the fifth month, and, lastly, the fast of the seventh month, on account of the death of Gedaliah.

These then were tokens of mourning to the time of the restoration; for when the city was besieged, God raised up, as it were, a sign of dreadful vengeance; and when Nebuchadnezzar broke through the wall of the city, it was then openly forsaken by God; after the burning of the temple there remained no hope, except that some of the common people continued in the land under the protection of Gedaliah. The root, as it were, of the people was cut off, but some thin fibres were remaining; and when even these were torn asunder, when all who could be found were led into exile, the favor of God had wholly disappeared as to the outward appearance. It behaved then the Jews to be in mourning and humiliation, that they might seek pardon from

God. We shall not then say, that these fasts were without reason, and foolishly appointed by them, for they were at liberty to testify their sorrow; nay, it was an act of piety humbly in their guilt to deprecate the wrath of the celestial Judge, when they perceived that he was displeased with them. But God now promises joy, which was to extinguish all sorrow, as the rising of the sun drives away all the darkness of the night.

But the Prophet seems to allude to what he had before taught when he indirectly taunted the Jews, because they were too anxious about keeping fasts, while they neglected the main things. But the simple meaning is, that if the Jews really repented and sincerely sought to return to God's favor, there would be an end to all their miseries, so that there would be no need of fasting.

We must also remember that the design of fasting is this, that those who have sinned may humble themselves before God, and go as suppliants before his throne, that they may confess their sins and condemn themselves. Fasting then is, as it were, the habit of criminals when they desire to obtain pardon from God; for Christ says, that there is no fasting at marriages and during festal days. (Matthew 9:15.) We then see that there is here promised a restoration which was to put an end to every former cause of sorrow among the people; not that these fasts of themselves displeased God, for they were appointed, as we have said, for a good purpose --- that the people might thus exercise themselves in acts of piety, and also stimulate and support their hope till the time of their deliverance; but Zechariah pursues what he had begun --- that God was now plainly reconciled, for he favored his people, and proved this by the blessings he bestowed.

With regard to festal days, we know that among other things they are expressly mentioned by Moses, ``Thou shalt rejoice before thy God.'' (Deuteronomy 12:18.) When therefore the Jews celebrated their festal meetings, it was the same as though they stood before God, and were thus fully persuaded that they were in his presence. Forasmuch then as God thus designed to exhilarate his people by festivals, the Prophet does not without reason say, that the fasts, which had been signs of mourning, would be turned into joy and into festal days. Moreover, the Prophet thus speaks, because the observance of the law, which prevailed while the people were in a state of security, had been interrupted in their exile --- as though he had said, ``As food expelled you to a foreign land, and made you while exiles from your country to grieve and mourn, so now being restored you shall have joy, and religiously keep your festal days.'' And thus he indirectly reproves the Jews for having deprived themselves of their festal days, in which the law invited them to rejoice, for they had profaned them. God would not have suffered to be discontinued what he had commanded, had not religion been corrupted; for on this account it was that things changed for the worse, and that sorrow succeeded, which is here designated by fastings.

At length he concludes by saying, Love ye then truth and peace. By truth he means integrity, as we have said before; and Zechariah includes in this word the whole of what is just and right: for when our hearts are cleansed, then the rule of justice and equity is observed. When then we deal sincerely with our neighbors, all

the duties of love freely flow from within as from a fountain. As to the word peace, it may be explained in two ways: either as in the former instance when he mentioned the judgment of peace in the sense of judgment rightly formed, and thus to love peace is to love good order; or it may be taken for God's blessing, as though the Prophet said, ``If ye wish to be in a good and prosperous state, observe integrity towards one another; for God will ever be present by his blessing, provided ye be sincere and faithful. [243] Ye have in a manner sought a curse for yourselves, and dried up as it were the fountain of God's blessings by your wickedness and your frauds. If then truth reign among you, all felicity shall accompany it; for the Lord will bless you.'' I shall not proceed farther now.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou invites us so kindly and graciously to thyself, we may not be refractory, but with every evil affection subdued, offer ourselves to thy service; and since thou requires nothing else from us but to observe what is right towards one another, --- O grant that we may be mindful of that brotherhood which thine only-begotten Son has consecrated by his own blood, and call on thee as our Father, and prove by the whole of our conduct that we are thy children; and may every one of us so labor for one another, that being united in heart and affection, we may with one consent aspire after that blessed life, where we shall enjoy that inheritance which has been prepared and obtained by the blood of thy Son, and through him laid up for us in heaven. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Fifty-first

Zechariah 8:20-22

20. Thus saith the Lord of hosts; It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities:

20. Sic dicit Iehova exercituum, Adhuc quando venient populi et incolae urbium magnarum (vel, multarum;)

21. And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts: I will go also.

21. Et venient incolae unius ad alteram, dicendo, Eamus eundo ad deprecandam faciem Iehovae, et quaerendum Iehovam exercituum; ibo etiam ego.

22. Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord.

22. Et venient populi magni et gentes robustae ad quaerendum Iehovam exercituum Ierosolymae, et depreceandam faciem Iehovae.

The Prophet here extends his discourse still farther; for he promises not only the

[243] It is better to regard "peace" here in its ordinary meaning, as opposed to strife and contention, as "truth" is to falsehood an deceit. They were to "love truth" and not falsehood, and also "peace" and concord, and not discord and contention. The [{,[{ו vau, at the beginning of this sentence has been variously rendered: ``only'' by Jerome and Drusius; ``therefore'' by Calvin and Blayney; ``but'' by Newcome and Henderson. But there is no need of all this. Let the whole passage be rendered in a perceptive form, and it may have its usual meaning as a copulative, as in the following manner,--- Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, --- Let the fast of the fourth, and the fast of the fifth, And the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth month, Be to the house of Judah For exultation and joy, And for cheerful seasons; And love ye truth and peace. ``Exultation,'' ,[{ששון}] is the outward expression of joy; the most obvious thing is mentioned first, as often is the case in Scripture, and then the source from which it proceeds, even joy. ``Cheerful'' is literally ``good,'' --- good seasons, or festivals, or solemnities. ``The Hebrews,'' says Grotius, ``were wont to call those days good which were appointed for rejoicing.'' This passage contains the answer to the inquiry mentioned in chapter 7:3; but the answer refers not only to one fast but to all the fasts which the Jews had instituted. --- Ed.

complete restoration of his chosen people, but also the propagation of the Church; for God, he says, will gather a Church for himself from many and remote nations, and unite many nations in one body. And this ought to have availed especially to animate the Jews, as they were thus taught that the temple was built, not only that God might be worshipped by one nation, but by all nations. Moreover, as before this time some had come from distant lands to worship God, the Prophet may seem here to have this in view by using {עוד}, oud, the adverb of time. [244] But he not only declares that some would come, as in the time of Solomon, but as I have already said, he promises here something more remarkable --- that the temple would not belong peculiarly to the Jews, but would be common to all nations; for there is to be no language and no nation which is not to unite in the true worship of God. But let us consider the words of the Prophet.

He begins by saying, that God was the author of this prophecy; and this was said to secure credit. There was need, as we have said, of no common authority, since he was here speaking of what was incredible. There was only a handful of people returned to their country, and many dangers surrounded them almost every day; so that many, wearied with their present condition, preferred exile, and regret for their return had now crept into the minds of many, for they thought that they had been deceived. Since then the state of the people was such, there was need of something more than ordinary to confirm what is here said --- that the glory of the second temple would be greater and more eminent than that of the first: It shall yet be, he says. Though a comparison is implied, there is yet no equality expressed, as though some few only would come. But as there had been no temple for seventy years, and as the temple, now begun to be built, was in no high esteem, but mean and insignificant, the Prophet says, that the time would yet come, when nations and inhabitants of great cities would ascend into Jerusalem. We may indeed render {רבות}, rebut, many or great, for it means both; but the Prophet, I think, speaks of great cities; and the reason will presently appear.

It follows, Come shall the inhabitants of one to one, that is, the inhabitants of one city to another; saying, going let us go, etc. He means by these words, that there will be a mutual consent among all nations, so that they will stimulate one another, and thus unite together their exertions. We here see that the Prophet's object was to encourage the Jews to entertain good hope, and thus to cause them to persevere, so that they might not doubt but that success would attend their work and labor, because the Lord would have himself worshipped at Jerusalem, not only by themselves but also by all nations. But as the Jews could not believe that nations could by force be drawn there, he teaches them, that their assembling would be voluntary; he says that those who had been before extremely refractory would be disposed to come of their own accord, so that there would be no need of external force to constrain them; for they would willingly come, nay, would excite one another,

[244] There is a difficulty in the construction here. The best solution is that of our version, followed by Grotius, Newcome, and others; there is understood the auxiliary verb, "it shall be:" so the rendering would be, Yet it shall be that come shall people And the inhabitants of many cities. There is a similar instance in verse 23, where the auxiliary verb is to be understood, and [{ו{אשר must be rendered that. --- Ed.

and by mutual exhortations stimulate themselves so as to come together to worship God at Jerusalem.

The ardor and vehemence of their zeal is to be noticed; for the Prophet says, that they would come of their own accord, and also encourage one another, according to what we have seen in the second chapter Zechariah 2:1, Lay hold will each on the hand of his brother, and say, let us go to the mount of the God of Jacob. But more is expressed in this place, for not only shall each one encourage his brother whenever met and an opportunity be offered, but he says that they will come from all quarters. We now then see the design of the Prophet in these words. And we hence learn, that faith then only produces its legitimate fruit when zeal is kindled, so that every one strives to increase the kingdom of God, and to gather the straying, that the Church may be filled. For when any one consults his own private benefit and has no care for others, he first betrays most clearly his own inhumanity, and where there is no love the Spirit of God does not rule there. Besides, true godliness brings with it a concern for the glory of God. It is no wonder then that the Prophet, when describing true and real conversion, says, that each would be solicitous about his brethren, so as to stimulate one another, and also that the hearts of all would be so kindled with zeal for God, that they would hasten together to celebrate his glory.

Then he adds, Let us go to entreat the face of Jehovah. The phrase is common in Scripture. But we must observe, that the Prophet in speaking of God's worship, sets prayer in the first rank, for prayer to God is the chief part, yea, the main thing in religion. It is, indeed, immediately added, and to seek Jehovah: he explains the particular by the general; and in the next verse he inverts the order, beginning with the general. However, the meaning continues the same, for God seeks nothing else but that we should be teachable and obedient, so as to be prepared to follow wherever he may call us, and at the same time carefully to enquire respecting his will, as we have need of him as our leader and teacher, so that we may not foolishly go astray through winding and circuitous courses; for if we deem it enough to take presumptuously our own way, the endeavor to seek God will be superfluous. It must then be observed, that God is then only really sought when men desire to learn from his word how he is to be worshipped. But, as I have already said, the Prophet adds prayer here, for the design of the whole truth respecting salvation is to teach us, that our life depends on God, and that whatever belongs to eternal life must be hoped for and expected from him. [245] We now then understand the import of the whole.

But we must enquire also why he says, that the nations would come to seek God at Jerusalem, and there to call on him. The Jews foolishly imagine that God cannot be otherwise worshipped than by offering sacrifices still in the temple. But the Prophet

[245] The 20th and 21st I render thus— 20. Thus saith Jehovah of hosts Yet it shall be that come shall people And the inhabitants of many cities; Yea, the inhabitants of one shall go to another, saying, "Going let us go to implore the favor of Jehovah; And to seek Jehovah of hosts, go also will I." The verb rendered "implore," means to solicit with importunity, or earnestness. "To conciliate the regard of Jehovah," as rendered by Henderson, is too much in the style of modern phraseology; nor is the meaning conveyed. Blayney's version is better, "To supplicate the favor of Jehovah." It seems more suitable to connect the words "to seek Jehovah," with the last sentence. We find the two clauses in the next verse, but in an inverted order— 22. Yea, come shall many people and mighty nations To seek Jehovah of hosts in Jerusalem, And to implore the favor of Jehovah. — Ed.

had something very different in view, that the light of truth would arise from that city, which would diffuse itself far and wide: and this prophecy ought to be connected with that of Isaiah,

``A law shall go forth from Sion,
and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem.'' (Isaiah 2:3.)

As then the doctrine of salvation which has filled the whole world flowed from that city, the Prophet says, that nations would come to Jerusalem, not that it would be necessary for them to assemble there, but because all were to seek there what could not be obtained elsewhere. Since then none could be accounted the children of God except they were brought up in that school and acknowledged that alone to be true religion which had its first habitation at Jerusalem, we hence see why the Prophet expressly mentions that city.

We must further bear in mind, that the temple was built for this end and purpose, --- that the doctrine of salvation might continue there, and have there its seat until the coming of Christ; for then was fulfilled that prophecy in the hundred and tenth Psalm, ``The scepter of thy power shall God send forth from Sion.'' The Prophet here teaches us, that Christ would not be the king of one people only, whose power was to be confined to narrow limits, but that he would rule through the whole world, for God would extend his scepter to every quarter of the globe. As tell it behaved the Jews to have this end in view, the Prophet, in order to animate them that they might not fail in the middle of their work, says, that that place was sacred to God, so that salvation might thence be sought by the whole world, for all were to be the disciples of that Church who wished to be deemed the children of God.

But we ought carefully to notice what I have already referred to, the two things required in God's worship --- to seek him, and also to pray to him. For the superstitious, though they pretend great ardor in seeking God, yet amuse themselves with many delusions; for they hurry on presumptuously, and as it were at random, so that they seek not God, but leave him, and weary themselves without thought and without any judgment. As then the superstitious have no reason for what they do, they can not be said properly to seek God. But the faithful seek God, for they acknowledge that he is not to be worshipped according to the fancy of any one, but that there is a certain prescript and rule to be observed. To us then this is the beginning of religion --- not to allow to ourselves liberty to attempt anything we please, but humbly and soberly to submit to God's word; for when any one seeks and chooses an unfit teacher, he will not advance as he ought to do. But the Prophet shows, that all the godly succeed when they strive to be approved of God by confining themselves to his word, and by attempting nothing through their own promptings, but when they have such a discernment as not to blend, as it is said, profane with sacred things. The second chief thing is, to pray to God: and the Prophet thus reminds us why it is that God would have us especially to seek him. Nothing indeed results to his advantage and benefit from our efforts, but he would have us to seek him that we may learn to expect from him everything connected with our salvation. This seeking is also defined by the term prayer, and not useless is the word face, for though God is invisible, we yet ought not to wander with uncertainty, as it were through the air,

when our purpose is to flee to him, but to go to him with full confidence. Unless then we are fully persuaded of what the Scripture teaches us --- that God is ever nigh those who truly call on him, the door will be closed against our prayers, for God's name will be profaned though we may express what we wish. As then the nearness of God ought to be impressed on our hearts when we prepare ourselves for prayer, the Scripture usually adopts this form, to entreat the face of God. But this is not to be understood of an ocular sight, but, on the contrary, of the conviction of the heart. Let us now proceed -

Zechariah 8:23

23. Thus saith the Lord of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you.

23. Sic dicit Iehova exercituum, In diebus isitis fiet ut apprehendant decem homines ex cunctis linguis gentium, apprehendant alam viri Judaei, dicendo, Ambulabimus (vel, ambulemus) vobiscum, quia audivimus quod Deus sit vobiscum.

He pursues the same subject in this verse; for as he had before said, that the nations would willingly come to worship God, and that each would encourage his brother to undertake this pious and holy expedition, so he now adds, that ten men would lay hold on the border of a Jew's garment: Ten men shall then take hold of the skirt of a Jew. He shows here more clearly what I have briefly referred to --- that there would be no need of arms, or of any compulsion, in order to draw or compel the nations to engage in God's service; for even ten would of themselves accompany one Jew; and it is a proof of a very great readiness when ten surrender themselves to be ruled by one. As one Jew could not be sufficient to draw so many nations, the Prophet declares that there would be everywhere a union of faith, so that those, before wholly alienated from God, would desire to join themselves as friends, or rather as companions to the Jews.

He says, From all languages. By these words he amplifies the miracle; for there cannot be a union between men far distant, especially when they are of different languages, as they are barbarians to one another. When the Prophet then says that they would come from all languages, and unite together, it more fully appears to be God's work; for there is nothing here to be ascribed to human contrivances. It must then be that the hearts of those who cannot express their minds, and can hardly give a sign, are united together by the hidden power of the Spirit. We now perceive the Prophet's object in this verse.

But he uses in the last clause a phrase different from the one he employed before --- Let us go with you, for we have heard that with you is God. He had said, ``Let us go to seek Jehovah, and to entreat his face;'' but now he says ``Let us go with you.'' But yet he handles and confirms the same thing; for the nations could not have sought God without following the Jews going before them. For when any one separates himself from others, it so happens that he is led astray, and feeds on much that is very absurd, as we see to be the case with proud and morose men, who invent strange and monstrous things; for they shun society, and seem not to themselves

to be wise, until they put off every feeling of humanity. The character then of faith has also this in it --- that the elect, while they themselves obey God, desire to have many associates in this obedience, and many fellow-disciples in true religion. The Prophet thus intended to point out two things: be had said before --- ``Let us go to seek God;'' and now --- ``We will go with you.'' What else is this but to seek God? But he expresses more now --- that the nations declare that they would come to seek God for this end --- that they might learn from others, like rude beginners, who have their fellow-scholars as their teachers; so that every one who had made some progress, was to preside over others, and those as yet commencing, and still in the first elements of knowledge, were humbly to connect themselves with others better informed. Shame prevents many from making in this manner any advancement, and so they ever remain sunk in ignorance.

The Prophet at the same time not only commends humility, but also exhorts all God's children to cultivate unity and concord. For whosoever tears asunder the Church of God, disunites himself from Christ, who is the head, and who would have all his members to be united together.

We now then understand that God ought to be sought in order to be rightly worshipped by us; and also, that he ought to be thus sought, not that each may have his own peculiar religion, but that we may be united together, and that every one who sees his brethren going before, and excelling in gifts, may be prepared to follow them, and to seek benefit from their labors. It is indeed true that we ought to disregard the whole world; and to embrace only the truth of God; for it is a hundred times better to renounce the society of all mortals, and union with them, then to withdraw ourselves from God; but when God shows himself as our leader, the Prophet teaches us that we ought mutually to stretch forth our hand and unitedly to follow him.

We have again to notice at the end of the verse what I have already referred to --- that the nations would come, not compelled by force of arms or by violence, but drawn by hearing alone. We have heard. By hearing the Prophet means here the doctrine of salvation everywhere diffused; for there would be no care nor concern for worshipping were we not taught; for faith, as Paul says, is by hearing; and so prayer proceeds from faith. (Romans 10:17.) In short, the Prophet means that the knowledge of religion would be through the preaching of the truth, which would rouse all nations to the duty of worshipping God.

He now again confirms what we have also mentioned --- that the Jews would have the precedence of all nations; for it appears that God would be among them. We hence see that primacy is not ascribed to the Jews in being leaders to others, because they excelled others by their own virtue or dignity, but because God presided over them. Then God is ever to be sought, though we may avail ourselves of the labors of men, and follow them when they show us the right way. We must ever bear this in mind --- that those only exhort truly and honestly, who not only do so by word, but who really prove what they feel by their conduct; according to what the Prophet has said --- Go will I also; and he says the same now --- Let us go, or, we shall go with you. For many there are who are strenuous enough in stimulating others; but their vain garrulity appears evident; for while they bid others to run, they are standing

still; and while they vehemently encourage others, they themselves delay and take their rest. Now follows ---

Chapter 9

Zechariah 9

Z

Zechariah 9:1

1. The burden of the word of the Lord in the land of Hadrach, and Damascus shall be the rest thereof: when the eyes of man, as of all the tribes of Israel, shall be toward the Lord

1. Onus sermonis Iehovae in terra Chadrak, et Damascus quies ejus; quia ad Iehovam oculus hominis et omnium tribuum Israel.

One thing had escaped my notice in the words of the Prophet --- that great people and strong nations would come. We have said that ``great'' rather than ``many'' ought to be adopted. The latter meaning may indeed be allowed that the worshipers of God would come from various cities; but as the word {עצומים}, otsumim properly signifies strong, and as it is certain that the Prophet means the same thing by the two words, it is more probable that he speaks of strong and valiant people, as they are not so easily subdued; for the more any one excels in prowess, the more stiff is his neck to undertake the yoke. As then the strong and the brave, and such as are eminent in the world, are not so easily brought to submit to God, the Prophet expressly says, that they shall become teachable, and be made willing, so that pride, as it is usually the case, shall not be a hindrance to them. [246]

I come now to the passage in which the Prophet announces a heavy burden, or a severe and fearful prophecy respecting Syria and other neighboring nations. I prefer to retain the word ``burden,'' rather than to render it prophecy, as many expositors have done; for though {משא}, mesha, is sometimes taken simply for prophecy, yet there is here, as it appears to me, something particular intended; for the Prophet denounces God's judgment both on Syria and on the surrounding countries, and the word prophecy is not suitable; for to say ``the prophecy of the word,'' would

[246] There seems to be no good reason for considering the two adjectives as describing the same thing. On the contrary, the reverse is most probable. Their number as well as their character is evidently here set forth; they were “many,” and “strong,” or mighty or powerful. The Septuagint and Jerome render the word “many,” and so do most interpreters. — Ed.

be strange and without meaning. But when he says, The burden of the word of God, the sentence is full, and flows well; for he reminds us that his word would not be ineffectual, but full of effect, as it would lie as a burden on Syria and on other countries, which they should not be able to shake off. The burden then of the word of Jehovah; that is, ``I have now a prediction which will be grievous and severe to those heathens who now disturb the Jews, the chosen people.''

But this doctrine contains consolation to the godly; for they may hence know that they are safe under God's protection, as he carries on war with their enemies; nay, his vengeance was now prepared against all those who harassed the Jews. As then he had before promised that incredible favor of God which we have noticed, so now he declares that the Church would be safe under the protection of God, inasmuch as vengeance was in readiness for all the ungodly.

But the Prophet mentions here only the cities known to the Jews, for it was enough to refer to them as an example, that the Jews might hence conclude that God would be always the protector of his Church, so that no enemies shall escape unpunished. The Prophet then no doubt mentioned these few cities to the Jews, that they might feel assured that nothing is so strong and impetuous in the world which God cannot easily subdue and lay prostrate. Now as we apprehend the Prophet's object, we shall come to the words.

Some think that the word {חדרך}, chedrak, includes the whole of Syria, which seems to me probable. Others suppose that some notable city is meant, as Damascus is immediately subjoined. But as the matter is uncertain, and as there is no doubt but that the Prophet speaks of the kingdom of Syria, I will not contest the point. Be it then the name of a city or of a country, [247] it is all the same, for the Prophet means that the vengeance of God was impending over the Syrians, and impending in such a manner, that it would not depart from them until they were wholly destroyed. For when he adds that its rest would be Damascus, he intimates that God's judgment would not be like a storm, which soon passes away, but that it would be a heavy and burdensome mass, which could not be dissipated, according to what Isaiah says ---

``The word came on Jacob and fell on Israel;'' (Isaiah 8:9;)

that is, what God pronounced against Jacob fell on Israel. He indeed changes the name, but it is the same as though he had said --- ``When God shall punish Jacob, can the Israelites escape?'' for they were the same. The sentence then shall fall, that is, it shall find its own place: in vain will they run here and there to escape. The Jews then will gain nothing by their flight; for the vengeance now denounced by the Lord shall lay hold on them. So also in this place he says, the burden of the word of Jehovah on the land of Chadrak and Damascus, the royal city, the metropolis, shall be its rest, its dwelling; for the Lord's vengeance will fix its station there, and it cannot be thence removed. In vain then will the Syrians try in various ways to escape, for they must be pressed down by God's hand, until they be laid prostrate. We now then understand in what sense the Prophet says that Damascus would be

[247] Blayney thinks it to be the name of a Syrian king, and so does Henderson. The former quotes Josephus, who calls Rehob, in 2 Samuel 8:3, [{Λραχος}]. This prince reigned over a part of Syria called Zobah. If this be admitted, then the three chief kingdoms of Syria are here named --- Zobah, Damascus, and Hamath. But Henderson is disposed to think that it is a corruption of the word ,[{חרר}] the common name of the kings of Syria. --- Ed.

the rest, the habitation, or the abode of God's vengeance.

He afterwards adds, For to Jehovah the eye of man. The particle {כי}, ki is to be taken here, I think, as an adverb of time, ``When''. There is indeed in reality but little difference, except that the common rendering of it greatly obscures the meaning of the Prophet. But if it be taken as an adverb of time, the passage will read better, When the eye of man shall be to Jehovah, and of all the tribes of Israel; that is, when the Jews shall begin to turn to God without any dissimulation, but with real sincerity; then he says, God will in every way bless them, and raise up his hand against their enemies. The Prophet had before exhorted the Jews to repentance; for they had been too much given to sacrifices and fastings, while no integrity existed among them. So also he shows again that their hypocrisy was an hindrance, which prevented God to manifest his favor to them; and thus he reminds them, that the gate would be opened, and the way made plain and even for God's favor and blessings, whenever they raised their eyes to him, that is, whenever they derived their hopes from him, and fixed on him their dependence. For to direct the eyes to God is nothing else than to look to him so as to fix on him all our thoughts. Some understand by ``man'' all mortals, but of this I approve not; nor do I doubt but that the Prophet refers to the Jews alone; and doubtless it is not consistent with the context to regard any but the Jews. It is indeed true, that the Prophet speaks here of the calling of the Gentiles, but so as to begin with the Jews; for as they were the first-born, so it was necessary for them to have the precedence. The Prophet then here declares that God would be glorious in his chosen people, and would lay prostrate all the bordering enemies. Then the eye of man signifies the same as the eye of the whole people; as though he had said, that after the Jews had begun to lay aside all dissimulation and devoted themselves to God, and cast all their hopes on him, they would then find God sufficiently powerful to lay in the dust all their enemies.

But he afterwards adds, by way of explanation, and of all the tribes of Israel. Some give this rendering, ``How much more,'' as though the Prophet reasoned here from the less to the greater. But, as I have already said, this cannot be maintained. First, this explanation is strained, ``The eye of man, and especially of all the tribes of Israel;'' for the Jews ought to have had the first place: and secondly, the particle waw has no amplifying sense. In short, he intended by a small particle to show that precedence belonged to the Jews. I do not then understand what they mean, who would include all nations in the word ``man,'' and then regard the Prophet as proceeding to mention the tribes of Israel. Now what I have stated, that the true servants of God were then few, is probable enough; hence the Prophet here exhorts the whole people to a union in religion. Whenever then the whole tribes of Israel directed their eyes to God, the burden of his word would then come upon Damascus and all the Syrians. [248]

[248] This sentence is one of some difficulty. The Septuagint, the Targum, the Syriac, and the Arabic versions, give this meaning, — that Jehovah sees, i.e., observes, and therefore judges, all men, as well as the ten tribes of Israel: and this is the view taken by Grotius, Piscator, Marckius, Dathius, and Newcome. The version of the last is, — For the eye of Jehovah over man, And over all the tribes of Israel. Literally it is, For to Jehovah (belongs) the eye (i.e. the seeing) of man And of all the tribes of Israel. The “eye” here is supposed to be put for the capacity of seeing, and is rendered by some “spectator — the beholder,” or judge,—”For it

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou kindly and graciously extends thy hand to us, not only to show us once for all the right way, but also to lead us through our whole life, and even to sustain us when wearied, and to raise us up when fallen, --- O grant, that we may not be ungrateful for this thy great kindness, but render ourselves obedient to thee; and may we not experience the dreadful power of thy judgment, which thou denounces on all thine enemies, who are to sustain a vengeance that is to sink them in the abyss of endless perdition; but may we suffer ourselves to be ever raised up by thy hand, until we shall at length reach that blessed rest, to which thou invites us, and art ready to lead us, where we shall enjoy the fullness of those blessings which have been obtained for us by thy only-begotten Son --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Fifty-second

Zechariah 9:2-4

2. And Hamath also shall border thereby; Tyrus, and Zidon, though it be very wise.

2. Etiam Chemath terminabit in ea; Tyrus et Sidon, quia (vel quamvis) sapiens sit valde.

3. And Tyrus did build herself a strong hold, and heaped up silver as the dust, and fine gold as the mire of the streets.

3. Et aedificavit Tyrus munitionem sibi, et coacervavit argentum quasi pulverem, et aurum quasi lutum platearum.

4. Behold, the Lord will cast her out, and he will smite her power in the sea; and she shall be devoured with fire.

4. Ecce Dominus expellet (vel, ad inopiam rediget) eam, et percutiet in mari potentiam ejus, et ipsa igne devorabitur.

Zechariah goes on with the same subject: for he says now, that destruction was nigh all the nations who, being neighbors, harassed the people of God. Yesterday I briefly referred to what he had in view, which was to show, that God would so defend his Church as to execute vengeance on all the ungodly who had unjustly persecuted it; and he spoke of the kingdom of Syria, which was contiguous to Judea. But he now goes farther, --- that the wrath of God would extend to the remoter parts of Syria: for Hamath is Antioch the great, and it gave a name to a part of Syria. Damascus was the metropolis of the Syrian empire. But as we have said elsewhere, this word is variously taken in Scripture, but generally for the whole country extending from Judea to the Euphrates and even beyond it. We now then see why Zechariah adds Antioch to Syria, as though he had said, that God would now be the avenger of his people, not only by rewarding bordering cities, but also those afar off. He then passes on to Tyrus and Simon, which were, as it is well known, cities on the sea-side, and were also nigh to the Jews; for there was no great distance between Galilee and

belongs to Jehovah to be the beholder or the eyer of man," or of mankind, "and of all the tribes of Israel." But Kimchi, Blayney, and Henderson agree in the view of Calvin and of our version. The former meaning seems most suitable to the context, as a reason is given for God's judgments on the surrounding Gentiles, for he observes the conduct of man in general as well as of the tribes of Israel: it is a declaration that his providence extends over all mankind. The paraphrase of Dathius is, "For Jehovah by his providence governs all men as well as the tribes of Israel." — Ed.

Phoenicia. But as we said yesterday, destruction is denounced on all the nations who had been inimical to the chosen people.

He says that Hamath, or Antioch, would be in its border. All nearly with one consent apply this to Judea or to Jerusalem, but they are mistaken; and this whole chapter is misunderstood by all expositors, Jews and others. I indeed feel ashamed when I see how widely they have departed from the meaning of the Prophet, and it will be almost a trial to me wholly to reject their mistakes. But it will become plainly evident that none of them have understood what the Prophet means.

They thus explain the passage, that Antioch would be within the borders of Judea, as God would consecrate to himself the lands which were before heathen. But the Prophet no doubt says, as I have already stated, that Antioch would be within the borders of Syria whenever God should visit them all for their wickedness, as though he had said, ``God will involve in the same punishment that part of Syria which derives its name from Antioch, because with united forces had all the Syrians assailed his chosen people; though then they are far distant from Judea, they shall yet partake of the same punishment, because they took up arms against his Church.'' Hamath then, or Antioch, shall be in the borders of Damascus; that is, it shall not be exempt from the punishment which God will inflict on the bordering kingdom of and. And as we advance this view will become more clear. [249]

He adds, Tyrus and Sidon, though it be very wise. The particle {כי}, ki, is used, which is properly causal; but we may gather from many parts of Scripture that it is taken as an adversative. Either meaning would not, however, be unsuitable, that God would take vengeance on the Sidonians and Syrians, because they were very crafty, or though they were cautious, and seemed skillful and cunning in managing their affairs: they were not however to escape God's judgment. If the former meaning be approved, it was the Prophet's object to show, that when men are extremely provident and labor to fortify themselves by crafty means, God is opposed to them; for it is his peculiar office to take the crafty by their own craftiness. As then too much cunning and craftiness displease God, it may suitably be said, that the Syrians and Sidonians were now summoned before God's tribunal, because they were extremely crafty, as is commonly the case with merchants in wealthy and maritime cities; for they learn much cunning by the many frauds which they are almost compelled to use. Since then the Sidonians and Syrians were such, it was right to denounce vengeance on them. But the other view is equally suitable, that all the craft of Tyrus and Simon would not prevent God from executing his judgment. As to

[249] And also on Hamath, which bordereth thereby. — Newcome. The construction of the whole passage, as given in our version by Newcome and Henderson, is not satisfactory. The resting-place of the burdens was to be Damascus, Hamath, Tyre, and Sidon. The following then would be its grammatical rendering — 1. The burden of the word of Jehovah on the land of Hadrach; And Damascus shall be its resting-place, (For Jehovah has an eye to see men And all the tribes of Israel,) 2. And also Hamath, which borders on it, Tyre and Zidon also: for she is very wise; 3. And built hath Tyre a fortress for herself, And has heaped up silver as dust, And fine gold as the mire of the streets. 4. Behold, the Lord will dispossess her, And smite in the sea her strength, And with fire shall she be devoured. As to “Tyre and Zidon,” the expression “very wise” belongs to the latter, and not to the former, as Henderson suggests; and then the character or state of Tyre is described in the following lines. This exactly corresponds with the usual style of the Prophets; when two things are mentioned, the last is first explained, and then the first. The boast of wisdom was the character of Zidon; confidence in its strength and riches is what is ascribed to Tyre. — Ed.

myself, I think that a reason is here given why God threatens ruin to the Syrians and Sidonians, even because they were given to crafty artifices, and thus circumvented all their neighbors.

But he uses a good word by way of concession; for all who intend to deceive cover their craft with the name of wisdom or prudence. ``They wish to be cautious,'' when yet they wickedly deceive others by their intrigues and frauds. A concession then is made as to the word wise: but the Prophet at the same time teaches us, that this kind of wisdom is hateful to God, when by the loss of others we increase our own wealth: for an explanation immediately follows ---

For Tyrus has for herself built a fortress. The Prophet shows by these words how very cautious or prudent the Syrians had been; for they fortified themselves by strongholds, and thought themselves to be beyond the reach of danger. He then adds, and heaped to herself silver as dust, and gold as the mire of the streets, that is, accumulated wealth above measure; for he mentions ``dust'' and ``mire'' as signifying an immense heap; as though he had said, ``They have worthless heaps of silver and gold for their vast abundance''. He no doubt includes silver and gold in the fortress which he mentions; for I do not confine the word fortress only to towers and strongholds; but the Prophet, as I think, states generally, that Tyrus was so furnished and fortified with wealth, forces, and all kinds of defences, that it thought itself impregnable.

There is a striking correspondence between {צור}, tsur, and {מצור}, metsur {צור}, Tsur, he says, has built {מצור}, metsur, a fortress. It is a paronomasia worthy of notice, but cannot be retained in Latin.

He now declares that God would be an avenger. Behold, he says, Jehovah will possess, or cause to possess, as some read, but they are mistaken, owing to the two meanings of the verb {ירש}, iresh, which means to possess and also to expel or impoverish; [250] for interpreters think that a hope of favor and of salvation is here given to these cities, and say that they are now chosen by God as a possession. But this is wholly contrary to the intention of the Prophet, as it appears more clearly from a view of each clause.

Jehovah then will expel her, and smite her strength. The Prophet no doubt alludes to what he had already said --- that Tyrus had heaped silver and gold; now on the other hand he declares that Tyrus would be exposed to a scattering; for the heap of gold and silver it had laid up would be dissipated by God: he will then dissipate; or if one chooses to take the verb as meaning to reduce to want, the contrast would thus be suitable --- God will then impoverish, or expel her. Afterwards he adds, In the sea will he smite her strength. As Tyrus, we know, was surrounded by the sea, the Prophet by this reference shows God's power in taking vengeance on her; for the sea would be no restraint or hindrance to God, when he resolved to enter there. The

[250] This verb is here confounded with [{ירש}] which means to impoverish in Hiphil. But the Hiphil of [{יוש}] has the idea of expelling or driving out; it means literally to cause one to be inherited or heired, that is, by making another to succeed in his place. To dispossess, according to Henderson, rather than to cast out, according to our version and Newcome, is the idea of the original. The explanation here disapproved by Calvin, which is wholly inconsistent with the whole passage, has been derived from the Septuagint, who have rendered the verb as though it were in Kal, [{κληρονομησει}]. The Targum gives it the idea of driving or casting out. The Greek fathers, Theodoret and Cyril, not knowing Hebrew, could give no other explanation. Similar has been the source of not a few interpretations given by the fathers. --- Ed.

Syrians, indeed, thought themselves safe from every hostile attack, for they had the sea on every side as a triple wall and a triple rampart. Nor was Tyrus altogether like Venice; for Venice is situated in a stagnant sea, while the situation of Tyrus was in a very deep sea, as historians plainly show who relate its assault by Alexander the Great. It had indeed been before taken and plundered; but he did what none had ever thought of --- he filled up a part of the sea, so that Tyrus was no longer an island.

We now see what Zechariah had in view, when he threatened ruin to Tyrus, though its strength was in the midst of the sea, beyond the reach of fortune, as it is commonly said. And she shall be consumed by fire. He means that Tyrus would not only be plundered, but wholly demolished; for we know that even the strongest things are consumed by fire. It follows ---

Zechariah 9:5

5. Ashkelon shall see it, and fear; Gaza also shall see it, and be very sorrowful, and Ekron; for her expectation shall be ashamed; and the king shall perish from Gaza, and Ashkelon shall not be inhabited.

5. Videbit Ascalon et timebit; et Aza, et dolebit valde; et Ekron, quia confusus erit (aut, pudefactus) aspectus ejus; et peribit rex ab Aza (hoc est, Gaza) et Ascalon non habitabitur.

In this verse also is described the devastation of those cities which the Prophet names; as though he had said, that all those cities which had risen up against God's people were devoted to extreme vengeance. Zechariah says that none would be exempt from punishment, since the hand of God would be stretched forth, and extend everywhere, so that it might be easily concluded, that all those who had unjustly harassed the Church would be thus rewarded for their cruelty. This is the import of what is here said.

He says that Ascalon would see and fear; for at that time the Ascalonites were hostile to the Jews. He speaks the same of Aza, which the Greeks called Gaza; but they were deceived in thinking it was a name given to it by Cambyses, for the reason that Gaza means a treasure in the Persian language. This is childish. It is indeed certain that it has been owing to a change in the pronunciation of one letter; for {ע}, oin, is guttural among the Hebrews, and was formerly so pronounced, like our g: as they called Amorrah, Gomorrah, so Aza is Gaza. We have spoken of this elsewhere.

Now it appears from geography that these cities were near the sea, or not far from the sea, and having this advantage they gathered much wealth. But as wealth commonly generates pride and cruelty, all these nations were very troublesome to the Jews. This is the reason why the Prophet says that grief would come on Gaza, and then on Ekron and on other cities. He adds, Because ashamed shall be her expectation. There is no doubt but they had placed their trust in Tyrus, which was thought to be impregnable; for though enemies might have subdued the whole land, there a secure station remained. Since they all looked to Tyrus, the Prophet says that their hope would be confounded, when Tyrus was overthrown and destroyed. The sum of the whole is, that the beginning of the vengeance would be at Tyrus, which was situated as it were beyond the world, so as not to be exposed to any evils. He says then that the beginning of the calamity would be in that city, to which no

misfortunes, as it was thought, could find an access. And then he mentions that other cities, on seeing Tyrus visited with ruin, would be terrified, as their confidence would be thus subverted. He afterwards adds, Perish shall the king from Gaza, and Ascalon shall not be inhabited; that is, such a change will take place as will almost obliterate the appearance of these cities. It follows ---

Zechariah 9:6

6. And a bastard shall dwell in Ashdod, and I will cut off the pride of the Philistines.

6. Et habitabit extraneus in Azdoth, (hoc est Azoti, et Azdoth verterunt Graci Azotum,) et excidam superbiam Philistim.

In this verse the Prophet denounces a similar ruin on Azotus, and the whole land of the Philistines, or on the whole land of Palestine. For what interpreters say, that the Jews would dwell at Azotus as strangers, that is, though they had previously been counted aliens, is to reach neither heaven nor earth. The Prophet on the contrary means, that after the destruction of these cities, if any inhabitants remained, they would be like strangers, without any certain habitation. The Prophet then mentions the effect, in order to show that the country would be waste and desolate, so as to contain no safe or fixed dwellings for its inhabitants. Some render it spurious, as it is rendered in some other places; and they understand it of the Jews, because they had been before in a mean condition, as though they were like a spurious race. But their opinion is probable, who derive {ממזר}, memezar, from {זור}, zur, which means to peregrinate; and they quote other instances, in which the double {מם}, mem, is used in the formations of a noun; and it is easy to prove, from many passages of scripture, that {ממזר}, memezar, means a stranger. [251] And if any one carefully considers the design of the Prophet, he will see the truth of what I have said --- that is, that his object is to show, that all the inhabitants of Azotus, and of the land of the Philistine, would be like lodgers, because all places would be desolate through the slaughter and devastations of enemies. As then Ashdod and Palestine had been before noted for the number of their people, the Prophet says that all the cities of Palestine, and the city Ashdod, would be deserted, except that there would be there a few scattered and wandering inhabitants, like those who sojourn in a strange land. It follows ---

Zechariah 9:7

7. And I will take away his blood out of his mouth, and his abominations from between his teeth: but he that remaineth, even he, shall be for our God, and he shall be as a governor in Judah, and Ekron as a Jebusite.

7. Et auferam sanguines ejus ex ore ejus, et abominationes ejus e medio dentium ejus; et qui residuus erit, etiam ipse, erit Deo nostro; et erit quasi dux in Iehuda, et

[251] That this is its meaning is generally admitted, as given by the Septuagint, the Targum, and the Syriac version, and adopted by Grotius, Newcome, Blayney, and Henderson. Lee accounts for the double [{[{מ by deriving the word from ,[{מן}] from, ,[{עם}] people, and ,[{זר}] a foreigner, or stranger. The poetical singular is used for the plural, as is the case in the following verse. The whole passage may be thus rendered --- 6. And dwell shall a stranger in Ashdod; (For I will cut off the pride of the Philistines;) 7. And I will remove his blood from his mouth, And his abominations from between his teeth, And left shall he be, even he, for our God; So that he shall be as a chief in Judah, And Ekron as a Jebusite. The ``his'' and ``he'' in this last verse is the ``stranger'' in verse 6; and that is used in a collective sense, properly rendered strangers, or foreigners, [{ἀλλογενεις}] by the Septuagint; so that the plural, in all these instances, might suitably be adopted in a translation --- The ``pride of the Philistines'' was cut off by introducing strangers into their cities; and this line may be considered as parenthetic. --- Ed.

Ekron quasi Iebusaeus.

Interpreters do also pervert the whole of this verse; and as to the following verse, that is, the next, they do nothing else but lead the readers far astray from its real meaning. God says now, that he will take away blood from the mouth of enemies; as though he had said, ``I will check their savage disposition, that they may not thus swallow down the blood of my people.'' For here is not described any change, as though they were to become a different people, as though the Syrians, the Sidonians, the Philistine, and other nations, who had been given to plunders, and raged cruelly against the miserable Jews, were to assume the gentleness of lambs: this the Prophet does not mean; but he introduces God here as armed with power to repress the barbarity of their enemies, and to prevent them from cruelly assaulting the Church.

I will take away blood, he says, from their mouth; and he says, from their mouth, because they had been inured in cruelty. I will cause, then, that they may not as hitherto satiate their own lust for blood. He adds, and abominations, that is, I will take from the midst of their teeth their abominable plunders; for he calls all those things abominations which had been taken by robbery and violence. [252] And he compares them to wild beasts, who not only devour the flesh, but drink also the blood and tear asunder the raw carcass. In short, he shows here, under the similitude of wolves and leopards and wild boars, how great had been the inhumanity of enemies to the Church; for they devoured the miserable Jews, as wild and savage beasts are wont to devour their prey.

It afterwards follows, and he who shall be a remnant. Some translate, ``and he shall be left,'' and explain it of the Philistine and other nations of whom mention is made. But the Prophet doubtless means the Jews; for though few only had returned to their country as remnants from their exile, he yet says that this small number would be sacred to God, and that all who remained would be, as it were, leaders in Judah, however despised they might have been. For there was no superiority even in the chief men among them; only they spontaneously paid reverence to Zerubbabel, who was of the royal seed, and to Joshua on account of the priesthood; while yet all of them were in a low and mean condition. But the Prophet says, that the most despised of them would be leaders and chiefs in Judah. We now perceive the Prophet's meaning; for after having predicted the ruin that was nigh all the enemies of the Church, he now sets forth the end and use of his prophecy; for God would provide for the good of the miserable Jews, who had been long exiles, and who, though now restored to their country, were yet exposed to the ill treatment of all, and also despised and made even the objects of scorn to their enemies. He then who shall be a remnant, even he shall be for our God, as though he had said, ``Though the Lord had for a time repudiated you as well as your fathers, when he drove you here and there and scattered you, yet now God has gathered you, and for this end --- that you

[252] Kimchi, Drusius, Grotius, and others, have given the same view; but Jerome, Marckius, Newcome, Blayney, Henderson, and Hengstenberg, regard idolatry as intended here, the "blood" being that of the victims which the heathens drank, and the "abominations" being the things sacrificed to idols. What seems strongly to favor the view taken by Calvin is the phraseology; the metaphor being that of a wild beast devouring his prey, and of the prey being taken from him: this certainly ill comports with the notion of putting an end to idolatrous practices. — Ed.

may be his people: ye shall then be the peculiar people of God, though ye are small in number and contemptible in your condition.'' [253]

Then he adds, these remnants shall be as leaders in Judah, that is, God will raise them to the highest honor; though they are now without any dignity, they shall yet be made by God almost all of them princes. It then follows, And Ekron shall be as a Jebusite. Some explain thus --- that the citizens of Ekron would dwell in Jerusalem, which the Jebusites had formerly possessed; and others give another view, but nothing to the purpose. The Prophet speaks not here of God's favor to the citizens of Ekron, but on the contrary shows the difference between God's chosen people and heathen nations, who gloried in their own good fortune: hence he says, that they should be like the Jebusites, for they at length would have to endure a similar destruction. We indeed know, that the Jebusites had been driven out of that town, when Jerusalem was afterwards built; but it was done late, even under David. As then they had long held that place and were at length dislodged, this is the reason why the Prophet says, that though the citizens of Ekron seemed now to be in the very middle of the holy land, they would be made like the Jebusites, for the Lord would drive away and destroy them all. He afterwards adds ---

Zechariah 9:8

8. And I will encamp about mine house because of the army, because of him that passeth by, and because of him that returneth: and no oppressor shall pass through them any more: for now have I seen with mine eyes.

8. Et castra metabor ad domum meam ab exercitu, a transeunte et redeunte; et non transibit super eos amplius exactor; quia nunc vidi oculis meis.

He concludes what he had been speaking of, --- that God would be the guardian of his chosen people, so as to repel on every side the violent assaults of enemies. It is then the same as though he had said, ``though the Church is not strongly fortified, it shall yet be impregnable, for God's protection is of more value than all human strength, than all aids and helps.'' God then compares himself here to a moat and a bulwark, and other kinds of fortresses, I will be, he says, a camp to my house. He mentions here house rather than city, that the Jews might feel confident that there was sufficient help in God alone, though they might dwell in a private house or in a cottage. ``My Church, though it be a small house, will I yet surround with my defences, so as to render it safe from all harm.''

He says, from the army; and then, from him that passes through, and from him that returns. He places the army in opposition to the house; and thus he exhorts

[253] The explanation of this clause, though countenanced by some others, cannot yet be admitted. There is nothing in the text to justify the translation from the “stranger” in verse 6, and who is spoken of in this verse, to the Jewish nation. The foreigners or strangers inhabiting Ashdod are no doubt intended. So thought Theodoret, Drusius, Grotius, Blayney, and Newcome; and such is the view of Henderson, only that he applies the passage to the Philistines generally, and not to the strangers in Ashdod. To consider the foreigner or stranger as a “ruler,” seems not right. This prophecy was fulfilled, says Grotius, in the time of the Maccabees, and he refers to Josephus, 12:12, and to 1 Maccabees 5:66; and also in the time of Alexander, when many of the cities of the Philistines, especially Ashdod and Gaza, were conquered by the Jews, when many of them became proselytes to Judaism. The explanation of Blayney as to the latter part of the verse is as follows: that the stranger or strangers in Ashdod should be on the same footing as a privileged citizen in Judah, but that the Ekronite, the natural born Philistine should be as a Jebusite in Jerusalem, deprived of the privileges which he had when the country was his own. This would be to “cut off the pride of the Philistines.” — Ed.

the Jews, not to regard their own strength, but to know that God alone is far better shall all armies. Though then the whole world united together and collected all its forces, he still bids them to be calmly confident, for God alone would be sufficient to put to flight all armies. And according to the same meaning he refers to him that passes through and who returns; as though he had said, ``Though enemies may wander through the whole earth and occupy it from one end to the other, yet I will cause my house to remain safe.'' By him that returns, he intimates, that though enemies renewed their armies the second and the third time, yet God's strength would be always sufficient to check their assaults. In a word, what is here taught is the perpetuity of the safety of God's people, for he will never be wearied in defending them, nor will his power be ever lessened. It often happens that those who with the best intention succor their neighbors, by degrees grow wearied, or they may have their efforts prevented by various events; but the Prophet tells us, that God is not like men, wearied or unable, after having once helped his people and repelled their enemies; for he will be always ready to aid his people, were enemies to renew the battle a hundred times.

By enemy then he means forces; by passing through, the obstinate cruelty of enemies; and by returning, new wars, which one undertakes, when disappointed of his hope, by collecting a new army and repairing his strength. [254]

At length he adds, And pass shall no more the extortioner through them. This sentence explains what he had figuratively expressed, --- that though the Jews had been exposed to the will of their enemies, yet God would not hereafter suffer them to be unjustly treated and to be plundered as they had been: for under the name of extortioner he includes all plunderers who had spoiled the miserable Jews of their goods. Then he says, For I have seen with mine eyes. It would be frigid, nay insipid, to explain this clause as some do, that is, as though the Prophet had said, --- that he related what had been made known to him from above: for on the contrary God testifies here, that he had seen with his eyes how cruelly and disgracefully the Jews had been treated. And some, while they regard God as the speaker, very unwisely give this explanation, --- that God already foresaw what he would do. But evidently God assigns here, as I have said, a reason why he purposed to deliver the Jews from injuries, and for the future to keep them safe and defend them; and the reason

[254] Perhaps this is too great a refinement. Marckius gives this meaning, that the "army" is a marshalled force, and that the passer through and the returner are individual enemies. But our version is very literal, only that passing through and returning may be applied to the army, — And I will be a camp to mine house from an host, From it when passing through and from it when returning. Or literally, From the passing through and from the returning (i.e. host.) Newcome's version is, And I will encamp about mine house with an army. So that none shall pass through or return. This is neither grammatically correct, nor consistent with posterior facts; for armies did pass through the land, though the house or temple of God was not invaded. Henderson's version is in substance the same with what I have given, And I will encamp about my house because of the army, Both when it passeth through and when it returneth. The following line may be thus rendered— And come upon them shall no more the oppressor. The Septuagint give for oppressor [{ἐξελαύνων}], the driver away or banisher; the Targum has ``tyrant,'' which Grotius adopts. ``Oppressor'' is the word used by Drusius, Newcome, and Henderson. It has been said that no foreign oppressor, like the Babylonians, had invaded the land from this time to the advent of Christ, though the Jews had suffered much both from the Eygptian and Syrian kings; but the language here is so strong, that the promise must be considered as conditional, as all those promises were which were connected with their national covenant. ``No more'' has no limit: hence the promise must be viewed as conditional. ``This promise,'' says Dr. M`Caul, ``is of the same nature as most of the others made to Israel; that is, conditional upon their obedience. Moses has repeatedly laid down this as the general principle of God's dealings with the Jews, especially in reference to the possession of blessing and prosperity in the land. (Deuteronomy 30:15-18.)'' --- Ed.

given is, because he saw what grievous wrongs they were suffering. And the Prophet speaks according to the usual manner adopted in Scripture; for though nothing is hid from God's eyes, yet he is rightly said to see what he takes notice of, and what he declares must be accounted for before his tribunal. Though then God saw even before the creation of the world what was to take place afterward in all ages, yet he is rightly said to see what he begins to call to judgment. The Jews indeed thought they were neglected by him; for the Scripture everywhere says, that God closes his eyes, is asleep, lies down, forgets, cares not, when he hides himself and appears not as the avenger of wrongs. Hence, on the other hand, the Lord declares here, that he saw with his eyes those things which were not to be tolerated, inasmuch as enemies had passed all bounds, and had so far advanced and indulged in wantonness, that their pride and cruelty were become intolerable.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that as the ungodly at this day take such delight in their own filth, that the weakness of our faith is somewhat disturbed by their pride and arrogance, --- O grant, that we may learn to lift up our eyes to thy judgments, and patiently wait for what is now concealed, until thou puttest forth the power of thine hand and destroyest all those who now cruelly rage and shed innocent blood, and persecute thy Church in every way they can: and may we so cast ourselves on thy care, so as not to doubt but that thou art sufficient for our safety, and that thou wilt at length make evident what thou hast testified, even that there is so much protection in thine hand, as that we may safely boast that we are safe and blessed, as long as thou art pleased to exercise care over us, until we shall at length reach that blessed rest, which has been prepared for us in heaven by Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Fifty-third

Zechariah 9:9

9. Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.

9. Exulta valde filia Sion, jubila fila Ierusalem: Ecce, rex tuus veniet tibi, justus et servatus ipse (vel, idem,) pauper, et equitans super asinum, et super pullum filium asinarum.

The Prophet here briefly shows the manner in which the Church was to be restored; for a king from the tribe and family of David would again arise, to restore all things to their ancient state. And this is the view given everywhere by the Prophets; for the hope of the ancient people, as our hope, was founded on Christ. Inasmuch then as things were as yet in a decayed state among the Jews, Zechariah here testifies that God had not in vain formerly spoken so often by his servants concerning the advent of a Redeemer, but that a firm hope was to be entertained, until the prophecies were in due time fulfilled. As then Zechariah has been hitherto speaking of the prosperous and happy state of the Church, he now confirms what he had said; and this was especially necessary, for they could not, as I have already said, have raised up their minds so as to feel confidence as to their salvation, without having a Mediator set before them. But as the faithful were then in great grief and sorrow, Zechariah here

exhorts them to perseverance: for by bidding them to rejoice greatly, and even to shout for joy, he no doubt intimates, that though grief and sorrow took fast hold on their hearts, they ought yet to strive manfully, so as to receive the favor of God; for they must have a hundred times succumbed under their evils, had they not Christ before their eyes; not indeed in a carnal manner, but in the mirror of the word; as the faithful see in that what is far distant and even hidden from them.

We now then understand, first, why the Prophet here makes such a sudden reference to Christ; and secondly, why he does not simply exhort the faithful to rejoice, but encourages them greatly to exult as though they were already in a safe and most happy condition.

By the word king, the Prophet intimates, that except they thought God unfaithful in his promises, they were to entertain hope, until the kingdom of David, then apparently fallen, arose again. As God then would have himself acknowledged faithful, and his adoption counted fixed and ratified in the Messiah, it is no wonder that the Prophet now briefly refers to a king; for this mode of speaking was well known by the people. And we have also seen elsewhere, that when the Prophets speak of the safety of the Church, they mention a king, because the Lord designed to gather again the dispersed Church under one head, even Christ. And no doubt there would ever remain a dreadful dispersion, were not Christ the bond of union. He then says that a king would come. But he speaks not as of a king unknown; he only reminds them that God would be true and faithful to his promises. Now since the whole law, and adoption, must have vanished away, except Christ came, his coming ought to have been patiently waited for.

Further, that God's children might be more confirmed, he says also that this king would come to the people, the daughter of Sion, as though he had said, that God, for the sake of the whole Church, had fixed the royal throne in the family of David: for if the king was to come, that he might indulge in his own triumphs, and be contented with pomps and pleasures, it would have been but a small and wholly barren consolation: but as God in determining to send the Messiah, provided for the safety of the whole Church, which he had promised to do, the people might here derive solid confidence. It is not then a matter of small moment, when the Prophet teaches us, that the king would come to Sion and to Jerusalem; as though he had said, ``This king shall not come for his own sake like earthly kings, who rule according to their own caprice, or for their own advantage:'' but he reminds us, that his kingdom would be for the common benefit of the whole people, for he would introduce a happy state.

He afterwards states what sort of king he was to be. He first names him just, and then preserved or saved. As to the word, just, it ought, I think, to be taken in an active sense, and so the word which follows: Just then and saved is called the king of the chosen people, for he would bring to them righteousness and salvation. Both words depend on this clause, --- that there would come a king to Sion. If he came privately for himself, he might have been for himself just and saved, that is, his righteousness and salvation might have belonged to himself or to his own person: but as he came for the sake of others, and has been for them endued with righteousness and salvation; then the righteousness and salvation of which mention is made here,

belong to the whole body of the Church, and ought not to be confined to the person of the king. Thus is removed every contention, with which many have foolishly, or at least, very inconsiderately, wearied themselves; for they have thought that the Jews cannot be otherwise overcome, and that their perverseness cannot be otherwise checked, than by maintaining, that {נושע}, nusho, must be taken actively; and they have quoted some passages of Scripture, in which a verb in Niphal is taken in an active sense. [255] But what need there is of undertaking such disputes, when we may well agree on the subject? I then concede to the Jews, that Christ is saved or preserved, and that he is said to be so by Zechariah.

But we must see what this salvation is which belongs to Christ. This we may gather from what is said by the Prophet. We are not then to contend here about words, but to consider what the subject is, that is, that a just and saved king comes to his chosen: and we know that Christ had no need of salvation himself. As then he was sent by the Father to gather a chosen people, so he is said to be saved because he was endued with power to preserve or save them. We then see that all controversy is at an end, if we refer those two words to Christ's kingdom, and it would be absurd to confine them to the person of one man, for the discourse is here concerning a royal person; yea, concerning the public condition of the Church, and the salvation of the whole body. And certainly when we speak of men, we say not that a king is safe and secure, when he is expelled from his kingdom, or when his subjects are disturbed by enemies, or when they are wholly destroyed. When therefore a king, deprived of all authority, sees his subjects miserably oppressed, he is not said to be saved or preserved. But the case of Christ, as I have said, is special; for he does not exercise dominion for his own sake, but for the preservation of his whole people. Hence with regard to grammar, I can easily allow that Christ is called just and saved, passively; but as to the matter itself, he is just with reference to his people, and also saved or preserved, for he brings with him salvation to the lost; for we know that the Jews were then almost in a hopeless state.

He however at the same time adds, that the king would be saved, not because he would be furnished with arms and forces, or that he would defend his people after the manner of men; for he says, that he would be poor [256] He must then be

[255] The Septuagint, the Targum, and the Vulgate, render the word actively [{σωζων}] --- Savior. It is so taken by Bochart, Grotius, Marckius, Dathius, Newcome, and Henderson. The reason given is, that there are instances of several verbs in Niphal having an active meaning. This is true; but this verb is found nineteen times in Niphal besides here, and invariably in a passive sense. This is quite sufficient to settle its meaning. Kimchi, Glassius, and Cocceius take this view. The last says that the reference is to his deliverance from his sufferings and his death. It is singular that this verse, at least a part of it, is quoted, and applied to Christ shortly before his crucifixion. Matthew 21:4,5. The two verses, 9th and 10th, are in a striking manner connected; there is a contrast between the end of the 9th and the beginning of the 10th, and a correspondence between the end of the 10th and the beginning of the 9th. The king shall ride lowly on an ass, --- and the chariot and the horse shall be cut off; he shall be saved or preserved, --- and the battle-bow shall be destroyed; then the correspondence, --- he is righteous, i.e., just and faithful to his gracious promises, --- and he shall speak peace to the nations; he is King, --- and his dominion shall be from sea to sea. The two first lines are not to be included in the comparison, --- 9. Exult thou greatly, daughter of Zion; Shout thou daughter of Jerusalem: Behold thy King, he shall come to thee; Just, and saved shall he be; Lowly, and he shall ride on an ass, Even on a colt, the foal of an ass: 10. And cut off shall I the chariot from Ephraim, And the horse from Jerusalem; And cut off shall be the bow of war; And he will speak peace to the nations; And his dominion shall be from sea to sea, And from the river to the extremities of the land. --- Ed.

[256] Pauper, [{,[{עני rendered ``[{πραυς}], meek'' by the Septuagint; ``humble,'' by Newcome; and ``lowly,'' by Blayney and Henderson, and also by Kimchi, and the Targum. It may either mean a depressed and poor condition, or, as Blayney says, ``the humility of his temper.'' Both were true as to the king mentioned here. He was poor in condition, riding on a colt, and lowly also in mind, of which his procession was an evidence. --- Ed.

otherwise preserved safe than earthly princes are wont to be, who fill their enemies with fear, who fortify their borders, prepare an army, and set up every defense to ward off assaults. Zechariah teaches us, that Christ would be otherwise preserved, as he would prove superior to his enemies through a divine power. As then he is poor, he must be exposed to all kinds of injuries; for we see, that when there is no earthly fortress, all the wicked immediately fly together as it were to the prey. If Christ then is poor, he cannot preserve his own people, nor can he prosper in his kingdom. It hence follows, that he must be furnished with celestial power, in order to continue himself safe, and in order to prevent harm to his Church; and this is what Zechariah will presently tell us, and more clearly express. It is now sufficient briefly to state his object.

He afterwards adds, Riding on an ass, the colt, the foal of an ass [257] Some think that the ass is not mentioned here to denote poverty, for they who excelled in power among the people were then in the habit of riding on asses. But it seems to me certain, that the Prophet added this clause to explain the word {עני}, oni, poor; as though he had said, that the king of whom he spoke would not be distinguished by a magnificent and splendid appearance like earthly princes, but would appear in a sordid or at least in an ordinary condition, so as not to differ from the humblest and lowest of the people. [258] He then bids the faithful to raise up their eyes to heaven, in order to come to the true knowledge of Christ's kingdom, and to feel assured that righteousness and salvation are to be expected from him. How so? Because he will be accompanied with nothing that may strike men with fear, but will serve as an humble and obscure individual. We may also here add, that righteousness and salvation must be understood according to the character of Christ's kingdom; for as the kingdom of Christ is not temporal or what passes away, we conclude that the righteousness he possesses is to be perpetual, together with the salvation which he brings. But I am not disposed ingeniously to speak here of the righteousness of faith; for I think, on the contrary, that by the word is meant here a right order of things, as all things were then among the people in a state of confusion; and this might be easily proved by many passages of Scripture.

The sum of the whole is, that the predictions by which God gave to his chosen people a hope of redemption were not vain or void; for at length in due time Christ, the son of David, would come forth, --- secondly, that this king would be just, and saved or preserved; for he would restore things into order which were in a disgraceful state of confusion, --- and thirdly, he adds, that this king would be poor; for he would ride on an ass, and would not appear in great eminence, nor be distinguished for arms, or for riches, or for splendor, or for number of soldiers, or even for royal trappings which dazzle the eyes of the vulgar: he shall ride on an ass

[257] Literally it is, "the foal of she-asses," which Kimchi explains, "the foal of one of the she-asses," and adduces Judges 12:7, as an instance, where "in the cities of Gilead" means "in one of the cities of Gilead." It is singular in the Septuagint, the Targum, and the Syriac. Th word is regarded by Grotius as including both sexes, "the foal of asses," a pure foal, not a mule, its father and mother being of the asinine kind. So Newcome renders the phrase, "the foal of asses." The probability is, that as the early versions give the singular, and as there seems to be no reason for the plural, it is a typographical mistake. — Ed.

[258] Newcome suggests another reason, "As horses are used in war, Christ may be supposed by this action to have shown the humble and peacable nature of his kingdom." — Ed.

This prophecy we know was fulfilled in Christ; and even some of the Jews are constrained to confess that the Prophet's words can be justly applied to none else. Yet they do not acknowledge as the Christ of God the Son of Mary; but they think that the Prophet speaks of their imaginary Messiah. Now we, who are fully persuaded and firmly maintain that the Christ promised has appeared and performed his work, do see that it has not been said without reason that he would come poor and riding on an ass. It was indeed designed that there should be a visible symbol of this very thing; for he mounted an ass while ascending into Jerusalem a short time before his death. It is indeed true, that the Prophet's words are metaphorical: when he says, Come shall a king, riding on an ass, the words are figurative; for the Prophet means, that Christ would be as it were an obscure person, who would not make an appearance above that of the common people. That this is the real meaning is no doubt true. But yet there is no reason why Christ should not afford an example of this in mounting an ass.

I will adduce a similar instance: it is said in the twenty second Psalm, `They have cast lots on my garments.' The metaphor there is no doubt apparent, which means that David's enemies divided his spoils. He therefore complains that those robbers, by whom he had been unjustly treated, had deprived him of all that he had: and fulfilled has this been in a literal manner, so that the most ignorant must acknowledge that it has not in vain been foretold. We now then understand how well do these things agree --- that the Prophet speaks metaphorically of the humble appearance of Christ; and yet that the visible symbol is so suitable, that the most ignorant must acknowledge that no other Christ but he who has already appeared is to be expected.

I omit many frivolous things, which in no degree tend to explain the Prophet's meaning, but even pervert it, and destroy faith in prophecy: for some think that Christ rode on an ass, and also on a colt, because he was to govern the Jews, who had been previously accustomed to bear the yoke of the law, and that he was also to bring the Gentiles to obedience, who had been hitherto unnameable. But these things are very frivolous. It is enough for us to know what the Prophet means. It afterwards follows ---

Zechariah 9:10

10. And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth.

10. Et excidam quadrigas (vel, currum) ab Ephraim, et equum ab Ierusalem, et excidetur arcus bellicus (arcus belli;) et loquetur pacem ad gentes; et imperium ejus a mari usque ad mare, et a fluvio usque ad terminos terrae.

The Prophet here expresses more clearly what he had briefly referred to by the word poor, and by the metaphor which we have explained. Hence he says, that there would be no horses, no chariots, no bows, no warlike instruments in Christ's kingdom; for tranquillity would prevail in it. The sum of the whole is, that Christ and his people would not be kept safe and secure by human defences, by means of many

soldiers and of similar helps being at hand; but that God would restrain, and even compose and allay all warlike commotions, so that there would be no need of such aids. We now understand the Prophet's design.

But we must notice the language here used. God declares here that he would be the giver of peace, so that the Messiah would continue safe in his kingdom; I will cut off, he says; for it might have been objected --- ``If he is to be poor, what hope can there be of safety?'' The answer is, because it will be God's work to restrain all the assaults of enemies. He means, in short, that the Messiah's kingdom would be safe, because God from heaven would check all the rage of enemies, so that however disposed they might be to do harm, they would yet find themselves held captive by the hidden bridle of God, so as not to be able to move a finger.

But after having said that the Jews and Israelites would be safe, though stripped naked of all defences, he adds, He will speak peace to the nations; that is, though he will not use threats or terrors, nor bring forth great armies, yet the nations will obey him; for there will be no need of employing any force. To speak peace then to the nations means, that they will calmly hear, though not terrified nor threatened. Some with more ingenuity make the meaning to be that Christ, who reconciles the Father to us, will proclaim this favor of reconciliation; but the Prophet, as I think, with more simplicity, says, that Christ would be content with his own word, inasmuch as the Gentiles would become obedient, and quietly submit to his authority. [259] The import of the whole is, that Christ would so rule far and wide, that the farthest would live contentedly under his protection, and not cast off the yoke laid on them.

He states in the last place, that his dominion would be from sea to sea, that is, from the Red sea to the Syrian sea, towards Cilicia, and from the river, that is, Euphrates, to the extreme borders of the earth. By the earth we are not to understand the whole world, as some interpreters have unwisely said; for the Prophet no doubt mentioned those places already known to the Jews. For we know that remarkable oracle ---

``He shall reign from sea to sea.'' (Psalm 72:8.)

But God speaks of David only, and the words are the same as here; and there was no oracle more commonly known among the Jews. [260] The Prophet, then, who adduces here nothing new, only reminds the Jews of what they had long ago heard, and repeats, as it were, word for word, what was familiar to them all. For we must bear in mind what I said at the beginning --- that the Prophet here strengthens the minds of the godly, and on this account, because the Messiah, on whose coming was founded the gratuitous adoption of the people, as well as their hope of salvation, had not yet appeared. We now then understand the real meaning of this passage. He then adds ---

Zechariah 9:11

[259] To “speak peace” is to anounce or proclaim peace, and not to produce peace. It is not to render people peaceable, but to declare the message of peace to them. It it the promulgation of the gospel. — Ed.

[260] The reference as to the “sea” may be also made to Exodus 23:31; and as to the “river” to Deuteronomy 11:24. The land promised to the Israelites is no doubt what is here described,” and Newcome renders the last clause “to the uttermost part of the land.” Though Henderson admits that the words are originally “descriptive of the utmost bound of the Hebrew kingdom,” yet he thinks that they are to be taken here in their widest meaning, as including the whole earth. — Ed.

11. As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water.

11. Etiam tu, in sanguine foederis, tui emisi vinctos tuos e puteo, in quo non erat aqua.

Here he applies his former doctrine to its right use, so that the faithful might emerge from their sorrow, and come to that joy which he had before encouraged them to entertain. He then addresses Jerusalem, as though he had said, ``There is no reason for thee to torment thyself with perplexed and anxious thoughts, for I will accomplish what I have promised --- that I would become a deliverer to my people.'' For this doubt might have occurred to them --- ``Why does he exhort us to rejoice, while the Church of God is still in part captive, and while those who have returned to their country are miserably and cruelly harassed by their enemies?'' To this objection Zechariah answers in the person of God --- that God would be able to deliver them, though they were sunk in the deepest gulf. We hence see how this verse harmonises with the other verses: he had before spoken of the happy state of the Church under Christ as its king; but as the condition of the people then was very hard and miserable, he adds, that deliverance was to be expected from God.

But we must observe, that a pronoun feminine is here used, when he says, even thou, or, thou also. Both the Latins and Greeks have been deceived by the ambiguity of the language used, [261] and have thought that the words are addressed to Christ, as though he was to draw his captives from a deep pit; but God here addresses his Church, as though he had said, ``Hear thou.'' And the particle {גם}, gam, is emphatical, meaning this --- ``I see that I do not prevail much with you, for ye are in a manner overwhelmed by your calamities, and no hope refreshes you, as you think yourselves visited, as it were, with a thousand deaths; but still, though a mass of evils disheartens you, or at least so far oppresses you as to render inefficacious what I say --- though, in short, ye be of all men the most miserable, I will yet redeem your captives.'' But God addresses the whole Church, as in many other places under the character of a wife.

He says, By the blood of thy covenant. This seems not to belong properly to the Church, for there is no other author of the covenant but God himself; but the relation, we know, between God and his people, as to the covenant, is mutual. It is God's covenant, because it flows from him; it is the covenant of the Church, because it is made for its sake, and laid up as it were in its bosom. And the truth penetrated more fully into the hearts of the godly, when they heard that it was not only a divine covenant, but that it was also the covenant of the people themselves: Then by the blood of thy covenant, etc. Some refer this, but very unwisely, to circumcision, for the Prophet no doubt had regard to the sacrifices. It was then the same as though he had said --- ``Why do ye offer victims daily in the temple? If ye think that you thus worship God, it is a very gross and insane superstition. Call then to mind the end designed, or the model given you from above; for God has already promised that he will be propitious to you, by expiating your sins by the only true sacrifice:

[261] Rather by following the Septuagint who changed the person of the verb "[{ἐξαπέστειλας}], though hast sent forth.'' The pronoun ``[{συ}], thou,'' in Greek, has no gender, as in Hebrew. It was in this way that Theodoret, Cyril, and Augustine were led astray as to the sense of this passage. The Targum retains the reading of the Hebrew. --- Ed.

And for this end offer your sacrifices, and that blood will bring expiation with it. Now since God has not in vain appointed your sacrifices, and ye observe them not in vain, no doubt the benefit will come at length to light, for I have sent forth thy captives. For God does not reconcile himself to men, that he may destroy or reduce them to nothing, or that he may suffer them to pine away and die; for why does God pardon men, but that he may deliver them from destruction?'' [262]

We now perceive why the Prophet thus speaks of the blood of the covenant in connection with the salvation of the whole people. ``Ye daily offer victims,'' he says, ``and the blood is poured on the altar: God has not appointed this in vain.'' Now since God receives you into favor, that ye may be safe, he will therefore deliver the captives of his Church; I will send forth, he says, or, have sent forth thy captives: for he expresses here in the past tense what he would do in future.

I will send forth thy captives from the pit in which there is no water. He means a deep gulf, where thirst itself would destroy miserable men without being drawn forth by a power from above. In short, he means, first, that the Jews were sunk in the deep; and secondly, that thirst would consume them, so that death was nigh at hand, except they were miraculously delivered by God: but he reminds them, that no impediment would prevent God from raising them to light from the deepest darkness. We then see that this was added, that the Jews might learn to struggle against all things that might strengthen unbelief, and feel assured that they would be preserved safe, for it is God's peculiar work to raise the dead. This is the meaning. He now adds ---

Zechariah 9:12

12. Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope: even to day do I declare that I will render double unto thee;

12. Convertimini ad munitionem vincti spei; etiam hodie annuntio duplicia, rependam tibi (vel, duplicia rependam tibi; uterque sensus non male convenit.)

Zechariah proceeds with the same subject. He bids the Jews suddenly to retake themselves to their fortress. There is no doubt but that he means by that term the holy land; nor do I oppose the opinion of those who think the temple to be intended: for Jerusalem and the whole of Judea is called a fortress, and for this reason, because God had chosen his sanctuary there. It is then the same, as though one wishing to collect a dispersed and straggling band of soldiers were to say, ``To the standard, to the standard;'' or, ``To the troop, to the troop.'' For though Judea was not then fortified, nay, Jerusalem itself had no high wall or strong towers, yet they had God as their stronghold, and this was impregnable; for he had promised that the Jews would be safe under the shadow of his wings, though exposed to the caprices of all around them. Nor does he here address them only who had returned, or the exiles who still remained scattered in the East; but by this declaration he encourages

[262] "The words," says Newcome, "allude to the Jewish custom of ratifying covenants by the blood of victims." It was called "thy" covenant, because it was a covenant made with the daughter of Sion. The meaning is, "the covenant ratified with thee by blood," that is, of victims. see Exodus 24:6-8. The [{[{ב here means for, or on account of. The verse may be thus rendered --- As to thee also, on account of the blood of thy covenant Have I sent forth thy prisoners From a pit without water in it. It was thought by Drusius and Newcome that the deliverance of the people from Babylon is here referred to, which is the most probable opinion, as the next verse seems to have been addressed to them. But Marckius and Henderson agree with Calvin, that the past tense is used for the future. --- Ed.

the whole Church, that they might be fully persuaded that when assembled under the protection of God, they were as fortified as though they were on every side surrounded by the strongest citadels, and that there would be no access open to enemies.

Return ye then to the stronghold. This could not have appeared unreasonable; for we know that when they were building the city their work was often interrupted; and we know also that the temple was not then fortified by a wall. But Zechariah teaches them, that in that state of things there was sufficient defense in God alone. Though then the Jews were not made safe by moats, or by walls, or by mounds, he yet reminds them, that God would be sufficient to defend them, and that he would be to them, as it is said in another place, a wall and a rampart. (Isaiah 26:1.)

But it is not without reason that he calls them the captives of hope; for many had wholly alienated themselves from God and altogether fallen away, so as to be unworthy of any promise. By this mark then he distinguishes between the faithful captives and those who had wholly degenerated and separated themselves from the family of God, so as no more to be counted among his people. And this ought to be carefully noticed, which interpreters have coldly passed by. They have indeed said, that they are called captives of hope, because they hoped to be saved; but they have not observed the distinction, by which Zechariah intended to convey reproof to the unbelieving Jews. It was therefore not without meaning that he directed his word to the faithful only, who were not only captives, but also captives having hope. I cannot finish today.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that as we do not at this day look for a Redeemer to deliver us from temporal miseries, but only carry on a warfare under the banner of the cross, until he appear to us from heaven to gather us into his blessed kingdom, --- O grant, that we may patiently bear all evils and all troubles: and as Christ once for all poured forth the blood of the new and eternal covenant, and gave us a symbol of it in the Holy Supper, may we, confiding in so sacred a seal, never doubt but that he will be always propitious to us, and render manifest to us the fruit of his reconciliation, when after having supported us for a season under the burden of those miseries by which we are now oppressed, thou gatherest us into that blessed and perfect glory, which has been procured for us by the blood of Christ our Lord, and which is daily set before us in the gospel, and laid up for us in heaven, until we at length shall come to enjoy it through the same, our Lord Jesus Christ. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Fifty-fourth

In yesterday's lecture the Prophet exhorted the Jews to assemble into that stronghold of which God was to be the guardian. And we have said that Jerusalem was then to the godly an impregnable fortress, though for the most part without walls, because the place was as it were sacred to God, and as under his care and protection. He now adds a confirmation of this truth, that they would be doubly more blessed who had resorted to Jerusalem than their fathers before their exile: for a comparison is no doubt made between them and their fathers. From the reign of David until the exile, God had proved by many tokens that he had a care for that

people; he afterwards raised up, as it were, a new Church, that is, when a liberty to return was granted to the Jews. The meaning then here is, that if the fathers before they were driven from their country had experienced God kind and bountiful, those who had now returned to their country would find God much more bountiful towards his new Church. We now then understand what he means by double, even double happiness; for God would increase his blessings to the Jews, though their condition was then by no means desirable; nay, very hard according to the estimation of the world. But he says, that he declared from that day, intimating, that though the effect of this prophecy was not immediately apparent, yet he spoke with confidence; for they would in course of time find that nothing had been said to them in vain or rashly. The Prophet then shows --- here, that he spoke with perfect confidence, and this in order to gain credit to the promise, lest the Jews should doubt that what they heard from the mouth of Zechariah should at length be made evident to them. [263] Let us now proceed ---

Zechariah 9:13

13. When I have bent Judah for me, filled the bow with Ephraim, and raised up thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece, and made thee as the sword of a mighty man.

13. Quia tetendi mihi Iehudah arcum, implevi Ephraim, et excitavi filios tuos, Sion, contra filios tuos, Graecia; et posui te quasi gladium gigantis (vel, robusti.)

God declares here that the Jews would be the conquerors of all nations, though they were then despised. That people, we know, were hated by all; and they were at the same time weak, and had hardly any strength, so as to be able to resist the wrongs done them on every side. As then this trial might have terrified weak minds, the Prophet says that the Jews would be as it were the bow and the quiver of God, so that they would be able to pierce all nations with their arrow; and that they would also be like a sword, which would wound and lay prostrate the strongest.

We now perceive the meaning of the words, and see also the reason why the Prophet made this addition, even because the Jews were filled with terror on seeing themselves surrounded on every side by violent and strong enemies, to whom they were very unequal in strength. Now, these similitudes we know occur elsewhere in Scripture, and their meaning seems to be this --- that the Jews would be the conquerors of all nations, not by their own prowess, as they say, but because the Lord would guide and direct them by his own hand. For what is a bow except it be bent? and the bow itself is useless, except the arrow be discharged. The Prophet then teaches us, that though the Jews could do nothing of themselves, yet there was strength enough in God's hand alone.

I have bent for me, he says, Judah as a bow. The Lord reminds the Jews of his

[263] The words may with more propriety be regarded as spoken by God. The construction of the last clause has been differently given. M'Caul in his observation on Kimchi has rendered it thus — "The announcer of double will I cause to return to thee." The "announcer of double" in his view is the Messiah: but to cause the Messiah to "return," is a language that cannot be admitted; and his remark on [{{ז in Hiphil is not correct: that is, that it has ever an accusative or a dative, or both, after it. See 1 Samuel 24:18; 2 Samuel 19:6. It is better to connect ``double,'' or a double blessing, with the verb ``restore,'' --- Even this day I declare, A double blessing will I restore to thee. This is essentially the rendering of Drusius, Grotius, Newcome, and Henderson. There is a correspondence between the verb ``restore,'' or cause to return, and the verb ``return'' at the beginning of the verse. ``Return, etc., and I will cause to return to thee a double blessing.'' --- Ed.

own power, that they might not regard their own strength, but acknowledge that they were made strong from above, and that strength to overcome their enemies would be given them. Hence he compares Ephraim to a quiver. But we have seen yesterday, that Judah and Ephraim are to be taken as the same; for as it had been a divided body, God intimates here, that when the Jews became again united and joined together, and when the ten tribes showed brotherly kindness towards the kingdom of Judah, then the people would be to him like a bow well furnished, being fully supplied with arrows. [264]

He afterwards adds, I will rouse thy sons, O Sion, against thy sons, O Javan. This apostrophe is more emphatical than if the third person had been adopted; for by addressing first Sion, and then Greece, he shows that he possesses power over all nations, so that he raises up the one and casts down the other, as he pleases.

As to the word {יון}, Ivan, we have elsewhere seen that it is to be taken for Greece, and now for all the countries beyond sea. Yet many think that the word Jonah is derived from this Hebrew word, and, as it often happens, is corruptly pronounced. But we may gather from many instances that {יון}, Ivan, is put for Greece, or for distant countries, and specifically for Macedonia. It is then the same as though he had said --- That the Jews would be superior to all heathen nations, even were they to unite together and bring vast forces from distant lands. For the Greeks could not have waged war in Judea with a small force; they must have brought with them large armies, to fight in a strange country and unknown to them. Nor could the Jews have attacked the Grecians or other remote nations, except they were favored with aid from heaven. For this reason also he adds, that they would be like a sword, by which a strong man can destroy others of less power. Let us now go on ---

Zechariah 9:14

14. And the LORD shall be seen over them, and his arrow shall go forth as the lightning: and the Lord GOD shall blow the trumpet, and shall go with whirlwinds of the south.

14. Et Iehova super eos conspicuus erit, et egredietur quasi fulgur sagitta ejus; et Dominus Iehova tuba clanget, et procedet in turbinibus Theman. (vel, Austri.)

He goes on with the same subject, but explains what I have said --- that victory is promised to the Jews, not that which they could gain by their own power, but that which should happen to them beyond their expectation; for this is what is meant when he says, that God would be seen over them. For though the events of all wars depend on God, yet he is said to be seen where there is a remarkable victory, which cannot be accounted for by men. When unequal armies engage, it is no wonder when

[264] Kimchi says that a remnant of the ten tribes were among the Jews who returned from Babylon, being those who had been left in the land by Shalmanezer, as it appears from 2 Chronicles 34:6,9,33; 35:17. "These went," he says, "into captivity with the tribe of Judah and of Benjamin to Babylon, and returned with them when they returned." Abarbanel gives the same opinion, and also Cyril and Bochart. The latter informs their return from Ezra 6:17; 8:35. This prophecy is viewed by Henderson as having been fulfilled in the wars of the Maccabees. See 1 Maccabees 1:62; 2:41-43; 3:33. This was also the view of Theodoret, Jerome, Grotius, and Marckius. Newcome thought that "the language of this prophecy is too strong for these events, and may remain to be fulfilled against the present possessors of the countries called Javan, which were Greec, Macedonia and part of Asia Minor." With this view Adam Clarke concurs, though Scott demurs. But there seems to be nothing here, and especially in the following verses, that does not well comport with the wars of the Maccabees. — Ed.

one becomes victorious; and it may sometimes be that a less number overcomes a greater, even because it exceeded the other in courage, in counsel, in skill, or in some other way, or because the larger army fought from a disadvantageous position, or trusting in its own strength rushed on inconsiderately. But when consternation alone dejects one party and renders the other victorious, in this case the power of God becomes evident. And even heathens have thought that men are confounded from above when courage fails them; and this is most true. We now then understand why the Prophet says, that God would be seen over the Jews, even because they would conquer their enemies, not by usual means, not after an earthly manner, but in a wonderful way, so that it would appear evident to be the work of God.

He then adds, Go forth shall his arrow as lightning. He again repeats and confirms what we have already observed that there would be no movement among the Jews, no celerity, but what would be like the sword, which lies quiet on the ground, except it be taken up by the hand of man, and what also would be like the arrow, which can do no harm except it be thrown by some one. We then see that the victory mentioned before is ascribed to God alone. And for the same reason he adds what follows, that Jehovah would come with the shout of a trumpet, and also, with the whirlwind of the south. In a word, he means that the work of God would be evident when the Jews went forth against the enemies by whom they had been oppressed and would still be oppressed. That they might not then compare their own with their enemies' strength, the Prophet here brings God before them, by whose authority, guidance, and power this war was to be carried on. And then, that he might extol God's power, he says, that he would come with the shout of a trumpet, and with the whirlwind of the south

Interpreters take the whirlwinds of the south simply for violent storms; for we know that the most impetuous whirlwinds arise from the south. But as the Prophet joins the whirlwinds of the south to the shout of a trumpet, he seems to me to allude to those miracles by which God showed to the Jews in a terrific manner his power on Mount Sinai, for the desert of Teman and Mount Paran were in that vicinity. We have seen a similar passage in the third chapter of Habakkuk Habakkuk 3:1, ``God,'' he said, ``shall come from Teman, the Holy One from Mount Paran.'' The Prophet's object was to encourage the Jews to entertain hope; for God, who had long concealed himself and refrained from helping them, would at length come forth to their aid. How? He reminded them in that passage of the records of ancient history, for God had made known his power on Mount Sinai, in the desert of Teman, and it was the south region with regard to Judea; and we also know that trumpets sounded in the air, and that all this was done that the Jews might reverently receive the law, and also that they might feel certain that they would be always safe under God's hand, since he thus shook the elements by his nod, and filled the air with lightnings and storms and whirlwinds, and also made the air to ring with the shouts of trumpets. It is for the same reason that the Prophet speaks in this passage, when he says, that God would make himself known as formerly, when he astonished the people by the shouts of trumpets, and also when he appeared in whirlwinds on Mount Sinai. [265]

[265] The two preceding verses, the 13th and 14th, are capable of being rendered more correctly.

He then adds ---

Zechariah 9:15

15. The LORD of hosts shall defend them; and they shall devour, and subdue with sling stones; and they shall drink, and make a noise as through wine; and they shall be filled like bowls, and as the corners of the altar.

15. Iehova exercituum proteget eos; et comedent et subjicient lapidibus fundae, (vel, lapides, ut alii vertun,) tanquam a vino, et replebuntur quasi phiala, quasi anguli altaris.

He expresses again the same thing in other words --- that God would be like a shadow to his people, so that he would with an extended hand protect them from their enemies. Since the Jews might have justly felt a distrust in their own strength, the Prophet continually teaches them that their safety depended not on earthly aids, but that God alone was sufficient, for he could easily render them safe and secure. He also adds, that there would be to them plenty of bread and wine to satisfy them. He seems here indeed to promise too great an abundance, as by its abuse luxury came, for he says, that they would be satiated and be like the drunken; they shall drink, he says, and shall make a noise as through wine. Certainly those who drink wine moderately, do not make noise, but they are as composed and quiet after dinner as those who fast. Zechariah then seems here to make an unreasonable promise, even that of excess in meat and drink. But we have elsewhere seen that wherever the Holy Spirit promises abundance of good things he does not give loose reigns to men's lusts, but his object is only to show that God will be so bountiful to his children that they shall stand in need of nothing, that they shall labor under no want. Nay, the affluence of blessings is to try our frugality, for when God pours forth as it were with a liberal hand more than what is needful, he thus tries the temperance of each of us; for when in the enjoyment of great abundance, we of our own accord restrain ourselves, we then really show that we are grateful to God. [266]

Junius and Tremelius render [{,[{כי at the beginning of verse 13th, when, and connect it with the preceding verse. But if the particle be so rendered, and ,[{ו}] at the beginning of verse 14th, be rendered them, the meaning will be more evident. All the verbs in verse 13 are in the past tense, and may be rendered as future perfects according to what is done by the preceding authors. Then the two verses will be as follows--- 13. When I shall have bent Judah for myself, And the bow filled with Ephraim, And roused up thy sons, O Sion, Against thy sons, O Javan, And made thee as the sword of a mighty man; 14. Then Jehovah shall be seen (a leader) over them, And go forth like lightning shall his arrow; Yes, the Lord Jehovah with a trumpet shall blow, And march in (or, accompanied with) the whirlwinds of the south. The ``whirlwinds,'' or storms, as rendered by Henderson, ``of the south,'' were impetuous and violent. See Job 37:9; Isaiah 21:1. The images here, as Newcome justly observes, are very sublime. The change of the person, as in verse 14th, is very common in the Prophets and in other parts of Scripture. See Genesis 3:22,23. --- Ed.

[266] Another view is taken of this view. The destruction of enemies, and not abundance of blessings, is what is said to be set forth in this verse, according to the rendering both of the Septuagint and the Targum, followed by Jerome, Kimchi, Drusius, Grotius, Newcome, Blayney, and Henderson. “The bowl or basin,” says Blayney, “and the corners of the altar, all seem to bespeak blood; for the blood of the sacrificed beasts was part of it received in bowls for the purpose of sprinkling, and the rest poured out at the foot of the altar, Leviticus 4:5-7.” Henry states this view as his own, and also mentions that given by Calvin, which both Scott and Adam Clarke have taken. The latter part of the verse is rendered by the Septuagint as though the meaning were, that the Jews would offer abundant sacrifices to express their gratitude. “And they shall fill the bowls as well as the altar.” Junius and Tremelius, and Piscator, have rendered the Hebrew according to this meaning, taking the two caphs as signifying both and and, or as well as, “And they shall fill both the bowl and the corners of the altar,” that is, by offering sacrifices in token of their gratitude for victory. But the explanation of Grotius is, “They shall be filled with the blood of their enemies as the corners of the altar are with the blood of victims. Leviticus 4:25; 15:18. It is difficult to know which view to take. The authorities, and perhaps the context, are in favor of the revenge that would be taken on the Grecians. In this case the

It is indeed true, that cheerfulness for abundance of blessings is allowed us, for it is often said in the law, ``Thou shalt rejoice before thy God,'' (Deuteronomy 12:18;) but we must bear in mind, that frugal use of blessings is required, in order that the gifts of God may not be converted to a sinful purpose.

Then the Prophet does not here excite or stimulate the Jews to intemperance, that they might fill themselves with too much food, or inebriate themselves with too much wine; but he only promises that there would be no want of either food or drink when God blessed them as in former days. And this seems also to be specified at the end of the verse, when he mentions the horns of the altar. He had previously said, that they would be full as the bowls were; but when he adds, ``the horns of the altar,'' he no doubt reminds them of temperance, that they were to feast as though they were in God's presence. They were indeed accustomed to pour out the wine and the oil on the horns of the altar; but, at the same time, since they professed that they offered from their abundance of wine and oil some first-fruits to God, it behaved them to remember that their wine was sacred, that their oil was sacred, as both proceeded from God. The Prophet then declares, that the Jews would be thus enriched and replenished with all good things, and that they were yet to remember, that they were to live as in God's presence, lest they should by luxury pollute what he had consecrated to a legitimate end. He then adds ---

Zechariah 9:16

16. And the Lord their God shall save them in that day as the flock of his people: for they shall be as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon his land.

16. Et servabit eos Iehova, Deus ipsorum, in die illa quad gregem populum suum; quia lapides coronae elevati super terram ejus.

He continues the same subject, but uses various figures, that he might more fully confirm what then was incredible. He indeed reminds them that God would not save his people in an ordinary way, such as is common to men. He compares them to sheep, that they might know, as I have said already, that their salvation would come from heaven, as they were themselves weak, and had no strength and no power; for to show this was the object of this comparison. He declares then that the Jews would be saved, because God would supply them with every thing necessary to conquer their enemies; but that he would in a wonderful manner help their weakness, even like a shepherd when he rescues his sheep from the jaws of a wolf. For the sheep, which escapes death by the coming of the shepherd, have no reason to boast of victory, but all the praise is due to the shepherd. So also God says, that it will be his work to deliver the Jews from their enemies.

By saying, his own people, he seems to confine to his elect what appeared too general; for he had said save then will God. It is however certain that the people who were then small, had been cut off, so that the greater part had perished; but at the same time it was true that God was a faithful guardian of his people, for there were then many Israelites, naturally descended from their common father Abraham, who were only in name Israelites.

metaphors, as Newcome observes, are taken from beasts of prey, not an uncommon thing in Scripture. See Numbers 23:24. — Ed.

He then adds another similitude, --- that they would be elevated high, like precious stones in a crown, which are borne on the head of a king, as though he had said, that they would be a royal priesthood according to what is said in the law. He had said before, They shall subdue the stones, or, with the stones, of a sling. More correct seems to be the opinion of those who read with the stones of a sling, [267] that is, that the Jews would conquer their enemies, not with swords, nor with arrows, but only with stones, in the same manner as Goliath was slain by David. Though not given to warlike arts, nor exercised in the use of arms, they would yet, as the Prophet shows, be conquerors; for their slings would be sufficient for the purpose of slaying their enemies. But some think that heathens and the unbelieving are compared to the stones of the sling, because they are worthless and of no account; which at the first sight seems ingenious, but it is a strained view. It is not at the same time improper to consider that there is here an implied contrast between the stones of the sling, and the stones of a crown; the Jews would cast stones from their slings to destroy their enemies, and they themselves would be precious stones. The Prophet seems here to represent the holy land as the chief part of the whole world. Elevated, he says, shall be the stones of crown over the land of God. Had he said over Egypt or over Assyria, the connection of the clauses would not have been so appropriate; but he names Judea, as the head of the world, and that the Jews, when prosperous and happy in it, would be like the stones of a crown, all the parts set in due order. In short, he shows, that the favor of God alone and his blessing, would be sufficient to render the Jews happy, as they would then excel in honor, enjoy the abundance of all good things, and possess invisible courage to resist all their adversaries.

Let us now enquire when all these things were fulfilled. We have said that Zechariah, by promising fullness to the Jews, gave them no unbridled license to indulge themselves in eating and drinking, but only expressed and extolled, in hyperbolical terms, the immense kindness and bounty of God to them. This is one thing.

But at the same time we must by the way consider another question: He says, that they would be like arrows and swords. Now as they were too much inclined to shed blood, he seems here to excite them in a manner to take vengeance fully on their enemies, which was by no means reasonable. The answer to this is plain --- that the Jews were not to forget what God prescribed in his law: for as when God promised large abundance of wine, and a plentiful provision, he did not recall what he had already commanded --- that they were to practice temperance in eating and drinking;

[267] This rendering is supported by the Septuagint, the Targum, the Vulgate, and adopted by Grotius, Marckius, and Newcome. But to "subdue" or tread down, "the sling-stones" is the version of Kimchi, Piscator, Dathius, and Henderson; who have thought that the Greeks are here called "sling-stones," by way of contempt, as the Jews are called "crown-stones" in verse 16, by way of honor; the first were common and worthless; the second rare and precious. What seems unfavorable to this metaphor is the expression, "lifted up as ensign," as applied to "the stones of a crown." The words [{{אבני}, {מרן}] have been rendered, ``stones of separation,'' that is, stones separated, set apart and consecrated to a particular use. See Genesis 28:18; Joshua 4:5,20. Hence Blayney's version is, ``consecrated stones,'' in accordance with the Septuagint, ``[{ἁγιασθοι} {ἁγιοι}] --- sacred or holy stones,'' and also with the Syriac and Arabic versions. They were stones, as it seems, set up as memorials of victory. Suitable then is the expression, that they were raised, erected or lifted up as banners or ensigns over the land. ``Crowned trophies'' is the rendering of Newcome, --- stones encircled by a crown as monuments of victory. But whether we render the words, consecrated or crowned stones, the same thing is meant: and the propriety of the principle which follows becomes evident. --- Ed.

so now when he promises victory over their enemies, he is not inconsistent with himself, nor does he condemn what he had once approved, nor abrogate the precept by which he commanded them, not to exercise cruelty towards their enemies, but to restrain themselves, and to show mercy and kindness. We hence see that we are not to judge from these words what is right for us to do, or how far we may go in taking revenge on enemies; nor to determine what liberty we have in eating and drinking. Such things are not to be learnt from this passage, or from similar passages; for the Prophet here does only set forth the power of God and his bounty towards his people.

Now again it may be asked, when has God fulfilled this, when has he made the Jews far and wide victorious and the destroyers of their enemies? All Christian expositors give us an allegorical explanation, --- that God sent forth his armies when he sent forth Apostles into all parts of the world, who pierced the hearts of men, --- and that he slew with his sword the wicked whom he destroyed. All this is true; but a simpler meaning must in the first place be drawn from the words of the Prophet, and that is, --- that God will render his Church victorious against the whole world. And most true is this; for though the faithful are not furnished with swords or with any military weapons, yet we see that they are kept safe in a wonderful manner under the shadow of God's hand. When adversaries exercise cruelty towards them, we see how God returns their wicked devices on their own heads. In this way is really fulfilled what we read here, --- even that the children of God are like arrows and swords, and that they are also preserved as a flock; for they are too weak to stand their ground, were not the Lord to put forth his power, when he sees them violently assailed by the wicked. There is then no need to turn the Prophet's words to an allegorical meaning, when this fact is evident that God's Church has been kept safe, because God has ever blunted all the weapons of enemies; yea, he has often by a strong hand discharged his arrows and vibrated his sword. For when Alexander the Great had passed over the sea, when he had marched through the whole circuit of the Mediterranean sea, when he had filled all the country with blood, he came at length to Judea; how was it that he left it without committing any slaughter, without exercising any cruelty, except that God restrained him? It will not weary you, if I relate what we read in Josephus; and it is true I have no doubt. He says, that when Alexander came, he was full of wrath, and breathing threats against those Jews by whom he had not been assisted, and who seemed to have despised his authority: after having thus given vent to his rage, he at length came into the presence of Jadeus the high-priest, and seeing him adorned with a mitre, he fell down and humbly asked pardon; and while all were amazed his answer was --- that God had appeared to him in that form while he was yet in Greece, and encouraged him to undertake that expedition. When therefore he saw the image or figure of the God of heaven in that sacerdotal dress, he was constrained to give glory to God. Thus far Josephus, whose testimony in this instance has never been suspected.

There is then no reason for any one to weary himself in finding out the meaning of the Prophet, since this fact is clear enough --- that God's elect have been victorious, because God has ever sent forth his arrows and vibrated his sword. At the same time there is another view of this victory; for alien and remote people were subdued by

the sword of the Spirit, even by the truth of the gospel: but this is a sense deduced from the other; for when we apprehend the literal meaning of the Prophet, an easy passage is then open to us, by which we may come to the kingdom of Christ. These remarks refer to the abundance of provisions, as well as to the victory over enemies. It now follows ---

Zechariah 9:17

17. For how great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty! corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids.

17. Nam quanta beneficentia ejus? et quanta pulchritudo ejus? Frumentum adolescentes, et mustum recreat (vel, corroborat) puellas.

The Prophet here exclaims at the incredible kindness of God, that the Jews might learn to raise up their thoughts above the world, as they were to look for that felicity which he had before mentioned. We then see that by this exclamation a fuller confirmation is given to what had been said by the Prophet, as though his words were, --- ``No one ought to judge of God's favor, of which I have spoken, according to his own doings, or conduct, or experience; but on the contrary, every one of you ought to be filled with amazement at God's incredible kindness, and at his incredible beauty.'' But by the last word he understands the brightness or splendor, which appears in all God's favors and gifts. [268]

He then concludes by saying, that the abundance of corn and wine would be so great, that young men and young women would eat and drink together, and be fully satisfied. Here a frivolous question may be asked, whether Zechariah allowed the use of wine to young women. But he speaks not here, as I have said before, of God's blessing, as though it were an incentive to luxury; but what he means is, that the abundance of provisions would be so great as to be fully sufficient, not only for the old, but also for young men and young women. We know that when there is but a small supply of wine, it ought by right of age to be reserved for the old, but when wine so overflows that young men and young women may freely drink of it, it is a proof of great abundance. This then is simply the meaning of the Prophet: but something more shall be said tomorrow on the subject.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that as we cannot look for temporal or eternal happiness, except through Christ alone, and as thou settest him forth to us as the only true fountain of all blessings, --- O grant, that we, being content with the favor offered to us through him, may learn to renounce the whole world, and so strive against all unbelief; that we may not doubt but that thou wilt ever be one kind and gracious Father, and fully supply whatever is necessary for our support: and may we at the

[268] Goodness and beauty are said to be God's, because conferred by him. Some refer "his" to the people and others to the land. The meaning is the same, though the form of the expression would be different. As the future time is referred to, the question here may be better expressed in the future tense, — For what will be his goodness! And what will be his beauty! The corn shall cause the young men to thrive, And new wine the maids. But were the [{[{ı after ``land'' in the preceding verse to be referred to ``people'' in the same verse, the [{ı}] added here to ``goodness'' might be applied to the same antecedent: and this would be the most natural rendering,--- 16. And save them will Jehovah their God, In that day, even as sheep, his people: Therefore consecrated stones Shall be raised as banners over their land. For how great will be their good (or prosperity!) And how great their comeliness! Corn shall cause the young men to thrive, And new wine the maids. We use ``they,'' and ``their,'' when we speak of ``people,'' though in Hebrew the singular pronoun is used. --- Ed.

same time live soberly and temperately, so that we may not be under the power of earthly things; but with our hearts raised above, aspire after that heavenly bliss to which thou invites us, and to which thou also guides us by such helps as are earthly, so that being really united to our head, we may at length reach that glory which has been procured for us by his blood. --- Amen.

Chapter 10

Lecture One Hundred and Fifty-fifth

Zechariah 10

Zechariah 10:1

1. Ask ye of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain; so the Lord shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field.

1. Petite a Iehova pluviam tempore serotino (vertunt;) Iehova faciet nubes, et pluvium imbrem dabit illis, cuique herbam in agro.

Zechariah, after having shown that God would be bountiful towards the Jews, so that nothing necessary to render life happy and blessed should be wanting, now reproves them for their unbelief, because they did not expect from the Lord what he was ready fully to bestow on them. As then it depended on them only, that they did not enjoy abundance of all blessings, he charges them with ingratitude: for though he exhorts them to prayer, there is yet an implied reproof. One by merely reading over the words may think that a new subject is here introduced, that the Jews are directed to ask of the Lord what he had previously promised them; but he who will more minutely consider the whole context, will easily find that what I have stated is true --- that the Jews are here condemned, and on this account, because they closed the door against God's favor; for they were straitened in themselves, as all the unbelieving are, who cannot embrace the promises of God; nor is it at all doubtful but that many made great complaints, when they found themselves disappointed of their wishes. They had indeed hoped for a most abundant supply of corn and wine, and had also promised to themselves all kinds of blessings, yet the Lord, as we have seen in the book of Haggai, had begun to withdraw his hand, so that they labored under want of provisions; and when mine and thirst oppressed them, they thought that they had been in a manlier deceived by God. On this ground the Prophet expostulates with them; they thrust from themselves, by their want of faith, the favor which had been prepared for them. We now then understand the Prophet's meaning.

He bids them to ask rain of Jehovah. They ought indeed to have done this of

themselves without being reminded; for though Christ has delivered to his Church a form of prayer, it ought yet to be as it were the dictate of nature to seek of God our daily bread; and it is not without reason that he claims to himself the name of a Father. The Prophet then does here reprove the Jews for their brutal stupidity --- that they did not ask rain of the Lord. He adds, at the late season, that is, at spring time; for rains at two seasons were necessary for the corn, after sowing and before harvest, and whenever Scripture speaks of fruitfulness or of a large produce, it mentions rain at these two seasons. Zechariah in this place only refers to the vernal before harvest; for in that hot country the earth wanted new moisture, Ask, he says, rain at the beginning of summer.

Jehovah, he adds, will give it; he will make clouds, or storms, or boisterous winds, as some read; but it is evident from other passages that {חזיזים}, chezizim, means clouds, which are as it were preparations for rain. [269] He then says, that a shower would come with the rain; for some take {גשם}, gesham, for a shower, that is, heavy rain; but the Prophet introduces here the two words, as though he had said, that the rains would be continued until the ground was saturated and the dryness removed. Some translate, ``the rain of a shower,'' but this would be too strained. I prefer then this rendering, He will give rain, a shower, that is, abundant rain; to every one grass in the field, that is, so that there may be moisture enough for the ground. In short, he promises a plentiful irrigation, that drought might not deprive them of the hope of food and support. What I have stated will appear more clear from the following verse, for he adds ---

Zechariah 10:2

2. For the idols have spoken vanity, and the diviners have seen a lie, and have told false dreams; they comfort in vain: therefore they went their way as a flock, they were troubled, because there was no shepherd.

2. Certe simulacra loquuta sunt vanitatem, et divini viderunt mendacium, et somnia vanitatis loquuti sunt, frustra consolati sunt; ideo transierunt (vel, migrarunt) sicut oves (aut, grex,) humiliati sunt, quia nullus fuit pastor.

Here the Prophet, as I have said, confirms the truth, that the blame justly belonged to the Jews that God did not deal more liberally with them; for he shows that they had fallen into superstitions, and had thus turned away the favor of God, which was already certain and nigh to them. Zechariah does not here condemn foreign nations given to superstitions; but, on the contrary, he reproves the Jews themselves for leaving the true God, and for retaking themselves to idols, to soothsayers, and diviners, and for having thus preferred to feed on their own delusions, rather than to open the door to the favor of God, who had freely promised that he would suffer them to want nothing. As then God had kindly invited the Jews to himself, as he had showed himself ready to do them good, was it not the basest ingratitude

[269] The word in the singular number is found twice, in Job 28:26; 38:25, and rendered "lightning." Scott, the versifier of the book of Job, renders it "blaze" or "flash of lightning," deriving it from an Arabic word which means to cut a thing like the jagged edge of a leaf. It is then the zigzag flash of lightning. Marckius renders it here "coruscations;" Dathius and Henderson "lightnings." To avoid the connection of two words of similar import, the arrangement of the verse may be different, — Ask ye from Jehovah rain in the latter season; Jehovah, who makes the flashes and the rain, Will a shower give to you, To every one grass in the field. "To you," [{;[{לכם so read many MSS., about fifteen, and the Syriac. --- Ed.

in them to turn away to idols and to attend to magical delusions? for they might have safely acquiesced in God's word. They would not have been deprived of their hope, had they been firmly persuaded that God had spoken the truth to them. As then they had done so grievous a wrong to God, as to run after idols, and after the crafts and impostures of Satan, the Prophet here deservedly condemns them for this wickedness.

Images, [270] he says, have spoken vanity, and diviners have seen falsehood, and have told dreams of vanity. He means, in short, that whatever means unbelieving men may try, they can attain nothing, and they will at length find that they have been miserably deceived by Satan. They have recourse to various expedients, for unbelief is full of bustle and fervor: ``O! this will not succeed, I will try something else.'' Thus the unbelieving wander, and resort to many and various expedients. But the Prophet teaches this general truth --- that when men turn away from God, they have recourse to vain things; for there is no truth without God.

He afterwards adds, that on account of idols, as well as of diviners and magicians, consolation was given in vain; and this he confirms by the event, and says, that they had wandered as sheep, that they had been distressed, because there was no shepherd. The Prophet no doubt refers here to the time of exile, that the Jews might learn to be wise, at least by the teaching of experience; for they had known to their great loss, that without God there is no real and solid comfort: nor does he without reason upbraid them with the punishment which their fathers had suffered, for he saw that they were walking in their steps. Since then the Jews were imitating the depraved inquisitiveness of their fathers, the Prophet justly charges them, that they did not acknowledge what, by the event itself, was well known to all; for the common proverb is, that experience is the teacher of fools. Since they did not become wise even when smitten, their stupidity was more than proved. We now then perceive what the Prophet means.

But we must first notice, that when he bids them to ask rain of the Lord, he speaks of the kingdom of Christ, as all the Prophets are wont to do; for since the Redeemer, promised to the Jews, was to be the author of all blessings, whenever the Prophets speak of his coming, they also promise abundance of corn, and plentiful provisions, and peace, and everything necessary for the well-being of the present life. And Zechariah now follows the same course, when he declares that it was not owing to anything in God that he did not kindly supply the Jews with whatever they might have wished, but that the fault was with themselves; for they had by their unbelief, as it has been said, closed the door against his favor. We must yet ever remember what we stated yesterday --- that whatever the Prophets have said concerning a blessed life, ought to be judged of according to the nature of the kingdom of Christ.

[270] Literally, "the teraphims." See Hosea 3:4, vol. 1 page 130. They were household gods, called Penates by the heathens. "Images" is the rendering of the Targum of Onkelos, and "worshippers of images" of Jonathan in this place. Jerome has "simulacra — images." Parkhurst derives the word from [{,[{רפה an appaller, they being the objects of dread of fear. Gesenius, from an Arabic word, which means to ``live in comfort,'' they being viewed as the givers of happiness. Lee, from an Ethiopic word, signifying a ``remnant, a survivor,'' and thinks that they mean ``relics.'' Whatever may be the meaning of the word, they were no doubt a sort of household gods, made, as Aben Ezra says, in a human form, and consulted, says Kimchi, as to future events. There are three kinds of idolatrous and superstitious practices mentioned here --- the images which were consulted as oracles, the pretenders to visions, and the dreamers of dreams; but all that was spoken, and seen, and dreamt, was vain, and false, and useless. --- Ed.

It is a strained interpretation to say that rain is heavenly doctrine; and I do not say that Zechariah spoke allegorically, but he describes under this common figure the kingdom of Christ --- even that God will fill his elect with all good things, so that they shall not thirst, nor labor under any want.

But at the same time we must bear in mind the exhortation of Christ ---

``Seek ye first the kingdom of God; other things,'' he says,
``shall afterwards be added.'' (Matthew 6:33.)

He then is strangely wrong who thinks that abundance of food was alone promised to the Jews; for God intended to lead them by degrees to things higher. The Prophet then no doubt includes here, under one kind, all things necessary for a happy life; for it is not the will of God to fill his faithful people in this world as though they were swine; but his design is to give them, by means of earthly things, a taste of the spiritual life. Hence the happiness of which Zechariah now speaks is really spiritual; for as godliness has the promises of the present as well as of the future life, (1 Timothy 4:8,) so the purpose of God was to consult the weakness of his ancient people, and to set forth the felicity of the spiritual life by means of earthly blessings.

It ought further to be carefully noticed, that the Jews are here exposed to derision, because they wandered after their own devices, when God was yet not far from them, and ready to aid them. Since God then showed himself inclined to kindness, it was a double wickedness in them that they chose to run after idols, magical arts, and the illusions of Satan, rather than to acquiesce in God's word. And similar is the upbraiding we meet with in Jeremiah, when God complains that he was forsaken, while yet he was the fountain of living water, and that the people dug out for themselves cisterns, dry and full of holes. (Jeremiah 2:13.) But as this evil is very common, let us know that we are here warned to plant our foot firm on God's word, where he promises that he will take care of us, provided we be satisfied with his favor; nor let us thoughtlessly run after our own imaginations; for however our own counsels may delight us, and though some success may sometimes appear, yet the end will ever show us that most true is what Zechariah teaches us here --- that whatever we may attempt will be useless and injurious too, for God will take vengeance on our ingratitude.

We must now also observe, that since Zechariah adduces an example of God's vengeance, by which the Jews had found that they had foolishly sought vain consolations, we ought to take heed, lest we forget those punishments with which God may have visited us in order to restore us to himself: let us remember what we ourselves have experienced, and what has happened to our fathers, even before we were born. Thus then ought the faithful to apply their minds so as to recount the judgments of God, that they may derive profit from his scourges. He afterwards adds ---

Zechariah 10:3

3. Mine anger was kindled against the shepherds, and I punished the goats: for the LORD of hosts hath visited his flock the house of Judah, and hath made them as his goodly horse in the battle.

3. Super pastores iratus est furor meus; super hireos visitabo; quia visitabit Iehova exercituum gregem suum, domum Iehudah; et posuit (vel, ponet) eos, quasi equum

decoris sui in praelio.

He had said that the Jews had been driven into exile, and had been oppressed by their enemies, because they had no shepherd; not indeed to lessen their fault, for they were wholly inexcusable, since they had wilfully renounced God, who would have been otherwise their perpetual shepherd: but he now turns his discourse to the false teachers, to the false prophets and to the wicked priests. Though then they were all unworthy of pardon, yet God here justly summons the shepherds first before his tribunal, who had been the cause of making others to go astray: as when a blind man leads the blind into a ditch, so ungodly pastors become the cause of ruin to others. We have elsewhere observed similar passages, in which God threatened priests and prophets with special punishment, because they had unfaithfully discharged their office; but yet he did not absolve the common people, for from the least to the greatest they were guilty; and it is also certain that men are punished for their obstinacy and wickedness, whenever God gives loose reins to the devil, and deceives them by ungodly teachers.

We now then see the order observed by the Prophet: At the beginning of the chapter he declares that the Jews were without excuse, because they had turned aside again to their own superstitions, though God had severely punished the sins of their fathers, and that thus they had profited nothing; he also shows that they were acting perversely, if they clamored against God, that he scantily or badly supported them, for they did not look for any thing from him, nor solicited by prayer what he was prepared willingly to grant them. Having thus reproved generally the wickedness of the whole people, the Prophet now assails the ungodly priests, and says that judgment was nigh both the shepherd and the he-goats.

He gives the name of pastors to wolves, which is a common thing. And here the Papists betray their folly, laying hold of words only, and claiming to themselves all power, because they are called pastors in the Church, and as though Antichrist was not to reign in the temple of God. Does not Zechariah give an honorable name to these wicked men who destroyed the Church of God? Yea, he brings a most heavy charge against them, that they scattered and trampled under their feet the whole kingdom of God, and yet he calls them pastors, even because they held the office of pastors, though they were very far from being faithful, and in no respect attended to their duties.

He then concedes the name of pastors to those who had been called to rule the people, and to whom this office had been divinely committed; and yet God declares that he would visit them, because they had elicited his just displeasure. The same is said of the he-goats, by which metaphorical name he means all those who were governors, or were in rank above the common people. Those who injured and cruelly treated the sheep had been called he-goats by other Prophets, and especially by Ezekiel (Ezekiel 34:17.) So then he adds the he-goats to the pastors, because the poor and the lower orders had been led to ruin through their misconduct. And it hence appears how dear to God is the salvation of men; for he denounces vengeance on pastors, though they had not exercised tyranny except on men worthy of such punishment; for it was the just wages of their sins, that the Lord gave them wolves

instead of shepherds. But though the Jews had merited such a judgment, yet God was angry with the pastors on account of his constant solicitude for his Church.

And the reason is also added, For visit will God his flock, the house of Judah; as though he had said, that he would not regard what the Jews were, but would regard his own election; for greatly valued by God is his own adoption; and as he had been pleased to choose that people, he could not have allowed them to be destroyed. When therefore he saw that his Church had been so much exposed to destruction through the fault of the pastors, he alleges here as a reason for his future vengeance, that he could not endure his favor to be brought to nothing; nor is it to be doubted but that he mentions here the house of Judah, because he had restored and consecrated that people to himself, that he might be served by them. He then takes away from the false pastors every pretense for an excuse, when he brings forward his own election, as though he had said, ``Though this people had provoked me a hundred times, and deserved a hundred deaths, yet I intended you to be pastors, because the house of Judah has been made sacred to me.''

But the visitation of the flock is different from that of the shepherds; for God visits the reprobate, being armed with vengeance, and he visits his own people by aiding them. Now the visitation of the flock refers to the whole house of Judah: and this was owing, as we have said, to their gratuitous adoption; yet the Lord suffered many to rush headlong into ruin, because he delivered only his own elect. It is indeed a mode of speaking that often occurs in the Prophets --- that God would help the children of Abraham, when he means only those who were Israelites indeed, and not the degenerated.

He adds that they would be as a splendid horse in war. A contrast is here no doubt implied between splendid horses and asses or oxen; for these shepherds who had tyrannically oppressed God's people, are said to be like violent riders who ride on asses and shamefully abuse them, or like herdsman, who treat their own oxen inhumanely. God then says that he would ride his people in another manner, even as the horseman, who sits splendidly on his horse when going to battle: for even kings, after having ridden a horse in battle, do afterwards wish it to be well taken care of; and they show much solicitude for their horses, and even go to the stable that they may see, if possible, with their own eyes, that they are properly attended to. God then thus intimates, that he indeed required obedience from his people, and intended to retain his own right, to ride as it were on his own people; but yet that he would not oppress them, and that on the contrary he would make them like a splendid horse. We now then perceive why the Prophet turns his discourse here especially to the false shepherds, not indeed to extenuate the fault of the whole people, for none among them was worthy of pardon. It follows ---

Zechariah 10:4

4. Out of him came forth the corner, out of him the nail, out of him the battle bow, out of him every oppressor together.

4. Ab eo angulus, ab eo clavus, ab eo arcus belli, ab eo egredietur omnis exactor pariter.

There is here a confirmation of the last verse, but the metaphors are different;

for he says, that the Jews would be fortified by every defense necessary for their security; nor is he inconsistent with himself. In the last chapter he indeed taught us, that though exposed to all kinds of wrongs, they would yet be safe through aid from heaven; but now he promises that there would come from them the corner-stone, the nail, the bow, and the exactor; and this seems a different doctrine; but it is the same as though he had promised, that though they stood in need of many helps, they would yet be sufficiently furnished, as God would be ready to aid them whenever there was need.

By the corner-stone he means the firmness of the building; from the Jews then shall be the corner-stone; that is, there shall ever be among that people those capable of carrying on the public government: then, from thee the nail; beams, we know, and other parts of the building, are fastened by nails, and we know also, that the ceiling is thereby made secure. Zechariah then mentions here all the supports which sustain a building from its very foundation. He afterwards adds, the bow of war, that is, what is necessary to overcome enemies; and, lastly, the exactor, one who has power over bordering nations, and demands tribute or tax from them, as conquerors are wont to do from their subjects. [271]

We now see what the Prophet means --- that when God would manifest his care for his people and openly show his favor, the Jews would be fortified by all kinds of help, so as to be well established, and that they would possess so much public authority as to have strength enough to resist all enemies; in short, that they would gain the fruit of conquest, and constrain all nations to be tributaries to them.

If any one asks when has this been fulfilled, my answer is, that some preludes of this were given when God raised up the Maccabees, and made the Jews again to live according to their own laws, and to enjoy their own rights; but no doubt the Prophet includes the whole course of redemption. As then God redeemed his people only to a small extent until Christ appeared, it is no wonder that Zechariah, in speaking of full and complete redemption, extends his words to the kingdom of Christ, and this was necessary. We hence learn, that the Church stands abundantly firm, and is also furnished with all needful things, while it continues under the protection of God, and that it is endued with sufficient power to resist all its enemies. It follows ---

Zechariah 10:5

5. And they shall be as mighty men, which tread down their enemies in the mire of the streets in the battle: and they shall fight, because the LORD is with them, and the riders on horses shall be confounded.

[271] As to "the corner-stone," [{,[{פנה the view given here is correct. The chiefs of the people are in several places called ``the corner-stones of the people.'' See [Judges 20:2; 1 Samuel 14:38; Isaiah 19:13. ``The angle or corner,'' says Blayney, ``metaphorically denotes the chief personage in the community, on whom its strength and security principally depend.'' With regard to the ``nail,'' rendered ``peg,'' by Henderson, the correct idea seems not to be given. The word ,[{יתד}] signifies two things --- the hooked stake, fixed in the ground, by which tents were fastened --- and the hooked nail or peg affixed to the sides of rooms, and put in the wall when built, so as to form a part of the building, and on which household stuff and instruments of war were suspended. The first is probably here intended, as it fastened and secured the tent, so the inferior officers of the state, next to the leaders or chiefs, were a strength to the community. See Lowth on Isaiah 22:23. See Ezra 9:8; Ezekiel 15:3 ``Exactor'' is the most common meaning of ;[{נגש}] but here, as in Isaiah 60:17, it seems to signify a ruler, a military chief, or a conqueror, as the ``corner-stone'' denotes the civil chief. In a series of sentences, which have only one verb, our mode is to put the verb in the first clause; but the Hebrew set it in the last, as we find to be the case here, as well in the last verse of the last chapter. This verse then ought to be rendered thus--- From him shall come forth the corner-stone, From him the stake, From him the bow of war, From him only every conqueror, or, From him every ruler altogether. --- Ed.

5. Et erunt quasi fortes, (aut, gigantes,) calcantes in luto platearum in proelio; et proeliabuntur, quia Iehova cum ipsis; et pudefient ascensores equorum.

He confirms what I have already said --- that the Jews would be victorious over all nations. Though the Church is fighting under the cross, she yet triumphs over all the wicked, partly by hope and partly by present success; for God wonderfully sustains it, and makes the faithful to possess their souls in patience; and he also protects them by his own power, and renders them safe amidst all the roarings and insatiable rage of their enemies. Since then God thus strengthens the minds of his people, and cherishes in them the hope of salvation, and also defends them against raging assaults, it is no wonder that the Prophet testifies that the church would be victorious, treading down, as a giant or a strong man, her enemies in the mire.

He gives the reason, For Jehovah will be with them; and this he said, that they might know that nothing in this case would be their own, but that they might, on the contrary, learn to depend on God's aid alone. And he explains this still more clearly at the end of the verse, by saying, Ashamed shall be the riders on horses; [272] that is, their strength and velour, their use of arms and their skill in handling them, shall avail them nothing, for the Lord will lay prostrate, notwithstanding their arrogance and pride, all those wicked men who in their cruelty devour the faithful, and think that they have strength more than enough to destroy the Church: the Lord will cause all these things to pass away like mist.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that since constant fightings await us here, and our infirmities are so great that without thy power supporting us we cannot but fall every moment, --- O grant, that we may learn to recumb on that help which thou hast promised, and which thou hast also offered to us, and dost daily offer through the Gospel in thine only-begotten Son; and may we distrust our own strength, yea, may we be overwhelmed with despair as to ourselves, not indeed that we may despond, but that we may look upward and seek the aid of thy Spirit, so that we may not doubt but that we shall be equal to our enemies, and even be victorious over them, until having at length finished our warfare, we shall reach that blessed rest which has been obtained for us by the blood of thine only Son. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Fifty-sixth

Zechariah 10:6

6. And I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph, and I will bring them again to place them; for I have mercy upon them: and they shall be as though I had not cast them off: for I am the LORD their God, and will hear them.

6. Et roborabo domum Iehudah, et domum Ioseph servabo, et redire (habitare) eos faciam; quia misertus sum eorum, et erunt ac si non abominatus fuissem eos; quia ego Iehova Deus eorum, et exaudiam eos.

Zechariah pursues the same subject, --- that the work of redemption, the beginning of which the Jews saw, would not be incomplete, for the Lord would at length

[272] Henderson says, that this refers to the numerous cavalry of the SyroGrecian army. See 1 Maccabees 3:39. — Ed.

fulfill what he had begun. The Jews themselves could not acquiesce in those beginnings, which were not a hundredth part of what God had promised; it was hence necessary for them to raise up their minds above, that they might hope for much more than what was evident before their eyes.

And this truth is very useful to us, for we are wont to confine God's promises to a short duration of time, and when we thus include him within narrow limits, we prevent him as it were to do what we stand in need of. Let then the example of the return of the people of Israel ever come to our minds, for the Lord had promised by his Prophets that they would become very eminent, and in every way rich and happy; but when this did not take place after their return to their country, many of the Jews thought that they had been deceived, as they had expected God to fulfill his word immediately, but they ought to have suspended their hope and expectation until Christ came to the world. On this then the Prophet now insists --- that the Jews were to rest patiently, until the ripened time came, when the Lord would prove that he is not only in part but a complete redeemer of his people.

Now he says, I will strengthen the house of Judah, and the house of Joseph will I save. The kingdom of Israel, we know, had by degrees wholly fallen; for at first four tribes were driven into exile, and afterwards the whole people perished, so that all thought that the name of the ten tribes had become extinct. The Lord afterwards visited the kingdom with dreadful ruin. But it must be observed, that while the two kingdoms existed, they entertained grievous enmities towards each other; for the defection which happened under Jeroboam, ever made the Jews violently to hate their brethren, the Israelites, as they indeed deserved; for they had in a manner rejected God by rejecting the son of David, and became in a manner alienated from the body of the Church. Now then Zechariah promises something uncommon, when he says that the two peoples shall be united, so as to be again one, as before the defection: for the house of Joseph means the same as the house of Ephraim; and we know that by taking a part for the whole, the house of Ephraim is taken for the whole kingdom of Israel. We now then understand the Prophet's meaning --- that the state of the people would be happier than it had been since the ten tribes separated from the kingdom of Judah, or from the house of David; for God would gather for himself a Church from all the children of Abraham. [273]

He then adds, I will bring them back and cause them to dwell. The verb here, {הושבותים}, eushebutim, is supposed to be derived from {שב}, sheb, or from {שוב}, shub; but they are mistaken who think these to be words of different meanings, because some refer to the one root, and others to the other; nor can this be maintained: but those who minutely consider the rules of grammar, say that the verb is a compound, and means that God would not only restore the ten tribes, but also make

[273] The opinion of those who regard this prophecy as having been accomplished in the history of the Jews before the coming of Christ, is that "the house of Joseph" were those of the ten tribes who had joined themselves to the tribe of Judah. So Grotius says, and Henderson observes, "It is clear from the reference thus made, that part, if not most of all the tribes, returned and took possession of their patrimonial lands after the captivity. But Scott and Adam Clarke, though they allow that this prophecy was in part fulfilled when the Jews successfully resisted their SyroGrecian enemies, yet think that its full accomplishment is yet future; while Calvin evidently considers that a spiritual union in Christ is intended, conveyed in a language borrowed from the civil condition of the Jews. — Ed.

them to dwell, that is, give them a fixed habitation in their country. [274]

He then adds, Because I have pitied them. Some read this in the future tense, but I retain the past, for the Lord assigns here a reason for their future gathering, even because he would deal mercifully with his people. He recalls then the attention of the Jews to the fountains of his mercy, as if he had said, ``Though they have deserved perpetual ruin, He will yet hear their greenings, because he will be propitious to them.'' As their calamity was an hindrance, which prevented the Jews from expecting any such thing, he adds, They shall be as though I had not cast them away. By which words he reminds them that the punishment which had been inflicted on the people, would be only for a time. He then bids them to take courage, though they were like the lost or the dead, for he would put an end to their miseries. And when God says that he had cast away his people, it ought to be taken according to the perceptions of men, as we have observed elsewhere; for adoption was unchangeable, but external appearance could have led to no other conclusion, but that the people had been rejected by God. The meaning of the Prophet is, however, clearly this --- that though God had dealt severely with that people, and inflicted on them the heaviest punishment on account of their perfidy, yet his vengeance would not be for ever, for he would give place to mercy.

He adds another reason, For I Jehovah am their God. He means by this sentence that adoption would not be void, though he had for a time rejected the Jews: for by calling himself their God, he reminds them of his covenant, as though he had said, that he had not in vain made a covenant with Abraham, and promised that his seed would be blessed. Since then God had pledged his faith to Abraham, he says here that he would be the God of his people; not that they deserved anything, but because he had gratuitously chosen both Abraham and his seed.

He in the last place says, And I will hear them [275] He seems here to exhort them to prayer, that, relying on this promise, they might ask of God what had been promised. Though this verb is often taken in a sense not strictly correct, for God is said to hear those who do not flee to him; but what I have stated is more suitable to this place --- that the people are stimulated to prayer, as God freely invites us to himself for this end, that is, that our prayers may harmonise with his promises. This is the meaning. It now follows ---

Zechariah 10:7

7. And they of Ephraim shall be like a mighty man, and their heart shall rejoice as through wine: yea, their children shall see it, and be glad; their heart shall rejoice in the LORD.

7. Et erunt quasi gigas Ephraim, et laetabitur cor eorum sicuti a vino, et filli eorum videbunt et gaudebunt; exultabit core eorum in Iehova.

He declares the same in other words: he had said in the last verse, that he would strengthen both the house of Judah and the house of Joseph, that is, the ten tribes;

[274] Kimchi says that [{,[{ישב to dwell, and ,[{שוב} to return, are included in this verb; but of such amalgamation there are no examples. The true reading no doubt is either ,[{והשבתים} ``and I will restore them,'' supported by six MSS. the Targum, the Syriac, and the Vulgate; or ,[{והושבתים} ``and I will settle them,'' supported by the Septuagint. --- Ed.

[275] Literally it is, "and I will answer them," [{{και}]---;[{ואענם {ἐπακούσομαι} {αυτοις}]---''and I will hear them,'' is the Septuagint; but the proper meaning of the verb is to answer; and so Henderson renders it. --- Ed.

he now speaks of Ephraim alone, but includes the kingdom of Judah; and he names Ephraim, not because he deserved to be honored, or to be preferred to the Jews, for Ephraim had become apostate; but because the return of the ten tribes was an event more incredible: this is clearly the reason why the Prophet expressly mentions Ephraim. [276] For even to the very destruction of the city and of the temple, God had continued to promise restoration to the Jews: the hope then of the Jews was certain and peculiar to themselves; but as to the Israelites, they were like a putrid carcass, for they had heard only something here and there, and received only some portion of the prophecies, as a grain of seed that falls outside of the field; for they were then as it were alienated from the people of God. We now then understand what the Prophet means by saying, that the Israelites would be like giants; for though they had been cast down by their enemies, and then driven in great dishonor and disgrace into exile, and had been exposed to all kinds of reproaches, and oppressed by extreme bondage; yet God promises them the strength of giants.

Now we have said that the words contain a part for the whole; for this promise no doubt belongs especially to the Jews: there is yet no mention of them, though they were first in rank, and had a better ground of hope as to their return, and the Lord had already given them some proof.

He says, Rejoice shall their hearts through wine; and see shall their sons and be glad; exult shall their heart in Jehovah. It is certain that they had already a cause for joy, as it is said in the book of Psalms,

``We became like those who dream,
when the Lord restored his captives.'' (Psalm 126:1.)

But the Prophet speaks here of a greater joy, that is, when they should see gathered all the tribes from their miserable and grievous dispersion: hence it is said in the same Psalm, ``Gather, Lord, our captivity, like the stream in the south;'' and then he adds, ``They who sow in tears, in joy shall reap.'' In part then did the faithful lament, and in part did they rejoice: the beginning of redemptions had raised their minds to joy; but on seeing their brethren still living under the tyranny of their enemies and having hardly a hope of restoration, they could not but mourn. Now the Prophet here declares, that their joy would be full, when their complete restoration came.

And he extends this joy to their sons; for it was needful to restrain their armor in expecting a full favor, as they ever closed up their way to God by their complaints, according to what we do when we give loose reigns to our wishes, for we then in a manner turn away from God. In order then to teach the people patience, the Prophet says, ``Though ye see not this today with your eyes, yet your sons shall at length see it.'' We now perceive that he here exhorts them to patience, that they might not anticipate with too much haste the promises of God.

Of the metaphor it is not needful to say much: he compares to the drunken, or to such as become cheerful through drinking, those who rejoice in the Lord, not that he expresses an approval of drunkenness, but because he wished to show that it would

[276] The words literally are, — And they shall be like a valiant man of Ephraim. So the Septuagint, only the "valiant man" is taken in a collective sense, "And they shall be like the warriors ([{μαχηται}]) of Ephraim.'' With this corresponds the Targum and the Syriac. The fact is, that the words cannot be grammatically rendered otherwise. --- Ed.

be no common joy, as though they were carried away beyond themselves. It would be then superfluous to move here the question, whether it be right to seek joy by drinking freely. It is indeed true that hilarity is connected with the lawful use of wine (Psalm 104:15;) but as we are too prone to excess, we ought to restrain the lusts of the flesh rather than to seek some color of excuse for a sinful indulgence. But as I have said, this question does not belong to the present passage. It follows ---

Zechariah 10:8

8. I will hiss for them, and gather them; for I have redeemed them: and they shall increase as they have increased.

8. Sibilabo illis et congregabo eos, quia redemi eos; et multiplicabuntur sicuti multiplicait sunt.

The same is the object of this verse. By the word whistle, Zechariah means what it imports in other passages, --- that it will not be an arduous world for God; for we are wont to measure his works by what our flesh understands. Since then the Jews might have easily raised this objection, --- that their brethren were dispersed through various countries and among many nations, so that the assembling of them was incredible, the Prophet meets this objection and says, that God was able by mere whistling or by a single nod to restore them to their country. God is sometimes said to whistle for the wicked, when he constrains them unwillingly to do him service, and employs them as instruments to execute his hidden purposes; for when great armies daily assemble, it is no doubt through the secret appointment of God. When therefore trumpets sound and drums beat, the Lord whistles from heaven, to lead the reprobate here and there as it pleases him. But in this passage the Prophet simply means, that though God may not have many heralds nor an equipped army to open a way for his people, he will be satisfied with whistling only; for when it should please him, a free passage would be made for captives, though the whole world were to hinder their return. These two words then are to be joined together, I will whistle for them and gather them; as though Zechariah had said, that the nod of God would alone be sufficient, whenever he designed to gather the people. [277]

He then adds, For I have redeemed them. Here also I retain the past time, as the verb is in the past tense: for God speaks of redemption already begun, as though he had said, ``I have promised that your exile would only be for a time; I have already appeared in part as your Redeemer, and I will not discontinue my work until it be completed.'' God then no doubt confirms here what I have stated, --- that as he had begun in some measure to redeem his people, a complete redemption was to be expected, though the distressed could hardly believe this. But they ought to have felt assured, that God, as it is said in Psalm 138:1, would not forsake the work of his hands. Hence by the consideration of what had commenced he encourages the Jews here to entertain confidence, so that they might with composed minds look for the end, and doubt not but that the whole people would be saved; for the Lord had

[277] The word rendered here “whistle,” is rendered “hist,” by Lowth, in Isaiah 5:26; 7:18; and he quotes Cyril, who says, “it is a metaphor taken from the practice of those who keep bees; who draw them out of their hives into the fields, and lead them back again by a hiss or a whistle.” This is probable, for it is connected in Isaiah 7:18 with the fly and the bee. Grotius takes the metaphor from the whistle of the shepherd, by which he collects his sheep. — Ed.

already proved himself to be their Redeemer. [278] It is indeed true that this had not been fulfilled as to all the Israelites: but we must ever remember, that gratuitous election so existed as to the whole people, that God had notwithstanding but a small flock, as Paul teaches us. (Romans 11:5.) The Prophet at the same time intimates that Christ would be the head of the Church, and would gather from all parts of the earth the Jews who had been before scattered; and thus the promised restoration is to be extended to all the tribes. It afterwards follows ---

Zechariah 10:9

9. And I will sow them among the people: and they shall remember me in far countries; and they shall live with their children, and turn again.

9. Et seminabo eos in populis, et in remotis partibus recordabuntur mei, et vivent cum fillis suis t revertentur.

He continues the same subject, and employs here a most suitable metaphor --- that the dispersion of the people would have a better issue than what any one then could have conceived, for it would be like sowing. The verb for scattering or sowing is often taken in a bad sense; for when people rested in their country, they ought then to have considered that they were living under God's protection. Dispersion, then, was an evidence of a curse, and it is often so taken by Moses. Now God uses it here in an opposite meaning, as though he had said, that he would at his pleasure turn darkness into light. The meaning then is, that the people had been dispersed through God being angry with them, but that the issue of this dispersion would be joyful; for the Jews would dwell everywhere, and be God's seed, and thus be made to produce abundant fruit. We then see that the meaning is, that God's favor would surpass the wickedness of the people; for those would bear fruit who had been scattered, and scattered because God would no longer exercise care over them, and defend them in the promised land. As God then had so often threatened by Moses that he would scatter the Jews, he now says in another sense, that he would sow them, and for this ends that they might everywhere produce fruit. [279]

It was an instance of the wonderful grace of God, that he so ordered his dreadful judgment as to make the dispersion, as it has been said, a sowing of the people; for it hence happened, that the knowledge of celestial truth shone everywhere; and at length when the gospel was proclaimed, a freer access was had to the Gentiles, because Jews were dispersed through all lands. The first receptacles (Hospitia) of the gospel were the synagogues. We see that the apostles everywhere went first to the Jews, and when a few were converted, the door was now opened that more

[278] The verb for "redeem" is in the past time, preceded by [{,[{כ for, because, or when. The Septuagint give the future time, ``because I shall redeem them.'' Jun. and Trem., and Piscator read thus, ``when I shall redeem them.'' There is a similar phrase in verse 6, and in a like manner connected, which may be rendered in the same way, ``when I shall pity them,'' instead of, ``for I have pitied them:'' for ,[{כי}] as well as ,[{ו}] has sometimes a conversive power, at least it turns the past to a future time. --- Ed.

[279] The sowing here, as admitted by all, evidently means scattering; yet the verse is rendered differently. Dathius and Henderson render the first [{[{ו ``though,'' and the second ``yet.'' This and the following verse may be thus translated --- 9. Though I shall scatter them among the nations, Yet in remote parts shall they remember me; And they shall live, even their children, and return: 10. Yea, I will restore them from the land of Egypt, And from Assyria will I gather them; And to the land of Gilead and Lebanon will I bring thm, And no place shall be found for them. ``And they shall live'' I take to mean, that they should live, not themselves, but in their children. But Dathius and Newcome follow the Septuagint --- ``And they shall cherish (or, preserve) their children,'' which the Hebrew will not bear; and Marckius and Henderson give the same version with Calvin --- ``And they shall live with their children.'' --- Ed.

might come, and Gentiles were also added to the Jews. Thus the punishment of exile, which had been inflicted on them, was the means of opening the door for the gospel; and God thus scattered his seed here and there, that it might in due time produce fruit beyond the expectation of all; and this consideration availed not a little to moderate the impatient desires of the people; for the Prophet intimates that this alone ought to have satisfied them --- that their exile would be productive of good, for the Lord would thereby gather much people to himself. Had the Jews been confined within their own borders, the name of the God of Israel would not have been heard of elsewhere; but as there was no part of the East, no part of Asia and of Greece, which had not some Jews --- and they inhabited many cities of Italy --- hence it was that the Apostles found, as we have said, wherever they came, some already prepared to embrace the gospel.

He afterwards adds, They shall remember me in distant lands. He shows the manner how the memory of God would be preserved: though the Jews sacrificed not in the temple, though they dwelt not in the holy land, they would yet ever worship the only true God; as then the seed cast on the ground, though it may not appear, and seem even to be wholly lost, being apparently consumed by rottenness, does yet germinate in its season, and produces fruit; so God teaches us, that the memory of his name will occasion this people to fructify in their dispersion. But as God promises this, we hence learn that it is through his singular kindness that we cherish piety in our hearts, when he sharply and severely chastises us. When therefore we cease not to worship God, it is certain that we are kept by his Spirit; for were this in the power of man, this promise would be useless, and even absurd.

He says further, They shall live with their sons, and shall return. He again speaks of sons, that the Jews might not make too much haste; for we know that men, having strong desires, hurry on immoderately. That they might not then prescribe time to God, the Prophet reminds them that it ought to have been enough for them that the Lord would quicken them as it were from the dead, together with their children. He however promises them a return, not that they would return to their own country, but that they would be all united by the faith of the gospel. Though then they changed not their place, nor moved a foot from the lands where they sojourned, yet a return to their country would be that gathering which would be made by the truth of the gospel, as it is well known, according to the common mode of speaking adopted by all the Prophets. It follows ---

Zechariah 10:10

10. I will bring them again also out of the land of Egypt, and gather them out of Assyria; and I will bring them into the land of Gilead and Lebanon; and place shall not be found for them.

10. Et reducam eos e terra Egypti, et ex Assur (ex Assyria) congregabo eos; et ad terram Gilead et Libani adducam eos; et non invenietur illis.

He confirms the same prediction --- that though the Jews were like broken pieces, they were yet to entertain hope of their return and future restoration, since God was able to gather them from the remotest parts whenever he stretched forth his hand. He then names Egypt and Assyria, that the Jews might know that the redemptions

here promised is equally open to them all, however far separated they might be. For though Egypt was not very far from Assyria, yet they who had fled to Egypt were regarded with more dislike than the rest, who had been forcibly driven into exile; for God had pronounced a curse on the flight of those who sought refuge in Egypt. Since then they were hated by the others, and as a hostile discord existed between them, the Prophet says that the gathering of which he speaks would belong to both. [280]

He then adds, that such would be the number of men, that there would be no place for them; for so ought these words to be understood, There shall not be found for them; that is, ``They will cover the whole land,'' according to what we have observed elsewhere. It is said in Isaiah, ``Secede from me,'' not that the faithful, when God shall increase his Church, will molest one another, or desire to drive away their brethren; but by this mode of speaking Isaiah means that the Church will be filled with such number of men that they will press on one another. So also now Zechariah says, that the number of people will be so great, that the place will be hardly large enough for so vast a multitude. It follows ---

Zechariah 10:11

11. And he shall pass through the sea with affliction, and shall smite the waves in the sea, and all the deeps of the river shall dry up: and the pride of Assyria shall be brought down, and the sceptre of Egypt shall depart away.

11. Et transibit in mari afflictio, et percutiet in mari fluctus; et arescent omnes profunditates fluminis: et dejicietur superbia Assur, et sceptrum Egypti recedet.

The Prophet confirms what he had said respecting the power of God, which is so great that it can easily and without any effort lay prostrate all the mighty forces of the world. As then the impediments which the Jews observed might have subverted their hope, the Prophet here removes them; he reminds the Jews that God's power would be far superior to all the impediments which the world could throw in their way. But the expressions are figurative, and allusions are made to the history of the first redemption.

Pass through the sea shall distress. As God formerly gave to his people a passage through the Red Sea, (Exodus 14:21;) so the Prophet now testifies that this power was unchangeable, so that God could easily restore his people, though the sea was to be dried up, and rivers were to be emptied. He says first, Pass shall distress through the sea, that is, spread shall distress, etc., for so the verb {עבר}, ober, is to be taken here. Pass then shall distress through the sea, [281] that is, the Lord will terrify the

[280] This promise of restoration from Egypt and Assyria is considered by Grotius, Dathius, and Henderson, as having been fulfilled literally. Grotius says that one hundred and twenty thousand were restored from Egypt [a larger number than what was restored from Babylon] by Ptolemy Philadelphus, and that many were restored from Assyria by Alexander, the son of Antiochus Epiphanes, and by Demetrius; and he refers to Josephus's of the Fathers, and some moderns, such as Marckius and Henry, viewed the prophecy as fulfilled in a spiritual sense, that is, in the spiritual restoration of the Jews, the language being taken from what belonged to a temporal restoration. But Scott and Adam Clarke seemed disposed to regard this prophecy as yet to be fulfilled, in the restoration of the Jews to their own land, as well as to the faith of the gospel. — Ed.

[281] So Pagninus, Drusius, and the Syriac. The Septuagint, the Arabic, the Vulgate, and also Jerome, give a different version — "And he shall pass through the narrow sea," or, "through the straits of the sea;" and this is the obvious meaning of the Hebrew, which is literally, "and he shall pass through the sea of straitness," or narrowness, i.e., through the (or a) narrow sea; the allusion is evidently to the Red Sea, which is narrow. Henderson connects [{{{עבר as a verb with the

sea, and so shake it with his power that the waters will obey his command. But he afterwards explains himself in other words, He will smite the waves in the sea. He means that God's command is sufficient to change the order of nature, so that the waters would immediately disappear at his bidding. He then adds, All the depths of the river shall dry up; some read, ``shall be ashamed,'' deriving the verb from {בוש}, bush; but it comes from {יבש}, ibesh: and this indeed means sometimes to be ashamed, but it means here to dry up. Others regard it as transitive, ``The wind shall dry up the depths.'' But as to the object of the Prophet, the passive or active sense of the verb is of no moment; for the Prophet no doubt means here, that there would be so much force in the very nod of God as to dry up rivers suddenly, according to what happened to Jordan; which being smitten by the rod of Moses dried up and afforded a passage to the people.

He at length speaks clearly, Cast down shall be the pride of Asshur, and the scepter of Egypt shall depart. In the preceding metaphor Zechariah alludes, as I have said, to the first redemption, as it was usual with all the Prophets to remind the people of the former miracles, that they might expect from the Lord in future what their fathers had witnessed. He now however declares, that God would be the Redeemer of his people, though the Assyrians on one side, and the Egyptians on the other, were to attempt to frustrate his purpose; for they could effect nothing by their obstinacy, as God could easily subdue both. He at last adds ---

Zechariah 10:12

12. And I will strengthen them in the LORD; and they shall walk up and down in his name, saith the LORD.

12. Et reborabo eos in Iehova; et in monime ejus ambulabunt, dicit Iehova.

Here at length he includes the substance of what we have noticed, that there would be sufficient help in God to raise up and support his people, and to render them victorious over all their enemies. He had already proved this by saying, that God had formerly sufficiently testified by many miracles how much superior he was to the whole world; but he briefly completes the whole of this proof, and shows, that the Jews, provided that they relied on God and expected from him what he had promised, would be sufficiently strong, though the whole power of the world were to rise up against them.

He also mentions the name of God, They shall walk, he says, in his name, that is, under his auspices. In short, there is here an implied contrast between the name of God and the wealth and the forces of their enemies, which might have filled the minds of the faithful with fear, and cast them down. Hence the Prophet bids the Jews to give the glory to God, and not to doubt but that they would be victorious, whatever hindrance the world might throw in their way. And by this word walk, he means a continued course of life, as though he had said, that the people indeed had returned from exile, that is, in part; but that more of them were to be expected, for the Lord had not only been a leader in their return, but that he would be also their

following line --- He shall cleave and smite the waves of the sea. He derives the peculiar sense of ``cleaving'' from the Chaldee :[{צרא}] but this is not necessary, for the other meaning is quite suitable, and countenanced by good authorities. Blayney give this version --- And some shall pass over the sea to Tyre; which is quite without any meaning in this connection, there being nothing in the passage to lead us to Tyre. --- Ed.

perpetual guardian, and defend them to the end.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that as we are constrained continually to groan under the burden of our sins, and the captivity in which we are held justly exposes us to continual trembling and sorrow, --- O grant, that the deliverance, already begun, may inspire us with the hope, so as to expect more from thee than what we can see with our eyes; and may we continually call on thee until thou completes what thou hast begun, and puttest to flight both Satan and our sins, so that being in true and full liberty devoted to thee, we may be partakers of that power which has already appeared in our head, until having at length passed through all our contests, we may reach that blessed rest, where we shall enjoy the fruit of our victory in Christ our Lord --- Amen

Chapter 11

Lecture One Hundred and Fifty-seventh

Zechariah 11

Z

Zechariah 11:1-3

1. Open thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars.

1. Aperi, Libane, protas tuas, et vorabit ignis cedros tuas:

2. Howl, fir tree; for the cedar is fallen; because the mighty are spoiled: howl, O ye oaks of Bashan; for the forest of the vintage is come down.

2. Ulula abies, quia cecidit cedrus, quia fortes (vel, praestantes) vastati sunt; ululate quercus Bashan, quia descendit (hoc est, excisa est, vel, prostrate) sylva munita.

3. There is a voice of the howling of the shepherds; for their glory is spoiled: a voice of the roaring of young lions; for the pride of Jordan is spoiled.

3. Vox ululatus pastorum, quia vastata est praestantia eorum (vel, fortitudo;) vox rugitus leonum, quia vastata est superbia Iordanis.

This Chapter contains severe threatenings, by which God designed in time to warn the Jews, that if there was any hope of repentance, they might be restored by fear to the right way, and that others, the wicked and the reprobate, might be rendered inexcusable, and also that the faithful might fortify themselves against the strong temptation to despond on seeing so dreadful a calamity awaiting that nation.

This prophecy does not indeed seem consistent with the preceding prophecies; for the Prophet has been hitherto not only encouraging the people to entertain hope, but has also declared that their condition would be so happy that nothing would be wanting to render them really blessed: but now he denounces ruin, and begins with reprobation; for he says, that God had been long the shepherd of that nation, but that now he renounced all care of them; for being wearied he would no longer bear with that perverse wickedness, which he had found in them all. These things seem to be inconsistent: but we may observe, that it was needful in the first place to set before the Jews the benefits of God, that they might with more alacrity proceed with the work of building the temple, and know that their labor would not be in vain;

and now it was necessary to change the strain, lest hypocrites, vainly confiding in these promises, should become hardened, as it is commonly the case; and also, lest the faithful should not entertain due fear, and thus go heedlessly before God; for nothing is more ruinous than security, inasmuch as when a license is taken to sin, God's judgment impends over us. We hence see how useful and reasonable was this warnings of the Prophet, as he made the Jews to understand, that God would not be propitious to his people without punishing their wickedness and obstinacy.

In order to render his prophecy impressive, Zechariah addresses Libanon; as though he was God's herald, he bids it to open its gates, for the whole wood was now given up to the fire. Had he spoken without a figure, his denunciation would not have had so much force: he therefore denounces near ruin on Lebanon and on other places. Almost all think that by Lebanon is to be understood the temple, because it was built with timber from that mountain; but this view seems to me frigid, though it is approved by the common consent of interpreters. For why should we think the temple to be metaphorically called Lebanon rather than Bashan? And they think so such thing of Bashan, though there is equally the same reason. I therefore regard it simply as the Mount Lebanon; and I shall merely refer to what Joseph us declares, that the temple was opened before the city was destroyed by Titus. But though that history may be true, and it seems to me probable, it does not hence follow that this prophecy was then fulfilled, according to what is said of Rabbi Jonathan, who then exclaimed, ``Lo! the prophecy of Zechariah; for he foretold that the temple would be burnt, and that the gates would be previously opened.'' These things seem plausible, and at the first view gain our approbation. But I think that we must understand something more solid, and less refined: for I doubt not but that the Prophet denounces complete ruin on Mount Lebanon, and on Bashan and other places. [282]

But why does he bid Lebanon to open its gates? The reason is given, for shortly after he calls it a fortified forest, which was yet without walls and gates. Lebanon, we know, was nigh to Jerusalem, though far enough to be free from any hostile attack. As then the place was by nature sufficiently safe from being assailed, the Prophet speaks, as though Lebanon was surrounded by fortresses; for it was not exposed to the attacks of enemies. The meaning is, --- that though on account of its situation the Jews thought that Lebanon was not exposed to any evils, yet the wantonness of enemies would lead them even there. We have already said why the Prophet bids Lebanon to open its gates, even because he puts on the character of a herald, who threatens and declares, that God's extreme vengeance was already nigh at hand.

He then adds, Howl thou, fir-tree, for the cedar has fallen. No doubt the Prophet by naming Lebanon, mentioning a part for the whole, meant the whole of Judea:

[282] Both to Jewish and Christian expounders for the most part have regarded the temple as meant by Libanon; with whom Blayney and Henderson agree. But the whole context clearly favors the opinion of Calvin, which has been followed by Marckius and Henry. There is in what follows no allusion to the temple, but the "land," verse 6, is expressly mentioned. The "cedars" evidently represented the chief men in the state, not in the temple, called in the second verse "the might" ones. Indeed the whole of what follows countenances this idea, that the Jewish state or land is what is intended. What has chiefly led to the notion, that the temple is intended, is the fact that it was built by cedars from Libanon: but the burning of the cedars mentioned here does not represent the burning of the temple, but the destruction of the chief men in the land of Judah; and this consideration alone is fatal to the notion. — Ed.

and it appears evident from the context that the most remarkable places are here mentioned; but yet the Prophet's design was to show, that God would punish the whole people, so as not to spare Jerusalem or any other place. And then by the fir-trees and cedars he meant whatever then excelled in Judea or in other places; and for this reason he compares them to the cedars of Lebanon, as though he had said, ``There is no reason for the fir-trees to regard themselves as beyond the reach of danger; for if he spares not the cedars what will become of the fir-trees, which possess no such stateliness and grandeur?''

We now then perceive the Prophet's meaning as to the trees: but he includes, as I have said, under one kind, whatever was valuable in Judea; and this we learn more clearly from what follows: for he adds, Fallen have, or laid waste have been, the strong [283] Some read in the neuter gender, ``Laid waste have been splendid things;'' but I am inclined to regard persons as intended. The Prophet then now simply declares, that the vengeance of God was nigh all the great ones, whom dignity sheltered, so that they thought themselves in no danger. And for the same purpose he adds, Howl, ye oaks of Bashan. He joins, as we see, Bashan to Lebanon; there is then no reason for allegorising only one of the words, when they are both connected. And he says, For fallen has the fortified forest. Either this may be applied to Lebanon, or the Prophet may be viewed as saying in general, that there was no place so difficult of access, which would not be penetrated into, when the Lord should give liberty to enemies to destroy all things. Though then the density of trees protected these mountains, yet the Prophet says that nothing would obstruct God's vengeance from penetrating into the inmost recesses of strongholds.

He then adds, The voice of the howling of shepherds; for their excellency, or their courage, is laid waste. Here he has {אדר}, ader, and before {אדירים}, adirim, in the masculine gender. We see then that the Prophet confirms the same thing in other words, ``Howl now,'' he says, ``shall the shepherds.'' He intimates that the beginning of this dreadful judgment would be with the chief men, as they were especially the cause of the public ruin. He then says, that the dignity of the great was now approaching its fall, and hence he bids them to howl. He does not in these words exhort them to repentance, but follows the same strain of doctrine. By God's command he here declares, that the shepherds who took pride in their power, could not escape the judgment which they had deserved: and as this is a mode of speaking usually adopted by the Prophets, I shall no longer dwell on the subject.

He afterwards adds, The voice of the roaring of lions. He no doubt gives here the name of lions, by way of metaphor, to those who cruelly exercised their power over the people. But he also alludes to the banks of Jordan, where there were lions, as it is well known. Since then lions were found along the whole course of Jordan, as it is evident from many passages, he compares shepherds to lions, even the governors who had abused their authority by exercising tyranny over the people: Fallen then has the pride or the excellency of Jordan. In short, it is now sufficiently evident, that the Prophet threatens final destruction both to the kingdom of Judah and to the

[283] The word means illustrious, stately, magnificent, glorious. It may apply to the cedars, or to the rulers or chief men, represented by the cedars, which is most probable: they are afterwards called shepherds and lions. — Ed.

kingdom of Israel. Both kingdoms were indeed then abolished; but I speak of the countries themselves. The meaning is --- that neither Judea nor the land of the ten tribes would be free from God's vengeance. [284] He afterwards adds ---

Zechariah 11:4-6

4. Thus saith the LORD my God; Feed the flock of the slaughter;

4. Sic dicit Iehova, Deus meus, Pasce gregem occisionis.

5. Whose possessors slay them, and hold themselves not guilty: and they that sell them say, Blessed be the LORD; for I am rich: and their own shepherds pity them not.

5. Qui possident ipsum, occident (hoc est, occidunt) et non peccant; et qui vendit ipsum (gregem, vel, ipsas oves) dicit, Benedictus Iehova, et ditatus sum; et qui pascit eas, non parcit illis.

6. For I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land, saith the LORD: but, lo, I will deliver the men every one into his neighbour's hand, and into the hand of his king: and they shall smite the land, and out of their hand I will not deliver them

6. Quia (vel, certe) non parcam amplius incolis terrae, dicit Iehova; et ecce ego tradam (vel, trado, vel, venire faciens) hominem quemque in manum proximi sui, et in manum Regis sui; et conterent terram, et non eripiam e manu eorum.

Here is given a reason why God purposed to deal so severely with his people --- even because their obstinacy deserved no pardon. As then in the beginning of the chapter the Prophet threatened ruin to the Jews, so now he reminds them that their punishment was nigh, and that they could not be more gently treated, because their wickedness was wholly incurable. We now perceive the design of the Prophet; but he charges the Jews especially with ingratitude, because they responded so basely and shamefully to the singular benefits of God.

He says first, that he was bidden to feed the flock destined to the slaughter [285] Now the Prophet does not here relate simply what command he had received from God, but teaches us in general that God had ever performed the office of a good and faithful shepherd towards the Jews. The Prophet then assumes the character of all the shepherds, as though he had said, ``There is no reason why this people should plead their ignorance, or attempt to disguise their own fault by other names and various pretences; for God has ever offered them a shepherd, and sent also ministers to guide and rule them: it is not to be ascribed to God that this people has not enjoyed prosperity and happiness.'' There is now no need of spending much labor about this verse, as interpreters have done who confine what is here said to

[284] The whole passage, including the three first verses, is remarkably concise, striking, and poetical,— 1. Open, Lebanon, thy doors, That consume may the fire thy cedars: 2. Howl thou the fir-tree; For fallen is the cedar, Because the magnificent are wasted. Howl, ye oaks of Bashan; For come down is the forest, the fenced one. 3. The voice of the howling of shepherds! Because wasted is their magnificence; The voice of the roaring of lions! For wasted is the pride of Jordan. There is a correspondence between “consume” and “wasted.” The Jewish rulers were called “shepherds” with regard to their office, and “lions” on account of their rapidity. Their “magnificence” was wasted, like that of the cedars when consumed by fire. The “pride of Jordan” were the trees growing on its borders, which afforded shelter for lions. These became wasted or destroyed, so that the lions could find there no receptacle. All these things intimate the entire destruction of the Jewish state. — Ed.

[285] This “slaughter” has reference to the ruin and destruction denounced in the previous verses, or to what was done by “the possessors” who slew them, verse 5. — Ed.

Christ alone, as one who had received this office from the Father; for we shall see from the passage itself that the Prophet's words are by them forcibly wrested from their meaning.

Let it then be borne in mind, that his special object is to show --- that God had ever been ready to rule this people, so that he could not have been accused by them of not having done what could have been possibly looked for or expected from a good shepherd. If any one objects and says, that this could have been said in other words, the plain answer is --- that God's perpetual care in his government had been fully shown; for he had not only himself performed the duties and office of a shepherd, but had also at all times set over them ministers, who performed faithfully their work. Since God then had so constantly and sedulously watched over the safety of the people, we see that their ingratitude was wholly proved. And by calling it the flock of slaughter, a reference is made to the time of the Prophet; for the Jews were then as though they had been snatched from the jaws of wolves, having been delivered from exile. They were then as dead sheep, whom the Lord had rescued; and we also know to how many troubles and dangers they had been constantly exposed. And hence appeared more clearly the goodness of God; for he was pleased nevertheless to exercise care over his flock. Then the Prophet enlarges here on God's favor, because he had not despised his sheep though given up to the slaughter. The words might indeed be extended farther, as though the Prophet referred to what had already taken place, and they might thus be applied to many ages; but it seems to me more probable, that he mentions here what belonged to that age. Zechariah then teaches us why God was constrained to adopt extreme severity, even because he had tried all things that might have healed the people, and yet lost all his labor: when their wickedness became wholly incurable, despair as it were at length constrained God to exercise the severity mentioned here. This is, as I think, the meaning of the Prophet.

He afterwards adds another circumstance, which shows still further the wonderful and ineffable goodness of God, --- that he had been a shepherd of a flock, which had not only been harassed by wolves and robbers, but also by its own shepherds. In short, the import of the whole is, --- that though wolves and robbers had ranged with great barbarity among the people, yet God had always been their shepherd.

He then enlarges on the subject and says, that they who possessed them had killed them, so that they spared not. By these words the Prophet shows that the safety of the people had been deemed as nothing by their very leaders: they could not then by any excellence of their own have induced God to show so much kindness to them. But these words ought to be attentively noticed, --- that when the flock was slain, the executioners or butchers themselves had no mercy, for they thought it was a spoil justly due to them. We see how God extols here his own goodness; for he had condescended to defend and rule and feed that people, who were not only despised in the world, but counted as nothing, and the slaughtering of them deemed a lawful prey: they sin not, [286] he says, that is, they are not conscious of exercising any

[286] More correct is our version, "and held not themselves guilty." The Targum gives the idea, "and say, there is no sin upon us." The Septuagint have departed from the meaning of the verb, though the general import is retained, "and they repented not;" and the same may be

cruelty, --- Why? because they thought that they justly enriched themselves, while they were plundering so wretched a flock. The more base, then, and inexcusable was the ingratitude of the people, when after having been so kindly received and so gently nourished by God, they yet rejected all his favors and suffered not themselves to be governed by his hand. And it is material to observe here, that these contrasts tend greatly to exaggerate the sins of men, and ought to be considered, that God's severity may not be blamed; for we know that many complain when God executes his judgments: they would measure all punishments by their own ideas, and subject God to their own will. In order therefore to check such complaints, the Prophet says, that though the flock was most contemptible, it had not yet been despised by God, but that he undertook the care of it.

The shepherds and masters said, Blessed be Jehovah. We are wont to give thanks to God when we really believe that the blessings we have come from him. The robber who kills an innocent man will not say, ``Blessed be God;'' for he on the contrary tries to extinguish every remembrance of God, because he has wounded his own conscience. The same may be also said of thieves. Hypocrites often profess the name of God; and they whose trade is cheating ever make a speech of this kind, ``By God's grace I have gained so much this year;'' that is, after having acquired the property of others by deceit, cheating, and plunder, they give thanks to God! and at the same time they flatter themselves by self-deception, as though all were a lawful prey; for, forsooth! they are not proved guilty before a human tribunal. Now the Prophet here adopts this common mode of speaking, by which men, not conscious of doing wrong, usually testify that their gain is just and lawful.

He then adds, And he who fed then has not spared them. The meaning is, that the people, according to the opinions commonly entertained, were not worthy of mercy and kindness. Hence, as I have said, the wonderful goodness of God shines forth more clearly; for he condescended to take the care of a flock that was wholly despised. [287] Then he says, I will not spare the inhabitants of the land; behold I will deliver, etc. To some it appears that there is here a reason given; for the Jews would have never been thus stripped, had not God been angry with them; as though he had said, that God's vengeance was just, inasmuch as they were thus exposed to such atrocious wrongs. But according to my judgment God simply confirms what we have stated, --- that his future vengeance on the Jews would be most just, because he had in feeding them so carefully labored wholly in vain. For though the Prophet has not as yet expressed what we shall hereafter see respecting their ingratitude, he yet does not break off his discourse without reason, for indignation has ever some warmth in it; he then in the middle of his argument exclaims here, I will not spare;

said of Jerome, “and they grieved not.” The version of Henderson is not right, “And are not held guilty.” It is not what others thought of them, but what they thought of themselves, is evidently intended. — Ed.

[287] There are in this verse, the fifth, several anomalies. The verbs, except one, are in the singular, and the nouns, “possessors,” “sellers,” and “shepherds,” are in the plural number, and the pronoun affixed to “shepherds” is masculine, while that which is affixed to each of the two preceding words is feminine, referring to the antecedent, “sheep.” There are MSS. and early versions in which these anomalies are rectified; and it is but reasonable to adopt such corrections. The meaning of the verse is evident; and it may be that some of these anomalies are idiomatic. A plural noun in Welsh has commonly a verb in the singular number when placed after it, which is often the case. — Ed.

for God had spared the Jews, when yet all men exercised cruelty towards them with impunity; and when they were contemptible in the sight of all, he still had regarded their safety. As then they had been so ungrateful for so many acts of kindness, ought not God to have been angry with them? This is then the reason why the Prophet introduces here in God's name this threatening, Surely I will not spare them; that is, ``I have hitherto deferred my vengeance, and have surpassed all men in kindness and mercy; but I have misplaced my goodness, and now there is no reason why I should longer suspend my judgment.'' I will spare then no longer the inhabitants of this land

I will give, or deliver, he says, every man into the hand of his friend; as though he had said, ``They are no longer sheep, for they will not bear to be ruled by my hand, though they have found me to be the best of shepherds. They shall now tear and devour one another; and thus a horrible dispersion will follow.'' Now the Jews ought to have dreaded nothing so much, as to be given up to destroy themselves by mutual slaughter, and thus to rage cruelly against one another and to perish without any external enemy: but yet God declares that this would be the case, and for this reason, because he could not succeed with them, though willing to feed them as his sheep and ready to perform the office of shepherd in ruling them. [288]

He concludes by saying, They shall smite the land, and I will not deliver from their hand. He intimates in the last place that ruin without any remedy was nigh; for he alone was the only deliverer of the people; but now he testifies that their safety would not be the object of his care; for should he see them perishing a hundred times, he would not be moved with pity, nor turn to bring them help, inasmuch as they had precluded all compassion. It now follows ---

Zechariah 11:7

7. And I will feed the flock of slaughter, even you, O poor of the flock. And I took unto me two staves; the one I called Beauty, and the other I called Bands; and I fed the flock.

7. Et pavi gregem occisionis, nempe (vel, ideoque) pauperes gregis: et sumpsi mihi duas virgas, unam vocavi Elegantiam (vel, Pulchritudinem;) et alteram vocavi Funiculos (alii vertunt, Perditores; de hac voce dicemus;) et pavi gregem.

He resumes here the thread of the discourse, which he had shortly before broken off; for he sets forth what had not yet been sufficiently expressed --- that the ingratitude of the people, with which obstinacy was especially united, deserved entire ruin, and that now there was no hope of pardon; for the paternal care of God had been most basely and most shamefully repudiated, as well as the kind favor which he had manifested to the people.

[288] There is one phrase omitted, “and unto the hand of his king;” that is “Antiochus,” says Grotius,—”Herod,” says Drusius,—”Caesar,” says Henderson. But no particular king seems intended, but a state of things is set forth, signifying the tyranny and oppression of the ruling power, which was verified in the condition of the Jews during a considerable period, until at last they were destroyed by one of the Caesars, the emperor of Rome. Inward discord, and the tyranny of those who ruled over them, characterised their history from the time of Antiochus Epiphanes until they were demolished as a nation by Titus and Vespasian. This seems to be the import of this prophecy. The singular number is used poetically: and this appears evident from the words which follow, “And they shall smite,” or rather pound to pieces, “the land.” The “king” is spoken of here as many — “they,” so that a succession of tyrants is meant. — Ed.

God then complains that he fed the flock. Some apply this to Zechariah; but, as I have said, God relates the acts of kindness which he had uniformly showed to the people, until they became wholly unworthy of his favor. Let us however remember that the Prophet speaks of the remnant; for he does not here recount the benefits of God in ancient times, but describes the state of the people after their return from their exile in Babylon. God seemed before to have committed this office to Zechariah --- to feed them; but as I have already said, the design of that was no other than to make it evident that the whole fault was in the people; for they had thrust from them the kindness of God, and in a manner carried on war frowardly with God, so as to prevent any access for his favor. There is therefore here an expostulation in God's name.

I have fed, he says, the flock of slaughter, even the poor of the flock. Some render {לכן}, on account of; but it may be taken in an explanatory sense: or we may give this rendering --- ``therefore the poor,'' or, especially the poor. With regard to the meaning, God here intimates that he had manifested his care for the whole people, for he had hoped that there were a few sheep yet remaining worthy of having mercy shown to them. As then some poor sheep might have been found among the impure flock, God says, that having this hope, he did not deem it grievous or burdensome to undertake the office of a shepherd in ruling the people. I have then fed the flock of slaughter, even for this reason, he says, because there were some miserable sheep among them: I was therefore unwilling to forsake them, and preferred to try all means rather than to cast away even one little sheep, provided a single one were found in the whole flock. [289]

He says that he took two rods, that he called one {נעם}, nom, ``Beauty,'' and that he called the other {חבלים}, chebelim, ``Cords,'' rendered ``destroyers'' by those who adhere to the Hebrew points; but as {חבל}, both in the singular and plural, has the meaning of a rope or cord, the Prophet, I have no doubt, means by {חבלים}, chebelim, ropes or bindings. Grammar, indeed, does not allow this; but Zechariah did not set down the points, for they were not then in use. I indeed know with how much care the old scribes contrived the points, when the language had already ceased to be in common use. They then who neglect, or wholly reject the points, are certainly void of all judgment and reason; but yet some discrimination ought to be exercised; [290] for if we read here ``destroyers,'' there is no meaning; if we read ``cords,'' there is no letter changed, but only two points are altered. As then the subject itself necessarily demands this meaning, I wonder that interpreters suffer themselves to be servilely constrained, so as not to regard the design of the Prophet.

The Prophet then says, that he had taken two rods, that he might devote himself

[289] This sentence has puzzled many, but needlessly. [{לכז} has sometimes the meaning of ,[{כז}] certainly, surely, in truth, Jeremiah 5:2; and it may be rendered here ``especially,'' as Calvin does. The simple [{כז}] is used in a similar sense in verse 11, in connection with the same words in part, as here: them, to consider them as ``the poor of the flock,'' and not ``the miserable sheep,'' as rendered by Henderson. The rendering of Newcome gives the same meaning---''because of the poor of the flock.'' He considers that [{לכז}] here signifies the same with ,[{למען}] which is given in one MS., and agrees with the Syriac. --- Ed.

[290] Grotius speaks in a similar strain of the Punctuists, and agrees with Jerome and others in regarding the word of a similar import with that stated by Calvin. The 14th verse is a sufficient confirmation. It is rendered "[{σχοινισμα}], bond,'' by the Septuagint, Agg. and Sym. --- ``funiculi, ropes or cords,'' by the Vulgate. --- ``devincientes, binders,'' by Drusius and Marckius; and as in our version, ``bands,'' by Newcome and Henderson

in a manner not common to the office of a shepherd. Shepherds were satisfied with one crook; for by rods he means here the crook used by shepherds. As then every shepherd carried his own crook, the Prophet says here that he was furnished with two crooks, or pastoral staffs, because the Lord surpassed all men in his solicitude in the office of ruling his people. But the remainder I must defer until tomorrow.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast hitherto so kindly showed thyself to be our Shepherd, and even our Father, and hast carefully provided for our safety, --- O grant, that we may not by our ingratitude deprive ourselves of thy favors, so as to provoke thy extreme vengeance, but on the contrary suffer ourselves to be gently ruled by thee, and render thee due obedience: and as thine only-begotten Son has been by thee set over us as our only true Shepherd, may we hear his voice, and willingly obey him, so that we may be able to triumph with thy Prophet, that thy staff is sufficient for us, so as to enable us to walk without fear through the valley of the shadow of death, until we shall at length reach that blessed and eternal rest, which has been obtained for us by the blood of thine only Son. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Fifty-eighth

We said yesterday that the word {חבלים}, chebelim, the name given by Zechariah to the second rod, could not be rendered ``destroyers,'' as all the Hebrews do; for God teaches us that he had fully and faithfully discharged the duties of a shepherd, so that the people perished through their own fault; and since God undertook the office of a shepherd, it could not have been said that he took a staff to destroy them: and there is also no doubt but that he connects this word with the other, {נעם}, nom, ``beauty.'' And he says in the last place, that this rod called {חבלים}, chebelim, was broken, in order to show that the brotherhood between Judah and Israel was come to an end. Now what affinity can there be between destroying and uniting? It is then clear that the word {חבלים}, chebelim, is to be taken here for ropes, or cords.

Let us now see why the Prophet calls one ``Beauty,'' and the other ``Ropes.'' Some think that the law of nature is designated by {נעם}, nom, and by {חבלים}, chebelim, the law of Moses, and those who render the word ``Lines,'' such as Jerome, who gives here the right version, think that as the law was a hard yoke on the ancients, the rod was so called because it bound them fast. Others, as Jerome also does, refer to this passage of Moses, ``When the Lord cast his line, he chose a place for Israel, and when the Highest divided the nations,'' etc. They then think that a line is taken for an inheritance. But the first interpretation is too remote and distorted; with regard to the second, as the Prophet puts the word in the plural number, it cannot be suitably taken for an inheritance, and, as we said yesterday, the following clause shows that the idea of union is included in it.

The meaning of the Prophet then is, that God had so performed his office of a shepherd towards his people, as to rule them in the best manner; this I understand by the word {נעם}, nom, beauty, for nothing could have been more perfect in beauty than the government which God had exercised over the Israelites; and hence he compares here his pastoral staff to beauty, as though he had said, ``The order of things was so arranged that nothing could be imagined better.'' He then mentions

unity or concord, and it was the highest favor that God gathered again the scattered Israelites so as to make them one body. It is indeed true, that few of the kingdom of Israel had returned to their own country, but it is yet evident that the remnant was not only from the tribe of Judah, from the half tribe of Benjamin, and from the Levites, but that there were others mingled with them. It was therefore a most appropriate representation, that not only a most beautiful order was established by God, but that was also added a brotherly concord, so that the children of Abraham were joined together in one spirit and in one soul. Since then they had so good a shepherd, the baser and less excusable was their ingratitude in shaking off his yoke, and in not suffering themselves to be ruled by his staff.

We now then see what the words of the Prophet mean, when he introduces God as furnished with two rods, even beauty and gathering. He then repeats what he had said before, I have fed, he says, the sheep, intimating, that it was not owing to him that he should not continue to rule them. It now follows ---

Zechariah 11:8

8. Three shepherds also I cut off in one month; and my soul lothed them, and their soul also abhorred me.

8. Et rejeci tres pastores mense uno; et taedio affecta est (ad verbum coarctata est) anima mea in ipsis; atque etiam anima eorum me abominata est.

At the beginning of the verse the Prophet continues the same subject, that God spared no pains in ruling the people, but patiently bore with many grievances; for it is the duty of every good and careful husband man to inspect often his flock, and to change his shepherd, when he finds him idle and inattentive to his duties. God then shows that he had exercised the greatest vigilance, for in one month he had rejected three shepherds, that is, he had within a short space of time often made choice of new shepherds, and substituted them for others, for one month is to be taken here for a short time, and the three shepherds signify many, indefinitely. When a husband man neglects his own flock, he may be deceived all the year round, should he meet with a thief or an inactive and worthless man. Since then God says, that he had changed his shepherds often in one month, he intimates what I have already said, that he took the greatest care of his flock, for he loved it, and omitted nothing necessary to defend it. [291] And this circumstance especially aggravated the sin of the Jews, for they did not respond to so great a care on God's part; no, not when they saw that he watched night and day for their safety.

Now the latter part of the verse is a complaint, for God begins to set forth how base had been the wickedness and ingratitude of the people, With weariness, he says, has my soul been affected by them, and their soul has hated me [292] He speaks not now of

[291] This is a more satisfactory explanation than what has been by many offered; for most have made the attempt to fix on some three shepherds, either before or after this time. Jerome mentions Moses, Aaron, and Miriam; others have referred to the three sons of Josiah, to the three Maccabean brethren, and to the three last of the Asmonean princes. Cyril names the priests, civil rulers, and lawyers or scribes; and this is the explanation which Henderson prefers, and also Scott and Adam Clarke. Newcome has given no option. Blayney prefers another rendering, "and I set aside the authority of the shepherds," but this cannot be admitted. The view given by Calvin is the most reasonable, and comports with the character of what was conveyed by vision. — Ed.

[292] My soul was grieved at them, and their soul also loathed me.—Newcome. My soul loathed

the shepherds, and they are mistaken who so read the passage, as though God had repudiated the shepherds, because his soul w as wearied with them: on the contrary, he turns his discourse to the whole people, and begins to show how wicked they had been, who having been favored with so many benefits, could not yet endure the best of shepherds. Hence he says, that his soul had been straitened by them, for he found no room made for his favors. Paul also, treating on this subject, expostulates with the Corinthians, and says, that he was ready to pour forth his heart and to open widely his mouth, but they themselves were straitened, and he felt himself these straitenings in his own heart. (2 Corinthians 6:11.) So also God complains here and says, that he was straitened by the Jews; for he found that his blessings were not rightly received, but as it were hindered, so great was the wickedness of the people.

He expresses more clearly at the end that he was despised by them, They also have hated me. Now it was a contempt in no way excusable, when the Jews would not acknowledge how kindly and bountifully God had treated them. We now perceive the Prophet's design: after having related how kindly God had condescended to rule the people, he now says that this labor had produced no fruit, for the door for God's favors had been closed up. It afterwards follows-

Zechariah 11:9

9. Then said I, I will not feed you: that that dieth, let it die; and that that is to be cut off, let it be cut off; and let the rest eat every one the flesh of another.

9. Et dixi, Non pascan vos; quod morti devotum est, moriatur; et quod succisioni devotum est, succidatur; et quae residuae erunt, devorent unaquaeque carnem sociae suae.

God now declares what had been briefly mentioned before, --- that his judgment could not be deemed cruel, for the people had been extremely wicked, and their wickedness deserved extreme punishment. It seems indeed to be a simple narrative; but God here defends his own cause, for he had tried all means in ruling the people, before he had recourse to extreme rigor. Who indeed could now murmur against God? for he had been ever ready to undertake the office of a shepherd, and had so humbled himself as to take care of that people as his own flock, and had, in short, omitted no kind of attention; and yet he had been despised by that people, and even treated with derision. It was therefore an extreme indignity when they hated God, who had yet dealt with them with so much kindness. We hence see that God's judgment is here vindicated from every calumny; for the wickedness of the people was altogether inexcusable before God had renounced his care of them.

I said: the time must be noticed, for he intimates that he had not been too hasty in taking vengeance; but that as there was no longer any remedy, he had been constrained, as it were by necessity, to give up his office of a shepherd. I said then, I will not feed you; what is to die, let it die; what is to be cut off, let it be cut off [293] He here resigns his office of a shepherd, and intimates that he was innocent and

them, and their soul also rejected me.—Henderson The first verb means grieved, vexed, or wearied, and not loathed. See Numbers 21:23: Judges 10:16; 16:16. “Wearied was my soul with them.” The verb in the next clause is only found here, and rendered “roared,” [{επωροντο}], by the Septuagint, (see Jeremiah 12:7,) and ``despised,'' by the Targum. It is said, that the word in the Talmud is used in the sense of despising and hating, and this idea suits this place, ``and their soul also hast despised me.'' --- Ed.

[293] The Targum renders the verbs in the future tense, “shall die — shall be cut off;” but the

free from all blame, whatever might happen. A shepherd is set over a flock for this purpose, --- that he may defend it, even every sheep, both against the depredations of robbers, and the rapacity of wolves: but when he gives up his office, he is exempt from all blame, though afterwards the flock may be stolen or devoured by wolves and wild beasts. God then here openly declares, that it was not to be imputed to him, if the Jews perished a hundred times, for they refused to be ruled by him, and thus he was freed from the pastoral charge. What then is to perish, let it perish; that is, ``Since they are not healable, and allow no remedy to be applied to their evils, I leave them; they shall find out what it is to be without a good shepherd.''

We now see more clearly what I before stated, --- that the wickedness and ingratitude of the people are here reproved, because they had rejected God, who was ready to be their shepherd, --- and that the cause of the ruin which was nigh at hand, was in the Jews themselves, though they anxiously tried, but in vain, to transfer it to another.

He concludes with these words, And those which remain, even those who shall escape external attacks, let them eat one another, since they are not now sheep, but savage wild beasts. And this we know has been fulfilled; for the Jews at length perished through mutual discords, and no one spared his own brother; nay, the nearer the relationship, the more cruelly each raged against the other. Hence God's judgment, denounced by the Prophet, then appeared most openly, when the Jews perished through intestine broils and even slaughters. It then follows ---

Zechariah 11:10, 11

10. And I took my staff, even Beauty, and cut it asunder, that I might break my covenant which I had made with all the people.

10. Et accepi virgam meam, nempe Pulchritudinem, et confregi eam, ut irritum facerem foedus quod pepigeram cum omnibus gentibus (vel, populis.)

11. And it was broken in that day: and so the poor of the flock that waited upon me knew that it was the word of the LORD.

11. Et irritum fuit die illo; et cognoverunt sic paupers gregis qui me observabant, quod sermo Iehovae hic esset.

He confirms the same truth, but a metaphor is introduced: for he says, that when he freed himself from the office of a shepherd, he broke the two rods, even Beauty and Gathering. He speaks of the first staff, because things were in a confusion in Judea, before the people were wholly cut off; for the dispersion did not immediately take place, so that there was no sort of social state among the Jews; but social order was so deranged, that it was sufficiently evident that they were not ruled by God. By degrees the purity of doctrine was corrupted, and a flood of errors crept in; superstition gained great strength. When things were in this state of confusion, the pastoral staff was broken, which is called, Beauty. This verse then contains no more than an explanation of the last: and hence also he says, That broken might be

Septuagint and Jerome, in the imperative mood, as here. The verse may be thus rendered, — 9. And I said,—I will not feed you; She that is to die, shall die; And she that is to be cut off, shall be cut off; And the remainder shall devour, Each one the flesh of its (or her) fellow. “The dying,” or “the dead,” and “the cut off,” the literal rendering, clearly mean what was destined to die and to be cut off. Hence to render “cut off” here “missing,” as done by Blayney, is not at all necessary. — Ed.

the covenant which I had made, that is, that it might be now quite evident that this people are not ruled by my hand and authority.

Some interpreters extend to the whole world what is here said of nations, and think that the same thing is meant by Zechariah as that which is said in Hosea 2:1, -that the Lord made a covenant with the beasts of the earth and the birds of heaven, that no harm should happen to his people; but the comparison is not suitable. It is then probable, that God here speaks only of the posterity of Abraham; nor is it to be wondered at that they are called nations, for even so Moses says,

``Nations from thee shall be born,'' (Genesis 17:6.)

and this was done for the purpose of setting forth the greatness of God's favor; for the ten tribes were as so many nations among whom God reigned. It seemed incredible, that from one man, not only a numerous family, but many nations should proceed. The real meaning then seems to be, that God testified that he would no longer be the leader of that people; for when order was trodden under foot, the covenant of God was made void. Why indeed was that covenant continued, and what was its design, except to keep things aright, in a fit and suitable condition? Thus in the church, God regards order, so that nothing should be done rashly, according to every man's humor. This then was the beginning of that dispersion, which at length followed when the people had fallen off from the order which God had appointed. 294

He concludes by saying, that in that day the covenant was broken. By which words he intimates that it was not by chance that the law was destroyed, and that the Jews departed from the just government of God, but that it was through the dreadful vengeance of God. In that day then: this is emphatical, as though the Prophet had said, ``It ought not to be ascribed to chance that things have changed for the worse, for God has thus executed his judgment, after having with extreme patience borne with the wickedness of the people.'' And hence he adds, that the poor of the flock saw that this was the word of Jehovah. Here the Prophet briefly points out two things --- that this was not commonly known as God's judgment, but that almost all with closed eyes overlooked what had happened; for the world contracts as it were hardness, and becomes wilfully obdurate under the scourges of God. All cry out that they are miserable, but no one regards the hand of the striker, as it is said elsewhere. (Isaiah 9:13.) So also Zechariah charges here the Jews with stupidity; for though the greater part saw all things in confusion, yet they did not consider, but regarded almost as nothing the dreadful judgment of God. It must then be that men are extremely refractory, when they perceive not that they are chastised by God; yet the Prophet charges the Jews with this sottishness; for they regarded not this as the word of Jehovah, they did not believe that this was God's hand. But he says further, that the poor of the flock perceived this: and thus he shows, that while the body of the people followed the way to ruin, a few derived benefit from God's

294 "All the nations" are considered to be the heathen nations by Michaelis, Newcome, and Henderson; but the meaning in this case is very obscure. Though the word here used, "peoples," or nations, commonly designates the Gentile world, yet there are instances in which it is applied to the tribes of Israel. See 1 Kings 22:28; Joel 2:6 Blayney proposes to connect "all nations" with "cut asunder," and renders [{,[{ם ``before,'' ``and cut it asunder, to break the covenant which I had made, before all the nations:'' but interviewing clauses of this kind are quite foreign to the character of the Hebrew language. --- Ed.

scourges; and thus it never happens, that God chastises without some advantage. Though then the reprobate obstinately resist God, and hesitate not to tread under foot his judgments, and as far as they can, render them void, there are yet some few who receive benefit and acknowledge God's hand so as to humble themselves and repent.

The Prophet, then, after having complained that the chief men, even those who were in honor and in wealth among the Jews, heedlessly despised God's dreadful judgment, makes this addition, that there were a few very poor and humble men, who regarded this judgment as not having come by chance, but through God, who became a just avenger, because his favor had been wantonly despised: The poor then of the flock knew this to be the word of Jehovah

As this happened in the time of the Prophet, it is no wonder that at this day, even when God thunders from heaven and makes known his judgments by manifest proofs, the world should yet rush headlong into perdition, and become as it were stupefied in their calamities. In the meantime we ought to strive to connect ourselves with the miserable poor, who are deemed as the offscourings of the world, and so attentively to consider God's vengeance, that we may seriously fear and not provoke his extreme judgments, and thus perish with the wicked.

We must observe also the expression which Zechariah introduced before the last words, Who attend to me. He mentions it as a singular and a rare thing, that even a few deigned to consider the works of God. The chief wisdom of men, we know, is attentively to consider the hand of God; but almost all seem to be immersed in a state of stupor: when the Lord smites them, they stand as it were amazed, and never, as we have already said, regard the hand of the smiter; and when the Lord freely and kindly cherishes them, they exult in their own wantonness. Thus under every kind of treatment, they are untractable; for they attend not to God, but close their eyes, harden their hearts, and cover themselves with many veils; in short, we find the blindness of the world ever connected with perverseness, so that they in vain pretend ignorance, for they attend not to God, but on the contrary turn their backs on him and darken the clear light by their wickedness.

We now then see why this sentence is introduced, that the poor of the flock understand, because they apply their minds and devote their attention for the purpose of considering the works of God. It hence follows that the bulls, who with their horns fearlessly assail God, and that he-goats, who by their stench fill the air, continue in their brutishness, and derive no benefit from God's judgments, because they are wilfully and through their own wickedness wholly blind. It follows ---

Zechariah 11:12, 13

12. And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver.

12. Et dixi illis, Si bonum est in oculis vestris (hoc esst, si vobis placet,) date mercedem meam; quod si non, desistite: et appenderunt mercedem meam triginta argenteos.

13. And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prised at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter

in the house of the Lord

13. Et dixit Iehova ad me, Projice hoc ad figulum, magnificentiam pretii quo aestimatus sum ab illis: et sumpsi triginta argenteos, et projeci hoc ad templum Iehovae, ad figulum.

God now adds another crime, by which he discovers the wickedness of the people; for they estimated all the labor he had bestowed at a cry insignificant price. He had before complained of ingratitude; but more fully detected was the iniquity and baseness of the people, when they thus regarded as of no value the inestimable favor of God towards them. What the Prophet then says now is --- that God at last tried them so as to know whether his benefits were of any account among the Jews, and that it had been fully found out, that all the labor and toil employed in their behalf, had been ill-spent and wholly lost. That Zechariah now speaks in his own person, and then introduces God as the speaker, makes no difference, as we said yesterday, as to the main subject; for his object is to set forth how shamefully the Jews had abused the favor of God, and how unjustly they had despised it. And yet he speaks as God's minister; for God not only governed that people himself, but also endued with the power of his Spirit many ministers, who undertook the office of shepherds.

He then says, that he came (and what is said properly belongs to God) to the people and demanded a reward, Give me, he says, a reward; if not, forbear [295] He expresses here the highest indignation, as though one upbraided the wickedness and ingratitude of his neighbor and said, ``Own my kindness, if you please; if not, let it perish: I care not; I see that you are wholly worthless and altogether unworthy of being so liberally treated: I therefore make no account of thy compensations; but at the same time it behaves thee to consider how much thou art indebted to me.'' So now does God in high displeasure speak here: ``Give me at least a reward, that I may not have served you for nothing: you have misused my labor, I have borne with many wrongs and annoyances in ruling you; what is to be the compensation for my solicitude and care? I indeed make no account of a reward, for I am not a mercenary.'' He then adds, that they gave him thirty silverings [296] He mentions this no doubt as a mean price, intimating, that they wished by such a small sum to compensate for the many and inestimable favors of God; as when one hires a swineherd or a clown, he gives a paltry sum as his wages; so the Jews, as the Prophet says, acted towards God. At the same time by the mean price, a suitable reward only to a clown, he means those frivolous things by which the Jews thought to satisfy God: for we know how diligent they were in performing their ceremonies, as though indeed these were a compensation that was of any value with God! He requires integrity of heart, and he gives himself to us, that he may in return have us as his own. [297] This then was the price of labor which the Lord had deserved. It would have been a suitable reward had the Jews devoted themselves wholly to him in obedience to his word. But what did they do? They sedulously performed ceremonies and other frivolous things. This

[295] Drusius gives the sense, "Nihil date — give nothing;" and Jerome, "Aperte renute — openly refuse." — Ed.

[296] "Rate my labors as a true shepherd. And they rated it contemptuously; thirty pieces of silver being the price of a slave. Exodus 21:32." — Newcome.

[297] So Grotius says, "Villa haec merces significat victimas et ritus sine pietate solida, — This means reward signifies victims and ceremonies without real piety." — Ed.

then was a sordid reward, as though they sought to put him off with the reward of a swineherd.

Hence he adds, Jehovah said to me, throw it to the potter. ``This truly is my reward! Cast it to the potter, that he may get some bricks or coverings to repair the temple; if there are any parts of the temple dilapidated, let the potter get thereby some bricks, or let any humble artisan have such a price for himself.'' But he afterwards speaks ironically when he says, the magnificence and the glory of the price at which he had been estimated! ``This is, forsooth! the magnificence of my price, though I had endured many toils! they now deal with me as with some mean swineherd, though I was their Lord and Shepherd: since then they seek thus craftily to satisfy me, and reproachfully offer me a paltry reward, and as it were degrade my glory and spit in my face, Cast, cast it, he says, to the potter;'' that is, let them repair the temple, in which they delight so much as if they were in heaven: for the temple is their idol; but God will be never nigh them while they act thus hypocritically with him. ``Let them then repair the breaches of the temple and pay the price to the potter, for I will not suffer a price so unworthy of my majesty to be obtruded so disgracefully on me.''

We now then apprehend the meaning of the Prophet: and first we must bear in mind what I have stated, that here is described how irreclaimable had been the wickedness of the people: though rejected by God, when he had broken his rod, they yet esteemed as nothing the favors which they had experienced. How so? because they thought that they performed an abundant service to God, when they worshipped him by external frivolities; for ceremonies without a real sense of religion are frivolous puerilities in God's presence. What then the Prophet now urges is, that the Jews wilfully buried God's benefits, by which he had nevertheless so bound them to himself that they could not be released. And to the same purpose is what follows, Cast it to the potter: for he testifies that the price was of no value, nay, that he abominated such a reward as men paid hint when they dealt with him in such a reproachful manner; for as he says in Isaiah, it was a weariness to him ---

``I am disgusted with your festal days; why do you daily tread the pavement of my temple?'' (Isaiah 1:12,13;)

and again he says,

``He who slays an ox is the same as he who kills a man.''
(Isaiah 66:3.)

God in these places shows, as here by Zechariah, that these sacrifices which ungodly men and hypocrites offer to him, without a right feeling of religion, are the greatest abominations to him, --- why? Because it is the highest indignity which the wicked call offer, which is as it were to spit in his face, when they compare him to a potter or a swineherd, and think nothing of the reward which he deserves, and that is, to consecrate and really to devote themselves wholly to him without any dissimulation. When therefore men trifle with God and think that he is delighted with frivolous puerilities, they compare him, as I have said, to a swineherd, or to some low or common workman; and this is an indignity which he cannot bear, and

for which he manifests hero by his Prophet his high displeasure. [298]

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou ceases not, though provoked by our many sins, to discharge the office of a good and most faithful shepherd, and as thou continues in various ways to testify that Christ watches over us as one who has undertaken the care of our safety, --- O grant, that we may be touched with the feeling of true repentance, and so profit under thy scourges, that by considering thy judgments, we may be really humbled under and mighty hand, and so submit to thee, that finding us teachable and obedient, thou mayest continue to rule us to the end, until after having been protected from all harms by the pastoral staff of thine only-begotten Son, we shall at length reach that blessed rest, which has been procured for us by his blood. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Fifty-ninth

Zechariah 11:14

14. Then I cut asunder mine other staff, even Bands, that I might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel.

14. Et fregi virgam meam alteram, nempe collectionis, ad dissipandam fraternitatem in ter Iehudah et inter Israel.

There is here set before us the extreme vengeance of God in scattering his people, so that there would be no longer any union between the children of Abraham. We have seen that the Prophet took two staves or crooks to execute the office of a shepherd in ruling the people. The first staff he said was Beauty, because God had omitted nothing necessary to produce the best order of things. Now when this blessed mode of ruling was trodden under foot, then soon after followed the scattering of the people: and this is the reason why the Prophet says, that he broke the other rod, or his crook. We then see that this people by their ingratitude at length justly deserved to be left without any regular form of government, and also without any union.

As to the word {חבלים}, chebelim, we have before said that what the Rabbis teach us, that it means ``destroyers,'' does not comport with the passage. But why should Zechariah say here that the rod was broken, that there should be no more union or fraternity between the kingdom of Judah and the ten tribes? We have already said, that this word by changing the points may have the meaning which has been mentioned; for {חבל}, chebel, signifies a rope or binding. We must also bear in mind, that this is an instance of ``last first'' ({ὕστερον} {πρότερον};) for he told us before that God, bidding adieu to the people, demanded his reward; this then ought to have been first mentioned: but this inversion of order is common in Hebrew. This verse then we are to read, as though it was placed before the last mission, by which God

[298] These two verses are quoted in Matthew 27:9,10. On this subject see the Translator's Preface prefixed to this Volume. Blayney needlessly labors to reconcile the wording of the two passages. The quotation is clearly, like many others, one of accommodation, or of likeness. The "price" here is evidently that for labor; but the "price" in Matthew is for blood. There is a similarity, and not identity, in the two cases: and the general meaning, and not the words are to be regarded. For "Prophesies," as Marckius observes, are often quoted in the New Testament, not according to the expressions, [{κατὰ} {το} {ῥητὸν}], but according to the sense or meaning, [{κατὰ} {τὴν} {διάνοιαν}], accompanied with some illustration of the meaning derived from the event.'' --- Ed.

laid aside the office of a shepherd. [299]

I will come now to the passage in Matthew; for after having told us that the thirty pieces of silver were cast away by Judah, and that by them the Potter's Field was bought, he adds, that this prediction of the Prophet was fulfilled. He does not indeed repeat the same words, but it is quite clear, that this passage was quoted,

``They gave,'' he says, ``the thirty silvering, the price of the valued, whom they of the children of Israel have valued.''
(Matthew 27:9.)

In substance then there is no doubt an agreement between the words of Matthew and those of the Prophet. But we must hold this principle, --- that Christ was the true Jehovah from the beginning. As then the Son of God is the same in essence with the Father, and is with him the only true God, it is no wonder that what the Prophet figuratively expressed as having been done under the law by the ancient people, has been done to him literally in his own person: for as they had given to God thirty pieces of silver, a sordid price, as his just reward, so he complained that the labor he undertook in ruling them, was unjustly valued; and when Christ was sold for thirty pieces of silver, it was a visible specimen of this prophecy exhibited in his own person.

When Matthew says, that Christ was valued by the children of Israel, he charges the chosen people with impiety. The article {ὁι}, is to be here understood. The expression is indeed, {ἀπὸ} {ὑιων} {Ισραὴλ}; but the sentence is to be taken in this sense, --- that he was valued at so low a price, not by barbarous nations, but by the very people who were of the children of Israel and of the seed of Abraham, as though he had said, ``This wrong has been offered to God, not by strangers, but by a people whom he had chosen and adopted as his peculiar possession; and this wickedness is therefore less excusable.''

Then Matthew adds,

``They gave it for the Potter's Field,
as the Lord had commanded me.'' Matthew 27:7-10.

This part also well agrees with the prophecy. It is indeed certain that this money was not designedly given to buy a field, that the Jews might obey God; but we know that God executes his purposes by means of the wicked, though they neither think nor wish to do such a thing. But what does Zechariah say? Cast it, he says, to the potter; he does not say ``To the field of the potter.'' But we have explained for what purpose God commanded the thirty silvering to be cast to the potter; it was, that he might get bricks or tiles to repair the temple; and this was said in contempt, or by way of ridicule. Such also was the visible symbol of this as to the purchase of the

[299] There seems to be no necessity for this. The order is consistent as it is. The breaking of the first rod was the relinquishing of the ruling office; and the breaking of the second, which happened after the contemptuous price or reward had been offered, was the sending of an awful judgment — universal discord, instead of the union before preserved. The breaking of the brotherhood between Judah and Israel has been variously understood. Grotius and Newcome refer to past history, the separation of the ten tribes from that of Judah; but this cannot be understood here. Marckius, Henry, Scott, and Henderson agree in the main with Calvin, and consider that the interal discords are meant which prevailed among the Jews, who became united after their return from Babylon under one government, though many of them were descendants of the ten tribes. “When the staff of beauty,” says Henry, “is broken, the staff of bands will not hold long. An unchurched people will be soon an undone people.” — Ed.

field; for the potter, the seller of the field, knew not what he was doing; the Scribes and Pharisees thought nothing of fulfilling what had been predicted. But that it might be made evident that Christ was the true God who had from the beginning spoken by the Prophet, God, by setting the thing before their eyes, intended that there should be a visible fact or transaction, that he might as it were draw the attention of the Jews to what is here said. The Prophet proceeds, -

Zechariah 11:15, 16

15. And the LORD said unto me, Take unto thee yet the instruments of a foolish shepherd.

15. Et dixit Iehova mihi, Adhuc sume tibi vas patoris stulti. [300]

16. For, lo, I will raise up a shepherd in the land, which shall not visit those that be cut off, neither shall seek the young one, nor heal that that is broken, nor feed that that standeth still: but he shall eat the flesh of the fat, and tear their claws in pieces.

16. Quia ecce ego constituo pastorem in terra; quod excisum est no visitabit, quod juvenile est no requieret, quod confractum est non sanabit, quod stat non pascet; et carnem pinguis comedet, et ungulas eorum confringet.

Here the Prophet teaches us, that when God shall renounce the care of his people there will be some weak form of government; but it is evident that God would no longer perform the office of a shepherd; as though he had said, that the people would be so deserted, that they would yet think themselves to be still under the protection of God, as we see to be the case among the Papists, who proudly make a boasting of this kind --- ``The Church is never forsaken by God.'' Though the truth of God has been long ago completely buried, they yet hold that it is still the true Church, a Church filled with impious superstitions! As then the Papists glory in the title only, and are content with it, so the Jews, we know, boasted of their privileges; and these were their weapons when they sought to oppose and contend with the Apostles --- ``What! are not we the heritage of God? has he not promised that his sanctuary would be perpetual among us? is not the sacerdotal unction a sure and infallible proof of his favor?'' As then the Jews made use of these foolish boastings against the Apostles, so also at this day the Papists hide all infamy under the title of Church. The same thing Zechariah here means by saying that he by God's command took the instrument of a foolish shepherd [301]

[300] Rendered "[{ἄπειρος}], inexperienced,'' by Septuagint, ``[{ἄφρονος}], unwise,'' by Aq., Sym., and Theod., and ``stupid,'' or ``stolid,'' by the Targum. The word means gross, stupid, foolish; but as Henderson justly observes, foolish often means wicked in Scripture; and what is said of this shepherd, proves that his folly was his wickedness. Dathius renders it ``mali, evil,'' or wicked. --- Ed

[301] This part determines the character of the whole vision; for the whole chapter is a vision, the first part being a denunciation of judgment executed in the final overthrow of the nation, and the remainder, from verse 4th to the end, being a symbolical vision, representing the dealings of God with the Jews in the interval, from the time referred to in the last chapter to the coming of the Messiah, or to the destruction of the Jewish polity by the Romans. Henderson seems disposed to regard Herod as "the foolish shepherd;" in that case the vision extends only to the advent of Christ; but if we regard this shepherd, as Blayney does, as denoting a succession of tyrannical rulers, then the vision extends to the very overthrow predicted in the three first verses of the chapter. This view, which is that of Calvin, removes all difficulties, and affords a proof of the falsity of the opinion advanced by Mede — that this portion of Zechariah belongs to Jeremiah. That the Prophet personates God here, or the Messiah, as the ruler of the Jewish nation, previous to his appearance in the flesh, is evident from the fact that God identifies, as it were, himself with the Prophet. (verse 8 and 10.) God's dealings with the Jews are

The word {כלי}, cali, means in Hebrew any kind of instrument. Some regard it to be a bag with holes, but this is an unsuitable interpretation. By instrument, Zechariah, I have no doubt, means the implements of a shepherds by which he proves himself to be in that office. But he calls him at the same time a foolish shepherd, that we may allow that he was a shepherd only in disguise. The term shepherd is given here by way of concession, according to the usual manner of scripture; and we also at this day concede sometimes the name of Church to the Papists; and we farther concede the name of pastors to their milted bishops, but improperly. So also does Zechariah in this place; though he speaks of a shadow and thing of nought, yet he says that there would be shepherds in Judea; and he adds the reason --- Because God would thus punish that wicked and ungrateful people: ---

Behold, he says, I will set a shepherd in the land. God had now, as we have said, renounced the office of a shepherd; but he afterwards set over them wolves, and thieves, and robbers, instead of shepherds, that is, when he executed his dreadful judgment on the Jews: and he shows at the same time what sort of shepherds they would be who in future should possess power over them.

They were to be such as would not look after what had been cut off. Some consider the word {הנכחדות}, enecachedut, as signifying the sick sheep; but they are in my judgment mistaken; for careful shepherds seek what is lost, or what has disappeared from the flock; and this is what Zechariah means, for he says, he will not visit, that is, he will look after what has been cut off from the flock. Then he says, he will not seek {הנער}, enor, the young. Some explain this of fat lambs; but others more correctly of those which are tender, not as yet accustomed to follow the shepherd; for sheep by long use keep from going astray, but lambs are more apt to wander from the flock, and are easily scattered here and there. This is the reason why Zechariah makes it one of the duties of a good shepherd to seek what is yet young. He adds in the third place, the sick, What is wounded, he says, he will not heal: and lastly, he will not feed what stands, that is, what is sound. The word literally is, to stand; but it means full vigor or strength. What then is vigorous and sound he will not feed. He then says, The flesh, of the fat he will devour, yea, he will break their hoofs. By these words he amplifies the cruelty of the shepherd; for he will not be satisfied with the fat flesh, without breaking also the bones and the hoofs, as though his barbarity would exceed that of wolves and wild beasts.

We now then see the import of this prophecy: and it seems to have been added, that the Jews might not flatter themselves with an external and evanescent form of government, after having departed from God, and after the covenant which he had made with that nation, having been also renounced by him, so that he should be no

symbolized in this vision in a way similar to what is done, as to the history of the Church, in the visions granted to John; the sticks, the breaking of them, the cutting off of three shepherds, the price or reward, and the foolish shepherd, are symbolical, setting forth the various dealings of God with their people, and their conduct towards him. As to the price, the very symbol was afterwards strikingly exemplified in the history of the Messiah. The Prohet is made to represent God in his two characters — as a beneficial ruler, producing order and unity, and as a judicial ruler, employing wicked and cruel tyrants to punish a refractory and rebellious people. "God commanded him (the Prophet) to perform a real action, and in a waking state, which was to be an intimation and a sign of that which was to happen in God's dealings with Israel." Abarbanel, quoted by M'Caul, in his translation of Kimchi on Zechariah.

longer their Father, or Guardian, or Shepherd. Hypocrites, we know, do not easily put off their obstinacy; though God's vengeance should be manifest, yet we see how they harden themselves, especially when they can cover their wickedness under some false pretense, a striking example of which we observe among the Papists. We now then perceive the design of the Holy Spirit, when the Prophet is bid to assume the character, and take the implements, of a foolish shepherd.

If any one objects, and says that this was not suitable to a true Prophet of God, the answer is plain --- the Prophet deviated not from the right course of his calling, though he assumed the character of a foolish shepherd, an instance of which we have already seen in Hosea, who was commanded to take a harlot, and to beget spurious children from one who had been infamous in her character. (Hosea 1:2.) As this was a vision presented to Hosea, it does not follow that he did anything disgraceful, so as to prevent him from exercising the office of a holy teacher. So also now, God simply shows to us what would be the fixture condition of that reprobate people.

It must further be noticed, that when anything of a right and good government remains in the external form, there is no reason to conclude from this that God is the ruler, for, as we have already said, it is a ridiculous and senseless glorying when men are inflated and take pride in mere titles or names of distinction. Let us then take heed, that those who bear rule be rightly called by God, and let them afterwards discharge their office faithfully, otherwise they may be a hundred times called pastors, after having attained this degree of honor, and be after all no better than wolves and robbers; for no one is a true pastor whom the Lord does not rule by his Spirit, and who is not his minister, and no ungodly pastors, however they may assume the title, can be called the ministers of God, when he has already, as we see here, forsaken the people.

It must at the same time be observed, that it happens not except through the just judgment of God, that things grow worse and worse, and at length become wholly degenerated; and those who loudly boast and seek to be esteemed by all as pastors, are altogether senseless, for God has not appointed them, and the whole filth of the Papal clergy is at this day a manifest evidence of God's wrath and indignation, for he thus justly punishes the contempt of his word, and that perverseness by which the world thus awfully provoked him. Though God has been graciously calling the whole world to himself, we yet see how his favor has been rejected, and we also see how almost all have gone on in their obstinacy. God had indeed in his great goodness borne for some ages with this great wickedness, and when he began to punish the ungrateful, he did not break out to extreme vengeance, for he added to scourges heavier scourges, but at length he was constrained to make his wrath to flow like a deluge. Hence has arisen that dreadful confusion which is seen under the Papacy; and this is what the words of the Prophet mean when God declares here that foolish pastors would be set up by his command and through his power, as he would thus execute his judgment on the ungodly.

Now as the Prophet enumerates here those things which are inconsistent with the duty of a good shepherd, we may hence learn, on the other hand, what it is to rule the Church rightly and according to God's will, and also what are the attributes or

marks of a good pastor. Whosoever then would be owned as a good pastor in the Church, must visit those who have been cut off, seek the young, strive to heal the wounded, and feed well the sound and the vigorous; and he must also abstain from every kind of cruelty, and he must not be given to the indulgence of his appetite, nor regard gain, nor exercise any tyranny. Whosoever will thus conduct himself, will prove that he is really a true pastor. But what can be more preposterous than for those to be called pastors who have no flock under their care? who plunder, and gather, and accumulate what they afterward spend in dissipation?

As then it is quite evident, that all those under the Papacy who are called bishops, seek the office for no other end but that they may live sumptuously, without any care or labor, and indulge in pleasures, and also spend in the gratification of their lust what is unjustly got, --- as then they are known to be idlers and cruel tyrants, such as the Prophet here describes, do we not clearly see how childishly they boast of their hierarchy, and at the same time declare that they derive their origin from the Apostles? For what sort of successor to Peter or to Paul, is he who exercises the most barbarous tyranny, and who thinks himself not bound to take care of the flock? We then see that there is at this day under the Papacy a striking representation of what the Prophet says here; there is a certain form of government, but God is wholly separated from such a mask or phantom. But we must also bear in mind, that the world suffers merited punishment on account of its ingratitude, when it is thus cruelly and shamefully treated; for it is but just that they who will not bear the easy yoke of Christ, should be made subject to the power of the Devil, and be trodden under foot and disgracefully oppressed by tyrants. This is God's righteous judgment. The Church, we know, would not have been turned upside down had not the greater part rejected the doctrine of salvation, and shaken off all religion; hence God is in a manner constrained by so great and by such unbridled wantonness to renounce his office of a shepherd. It then follows ---

Zechariah 11:17

17. Woe to the idol shepherd that leaveth the flock! the sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye: his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened.

17. Heus pastor inutilis! deserens gregem! gladius super brachium ejus, et super oculum dextrum ejus; brachium ejus arescendo arescet, et oculus dexter ejus contrahendo contrahetur, (alii obscurando obscurabitur.)

In this verse the Prophet teaches us, that though God would inflict a deserved punishment on the Jews, yet the shepherds themselves would not escape his vengeance; and thus he reminds them, that even in such a confused and depressed state of things, he would still in some degree remember his covenant. He addresses the Shepherds themselves, for he speaks not of one, but of the whole number, as it has already been stated.

Woe to the baseless shepherd, he says; the word {אליל}, alil, means in Hebrew a thing of nought, and hence idols were called {אלילים}, alilim, nothings; ``Those useless shepherds,'' [302] he says, ``who forsake the flock.'' He again shows by an

[302] "Worthless shepherd," is the version of Newcome, and Henderson, and also of Drusius,

explicit term, that those whom he called shepherds were not worthy of so honorable a title. He then only concedes the name, for a shepherd who is not solicitous for the safety of his flock, clearly proves that he is really no shepherd. He then denounces on him a punishment, A sword, he says, on his right arm and on his right eye! By the sword he means any kind of punishment, by the arm is to be understood strength, and by the eye prudence. He means, ``God will punish thee both in soul and body, for his curse shall be on thy strength and on thine understanding.'' Hence he says, Dry up shall his arm. This seems not indeed to correspond with the metaphor of the sword, but it matters not, for the Prophet, as we have said, includes under that word every kind of punishment. Dry up then shall his arm, that is, all its vigor shall cease, so as to become like a piece of decayed wood; and his right eye, the soundness of his mind or his right understanding, shall by contracting be contracted; some read, shall be darkened; but the verb properly signifies, to wrinkle, as it appears from other places, and I can find no better way of expressing its meaning than by saying that the eye would be contracted. [303]

I have briefly explained the object of the Prophet, even that God would so punish the wickedness of the people, as not to allow those shepherds to escape whom he would employ as instruments in executing his vengeance. For though they were under the direction of divine power, we must yet hold this principle, that they had nothing in common with God; for mere ambition, avarice, and cruelty instigated them; and nothing was farther from their purpose than to obey God: but he extorted service from the unwilling and even the ignorant --- for what end? that he might render to the ungrateful, the wicked, and the perverse, in their own sinful ways, the reward which they deserved. We then see that the design of God's vengeance is just; and we also see that the instruments he employs are ungodly: there is therefore no reason for them to think that they shall be unpunished, because they accomplish God's purpose, for they do not intend any such thing.

We must also bear in mind, that when the extreme rigour of God prevails, there still remains some evidence of his favor, for some seed, though few in number, is still perpetuated; for the Church is never so completely abolished as not to leave any remnants, for whose safety God is pleased to provide when he executes his vengeance, inasmuch as he stretches forth his hand at the same time against the ministers he has employed, because they had cruelly abused their power. So also at this day the milted bishops shall be made to know how precious to God is the safety of his Church; for though almost all the people and almost every individual are worthy of the most tyrannical cruelty, yet we know that some are found in that labyrinth for whom God has a care. Though then they who at this day possess power under the Papacy think themselves innocent, while they are robbers and wolves, they shall yet

Bochart, Piscator, and Marckius. Our version follows Jerome, who renders it “idolum — idol.” Parkhurst considers it in the sense of nought, nothing, vain, nothing-worth, and refers to Job 13:4, and Jeremiah 14:14. — Ed.

[303] To render the metaphor consistent, Dathius has rendered [{,[{חרב not sword, but drought or dryness, which it sometimes means. Then the verse would be --- 17. Woe to the worthless shepherd, Who forsakes the flock! A drought shall be on his arm, And on the eye of his right hand: (i e. on his right eye:) His arm, withering it shall wither; And his right eye, shrinking it shall shrink. Both Newcome and Henderson render the last line as in our version; but restraint, or contraction, or shrinking is the idea included in the verb. When there are no humors sufficient for the eye, it contracts, it shrinks, and this corresponds with the drought. --- Ed.

find that God is a righteous judge, who will visit their abominable cruelty: for the disorder of the Church is not its destruction, as God ever preserves some remnant.

We also see that the whole strength of men depends on the grace of God; and farther, that a sound mind proceeds from his Spirit: for since it is he who takes away from men both their strength and a right judgment, we hence conclude that to give these things is also in his power. Let men then know that in order to possess due courage and strength, they are to rely on the hidden power of God; and let them also know that in order to discern what is useful and profitable, they must be governed by his Spirit; and let those especially who bear rule be assured of this, that when they exercise power in peace, it is God's singular gift, and that when they rightly govern their subjects, and are endued with sound discretion, it is wholly to be ascribed to an influence from above.

But it may be asked, how can this harmonise --- that those who were before useless are deprived of understanding and strength? To this I answer --- that it is the same as though the Prophet had said, that the baseness of him who was previously an useless shepherd would be made conspicuous to all. For however deficient they might have been in their office, they yet for a time deceived the simple multitude; nay, we see at this day how the milted bishops and abbots and their whole company by their delusive splendor, dazzle the eyes of most men: they believe that the Pope is the vicar of God, and the rest the successors of the apostles! But the Prophet here testifies, that when the ripened time shall come, their shameful conduct shall be made evident, so that all shall treat them with contempt, and that they shall become an abomination to all. Though then they may be counted wise and held in admiration, or at least in honor, yet Zechariah threatens them with the loss of both; for God's curse lies on them, on their arms, and on their right eyes. This is the import of the passage. I shall begin the next chapter tomorrow.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast hitherto so patiently endured, not only our sloth and folly, but also our ingratitude and perverseness, --- O grant, that we may hereafter render ourselves submissive and obedient to thee; and as thou hast been pleased to set over us the best of shepherds, even thine only-begotten Son, cause us willingly to attend to him, and to suffer ourselves to be gently ruled by him; and though thou mayest find in us what may justly provoke thy wrath, yet restrain extreme severity, and so correct what is sinful in us, as to continue to the end our Shepherd, until we shall at length, under thy guidance, reach thy heavenly kingdom; and thus do thou keep us in thy fold and under the guidance of thy pastoral staff, that at length being separated from the goats, we may enjoy that blessed inheritance which has been obtained for us by the blood of thy beloved Son. Amen.

Chapter 12

Lecture One Hundred and Sixtieth

Zechariah 12

Z

Zechariah 12:1

1. The burden of the word of the Lord for Israel, saith the Lord, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him.

1. Onus verbi Iehovae super Israel: Dicit Iehova, qui expandit coelos, et fundavit terram, et formavit spiritum hominis in medio ejus.

The inscription seems not to agree with what follows, for he does not denounce any evil on the chosen people in this chapter, but, on the contrary, comforts the miserable, and promises that God would provide for the safety of his Church. Since then Zechariah speaks only of God's favor and aid, he seems to have mentioned burden here improperly or unreasonably; for {משא}, mesha, we know, is rightly to be taken for a threatening prophecy. It might indeed be said, that he promises that God would so deliver his Church as to teach it at the same time that it would be subject to many evils and trials: but I rather think that the Prophet's design was different, even to show that the Israelites, who had preferred exile to God's favor, would be punished for their sloth and ingratitude, because it was through their own fault that they were not again united in one body, and that they did not rightly worship God in their own country. Interpreters have heedlessly passed over this, as though it had nothing to do with the subject: but except this be borne in mind, what is read in this chapter will be altogether without meaning. I therefore consider that the Prophet here reproves those Israelites who had rejected what they had long desired, when it was offered to them from above and beyond all hope: for nothing was so much wished for by them as a free return to their own country; and we also see how ardently all the Prophets had prayed for restoration. As then the Israelites, given to ease, and pleasures, and their worldly advantages, had counted as nothing the permission given them to return, that they might again be gathered under God's protection, it was a base ingratitude. Hence the Prophet here reproves them, and shows that their success

would be far otherwise than they imagined.

We must also observe, that those who were dispersed in different parts, were retained by their torpidity, because they did not think that the state of the people would continue; for they saw, as they had before found, that Judea was surrounded by inveterate enemies, and also that they would not be a people sufficiently strong to repel the assaults of those around them; for they had already been accustomed to bear all things, and though they might have had some courage, they had completely lost it, having been oppressed by so long a servitude. Since then the ten tribes entertained these ideas, they did not avail themselves of the present kindness of God. Thus it was, that they wholly alienated themselves from the Church of God, and renounced as it were of their own accord that covenant, on which was founded the hope of eternal salvation. [304]

What then does Zechariah teach us in this chapter? Even that God would be the guardian of Jerusalem, to defend it against all violence, and that though it might be surrounded by nations for the purpose of assailing it, he would not yet suffer it to be overcome: and we shall see that many other things are stated here; but it is enough to touch now on the main point, that God would not forsake that small company and the weak and feeble remnant; and that however inferior the Jews might be to their enemies, yet the power of God alone would be sufficient to defend and keep them.

If it be then now asked, why the Prophet calls the word he received a burden on Israel? The answer is plainly this, that the Israelites were now as it were rotting among foreign nations without any hope of deliverance, having refused to be gathered under God's protection, though he had kindly and graciously invited them all to return. Since then God had effected nothing, by stretching forth his hands, being ready to embrace them again, this was the reason for the burden of which Zechariah speaks; for they would be touched with grief and with envy when they saw their brethren protected by God's aid, and that they themselves were without any hope of deliverance. In short, there is an implied contrast between the ten tribes and the house of Judah; and this is evident from the context. Having now ascertained the Prophet's design, we shall proceed to the words.

The burden, he says, of the word of Jehovah on Israel: Say does Jehovah who expanded the heavens, etc. Zechariah thus exalts God in order to confirm the authority of this prophecy; for no doubt the creation of heaven and earth and of man is here mentioned on account of what is here announced. We have elsewhere seen similar declarations; for when anything is said difficult to be believed, what is promised will have no effect on us, except the infinite power of God be brought to our minds. God then, that he may gain credit to his promises, bids us to raise up our eyes to the heavens and carefully to consider his wonderful workmanship, and also to turn our eyes down to the earth, where also his ineffable power is apparent; and, in the third place, he calls our attention to the consideration of our own nature. Since then what

[304] Many of the Jews at this time were not returned. There were especially two returns — the first under Zerubbabel in the year before Christ 536; the second under Ezra in the year 457, seventy-nine years after the first. Now the date of this prophecy in our Bibles is 587, fifty-one years after the first return, and twenty-eight years before the second. Nehemiah, through whose influence the walls of Jerusalem were built and a great reform produced, returned about eleven years after Ezra. — Ed.

Zechariah says could hardly be believed, he prescribes to the Jews the best remedy --- they were to raise upwards their eyes, and then to turn them to the earth. The expanse of the heavens constrains us to admire him; for however stupid we may be, we cannot look on the sun, and the moon and stars, and on the whole bright expanse above, without some and even strong emotions of fear and of reverence. Since then God exceeds all that men can comprehend in the very creation of the world, what should hinder us from believing even that which seems to us in no way probable? for it is not meet for us to measure God's works by what we can understand, for we cannot comprehend, no, not even the hundredth part of them, however attentively we may apply all the powers of our minds.

Nor is it yet a small matter when he adds, that God had formed the spirit of man; for we know that we live; the body of itself would be without any strength or motion, were it not endued with life; and the soul which animates the body is invisible. Since then experience proves to us the power of God, which is not yet seen by our eyes, why should we not expect what he promises, though the event may appear incredible to us, and exceed all that we can comprehend. We now then understand why the Prophet declares, that God expanded thee heavens, and founded the earth, and formed the spirit of man [305] By saying ``in the midst of him'', he means, that the spirit dwells within; for the body, we allow, is as it were its tabernacle. Let us proceed -

Zechariah 12:2

2. Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem.

2. Ecce ego pono Ierusalem postem contritionis (vel, calicem veneni, aut, mortiferum; alii vertunt, crapulae) omnibus populis per circuitum; atque etiam super Iehudah, erit in obsidionem contra Ierusalem.

Zechariah begins here to teach us what I have briefly explained, that Jerusalem would be under the protection of God, who would render it safe and secure against all enemies. But he uses here figurative terms, which make the point more evident. He says, that Jerusalem would be a threshold of bruising, or breaking. The word {סף}, saph, means a threshold almost everywhere in Scripture. But some think that it means here a cup, and then they translate {רעל}, rol, drunkenness, or fury. But as this word also means breaking, it is not unsuitable to say that Jerusalem is here called a threshold at which people stumble, so that he who comes against this

[305] It is usual to render the verbs here in the present tense. They are participles in Hebrew, which may often be rendered in the past tense. Dathius and Blayney so render them, "stretched out — founded — formed." The verse then would be as follows — The burden of the word of Jehovah on Israel, Saith Jehvovah, who expounded the heavens, And founded the earth, And formed the spirit of man within him. Though Marckius objects to the view taken by Calvin of the first line, yet the literal rendering, as given above, will admit of no other. It is a "burden" on, [{על},] Israel. It is true that ``burden'' may not always mean a judgment, but a weighty and important prediction; yet when followed by on, it can mean nothing else. See 1 Kings 13:29, and 2 Kings 9:25. It means a judgment too when another word comes after it, as in 9:25. It means a judgment too when another word comes after it, as, ``The burden of Babylon,'' Isaiah 13:1. It is therefore rendered here improperly ``Prophecy'' by Newcome, and ``sentence'' by Henderson. It is not indeed necessary to confine the word ``Israel'' to the ten tribes, for it is often used in a general sense, denoting the descendants of Israel generally, when the word ``Judah'' is not introduced. The persons referred to were, it may be, those who continued in exile, many of whom returned afterwards with Ezra, though I think they were the people of the land. We ought to remember that Zechariah prophesied between the two returns, and that though the temple was built at this time, yet Jerusalem was not protected by walls, and continued so till the time of Nehemiah, about 90 years after the first return. --- Ed.

threshold either breaks a bone or receives some other injury. At the same time the Prophet seems to express something more, that whosoever ascended to attack Jerusalem would meet with a stumbling block, by which he might have his legs broken or bruised. The meaning then is, that access to Jerusalem would be closed up, so that enemies would not overcome it, though they reached the walls and the gates, for they would stumble, as it is said, at the threshold.

If the other rendering be approved, the sense would be suitable, --- that all the ungodly, while devising schemes against God's Church, would be inebriated by their own counsels; yea, that their drink would be deadly to them: for the passions of men produce effects like drunkenness. When therefore the ungodly gather their forces against the Church, it is the same as though they were greedily swallowing down wine; for the drunken meet together to indulge in excesses. The meaning then would be, --- that this immoderate drinking would be fatal to the nations. But I prefer the former view, --- that though the gates of the holy city were open, or even an easy access were made through the walls, yet God would on every side be a defense, so that enemies would stumble, as we have said, at the very threshold and bruise themselves. And this promise was very necessary then, for Jerusalem was exposed to the assaults of all, as it could not have defended itself by moats or walls or mounds: but the Lord here promises that it would be a threshold of bruising

He then adds, Also against Judah, or over Judah, it shall be during the siege against Jerusalem. The Prophet, as I think, extends the promise to the whole land, as though he had said, ``Though the compass of Jerusalem should not contain all the inhabitants, yet they shall be everywhere safe; for God will take them under his protection.'' I wonder why some interpreters have omitted the preposition {על}, ol, and have translated thus, ``Judah also shall be in the siege against Jerusalem:'' and they elicit a meaning wholly different, even that some of the Jews themselves would become perfidious, who would not spare their brethren and friends, but become hostile to them, and unite their forces to those of heathen nations. But I consider the meaning to be the reverse of this, --- that when Jerusalem shall be besieged, the Lord will put impediments everywhere, which will hinder and prevent the assaults of enemies. When God, he says, shall defend the holy city, even this very thing, (for I apply this phrase to God's protection,) even this very thing shall be through the whole land; as though he had said, ``God will not only be the guardian of the city alone, but also of the whole of the holy land.'' [306] Now this must have sharply goaded the Israelites, seeing that they were excluded from having God's aid, inasmuch asthey had not thought proper to return to their own country when liberty was freely given them. It

[306] This has been found a difficult verse. The former part, as given in our version, "I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling," etc., has been adopted by most, Drusius, Grotius, Marckius, Newcome, and Henderson, only some of them adopt "intoxication" instead of "trembling." The word [{סף means both a threshold and a bowl or a cup. The Septuagint have taken the former sense, and the Targum the latter: but as [{רעל}] means shaking, trembling, confusion, occasioned by inebriety, it is more consistent to take the latter sense. The latter part cannot certainly be construed according to our version, which is that of Piscator. Newcome's rendering is literal, and according to the sense given by Jerome, Drusius, Castalio, Grotius, and Marckius; and it is the following --- And for Judah shall it (the cup) be, In the siege against Jerusalem. This implies that Judah would turn traitorous to Jerusalem. It is somewhat singular that many MSS. read ``shall be'' in the feminine gender, ,[{תהיה}] and ,[{סף}] when it means a cup or bowl, is of that gender. Dathius proposes another view. He takes [{מצור}] agreeably to the Septuagint, [{περιοχη}], in the sense of a fortress, stronghold, or defense; and then the version would be, And also with regard to Judah, He will be for a defense to Jerusalem. But the most natural and obvious meaning is the previous one. --- Ed.

follows ---

Zechariah 12:3

3. And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it.

3. Et erit in die illa, Ponam Ierusalem lapidem onerosum cunctis populis; quisque portabit concisione concidetur (vel, laceratione lacerabitur,) et congregabuntur contra eam omnes gentes terrae (sic autem resolvi debet oratio, Licet congregentur adversus eam cunctae gentes terrae.)

Zechariah adds here another metaphor, which is very apposite; for when the ungodly made war against the holy city, the object was not to reduce it only to subjection, or to impose a tribute or a tax, or simply to rule over it, --- what then? to cut it off entirely and obliterate its name. Since then such a cruelty would instigate enemies to assail the holy city, the Prophet here interposes and declares that it would be to them a most burdensome stone. He thus compares the enemies of Jerusalem to a man who attempts to take up a stone when he is too weak to do so. He then injures his own strength; for when a man tries to do what is too much for him, he loosens some of his joints, or breaks his sinews. The Prophet then means, that though many nations conspired against Jerusalem, and made every effort to overthrow it, they should yet at length find it to be a weight far too heavy for them: they should therefore break or lacerate their own arms, for their sinews would be broken by over-exertion. [307] Some explain the last clause more frigidly, ``In tearing he will be torn,'' as when any one takes up a rough stone, he tears his own hands. But the Prophet, I have no doubt, meant to set forth something more serious; and each clause would thus correspond much better; for as we have said, the object of the ungodly was to remove Jerusalem, so as not to leave a stone upon a stone: but God declares here that it would be too heavy a burden, so that they would find their own strength broken in attempting inconsiderately to remove what could not be transferred from its own place.

Now the reason for this prophecy is, because God was the founder of Jerusalem, as it is said,

``Its foundations are in the holy mountains, love does the Lord the gates of Sion,'' (Psalm 87:1,2;)

and again it is said,

``Jehovah in the midst of her, she shall not be moved.''
(Psalm 46:5.)

We must also remember what we have observed in the last verse: for though the heavens are in continual motion, they yet retain their positions, and do not fall into disorder; but were the heavens and the earth blended together, still Jerusalem, founded by God's hand and exempt from the common lot of men, and whose condition was peculiar, would remain firm and unchangeable. We hence see why the

[307] Literally it is, — All her lifters, cut they shall be cut, or, wounded they shall be wounded. The whole verse is as follows, — And it shall be in that day, That I will make Jerusalem A burdensome stone to all nations; All her lifters, wounded they shall be wounded, When gathered against her Shall be all the people of the land. — Ed.

Prophet says, that there would be no other issue to the ungodly, while attempting to overthrow Jerusalem, than to wound and tear themselves.

He then adds, And assemble against them shall all nations. This, as we have said, was added in order to show, that though enemies flocked together from every quarter, God would yet be superior to them. This clause then contains an amplification, to encourage the faithful to continue in their hope with invincible constancy, though they saw themselves surrounded by hosts of enemies. It afterwards follows ---

Zechariah 12:4

4. In that day, saith the Lord, I will smite every horse with astonishment, and his rider with madness: and I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah, and will smite every horse of the people with blindness.

4. Die illo, inquit Iehova, percutiam omnem equum stupore, et sesso rem ejus amentia; et super domum Iehudah aperiam oculos meos, et omnem equum populorum percutiam caecitate.

He pursues here the same subject, but in other words, --- that multiplicity of means is in God's hand, by which he can drive away and break down the fury of enemies. By the words horse and its rider, the Prophet, stating a part for the whole, means whatever is strong, and intimates that it can be easily overcome by divine power

He says first, I will smite every horse with stupor [308] Military strength, we know, is in horses and horsemen; but he says that the horses would be stunned, and the horsemen seized as it were with madness, so that they would destroy themselves, and could do no harm to the Church. He then confirms what he said before --- that though the whole world conspired against the Church, there would yet be sufficient power in God to repel and check all their assaults and he mentions stupor, madness, and blindness, that the faithful might know that God can by hidden means either destroy or put to flight all their enemies. Though then God fights not with drawn swords, nor uses the common mode of warfare, yet the Prophet says, that he is prepared with other means to lay prostrate their enemies; for even the most powerful in the world cannot proceed so far as to confound their enemies by blindness and madness; but the Prophet here shows, that though no way appears to us by which God may deliver us, we are yet to entertain firm hope, for he can by his breath destroy all enemies, as he can render then blind, and take from them understanding, and wisdom, and strength.

Then he adds, I will open mine eyes on the house of Judah. A reason is here given why all enemies would be smitten with stupor and madness, because the Lord would have a regard for his Church; for to open the eyes means the same thing as to have a care for a thing. It had seemed good to God to neglect his people for a time, and this neglect was as it were an oblivion. Hence the saints often complain ``How longs wilt thou sleep! how long wilt thou close thine eyes! Look down, O Lord, and see.'' So in this place Zechariah means that God would yet care for his people, so as to subdue their enemies.

We may hence learn a useful doctrine --- that, in the first place, there is nothing

[308] "With astonishing astonishment," Newcome; "with consternation," Henderson; rather, "with stunness" or "stupefaction," a word more suitable to horses. — Ed.

better for us than to be gathered under the shadow of God's protection, however destitute of any fortress the Church may be, yea, were she to have innumerable enemies hostile to her, and to be without any strength to resist them. Though then the Church were thus grievously tried, and be in the midst of many dangers, and exposed even to death, let us learn from this passage that those are miserable indeed who through fear or cowardice separate themselves from her, and that they who call on God, and cast on him the care of their safety, shall be made blessed, though the whole world were mad against them, though the weapons of all nations were prepared for their ruin, and horses and horsemen were assembled to overwhelm them; for the defense of God is a sufficient protection to his Church. This is one thing. Then let us learn to exercise our faith, when God seems to cast us as it were between the teeth of wolves; for though he may not afford any visible aid, yet he knows how to deliver us, and possesses hidden means of help, which we may not perceive, because his purpose is to try our faith and our patience. And lastly, let us learn, that when God connives at our miseries, as though he had forgotten us, yet our hope, founded on him, can never be disappointed; for if we abide among his flock, he will at length open his eyes upon us, he will really show that he cares for our safety. It now follows ---

Zechariah 12:5

5. And the governors of Judah shall say in their heart, The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength in the LORD of hosts their God.

5. Et dicent duces Iehudah in cordibus suis, Fortitudo mihi (vel, robus) habitatores Ierusalem in Iehova exercituum Deo suo.

He still continues the same subject --- that however small and feeble the flock of God would be, it would yet have sufficient strength; for the Lord would stand on the side of those who fled to him. Though then Jerusalem was not as yet filled with citizens, and though there was but one city, yet Zechariah testifies that its strength would be invincible; but he speaks of the chiefs of Judah comparatively. Formerly, we know, it had a great number of men, and great armies were raised from that one tribe and the half tribe of Benjamin. Though then there were formerly many provinces, though the country was full of populous towns, yet almost Jerusalem alone had then begun to be inhabited: but the Prophet says here, that though the whole Church was gathered within the narrow bounds of one city, it would yet have sufficient strength to resist all the attacks of enemies.

Say then shall the chiefs of Judah; that is, though formerly the governors or commanders of thousands had forces in their several towns, yet now all would look to one city; for the land was nearly forsaken and without inhabitants; at the same time they were to entertain hope, for their strength was to be in the Lord. Some insert a conjunction, ``Strength will be to me and to the citizens of Jerusalem;'' but they pervert the meaning; for the Prophet meant to say in one sentence what I have stated --- that the eyes of all would be directed to one city only, and that yet there would be sufficient ground for hope and confidence, for they would become strong, not in themselves, but in their God.

There is a change of number, when he says, a strength to me, for he had spoken

of chiefs; it ought then to have been {לנו}, lanu, to us. But he now introduces each of them as speaking, as though he had said, ``No one of the chiefs shall look to his own land, but, on the contrary, direct his eyes to the holy city, and be content with the defense of a few men.'' Hence he says, In Jehovah of hosts, their God; for he means that God would be then the protector of that people whom he had for a time forsaken. And he calls him again the Jehovah of hosts, in order to set forth his invincible power, lest the minds of the godly should fail through fear, on seeing themselves far unequal to their enemies. [309] It follows ---

Zechariah 12:6

6. In that day will I make the governors of Judah like an hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf; and they shall devour all the people round about, on the right hand and on the left: and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem.

6. In die illa ponam duces Iehudah quasi fornacem (vel, catinum fusorium) ignis inter ligna, et quasi facem (vel, lampadem) ignis in manipulo (hoc est, inter manipulos;) et comedent ad dextram et ad sinistram cunctos populos in circuitu; et habitabitur (vel, manebit) Ierusalem adhuc sub se (hoc est, in loco suo) in Ierusalem.

He adds another metaphor for the sake of a further confirmation; for he says, that the chiefs of Judah would be like a melting pot: some render it a hearth, but improperly and without meaning. He afterwards compares them to a flaming torch, and heathen nations to wood and stubble or chaff. The Spirit speaks thus also in other places; and the reason is to be noticed; for when the ungodly assail the Church of God, all things seem to threaten its ruin; but God declares that they shall be like chaff or wood. ``The house of Israel,'' says Isaiah, ``shall be a flaming fire, and shall consume all the wood of the forest:'' so also in this place, ``There shall be indeed a great host of enemies, assembled against Israel; but the Lord will consume them, for he will be like fire in the midst of his people, and his people also shall be through the secret power of the Spirit like a burning pot or a torch, which shall consume the chaff, in which there is nothing substantial.''

But the Prophet shows again that the deliverance of the Church is ever wonderful: and hence foolishly do they act who rely on human and earthly instrumentality, and wilfully bind God to their own ways; for whenever God promises to be their deliverer, their inquiry is, ``But how can this be? whence will come this aid to us? how will the hand of the Lord be stretched forth to us? whence will he gather his army?'' Inasmuch then as we are wont thus anxiously to inquire, and thus drive away from us the aid of God, let this truth, taught by the Prophet, be borne in mind, --- that though enemies in great numbers may come upon us, they shall yet be like a heap of wood, and we like fire; for though we have no strength, yet the Lord by his hidden favor will cause that our enemies shall even, by coming nigh us, be consumed.

[309] There is something unsatisfactory in the usual rendering of this verse. The words "shall say in their heart," seem rather singular in this connection. There is one MS. which connects the preposition [{[{ל with ``the inhabitants,'' and this reading is countenanced by the Targum. Then the version would be, --- And say will the chiefs of Judah in their heart, --- ``Strength be to the inhabitants of Jerusalem Through Jehovah of hosts, their God.'' To stay in the heart is to pray, to utter a secret prayer; and the prayer is stated in the following lines. This was to show that there would be discord or emulation between Judah, the people of the country, and the city Jerusalem. And in the following verses we find both mentioned, as liable to envy, especially in verse 7. --- Ed.

To the same purpose is the next similitude, --- that they would be a torch in handfuls of chaff; for here also the singular number is used for the plural. Then follows an explanation, Consume shall they on the right hand, and on the left, all nations around. Zechariah seems here to ascribe an insatiable cruelty, and a revengeful passion to the faithful, who yet are to be influenced by a meek spirit, so that they may imitate their heavenly Father. But here he speaks not of their disposition and feeling, but only shows, that all the ungodly shall be frustrated in their expectation of success, and not only so, but that they shall also be destroyed. The more furiously then they assail the Church, the more sudden shall be their destruction; for though the faithful may wish to spare them, yet God, the righteous judge, will not spare them. In short, the work of God himself, as in other places, is ascribed to the Church.

In the last place he declares, that Jerusalem shall stand in its own place, where it was. There is here a sort of repetition; and it was made, because enemies thought, as we have already stated, that they could destroy Jerusalem so as wholly to obliterate it: but the Prophet on the other hand says, that it would be established in its own place, because God had chosen it as the place where he purposed to be worshipped, and he had chosen it, as it is often said by Moses, to commemorate his own name. In a word, he intimates, that the Church would be perpetually established: though all mortals conspired for its ruin and assailed it on every side, yet the sanctuary of God, as he had promised, would continue there still, even to the advent of Christ; for then, we know, Jerusalem was to be wholly destroyed, together with the temple, as an end was to come on all these things, and the world was to be renewed.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that inasmuch as the condition of all those who fight under the banner of the cross of Christ seems at this day hard and even miserable, --- O grant, that relying on thy promises, by which thou encourages us, we may continually persevere, and not hesitate to remain in thy fold, though wolves lie in wait for us on every side, and robbers also and thieves furiously assail us, so that we may ever remain under the protection of thy hand, and never envy the children of this world on account of their pleasures, ease, and worldly advantages, but patiently bear to be agitated by constant fear, so that we may with quiet minds wait until thou showest to us, when we come to die, that our salvation is safe and secure in thy hand; and having thus at length passed through all troubles, we may come to that blessed rest, which thine only-begotten Son has procured for us by his own blood. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Sixty-first

Zechariah 12:7

7. The Lord also shall save the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem do not magnify themselves against Judah.

7. Et servabit Iehovah tabernacula Iehudah sicut initio (subaudiendum enim est nota similitudinis;) itaque non gloriabitur decor (vel, magnificentia) domus Davidis, et decore civis Ierusalem contra Iehudam.

The Prophet teaches us again, --- that there is no need of helps when God stretches

forth his hand to preserve his people; for he is alone abundantly sufficient. And the design of the verse is to show, that the Jews were to learn to acquiesce in God alone, though they might find themselves destitute of every earthly assistance; for when God purposes to save, he needs no help, as we have said; nor does he borrow any, as he by himself is fully sufficient.

But by the word, Tabernacles, the Prophet means, as I think, sheds, such as afforded but partial protection. It is indeed true that tents are called {סחות}, sachut, in Hebrew; but the same is often meant by the {אעלים}, aelim, tents, which afforded a temporary accommodation; for they were not strongly built, as it is evident from many passages. I allow that all houses without any difference are sometimes called tabernacles, {אהלים}, aelim; but the word properly signifies a tent, built as a temporary convenience; for it is said that the fathers dwelt in tents, when they had no fixed habitation.

Let us now see why the Prophet speaks of tents. He may have alluded to their dwelling in the wilderness; but as this may seem too remote, I consider that he simply refers to the tents in which the Jews dwelt when they had entered the land, after their deliverance from Egypt; for they must have been wonderfully protected by the hand of God, inasmuch as they had provoked all their neighbors and kindled the hatred of all against themselves. There were indeed some fortified cities; but for the most part they lived in villages, and the greatest part of the people were no doubt satisfied with their tents or sheds. Hence as the Israelites then had no defense, the Prophet now reminds them, that they were then protected by God alone, in order that they might believe that they should in future be safe and secure, as God would defend them to the end. There is then here an implied comparison between tents and fortified cities; and the Prophet bids them to consider what their fathers had formerly experienced, for God faithfully defended them, even when they were unprotected and exposed to the attacks of their enemies.

He says first, Jehovah will save the tents, etc.; as though he had said, ``Know that your fathers were formerly defended by the hand of God, when they did not, as to the greater part of them, dwell in cities, but lived scattered in villages: since God then had been the preserver of his people many ages before a king was made, believe that he will be the same to you hereafter.'' But we must yet remember what we said yesterday, --- that the Jews who had returned to their country had a promise of God's help, in order that the Israelites, who were retained by their own sloth in Babylon, might know that they were justly suffering punishment for their ingratitude, because they had not given glory to God, as they ought to have done, by committing themselves to his protection, and thus relying on his defense, so as not to seek other helps from the world: he will then save them, he says, as at the beginning; for as, the particle of similitude, is to be understood here. [310]

[310] So is the rendering of the Septuagint, the Syriac, and the Vulgate, and adopted by Dathius and Newcome. But the Hebrew, as it is, has been adhered to by Drusius, Marckius, and Henderson; and this is what the context seems to require: for the following words give the reason why the tents of Judah (which mean here the towns and villages of Judah according to Kimchi and to Grotius) were saved "first," or at first, or in the beginning; and the reason is, — that the honor or the glory of the house of David and of the citizens of Jerusalem might not be magnified above that of Judah. This is clearly the meaning of the verse. The literal rendering

He then adds, And hence boast shall not the honor of the house of David and the honor of the citizen of Jerusalem over Judah. This latter clause is added, I think, by way of explanation; and this is evident from the subject itself for God declares, that he would be the protector of the helpless, so that they would be no less victorious than if they possessed many armed soldiers, and were furnished with money and other necessaries to carry on war. For by comparing here the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem with Judah, he has no doubt a regard to this, --- that though there was no kingdom and no fortified cities, there would yet be sufficient protection in him alone, so that he could by himself defend the people, though unarmed, and having no swords, nor power, nor any other requisite means. Boast then shall not the house of David: and this seems to have been mentioned designedly, for while they trusted in their own wealth and power, they did not rest on God as they ought to have done.

As then the Jews had been elated with vain pride, while the dignity of the kingdom remained, and while they possessed wealth and warlike instruments, God here reproves this false confidence; for the Jews had thus obscured his gratuitous favor. For however great might have been the treasures collected by David and Solomon, and however formidable they might have been to their enemies and the neighboring nations, they ought yet to have relied on the protection of God alone. Since then earthly helps had inflated their minds, God now reproves their vain conceit, and shows that the condition of the people would be no less happy, when no king sat on the throne, and no aids enlisted for the protection of the people; and therefore he declares, that though exposed to all evils, they should yet be safe and secure, for God would defend them. This is the reason why the Prophet says, that the royal posterity would not glory against Judah, though dwelling in tents, nor the citizens of Jerusalem, who were then as it were the courtiers: for as the royal seat was at Jerusalem, a sort of vain boasting was made by all the citizens. As then all of them despised the inhabitants of the country, when the condition of the city was illustrious, the Prophet says, the posterity of David and Jerusalem shall not hereafter glory against the people of Judah, scattered in the open fields. It then follows ---

Zechariah 12:8

8. In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them.

8. Die illo proteget Iehova super habitatorem Ierosolymae; et erit qui aegrotabit inter ipsos die illo quasi David; et domus Davidis sicuti angeli (aut, Dii,) sicuti angelus Iehovae coram facie ipsorum.

He goes on with the same subject; and he says that God would be like a shield to protect the Jews. For though the verb {יגן}, igen, is used here, yet as it is derived from {מגן}, megen, which means a shield, that metaphor is to be understood here,

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is as follows,— 7. But save shall Jehovah the tents of Judah first, That the honor of the house of David, Even the honor of the inhabitant of Jerusalem, May be not magnified above that of Judah. The “inhabitant” is the poetical singular. The word rendered “honor” is [{,[{תפארת and in the first instance rendered ``[{καύχημα}] --- boasting,'' by the Septuagint, and in the second, ``[{ἔπαρσις}] --- elevation,'' or exaltation; and the Targum give a word of a similar import. But ``glory'' is the most common rendering: it is that of Marckius, Newcome, and Henderson. --- Ed.

--- even that the Jews, though without power and without warlike instruments, would yet be safe under the protection of God, for he being their shield would be sufficient. And God is here indirectly opposed to all kinds of fortresses which men too anxiously seek, and on which they vainly depend. The Prophet then no doubt claims here for God a power, which in opposition to the whole world, and when no other help appears, would be found sufficient to subdue all enemies and to save his people. Jehovah then shall be, he says, a shield [311]

But there seems to be here something inconsistent; for he had said before that the Jews would be safe wherever they lived, though they did not dwell at Jerusalem; but now he confines this promise to the citizens of Jerusalem. The answer to this is plain: We observed yesterday, that the piety of those was commended who had preferred to undergo many and grievous trials in returning home, and then to expose themselves to many dangers, rather than to continue in exile, as in that case they wholly separated themselves from the temple. Now since this was the object of the Prophet, it is no wonder that he one while names the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and that at another time he includes generally all the Jews. And by saying in the last verse, that the citizens of Jerusalem were not to glory against the country people, scattered in the villages, he intended, in adopting this way of speaking, to humble the citizens of Jerusalem, but not to exclude them from the promise made to all: as God then was to be the defender of all, the Prophet returns again to Jerusalem. For as God had chosen there his sanctuary, it is not to be wondered that the place was precious in his sight. But it was yet necessary to take away all pride from the Jews, that they might not, as it has been said, trust in earthly aids and supports. This is the meaning, when he says, the protection of God shall be on the inhabitants of Jerusalem

He now adds --- The feeble [312] among them shall be like David. Some give a refined explanation --- that as David, who was not trained up for war, and was by no means strong, being, almost a boy, yet slew the proud giant Goliath, so the feeble among the Jews, as they think, will, by God's power, be made victorious over their enemies. But this seems forced. The Prophet, then, I have no doubt, connects the whole together, and considers David as a king; for when David slew Goliath, he was yet a boy, remarkable for no velour. After he attained the kingdom, he became more eminent, we know, in every way, than all the kings of the earth. It is then this eminence which the Prophet has in view, when he says that the least and the most despised among them would be like David; as though he had said --- ``They shall all be endued with royal and heroic velour, not only the common people, but even those who seemed to be like women, and who possessed nothing that was manly; they would yet excel as David in heroic velour.''

It then follows --- And the whole house of David shall be as angels; that is, the royal posterity shall be remarkable for angelic velour. And it was necessary to add

[311] The version of the Septuagint is, "[{ὑπερασπιεῖ}] --- will over-shield," or hold over the shield. --- Ed.

[312] This is the rendering of the Septuagint, and not of the Hebrew. The stumbling, or stumbler, according to Kimchi, is the right version. "The fallen to decay," as rendered by Blayney, is not to be admitted. "The stumbling" is the rendering of Drusius, Marckius, and Henderson. It was no doubt the weak or the feeble, but the act which betokens weakness is what the original expresses. — Ed.

this, that the faithful might not think that the house of David, from which salvation was to be expected, would be reduced to nothing. For whatever had been promised to them might have vanished, were not that promise to stand firm, on which was founded the salvation of the whole people ---

``Thy house shall remain for ever.'' (Psalm 89:37.)

Now as Zechariah seemed to have cast down and wholly overthrown the royal house, it might have occurred to the minds of the faithful, ``whence then shall arise our salvation? for it is certain that without Christ we are wholly lost.'' Now Christ was not to come forth, except from the house of David. The Prophet then does here opportunely declare, that the royal house would be most eminent, as though all the men belonging to it were angels. He puts down the word {אלהים}, aleim, which also means God; but he adds in the same sentence --- As the angel of Jehovah before their face [313] The Prophet compares here, no doubt, the posterity of David to the angel, who had been the leader of the people and the minister of redemption. That angel we conclude was Christ; for though God then appointed many angels to his people, yet Christ, as it is well known, was their prince and head. The Prophet then bids the Jews here to look for the perpetual aid of God, since in the royal house were not only angels, but even the very leader of the fathers, who had exercised the ineffable power of God in redeeming the people.

We now then perceive the design of the Prophet: The import of the whole is, that God would so undertake the defense and protection of his people, as to be of himself sufficient, without any other aid; and also that the minister of salvation would be in the royal house itself; for as formerly, when their fathers were led out of Egypt, God had exercised his power through an angel, so now he had set over them a Mediator. And in accordance with this meaning he adds, {לפניהם}, lepeniem, ``before their face.'' He bids the faithful to attend to the royal house, which was then deprived of all dignity, so that it had no power to help. Nothing indeed was then seen in the posterity of David but what was degrading, and even contemptible; and yet the Prophet bids them to expect salvation from that house, which was so brought down as to possess nothing worthy of being noticed.

We may now ask, when was this prophecy fulfilled? Zechariah does indeed predict great things; but in reviewing all histories, nothing of a corresponding character is to be found. It must nevertheless be observed, that this blessed and happy state ass promised to the Jews, because from them Christ was to arise, and also because Jerusalem was to be the mother of all Churches; for from thence the law was to go forth, and from thence God had determined to send forth the royal scepter, that the son of David might rule over the whole world. Since the case was so, we may now easily understand how the condition of that miserable people would become happier and more glorious than under the rich and flourishing kingdom of David; for Christ

[313] Both Genesius and Lee, according to Henderson, deny that angels are ever called [{,אלהים}] though the Septuagint have often rendered the word ``angels.'' Here the Septuagint introduce the word house ``as the house of God;'' and the Targum has ``princes;'' and kings and princes are sometimes called ``gods.'' But the following lines settles the meaning, as it is evidently an explanation --- 8. And the stumbling among them, in that day, Shall be like David, And the house of David like God, Like the angel of Jehovah before them. The stumbling or weak was to be strong and valiant like David, and the descendants or David were to be like God, taking the lead and guiding, even like the angel who went before them in the wilderness, who afterwards approved as God manifested in the flesh. --- Ed.

would at length come, in whom complete happiness was to be found.

We may now also add this --- that though few of the Jews embraced the favor of Christ, and the rest fell away, and thus gave place to the Gentiles, yet however small was the portion of the faithful, still the Prophet does not speak here hyperbolically, for the thing itself is what ought to be regarded; and that the Jews did not enjoy this blessed state, was owing to their own ingratitude; but this detracts nothing from the felicity described here by Zechariah. Let us proceed -

Zechariah 12:9

9. And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.

9. Et erit die illo, quaeram ad perdendum omnes gentes, quae venient contra Ierusalem.

The Prophet repeats again, that though ungodly and wicked men assailed the Church in great number on every side, God would yet be its defender. By saying, I will seek to destroy, etc., he means that God would he fully bent (intentum) to destroy, as men are wont to be anxious when they earnestly pursue an object. Lest then the faithful should think that they should perish through the disdain, or the neglect, or the forgetfulness of God, he says, that he would be their anxious defender. I will seek then, that is, I will be most earnestly solicitous, to destroy all the nations

This promise no doubt extends far wider than to the Jews; for he prophesies here concerning the kingdom of Christ: for if we consider the state of the people during the whole of the intervening period, from their return to the coming of Christ, the Prophet will certainly appear to have given here a hope of something far greater than what had taken place. But he had a regard especially to Christ. Here then is promised a perpetual defense to the Church; and hence also proceeds confidence as to salvation, for God carefully watches over us, that he may effectually oppose all our enemies.

I only briefly touch on these things, which require long and minute consideration: but it is enough for me to show briefly the meaning of the Prophet, provided this be done clearly, so that each may then apply what is said to his own improvement. We may in the meantime learn also from the words of the Prophet, that the Church is ever to be disquieted in this world, for not only one enemy will cause trouble to it, but even many nations shall rise up against it. It follows ---

Zechariah 12:10

10. And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.

10. Et effundam supe domum Davidis, et super habitatorem Ierosolymae Spiritum gratiae et miserationum; (vel, precationum, vertunt alii;) et respicient ad me quem confixerunt; et lugebunt super ipsum tanquam luctu super inigenitum; et amarulenti erunt super eum, quasi amarulentia quae est super primogenitum.

At the beginning of this verse the Prophet intimates, that though the Jews were then miserable and would be so in future, yet God would be merciful to them: and

thus he exhorts them to patience, that they might not faint through a long-continued weariness. For it was not enough to promise to them what we have noticed respecting God's aid, except Zechariah had added, that God would at length be merciful and gracious to them after they had endured so many evils, that the world would regard them as almost consumed.

As to the effusion of the spirit, the expression at the first view seems hard to be understood; for what is it to pour forth the spirit of grace? He ought rather to have said thus, ``I will pour my grace upon you.'' But what he means is, that God would be merciful, for his spirit would be moved to deliver the Jews; for he compares the spirit of God here to the mind of man, and we know that Scripture often uses language of this kind. The phrase then, I will pour forth the spirit of grace, may be thus suitably expressed --- ``I will pour forth my bowels of mercy,'' or, ``I will open my whole heart to show mercy to this people,'' or, ``My Spirit shall be like the spirit of man, which is wont to move him to give help to the miserable.''

We now then understand the sense in which God may be fitly said to pour forth the spirit of grace. It may yet be taken in a more refined manner, as meaning that God would not only show mercy to his people, but also make them sensible of his mercy; and this view I am inclined to take, especially on account of what follows, the spirit of commiserations, or, of lamentations, for the word, {תחנונים}, tachnunim, commonly means lamentations in Hebrew. Some render it ``prayers,'' but improperly, for they express not the force of the word. It is always put in the plural number, at least with this termination: and there is but one place where we can render it commiserations, that is, in Jeremiah 31:9 ---

``In commiserations will I restore them.''

But even there it may be rendered lamentations consistently with the whole verse; for the Prophet says, ``They shall weep,'' and afterwards adds, ``In lamentations will I restore them.'' The greater part indeed of interpreters render it here, prayers; but the Hebrews prefer to translate it commiserations, and for this reason, because they consider that the spirit of grace is nothing else but simply grace itself. The spirit of grace is indeed grace itself united with faith: for God often hears the miserable, extends his hand to them, and brings them a most effectual deliverance, while they still continue blind and remain unconcerned. It is then far better that the spirit of grace should be poured forth on us, than grace itself: for except the spirit of God penetrate into our hearts and instils into us a feeling need of grace, it will not only be useless, but even injurious; for God at length will take vengeance on our ingratitude when he sees his grace perishing through our indifference. What then the Prophet, in my opinion, means is, that God will at length be so propitious to the Jews as to pour forth on them the spirit of grace, and then the spirit of lamentations, in order to obtain grace.

They who render the word prayers, do not, as I have already said, convey the full import of the term. But we may also take commiserations in a passive sense and consistently with its common meaning: I will pour forth the spirit of grace, that they themselves may perceive my grace; and then, the spirit of commiserations, that having deplored their evils, they may understand that they have been delivered by a

power from above. Hence Zechariah promises here more than before; for he speaks not here of God's external aid, by which they were to be defended, but of inward grace, by which God would pour hidden joy into their hearts, that they might know and find by a sure experience that he was propitious to them.

But if the word {תחנונום}, tachnunim, be rendered commiserations, the meaning would be, as I have already stated, that the Jews, through the dictation and the suggestions of the Holy Spirit, would find God merciful to them; but if we render it lamentations, then the Prophet must be viewed as saying something more --- that the Jews, previously so hardened in their evils, as not to flee to God for help, would become at length suppliants, because the Spirit would inwardly so touch their hearts as to lead them to deplore their state before God, and thus to express their complaints to Him: [314] and this view is more fully confirmed by what follows.

They shall look to me, he says, whom they have pierced. We then see here that not only an external grace or favor was promised to the Jews, but an internal light of faith, the author of which is the Spirit; for he it is who illuminates our minds to see the goodness of God, and it is he also who turns our hearts: and for this reason he adds, They shall look to me [315] For God, as I have already reminded you, deals very bountifully with the unbelieving, but they are blind; and hence he pours forth his grace without any benefit, as though he rained on flint or on and rocks. However bountifully then God may bestow his grace on the unbelieving, they yet render his favor useless, for they are like stones.

Now, as Zechariah declares that the Jews would at length look to God, it follows, that the spirit of repentance and the light of faith are promised to them, so that they may know God as the author of their salvation, and feel so assured that they are already saved, as in future to devote themselves entirely to him: they shall then look to me whom they have pierced. Here also the Prophet indirectly reproves the Jews for their great obstinacy, for God had restored them, and they had been as untameable as wild beasts; for this piercing is to be taken metaphorically for continual provocation, as though he had said, that the Jews in their perverseness were prepared as it were for war, that they goaded and pierced God by their wickedness or by the weapons of their rebellion. As then they had been such, he says now, that such a change would be wrought by God that they would become quite different, for they would learn to look to him whom they had previously pierced. We cannot finish today.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that as we are this day surrounded with enemies, and with-

[314] The two words are thus expressed by the Septuagint, [{πνεῦμα} {χάριτος} {και} {οἰκτιρμου}] --- ``the Spirit of grace and of commiseration;'' and in similar terms by the Targum. For the last word, Jerome, Drusius, and Piscator have ``deprecationum --- of entreaties;'' and our version, Newcome, and Henderson, ``supplications.'' Both these authors have ``A spirit,'' etc., as though an impulse or a disposition is meant by ``Spirit,'' as Grotius understood the expression: but ``Spirit'' here signifies the same as Spirit in Joel 2:28, ``I will pour out my Spirit,'' etc.; and is called ``The Spirit of grace and entreaties'' or supplications, because he, the divine Spirit, is the author of them. Renewing grace and sincere entreaties come from the Spirit. The latter word, derived from a reduplicate verb, signifies more than supplications; it means earnest supplications or entreaties. --- Ed.

[315] Respicient ad me, [{והביטו אלי}. {The same phrase is rendered ``look upon,'' in Exodus 3:6; Numbers 21:8; and ``look unto,'' in Psalm 34:5; Isaiah 22:11; 51:1,2 Newcome follows our version, while Henderson follows Calvin, ``look unto me.'' Inasmuch as the phrase admits of these two meanings, and as St. John, not following the Septuagint, interpreted it in the sense of our version, it ought to be so regarded --- to look upon as an object before our eyes. --- Ed.

out any defense, so that our safety seems to be every moment in danger, --- O grant, that we may raise up our hearts to thee, and being satisfied with thy protection alone, may we despise whatever Satan and the whole world may threaten us with, and thus continue impregnable while carrying on our warfare, so that we may at length reach that happy rest, where we shall enjoy not only those good things which thou hast promised to us on earth, but also that glorious and triumphant victory which we shall partake of together with our head, even Christ Jesus, as he has overcome the world for us, in order that he might gather us to himself, and make us partakers of his victory and of all his blessings. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Sixty-second

We said in our yesterday's lecture, that the words, They shall look to me whom they have pierced, are to be taken metaphorically, [316] for the Prophet expresses here what he had said before --- that the Jews would some time return to a sound mind, that is, when endued with a spirit of grace and of commiserations. For it is a true conversion when men seriously acknowledge that they are at war with God, and that he is their enemy until they are reconciled; for except a sinner sets himself in a manner before God's tribunal, he is never touched by a true feeling of repentance. It is therefore necessary for us to remember, that God has been offended by us, and that we have, as far as we could, instigated him to destroy us, inasmuch as we have provoked his wrath and his vengeance. This then is the real meaning of the Prophet here: for the Jews, after having in various ways and for a long time heedlessly provoked God, would sometime be led to repentance, inasmuch as they would become terrified by God's judgment, while no one of them thought previously that they had any account to render.

John says that this prophecy was fulfilled in Christ, when his side was pierced by a spear, (John 19:37;) and this is most true: for it was necessary that the visible symbol should be exhibited in the person of Christ, in order that the Jews might know that he was the God who had spoken by the Prophets; and we have elsewhere seen similar instances. The Jews then had crucified their God when they grieved his Spirit; but Christ also was as to his flesh pierced by them. And this is what John means --- that God by that visible symbol made it evident, that he had not only been formerly provoked in a disgraceful manner by the Jews, but that at length in the person of his only-begotten Son this great sin was added to their disgraceful impiety, that they pierced even the side of Christ. It is indeed true, that the side of Christ was pierced by a Roman soldier, but, as Peter says, he was crucified by the Jews, for they were the authors of his death, and Pilate was almost forced by them to condemn him. (Acts 2:36.) So then the piercing of his side is justly to be ascribed to the Jews, for they executed what their mad impiety suggested by the hand of a foreign soldier.

But it must be observed, that the words of the Prophet are not cited by John with

[316] This principle of interpretation, which Calvin has elsewhere mentioned, is a very important one. What was metaphorically applied to God, or rather to the Messiah as the king and shepherd or Israel, before his appearance in the flesh, became afterwards literally true of him in his incarnate state. The people of Israel or the Jews, “pierced” him by their provocations while he was their king before his incarnation; they afterwards literally “pierced” him on Calvary. The same view may be taken, and is taken by Calvin, of many similar expressions borrowed from the Prophets and applied to Christ. — Ed.

reference to repentance, for he does not speak there of repentance; but his object was briefly to show, that Christ is that God who had from the beginning spoken by the Prophets; for he says, They shall look to me. It is certain that the only true God, the creator of heaven and earth, declared this through his Spirit by the mouth of Zechariah. Then Christ is that same God. We do not, however, thus confound the persons; but we are to conclude that the essence of the Father and of the Son is simple and the same, which those wicked men, who now disturb the Church, attempt to deny. For they imagine that the Father is the only true God, and then they allow that Christ also is a God; but they devise a new kind of divinity, like a river issuing from a fountain. They therefore deny that Christ is the only true God; though they allow that he was begotten from eternity, they yet teach us that the essence of the Father and of the Son is not the same; and they regard Christ as some sort of phantom, I know not what; for they will never allow him to be that God, the author of this prophecy. They say, as they necessarily must say, that Zechariah spoke by his Spirit; but they even account for this by referring to the proximate and the second cause, inasmuch as God the Father employed his own Son. They, however, pertinaciously contend, that Christ is a God not of the same essence with the Father; for the word God, as they imagine, does not properly belong to any but to the Father.

But we clearly see how the Holy Spirit condemns this blasphemy; for he shows by the mouth of the evangelist, that he was not a kind of a second God, who was crucified, but that he was the God who spoke by Moses, and who thus declared himself to be the only true God, and affirmed the same by the mouth of Isaiah ---

``My glory will I not give to another: I, I am, and none besides me.'' (Isaiah 42:10:)

Now follows what we read in our last lecture, but time did not allow me to give an explanation: Lament, he says, shall they for him a lamentation as that for an only-begotten; and bitter shall they be for him as with a bitterness for a first-born. Zechariah goes on with the same subject; for he promises as before the spirit of repentance to the Jews, and mentions a particular kind of repentance; but by stating a part for the whole, he includes under this kind every part of it. The beginning of repentance, we know, is grief and lamentation. As then by the phrase, ``They shall look to me,'' he had not sufficiently expressed what he wished, he now explains his meaning more clearly by mentioning lamentation and grief, that God would at length grant the Jews repentance for heaving crucified Christ. The person indeed is changed; but we know that it is a common thing with the Prophets to introduce God as speaking, now in the first person, then in the second person. [317] If any one be disposed to think that there is a difference marked out here as to the person, I do not object; but I fear that it is a refinement that will not stand. At the same time we may state this explanation --- They shall look to me whom they pierced. Was God the Father pierced? By no means; for he had not put on flesh in which he could have

[317] It is true that this is often the case; yet as John (John 19:37) quotes the preceding sentence from the Hebrew, and not from the Septuagint, and in a manner that implies the third person, we may regard "on me" as a mistake for "on him." All the early versions are indeed in favor of "on me," and also the best MS.; and swayed by these authorities, Dathius and Henderson have retained this reading; but Kennicott and Newcome, supported by some of the early fathers, and also by thirty-six MS., as stated by the last, have adopted "on him:" and this seems to be the best course. Neither Dathius nor Henderson gives a satisfactory solution of the difficulty as to the quotation of St. John. — Ed.

suffered; but this was done by his only begotten Son. Why then does the Father say, They shall look to me? the answer given is, because of the unity of the essence. It then follows --- And they shall lament for him and be bitter for him. There is here a transition from the first to the third person; for though Christ is the same with the Father, yet different as to his person. But, as I have already said, I am not inclined to enforce this view; for the Hebrew mode of speaking seems to countenance the other opinion --- that the Prophet first introduces God as the speaker, and then narrates himself, as God's minister, what would take place.

But what I have just referred to is doubtless true --- that repentance is here described by stating a part for the whole; for the first thing in order is sorrow, according to what Paul teaches us in 2 Corinthians 7:10; and the reason may also be gathered from what I have said --- that it cannot be that sin will displease us, and we repent, except our guilt goad and wound us, while we acknowledge that God is an avenger of sins, and that we have to do with him; for when God the Judge comes forth to punish us, must we not necessarily be smitten with dreadful grief and alarm, yea, be almost so allowed up by it? Hence that bitterness that is mentioned; and hence lamentation; for it cannot be otherwise, when we dread God's vengeance suspended over us.

But the Prophet, it may be said, seems to mean something else --- that they will lament on account of Christ, and not on their own account. To this a ready answer may be given --- that the fountain and cause of lamentation is pointed out; for ingratitude will constrain the Jews to lament, inasmuch as they will acknowledge that in their perverse obstinacy they had carried on war with God and his only-begotten Son. He does not then understand that the death of Christ would be bitter to them, as we are wont to shed tears and to lament at the death of a friend, or of a brother or of a son; but because they would know and feel that they had been extremely blind, and by their sins provoked God

Jerome thought that Christ is called the only-begotten with regard to his Divine nature, and the first-born, because he is the elder brother of all the godly, and the Head of the Church. The sentiment is indeed true, but I know not whether it be the sentiment of the Prophet in this passage. I therefore prefer to take this simple view of what is here said, --- that the Jews, after having despised Christ, would at length acknowledge him to be a precious and invaluable treasure, the contempt of whom deserved the vengeance of God. Let us proceed -

Zechariah 12:11

11. In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon.

11. In die illo magnificabitur (ad verbum, magnus erit) lucus in Ierusalem, sicut luctus Hadadrimon in planitie Megedon.

The Prophet says nearly the same thing to the end of the chapter; but as the event was worthy of being commemorated, he embellishes it with many figurative terms. He then says, that the lamentation for the death of Christ would be like that after the death of Josiah; for they who would have Hadadrimmon to be a man's name, have no reason for what they hold, and indulge themselves in mere conjecture. It is indeed

agreed almost by all that Hadadrimmon was either a town connected with the plain of Megiddon, or a country near Jezreel. But as to what it was, it is a matter of no great consequence. I indeed believe that Hadadrimmon was a neighboring town, or a part of that country in which was situated the plain of Megiddon. [318]

We may now observe, that this comparison which the Prophet institutes is very apposite; for when Josiah was slain by the King of Egypt, it is said in 2 Chronicles 35:25, that an yearly lamentation was appointed. The Jews then were wont every year to lament the death of Josiah; for from that time it was evident that God was so displeased with the people, that they had no longer any hope of deliverance; nay, Jeremiah in his mournful song had special reference to Josiah, as it appears from sacred history. And, among other things, he says, that Christ our Lord, in whose life lived our life, was slain for our sins. Jeremiah then acknowledges that it was a special proof of God's vengeance, that that pious king was taken away, and that the Jews were thus as it were forsaken, and became afterwards like a dead body, inasmuch as they only breathed in the life of Josiah: and at the same time he reminds us, that the kingdom, which God had intended to be the type and image of the kingdom of Christ, had as it were ceased to exist; for the successor of Josiah was deprived of all royal honor, and at length not only the whole dignity, but also the safety of the people, were trampled under foot. Hence, most fitly does the Prophet apply this lamentation to the death of Christ; as though he had said, --- That the Jews lamented yearly the death of Josiah, because it was an evidence of the dreadful vengeance of God that they were deprived of that pious ruler; and that now there would be a similar lamentation, when they perceived that their light of salvation was extinguished, because they had crucified the Son of God, unless they humbly acknowledged their great wickedness, and obtained pardon.

We now then see the true meaning of the Prophet, when he says, that the lamentation in Jerusalem would be like that in Megiddon.

Were any to object and say, that the death of Christ was not accompanied with tears and mourning; I answer, --- that the penitence of believers only is here described; for we know that a few only of the whole people were converted to God: but it is not to be wondered that the Prophet speaks generally of the whole nation, though he referred only to the elect of God and a small remnant; for God regarded those few who repented as the whole race of Abraham. Some mention the women of whom Luke speaks; but this seems too confined and strained: and we find also that that lamentation was forbidden by Christ,

``Weep,'' he says, ``for yourselves and for your children,
not for me.'' (Luke 23:28.)

Since then Christ shows that that weeping was vain and useless, we may surely say that what is here said by Zechariah was not then fulfilled. And we must bear in mind what I have said before, --- that by lamentation and sorrow is described that repentance with which the Jews were favored, not indeed all, but such as had been ordained to salvation by the gratuitous adoption of God. It follows ---

[318] "Jerome says that this (Hadadrimmon) was a place near Jezreel, called in his time Maximaniopolis. De Lisle places it near Megiddo, where Josiah was slain, over whom great lamentation was made, 2 Chronicles 35:22-25." — Newcome.

Zechariah 12:12-14

12. And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart;

12. Et lugebit terra, familiae, familiae seorsum; familia domus Davidis seorsum, et uxores eorum seorsum;

13. The family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart;

13. Familia domus Levi seorsum, et uxores eorum seorsum; familia Simei seorsum, et uxores eorum seorsum;

14. All the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart.

14. Omnes familiae residuae, familiae, familiae seorsum (hoc est, singulae familiae seorsum,) et uxores eorum seorsum.

Zechariah seems to have used more words than necessary to complete his subject; for he appears to be diffuse on a plain matter: but we ought to attend to its vast importance; for it seemed incredible, that any of that nation would repent, since they had almost all been given up to a reprobate mind. For who could have thought that there was any place for the favor of God, inasmuch as all, as far as they could, even from the least to the greatest, attempted to involve Christ in darkness? When therefore the Sun of Righteousness was as it were extinguished by the Jews, it seemed probable that they were a nation repudiated by God. But the Prophet here shows, that God would be mindful of his covenant, so that he would turn to himself some of all the families.

Lament, he says, shall the land. This indeed we know did not take place as to the body of the people, but God, to whom a small flock is precious, denominates here as the whole land the faithful, who had felt how grievously they had sinned, and were so pricked in their hearts as though they had pierced the Son of God. (Acts 2:37.) And though the Jews had destroyed themselves, yet through special and wonderful favor, three thousand were converted at one sermon by Peter; and then many in Greece, Asia Minor, and in the East, repented, and many Churches arose everywhere, as though God had created a new people. If these things be rightly viewed by us, we shall not think it unreasonable that Zechariah promises repentance to the whole land.

What he said before of Jerusalem ought not to be so taken as though he confined what he said to one city, but under this name he includes the whole nation, dispersed through distant parts of the world.

He says now, that this lamentations would be in every family apart. By which word he means, that it would not be a feigned or pretended ceremony, as when one begins to weep and draws tears from the eyes of others. The Prophet then testifies that it would be real sorrow, for one would not imitate another, but every one, impelled by his own feeling, would really grieve and lament. This then is the reason why he says that families would lament apart. Indeed the faithful ought to stimulate others by their example and encourage them to repent, but in a congregation hardly one in ten prays in earnest for pardon and really laments on account of his sins. Since therefore

men are thus born to hypocrisy, and are confirmed in it by the whole practice of their the, it is no wonder that the Prophet, in order to set forth real sorrow, represents here every family by itself; as though he had said, ``The family of David shall know that it had sinned, and the family of Levi, though it may not observe such an example, shall yet inwardly acknowledge its guilt.'' We now see why Zechariah repeats the word apart so often.

By saying, that the women wept apart, he means no doubt the same thing with what we find in the second chapter of Joel (Joel 2:1)

``Go forth let the bridegroom from his chamber,
and the bride from her recess.''

Men in grief, we know, withdraw from all pleasures and all joy. As then men usually separate themselves from their wives during the appointed time of public grief or mourning, the Prophet makes the women to be by themselves: he intimates at the same time that the women would not wait until the men showed then an example of mourning, but that they would of themselves, and through a feeling of their own, be inclined to lament.

But we must bear in mind what I lately said, --- that the grief which the Jews felt for the death of Christ is not what is described, but rather that by which they were touched when God opened their eyes to repent for their own perverseness; for the death of Christ, we allow, is a cause of joy to us rather than of sorrow, but the joy arising from Christ's death cannot shine in us until our guilt really wounds us through God's appearing to us as a threatening judge. From this sorrow there arises the desire to repent and the true fear of God. Hence it is, that God himself will give us joy, for he will not have us, as Paul says, to be swallowed up with sorrow; he lays us prostrate, that he may again raise us up.

Now, why he names the house of Levi, and the house of Shimei, or of Simeon, and the house of David, and the house of Nathan, rather than the other tribes, is uncertain: yet it seems to me probable that by the family of David he means the whole tribe of Judah, and the same by the family of Nathan. As to the tribe of Levi it excelled in honor on account of the priesthood, but no honor belonged to Simeon. Why then are Issachar and Reuben the first-born, and the other tribes omitted here? It might indeed have been, that there were then remaining more from the tribes of Simeon and Levi than from the tribe of Zebulon or of Issachar or of Reuben; but this is uncertain, and I am not disposed to make much of mere conjectures. But I am inclined to think that the family of David and the tribe of Levi are here mentioned not for the sake of honor but of reproach, because the royal family and the priests were those who crucified Christ, and pierced God in the person of his only-begotten Son. Jerome conjectures, that the family of Nathan is named, because he was a celebrated Prophet and eminent above others, and that the Prophets are designated by him. He says that many teachers arose from the tribe of Simeon; but I know not where he got his information, for he adduces no proofs. [319]

[319] What he says in substance is, that the family of David represented the royal order — of Nathan, the prophetic — of Levi, the sacerdotal — and of Simeon, the order of teachers, as from that tribe many of them had proceeded. The same view was taken by Theodoret and Cyril. It was thought by Marckius that Nathan the son of David is meant, who represented,

But I am satisfied with the simple view already given, --- that the Prophet by mentioning certain families meant to include the whole people, and that he does not omit the royal family nor the priests, because they were especially those who crucified Christ: and we know that Christ descended from Nathan, though Jerome thought the Prophet to be intended here rather than Nathan, one of Christ's progenitors: but these things are of small moment.

He says in the last place, that this lamentation would be common to all the remaining families. Though few had returned, except those from the tribe of Judah and Benjamin, and from the tribe of Levi, yet Zechariah, as I think, means here by the remaining families, the elect who had been miraculously delivered from the common ruin; for blindness had so prevailed, that the rejection of the whole people on the part of God was evident. Under this designation then I consider the remnants of grace, as Paul says, to be included; as though the Prophet had said, that he had spoken of sorrow, not with regard to the whole nation indiscriminately, but to that part which was a remnant according to the gratuitous election of God. Now follows ---

Chapter 13

not the royal line, but his other descendants, and that Shimei belonged to the tribe of Levi, and represented the Levites, not the priestly line; see Numbers 3:18; and Henderson's view is the same. But Blayney though that they were all the progenitors of our Savior. Luke 3:29-31. Instead of "Shimei," the Septuagint, the Arabic, and Syriac, have a "Simeon," which Newcome, adopts as the true reading. Three MS., the Syriac, and the Targum, supply "house" before it. Was not this prophecy literally fulfilled in the time of Ezra? His return, and the reformation he effected, were several years posterior to the time when this prophecy was delivered. The brief account, given in the ninth and tenth chapters of Ezra, clearly intimates a state of things similar to what is here described. See especially chapters 9:1-4; 10:1,9,14; and the names of those who had transgressed, 20-44. The priestly line of Levi and those of inferior order are mentioned, and also those "of Israel," denominated "princes and rulers" in chapter 9:2. We hence see a reason for the lamentation of the "wives," and these apart. — Ed.

Zechariah 13

Zechariah 13:1

1. In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.

1. In die illo erit fons apertus domui Davidis, et incolis Ierosolymae, ad peccatum et ad immunditiam (vel, ad expiationem et aspersionem.)

From this verse we again learn, that Zechariah promised the spirit of repentance to the Jews, so that they would find God still propitious to them, when their circumstances were brought to the verge of despair: for it would not have been enough for them to feel sorrow, except God himself became propitious and merciful to them. He had said indeed that the Spirit of grace and of commiserations would be poured forth; but he had not as yet taught clearly what he now adds respecting remission and pardon. After having then declared that there would be felt by the Jews the bitterest sorrow, because they had as it were pierced God, he now mentions the fruit of this repentance. And hence also appears what Paul means by sorrow not to be repented of; for it generates repentance unto salvation. When then our sorrow is blessed by the Lord, the end is to be regarded; for our hearts are thereby raised up to joy. But the issue of repentance, as Zechariah declares here, is ablution: and he alludes to the legal rites when he says,

A fountain shall be opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. We know that formerly under the law many washings were prescribed to the Jews; and when any one had become defiled, to wash himself was the remedy. It is certain that water was of no value to cleanse the heart; but the sins of men, we know, are expiated by the death of Christ, so that true ablution is by the blood which he shed for us. [320] Hence the types of the law ought no doubt to be referred

[320] Jerome and Cyril say that the "fountain" is baptism; but Theodoret with more wisdom considered it to be the blood of Christ. Marckius regarded it as the grace of God flowing to us through the merits of the Redeemer, and applied for justification and sanctification. The word

to this blood. The meaning is that God would be reconciled to the Jews when they became touched with sincere sorrow, and that reconciliation would be ready for them, for the Lord would cleanse them from every defilement.

He speaks of a fountain opened; and he no doubt intimates here a difference between the law and the gospel. Water was brought daily to the temple; but it was, we know, for private washings. But Zechariah promises here a perpetual stream of cleansing water; as though he had said, ``Ablution will be free to all, when God shall again receive his people into favor.'' Though remission of sins was formerly offered under the law, yet it is now much more easily obtained by us; not that God grants a license to sin, but that the way in which our filth is cleansed, has become more evident since the coming of Christ. For the fathers under the law were indeed fully assured that God was so propitious as not to impute sins; but where was the pledge of ablution? In the sprinkling of blood, and that blood was the blood of a calf or a lamb. Now since we know that we have been redeemed by Christ, and that our souls are sprinkled with his blood by the hidden power of the Holy Spirit, it is doubtless the same as though God had not only set before our eyes our ablution, but also placed it as it were in our hands, while to the fathers it was more obscure or shown to them at a distance.

And he says, To the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. He had before restricted God's favor to that city, that he might goad the Jews, who had preferred their outward gratifications to so great a happiness; for they thought themselves happy in their exile, because they inhabited a pleasant and fruitful country, and enjoyed quietness and peace; and thus it happened that they despised the deliverance offered to them. Hence the Prophet promises here to the citizens of Jerusalem and to the royal family a fountain in which they might wash away their filth; for from Sion was the law to go forth, and from Jerusalem the word of the Lord. (Isaiah 2:2.) And we know that from thence were taken the first-fruits of the new Church. [321] What we have before seen respecting God's favor being extended farther, is no objection; for both events were in their due order fulfilled, as God blessed the tribe of Judah, who trusted in his promises and returned to their own country, and afterwards extended wider his favor, and gathered into one body those who had been dispersed through distant parts of the world.

He adds, For sin and for uncleanness, or as some read, ``for sprinkling,'' which is by no means suitable, except the word ``sin'' be taken for expiation. The word is derived from {נדד}, nedad, but it often means sprinkling, sometimes uncleanness, and sometimes the uncleanness of women, and so some render it here. The verb signifies to remove or to separate; and hence {נדה}, nede, is the removal of a woman from her husband during her uncleanness, but it is applied to designate any uncleanness. It might indeed be taken here for the uncleanness of women, as an instance of a part for the whole; but I am led by the context to render it uncleanness. Now if we

"fountain," says Drusius, intimates the perennity and abundance of grace. — Ed.

[321] The house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem were specifically mentioned, says Grotius, because they had grievously offended. The design seems to have been to point out those who had been most guilty, who had been themselves the murderers of their own Messiah. This fountain was yet opened for them. — Ed.

translate {חטאת}, chathat, sin, then {נדה}, nede, must be rendered uncleanness; but if the first be expiation, then the second may be sprinkling: and this meaning I am disposed to take, for under the law sins were cleansed by sacrifices as well as by washings. [322]

The import of the whole then is --- that though the Jews had in various ways defiled themselves, so that they were become filthy before God, and their uncleanness was abominable, yet a fountain would be prepared for them, by which they might cleanse themselves, so as to come before God pure and clean. We hence see that it was the Prophet's object to show, that the repentance of which he had spoken would not be useless, for there would be a sure issue, when God favored the Jews, and showed himself propitious to them, and already pacified, and even provided for them a cleansing by the blood of his only-begotten Son, so that no filth might prevent them to call on him boldly and in confidence; for instead of the legal rites there would be the reality, as their hearts would be sprinkled by the Spirit, so that they would be purified by faith, and would thus cast away all their filth.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou hast been pleased to adopt us as thy people, and from being thine enemies, profane and reprobate, to make us the children of Abraham, that we might be to thee a holy heritage, --- O grant, that through the whole course of our life we may so repent as to attain thy mercy, which is daily set before us in thy gospel, and of which thou hast given us a sure pledge in the death of thy only Son, so that we may become more and more humble before thee, and labor to form our life according to the rule of righteousness, and so loathe ourselves, that we may at the same time be allured by the sweetness of thy goodness to call upon thee, and that being thus united to thee, we may be confirmed in the faith, until we shall reach that blessed rest which has been procured for us by the blood of thy Son Jesus Christ. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Sixty-third

Zechariah 13:2

2. And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land.

2. Et erit in die illo, dicit Iehova exercituum, Excidam (vel, delebo) nomina simulachrorum e terra, et non erunt in memoria amplius; atque etiam Prohetas et spiritum immundum auferam (vel, exterminabo, ad verbam est, transire faciam) e terra.

Here the Prophet mentions another effect, which would follow the repentance of the people, and which the Lord also would thereby produce. There was to be a cleansing from all the defilements of superstitions; for the pure and lawful worship of God cannot be set up without these filthy things being wiped away; inasmuch as

[322] For sin and defilement, Newcome For guilt and for uncleanness, Henderson Our version cannot be mended "for sin and for uncleanness." The latter word, [{,[{נדה has been strangely rendered by some. Its first meaning is removal or separation, which took place in case of uncleanness: but it is also used to designate the cause of removal, even uncleanness, and that generally, as we find from Ezra 9:11, where the ``land'' is said to be ``unclean ([{נדה}]) with the filthiness ([{נדת}]) of the people,'' or rather polluted with the pollution of the people ``of the lands.'' It is used in this text as synonymous with ,[{טמא}] which means what is unclean, defiled, or polluted. See Ezra 6:21 This verse is most strangely rendered by the Septuagint, in a way quite unaccountable. The three other versions --- Aq., Sym., and Theod., --- are not very far from the original. --- Ed.

to blend sacred with profane things, is the same thing as though one sought to take away the difference between heaven and earth. No religion then can be approved by God, except what is pure and free from all such pollution. We hence see why the Prophet adds, that there would be an end to falsehoods and all errors, and to the delusions of Satan, when God restored his Church; for the simplicity of true doctrine would prevail, and thus abolished would be whatever Satan had previously invented to corrupt religion.

We hence learn what I have just stated --- that God cannot be rightly worshipped, except all corruptions, inconsistent with his sincere and pure worship, be taken away. But we must at the same time observe, that this effect is ascribed to God's word; for it is that which can drive away and banish all the abominations of falsehood, and whatever is uncongenial to true religion. As then by the rising of the sun darkness is put to flight, and all things appear distinctly to the view, so also when God comes forth with the teaching of his word, all the deceptions of Satan must necessarily be dissipated.

Now these two things ought especially to be known; for we see that many, who are not indeed ungodly, but foolish and inconsiderate, think that they give to God his due honor, while they are entangled in many errors, and refrain not from superstitions. Others, more politic, devise this way of peace --- that they who think rightly are to concede something to tyrants and false Prophets; and thus they seek to form at this day a new religion for us, made up of Popery and of the simple doctrine of the gospel, and in this manner as it were to transform God. As then we see that men are so disposed to mix all sorts of things together, that the pure simplicity of the gospel may be contaminated by various inventions, we ought to bear in mind this truth, --- that the Church cannot be rightly formed, until all superstitions be rejected and banished. This is one thing.

We may also deduce hence another principle --- that the word of God not only shows the way to us, but also discovers all the delusions of Satan; for hardly one in a hundred follows what is right, except he is reminded of what he ought to avoid. It is then not enough to declare that there is but one true God, and that we ought to put our trust in Christ, except another thing be added, that is, except we warn men of those intrigues by which Satan has from the beginning deceived miserable mortals: even at this day with what various artifices has he withdrawn the simple and unwary from the true God, and entangled them in a labyrinth of superstitions. Except therefore men be thus warned, the word of God is made known to them only in part. Whosoever then desires to perform all the duties of a good and faithful pastor, ought firmly to resolve, not only to abstain from all impure doctrines, and simply to assert what is true, but also to detect all corruptions which are injurious to religion, to recover men from the deceptions of Satan, and in short, avowedly to carry on war with all superstitions.

This was what Zechariah had in view when he said, In that day, that is, when God would restore his Church, perish shall the names of idols, [323] so that they shall

[323] [{עצבים from ,[{עצב}] to work, to labor, because of the labor taken to form and adorn them. As to the ``names,'' see Exodus 23:13; Deuteronomy 12:3; Psalm 16:4. --- Ed

be remembered no more. By this last expression he sets forth more clearly what I have just stated, that the pure worship of God is then established as it ought to be, and that religion has then its own honor, when all errors and impostures cease, so that even the memory of them does not remain. It is indeed true, that superstitions can never be so abolished, so that no mention of them should be made; nay, the recollection of them is useful ---

``Thou shalt remember thy ways,'' says Ezekiel, ``and be ashamed,'' (Ezekiel 16:6.)

But by this form of speaking Zechariah means, that such would be the detestation of superstitions, that the people would dread the very mention of them. And hence we may learn how much purity of doctrine is approved by God, since he would have us to feel a horror as at something monstrous, whenever the name of an idol is mentioned.

He then refers to false teachers, I will exterminate, he says, the Prophets and the unclean Spirit [324] from the land. The connection here is worthy of being noticed; for it hence appears how all errors arise, even when a loose rein is given to false teachers. It is indeed true I allow, that the seed of all errors is implanted in each of us, so that every one is a teacher to deceive himself; for we are not only disposed to what is false, but rush headlong into it: it is the corruption of our nature. But at the same time when liberty is taken to teach anything that may please men, the whole of religion must necessarily be corrupted, and all things become mixed together, so that there is no difference between light and darkness. God then here reminds us, that the Church cannot stand, except false teachers be prevented from turning truth into falsehood, and from pealing at their pleasure against the word of God.

And this is what ought to be carefully observed; for we see at this day how some unprincipled men adopt this sentiment --- that the Church is not free, except every one is allowed with impunity to promulgate whatever he pleases, and that it is the greatest cruelty to punish a heretic; for they would have all liberty to be given to blasphemies. But the Prophet shows here, that the Church cannot be preserved in a pure state, and, in a word, that it cannot exist as a healthy and sound body, except the rashness and audacity of those who pervert sound and true doctrine be restrained.

We now then understand the import of this verse --- that in order that God may be alone and indeed be rightly worshipped, he will take away and banish all idols and all superstitions, and also, that he will exterminate all ungodly teachers who pervert sound doctrine.

He calls them first Prophets, and then unclean spirits. The name of Prophets is conceded to them, though they were wholly unworthy of so honorable a title. As ungodly men ever boast themselves in an audacious manner and hesitate not to pretend God's name, that they may more boldly proceed in deceiving: hence it is,

[324] Or, "the spirit which pollutes," or, "the polluted spirit." It is rendered "the unclean ([{ακαθαρτον}]) spirit,'' by the Septuagint, a phrase used often in the gospels. The word ,[{טמא}] polluting, or polluted, stands opposed to ,[{קדש}] holy, applied to the divine Spirit. If it be rendered polluting, the effect produced by it is designated, or, if polluted, the character of the Spirit itself. It is no doubt the same with the ``lying spirit,'' mentioned by Micaiah, 1 Kings 22:13. ``He thus calls,'' says Drusius, ``either the emotions excited in the heart by the evil spirit, i.e., Satan, or the impure doctrine of the false prophets which proceeds from the impure spirit.'' --- Ed.

that Scripture sometimes concedes to them a name which they falsely claim. So also the word spirit is sometimes applied to them ---

``Prove the spirits, whether they are of God: every spirit that denies that Christ has come in the flesh, he is a liar.''
(1 John 4:1.)

John doubtless adopted this mode of speaking according to common usage; for all false teachers claimed this title with great confidence, and maintained that all the errors they spread abroad were revealed to them by the Spirit.'' Be it so then, but ye are lying spirits.''

Now then as to this title, there is no obscurity in what the Prophet means: and by way of explanation he adds the unclean spirit, that he might distinguish those vile men from the faithful ministers of God; as though he had said, ``They indeed declare that they have drawn down the Spirit from heaven; but it is the spirit of the devil, it is an unclean spirit.'' Now as Zechariah declares, that this would be in the Church of God, we learn how foolish the Papists are, who are content with the mere title of honor, and claim to themselves the greatest power, and will have themselves heard without dispute, as though they were the organs of the Spirit. What right indeed do they pretend? that they have been called by the Lord. The same reason might have been assigned by these unprincipled men, whom it was necessary to drive away, in order that the Church might rise again. It then follows that we are not to consider only what name a person has, or with what title he is distinguished, but how rightly he conducts himself, and how faithfully he performs his duties and discharges the office of a pastor. Let us proceed -

Zechariah 13:3

3. And it shall come to pass, that when any shall yet prophesy, then his father and his mother that begat him shall say unto him, Thou shalt not live; for thou speakest lies in the name of the LORD: and his father and his mother that begat him shall thrust him through when he prophesieth.

3. Et erit, quum prophetaverit vir (hoc est, quispiam) adhuc, dicent ad eum pater ejus et mater ejus, qui eum genuerunt, Non vies, qu ia mendacium loquutus es in nomine Iehovae; et transfigent eum (vel, confodient, nam habetur verbum illud, [{דקר}], quod heri vidimus) pater ejus et mater ejus, qui genuerunt eum, quia prophetaverit.

The same concession is made in this verse, where Zechariah speaks of the office of prophesying: he indeed confines what he says altogether to false teachers, for he takes it as granted that there was then no attention given to God's servants, inasmuch as false spirits had conspired together, so that nothing pure or sound remained in the Church. As then a false and diabolical faction had then prevailed, Zechariah calls them Prophets as though they were all such, for they were heard as the Lord's servants during that disorder of which mention is made. But he proceeds farther in this verse than before, and says, that there would be so much zeal in God's children when renewed by his Spirit, that they would not spare even their own children, but slay them with their own hands, when they saw them perverting the truth of God.

Zechariah no doubt alludes to the 13th chapter of Deuteronomy 13:1 where God

requires such a rigorous severity in defending pure doctrine, that a father was to rise up against the son whom he had begotten, that a husband was to lead his wife to death rather than to indulge his love and to pardon impiety, in case the wife solicited him or others to forsake God. The Lord then would have all the godly to burn with so much zeal in the defense of lawful worship and true religion, that no connection, no relationship, nor any other consideration, connected with the flesh, should avail to prevent them from bringing to punishment their neighbors, when they see that God's worship is profaned, and that sound doctrine is corrupted. This was the rule prescribed by the law. Now after religion had been for a time neglected, and even trodden almost under foot, Zechariah says, that the faithful, when they shall have repented, would be endued with so much zeal for true religion, as that neither father nor mother would tolerate an ungodly error in their own son, but would lead him to punishment; for they would prefer the glory of God to flesh and blood, they would prefer to all earthly attachments that worship which ought to be more precious to us than life itself.

But it must at the same time be observed, that this zeal under the reign of Christ is approved by God; for Zechariah does not here confine what he teaches to the time of the law, but shows what would take place when Christ came, even that this zeal, which had become nearly extinct, would again burn in the hearts of all the godly. It then follows, that this law was not only given to the Jews, as some fanatics verily imagine, who would have for themselves at this day a liberty to disturb the whole world, but the same law also belongs to us: for if at this day thieves and robbers and sorcerers are justly punished, doubtless those who as far as they can destroy souls, who by their poison corrupt pure doctrine, which is spiritual food, who take away from God his own honor, who confound the whole order of the Church, doubtless such men ought not to escape unpunished. It would be indeed better to grant license to thieves and sorcerers and adulterers, than to suffer the blasphemies which the ungodly utter against God, to prevail without any punishment and without any restraint. And this is evident enough from the words of our Prophet.

And little consideration do they also show, who immediately fret from a regard to their own relatives. When faithful ministers and pastors are constrained to warn their people to beware of the artifices of Satan, they seek to bury every recollection of this, because it is invidious, because it leads to reproach. What if their children were to be drawn forth to punishment? How could they bear this, though they might remain at home; for they cannot attend to a free warning from their own pastor, when they find that impious errors are reproved, which we see prevailing, I say not in our neighborhood only, but also in our own bosom and in the Church. Let them then acknowledge their own folly, that they may learn to put on new courage, so that they may make more account of the glory of God, and of the pure doctrine of religion, than of their own carnal attachments, by which they are too fast held. And this is also the reason why the Prophet says, who have begotten him, and he repeats it twice: nor was it in vain that God had those words expressly added,

``The husband shall not suffer the wife who sleeps in his bosom to go unpunished; nor shall the father pardon his son whom he has begotten, nor the mother her own

offspring, whom she has nourished, whom she has carried in her womb.'' (Deuteronomy 13:6, 9.)

All these things are said, that we may learn to forget whatever belongs to the world and to the flesh, when God's glory and purity of doctrine are to be vindicated by us. [325]

Now the Prophet shows clearly that all this is to be understood of false teachers, for he adds, For falsehood hast thou spoken in the name of Jehovah. And at the same time the atrocity of their sin is here pointed out; for if we rightly consider what it is to speak falsehood in the name of Jehovah, it will certainly appear to us to be more detestable than either to kill an innocent man, or to destroy a guest with poison, or to lay violent hands on one's own father, or to plunder a stranger. Whatever crimes then can be thought of, they do not come up to this, that is, when God himself is involved in such a dishonor, as to be made an abettor of falsehood. What indeed can more peculiarly belong to God than his own truth? and it is his will also to be worshipped by us according to this distinction: God is truth. Now to corrupt pure doctrine --- is it not the same thing, as though one substituted the devil in the place of God? or sought to transform God, so that there should be no difference between him and the devil? Hence the greatest of all crimes, as I have already said, does not come up to this horrible and monstrous wickedness. For how much does the salvations of souls exceed all the riches of the world? and then, how much more excellent is the worship of God than the fame and honors of mortals? Besides, does not religion itself, the pledge of eternal life, swallow up in a manner every thing that is sought in the world? But most sacred to us ought to be the name of God, the sanctifying of which we daily pray for. When therefore what is false is brought forward in the name of God, is not he, according to what I have already said, as it were violently forced to undertake the office of the devil, to renounce himself, and to deny that he is God?

We hence see the design of the Prophet, when he shows that there is no place for pardon, when the ungodly thus wantonly rise up to pervert pure doctrine, and so to confound all things as wholly to destroy true religion.

He adds, Pierce him shall his father and his mother who have begotten him. It is much harder to kill their son by their own hands than to bring him to the Judge, and to leave him to his fate. But the Prophet has taken this from the law --- that so much zeal is required from the faithful, that, if it be necessary, they are to exterminate from the world such pests as deprive God of his own honor, and attempt to extinguish the

[325] From the tenor of the preceding and the following remarks, it appears evident that Calvin, in common with almost all the Reformers, considered that heretics are worthy of death, and that it is the duty of the Christian public to inflict on them this punishment. The defence then which has been unwisely set up for him, is without foundation. Toleration was not understood in his day. The Papists certainly can throw no stone at him, for he only adhered to a principle which he had derived from them, and defended it with arguments which have been often used by themselves. Nor is it a right for Protestants in the present day to fall foul on Calvin alone, since he held a principle which nearly all the Reformers maintained. We see by what is here said how the principle was defended, that is, by borrowing what was peculiar to the old dispensation, and adding it to the New, forgetting, at the same time, the character of the gospel, that its weapons are not carnal, are not human force or power, but such as are mighty only through God to the pulling down of strongholds. “The Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.” — Ed.

light of true and genuine religion. It follows ---

Zechariah 13:4

4. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the prophets shall be ashamed every one of his vision, when he hath prophesied; neither shall they wear a rough garment to deceive:

4. Et erit in die illa, pudefient Prophetae, quisque a visione sua, ubi prohetaverint; et non induent vestem pilosam ut mentiantur.

Zechariah proceeds with the same subject, but in other words and in another mode of speaking, and says, that so great would be the light of knowledge, that those who had previously passed themselves as the luminaries of the Church would be constrained to be ashamed of themselves. And he farther shows how it was that so great and so gross errors had arisen, when the whole of religion had been trodden under foot, and that was because Satan had veiled the eyes and minds of all, so that they could not distinguish between black and white.

And such ignorance has been the source of all errors under the Papacy. How great has been the stupidity of that people, as they have indiscriminately admitted whatever their ungodly teachers have dared to obtrude on them? And in their bishops themselves, and in the whole band of their filthy clergy, how great a sottishness has prevailed, so that they differ nothing from asses? For artisans, and even cowherds, surpass many of the priests and many of the bishops, at least in common prudence. While then there was such ignorance in these asses, there could not have been any difference made between truth and falsehood. And then when they put on fine rings, and adorn themselves with a forked metre and its ornaments, and also display their crook, and appear in all their pontifical splendor, the eyes of the simple are so dazzled, that all think them to be some new gods come down from heaven. Hence these prelates were beyond measure proud, until God stripped off their mask: and now their ignorance is well known, and no one among the common people is now deceived.

How then is it, that many are still immersed in their own errors? Because they wish to be so; they close their own eyes against clear light. The kings themselves, and such as exercise authority in the world, desire to be in their filth, and are indifferent as to any kind of abomination; for they fear lest in case of any innovation the common people should take occasion to raise tumults. As they themselves wish to remain quiet, hence it is that they defend with a diabolical pertinacity those superstitions which are abundantly proved to be so. And the people themselves neither care for God nor for their own salvation. Hence then it is, that almost all, from the least to the greatest, regard these asses, who are called prelates, as the most ignorant, and yet they submit to their tyranny. However this may be, the Lord has yet discovered the shame of those who had been a little while ago almost adored.

This is what Zechariah now declares, Ashamed, he says, shall all the Prophets be in that day, every one for his own vision, when they shall have prophesied. And the concession, of which we have spoken, is not without reason; for when the brawling monks about thirty years ago ascended their pulpits, or the prelates, who theatrically acted their holy rites, there was nothing, but what was divine and from heaven.

Hence with great impudence they boasted themselves to be God's messengers, his ministers, vicars, and pastors; though the name of pastors was almost mean in their esteem; but they were Christ's vicars, they were his messengers, in short, there was nothing which they dared not to claim for themselves. The Prophet ridicules this sort of pride, and seems to say, ``Well, let all their trumperies be prophecies; and all their babblings, let these be for a time counted oracles: but when they shall thus prophesy, the Lord will at length make them ashamed, every one for his vision.''

It follows, And they shall not wear a hairy garment that they may lie; that is, they shall not be solicitous of retaining their honor and fame, but will readily withdraw from courting that renown which they had falsely attained. It appears from this place that Prophets wore sordid and hairy garments. Yet interpreters do not appropriately quote those passages from the Prophets where they are bidden to put on sackcloth and ashes; for Isaiah, while announcing many of his prophecies, did not put on sackcloth and ashes, except when he brought some sad message. The same also may be said of Jeremiah, when he was bidden to go naked. But it was a common thing with the Prophets to be content with a hairy, that is, with a sordid and mean garment. For though there is liberty allowed in external things, yet some moderation ought to be observed; for were I to teach in a military dress, it would be deemed inconsistent with common sense. There is no need of being taught as to what common decency may requite. The true Prophets accustomed themselves to hairy garments in order to show that they were sparing and frugal in their clothing as well as in their diet: but they attached no sanctity to this practice, as though they acquired some eminence by their dress, like the monks at this day, who deem themselves holy on account of their hoods and other trumperies. This was not then the object of the Prophets; but only that by their dress they might show that they had nothing else in view but to serve God, and so to separate themselves from the world, that they might wholly devote themselves to their ministry. Now the false Prophets imitated them; hence Zechariah says, they shall no more wear a hairy garment, that is, they shall no more assume a prophetic habit.

His purpose was, not to condemn the false Prophets for wearing that sort of garment, as some have supposed, who have laid hold of this passage for the purpose of condemning long garments and whatever displeased their morose temper; but the Prophet simply means, that when purity of doctrine shall shine forth, and true religion shall attain its own honor, there will be then no place given to false teachers; for they will of themselves surrender their office, and no longer try to deceive the unwary. This is the real meaning of the Prophet: hence he says, that they may lie. We then see that hairy garments are condemned on account of a certain end --- even that rapacious wolves might be concealed under the skin of sheep, that foxes might introduce themselves under an appearance not their own. This design, and not the clothing itself, is what is condemned by Zechariah. He afterwards adds ---

Zechariah 13:5

5. But he shall say, I am no prophet, I am an husbandman; for man taught me to keep cattle from my youth.

5. Et dicet, Non sum ego propheta, vir agricola ego sum; quia Adam (vel, homo)

docuit me pastorem esse e pueritia mea.

He describes repentance in this verse more fully. When Paul wished to exhort the faithful to newness of life, he said,

``Let him who has stolen, steal no more; but rather work with his own hands, that he may relieve the wants of others.''
(Ephesians 4:18.)

Paul notices two parts of repentance, --- that thieves are to refrain from acts of dishonesty and wrong, --- and that they ought to labor in order to aid others and relieve their wants. So also Zechariah mentions these two particulars, --- that false prophets will give up their office, --- and that they will then spend their labor in doing what is right and just, supporting themselves in a lawful and innocent manner, and affording aid to their brethren.

Having spoken already of the former part, he repeats the same thing again, I am not a prophet. It is then the first thing in repentance, when they who had been previously the servants of Satan in the work of deception, cease to deal in falsehoods, and thus put an end to their errors. Now follows the progress, --- that they who lived before in idleness and in pleasures under the pretext of sanctity, willingly devote themselves to labor, and continue no longer idle and gluttonous as before, but seek to support themselves by just and lawful employment. It would not then have been enough for him to say, I am no prophet, had he not added, I am an husbandman; that is, I am prepared to labor, that I may support myself and aid my brethren.

A half reformation might probably succeed with many at this day. Were many monks sure that a rich mess would continue to them in their cloisters, and were also the milted bishops and abbots made certain that nothing of their gain and profit would be lost to them, they would easily grant a free course to the gospel. But the second part of reformation is very hard, which requires toil and labor: in this case the stomach has no ears, according to the old proverb. And yet we see what the Prophet says, --- that those are they who truly and from the heart repent, who not only abstain from impostures, but who are also ready to get their own living, acknowledging that they had before defrauded the poor, and procured their support by rapine and fraud.

The Prophet no doubt speaks of impostors, who were then numerous among the Jews; and there were also women who boasted that they were favored with a prophetic spirit; and the true prophets of God had to contend with these sorceresses or wise women, who had ever intruded themselves during a confused state of things, and undertook the office of teaching. As then there were at that time many idlers who lived on superstition, rightly does the Prophet send them away to cultivate the land. So at this day there are many brotherlings who hide their ignorance under their hood, and even all the papal clergy, under the sacred vestment, as they call it; and were they unmasked, it might easily be found out, that they are the most ignorant asses. Now, as the Lord has abundantly discovered their baseness, were they to acknowledge that they have been impostors, what would remain for them, but willingly to do what they are here taught? that is, to become husband men instead of being prophets.

As to the end of the verse, some retain the word Adam; others render it man; and

generally the word Adam means man in Scripture. But they who think that Zechariah speaks of the first man, adduce this reason, --- that as this necessity of ``eating his bread by the sweat of his face'' (Genesis 3:9) was imposed on all mankind after the fall, so also all his posterity were thus taught by Adam their first parent; but this interpretation seems too far-fetched. I therefore take the word indefinitely; as though he had said, ``I have not been taught by any master, so as to become capable to undertake the prophetic office; but I am acquainted only with agriculture, and have made such progress, that I can feed sheep and oxen; I am indeed by no means fit to take upon me the office of a teacher.'' I take the passage simply in this sense.

With regard to the verb {הקנני}, ekenni, {קנה}, kene, means to possess, to acquire; but as the word {מקנה}, mekene, which signifies a flock of sheep or cattle, is derived from this verb, the most learned interpreters are inclined to give this meaning, ``Man has taught me to possess sheep and oxen.'' I am however disposed to give this rendering, as I have already stated, ``Man has taught me to be a shepherd.''[326]

The import of the whole is, --- that when God shall discover the ignorance, which would so prevail in the Church, as that the darkness of errors would extinguish as it were all the light of true religion, then they who repent shall become so humble, as to be by no means ashamed to confess their ignorance and to testify that they had been impostors as long as they had under a false pretense assumed the office of prophets. The Spirit of God then requires here this humility from all who had been for a time immersed in the dregs of falsehood, that when they find that they are not fit to teach, they should say, ``I have not been in school, I was wholly ignorant, and yet I wished to be accounted a most learned teacher; at that time the stupidity of the people veiled my disgrace: but now the light of truth has shone upon us, which has constrained me to feel ashamed; and therefore I confess that I am not worthy to be heard in the assembly, and I am prepared to employ my hands in labor and toil, that I may gain my living, rather than to deceive men any longer, as I have hitherto done.''

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast been pleased to draw us at this day, by the light of thy gospel, out of that horrible darkness in which we have been miserably immersed, and to render thy face so conspicuous to us in the person of thy only-begotten Son, that nothing but our ingratitude prevents us from being transformed into thy celestial glory, --- O grant, that we may make such advances in the light of truth, that every one of us may be ashamed of his former ignorance, and that we may freely and ingenuously confess that we were lost sheep, until we were by thy hand brought back into the way of salvation; and may we thus proceed in the course of our holy vocation, until we shall at length be all gathered into heaven, where not

[326] For another man hath possessed me from my youth.—Newcome For I have been in a state of slavery from my youth.—Henderson The latter is a very loose paraphrase; the first is the literal rendering; “another” need not be have been put in. “Disclaiming all pretensions to the character of a prophet, he shall profess himself to be no other than a plain laboring man, employed in husbandry business by those whose property he had been, quasi adstrictus glebae, from his youth.” — Blayney. The line may be rendered, as proposed by Parkhurst, For man has purchased me in my youth. — Ed.

only that truth shall give us light, which now rules us according to the capacity of our flesh, but where also shall shine on us the splendor of thy glory, and shall render us conformable to thine image, through Jesus Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Sixty-fourth

Zechariah 13:6

6. And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.

6. Et dicit ad eum, Quid plagae istae inter manus tuas? et dicet, Quia percussus sum in domo amicorum meorum.

Here the Prophet, in order to finish what we explained yesterday, says that such would be the discipline among the new people after having repented, that each in his own house would chastise his sons and relatives: and it is an evidence of perfect zeal, when not only judges perform their office in correcting wickedness, but when also private individuals assist to preserve public order, each according to his power. It is indeed true that the use of the sword is not allowed us, so that the offender may be punished by his neighbor: but as it was always allowed by the law of God, that when the matter did not come before a public tribunal, friends might inflict punishment, Zechariah, alluding to this custom, says, that though they who unjustly claimed the prophetic office and spread abroad false and impious errors, should not be visited with capital punishment, yet such would be their zeal for true religion, that friends would privately chastise such as they found to be of this character.

If any one objects and says, that these two things are inconsistent, --- that false Prophets were punished with death, and that they were only chastised with stripes or scourges. To this I answer, that Zechariah does not speak precisely of the kind and mode of punishment, but says generally, that false teachers, even in the estimation of their parents, were worthy of death; and that if they were treated more gently they should yet suffer such a punishment, that they would through life be mutilated and ever bear scars as proofs of their shame.

We may at the same time gather from the answer what proves true repentance, Say will one, (it is put indefinitely,) or it will be said, What mean these wounds in thine hands? Then he will say, I have been stricken by my friends. The Prophet shows that those who had previously deceived the people would become new men, so as patiently to bear correction; though it might seem hard when the hands are wounded and pierced, yet he says that the punishment, which was in itself severe, would bee counted mild, for they would be endued with such meekness as willingly to bear to be corrected. Some apply this to Christ, because Zechariah has mentioned wounds on the hands; but this is very puerile; for it is quite evident that he speaks here of false teachers, who had for a time falsely pretended God's name. As then they say, that they were friends by whom they were smitten, they acknowledge themselves worthy of such punishment, and they murmur not, nor set up any complaint. [327] It

[327] This verse may be thus rendered — When one shall say to him, “Why are these wounds in thine hands?” Then he will say, “Because I have been smitten at home by my friends,” or by my lovers, [{.[{.מאהבי Grotius, Blayney, and Henderson, consider the ``wounds'' or stripes, punctures or marks, to have been those made in honor of some idol, and ascribed to friends for the purpose of escaping punishment: but the obvious meaning is that stated by Calvin, --- that they were the wounds inflicted by the nearest relatives, particularly mentioned in the 3rd verse, ``and pierce him shall his father and his mother,'' etc. Marckius, Adam Clarke, and Henderson, agree with Calvin in repudiating

now follows ---

Zechariah 13:7

7. Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.

7. Gladie, (vel, framea,) expergiscere super pastorem meum, et super virum socium meum, dicit Iehova exercituum; percute pastorem, et dispergentur oves; et reducam manum meam super parvulos.

It was pleasant and delightful to hear what the Prophet said at the beginning of the chapter, for he promised that a fountain would be opened, by which the Jews might cleanse away all their filth, and that God, having been reconciled, would be bountiful to them. As then he had promised so blessed and happy a state, what he had said before might have been so taken, even by the true and faithful servants of God, as though the condition of the Church were to be after that time free from every trouble and inconvenience; hence Zechariah anticipates such a conclusion, and shows that the happy state which he had promised was not to be so looked for, as it though the faithful were to be free from every affliction, for God would in the meantime severely try his Church. Though then God had promised to be bountiful to his Church, he yet shows that many troubles would be mixed up with its prosperity in order that the faithful might prepare themselves to endure all things.

This discourse may indeed appear abrupt, but its different parts harmonise well together, for God so regulates his benefits which he bestows on his Church in this world, as ever to try it in various ways. What is here said was especially necessary, since very grievous afflictions were nigh at hand: for, as it is evident from history, that nation was on the borders of despair when the coming of Christ approached. This then is the reason why the Prophet seems at the first view to join together things so contrary. For what he has hitherto promised tended to prepare the faithful to bear all things patiently, inasmuch as deliverance was nigh. But in the meantime it was needful that they should be expressly encouraged to persevere, lest they should succumb under the extreme evils which were not far distant.

The sum of the whole is, that before the Lord would cleanse his Church and bring it back to perfect order, very grievous calamities were to intervene, for a dreadful disorder there must be when God smites the very shepherds; and the apostrophe, when God addresses the sword, a thing void of reason, is very emphatical. It is much more striking than if he had said, ``A sword shall be raised against my shepherds and against my ministers, so that the flock shall be dispersed.'' But the metaphor, as I said, is much more expressive, when God directs his words to the sword itself; Awake, watch, O sword, --- how? against my shepherd

Most of our interpreters confine this passage to the person of Christ, because in Matthew 26:31, this sentence is quoted,

``Smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered:''

but this is no solid reason; for what is said of a single shepherd ought probably to

the notion that this verse is to be understood by Papal expositors: but Henry and Scott refer to the sentiment without condemning or approving it. Both Jerome and Theodoret refer, as it is done here, to the punishment inflicted by the parents; and it is strange that any sound expounder could do otherwise. --- Ed.

be extended to the whole order. When God says in Deuteronomy 18:15,

``A prophet will I raise up from the midst of you,''

though mention is indeed made of one Prophet only, yet God includes all the Prophets; as though he had said, ``I will never deprive you of the doctrine of salvation, but in every age will I show that I care for you, for my Prophets shall be ever present, by whose mouth I shall make it known that I am near you.'' This passage is quoted as referring to Christ, and very suitably, because all the Prophets spoke by his Spirit, and at length he himself appeared, and by his mouth the heavenly Father spoke familiarly with us, and fully explained his whole mind, as it is said in the first chapter to the Hebrews

``In various ways and often did God speak formerly to the fathers by the Prophets, but now in these last times by his only-begotten Son.''

As then Christ possesses a supremacy among the Prophets, and hence rightly applied to him are the words of Moses; so also as he is the head and prince of shepherds, this pre-eminence justly belongs to him. But what is said by the Prophet is however to be viewed as a general truth. In short, God threatens the people, and declares that there would be a dreadful disorder; for they would be deprived of their shepherds, so that there would be no government among them, or one in great confusion.

The word {עמית}, omit, is rendered by some, kindred, (contribulis --- one of the same tribe,) by others, kinsman, (consanguineus --- one of the same blood,) and by others, one connected, (co-haerens,) that is, with God; and they have considered that this passage cannot be understood of any but of Christ alone: but they have taken up, as I have said, a false principle. The Greek version has citizen ({τὸν} {πολίτην},) and some render it, as Theodotion, kindred (sumfulon --- one of the same tribe.) Jerome prefers the rendering, one connected or united with me (cohaerentem mihi.) [328] The word, according to the Hebrews, means an associate, a neighbor, or a friend, or one in any way connected with us. God, I have no doubt, distinguished pastors with this title, because he gave a representation at himself by then to the people; and the more eminent any one is, the nearer, we know, he is to God: and hence kings and judges, and such as exercise authority, are called his sons. So also pastors are called his associates, for they spend their labor in building up the Church. He is the chief Pastor, but he employs his ministers to carry on his work. This is the reason why they are called the associates of God, that is, on account of the connection between them, for they are co-workers with God, as Paul also teaches us. In short, the Prophet calls pastors the associates of God in the same sense in which Paul calls them fellow-workers. ({συνεργους} 1 Corinthians 3:9.)

Having said that the sword was permitted, nay, commanded, to rise against the

[328] Much as been written about this word, but unnecessarily. It occurs about nine times in Leviticus, and nowhere else but here, and is rendered "neighbor," and, "one another." Leviticus 6:12; 18:20, etc. "Against the man who is near into me," is Newcome's version; Henderson's is, "who is united to me;" and Blayney paraphrases the two words thus, "him that is next to me in favor and authority," conceiving that the word [{,[{גבר is not simply a man, but one superior to others in strength, power, or authority.'' To deduce from this word an argument in favor of our Lord's divinity seems an over-strained criticism. A neighbor, it is true, is one of the same nature with ourselves, but he is also a member of the same society, and of a similar station in the community, on which account he is especially called a neighbor. The view that Calvin takes of the word, is no doubt the correct one; and the same is taken by Newcome, Archbishop Secker, and Blayney

shepherd, he immediately adds, that the sheep were dispersed. We then see that in these words is set forth a calamity that was to be feared, and which the people were not able to escape, in order that the faithful might not be too much disheartened, as though God would disappoint them, but that they might stand firm amidst grievous troubles and violent commotions. Since then this disorder was nigh, Zechariah bids the faithful to continue firm and patiently, and quietly hope, until God showed himself again propitious to them, and those evidences of his favor appeared of which he had before spoken. We now see what the design of the Prophet was. But we must especially notice, that it is a sure presage of the people's ruin and destruction when pastors are taken from them; for when God intends to keep us safe, he employs this instrumentality, that is, he raises up faithful teachers, who rule in his name; and he rules them by his Spirit, and fits them for their rank and station: but when he strikes them, he not only forsakes the people, but also shows that he is the avenger of wickedness, so that the people themselves are destroyed. This is the import of the Prophet's words.

But this, as I have already observed, was fulfilled in Christ; for he accommodated the passage to himself when his disciples fled from him. Though they were but a small flock, being very few in number, yet they were scattered and put to flight. In that case then, as in a mirror, appeared how truly it had been said by Zechariah, that the scattering is nigh when a pastor is smitten.

By the word sword, he means affliction; for though Christ was not slain by a sword, yet crucifixion and violent death are fitly designated by the word sword.

It follows at the end of the verse, And I will turn my hand to the little ones. Some consider that the little ones would be exposed to many evils, because the Lord would ever hold his rod in his hand to chastise them. But the Prophet, I have no doubt, meant what is far different, --- that God would show mercy to them, when the body of the people had been as it were torn into many parts. For all the godly might have been wholly dejected when their shepherds were taken away, and when the people were become like a straying flock. God then comes to their aid, and testifies that his hand would be extended over the miserable and the poor ones, who had been almost overwhelmed by a mass of evils.

This passage is also very serviceable to us in the present state of the Church: for we see how God has lately cut off many pastors, so that what is called the Church is become like a mutilated body. We also see that God often deprives of good and faithful pastors those who have abused his truth, or with impious contempt rejected it. We might then in this case be terrified and cast off all hope of salvation, were we not to remember what Zechariah teaches us here, even that though the Church were contemptible in the world, and though the faithful were few in number, and all of them exposed to calamities, yet God's hand will be over them, so as to gather for himself again a Church from the torn members. This is the import of the whole. It follows ---

Zechariah 13:8

8. And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the LORD, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein.

8. Et erit in tota terra, dicit Iehova, portio duae (vel, duorum) in ea excidentur, morientur, et tertia residua erit in ea.

He goes on with the same subject; for he reminds the faithful, that though God had resolved to restore his Church, and though his blessing would be evident, yet very heavy afflictions were not far distant; as though he had said, ``God will give you a serene heaven and a bland air, that the land may bring forth its fruit; but still there is a heavy tempest impelling, and ye shall not be exempt from storms and hail. But when God has laid waste a part of the land, he will bless you with corn and wine, so that you shall have sufficient support.'' So also in this place he says, ``God will protect his Church, and will also be propitious to it, for he will wash away all the filth of wickedness, and will give to you faithful pastors, when he has removed the impostures of Satan: but in the meantime most grievous afflictions await you, and a hard state of things, and difficult to be borne, must be expected; for God will appear as though he intended to destroy his people: such will be the scattering.''

For this reason he says, that there will be through the whole land the most grievous calamities: Two parts, he says, shall die; the third only shall remain

We now see how all these things agree, and how the Prophet's words harmonise. In short, he means, that what he had before promised respecting the future favor of God, does not belong indifferently to all, or to the whole body of the people, but to the faithful, whom God will in a wonderful manner deliver from ruin; for of the people God will only save the third part, as he had already resolved to destroy the other two parts. The intention of the Prophet is now by no means doubtful.

But we hence conclude, that what God daily promises to his Church is not to be extended indiscriminately to all, for many falsely profess his name: but he knows his own, as Paul says, and therefore exhorts them to depart from iniquity. (2 Timothy 2:16.) Let us then know that promises of God's favor do not appertain to hypocrites: for though he has decreed to deal kindly and graciously with his Church, he yet continues to diminish it, so that the third part only remains safe. Whenever then we speak of God's mercy towards his Church, and of his aid and help, let us ever bear in mind the cleansing of which Zechariah now speaks, that God will reserve the third part, while the greater portion ever runs headlong into ruin. It is then enough that the third part should be delivered from destruction. But this verse, as it has already appeared, ought to be applied to the kingdom of Christ.

Literally we read, the mouth of the two; but {פי}, pi, is to be taken metaphorically for part or portion. A part then of the two in it, or two parts in it, (the plural is joined with the singular, as often is the case,) shall perish, shall be cut off. The verb {כרת}, caret, means to cut off; and then {גוע}, guo, signifies to die or to sink. Though he understands the same things by the two words, it is not yet an unmeaning repetition; for it might have seemed hard and unreasonable that only a third part of God's people should remain. This diminution of the Church might have disturbed the minds of many, and might have appeared incredible: hence the Prophet, in order to confirm what in itself seemed a paradox, says, they shall die, they shall perish; it has been so decreed, and you are not to contend with God; for given up to ruin shall the greater number be, while a few only shall remain: the third part then shall remain in

it. It follows ---

Zechariah 13:9

9. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God.

9. Et ducam (vel, venire faciam) tertiam partem per ignem; et conflabo eos sicuti conflatur argentum: et examinabo eos sicuti probatur aurum: ipse invocabit nomen meum, et ego respondebo ei; et dixi, (vel, dicam,) populos meus est; et ipse dicet, Iehova Deus meus.

Zechariah proceeds further here, that when God shall cut off two parts of the people, he will yet save the third for this end --- that it might be proved by various kinds of trials, and be made to bear many afflictions. With regard to the two parts, the Lord did not afflict them in order to turn them to repentance, but resolved wholly to destroy them. The third part then is reserved for salvation; and yet it is necessary even for them to be cleansed through many afflictions.

Very useful is this doctrine; for we hence first conclude that many, not only from the world, are led into perdition, but also from the bosom of the Church: for when three hundred shall profess to worship God, one hundred only, says Zechariah, will be saved. There are always among the people many hypocrites; nay, the grains lie hid in the midst of much chaff and refuse; it is therefore necessary to devote to ruin and eternal death a larger number than those who shall be saved. Let us then not envy the ungodly, though their prosperity may disturb us and cause us to grieve. (Psalm 37:2.) We think them happy; for while God spares and supports them, they deride us and triumph over our miseries. But under this circumstance, the Holy Spirit exhorts us to bear patiently our afflictions; for though for a time the happiness of the ungodly may goad us, yet God himself declares that they are fattened in order to be presently slain, when they shall have gathered much fatness. This is one thing.

Then it is in the second place added, that after the greater part, both of the world and of the Church, (at least such as profess to belong to it,) shall be destroyed, we cannot be retained in our position, except God often chastises us. Let us then remember what Paul says, that we are chastised by the Lord, that we may not perish with the world; and the metaphors which the Prophet adopts here are to the same purpose; for he says, I will lead them through the fire. He speaks here of the faithful whom God has chosen into salvation, and whom he has reserved that they might continue safe: yet he says, that they shall be saved through fire, that is, hard trials. But he sets forth this still more clearly, He will prove them, he says, as silver and gold [329] The stubble and the chaff, as John the Baptist teaches us, are indeed cast into the fire, (Matthew 3:12,) but without any benefit; for the fire consumes the refuse and the chaff, and whatever is corruptible. But when the gold and the silver are put in the fire and are purified, it is done that greater purity may be produced, and also that what is precious in these metals may become more apparent: for when the silver is

[329] I would render the first lines of this verse thus — And I will bring the third part into the fire, And will purify them as he who purifies silver, or, as the purifier of silver, And will try them as he who tries gold, or, as the trier of gold. The participle following "as" I regard as active, and not passive, as made by the Punctuists. — Ed.

drawn out of the mine, it differs not much from what is earthy. The same is the case with gold. But the furnace so purifies the gold and silver from their dross, that they attain their value and excellency. Hence Zechariah says, that when God casts his faithful people into the fire, he does this according to his paternal purpose in order to burn out their dross, and thus they become gold and silver who were before filthy and abominable, and in whom much dross abounded. We see then that the elect of God, even those who may be rightly counted his children, are here distinguished from the reprobate, however they may profess God's name and worship.

Now this passage is not inconsistent with that in Isaiah,

``I have not purified thee as silver and gold, for thou hast been wholly consumed.'' (Isaiah 48:10.)

Though God tries his elect by the fire of afflictions, he yet observes moderation; for they would wholly faint were he to purify them to the quick. It is however necessary to pass through this trial of which the Prophet now speaks: and thus the state of the Church is here described --- that it ought to be always and continually cleansed, for we are altogether unclean; and then, after God has washed us by his Spirit, still many spots of uncleanness remain in us; besides, we contract other pollutions, for it cannot be but that much contagion is derived from those vices by which we are on every side surrounded.

He now adds, He will call on my name, and I will answer him [330] With this consideration God mitigates what was in itself hard and grievous. It is hard to see so many dreadful evils, when God treads under foot the greater part of the world, and when his vengeance bursts forth on the Church itself, so that his severity on every side fills us with fear. But this also is added --- that we are daily to feel the fire, as though God meant to burn us, while yet he does not consume us. Hence the Prophet shows how these miseries are to be sweetened to us, and how sorrow becomes not too grievous; for we are tried by the cross and the scourges and chastisements of God in order that we may call on his name. Hearing follows calling; and nothing can be more desirable than this. The Prophet then proves from the happy effect, that there is no reason for the faithful to murmur against God, or impatiently to bear their evils, because being purified they can now really flee to him.

Were any to ask, whether God can by his Spirit only draw the elect to true religion? If so, why is this fire of affliction and hard trial necessary? The answer is, that he speaks not here of what God can do, nor ought we to dispute on the subject, but be satisfied with what he has appointed. It is his will then, that his own people should pass through the fire and be tried by various afflictions, for this purpose --- that they may sincerely call on his name. We must at the same time learn that it is the true preparation by which the Lord brings back the elect to himself, and forms in them a sincere concern for religion, when he tries them by the cross and by various

[330] The singular number "he," or rather "it," refers to "the third part" at the beginning of the verse. Henderson, renders these lines literally, "It shall invoke my name," etc. According to our version and Newcome, this is partly done. It would be better in a translation to adopt the plural throughout — They shall call on my name, And I will answer them; And I will say, "My people are they;" And they will say, "Jehovah is our God." There is a conversive [{[{ wanting before ``say'' in the third line, for the verb is in the past tense; it is supplied by the Septuagint, the Syriac, and the Arabic. Here is an instance of manifest omission, not supported by any MS., but by the early versions. --- Ed.

chastisements; for prosperity is like mildew or the rust. We cannot then look to God with clear eyes, except our eyes be cleansed. But this cleansing, as I have said, is what God has appointed as the means by which he has resolved to render his Church submissive. It is therefore necessary that we should be subject, from first to last, to the scourges of God, in order that we may from the heart call on him; for our hearts are enfeebled by prosperity, so that we cannot make the effort to pray. But this consolation is ever to be applied to ease our sorrows, when our flesh leads us either to perverseness or to despair; let this remedy occur to us, that though chastisement is hard while it is felt, it ought yet to be estimated by what it produces, as the Apostle also reminds us in Hebrews 12:11. Let us especially know that the name of God is then seriously invoked, when we are subdued, and all ferocity, and all the indulgence of the flesh, are corrected in us: for we are like untamed heifers, as Jeremiah says, when God indulges us. (Jeremiah 31:18.) Hence the discipline of the cross is necessary, so that earnest prayer may become vigorous in us.

He shows at last how God may be invoked, for we are taught that he will be kind and propitious to us, whenever called upon. It would not indeed be enough for us to groan under the burden of afflictions, and to be thus awakened to prayer, except God himself allured us and gave us hope of favor. Hence the Prophet adds, I will say, My people they are; and they will say, Jehovah our God is he. The Prophet in short means, that unless the promises of God shine on us, and invite us to prayer, no sincere prayer can ever be drawn from us. How so? Because we first come to God by faith alone, and this opens the gate to us, and all prayers not founded on faith are rejected; and further, we know that men naturally dread the presence of God, and will do so until he gives them a taste of his goodness and love. Hence what Zechariah says here is especially worthy of notice, --- that God's word precedes, so that we may follow with confidence, and be able to enter through the gate opened to prayer, for except he first says, ``ye are my people,'' we cannot claim the privilege of entering into his presence and say, ``thou art our God.'' For who has bound God to us, that he should be a God to us? even he himself; for he has bound himself to us when he promised that we shall be his people. There is then, as I have said, no right beginning to prayer until we are taught that God is ready to hear our prayers, as it is said in Psalm 65:2, ``Thou God hearest prayers, and all flesh shall come to thee.''

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou sees that we are full of so many sinful desires, which defile whatever purity thou hast conferred on us by thy Spirit, --- O grant, that we may daily profit under thy scourges, and so submit ourselves to be ruled by thee, as to become resigned and obedient, even when thou dealest with us with unusual severity; and may we ever taste of the sweetness of thy goodness in thy greatest rigour, and know that thou thereby providest for our safety, and leadest us towards perfect purity, from which we are as yet far distant, so that we may be obedient to thee in this world, and become hereafter partakers of that victory which Christ has procured for us, and enjoy with him his triumph in thy heavenly kingdom. --- Amen.

chapter 14

Lecture One Hundred and Sixty-fifth

Zechariah 14

Z

Zechariah 14:1, 2

1. Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee.

1. Ecce dies venit Iehovae, et dividentur spolia tua in medio tui.

2. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city.

2. Et congregabo omnes gentes contra Ierusalem in proelium, et capietur urbs, et diripientur domus; mulieres stuprabuntur; et exibit dimidia pars urbis in exilium, et residuum populi non excidetur ex urbe.

Zechariah pursues the same subject as in the preceding chapter: for having promised a joyful and happy state to the faithful, who despising their indulgences in Chaldea had returned to their own country, he now reminds them that their peaceful condition in Judea would not be without many trials and troubles; and therefore he exhorts them to patience, lest they should faint in their adversities, and repent of their return.

Some apply this chapter to the time of Antichrist, some refer it to the last day, others explain it of the destruction of the city which happened in the reign of Vespasian; but I doubt not but that the Prophet meant here to include the calamities which were near at hand, for the city had not yet been built, [331] the Jews having been much harassed by their neighbors; and we also know how atrocious was the tyranny which Antiochus exercised: in short, there was a continued series of evils from the time the city and the temple began to be built till the coming of Christ. As then the Jews, who had preferred foreign countries to their own, might have boasted

[331] This was not done till the time of Nehemiah, who returned to Judea about ninety years after the first return under Zerubbabel, and several years, probably thirty or forty, after the date of this prophecy. — Ed.

of their lot and despised their brethren, as though they had foolishly and thoughtlessly removed from foreign lands, and had been too precipitate in returning, God designed to declare by the mouth of Zechariah what evils were at hand, that the faithful might with a courageous mind be prepared to undergo their trials, and that they might never succumb under any evils, for the Lord had promised more to them than what they could have attained in Chaldea and other countries. Having now explained the meaning of the Prophet, I shall come to the words. [332]

Behold, he says, the day shall come to Jehovah, and divided shall be thy spoils in the midst of the city. By the demonstrative particle Behold, the certainty of the prophecy, as it has been elsewhere said, is intimated; for the Prophet points out as by the finger what could not yet be comprehended by human minds. And he says, that the day would come to Jehovah, that they might know that they would suffer a just punishment when the Lord treated them in this manner; for men, we know, indulge themselves and seek pleasures, and when God seems not to deal kindly with them, they raise a clamor as though he were too severe. Hence the Prophet reminds them, that so great a calamity would not come without a cause, for God would then execute his judgment. He does not expressly describe it, but he speaks as though he summoned them before God's tribunal. Now when we understand that we have to do with God, it avails us nothing to murmur. It is then better to be silent when God is set forth as being in the midst of us, for it is certain that he will not in chastising us exceed what is just.

But here is described a hard affliction; for Zechariah intimates that the city would be exposed to the will of enemies, so that they would divide at pleasure their spoils in the very midst of it. What conquerors snatch away, they afterwards in private divide among themselves; and we know that many cities have been plundered, when yet the conquerors have not dared to expose to view their spoils. But the Prophet means here that there would be no strength in the Jews to prevent their enemies from dividing the spoils at their leisure in the midst of the city.

He afterwards adds, I will gather all nations against Jerusalem. He confirms what I have already said, that God would be the author of those calamities, and thus he puts a restraint on the Jews, that they might not expostulate with him respecting the severity of their punishment. He then shortly intimates, that the nations would not come by chance to attack Jerusalem; and that whatever commotions would arise,

[332] Dathius truly says, that interpreters have toiled much in the explanation of this chapter, some taking the words in a spiritual sense, others maintaining that what is here said was fulfilled before the coming of Christ, and a third party holding that all is as yet unfulfilled. He was disposed on the whole to assent to the opinion of Grotius, the same in part with that of Calvin — that this prophecy, as well as some in the preceding chapters, were fulfilled in the times of the Maccabees. See 1 Maccabees 6:26, etc. He indeed admits that this theory does not remove all the difficulties, but leaves less than any other. Marckius doubted not but that the beginning of this chapter is a prophecy concerning the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, and he quotes Jerome, Cyril, and Theodoret as having expressed the same opinion. Lowth, Scott, Adam Clarke, and Henderson take the same view. But the sequel of this chapter may be better explained by the events which followed the attacks of the Greco-Syrian kings on Jerusalem, (see 2 Maccabees 4,) than by the events which followed the ruin of that city by the Romans. Blayney viewed the contents of this chapter, and much of what is found in the preceding chapters, as yet unfulfilled: and so does Newcome in part. Henry is doubtful whether this chapter and the preceding are to be understood of the whole period from the Prophet's days to the days of the Messiah, or to some events during that time, or to Christ's coming and the setting up of his kingdom upon the ruins of the Jewish polity. — Ed.

they could not be ascribed to chance or to fortune, or to the purposes of men, but to the decree of heaven. He then bids them to look to God, that they might humble themselves umber his mighty hand, according to what Peter also does. (1 Peter 5:6.) He might have said in a briefer manner, ``All the nations shall conspire;'' but he ascribes this to God, and says, that he will bring them, like a prince, who collects an army, which he commands to fight under his banner. And by naming all nations, he reminds them that their trials would not be light; for such would be the union of enemies, and so large would be their number, that Jerusalem would be brought nigh to utter ruin. But afterwards he subjoins a consolation to moderate the grievousness of that calamity: yet he says first -

Taken shall be the city, plundered shall be the houses, and the women shall be ravished. What usually happens to a city taken by storm, the citizens of Jerusalem, the Prophet says, would have to endure. It is indeed an extreme outrage, when women are ravished by enemies; and then, poverty is often more grievous than death; and yet he says, that when deprived of their substance they would have to witness an outrage more hard to be borne than death itself, because their women would be subjected to such a disgrace.

He adds, that half part of the city would depart. He had said before that a third part only would be saved; but he now seems to be inconsistent with himself. But as to number we need not anxiously enquire, as I have elsewhere reminded you; for the Prophets often mention half part and then the third, when yet they mean the same thing. It is the same as though he had said, that the destruction would be so great, that hardly half of them would remain alive.

Now follows the consolation which I have mentioned, --- that the residue of the people would not be exterminated from the city. By these words the Prophet teaches them, that though hard would be the condition of the city, as it would be reduced nearly to a waste, yet they who having returned to their country sincerely worshipped God, would be blessed; for the Church would ever remain safe, and that how much soever God might lessen the number, yet a part of the Church, however small, would be kept safe. The object then of the Prophet is to comfort the faithful, that they might sustain whatever evils might be at hand, and look for what God promises, even that a Church would again emerge, and that God would really prove that Jerusalem was not in vain his sanctuary, where he would bless the remnant which escaped, and escaped through his wonderful favor. He afterwards adds ---

Zechariah 14:3

3. Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle.

3. Et egredietur Iehova, pugnabit contra gentes istas, sicut die quo proeliatus est in die proeli.

Zechariah here amplifies the favor of God, --- that he will go forth openly, and avowedly carry on war against all the enemies of Jerusalem. It was not indeed a small mitigation of their evils, that a part of the Church would be saved. But the Prophet declares here what is still far better, --- that when God afflicted his Church, and suffered it to be violently assailed by enemies, he would become at length the

avenger of all the wrongs they might have done. We know how we are wounded and tried, when God gives loose reins to the ungodly, and when they grow wanton in their wickedness and triumph, insult God, and almost spit as it were at the very clouds. When therefore the ungodly thus petulantly exult, and God in the meantime hides himself and is still, it is difficult to wait patiently for the issue. Hence the Prophet promises that God will become the avenger, after having allowed his Church to be for a time chastised by ungodly and wicked enemies.

Go forth, he says, shall Jehovah. We know the meaning of this metaphorical expression. The Prophets sometimes extend the phrase, ``Go forth shall God from his holy place,'' as though they said --- that the Jews would find by experience that God's name is not invoked in vain in his temple, and that it has not been said in vain, that God is seated between the cherubim. But the Prophet seems here to speak of God generally, as going forth armed from his recesses to resist the enemies of his Church. Go forth then shall God; for he had for a time concealed his power. In a like manner, we know that God hides his face from us when he brings us no help, and when we also think that we are neglected by him. As then God, as long as he hides his power, seems to be without power, hence the Prophet says here, Go forth shall Jehovah, and he will fight against these nations

By these words he intimates, that there is no reason for the faithful to envy their enemies, even when all things go on prosperously with them; for they will at length find that they cannot injure the Church without God undertaking its cause, according to what he has promised,

``I will be an enemy to thine enemies.'' (Exodus 23:22.)

But as this is a thing difficult to be believed, he calls to mind ancient history, ---

As in the day, he says, in which he fought in the day of battle. Some confine this part to the passage through the Red Sea; but I think that Zechariah includes all the instances which God had given to the Jews to prove that they were the objects of his care. God then, not only once, not at one time, nor in one manner, had put forth his power, that the Jews might plainly see that they became conquerors through his aid. This is what Zechariah means. He in effect says, ``Both you and your fathers have long ago found that God is wont to fight for his Church; for he has honored you with innumerable victories; you have been often overwhelmed with despair, and his favor unexpectedly shone upon you, and delivered you beyond all that you hoped for: you had often to contend with the strongest enemies; they were put to flight, even when ye were wholly unequal to them in number, and yet God bestowed upon you easy victories. Since then God has so often and in such divers ways cast down your enemies, why should you not hope for the same aid still from him?''

We hence see why the Prophet now refers to the ancient battles of God, even that he might by facts confirm the Jews in their hope, and that they might not doubt but that God was endued with power sufficiently strong to subdue all the ungodly, for he loses none.

And he adds, in the day of battle, even when there is need of help from heaven. He indeed calls it the day of engagement or contest, for so the word {קרב}, koreb, properly means. When therefore it was necessary for God to engage with enemies,

then his power appeared: ``There is hence no reason for you hereafter to doubt, but that he will still prevail against your enemies.'' We know that this mode of speaking is frequently and commonly used by the Prophets, that is, when they adduce examples of God's favor and power, by which he has proved that there is in him alone sufficient help for the deliverance of his Church.

It behaves us now to apply to ourselves what is here said, for Zechariah did not only speak for the men of his age, or for those of the next generation, but he intended to furnish the Church with confidence till the end of the world, so that the faithful might not faint under any trials. Whenever then the ungodly prevail, and no hope shines on us, let us remember how often and by what various means God has wonderfully delivered his Church as it were from death; for it was not his purpose only once to help and aid his own people, but also to animate us, that we at this day may not despond, when we endure evils with which the fathers formerly struggled. He then adds ---

Zechariah 14:4

4. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.

4. Et stabunt pedes ejus in die illa super montem Olivarum, qui est e regione Ierusalem ab Oriente; et scindetur mons Olivarum a dimidia parte sui ab Oriente ad Occidentem (vel, versus Orientem et Occidentem) vallis magna valde; et discedet dimidia pars montis ad Aquilonem, et dimidia pars ejus ad Meridiem.

He continues the same subject, that God's power would be then conspicuous in putting enemies to flight. He indeed illustrates here his discourse by figurative expressions, as though he wished to bring the Jews to see the scene itself; for the object of the personification is no other but that the faithful might set God before them as it were in a visible form; and thus he confirms their faith, as indeed it was necessary; for as we are dull and entangled in earthly thoughts, our minds can hardly rise up to heaven, though the Lord with a clear voice invites us to himself. The Prophet then, in order to aid our weakness, adds a vivid representation, as though God stood before their eyes.

Stand, he says, shall his feet on the mount of Olives. He does not here promise a miracle, such as even the ignorant might conceive to be literal; nor does he do this in what follows, when he says, The mount shall be rent, and half of it shall thorn to the east and half to the west [333] This has never happened, that mount has

[333] "This sign," [God's feet standing on the mount,] says Kimchi, "is a type of the clearing of the Gentiles who came against Jerusalem, and who shall fall scattered about." The Targum gives this paraphrase, "He shall be revealed in his power." "The rending," says Drusius, "signifies the flight of the nations, who, on finding God fighting against them, shall flee away in all directions: so that the mountain on which the besiegers fixed their camp shall seem as though divided into parts." Theodoret's language is to the same purpose; he regarded the mountain as symbolic of the enemies assembled against the city — [{ὄρος} {καλει} {τήν} {φάλαγγα} {των} {πολεμίων}], etc. Marckius's view of the text is as follows: This mountain rendered access on the east to the city and temple difficult, and intercepted the morning light and the flowing of waters in that direction, both which are referred to afterwards in verse 7 and 8. God's descent on this mountain was a sign of his great displeasure with that nation, and the rending of the mountain was emblematic of a way being made open for the gospel to spread throughout the world. And he regarded the Lord's coming in the next verse as his coming in the ministration of the gospel to render it successful through the world by means of his saints, his apostles, and ministers. --- Ed.

never been rent: but as the Prophet could not, under those grievous trials, which might have overwhelmed the minds of the godly a hundred times, have extolled the power of God as much as the exigency of the case required without employing a highly figurative language, he therefore accommodates himself, as I have said, to the capacity of our flesh.

The import of the whole is, --- that God's power would be so remarkable in the deliverance of his Church, as though God manifested himself in a visible form and reviewed the battle from the top of the mountain, and gave orders how everything was to be done.

He says first, Stand shall his feet on the mount of Olives. Why does he not rather say, ``In the city itself?'' Even because he meant by this mode of speaking to show, that God would watch, that he might see what would be necessary for the deliverance of his Church. All these things, I know, are explained allegorically, --- that Christ appeared on the mount of Olives, when he ascended into heaven, and also, that the mount was divided, that it might be passable, and that the apostles might proceed into the various parts of the world, in order that they might assail all the nations: but these are refinements, which, though they please many, have yet nothing solid in them, when they are by any one properly considered. I then take a simpler view of what the Prophet says, --- that God's hand would be sufficiently conspicuous, whenever his purpose was to aid his miserable and afflicted Church.

The same view is to be taken of what follows, that a great valley would be in the middle, for the rent would be one half towards the north and the other half towards the south. It is the same thing as though he had said, that Jerusalem was as it were concealed under that mountain, so that it was hid, but that afterwards it would be on an elevated place, as it is said elsewhere, ``Elevated shall be the mountain of the Lord,'' say both Isaiah and Micah, ``above all mountains.'' (Isaiah 2:2; Micah 4:1.) That hill, we know, was small; and yet Isaiah and Micah promise such a height as will surpass almost the very clouds. What does this mean? Even that the glory of the God of Jerusalem will be so great, that his temple will be visible above all other heights. So also in this place, Rent, he says, shall be the mount of Olives, so that Jerusalem may not be as before in a shaded valley, and have only a small hill on one side, but that it may be seen far and wide, so that all nations may behold it. This, as I think, is what the Prophet simply means. But those who delight in allegories must seek them from others. It now follows ---

Zechariah 14:5

5. And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee.

5. Et fugietis in vallem montium (vel, per vallem,) quia pertinget vallis montium ad Azal (alii vertunt, ad proximum; alii ad excelsum;) et fugietis sicuti fugistis a facie motus diebus Uziae regis Iehudah; et veniet Iehova, Deus meus; omnes sancti tecum.

The Prophet says again, that God's presence would be terrible, so that it would

put to flight all the Jews; for though God promises to be the deliverer of his chosen people, yet as there were still mixed with them hypocrites, his language varies. But we must further observe, that though the Lord may appear for our deliverance, it yet cannot be but that his majesty will strike us with fear; for the flesh must be humbled before God. What the Prophet then says is the same as though he had said, that the coming of God, which he had just mentioned, would be fearful to all, not only to open enemies whom he would come to destroy, but also to the faithful, though they knew that he would put forth his power to save them. And thus the Prophet seems to reason from the less to the greater; for if the faithful, who look anxiously for God, yet tremble and quake at his presence, what must happen to his enemies, who know that he is against them? As then the Prophet bids here the faithful to be prepared reverently to look for God, so also he shows that he will be dreadful to all the ungodly, in order that the elect might not hesitate to flee to his aid and to rely on him.

Flee, he says, shall ye through the valley of the mountains. Some imagine this to have been a valley so called, because it was of long extent, stretching through chains of mountains; but we read nothing of this in scripture. It seems to me probable, that valleys of the mountains were all those places called, which were rough, impassable, and intricate. Since then there was much wood, and no easy passage through these countries, the Prophet says that there would be a long valley, which never was before, but which the rending, of which he had spoken, would produce. And for the same purpose he adds, Reach shall the valley of the mountains to Azal. This I think is a proper name of a place; [334] yet some render it, next; but I see not for what reason. The meaning then is, --- that where there were previously many hills which were not passable, or even mountains through which it was difficult to penetrate, there would be one continuous and even valley to a place very remote.

And he says, that flight would be hasty, as in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah; for it appears from sacred history that Judah was then shaken with a terrible earthquake. The Jews, as they are bold in their conjectures, suppose that this happened when Uzziah approached the altar to burn incense to God; and Jerome has followed them. But at what time that earthquake happened is not certain. Amos says that he began to prophecy two years after an earthquake, (Amos 1:1;) but for what cause the earth was then shaken we nowhere read: and yet we learn from this as well as from other passages, that it was an awful sign and presage of God's vengeance. God then intended to announce to the Jews a dreadful calamity, when he thus shook the earth. And for the same purpose also does Zechariah now say, that the flight would be precipitous, as when the Jews retook themselves to flight, as it were in extreme

[334] So thought Kimchi, Drusius, Grotius, Newcome, and also Henderson Jerome renders it "proximum — nearest or next," i.e., the temple. The verb [{,[{נסתם with a prefixed ,[{ו] rendered, ``Ye shall flee,'' occurs three times in this verse, and may be the Niphal of ,[{סתם] to stop or close up, as well as the second person plural of ,[{נם] to flee. The Septuagint, the Targum, Symmachus, and the Arabic, take the first meaning, which Dathius and Blayney have adopted: then the verse would be as follows, --- 5. And closed up shall be the valley of the mountains, Reach shall the valleys of the mountains to Azal; Yea, closed up shall it be, as it was closed up At the earthquake, in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah. There are two objections to this version; the one is, that ,[{מפני] ``from the presence,'' before ``earthquake,'' is not a suitable proposition to come after ``closed up:'' but to ``flee from the presence of,'' or from, the earthquake, is an appropriate language. Hence the verse itself clearly shows that the right version is that which has been adopted by most of modern critics. --- Ed.

despair, in the time of Uzziah. As then ye fled from the earthquake, so shall ye flee now. A long time had indeed intervened from the death of Uzziah to the return of the people; hence the Prophet intimates that it would be an unusual calamity, for the like had not happened which had caused so much terror to the Jews for many ages.

But we must remember what I have said --- that this coming of God is not described as fearful for the purpose of threatening the Jews; but rather in order to show that the ungodly would not be able to stand in the presence of God, as he would terrify even those for whose aid he would come forth. And we must also observe what has been stated that God varies his address by his Prophets; for now he speaks to the whole Church, in which hypocrites are mingled with the sincere, and so threatening must be blended with promises, and then, he directs his words especially to the elect alone, to whom he manifests his favor.

He says at length, And come shall Jehovah, my God. The Prophet repeats what he had said shortly before --- that God's power would be made evident to the Jews, as though they saw it with their eyes. There is indeed no necessity to suppose that God would actually descend from heaven; but he teaches us, as I have said, that though God's power would be for a time hidden, it would at length appear in the deliverance of his elect, as though God descended for the purpose from heaven. He calls him his God, in order to gain more credit to his prophecy. He no doubt thus courageously assailed all the ungodly, to whom promises as well as threatening were a mockery; and he also intended to support the minds of the godly, that they might not doubt but that this was promised them from above, though they heard but the voice of a mortal man. The Prophet then with great confidence claims God here as his God, as though he had said --- that there was no reason for them to judge of what he said by any worldly circumstance or by his person; in short, he declares here that he was sent from above, that he did not rashly intrude himself, so as to promise anything which he himself had invented, but that he was favored with a divine mission, so that he represented God himself.

And this also is the object of the conclusion, which has been overlooked by some. All the saints with thee. There seems to be here a kind of indignation, as though the Prophet turned himself away from his hearers, whom he observed to be in a measure prepared obstinately to reject his heavenly doctrine; for he turns his discourse to God. The sentence seems indeed to lose a portion of its gracefulness, when the Prophet speaks so abruptly, Come shall Jehovah my God, all the saints with thee [335] He might have said ``all the saints with him:'' but as I have said, he addresses God, as though he could not, on account of disgust, speak to malignant and perverse men, and this serves much to confirm the authority of his prophecy; for he not

[335] The greatest number of MS. have “and” before “all saints,” as well as the Septuagint, the Targum, the Syriac, and the Arabic. The three last verses have also “his” before “saints.” Very many MS., the Septuagint, the Targum, and the early versions, have “with him,” instead of “with thee.” Then the best reading would be, — And come shall Jehovah my God, And all his saints with him. Blayney proposes another version, — And Jehovah shall come, The God of all holy ones with thee. He considers that Jerusalem, addressed in the second person in verse first, is addressed here, “with thee,” and that what is meant is, that God, the protector of all holy ones, all true believers, would march as it were with Jerusalem as its ally against the nations beforementioned in verse third. Taking the text as it is, the rendering is no doubt literal: but the best authorities are in favor of the text as amended above. — Ed.

only declares boldly to men what was to be, but also appeals to God as his witness; nay, he seems as though he had derived by a secret and familiar colloquy what he certainly knew was committed to him by God. But by saints, as I think, he understands the angels; for to include the holy patriarchs and kings, would seem unnatural and far-fetched: and angels, we know, are called saints or holy in other places, as we have seen in the third chapter of Habakkuk (Habakkuk 3:1); and they are called sometimes elect angels. In short, the Prophet shows, that the coming of God would be magnificent; he would descend, as it were, in a visible manner together with his angels, that men's minds might be roused into admiration and wonder. This is the meaning.

Zechariah 14:6, 7

6. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark:

6. Et erit, die illo non erit lumen pretiosum et coagulatum (ad verbum est, non erit lumen pretiositatum et coagulationum.)

7. But it shall be one day which shall be known to the LORD, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light.

7. Et erit, die uno (ille notus est Iehovae) non dies, neque nox; et erit (aut, accidet) ad tempus vespertinum, ut sit lumen.

The Prophet confirms what we have already observed that the Church would be subject to many troubles and commotions, so that the faithful should not enjoy the common light, but be more miserable than men in general. And he has ever the same object in view, to prepare the faithful to exercise patience, and to remind them that they are not to promise themselves such enjoyments in the holy land, as though they were to be free from the trials of the cross. Lest then they should deceive themselves with vain hopes, he sets before them many evils and many calamities, that they might confidently wait for the aid, of which he had spoken, while immersed in thick darkness, and hardly able to distinguish between day and night. But the rest shall be considered tomorrow.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou hast deigned to separate us to be thy peculiar treasure, and leadest us daily under thy banner, and invites us so kindly and gently by the voice of thy gospel, --- O grant, that we may not reject so great a kindness, nor render ourselves unworthy of our holy calling; and whatever evils must be borne by us, may we sustain them with resigned minds, until having at length finished the contests by which thou wouldst now exercise and prove our faith, we shall be received into that blessed rest, which is laid up for us in heaven, and has been purchased for us by the blood of thine only-begotten Son. Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Sixty-sixth

We explained shortly yesterday why the Prophet says, that there would be for some time no difference between day and night; it was to prepare the faithful for all changes, and to show that they are not to promise themselves anything certain or sure in this world. Days and nights revolve throughout all seasons of the year, but the Prophet shows that there would be an uncertain time, as though it were twilight, or that there would not be constant light, but light mixed with darkness. The two

verses ought to be connected together, when he says, In that day there shall not be precious light and mingled light, or, on the contrary, thick darkness. What he says afterwards, In that day there shall not be day or night, is disjoined by some, but not rightly, as we shall presently see.

But with regard to the words, light of preciousnesses, it is agreed among all writers that the word {יקרות}, ikarut, means what is excellent. As to this word then there is no ambiguity; for the Prophet means that it shall not be a light day, such as is wont to be during a clear sky. But as to the second word, interpreters differ. It is written {יקפאון}, ikophaun: {קפא}, kopha, means to coagulate, to become thick: hence {יקפאון}, ikophaun, signifies density or dense darkness. Some think it to be in construction; and others, that {ו}, vau, is to be put in; and this is probable, as we may see from the context, though yet it may have a twofold meaning. If indeed we join these two words, the Prophet may understand that the light would not be very clear, and that there would not be thick darkness. But we may take the light of densities for that which is steady and fixed, which gains such strength, that it cannot be darkened. But I prefer a different view: we know that the copulative in Hebrew is often taken adversatively; and this exposition is the most suitable, --- that there would not be clear light, but on the contrary, a density, that is, thick darkness, which would obscure the light of the sun, or hinder the eyes of men from enjoying clear light. This seems to be the meaning of our Prophet, In that day there shall not be light, that is, that day shall not be clear, that is, so far that it can be numbered among fair and bright, or clear days; but on the contrary, there will be densities, that is, it will be a cloudy time, for much darkness will fill the sky, and prevent men to see the sun. [336]

As to the subject itself, it is sufficiently apparent what the Prophet meant; for as I said yesterday, and have again reminded you, it was to be a perilous time, so that the miserable Jews would hourly and every moment be filled with fear, as they should see many dangers around them; and there would ever be some appearance of a sudden change. As when we find the south wind blowing, and the heavens covered with clouds, a shower is expected, and every one keeps within floors, and they who travel dare not proceed lest a storm overtakes them; so also the Prophet says, that this time would be like cloudy and dark days.

The same is the meaning of what he adds, It shall be one day, when it shall not be day and night; as though he had said, that there would not be any settled state of weather. Interpreters have given a very different view --- that it would be neither day nor night. Some give this reason, because the Lord will rule his Church by faith; and we indeed know that our salvation is hid under the safe keeping of faith. Others

[336] In favor of [{[{ו instead of [{וי}] before ,[{קפאון}] there are many MS., the Keri and all the early versions. The word means condensity, that is, of darkness, as it answers to night in the next verse; it may then be rendered ``thick darkness.'' The [{ו}] following a negative may often be rendered ``nor.'' The first idea of [{יקר}] is bright, splendid, clear; and then, as what commonly belongs to what is bright, etc., --- precious, excellent. It is here in the plural, but has the meaning of an adjective, --- a mode of speaking common in Hebrew. It is evident that this verse is more fully explained in the next; there can then be no difficulty about the construction and the meaning, --- 6. And it shall be in that day, That there will be no clear light nor thick darkness: 7. But one day will that be, known to Jehovah, No day, and no night; But it shall be, at the time of the evening, That there will be light. By ``one day'' we are to understand a peculiar day, distinguished from every other. To separate the two verses, as is done by Henderson, seems not at all right: and his rendering of the second line, ``That there shall not be the light of the precious orbs,'' bears on it hardly any trace of the Original. --- Ed.

give an entirely different meaning, --- that the Lord will so fill heaven and earth by his own brightness, that there will be no need for the sun and the moon, according to what is said by Isaiah,

``Shine to thee shall not the sun by day nor the moon by night; but to thee shall Jehovah be an eternal light.'' (Isaiah 60:19.)

But these are mere refinements. The real meaning of the Prophet, I doubt not, is, --- that men would be in continual trepidation, as wile the air is in various ways agitated, when clouds arise, when the thunder is heard, and when the light of the sun disappears. When such is the state of the sky, men we know fear, for there is hardly a distinction between day and night. Thus our Prophet warns the faithful as to future events, and prepares them for patience, lest any storm should overwhelm them, and they should despond when overtaken by it, but that they might look for what had been foretold, even for darkness mixed with light, which would be a continual twilight: and the word, twilight, the ancients have said, is derived from one signifying what is doubtful (crepusculum a crepero.)

But we must also notice what he afterwards says, that this day would towards evening be light. He here intimates, that there will ever be a joyful end to the troubles of the faithful. Though then they were tossed by many cares, and troubled with various kinds of fear, as though they were in darkness, yet he says, that the evening would be clear. And this ought to be carefully observed, for with this solace alone is the Spirit wont to ease the sorrows of the godly, that is, that after God has for a while tried them, there will come shortly an end, and that a joyful one, to all their evils, so that God will shine on them like the sun in its meridian splendor. He calls, in short, the attention of the faithful to this end, because God makes thus a distinction between the elect and the reprobate; for though he afflicts both alike, and overwhelms them as with darkness, there is yet light prepared for his elect; and after having suffered them for a time to lie in darkness, he will make them at length to emerge into clear light; but he deprives the reprobate of every hope.

This is the subject which the Prophet now handles; as though he had said, --- ``There is no reason for the faithful to be disheartened by adversities, when darkness on all sides surrounds them; for the Lord will at length restore light to them, of which it was needful for them to be deprived for a time.'' But Zechariah speaks not here of one day, but of a period which would be like a dark day, even until Christ by his coming restored the full light, as the Sun of Righteousness, according to what he is called by Malachi.

Then he says, that this day is known to Jehovah, in order that the faithful night depend on his good pleasure, and not too anxiously enquire about an event hidden from them and the whole world. The day then is known, says Zechariah, only to God, though he speaks of things well known, and which the Jews had at length to know by experience. But his object must be regarded, for his purpose was to restrain the godly, that they might not unnecessarily torment themselves, for we are wont to be too curious to know things: when God's design is to calm us, and to make us rely on his providence, then many thoughts come across our minds, and toss us here and there, and thus we torment ourselves with anxiety. As then it is disease is innate

in human nature, the Prophet supplies a seasonable remedy, --- that the faithful are to allow themselves to be ruled by God, and to follow the example of their father Abraham, ``The Lord will provide:'' when he was in extremity and no escape was open he committed himself to God's providence. So also Zechariah says, that it would be entirely dependent on the will of God alone, now to cover the heavens with darkness, and then to restore the sun, and also to blend darkness with light; and nothing is better for men than to check themselves, and not to enquire more than what is right, nor take away anything from God's power, for whenever men murmur against God's judgments, it is the same thing as though they wished to penetrate into heaven, and concede nothing to him except what they themselves think right. Then, in order to check this presumption, the Prophet says, that this day is known to Jehovah, so that the faithful might patiently wait until the ripened end should come, for our curiosity drives us here and there, so that we always wish to be certain about the end, ``How long is this to endure?'' and thus we complain against God; but when we are not able to subordinate our minds to his will, then we break forth as it were into a furious temper.

We hence see how useful a doctrine this clause contains, where the Prophet sets God as the judge and the arbitrator of all events, so that he afflicts the Church as long as it pleases him, sets bounds to adversities, and regulates all things as it seemeth good to him; and he also covers the heavens with thick clouds, and takes away the sight of the sun. All this then is what the Prophet would have us to know is in God's power, and directed by his counsel. It now follows-

Zechariah 14:8

8. And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be.

8. Et accidet die illo, Exibunt aquae vivae e Ierusalem; medium earum ad mare Orientale, et medium earum ad mare novissimum, (vel, posterius,) aestate et hyeme erunt.

Here is subjoined a more cheering prophecy, --- that the grace of God would yet prevail. Whatever evils, and troubles, and dangers, and fears, and diseases awaited the faithful, he yet says that in such miseries they would still be made happy. And this ought to be carefully observed, for nothing can be more suitably found to alleviate our sorrows than to put in the balance God's benefits on one side, and on the other the punishments and chastisements which he brings on us; for as God's mercy and kindness always greatly preponderate, it cannot be but that we shall be able to say with holy Job,

``If good things have we received from the Lord's hand,
why should we refuse evil things?'' (Job 2:10.)

This then is what Zechariah sets before us, --- that though the Church may be harassed by many cares, and subject to many fears, and terrified by many dangers, and be as it were in trepidation, yet the grace of God, if rightly viewed, is sufficient to administer invaluable comfort, for go forth shall living waters from Jerusalem [337]

[337] "Living, that is, running waters. This passage refers to the wide effusion of divine knowl-

This prophecy no doubt refers to the kingdom of Christ, and this may be sufficiently proved by other passages. The Prophet then has hitherto spoken of the many afflictions, which were nigh at hand, in order that the Jews might not faint or entirely fail; but he now directs their minds to the kingdom of Christ, from whence they were to look for not only a deliverance from all evils, but also the full restitution of the Church, and as it were the renovation of the world.

There is here no doubt an implied contrast between living waters and those which soon dry up: hence he says, that they would flow continually summer and winter. [338] Judea, we know, was subject to want of water, and there were no waters around Jerusalem, except the spring of Siloam, which had waters in abundance, and supplied the wants of the citizens. But the Prophet promises living waters, which would not be like occasional streams, but flow continually. At the same time he seems to regard something higher. As by living waters he understands those which are spiritual, so he compares these waters with all those streams which are earthly; as though he had said, ``the fountain from which the two streams arise is inexhaustible, so that its exuberance shall never fail, but shall send forth streams from one sea to the opposite sea, and shall water the farthest regions of the earth.''

By the eastern sea many understand the Lake Asphaltes, but it seems to me more probable that the Prophet speaks of the Persian Sea; [339] for if he had said that the waters would go forth to that lake, the distance would be very short; but he meant on the contrary to show, that the copiousness of the waters would be so large and abundant that though they would pass through the whole earth, yet their flow would never cease. By the hinder sea he no doubt meant the Mediterranean. The import of the whole is, --- that thong the earth were previously dry, yet such would be the abundance of waters as to be sufficient for all, not only as in former times to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, but also to all the Jews in whatever part of the country they might dwell.

Now, since the language is metaphorical, we must bear in mind what I have lately said, --- that here is set forth the spiritual grace of God; nor is it a new thing to apply the word waters to the Spirit of God:

``I will pour forth waters on the dry land
and rivers on the thirsty land'' (Isaiah 44:3;)

and again,

``I will give clean waters.'' (Ezekiel 36:25.)

There is a twofold reason why Scripture gives the name of waters to the Holy Spirit, --- because he performs the two offices of cleansing and of watering: for we are like barren and dry land, except the Lord by his Spirit from heaven gives us new vigor and conveys moisture to us. As then the earth derives moisture from heaven, that it

edge from Jerusalem when restored." — Newcome. The Gospel blessings are often mentioned as waters. See Isaiah 55:1; Jeremiah 2:13; Ezekiel 47:1; John 4:10. "Perennial waters" is the rendering of Dathius. — Ed.

[338] "In those countries most springs failed during summer." — Newcome.

[339] Both Newcome and Henderson consider it to be the Lake Asphaltes or the Dead Sea. The land of Canaan is here throughout contemplated, and not the whole world, as Calvin and many others have thought. The land of Canaan was emblematic of the land of the Church, the whole world; hence what is promised to extend to the extremities of its borders is to be understood, when it appertains to Christ's kingdom, as extending to the utmost limits of the earth. — Ed.

may produce fruit, so also we must have conferred on us by the hidden power of the Spirit whatever vigor we may possess. Since then Zechariah promises a fountain of living waters, he understands that God's grace would be offered to all the Jews, so that they might drink and be satisfied, and no more be exposed as formerly to the want of water.

If any one objects and says, that this interpretation seems forced, the answer is ready at hand, which is this, --- that as it is certain that the prophet here speaks of the kingdom of Christ, this rule is to be remembered, --- That whatever is foretold of Christ's kingdom, must correspond with its nature and character. Since then the kingdom of Christ is spiritual, there is no doubt but that when Scripture, as we have seen, promises a large produce of corn and wine, an abundance of all good things, tranquillity and peace, and bright days, it intends by all these things to set forth the character of Christ's kingdom. We hence see what the prophet means by living waters; and then, why he says that they would go forth to the east and to the west; and lastly, why he adds, that they would flow in winter as well as in summer. It now follows ---

Zechariah 14:9

9. And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one.

9. Et erit Iehova in regem super totam terram; die illo erit Iehova unus, et nomen ejus unum.

Here the prophet shows more clearly, and without using a figurative language, what might otherwise be more obscure: he says, that Jehovah would be king. Here Zechariah compares the kingdom of Christ with those periods of misery and calamities which had preceded, and which had continued till the coming of Christ. We indeed know that there had been the most dreadful scattering through the whole land, since the time the ten tribes separated from the family of David; for since the body of the people ceased to be one, they wilfully contrived ruin for themselves. When therefore the Israelites fought against Judah, the wrath of God appeared, the fruit of their defection. We indeed know that David was not made king by the suffrages of men, but was chosen by the decree of God. Hence when the kingdom of Israel departed from the son of David, it was the same as though they had refused to bear the authority of God himself, according to what he said to Samuel,

``Thee have they not despised, but me,
that I should not reign over them.'' (1 Samuel 8:7.)

And yet Samuel was only a governor for a time over the people; but when the people through a foolish zeal wished a king to be given then, God complains that he was despised in not being allowed to reign over them alone. This was more fully completed, when the ten tribes separated themselves from the lawful kingdom which God himself had established and had commanded to be inviolable. From that time then God was not their king. This is one thing.

Afterwards we know that the kings of Israel joined themselves with the kings of Syria to overthrow the kingdom of Judah, and that the Jews also sent for aid to the Assyrians, and afterwards had recourse to the Egyptians. At length the kingdom

of Israel was cut off; then the kingdom of Judah, and the city was destroyed and the temple burnt, so that the worship of God for a time ceased. They afterwards returned; but we know they were ever oppressed by hard and cruel tyranny: when they perceived that they were unprotected, because they had refused to take shelter under the wings of God. Though he had so often told them that they would be safe and secure under his protection, they yet refused that favor. Therefore the Jews then found to their great loss that God was not their king.

Hence when Zechariah now speaks of the restoration of the Church, he rightly says, that Jehovah would be king; [340] that is, though the Jews had been torn asunder and pillaged by tyrants, though they had suffered many reproaches and wrongs, yet God would become again their king, that He might defend them against all unjust violence and keep them under His protection. Nothing indeed can be more blessed than to live under the reigns of God; and this highest happiness is ever promised to the faithful.

We now understand the Prophet's meaning as to this part; but he shows immediately after that this cannot be hoped for, except the Jews really attended to true religion and worshipped God aright and cast away their superstitions. Hence he joins together these two things, --- that the condition of the people would be a happy one, because God would undertake the care of them and perform the office of a king, --- and then, that God would be their king, in order that he might be rightly and sincerely worshipped by them: there shall be, he says, one Jehovah. Here the Prophet briefly shows that the legitimate worship of God cannot be set up, unless superstition be abolished. We indeed know that God is jealous, as he calls himself, so that he cannot bear rivals: for when we devise for ourselves any sort of deity, we instantly take from God what is his own. The Prophet then teaches us, that God cannot be truly worshipped, except he shines alone as the supreme, so that our religion may be pure and sound. In short, he indirectly condemns here those superstitions by which the earth had been corrupted and polluted, and also the superstitions by which true religion had been adulterated and the worship under the law had been violated. For this reason he says, that Jehovah would be one [341]

He expresses this still clearer by saying, that his name would be one. This second clause may indeed appear useless; for whatever can be said of God is comprehended in his oneness. But as we are wont by various artifices to cover superstitions, and ever devise new excuses and new disguises, by which our impiety may seem specious and plausible, the Prophet expressly adds here, that God's name is one;

[340] It is added, "over all the earth," according to our version and Newcome and Henderson; but it ought to be, "over the whole land," as it appears evident from the verses which follow; and our version and Newcome render the same phrase, "all the land" in the next verse, while Henderson, more consistent with himself, but not with the meaning of the passage, retains the words, "all the earth." — Ed.

[341] Henderson seems to have unnecessarily introduced another version, In that day Jehovah alone shall be, And his name alone. The obvious meaning is, that there would be but "one Jehovah" acknowledged, to the exclusion of all pretended deities, and that his "name" would be one to the exclusion of every other name. It is an announcement suitable to the previous state of things, when many gods were acknowledged, and many names given to them, under which they were worshipped. Much more emphatical and expressive is the usual rendering, — In that day there shall be one Jehovah, and his name one. [{Εσται} {κύριος} {εἰς} {καὶ} {τὸ} {ὄνομα} {αὐτου} {ἕν}]. --- Septuagint ``One name'' is mentioned, because the heathens pretended to worship the true God under various names. --- Ed.

as though he had said, ``It is not enough for men to declare that they acknowledge one true God or one supreme deity, except also they agree in some true and simple faith, so that the name of this one true God may be celebrated on the earth.'' But the idea of the Prophet will become more clear if we notice the difference between the one true God and the name of the only true God, or the one name of God. All the philosophers with one mouth teach, that there are not many gods, but some supreme deity, who is the source of divinity: and this is what has been believed by all heathen nations. But in course of time they began to imagine that from this source many gods have emanated; and hence has come a multitude of false gods, so that some worshipped Jupiter, others Mercury, others Apollo; not because they thought that there are many gods partaking of original divinity; but because they imagined that gods have proceeded from the supreme fountain. As then the Jews might have sought subterfuges, and excused themselves by saying that they did not in heart worship many gods, the Prophet adds the second clause, --- that the name of God is one; which means, that there is a certain way in which God is to be worshipped, that there is a certain fixed rule, so that no one is to follow what he himself may imagine to be right, and that the majesty of God ought not to be profaned by various errors, nor should men be lost each in his own notion, but that all ought to attend to the voice of God, and to hear what he testifies of himself.

We now then understand what the Prophet means: he says first, that things would be in a happy state in Judea, when God would be regarded as one, that is, when the whole land had been cleansed from its defilements, and when true religion again prevailed: but as this purity would not easily obtain footing in the world, and as men easily decline from it, he adds, that the name of God would be one, in order that the Jews might understand that God cannot be rightly worshipped except he be alone worshipped; and that it cannot be one, unless there be one faith, prescribed and certain, and not alternating between diverse opinions, like that of the heathens, whose religion is no other than to follow what they themselves imagine or what they have derived from their ancestors.

Now this is a remarkable passage: God distinguishes himself from all idols and his worship from all superstitions; and the more attentively we ought to consider what the Prophet teaches us, because our inclinations, as I have said, to vanity, is so great, and this is what experience itself sufficiently shows, and we also see how easily superstition, like a whirlwind, carries us away, and not only one superstition, but innumerable kinds of superstition. The more then it behaves us to notice this truth, so that the one name of God may prevail among us, and that no one may allow himself the liberty of imagining anything he pleases; but that we may know what God ought to be worshipped by us. And Christ also condemns for this reason all the forms of worship which prevailed in the world, by saying to the woman of Samaria,

``Ye know not what ye worship, we Jews alone,'' he says,
``know this.'' (John 4:22.)

We hence see that this one thing is sufficient to condemn all superstitions, that is, when men follow their own fancies, and observe not a fixed and unchangeable

rule, which cannot deceive. It follows ---

Zechariah 14:10

10. All the land shall be turned as a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem: and it shall be lifted up, and inhabited in her place, from Benjamin's gate unto the place of the first gate, unto the corner gate, and from the tower of Hananeel unto the king's winepresses.

10. Vertetur tota terra quasi planities a Geba ad Rimmon versus meridiem Ierusalem; exaltabitur et habitabitur loco suo, (sub se, ad verbum,) a porta Ben-jamin ad locum portae primae, ad portam angulorum, et ab arce Chananeel ad torcularia Regis.

The Prophet in this verse promises two things, --- that the city would be in a very prominent place, so as to be seen at a distance, and also, that it would be a secure and peaceable habitation.

With regard to the former part he says, Turned shall be the whole land into a plain [342] We indeed know that Jerusalem was situated with mountains around it, its foundations, as it is said in Psalm 87:1, were on the holy mountains. As then the country was uneven on account of its many hills, the Prophet says, that it would become a wide plain, so that travelling would not be rough and difficult as before; and further, that Jerusalem would not be low in a deep place, but would be on a plain, which would not prevent it from being seen from whatever quarter the visitants might come. The whole land, he says, shall be a plain from Geba to Rimmon. As we do not fully know what sort of country that was, nor where Geba and Rimmon were, I shall not speak here particularly on every word; but it is enough for us to understand the design of what is said, which was to show --- that steep places would become level ground, so that Jerusalem might be seen from far, and that the surface being level there would be no mountains to impede a distant view. [343]

Then follows the second clause, Inhabited shall be Jerusalem in its own place; that is, though it was formerly pulled down, and now lies as it were dilapidated, and the buildings already begun are very imperfect, yet it shall on itself be inhabited, it shall have the same limits, the same boundaries: in short, the Prophet means, that the size of the city would be the same as it was formerly.

Zechariah, we know, performed the office of a teacher, when the Jews began, not without great hindrances, to build the city. They were not able at first to take in the whole compass; indeed they thought this impracticable, until they were encouraged by Ezra and Nehemiah, as we learn from the books of both. Since then the city they began to build was confined in its limits, Zechariah says, that there was no reason to despair, for in a short time it would again attain its ancient splendor, and be extended to all its gates, as it is afterwards stated. And a description of the ancient city, when destroyed, is no doubt given here when he says,

From the gate of Benjamin to the place of the first gate, (he mentions the place of the gate, for there was then no gate, as that part of the city remained as yet

[342] I would render the words, — All around shall the whole land be like a plain. The verb [{,l{ɔo means to turn or go round, to be in a circuit. --- Ed.

[343] "Geba" was in Benjamin, north of Jerusalem, Joshua 21:17; and "Rimmon" was in Judah, south of Jerusalem, Joshua 15:32. — Ed.

desolate,) to the gate of the corners, from the citadel of Hananeel to the wine-vats of the king. Though we know not fully now how far the ancient Jerusalem extended, or what was its exact situation, it is yet certain that the Prophet meant that such would be the greatness and magnificence of the city, that its condition would fully equal its ancient splendor which then had disappeared. The city, as it is well known, had been very large; though writers do not agree on the subject, yet it is commonly admitted, that it included 30 stadia. This was certainly no common size; and hence the Prophet states what all thought to be incredible, that though the extent of the city was small, it would yet become a new Jerusalem, not inferior to the former either in largeness or in magnificence, or in any other respect. But we must defer what remains till tomorrow.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou gatherest us for this end, that we may be to thee a peculiar people, and as thou hast separated us from profane men, that thy legitimate worship may prevail among us, --- O grant, that we may all attend to thy word, and surrender ourselves wholly to thee, and never thorn aside either to the right hand or to the left, but continue to observe the rule which thou hast prescribed, so that we may know by the continual flowing of thy favor that thou rulest in the midst of us; and may we by this enjoyment be stimulated more and more to love, worship, and fear thee, so that consecrating ourselves, body and soul, truly and from the heart, to thee, we may make continual advances in true religion, until having at length put off all the filth of our flesh we shall come to that blessed inheritance, which has been purchased for us by the blood of thy only begotten Son --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Sixty-seventh

Zechariah 14:11

11. And men shall dwell in it, and there shall be no more utter destruction; but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited.

11. Et habitabunt in ea, et excidium non erit amplius: et habitabitur Ierusalem confidenter.

Zechariah concludes what he said in the last verse by saying, that Jerusalem when restored by God to its pristine state would be a populous city, for the indefinite verb here used means the same as though he had said, that the number of people would be as great as it had been before, though a small portion only had returned. We indeed know how difficult it is to fill a city with inhabitants when once deserted, especially after a long interval of time. But the Prophet here exhorts the Jews to entertain hope, for the Lord would gather again a large number of men, so as to fill the city with inhabitants.

He adds, there shall be no more utter destruction [344] By the word {חרם}, cherem, I have no doubt, the Prophet means all utter ruin, such as had happened when the people were driven into exile. And for this reason and in the same sense, Isaiah

[344] Rendered "a curse — [{ἀνάθεμα}]," by the Septuagint, by Marckius, Newcome, and Henderson,---"slaughter --- occisio," by the Targum. The verb means especially two things --- to devote a thing to God --- and to devote a thing to death, or to entire ruin. From this latter meaning has come the idea of a curse and destruction, which is evidently what is intended here. The Jews were not to be a curse so as to be utterly destroyed, though they were to be subject to many evils. They are not utterly cut off even now according to the doctrine of St. Paul. --- Ed.

says, that God had sworn that the destruction of the city would be like the deluge of Noah, (Isaiah 54:9;) for he should never again bring such a grievous and dreadful vengeance on his people. But we learn from the whole passage, that this prophecy extends to the kingdom of Christ; for though Jerusalem was destroyed by Titus, it is yet true that God bad been the perpetual guardian of that city, inasmuch as the fullness of time had come when Christ was revealed. It is then the same as though the Prophet had said, that such should be the moderation of God's anger, that the name of the city would wholly perish, nor the whole people be forced to migrate. This then is what he understands by {חרם}, cherem

He now adds, that those who returned thither shall dwell safely in Jerusalem, for the Lord would protect them, and by an extended hand defend them against all enemies. We have elsewhere reminded you of the Prophet's object; for he wished to goad the tardiness and sloth of those who made so much of their pleasures in Chaldea, that to return to the inheritance promised them from above was unpleasant and grievous to them. Hence he shows of how great a benefit of God they had deprived themselves; for being dispersed among the heathen nation they knew not that God's aid was provided for them. They indeed deprived themselves of that promise which especially belonged to the remnant who dwelt at Jerusalem. The Prophet had also a particular regard to those miserable inhabitants of the land, who having been stimulated by God's promises, had despised all dangers and all difficulties, and then had undergone, not grudgingly, vast troubles that they might possess their own country. The Prophet then shows that they had no reason to repent, for the Lord would bless them, and make them to dwell safely in the midst of enemies, by whom we know they were on every side surrounded, and further, that the city would become populous, though they were not then many in number. It follows ---

Zechariah 14:12

12. And this shall be the plague wherewith the LORD will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem; Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth.

12. Et haec erit plaga qua percutiet (vel, plagabit) Iehova omnes populos, qui pugnaverint contra Ierusalem, ---liquescet (alii vertunt, tabescet) caro ejus, dum ipse stabit super pedes suos; et oculi ejus liquescent in foraminibus suis; et lingua ejus liquescet in ore ipsorum.

The Prophet adds, that though there would not be wanting many ungodly men, who should distress the Church, and attempt many things for its destruction, yet God would be a defender and would inflict punishment, which would exhibit a clear and decided proof of that paternal favor which he manifests towards his Church. But these things do not seem to harmonise --- that the people should dwell safely at Jerusalem, and yet that there would be enemies violently disturbing the city: but by saying, that they should dwell safely, he means not that there would be none anxious to do them harm; but that trusting in God's protection they would continue safe in the greatest dangers, as they would feel persuaded that God, who promised to stand on their side, would be stronger than all. The habitation of the godly would then be

secure, not because they dreaded no attacks of enemies, but because they firmly believed that they would be preserved by a power from above, though the devil excited many people on all sides against them, and also prepared and suborned many wicked men to contrive their ruin.

And to this power it behaves us to raise up our thoughts when various enemies rage against us, so that we may dwell in safety and wait with quiet minds until God shall deliver us; for our safety is concealed under the faithful protection of God, which is only made known to us by the word and promises. Let us, however, bear in mind what the Prophet teaches us here --- that when God gives loose reins to enemies, his vengeance is near, so that he will visit with punishment all those wrongs and injuries which we patiently endure.

This, he says, shall be the plague with which Jehovah shall smite all people. He mentions all people again, lest a multitude of enemies should terrify the faithful, when they found themselves unequal to them, and almost overwhelmed by their vast number; they were not to doubt but that the hand of God would prevail. Then he adds, His flesh shall consume away, or melt away: there is a change of number, but the sense is not obscured; for he says, This shall be the plague with which Jehovah shall smite all people; his flesh shall melt away, as though he was speaking of one man; and then he immediately adds, while he shall stand on his feet; and his eyes shall melt away, and his tongue in their mouth [345] We see how the Prophet changes the number three times; but there is in the subject itself nothing ambiguous. He means that it would be nothing to God, when resolved to punish the adversaries of his Church, whether they were many or few; for he can easily destroy them all, as though he had to do only with one man. But it seems also that Zechariah had another thing in view --- that as God's vengeance would regard each individual, no one of them would be safe, and that thus the vengeance of God would be universal, without any exception, and executed on all armies and on each individual.

We must now notice the kind of punishment which is here described --- that God would destroy them all without the hand or the aid of men: his flesh, he says, shall melt away, or dissolve. In this case divine vengeance is more clearly seen, that is, then enemies, though no one fights with them, yet of themselves consume away: and then he adds, when they shall stand on their feet; and yet their flesh shall melt away. The Prophet no doubt alludes to the curses of the law, among which this is especially to be observed --- that God in various ways consumes the wicked, so that they melt away when no cause appears. (Deuteronomy 28:21,22.)

The meaning then is, that God has various means by which he can reduce to nothing our enemies, though they may seek aid on every side. We are therefore taught by these words to cast all our cares on God; for when our enemies seem to be placed beyond the chance of danger, and confidently boast that nothing adverse can happen to them, yet in God's hand is their death and life, so that they can be consumed by his breath only. There is then no reason for us to depend on earthly means, when we seek to be certain respecting the destruction of our enemies; for

[345] The way to account for this is, that the words, [{,[{העמים}-{כל}-{את at the beginning of the verse, are to be rendered, ``every one of the peoples,'' or, ``each of the nations.'' Then the singular number here refers to ``every one,'' or ``each'' nation of the nations. --- Ed.

God can inwardly consume them; though they may seem to stand whole and sound, yet they will be dissolved, so that even their eyes shall melt away in their cavities, that is, they shall fail without any external force. We indeed know that eyes are well protected; being covered with their defences, they seem to be beyond the reach of harm. But the Prophet intimates that the hidden vengeance of God can penetrate into the bowels and marrow; in short, that there is nothing so safe that it can escape the vengeance of God. The tongue also, he says, shall melt away, or dissolve (it is the same verb) in their mouth. He afterwards adds ---

Zechariah 14:13

13. And it shall come to pass in that day, that a great tumult from the LORD shall be among them; and they shall lay hold every one on the hand of his neighbour, and his hand shall rise up against the hand of his neighbour.

13. Et accidet, die illo erit tumultus Iehovae magnus in illis; et apprehendet quisque manum socii sui; et ascendet manus ejus contra manum proximi sui (vel, evanescet; alii vertunt, excidetur manus ejus, quia [{עלה}] etiam significat excidere.)

The Prophet seems again to be inconsistent with himself; for after having declared that God would be the defender of his people, so as to destroy and consume all people for their sake, he now adds that there would be intestine discords, by which the Jews would wilfully consume one another; while yet there is nothing more improbable than that the people, who live under God's protection, should so divide themselves into factions, as to perish miserably without any outward enemy. But these things do not ill accord, provided we bear in mind what I have already said --- that these things are to be taken in a different sense; for the Prophet at one time warns the faithful of the evils which were impending, lest being shaken by their suddenness, they should despond; at another time he promises them a happy condition, for they would ever be the objects of God's care. So then we may explain the matter thus --- ``Though enemies on every side should unite and conspire against you, though they should hasten with great fury and rage to destroy you, and though a vast member at home, and domestic enemies from the bosom of your city, should rise up against you, yet God will prevail against them, and all your enemies shall at length be for your good and benefit.''

This then is the reason why Zechariah blends together what seems to be wholly inconsistent. It was necessary to know both these things --- that the faithful might be fully persuaded that God watched over their safety, for it was his purpose to defend the holy city, and to be its perpetual guardian --- and then, that they might also be prepared in their minds to bear many trials and troubles, lest they should promise to themselves a joyful state, and thus indulge in carnal security. Having now explained the Prophet's intention, we must briefly notice the words.

He says that there would be a great tumult from Jehovah among them. This no doubt refers to the Jews; for the Prophet shows that they would be not only exposed to external injuries, but also to another evil --- that they would arm themselves against one another, as though they would tear out their own bowels. A tumult, he says, shall be among them, which is the extreme of evils that can happen to a city or people;

for no danger is nearer than when they who ought as one man to unite strength and courage to repel an enemy, rage internally against themselves.

But this passage deserves special notice, as here is described to us the condition of the Church, such as it is to be until the end of the world; for though the Prophet speaks here of the intermediate time between the return of the people and the coming of Christ, yet he paints for us a living representation, by which we can see that the Church is never to be free or exempt from this evil --- that it cannot drive away or put to flight domestic enemies. And we must also observe, that this tumult, as he says, would be from Jehovah [346] He means that whenever the Church is rent, and sects burst forth, and many hypocrites and ungodly men, who for a time pretend to be God's true servants, furiously assail true religion --- whenever these things arise, the Prophet means that they do not happen by chance, but that they are God's judgments, in order to prove the faith of his people, and to humble his Church, and also to give to his people a victory and a crown. However this may be, though their own ambition rouses heretics, and all the ungodly, to disturb the Church, and though the devil excites them by his own fans, yet God sits in the chief place, and whatever commotions rage in the Church proceed from him. Hence Paul says that heresies must be, that those who are approved may become manifest. (1 Corinthians 11:19.) Certainly this is not the object of the devil; but Paul shows that it is the high purpose of God, so that he may distinguish by severe trial between his sincere servants and hypocrites; for he not only permits tumults to arise, but even stirs them up. And hence also we learn, that nothing is better than to flee to him when ungodly men race and distort our peace; for he can easily by a nod silence those commotions which he excites.

He adds, Every one shall lay hold on the hand of his companion, and rise up (or perish) shall his hand against the hand of his neighbor. This passage may admit of a twofold meaning. The first is, that every one for the sake of obtaining help will lay hold on the hand of his neighbor, and yet without any advantage, for his own hand would perish, that is, he who sought aid for his friend could not support himself: and this is the meaning given by many interpreters; as though the Prophet had said, that the state of things would be so desperate, that every one would be constrained to seek help from his friend, and yet could not obtain what he desired, for while attempting to lay hold on the hand of his friend, he would find that he could not grasp it. But a different meaning would better correspond with the next verse, --- that every one would violently lay hold on the hand of his neighbor, and his hand would rise up against the hand of his neighbor. I think then that this part is added as explanatory, --- that when God raised tumults among the Jews, every one would

[346] Literally it is "the tumult of Jehovah," that is, proceeding from him, occasioned or produced by him. The arrangement of the words would lead us to make such a version as the following— 13. And it shall be in that day, That there shall be a tumult from Jehovah, Great shall it be among them; And they shall strengthen them; And raised up shall his hand be against his neighbor. The two last lines describe the tumult and confusion; some would strengthen the hands of their neighbors, others would raise up their hands against them. The verbs "strengthen," with no preposition before "hand," cannot mean to seize or lay hold on in an unfriendly manner. See Isaiah 35:3; Jeremiah 23:14; and see also Isaiah 41:13; Ezekiel 30:25. The state of things described here corresponds exactly with the account given by Josephus, and in the books of the Maccabees, of the Jewish nation in those days; they were not only assailed by outward enemies, but also by traitors among themselves. — Ed.

start forward to act violently against his neighbor, and raise up his hand to hurt him: for it follows ---

Zechariah 14:14

14. And Judah also shall fight at Jerusalem; and the wealth of all the heathen round about shall be gathered together, gold, and silver, and apparel, in great abundance.

14. Atque etiam Iehudah pugnabit contra Ierusalem, et congregabitur exercitus (alii vertunt, opulentiam, quod etiam non male quadraret) omnium gentium in circuitu aurum et argentum et vestes ad copiam multam (ad multitudinem valde, ad verbum.)

Zechariah speaks here no doubt on the same subject; for he adds, that there would be an intestine war between the country and the city, though they were but one body, and since their return they were under the same Divine banner: God had indeed been their leader in their journey, and was in short the only remaining glory of the people. It was then something horribly monstrous, that Judah should join himself to enemies in order to destroy the city: yet the Prophet says that this evil, as well as other evils, would soon be witnessed; so that they would have not only to sustain the assaults of enemies, who would come from far, but would also find their brethren hostile and hurtful to them: Fight then shall Judah against Jerusalem [347]

At what time this happened, it is well known; for under Antiochus we know that both the city and the whole land were full of traitors; inasmuch as hardly one in a hundred continued to follow true religion. Thus it happened, that almost all were trodden under foot. It was not then without reason foretold by Zechariah, that the Jews would become cruel enemies to their own brethren.

He then adds, Collected shall be the armies of all nations. The word {חיל}, chil, means forces, wealth and strength. I am disposed to follow what I have already said, --- that the army or strength of all nations around would be collected to overthrow Jerusalem. The Prophet intimates in these words that the Jews would apparently be the most miserable of men, were their condition estimated by their state at that time; for there would be harassing traitors within, so that they had to fear intrigues and hidden dangers, and many people also from every part would unite to destroy them. Nothing can be imagined more miserable than to be assailed from within and from without by almost the whole of mankind. But there will presently follow a consolation; and hence we must bear in mind what I have said, that threatening are given by way of warning, that the faithful might courageously bear those ruinous attacks, relying on the hope of a better state of things, according to what God had promised.

When afterwards he mentions gold, and silver, and garments, he intimates that the enemies, whom he speaks of, would not come, as though they were hungry, running to the prey; but that they would be so savage as to seek nothing but blood;

[347] Most commentators render this line, "And Judah shall fight in Jerusalem," but contrary to Scripture usage. The verb used here for "fight," when followed by [{,[{ɑ almost invariably means to ``fight against.'' The exception which Henderson makes as to place, is not well founded. The very same form of words occurs in Nehemiah 3:8 and the rendering is, ``against Jerusalem.'' See also 1 Samuel 23:1. The history of the Jews, as detailed both by Josephus and the Maccabees, fully bears out what is here said: and this corresponds with what is said of Judah in chapter 12:2. Whatever view may be taken of this and the preceding chapters, it cannot be denied but that there is a striking coincidence between what they contain, and the events connected with the Jews from the time of Ezra to the coming of Christ. --- Ed.

for they would be furnished with necessaries, having an abundance of gold and silver. For what purpose then would they come? Not to satiate their avarice, but only to gorge human blood, and thus to extinguish the memory of the chosen people. Even to hear this was terrible; but it was necessary to warn the faithful, lest they should be surprised by any sudden event. He afterwards adds ---

Zechariah 14:15

15. And so shall be the plague of the horse, of the mule, of the camel, and of the ass, and of all the beasts that shall be in these tents, as this plague.

15. Et talis erit plaga equi, muli, cameli, et asini, et cujuslibet jumenti (vel, animalis,) quod erit in castris istis, sicuti plaga haec.

Zechariah in this verse raises up the minds of the godly, so that they might know that their energies would effect nothing, but that after having tried every thing they would be put to flight by the power of God. And hence appears more evident what has been twice repeated, --- that the Prophet does not simply denounce calamities to terrify the Jews, but to animate them to constancy, that they might boldly exult, even when nearly overwhelmed by a vast heap of evils.

The meaning then is, --- that after Satan had tried every thing to effect the ruin of the Church, and the ungodly had left nothing undone, there would yet be a successful issue to the faithful; for God would execute his vengeance, not only on men, but also on horses and camels, and on all cattle: and since God's wrath would burn against all animals, which are in themselves innocent, it may with certainty be concluded, that those enemies who had provoked him by their cruelty, could not escape his judgment, and the punishment described here by the Prophet. He then subjoins -

Zechariah 14:16

16. And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles.

16. Et erit, (hoc est, accidet,) ut quisque residuus fuerit ex cunctis gentibus quae venerint contra Ierusalem, ascendat ab anno in annum ad adorandum, (vel, ad supplicandam,) Regem Iehovam exercituum, et celebrandum celebritatem tabernaculorum.

Zechariah here advances farther, --- that those who shall have escaped the ruin of which he had spoken shall be so humbled that they would of their own accord submit to God. He said before, that God would take vengeance and destroy all the enemies of his Church; but the promise here is still more valuable, --- that he would turn the hearts of those who escaped punishment, so that without any constraint they would become obedient; for come, he says, shall they every year to worship God in his temple. Then the sum of what is said is this, that God would subdue all the enemies of his Church, and in two ways, for some he would destroy, and he would humble others, so as to make them willing servants and ready of themselves to obey his authority. It shall be then that every one who shall remain of all the nations which came against Jerusalem, shall ascend to supplicate God, or humbly to worship God.

If the time be inquired, I answer, that whenever the Prophets speak of the conversion of the nations, they are wont to speak always in general terms; but that this is

an hyperbolical language, and that still there is nothing unreasonable in this excess, for surely it was a wonderful work of God when a great number from the nations became subject to him. We indeed know, that the name of the people of Israel was universally hated, so that their religion was disliked by almost the whole world. It was then a thing incredible when Zechariah said, that men from all countries would be so changed as to worship the true God of Israel. But many Churches we know were everywhere formed in the world, and men without number professed God's name, and undertook his yoke, and embraced that religion which before had been despised by them, and which indeed they had persecuted with the greatest hatred. It is therefore no wonder that the Prophet should say, that the remnant who escaped the sword of vengeance would at length become the willing servants of God. But we ought to notice, as I have said, the mode of speaking commonly adopted by the Prophets, for, in order to amplify the grace of God, they speak in general terms, though what they say ought to be confined to the elect alone.

Ascend, he says, shall every one from year to year. Zechariah speaks here also according to the apprehensions of the people. Festivals, we know, were appointed by God; the Israelites ascended at least three times a year unto the temple, but as this was too hard and difficult for the miserable exiles to do, who had been scattered through all countries, those influenced by zeal for religion were wont to descend unto Jerusalem once a year. To this custom of the law the Prophet now alludes, as though he had said, ``God indeed spares some, yet they will at length come to his service without any constraint, and submit to the God of Israel.'' But he speaks, as I have said, according to the rites of the law; and of this mode of speaking we have often reminded you: I shall therefore pass by the subject, but some additional remarks shall be made at the end of this chapter. Ascend then shall every one to supplicate the king, Jehovah of hosts; that is, that they might confess the only true God to be king: for he has regard to the Prophecy which we considered yesterday, when he said that the only true God would be king. So also in this place, confirming the former truth he says, that they who had before furiously assailed the Church would become the worshipers of God, for they would understand him to be the king of the whole world. But the remainder shall be deferred to another time.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou sees that thy Church at this day is miserably torn by many discords, and that there are so many traitorous ministers of Satan, who cease not to disturb it, --- O grant, that we may find by experience what thou hast promised by thy Prophet, even that thou wilt be the perpetual guardian of those whom thou hast been pleased once to choose as thine own, and whom thou hast received into thine own embrace, so that they may courageously proceed amidst all discords, and come forth at length as conquerors: and may it please thee also to put forth thine hand, and to execute that vengeance which thou hast denounced by the same Prophet, so as to destroy and reduce to nothing not only those who openly oppose thee and thy servants and children, but also those serpents, who by intrigues and frauds and by other base means, harass and torment thy Church, until we shall at length attain a full victory and triumph in thy celestial kingdom, together with our

head, even Christ Jesus our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Sixty-eighth

Zechariah 14:17, 18

17. And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain.

17. Et erit, Qui non ascenderit e familiis terrae in Ierusalem ad supplicandum Regi, Iehovae exercituum, etiam non erit super eos pluvia.

18. And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain; there shall be the plague, wherewith the Lord will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles.

18. Et si familia Egypti non ascenderit et non venerit, etiam non super eos; erit autem plaga qua percutiet, (plagabit, ad verbum,) Iehova gentes quae non ascenderint ad celebrandam festivitatem Tabernaculorum.

Zechariah goes on here with the same subject, --- that the name of the only true God would be known throughout the whole world, so that all nations would unite in his worship, while the whole earth was before polluted with various superstitions, and every one followed his own god: but the more clearly expresses here than in the last lecture, that vengeance was prepared for all the despisers of the true God. He says then, that the curse of God is laid up for all those who would not come to Jerusalem humbly to worship God to there.

We have said that in these words is set forth the legitimate worship of God; for after the coming of Christ it was not necessary to ascend into Jerusalem according to what John says in John 4:21

``The time comes and now is, that the true worshippers of God shall worship God, neither in this mountains nor at Jerusalem;''

but in every part of the world. But the Prophets speak according to the state of things in their time, and always describe the spiritual worship of God according to the types of the law. To ascend then into Jerusalem amounts to the same thing as to embrace true religion and cordially to engage in the worship of the only true God, such as has been prescribed in his word. The meaning then is, --- that all who despised the God of Israel would be accursed.

Then what follows is mentioned by the Prophet as a part for the whole; he declares that there would be no rain on the despisers of God; as though he had said, that they would perceive God's vengeance, as he would take away from them all the necessaries of life; for by rain the Prophet means whatever is needful for the support of life. And we know that as to the blessings of God needful for the present life, the chief thing is, when he renders the heavens and the earth the servants as it were of his bounty to us: for how can we be supplied with food, except the earth by his command open its bowels and the heavens hear the earth, as it is said elsewhere, (Hosea 2:21;) so that rain may irrigate it, and render it fruitful, which must be otherwise barren?

We now then understand the design of the Prophet, --- that in order to invite all nations to the pure worship of God, he declares that all who refused to serve the only

true God would be accursed. He further intended by this prophecy to animate the Jews, that they might firmly proceed in the course of true religion until the coming of Christ, and never doubt but that the God whom they worshipped would be the supreme king of the whole world, though before hidden as it were in a corner of the world, while worshipped in Judea alone. The Prophet then intimates that though God had been despised by all nations, his name would yet be sanctified and adored; and also, that if any deprived him of his legitimate worship they would be visited with punishment, because they were destined to perish through famine and want, inasmuch as the heavens would deny rain to them, and the earth would not give them food.

But Zechariah speaks expressly of the Egyptians: and we indeed know that they were most inveterate enemies to true religion; and he might have also mentioned the Assyrians and the Chaldeans; but as the Egyptians were nearer and more contiguous to the holy land, their hatred towards the Jews was more virulent. This is the reason why Zechariah speaks of them particularly. It may at the same time appear strange that he threatens them with want of rain; for we know that Egypt expects no rain from above, because of the peculiar condition of the country; for according as the Nile overflows, do the inhabitants look for a fruitful produce of corn and of all other things. The Prophet then ought not to have thus threatened the Egyptians, for they might have justly laughed at him for saying that there would be no rain for them, the want of which is not much felt there. But the Prophet's intention was simply what I have already explained, --- that God would be a Father to the Jews, and also to others who joined in his worship according to the law. Though then the Egyptians had no need of rain, yet by this metaphor Zechariah denounced on them sterility as the punishment of impiety.

And we may further observe, that though the overflowing of the Nile irrigated the whole land and made it fruitful, yet rain was by no means useless; and it is said in Psalm 105:32, ``He turned their rain into hail,'' Egypt being the place spoken of; for the Lord destroyed all its fruit, because the rain was turned into hail. It appears also evident from history, that rain is desirable in Egypt in order to render the produce more abundant. But the Lord has favored that country with a peculiar benefit by supplying the want of rain by the Nile.

There is then nothing doubtful in the meaning of the Prophet, as his object was to show, that the Lord would constrain all people to become obedient to true religion, not only those Jews who were far removed from Judea, but even the Egyptians themselves, who had been always most alienated from true and pure worship.

He adds, There shall be upon them the plague. He now speaks more generally; and what he before specifically mentioned, he now declares in general terms, --- that God would execute vengeance and destroy and reduce to nothing all those who took not on them the yoke, so as to worship him sincerely, together with the Jews, according to what the law prescribes. He again repeats the words, who ascended not into Jerusalem; not that he intended to confine the worship of God to ceremonies or rites under the law; but because it was necessary, until Christ abrogated all the ancient rites, that the worship of God should be thus described; nor could it then be

separated from these external exercises.

But here it may be rightly inquired, why the Prophet speaks specifically of the feast of tabernacles, since the passover was deemed first among the festivals. The reason seems to me to have been this, --- because it was difficult to believe that the Jews would return to their own country, that God would become again their redeemer. Many interpreters say, that the Prophet speaks of the feast of tabernacles, because it behaved them to be sojourners in the world: but a similar reason might be given for other days. We must then inquire why he mentions the feast of tabernacles and not other feasts. Now we know that when the Prophets speak of the second restoration of the people, they often call attention to that wonderful deliverance from Egypt by which God had proved that he possessed sufficient power to redeem and save his own people. To this instance does Zechariah now allude, as I think, and says, that God would restore his people by his wonderful and inexpressibly great power, so that they might justly celebrate the feast of tabernacles as their fathers formerly did: for we know why God commanded the Jews to dwell every year under the branches of trees; it was, that they might be mindful of that deliverance which had been granted to their fathers; for they had continued forty years in the desert, where they had no buildings, but huts only, made of branches of trees. When therefore they went forth from their houses, and dwelt as it were in the open air in tents, they thus revived the memory of the wonderful manner by which their fathers were delivered. Hence God, in order to show that their return from the Babylonian exile was worthy of being remembered, says here that the feast of tabernacles would be celebrated [348]

In short, the Prophet means that God would be such a deliverer of his people, that all the nations, even from the remotest parts, would acknowledge it as a remarkable miracle: it is the sense then as though he had said, that the deliverance of the people would be an evidence of divine power so manifest and illustrious, that all nations would acknowledge that the God of Israel is the creator of heaven and earth, and is so endued with supreme power, that he governs the whole world; and, in a word, that he is the only true God who ought to be worshipped. [349] It afterwards follows ---

Zechariah 14:19

19. This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles.

[348] See Nehemiah 8:13-18.

[349] The two verses, 17 and 18, I would render thus, — 17. And it shall be, that whosoever shall not ascend, Of the families of the land, to Jerusalem, To worship the King, Jehovah of hosts. 18. Not on them shall be rain; And if the family of Egypt Shall not ascend and shall not come,— On them shall be the plague, Which Jehovah will bring on all the people Who will not ascend to keep the feast of tabernacles. The “land” of Judah, not earth or the world, is what is meant, as it is evident from the contrast in the next verse, “the family of Egypt.” The word [{ארף} means commonly in the Prophets the land of Canaan. The words [{ולא}] before ``on them'' in verse 18, are left out of four MS., in the Septuagint and the Syriac; and they seem to be wholly misplaced here. I render [{גוים}] ``people,'' and supply [{כל}] before it, as in verses 14 and 16, supported by very many MS., and by the Septuagint. The word here and everywhere in this chapter, in verses 2,3,14,16, and 19, is in my view improperly rendered ``nations,'' viewed as heathen nations. It has no doubt this meaning in many places, but it means also people or peoples, i.e., the people of Israel. See Deuteronomy 4:6; Joshua 5:6. It is a word of general import, signifying the body of a nation; and her and elsewhere in this chapter it means the whole community of the Jews, whether residing in the land of Canaan or in other parts of the world, especially in Egypt. Intestine broils, and not wars with heathens, are referred to in this chapter. Hence we clearly see the reason why ``the feast of tabernacles'' is mentioned, and why a curse is denounced on those who neglected it. --- Ed.

19. Haec erit poena Egypti et poena omnium gentium, quae non ascenderint ad celebrandum celebritatem tabernaculorum.

He repeats the same thing, and almost in the same words; but yet it is not done without reason: for we ought to consider how difficult it was to believe what is said, as the Jews who had returned to their country were few in number, and unwarlike, and on every side opposed by their enemies. Since then the Church was almost every moment in danger, it was no wonder that the faithful had need of being strengthened under their trials, which often disturbed and harassed their minds. This then is the reason why the Prophet repeats often the same thing.

This, he says, shall be the sin of Egypt and of all nations, etc. The word {חטאת}, chethat, properly means wickedness, sin; but as piaculum in Latin sometimes means sin, and sometimes expiation, so {חטאת}, chethat, in Hebrew: it signifies at one time sin, at another the sacrifice by which sin is atoned: and hence Christ is said to have been made sin; for when he offered himself as an expiation, he sustained the curse which belonged to us all, by having it transferred on himself (Galatians 3:13.) As Christ then was an expiation, he was on this account called sin. And the Greek translators did not change the name, because they saw that {חטאת}, chethat, in Hebrew, is taken for a sacrifice or punishment as well as for sin; hence they used the word hamartia indiscriminately. [350]

So then the Prophet says that this would be the sin or the punishment of Egypt and of all nations, as though he had said, ``If they despise the God of Israel and condemn his worship, such a contumacy shall not be unpunished; for God will show himself to be the vindicator of his own glory.'' And hence we conclude, that nothing ought to be more desired by us than that God should reveal himself to us, so that we may not presumptuously wander after superstitions, but purely worship him; for no one rightly worships God, except he who is taught by his word. It is then a singular favor, when the Lord prescribes to us the rule by which we may rightly worship him: but when we assent not to his true and legitimate worship, we here see that our whole life is accursed. It now follows ---

Zechariah 14:20

20. In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, Holiness Unto The Lord; and the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar.

20. Die illo erit super fraena (aut, phaleras; alii vertunt, frontalia; alii, collaria; dicemus postea de hac voce; vel, stabula, hoc meum est, et postea dicam rationem; super stabula ignitur) equi (hoc est, equorum, est mutatio numeri) sanctitas Iehovae; et erit (hoc est, erunt; iterum est mutatio numeri) lebetes in domo Iehovae sicuti phialae (sic vertit Hieronymus, alii vertunt, pelves) coram altari.

Zechariah teaches us in this verse, that God would become the king of the world, so that all things would be applied to his service, and that nothing would be so profane as not to change its nature, so as to be sanctified for the service of God. This is the import of the whole. There is some obscurity in the words; but interpreters for the most part have been led astray, because they have not sufficiently attended to

[350] The Targum paraphrases it “the punishment of sin,” and so do Jun., and Trem., and Piscator. The word “sin” is retained by Jerome, Cyril, and Marckius. But Newcome and Henderson, in accordance with our version and that of Calvin, render it “punishment.” — Ed.

the design of the Prophet; and thus they have wrested the words to their own views, while they did not understand the subject.

There will be, he says, an inscription on the shades or head coverings of horses, Holiness to Jehovah. No interpreters have perceived that there is here an implied comparison between the mitre of the high priest and all profane things; for since the high priest was a type of Christ, there was inscribed on his tiara, Holiness to Jehovah, {ליהוה} {קדש}, kodash la-Ieve, and as the holiness of the temple, and of everything belonging to the service under the law, depended on the priesthood, this inscription must be viewed as extending to everything in the temple, to the altar, to the sanctuary, to the sacrifices, to the offerings, to the candlestick, to the incense, and in short, to all sacred things.

What now does the Prophet mean? There shall be, he says, that inscription which the high priest bears on his head, Holiness to Jehovah; there shall be, he says, this inscription on the stables of the horses

As to the word {מצלות}, metsalut, it is only found here. Some derive it from {צול}, tsul, and others from {צלע}, tsale; but the more received opinion is that it comes from {צלל}, tsalal, in which the {ל}, lamed, is doubled. And some render it trappings; others, reins; others, bells; and all only conjecture, for there is no certainty. [351] Some also render it the deep; and this sense may be also suitable. But what I have already stated seems to me more probable --- that the shades or blinkers of horses are meant, and are here metaphorically called stables. Though then the stable of a horse is a mean and sordid place, and often filthy, yet the Prophet says that it would become holy to the Lord.

The meaning then is, that no place was so profane which would not be made holy when God reigned through the whole world. But if any one prefers trappings, or warlike harness, I do not object; for this view also is not unsuitable. Nothing is less holy than to shed human blood; and hence the Scripture says, that their hands are polluted who justly slay an enemy in war; not because slaughter is of itself sinful, but because the Lord intended to strike men with terror, that they might not rashly commit slaughter. It would not then ill suit this place to say, that the Lord would make holy the trappings of horses, so that nothing disorderly would hereafter be done in war, but that every one putting on arms would acknowledge God to be a judge in heaven, and would not dare, without a just cause, to engage with his enemy.

Ridiculous and puerile is what Theodore says in the first book of his Ecclesiastical history. He quotes this passage, and says that it was fulfilled when Helena, the mother of Constantine, adorned the trappings of a horse with a nail of the cross; for her purpose was to give this to her son as a sort of charm. One of those nails by which she thought Christ was crucified, she put in the royal diadem; of the other she caused the bit of a bridle to be made, or according to Eusebius, to be partly

[351] It is rendered "bridle — [{τὸν} {χαλινὸν}]," by the Septuagint, the Syriac, and Jerome; ``trappings,'' by the Targum; ``the deep --- [{βυθον}],'' by Aq. and Theod; ``shady procession --- [{περίπατον} {συσχιον}],'' by Sym; and ``bells,'' by Drusius, Grotius, Marckius, Newcome, and Henderson. The last says, that they ``were small metallic plates, suspended from the necks or heads of horses and camels for the sake of ornament, and making a tinkling noise by striking against each other like cymbals.'' The notion of Blayney, that the horses and their bells were trophies taken from enemies and dedicated to God, seems not consistent with the tenor of the passage: for the things employed by the Jews are here mentioned, which were to be used in a holy manner, to the glory of God. --- Ed.

made; but Theodore says that the whole was made of it. These are indeed rank trifles; but yet I thought proper to refer to them, that you might know how foolish that age was. Jerome indeed rejects the fable; but as it was believed by many, we see how shamefully deluded at that time were many of those who were accounted the luminaries of the Church. I now return to the words of the Prophet.

He says, that upon the stables, or upon the trappings of the horses, there would be this inscription --- Holiness to Jehovah --- {ליהוה} {קדש}, kodash la-leve: then he adds, All the pots in the house of Jehovah shall be as the vessels before the altar; that is, whatever was before only applied to profane uses, would be invested with holiness. I then give this interpretation --- that pots or kettles would be like the vessels of the altar, as the whole apparatus for cooking would be converted to the service of God; as though he had said that there would be no profane luxuries, as before, but that common food would be made holy, inasmuch as men themselves would become holy to the Lord, and would be holy in their whole life and in all their actions.

But most go astray in supposing that the trappings would be made into pots; for the Prophet meant another things that holiness would exist among men in peace as well as in war, so that whether they carried on war, or rested at home, whether they ate or drank, they would still offer a pure sacrifice to God, both in eating and drinking, and even in warfare. Such then is the view we ought to take of the Prophet's words --- that all the pots in the house of Jehovah shall be like the vessels before the altar; that is, ``whatever has hitherto been profaned by the intemperance and luxuries of men, shall hereafter become holy, and be like the vessels of the temple itself.''

Jerome philosophises here with great acuteness, as the Prophet intimated that the sacrifices offered under the law would be of no account, because God would no longer require the fat of beasts, nor any of the ritual observations, but would desire only prayers, which are the sacrifices approved by him; and hence he renders {מזרקים}, mesarekim, bowls, and not vessels, a word of wider meaning; but it signifies the latter.

We now see that what Zechariah meant was this --- that God would so claim the whole world as his own, as to consecrate men and all their possessions wholly to his own service, so that there would be no longer any uncleanness, that whether they ate or drank, or engaged in war, or undertook any other work, all things would be pure and holy, for God would always be before their eyes. Let us proceed -

Zechariah 14:21

21. Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the Lord of hosts: and all they that sacrifice shall come and take of them, and seethe therein: and in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts.

21. Et erit omnis lebes in Ierusalem et Iehudah sanctitas Iehovae exercituum; et venient omnes qui sacrificabunt et accipient ex ipsis et coquent in ipsis; et non erit Chamanaeus (alii vertunt non erit mercator) amplius in domo Iehovae exercituum die illo.

The Prophet explains here more clearly what we have already considered --- that

such would be the reverence for God, and the fear of him through the whole world, that whatever men undertook would be a sacrifice to him: he therefore says, that all the kettles, or pots, or vessels, would be sacred to God. And this is fulfilled when men regard this end --- to glorify God through their whole life, as Paul exhorts us to do. (1 Corinthians 10:31.) Our provisions and our beds, and all other things, become then holy to God, when we really devote ourselves to him, and regard in all the actions of our life the end which I have mentioned, even to testify in truth that he is our God, and that we are under his guidance. By such comparisons then does Zechariah teach us, that men will be sacred to God; for nothing they touch shall be unclean, but what was before profane shall be sanctified to his glory. [352]

Come, he says, shall they who sacrifice, and shall boil flesh in pots; as though he had said, That such would be the multitude of men who would ascend to offer sacrifices to God, that the vessels of the temple before in use would not be sufficient. It would hence be necessary to apply for that purpose what was previously profane. The language of Isaiah is similar, for he says that they who were Levites would become priests of the first order, and that those of the common people would become Levites, so that they might all come nigh to God. (Isaiah 66:20,21.) The meaning then of the Prophet is now clear --- that he wished to stir up the Jews to constancy and firmness, who regarded their small number as their reproach and were almost disheartened: as then they thought that they had in vain returned to their own country, as the Lord did not gather the whole people, he says that God's worship would become more celebrated than at the time when the state of things was most flourishing in Judea; for assemble they would, from the whole world, to offer sacrifices to God at Jerusalem, so that the whole city, with all its utensils, would be sacred to God, for the pots and the sacred vessels of the temple, used before under the law, would not be sufficient.

And he adds, And there shall be no Canaanite in the land: the meaning is, that the Church would become pure from all defilements: and this change ought to have given no small comfort to the Jews in their sad and calamitous state; for God had used no small severity, when all were driven into exile; and many tokens of this dreadful rigour still remained, since very few worshipped God, and were despised by all, so that true religion was exposed to the contempt and ridicule of all nations. This compensation then, that the Lord would by this remedy cleanse his Church from its filth, must have greatly allayed their sorrow: on this subject I have already said much.

[352] Drusius, Grotius, and some others, take another view, thinking what the number of vessels required for sacrifices would be very great, so that pots would be used, the bowls belonging to the altar being not sufficient. Grotius says that Antiochus the Great sent 20 thousand pieces of silver (20 mille nummos argenteos) to be spent in sacrifices in the temple, and that Demetrius sent 150 thousand annually; and he refers to Josephus, 12:3 and 13:5. But Marckius justly says, that there is no reference here to number, but to consecration, and agrees in the view given here by Calvin. The same is also taken by Henry, Newcome, Scott, and Henderson. The literal accomplishment of what is here said was at the time posterior to Nehemiah, the last reformer recorded in Scripture, who lived many years — probably from fifty to sixty — after Zechariah, and about ninety years after the first return under Zerubbabel. After Nehemiah, and for nearly three centuries, the state of the Jews was very flourishing and prosperous. Their calamities chiefly commenced in the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, and continued, with some intermission, until their final overthrow by the Romans. — Ed.

Zechariah now briefly promises that the Church would become pure, so that all would from the heart and sincerely worship God, and that there would be no mixture of hypocrites to pollute the temple and holy things. But this seems strange, since the Church has ever been contaminated by many pollutions: and hence John the Baptist compares it to a floor, where the chaff is mixed with the wheat; and it is also compared to a net, into which are gathered many fishes, some good and some bad; and also at this day, in the kingdom of Christ, the Church is subject to this evils that it cannot cast out all corruptions: it seems then that the Prophet has spoken hyperbolically. But what we have elsewhere said ought to be borne in mind --- that a comparison is made between the ancient state of the people and their second state, when the Church was renewed. As the religion had been in the most disgraceful manner corrupted, and as the Jews had impudently boasted that they were the holy people of God, while they were the most wicked of men, the Prophet justly says, that the Church when renewed would be purer; for the Lord would cleanse it by the cross, as gold and silver are cleansed, which are not only tried by the fire, but become also brighter, because the dross is removed. This is simply what the Prophet means when he says, that there will be no Canaanite among the people of God; that is, there will be no foreign or profane men, mingled with the faithful, to pollute the pure worship of God.

Some have wrested the passage and applied it to the last coming of Christ. But this is inconsistent with the subject in hand. At the same time I allow that the kingdom of Christ, according to the prophetic mode of writing, is here described from its commencement to its end. When God therefore purposed to renew his Church, he cleansed it from much filth, and still daily cleanses it, nor will he cease to do so, until, after all the defilements of the world having been removed, we shall be received into the celestial kingdom. Whenever then the Prophets speak of perfection under the reign of Christ, we ought not to confine what they say to one day or to a short time, but we ought to include the whole time from the beginning to the end. Hence when Christ appeared in the world, then began to shine the splendor of which Zechariah now speaks: but the Lord will go on until that shall be completed which now makes continual progress.

Some read, There shall be a merchant no more, etc.; and they have some reason for what they say, for the word is sometimes rendered merchant: but as in this case, we must have recourse to allegories, and take merchants for impious corrupters who make a merchandise of God's worship, or give this interpretation, that there shall be no merchant any more, because all would freely bring their offerings, --- as these explanations are not appropriate, it is better to take the passage simply as it is --- that the Lord will gather his elect, so that pure sacrifices will be offered by them all; and that there will be no hypocrites any more to contaminate and corrupt the Church, or to adulterate the worship of God. [353]

Prayer

[353] The word is rendered "Canaanite — [{χαναναιος}]," by the Septuagint, --- ``merchant'' by the Targum and Aquila, and is taken in this sense by Jerome, Newcome, and Henderson: but Theodoret and Cyril take the first sense, and the latter explains it by ``stranger and idolater --- [{αλλογευνὴς} {και} {εἰδωλολάτρης}].'' It is justly observed by Marckius, that there is nothing in the passage that can lead us to give the word its secondary meaning of a merchant. --- Ed.

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast deigned to choose us as thy peculiar treasure, and to consecrate us to thyself in the person of thy only-begotten Son, --- O grant, that we may so follow holiness through the whole course of our life, that thy glory may shine forth in all our works: and may we never undertake anything except for this end --- that thy name may be more and more glorified, and may we be holy both in body and soul, and free from all the pollutions of the flesh and of the world, that we may be thus confirmed in the hope of our calling, and be encouraged to proceed during the remainder of our course, until we shall at length reach that glory which has been procured for us by the blood of thine only-begotten Son. --- Amen.

End of Calvin's Commentary on Zechariah

Commentary on Malachi

Commentary on Malachi

CALVIN'S PREFACE TO MALACHI

Lecture One Hundred and Sixty-ninth

The Book Of Malachi follows, whom many have imagined to have been an angel, on account of his name. We indeed know that {מלאך}, Melac, in Hebrew is an Angel; but how absurd is such a supposition, it is easy to see; for the Lord at that time did not send angels to reveal his oracles, but adopted the ordinary ministry of men; and as {י}, is added at the end of the word, as it was usual in proper names, we may indeed hence conclude that it was the name of a man; at the same time I freely allow that it may have been added for some particular reason not known to us now. I am more disposed to grant what some have said, that he was Ezra, and that Malachi was his surname, for God had called him to do great and remarkable things.

However this may be, he was no doubt one of the Prophets, and, as it appears, the last; for at the end of his Book he exhorts the people to continue in their adherence to the pure doctrine of the Law: and this he did, because God was not afterwards to send Prophets in succession as before; for it was his purpose that the Jews should have a stronger desire for Christ, they having been for a time without any Prophets.[354] It was indeed either a token of God's wrath, or a presage of Christ's coming, when they were deprived of that benefit which Moses mentions in Deuteronomy 18; for God had then promised to send Prophets, that the Jews might know that he cared for their safety. When therefore God left his people without Prophets, it was either to show his great displeasure, as during the Babylonian exile, or to hold them in suspense, that they might with stronger desire look forward to the coming of Christ.

[354]"It is probable that he was contemporary with Nehemiah. Compare Malachi 2:11 with Nehemiah 13:23-27; and Malachi 3:8, with Nehemiah 13:10."—Newcome. He must then be several years after Zechariah, who began his Prophecy in the second year of Darius Hystaspes, about sixteen years after the first return from captivity, and Nehemiah returned from Persia in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes, about ninety years after the first return, and about seventy-four year after Zechariah began to prophesy. — Ed.

However we may regard this, I have no doubt but he was the last of the Prophets; for he bids the people to adhere to the doctrine of the Law until Christ should be revealed.

The sum and substance of the Book is, --- that though the Jews had but lately returned to their own country, they yet soon returned to their own nature, became unmindful of God's favor, and so gave themselves up to many corruptions; that their state was nothing better than that of their fathers before them, so that God had as it were lost all his labor in chastising them. As then the Jews had again relapsed into many vices, our Prophet severely reproves them, and upbraids them with ingratitude, because they rendered to God their deliverer so shameful a recompense. He also mentions some of their sins, that he might prove the people to be guilty, for he saw that they were full of evasions. And he addresses the priests, who had by bad examples corrupted the morals of the people, when yet their office required a very different course of life; for the Lord had set them over the people to be teachers of religion and of uprightness; but from them did emanate a great portion of the vices of the age; and hence our Prophet the more severely condemns them.

He shows at the same time that God would remember his gratuitous covenant, which he had made with their fathers, so that the Redeemer would at length come. --- This is the substance of the whole: I come now to the words. ---

CHAPTER 1

Malachi 1

Malachi 1:1

1. The burden of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi.

1. Onus sermonis Iehovae ad Israel in manu Maleachi.

They who explain {משא}, mesha, burden, as signifying prophecy, without exception, are mistaken, as I have elsewhere reminded you; for prophecy is not everywhere called a burden; and whenever this word is expressed, there is ever to be understood some judgment of God; and it appears evident from Jeremiah 23:38, that this word was regarded as ominous, so that the ungodly, when they wished to brand the Prophets with some mark of reproach, used this as a common proverb, ``It is a burden,'' intimating thereby that nothing else was brought by the Prophets but threatenings and terrors, in order that they might have some excuse for closing their ears, and for evading all prophecies by giving them an unhappy and ominous name.

As we proceed it will become evident that the doctrine of Malachi is not without reason called a Burden; for as I have stated in part, and as it will be more fully seen hereafter, it was necessary that the people should be summoned before God's tribunal, inasmuch as many sins had again begun to prevail among them, and such as could not be endured: and for this reason he says that God's judgment was at hand.

But under the name of Israel he refers only to those who had returned to their own country, whether they were of the tribe of Judah and Benjamin, or of the tribe of Levi. It is nevertheless probable that there were also some mixed with them from the other tribes: but the Jews and their neighbors, the half tribe of Benjamin, had almost alone returned to their country, with the exception of the Levites, who had been their guides in their journey, and encouraged the rest of the people. They were yet called Israel indiscriminately, since among them only pure religion continued: but they who remained dispersed among foreign and heathen nations, had as it were lost

their name, though they had not wholly departed from the pure worship of God and true religion. Hence, by way of excellency, they were called Israel, who had again assembled in the holy land, that they might there enjoy the inheritance promised them from above.

The word hand, as we have observed elsewhere, means ministration. The meaning then is, that this doctrine proceeded from God, but that a minister, even Malachi, was employed as an instrument; so that he brought nothing as his own, but only related faithfully what had been committed to him by God from whom it came. It then follows ---

Malachi 1:2-6

2. I have loved you, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? Saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob,

2. Dilexi vos, dicit Jehovah; et dixistis, In quo dilexisti nos? Annon frater Esau erat ipsi Jacob? dicit Jehova; et dilexi Jacob,

3. And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness.

3. Et Esau odio habui; et posui montes ejus solitudinem, et haereditatem ejus serpentibus desertum (alii vertunt, deserti.)

4. Whereas Edom saith, We are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places; thus saith the LORD of hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them, The border of wickedness, and, The people against whom the LORD has indignation for ever.

4. Si dixerit Edom, Attenuati sumus, sed revertemur, et aedificabimus deserta: sic dicit Iehova exercituum, Ipsi aedificabunt, et ego diruam; et dicetur illis, Terminus impietatis et populus cui infensus est Iehova in perpetuum.

5. And your eyes shall see, and ye shall say, The LORD will be magnified from the border of Israel.

5. Et oculi vestri videbunt, et vos dicetis, Magnificabitur Iehova super terminum Israel. (Addendus etiam sextus versus, saltem initium:)

6. A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name?

6. Filius honorat patrem, et servus dominum suum; et si pater ego, ubi honor meus? et si dominus ego, ubi timor mei? dicit Iehova exercituum ad vos, O sacerdotes, qui contemnitis nomen meum: et dixistis, In quo contempsimus nomen tuum?

I am constrained by the context to read all these verses; for the sense cannot be otherwise completed. God expostulates here with a perverse and an ungrateful people, because they doubly deprived him of his right; for he was neither loved nor feared, though he had a just claim to the name and honor of a master as well as that of a father. As then the Jews paid him no reverence, he complains that he was defrauded of his right as a father; and as they entertained no fear for him, he condemns them for not acknowledging, him as their Lord and Master, by submitting

to his authority. But before he comes to this, he shows that he was both their Lord and Father; and he declares that he was especially their Father, because he loved them.

We now then understand the Prophet's intention; for God designed to show here how debased the Jews were, as they acknowledged him neither as their Father nor as their Lord; they neither reverenced him as their Lord, nor regarded him as their Father. But he brings forward, as I have already said, his benefits, by which he proves that he deserved the honor due to a father and to a master.

Hence he says, I loved you. God might indeed have made an appeal to the Jews on another ground; for had he not manifested his love to them, they were yet bound to submit to his authority. He does not indeed speak here of God's love generally, such as he shows to the whole human race; but he condemns the Jews, inasmuch as having been freely adopted by God as his holy and peculiar people, they yet forgot this honor, and despised the Giver, and regarded what he taught them as nothing. When therefore God says that he loved the Jews, we see that his object was to convict them of ingratitude for having despised the singular favor bestowed on them alone, rather than to press that authority which he possesses over all mankind in common. God then might have thus addressed them, ``I have created you, and have been to you a kind Father; by my favor does the sun shine on you daily, and the earth produces its fruit; in a word, I hold you bound to me by innumerable benefits.'' God might have thus spoken to them; but as I have said, his object was to bring forward the gratuitous adoption with which he had favored the seed of Abraham; for it was a less endurable impiety, that they had despised so incomparable a favor; inasmuch as God had preferred them to all other nations, not on the ground of merit or of any worthiness, but because it had so pleased him. This then is the reason why the Prophet begins by saying, that the Jews had been loved by God: for they had made the worst return for this gratuitous favor, when they despised his doctrine. This is the first thing.

There is further no doubt but that he indirectly condemns their ingratitude when he says, In what hast thou loved us? The words indeed may be thus explained --- ``If ye say, or if ye ask, In what have I loved you? Even in this --- I preferred your father Jacob to Esau, when yet they were twin brothers.'' But we shall see in other places that the Jews by evasions malignantly obscured God's favor, and that this wickedness is in similar words condemned. Hence the Prophet, seeing that he had to do with debased men, who would not easily yield to God nor acknowledge his kindness by a free and ingenuous confession, introduces them here as speaking thus clamorously, ``He! when hast thou loved us! in what! the tokens of thy love do not appear.'' He answers in God's name, Esau was Jacob's brother; and yet I loved Jacob, and Esau I hated.''

We now see what I have just referred to, --- that the Jews are reminded of God's gratuitous covenant, that they might cease to excuse their wickedness in having misused this singular favor. He does not then upbraid them here, because they had been as other men created by God, because God caused his sun to shine on them, because they were supplied with food from the earth; but he says, that they had been

preferred to other people, not on account of their own merit, but because it had pleased God to choose their father Jacob. He might have here adduced Abraham as an example; but as Jacob and Esau proceeded from Abraham, with whom God had made the covenant, his favor was the more remarkable, inasmuch as though Abraham had been alone chosen by God, and other nations were passed by, yet from the very family which the Lord had adopted, one had been chosen while the other was rejected. When a comparison is made between Esau and Jacob, we must bear in mind that they were brothers; but there are other circumstances to be noticed, which though not expressed here by the Prophet, are yet well known: for all the Jews knew that Esau was the first-born; and that hence Jacob had obtained the right of primogeniture contrary to the order of nature. As then this was commonly known, the Prophet was content to use only this one sentence, Esau was Jacob's brother

But he says that Jacob was chosen by God, and that his brother, the first-born, was rejected. If the reason be asked, it is not to be found in their descent, for they were twin brothers; and they had not come forth from the womb when the Lord by an oracle testified that Jacob would be the greater. We hence see that the origin of all the excellency which belonged to the posterity of Abraham, is here ascribed to the gratuitous love of God, according to what Moses often said, ``Not because ye excelled other nations, or were more in number, has God honored you with so many benefits; but because he loved your fathers.'' The Jews then had always been reminded, that they were not to seek for the cause of their adoption but in the gratuitous favor of God; he had been pleased to choose them --- this was the source of their salvation. We now understand the Prophet's design when he says, that Esau was Jacob's brother, [355] and yet was not loved by God.

We must at the same time bear in mind what I have already said --- that this singular favor of God towards the children of Jacob is referred to, in order to make them ashamed of their ingratitude, inasmuch as God had set his love on objects so unworthy. For had they been deserving, they might have boasted that a reward was rendered to them; but as the Lord had gratuitously and of his own good pleasure conferred this benefit on them, their impiety was the less excusable. This baseness then is what our Prophet now reprobates.

Then follows a proof of hatred as to Esau, the Lord made his mountain a desolation, and his inheritance a desert where serpents dwelt. Esau, we know, when driven away by his own shame, or by his father's displeasure, came to Mount Seir; and the whole region where his posterity dwelt was rough and enclosed by many mountains. But were any to object and say, that this was no remarkable token of hatred, as it might on the other hand be said, that the love of God towards Jacob was not much shown, because he dwelt in the land of Canaan, since the Chaldeans inhabited a country more pleasant and more fruitful, and the Egyptians also were very wealthy; to this the answer is --- that the land of Canaan was a symbol of God's love, not only

[355] The order of the words in the original gives a peculiar emphasis to the sentence — Was it not a brother that Esau was to Jacob? The Welsh will express it word for word — Onid brawd oedd Esau i Jacob? These two verses may be thus rendered — 2. “I have loved you,” saith Jehovah; But ye say, “How hast thou loved us?”— “Was not Esau a brother to Jacob,” saith Jehovah? 3. “Yet I loved Jacob, and Esau I hated; And I have set his mountains a waste, And his heritage for the serpents of the desert.” — Ed.

on account of its fruitfulness, but because the Lord had consecrated it to himself and to his chosen people. So Jerusalem was not superior to other cities of the land, either to Samaria or Bethlehem, or other towns, on account of its situation, for it stood, as it is well known, in a hilly country, and it had only the spring of Siloam, fiom which flowed a small stream; and the view was not so beautiful, nor its fertility great; at the same time it excelled in other things. for God had chosen it as his sanctuary; and the same must be said of the whole land. As then the land of Canaan was, as it were, a pledge of an eternal inheritance to the children of Abraham, the scripture on this account greatly extols it, and speaks of it in magnificent terms. If Mount Seir was very wealthy and replenished with everything delightful, it must have been still a sad exile to the Idumeans, because it was a token of their reprobation; for Esau, when he left his father's house, went there; and he became as it were an alien, having deprived himself of the celestial inheritance, as he had sold his birthright to his brother Jacob. This is the reason why God declares here that Esau was dismissed as it were to the mountains, and deprived of the Holy Land which God had destined to his chosen people.

But the Prophet also adds another thing, --- that God's hatred as manifested when the posterity of Esau became extinct. For though the Assyrians and Chaldeans had no less cruelly raged against the Jews than against the Edomites, yet the issue was very different; for after seventy years the Jews returned to their own country, as Jeremiah had promised: yet Idumea was not to be restored, but the tokens of God's dreadful wrath had ever appeared there in its sad desolations. Since then there had been no restoration as to Idumea, the Prophet shows that by this fact the love of God towards Jacob and his hatred towards Esau had been proved; for it had not been through the contrivance of men that the Jews had liberty given them, and that they were allowed to build the temple; but because God had chosen them in the person of Jacob, and designed them to be a peculiar and holy people to himself.

But as to the Edomites, it became then only more evident that they had been rejected in the person of Esau, since being once laid waste they saw that they were doomed to perpetual destruction. This is then the import of the Prophet's words when he says, that the possession of Esau had been given to serpents. For, as I have already said, though for a time the condition of Judea and of Idumea had not been unlike, yet when Jerusalem began to rise and to be repaired, then God clearly showed that that land had not been in vain given to his chosen people. But when the neighboring country was not restored, while yet the posterity of Esau might with less suspicion have repaired their houses, it became hence sufficiently evident that the curse of God was upon them.

And to the same purpose he adds, If Edom shall say, We have been diminished, but we shall return and build houses; but if they build, I will pull down, saith God. He confirms what I have stated, that the posterity of Edom had no hope of restoration, for however they might gather courage and diligently labor in rebuilding their cities, they were not yet to succeed, for God would pull down all their buildings. This difference then was like a living representation, by which the Jews might see the love of God towards Jacob, and his hatred towards Esau. For since both people were

overthrown by the same enemy, how was it that liberty was given to the Jews and no permission was given to the Idumeans to return to their own country? There was, as it has been said, a greater ill-will to the Jews, and yet the Chaldeans dealt with them more kindly. It then follows, that all this was owing to the wonderful purpose of God, and that hence it also appeared, that the adoption, which seemed to have been abolished when the Jews were driven into exile, was not in vain.

Thus then saith Jehovah of hosts, They shall build, that is, though they may build, I will overthrow; and it shall be said to them, Border of ungodliness, and a people with whom Jehovah is angry for ever. By the border of ungodliness he means an accursed border; as though he had said, ``It will openly appear that you are reprobate, so that the whole world can form a judgment by the event itself.'' By adding, A people with whom Jehovah is angry or displeased, he again confirms what I have said of love and hatred. God might indeed have been equally angry with the Jews as with the Edomites, but when God became pacified towards the Jews, while he continued inexorable to the posterity of Esau, the difference between the two people was hence quite manifest.

Noticed also must be the words, {עולם}-{עד}, od-oulam, for ever: for God seemed for a time to have rejected the Jews, and the Prophets adopt the same word {זעם}, som, angry, when they deplore the condition of the people, who found in various ways that God was angry with them. But the wrath of God towards the Jews was only for a time, for he did not wholly forget his covenant; but he became angry with the Edomites for ever, because their father had been rejected: and we know that this difference between the elect and the reprobate is ever pointed out, that when God visits sins in common, he ever moderates his wrath towards his elect, and sets limits to his severity, according to what he says, ``If his posterity keep not my covenant, but profane my law, I will chastise them with the rod of man; but my mercy will I not take away from him.'' (Psalm 89:31-33 2 Samuel 7:14.) But with regard to the reprobate, God's vengeance ever pursues them, is ever suspended over their heads, and ever fixed as it were in their bones and marrow. For this reason it is that our Prophet says, that God would be angry with the posterity of Esau.

He adds, Your eyes shall see. The Jews had already begun in part to witness this spectacle, but the Prophet speaks here of what was to continue. See then shall your eyes; that is, ``As it has already appeared of what avail gratuitous election has been to you, by which I have chosen you as my people, and as ye have also seen on the other hand how it has been with your relations the Edomites, because they had been rejected in the person of their father Esau; so also this same difference shall ever be evident to you in their posterity: see then shall your eyes

And ye shall say, Magnified let Jehovah be over the border of Israel; that is, ``The event itself will extort this confession, --- that I greatly enhance my goodness towards you.'' For though tokens of God's grace shone forth everywhere, and the earth, as the Psalmist says, is full of his goodness, (Psalm 104:24;) yet there was in Judea something special, so that.our Prophet does not in vain say, that there would be always reasons for the Jews to celebrate God's praises on account of his bounty to them more than to the rest of the world. And the Prophet no doubt reproves here

indirectly the wickedness of the people, as though he had said, --- ``Ye indeed, as far as you can, bury God's benefits, or at least extenuate them; but facts themselves must draw from you this confession --- that God deals bountifully with the border of Israel, that he exercises there his favor more remarkably than among any of the nations.''

After having briefly referred to those benefits which ought to have filled the Jews with shame, he comes at length to the subject he had in view; for his main object, as I have already stated, was to show, that it was God's complaint that he was deprived of his own right and in a double sense, for the Jews did not reverence him as their Father, nor fear him as their Lord. He might indeed have called himself Lord and Father by the right of creation; but he preferred, as I have already explained, to appeal to their adoption; for it was a remarkable favor, when the Lord chose some out of all the human race; and we cannot say that the cause of this was to be found in men. Whom then he designs to choose, he binds to himself by a holier bond. But if they disappoint him, wholly inexcusable is their perfidy.

As we now understand the Prophet's meaning, and the object of this expostulation, it remains for us to learn how to accommodate what is taught to ourselves. We are not indeed descended fronm Abraham or from Jacob according to the flesh; but as God has engraved on us certain marks of his adoption, by which he has distinguished us from other nations, while we were yet nothing better, we hence see that we are justly exposed to the same reproof with the Jews, if we do not respond to the calling of God. I wished thus briefly to touch on this point, in order that we may know that this doctrine is no less useful to us at this day than it was to the Jews; for though the adoption is not exactly the same, as it then belonged to one seed and to one family, yet we are not superior to others through our own worthiness, but because God has gratuitously chosen us as a people to himself. Since this has been the case, we are his; for he has redeemed us by the blood of his own Son, and by rendering us partakers, by the gospel, of a favor so ineffably great, he has made us his sons and his servants. Except then we love and reverence him as our Father, and except we fear him as our Lord, there is found in us at this day an ingratitude no less base than in that ancient people. But as I wished now only to refer to the chief point, I shall speak tomorrow, as the passage requires, on the subject of election: but it was necessary first briefly to show the Prophet's design, as I have done; and then to treat particular points more at large, as the case may require.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast not only designed to give us a life in common in this world but hast also separated us from other heathen nations, and illuminated us by the Sun of Righteousness, thine only begotten Son, in order to lead us into the inheritance of eternal salvation, --- O grant, that having been rescued from the darkness of death, we may ever attend to that celestial light, by which thou guidest and invitest us to thyself; and may we so walk as the children of light, as never to wander from the course of our holy calling, but to advance in it continually, until we shall at length reach the goal which thou hast set before us, so that having put off all the filth of the flesh, we may be transformed into that ineffable glory, of

which we have now the image in thine only-begotten, Son. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Seventieth

We saw yesterday what the object of Malachi was in reminding the Jews that they were loved and chosen by God; it was, that he might the more amplify their ingratitude for having rendered such an unworthy reward for so great a favor of God: as he had preferred them to all other nations, he had justly bound them to perpetual obedience; but they had shaken off the yoke, and having despised God had given themselves up again to many corruptions, as we have yesterday stated. But I reminded you at the same time, that the Prophet refers not here to those benefits with which God favors indiscriminately all mankind, but brings forward the adoption by which he had set apart the seed of Abraham as his peculiar people.

But that it may appear more fully how just this expostulation was, let us first observe, that it is one kind of obligation that God has created us men in his image and after his likeness; for he might have created us dogs and asses, and not men. Adam, we know, was taken from the earth, as other animals were: then as to the body there is no difference between men and other creatures. When it is said that God breathed into man the breath of life, we ought not to dream as the Manicheans do, that man's soul is by traduction; for so they say, affirming that man's soul is from the substance of the Deity; but Moses on the contrary understands that man's soul was created from nothing. We are born by generation, and yet our origin is clay; and the chief thing in us, the soul, is created from nothing. We hence see that we differ from animals because God was pleased to create us men. He therefore will justly charge us with ingratitude, if we do not serve him; for it was for this end he created us in his own image.

But there is here mentioned a special favor --- that the Lord took to himself the seed of Abraham, as it is said in the song of Moses, that all nations are God's, but that he had cast his line to set apart Israel for himself. (Deuteronomy 32:9.) Though then the whole world was under God's government, it was yet his will to choose one family. If the cause be enquired, it is not to be found in men; for all were created from the earth, and souls were implanted in their bodies created from nothing. Since it was so, we see that the difference arose from the fountain of gratuitous favor --- that God preferred one race to the rest; and as we stated yesterday, Moses often repeats this --- that the Jews were not chosen because they were more excellent than other nations, but because God gratuitously loved their fathers. (Deuteronomy 7:7.) By love he means gratuitous favor.

Malachi then does not consider here that the Jews had been chosen before other nations on the ground of their own merit; for if he granted this, they might have objected and said --- ``Why dost thou remind us that God has favored us more than other nations, since he deemed us worthy, and rewarded our merit?'' But the Prophet takes it as admitted, according to what I have already said, that the Jews were by nature like other nations, so that their different condition did not proceed from themselves, or from their own worthiness, but from the gratuitous love of God.

A third step is also to be noticed here; for God selected a part only from the very race of Abraham, as Esau and Jacob were brothers, and Esau was first according

to the order of nature, for he was the first-born; and yet God rejected him, and appointed the favor of election to be in the posterity of Jacob. This third step then was election.

These things ought to be carefully considered. Men are peculiarly bound to God, because he might have created them asses and dogs, and not men; but it has pleased him to form them in his own image. The second step is, that he chose the race of Abraham, when his empire extended over all nations without exception: for how was it that God chose to be the father and savior of one people only, when the whole world was under his authority? Here shines forth, as I have already said, his gratuitous favor; and in addition to the testimonies of Moses, it is often said in the Psalms that God loved the fathers, that he did to them what he had not done to other nations, that he made known his judgments to them. (Psalm 147:19.) There are many passages in which God commemorates his favor to the Jews, because it pleased him to distinguish them from other nations, while yet the condition of all by nature was wholly the same. Now the third step which Malachi mentions ought to be carefully noticed --- that God not only promised to be a God to Abraham and to his seed, but also made a difference between the very sons of Abraham, so as to reject some and to choose others; and it is on this point that Paul dwells in the ninth chapter to the Romans; Romans 9:1-33 for he says, that not all who are of Israel-that is, who derive their origin from him --- are true and legitimate Israelites, but those who are called. For it was Paul's object to refute the Jews, for they boasted that they were a holy people, though they wilfully rejected Christ and his gospel. For when the apostles proved that the Redeemer promised had been sent, the proud answer in the mouth of the Jews was this --- ``Are not we the Church of God? but we do not acknowledge this Christ whom ye would thrust upon us.'' As then the Jews, through this false pretense, despised the favor of God, and sought to trample Christ as it were under foot, Paul repels this arrogance, and shows that they excelled not the nations, except by virtue of a gratuitous adoption, and that this adoption was to be so extended to the whole race of Abraham as yet to be confined to a certain number.

In the same manner do the Papists act in the present day. As they estimate faith by external tokens, they haughtily object to us, and say that they are the Church; as though a general promise were sufficient without the Spirit, who is justly called the Spirit of adoption, by whom God seals it within, even in our hearts.

Now Paul adds evidences of the fact, and brings forward the instance of Jacob and Esau. Of the twin brothers, one, he says, was chosen, and the other passed by; and yet both were the sons of Abraham. It then follows that there is a third step in election, as I have already stated. Now from this third proceeds a fourth --- that God takes some of the sons of Jacob, whom he has chosen before the foundation of the world, and others he rejects; and of this fact Paul adduces a sure proof, or assigns an evident reason: God preferred Jacob to his brother, the first-born, but not on account of any merit: if then the free mercy of God availed so much in the election of Jacob, it follows that the same still prevails with regard to his posterity. If it be again asked, whence comes it that some are faithful and others are reprobate, the answer is, because it so pleases God. Hence Paul ascends higher and says, that

before they were born, and had done neither good nor evil, it was said, the elder shall serve the younger; and then he brings forward this prophecy-Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.''

If then we wisely consider the whole passage, we shall find what I have stated --- that from the third step we may proceed to a fourth, and that is, that from the sons of Jacob God chose whom he pleased and rejected others; for when he chose Jacob, God was not bound to him any more than he was before. The same promise was indeed repeated to Jacob, which had been given to Abraham; but from Abraham proceeded Ishmael, who was rejected, we know, from God's Church; and the same was the case with the other sons of Abraham. Isaac was alone chosen. But Isaac, the father of Esau and Jacob, was not able at his own pleasure to retain them both; but here the free and hidden election of God appeared, so that Esau was rejected, and Jacob remained as the legitimate heir to the divine favor.

We now then more fully understand what the Prophet means: he does not charge the Jews with having shaken off every fear of that God, in whose image they had been created; but he enhances their ingratitude, because they gave no response to the free adoption of God, for they had been chosen from all other nations, and not only this, but they had been separated again from the very race of Abraham, and this was their second election. Another thing must also be added respecting their gratuitous election; for the reproof of the Prophet would not have been received, except God in his adoption had regard only to his own favor; for if we grant that either Jacob or Abraham had merited anything, what the Prophet says, Was not Esau Jacob's brother? would not have availed. An answer might have been readily given, ``He was indeed his brother, but his virtue being meritorious set him before his brother.'' But the Prophet here presses this point on the Jews --- that having been bound by so many benefits, they yet were become as it were spurious; for they had degenerated from the favor which God had conferred on them. We hence see that by these words of the Prophet it is sufficiently proved --- that Abraham had been chosen by God in preference to all other nations, Isaac in preference to his brother Ishmael, and Jacob in preference to Esau.

And Scripture is full of proofs on the subject, and experience also sufficiently demonstrates the truth. Moses says, that it was not by their own virtue that they excelled other nations, for they were a rebellious and a stiff-necked people. Though God then knew the perverse character of that nation, it yet pleased him to make them an example of his wonderful goodness. There is therefore no reason for us to seek any other cause for adoption except the will of God. And since the election of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was gratuitous, it follows that each one is freely chosen whom God separates from the whole body; and thus we come to the fourth step; for what is said here, that Jacob was chosen, ought not to be confined to his person, but what he had in common with his posterity. Jacob then was chosen --- for what purpose? that his children might be God's holy and peculiar people. Now if we consider his whole offspring, we shall find that all who descended from Jacob were not legitimate Israelites, for the greatest part of them were rejected. As then many who derived their origin from Jacob, were not less reprobate than Esau, it follows

that God's free favor and gratuitous mercy prevails as to individuals: and this is the subject which Paul discusses in the ninth chapter to the Romans.

It seems hard to many, that God should choose some and not all, and that he should regard no worthiness, but of his own free will choose whom he pleases, and reject others. But whence comes this objection, except that they wish to restrain God and subject him to their own judgment? But we must come to the principle to which I have referred. If it seems unreasonable to them that one of two should be chosen and the other rejected, how can they defend the justice of God (if need there be of their apology) with regard to an ass and man? for as I have said, they both proceeded, both asses and men, from the same lump as to their bodies. Every vigor and strength in the ass has been created by the hidden power of God: and as to the soul of man, though its essence is immortal, it has yet been created from nothing. Now, then, let these wise censors answer for God in this case, whom they think to be exposed to many calumnies, when we say that men's salvation depends on his will, so that he rejects some and chooses others.

But as to general election, there is the same difficulty to satisfy the judgment of men: for as we have already said, there is no difference between men but what arises from hidden election. They indeed imagine in this case a foreknowledge as the mother of election: but the notion is extremely foolish and puerile. They then say, that some are elected by God and some are rejected, because God, to whom nothing is hid, foresees what every one will be. But I now ask, Whence is it that one is virtuous, while another is vicious? If they say, from free-will, doubtless creation is anterior to free-will: this is one thing. Then we know that in Adam all men were created alike; for how is it that we are all exposed to eternal death, and that the vengeance of God extends over us all, and at this day prevails through the whole world? How is this, except that the condition of us all originally is one and the same? It follows then, that if Adam stood upright, all men would be alike in their integrity. I do not now speak of special gifts: for there would have been, I allow, a difference of endowments had nature remained perfect; but as to eternal life the condition of all would have been the same. Now after the fall of Adam we are all lost. What can then be more foolish and absurd than to imagine that there is some virtue in man by which he excels others, since we are all equally accursed in the person of Adam? For who hath made thee to excel, saith Paul? He proves that there is no excellency in man, except what proceeds from the bounty of God only, and as I have stated, the reason is quite manifest.

For either original sin does not belong to all men, or God cannot foresee that this man will be just and that man unjust. Why? All are naturally reprobate in Adam and liable to eternal death, and the reason is evident, for nothing is found in men but sin. The foreknowledge of God then cannot be the cause of our election, for by looking on the whole race of man, he finds them all under a curse from the least to the greatest.

We see then how foolishly do they talk and prattle who ascribe to mere and naked prescience what ought to be ascribed to the good pleasure of God. That God made himself known to the race of Abraham, that he designed to deposit his law with the

Israelites --- all this was his peculiar favor, and no other reason can be assigned for it except gratuitous adoption. God then favored the children of Abraham with this privilege, because it so pleased him: for if we say that they were worthy, and by their virtue rendered themselves deserving, the Holy Spirit does in the first place everywhere speak against us, and in the second place experience and facts, for the obstinacy of that people was extraordinary. But we ought to be satisfied with the authority of Scripture, since God makes known and illustrates his favor by this instance --- that he loved Abraham and his children, that is, that he was favorable to the Jews through his own goodness only, and this is what we shall hereafter see still more clearly. Let this then remain as a fixed principle --- that the cause of our election is nothing else but the mere favor of God. If we seek a cause apart from God, when we enquire about our election, we shall wander in a labyrinth.

That the same principle holds as to individuals, I have already proved. It ought indeed to be sufficient for us, that Paul passes from the person of Jacob to individuals among his posterity. For he adduces as it wet e an instance in the two brothers, in order to convince us that no one is chosen on account of his own virtue, but according to the good pleasure of God: nor was it necessary to state these circumstances --- that one was chosen when the brothers were not yet born, and when they had not done either good or evils that it was not through works but through him who called, except he meant to prove this, that it is in God's power to choose whom he wills and to reject whom he wills. But as Augustine reminds us, nothing can be imagined more absurd than that notion, with which many are pleased, that God has foreknown what men will be, for Paul excludes such foreknowledge as the cause which he infers, that it was not owing to works but to him who called, that God preferred the one to the other, for neither of them, while in their mother's womb, had done either good or evil.

Paul brings also a confirmation from another declaration of Moses, ``I will pity whom I will pity, and mercy will I show to whom I will be merciful. ``By these words God clearly declares that it was in his power to reject whom he pleased of the seed of Jacob, and to choose whom he pleased. What then he had before said respecting one man, God now applies to the whole seed, for he speaks not there of foreign nations, but of that holy and chosen people. When God threatened with ruin all the children of Abraham, Moses humbly deprecated this, lest he should annul his own covenant: God answered him, ``I will pity whom I will pity,'' --- what does this mean? that there is no other cause why God retains some for himself and rejects others, than his own will. The repetition may seem superfluous and frigid, ``I will pity whom I will pity,'' but it is very emphatical; as though he had said, ``I might have chosen for myself another from the world and not Abraham, but I have according to my own good pleasure adopted him; and Ishmael might have been as dear to me as Isaac, but it has been my will that the blessing should rest on Isaac; when he also had begotten two children, I repudiated the first born and choose Jacob, and now from the posterity of Jacob I will choose for myself whom I please, for there is to be found no other cause but my will, `I will then pity whom I will pity, and mercy will I show to whom I will be merciful.'`` If then in this case men will contend with God, and would

know why he chooses this rather than that man, the answer he gives is, that the cause is to be found in his mercy alone, for he is bound to no one.

We now see how the folly of those vanishes away who would have foreknowledge to be the cause of election; and also that they who murmur against God, are sufficiently refuted by this reason, that it is in his power either to choose or to reject, inasmuch as he is under obligations to none.

As to reprobation, the cause of it is sufficiently manifest in the fall of Adam, for, as we have said, we all fell with him. It must still be observed, that the election of God is anterior to Adam's fall; and that hence all we who are rescued from the common ruin have been chosen in Christ before the creation of the world, but that others justly perish though they had not been lost in Adam; because God appointed Christ the head of his Church, in order that we might be saved in him, not all, but those who have been chosen.

And with regard to the proof, it is not necessary here to bring together the mass of passages found in scripture, for this would be endless. But there are, however, some remarkable passages, by which it is sufficiently evident that some are chosen from the whole world as well as from the race of Abraham, according to God's good pleasure only, and that others are rejected, and that there is no other cause to be found but his will; for our election is hid in the eternal and secret counsel of God, and founded on Christ, and reprobation is also hid in the judgment of God. Now if we wish to penetrate into this mystery, we must know that it is a great and unfathomable abyss: here all our ideas vanish away. In the meantime, however, God does not lose his liberty to choose and reject whom he pleases.

With regard to election, the ninth chapter to the Romans (Romans 9:1) ought to be sufficient, or rather the three chapters, for Paul pursues the same argument to the end of the eleventh chapter, and then exclaims that the riches of God's wisdom and goodness are incomprehensible, and that his judgments are untraceable. He speaks also of the elect in the first chapter to the Ephesians; Ephesians 1:1 and the sum of what he says is, that all the faithful had been chosen in Christ before the creation of the world, and through the good pleasure of God only, in order that he might show in them the glory of his goodness.

By no refinements can they escape who attempt to darken this truth; for Paul very clearly and briefly declares that the whole world has not been chosen, but the faithful, who are afterwards favored with the Spirit of adoption: and thus sufficiently is that fancy refuted, that the election of God ought to be connected with his promises. I wonder that men of learning, endued with judgment and versed in scripture, so frigidly pass over the subject, and that they are not at least moved when they see that they give to many the occasion of foolishly going astray, and that some take hence the opportunity to calumniate. We must, however, declare what this passage requires --- that those are very unwise who seek to subvert or overthrow the eternal election of God by this contrivance --- that God addresses all men generally, ``Come unto me'' --- ``I am your Father.'' Since God then offers his grace to all by the external preaching of his word, they will have it that all are elected: but Paul says, that we are believers, because we have been elected. If then it be asked, why some obstinately

reject the grace of God, and others embrace it in the spirit of meekness, Paul assigns the reason, and it is this --- because God illuminates those who believe, inasmuch as he has chosen them before the creation of the world. It then follows that God so speaks generally, as that the efficacy of the doctrine still depends on his secret good pleasure; for whence is faith, but from his peculiar favor? and why does he not communicate his grace to all? even because he has not chosen all. We see that Paul thus proceeds step by step, that he might teach us that faith emanates from the fountain of free election; and he raises up election into the highest eminence to show that it is not right to inquire into its cause. Thus much about election.

As to reprobation, I know that many greatly dislike this doctrine --- that some are rejected, and that yet no cause can be found in themselves why they thus remain disapproved by God. But there is here need of docility and of a meek spirit, to which Paul also exhorts us, when he says,

``O man, who art thou who answerest against God?''
(Romans 9:20.)

For were it lawful to investigate the cause, surely Paul, who had been taken up to the third heaven, might have showed us the way; but he is here silent and drives us away from the indulgence of a bold and an over curious spirit. Since the Holy Spirit by the mouth of Paul restrains the presumption of men, that they may not dare to go beyond this step --- that God hardens whom he wills and rejects whom he wills, why do men leap beyond this, except they wilfully seek to carry on war with God? and yet they pretend modesty, and under this pretext they seek to bury the doctrine of election; we ought, they say, to speak soberly of mysteries. This last sentence I allow fully; but what is our sobriety but our docility? that is, when we embrace what God declares in his word, and never allow ourselves to investigate more than what he teaches us. But they would extinguish God's word; nay, they dare openly to pronounce blasphemies against God, and to find fault with the Spirit, who has spoken by the prophets and the apostles.

We indeed see that there are many devils who preach modesty, when their object is to suppress the light and this chief doctrine, the main basis of our salvation; and they extort wicked edicts from the ignorant and the slumbering, as though it were in the power of men, by babbling about things unknown, and by barbarously mixing all things together, to thrust God as it were from his celestial throne. This is horribly monstrous, and ought to be detested by all; for it would be better that all the empires of the world should be swallowed up in the lowest depths, than that mortal creatures should raise themselves up as it were into heaven, and attempt to penetrate into the secret things of God. But, however, when the whole world either assail this doctrine by barking, or seek to subvert it by threats and terrors, or when all in various ways manifest their rage, and when they roll thunders who seem to themselves to be very powerful, it behoves us to hold fast this doctrine, that God alone is the author of our salvation, because he has been pleased freely to elect us, and also that he possesses power over all the human race, so that some, according to his will, are elected and some are rejected, and that he ever acts justly, and holds secret the cause both of election and of reprobation. But it is no wonder that we are so blind, for we are

stupid by nature, nay, blind altogether; and were we angels, it would be still our duty reverently to regard the manifold wisdom of God, which no human minds, no, not even angelic minds, can fully comprehend. Other things we must defer.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou best been pleased to adopt us as thy people for this end, that we may be ingrafted as it were into the body of thy Son, and be made conformable to our head, --- O grant, that through our whole life we may strive to seal in our hearts the faith of our election, that we may be the more stimulated to render thee true obedience, and that thy glory may also be made known through us; and those whom thou hast chosen together with us may we labor to bring together, that we may unanimously celebrate thee as the Author of our salvation, and so ascribe to thee the glory of thy goodness, that having cast away and renounced all confidence in our own virtue, we may be led to Christ only as the fountain of thy election, in whom also is set before us the certainty of our salvation through thy gospel, until we shall at length be gathered into that eternal glory which He has proctored for us by his own blood. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Seventy-first

Malachi 1:6-8

6. A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name?

6. Filius honorat patrem, et servus dominum suum; et si pater ego, ubi honor meus? et si dominus ego, ubi timor mei? dicit Iehova exercituum ad vos, O sacerdotes, qui contemnitis nomen meum: et dixistis, In quo contempsimus nomen tuum?

7. Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the LORD is contemptible.

7. Qui offertis super altare meum panem pollutum; et dixistis, In quo polluimus te? Quum dicitis, Mensa Iehovae ipsa est contemptibilis (vel, despecta.)

8. And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the LORD of hosts.

8. Si obtuleritis caecum ad immolandum, non malum est? et si claudum vel mutilum obtuleritis, non malum est? Offer hoc nunc (vel, adedum, vel, quaeso; [{נא}] dubiae est significationis, offer ergo, obsecro, hoc) praefecto tuo, an complacebit ei in te, vel suscipiet faciem tuam, dicit Iehova exercituum?

God as already proved that he had by many favors been a Father to the Jews. They must have felt that he had indeed bound them to himself, provided they possessed any religion or gratitude. He now then concludes his address to them, as though he had said, that he had very ill bestowed all the blessings he had given them; and he adopts two similitudes; he first compares himself to a father, and then to a master. He says, that in these two respects he had a just cause to complain of the Jews; for he had been a father to them, but they did not in their turn conduct

themselves as children, in a submissive and obedient manner, as they ought to have done. And farther, he became their master, but they shook off the yoke, and allowed not themselves to be ruled by his authority.

As to the word, Father, we have already shown that the Jews were not only in common with others the children of God, but had been also chosen as his peculiar people. Their adoption then made them God's children above all other nations; for when they differed nothing from the rest of the world, God adopted them. With regard to the right and power of a master, God, in the first place, held them bound to him as the Creator and former of the whole world; but he also, as it is well known, attained the right by redemption. That he might then enhance their crime, he not only expostulates with them for having abused his favors, but he charges them also with obstinacy, because they disobeyed his authority, while yet he was their Lord.

He says, that a son who honors his father, and a servant his master. He applies the same verb to both clauses; but he afterwards makes a difference, ascribing honor to a father and fear to a master. As to the first clause, we know that whenever there is authority, there ought to be honor; and when masters are over servants, they ought to be honored. But in a subsequent clause he speaks more distinctly, and says, that a master ought to be feared by a servant, while honor is due to a father from a son. For servants do not love their masters; not being able to escape from their power, they fear them: but the reverence which sons have for their fathers, is more generous and more voluntary. But God shows here, that the Jews could by no means be kept to their duty, though so many favors ought to have made it their sweet delight. God had indeed conciliated them as much as possible to himself, but all was without any benefit. The majesty also of God ought to have struck them with fear. It was then the same, as though he had said, that they were of so perverse a nature, that they could not be led to obedience either by a kind and gracious invitation, or by an authoritative command.

The Lord then complains that he ass deprived by the Jews of the honor which sons owe to their fathers, as well as of the fear which servants ought to have for their masters; and thus he shows that they were like untameable wild beasts, which cannot be tamed by any kind treatment, nor subdued by scourges, or by any kind of castigation.

He then adds, To you, O priests. It is certain that this complaint ought not to be confined to the priests alone, since God, as we have seen, speaks generally of the whole race of Abraham: for he had said that Levi was advanced to the sacerdotal honor, while the other brethren were passed by; but he had said also, that Jacob was chosen when Esau was rejected; and this belonged in common to the twelve tribes. Now it ought not, and it could not, be confined to the tribe of Levi, that God was their father or their master. Why then does he now expressly address the priests? They ought indeed to have been leaders and teachers to the rest of the people, but he does not on this account exempt the whole people from blame or guilt, though he directs his discourse to the priests; for his object was to show that all things had become so corrupt among the people, that the priests were become as it were the chief in contempt of religion and in sacrileges, and in every kind of pollution. It hence

follows that there was nothing sound and right in the community; for when the eyes themselves are without light, they cannot discharge their duty to the body, and what at length will follow?

God then no doubt shows that great corruptions prevailed and had spread so much among the people, that they who ought to have been examples to others, had especially shaken off the yoke and given way to unbridled licentiousness. This then is the reason why the Prophet condemns the priests, though at the beginning he included the whole people, as it is evident from the context.

We must at the same time bear in mind what we have elsewhere said -that the fault of the people was not lessened because the sin of the priest was the most grievous; but that all were involved in the same ruin; for God in this case did not absolve the common people, inasmuch as they were guilty of the same sins; but he shows that the most grievous fault belonged to the teachers, who had not reproved the people, but on the contrary increased licentiousness by their dissimulation, as we shall presently find again.

He says that they despised his name; not that the fear of God prevailed in others, but that it was the duty of the priests to reprove the impiety of the whole people. As then they allowed to others so much liberty, it appeared quite evident that the name of God was but little esteemed by them; for had they possessed true zeal, they would not have suffered the worship of God to be trodden under foot or profaned, as we shall presently find to have been the case.

It then follows, Ye have said, In what have we despised thy name? As the Prophet at the beginning indirectly touched on the hypocrisy and perverseness of the people, so he now no doubt repeats the same thing by using a similar language: for how was it that the priests as well as the people asked a question on a plain matter, as though it were obscure, except that they were blind to their own vices? Now the cause of blindness is hypocrisy, and then, as it is wont to do, it brings with it perverseness; for all who deceive themselves, dare even to raise their horns against God, and petulantly to clamor that he too severely treats them; for the Prophet doubtless does not here relate their words, except for the purpose of showing that they had such a brazen front and so hard a neck, that they boldly repelled all reproofs. We see at this day in the world the same sottishness; for though the crimes reproved are sufficiently known, yet they, even the most wicked, immediately object and say that wrong is done to them; and they will not acknowledge a fault except they be a hundred times convicted, and even then they will make some pretense. And truly were there not daily proofs to teach us how refractory men are towards God, the thing would be incredible. The Prophet then did no doubt by this cutting expression goad and also wound the people as well as the priests, intimating that so gross was their hypocrisy, that they dared to make shifts, when their crimes were openly known to all.

Ye have said then, by what have we despised thy name? They inquired as though they had rubbed their forehead, and then gained boldness, ``What does this mean? for thou accuses us here of being wicked and sacrilegious, but we are not conscious of any wrong.'' Then the answer is given in God's name, Ye offer on mine altar polluted

bread. A question may be here asked, ``Ought this to have been imputed to the priests as a crime; for had victims been offered, such as God in his law commanded, it would have been to the advantage and benefit of the priests; and had fine corn been brought, it would have been advantageous to the priests?'' But it seems to me probable, that the priests are condemned because like hungry and famished men they seized indiscriminately on all things around them. Some think that the priests grossly and fraudulently violated the law by changing the victims --- that when a fat ram was offered, the priests, as they suppose, took it away, and put in its place a ram that was lean, or lame, or mutilated. But this view appears not to me suitable to the passage. Let us then regard the meaning to be what I have stated --- that God here contends with the whole people, but that he directs his reproofs to the priests, because they were in two ways guilty, for they formed a part of the people, and they also suffered God to be dishonored; for what could have been more disgraceful than to offer polluted victims and polluted bread?

If it be now asked, whether this ought to have been ascribed as a fault to the priests, the answer is this --- that the people then were not very wealthy; for they had but lately returned from exile, and they had not brought with them much wealth, and the land was desolate and uncultivated: as, then, there was so much want among the people, and they were intent, each on his advantage, according to what we have seen in the Prophet Haggai, (Haggai 1:4,) and neglected the temple of God and their sacrifices, there is no doubt but that they wished anyhow to discharge their duty towards God, and therefore brought beasts which were either lame or blind; and hence the whole worship of God was vitiated, their sacrifices being polluted. The priests ought to have rejected all these, and to have closed up God's temple, rather than to have received indiscriminately what God had prohibited. As then this indifference of the people was nothing but a profanation of divine worship, the priests ought to have firmly opposed it. But as they themselves were hungry, they thought it better to lay hold on everything around them --- ``What,'' they said, ``will become of us? for if we reject these sacrifices, however vicious they may be, they will offer nothing; and thus we shall starve, and there will be no advantage; and we shall be forced in this case to open and to close the temple, and to offer sacrifices at our own expense, and we are not equal to this burden.'' Since then the priests spared the people for private gain, our Prophet justly reproves them, and says, ye offer polluted bread

It was indeed the office of the priests to place bread daily on the table; but whence could bread be obtained except some were offered? Now nothing was lost to the priests, when they daily set bread before God, for they presently received it; and thus they preferred, as it was more to their advantage, to offer bread well approved, made of fine flour: but as I have said, their own convenience interposed, for they thought that they could not prevail with the people --- ``If we irritate these men, they will deny that they have anything to offer; and thus the temple will be empty, and our own houses will be empty; it is then better to take coarse bread from them than nothing; we shall at least feed our families and servants with this bread, after having offered it to the Lord.'' We hence see how the fault belonged to the priests,

when the people offered polluted bread, and unapproved victims.

I have hitherto explained the Prophet's words with reference chiefly to the shew-bread; not that they ought to be so strictly taken as many interpreters have considered them; for under the name of bread is included, we know, every kind of eatables; so it seems probable to me that the word ought to be extended to all the sacrifices; but one kind is here mentioned as an example; and it seems also that what immediately follows is added as an explanation --- ye offer the lame and the blind and the mutilated. Since these things are connected together, I have no doubt but that God means by bread here every kind of offering, and we know that the shew-bread was not offered on the altar; but there was a table by itself appointed for this purpose near the altar. And why God designates by bread all the sacrifices may be easily explained; for God would have sacrifices offered to him as though he had his habitation and table among the Jews; it was not indeed his purpose to fill their minds with gross imaginations, as though he did eat or drink, as we know that heathens have been deluded with such notions; but his design was only to remind the Jews of that domestic habitation which he had chosen for himself among them. But more on this subject shall presently be said; I shall now proceed to consider the words.

Ye offer on my altar polluted bread; and ye have said, In what have we polluted thee? The priests again answer as though God unjustly accused them; for they allege their innocency, as the question is to be regarded here as a denial: In what then have we polluted thee? They deny that they were rightly condemned, inasmuch as they had duly served God. But we may hence conclude, according to what has been before stated, that the people were under the influence of gross hypocrisy, and had become hardened in their obstinacy. It is the same at this day; though there be such a mass of crimes, which everywhere prevails in the world, and even overflows the earth, yet no one will bear to be condemned; for every one looks on others, and thus when no less grievous sins appear in others, every one absolves himself. This is then the sottishness which the Prophet again goads --- Ye have said, In what have we polluted thee? He and other Prophets no doubt charged the Jews with this sacrilege --- that they polluted the name of God.

But it deserves to be known, that few think that they pollute God and his name when they worship him superstitiously or formally, as though they had to do with a child: but we see that God himself declares, that the whole of religion is profaned, and that his name is shamefully polluted when men thus trifle with him.

He answers, when ye said, literally, in your saying, The table of Jehovah, it is contemptible. Here the Prophet discovers the fountain of their sin; and he shows as it were by the finger, that they had despised those rites which belonged to the worship of God. The reason follows, If ye offer the blind, he says, for sacrifice, it is no evil. Some read the last clause as a question, ``is it not evil?'' but he, the mark of a question, is not here; and we may easily gather from the context that the Prophet as yet relates how presumptuously both the priests and the whole people thought they could be acquitted and obtain pardon for themselves, ``It is no evil thing if the lame be offered, if the blind be offered, if the maimed be offered; there is nothing

evil in all this.'' [356] We now then understand what the Prophet means.

But the subject would have been obscure had not a fuller explanation been given in these words, The table of Jehovah, it is contemptible [357] God does here show, as I have before stated, why he was so much displeased with the Jews. Nothing is indeed so precious as his worship; and he had instituted under the law sacrifices and other rites, that the children of Abraham might exercise themselves in worshipping him spiritually. It was then the same as though he had said, that he cared nothing for sheep and calves, and for any thing of that kind, but that their impiety was sufficiently manifested, inasmuch as they did not think that the whole of religion was despised when they despised the external acts of worship according to the law. God then brings back the attention of the Jews from brute animals to himself, as though he had said, ``Ye offer to me lame and blind animals, which I have forbidden to be offered; that you act unfaithfully towards me is sufficiently apparent; and if ye say that these are small things and of no moment, I answer, that you ought to have regarded the end for which I designed that sacrifices should be offered to me, and ordered bread to be laid on my table in the sanctuary; for by these tokens you ought to have known that I live in the midst of you, and that whatever ye eat or drink is sacred to me, and that all you possess comes to you through my bounty. As then this end for which sacrifices have been appointed has been neglected by you, it is quite evident that ye have no care nor concern for true religion.

We now then perceive why the Prophet objects to the priests, that they had called the table of Jehovah contemptible; not that they had spoken thus expressly, but because they had regarded it almost as nothing to pervert and adulterate the whole of divine worship according to the law, which was an evidence of religion when there was any.

Now it may seem strange, that God one while so strictly requires pure sacrifices and urges the observance of them, when yet at another time he says that he does not seek sacrifices, ``Sacrifice I desire not, but mercy,'' (Hosea 6:6;) and again, ``Have I commanded your fathers when I delivered them from Egypt, to offer victims to me? With this alone was I content, that they should obey my voice.'' He says afterwards in Micah,

``Shall I be propitious to you if ye offer me all your flocks? but rather, O man, humble thyself before thy God.''
(Micah 6:6.)

The same is said in the fiftieth Psalm, in the first and the last chapters of Isaiah, and in many other places. Since then God elsewhere depreciates sacrifices, and shows that they are not so highly esteemed by him, why does he now so rigidly expostulate with the Jews, because they offered lame and maimed animals? I answer,

[356] It is rather an ironical language, as it will appear from the following literal version — 8. And when ye bring the blind for a sacrifice, no evil! And when ye bring the lame and the sick, no evil! Offer, it, I pray, to thy governor; Will he be pleased with thee or accept thy person, Saith Jehovah of hosts? The whole is in the strain of irony; and the first lines are much more striking than when the interrogative particle is introduced. So is the rendering of the Septuagint, {οὐ} {κακὸν} --- no evil. It was the Targum that introduced the interrogative form. --- Ed.

[357] So ought this sentence to be rendered; and it is thus rendered by Newcome, only for "contemptible" he has "despicable," while Henderson retains the former, as it is in our version. — Ed.

that there was a reason why God should by this reproof discover the impiety of the people. Had all their victims been fat or well fed, our Prophet would have spoken as we find that others have done; but since their faithlessness had gone so far that they showed even to children that they had no regard for the worship of God --- since they had advanced so far in shamelessness, it was necessary that they should be thus convicted of impiety; and hence he says, ye offer to me polluted bread, as though he had said, ``I supply you with food, it was your duty to offer to me the first-fruits, the tenths, and the shew-bread; and the design of these external performances is, that they may regard themselves as fed by me daily, and also that they may feed moderately and temperately on the bread and flesh and other things given them, as though they were sitting at my table: for when they see that bread made from the same corn is before the presence of God, this ought to come to their minds, `it is God's will, as though he lived with us, that a portion of the same bread should ever be set on the holy table:' and then when they offer victims, they are not only to be thus stirred up to repentance and faith, but they ought also to acknowledge that all these are sacred to God, for when they set before the altar either a calf, or an ox, or a lamb, and then see the animal sacrificed, (a part of which remains for the priests,) and the altar sprinkled with blood, they ought to think thus within themselves, `Behold, we have all these things in common with God, as though clothed in a human form he dwelt with us and took the same food and the same drink.' They ought then to have performed in this manner their outward rites.''

God now justly complains, that his table was contemptible, as though he had said, that his favor was rejected, because the people, as it were in contempt, brought coarse bread, as though they wished to feed some swineherd, --- a conduct similar to that mentioned in Zechariah, when God said, that a reward was offered for him as though he were some worthless hireling, (Zechariah 2:12) --- ``I have carefully fed you,'' he says,'' and I now demand my reward: ye give for me thirty silverings, a mean and disgraceful price.'' So also in this place, Ye have said, the table of Jehovah, it is polluted. There is an emphasis in the pronoun; for God shows that he by no means deserved such a reproach: ``Who am I, that ye should thus despise my table? I have consecrated it, that ye might have a near access to me, as though I dwelt in the visible sanctuary; but ye have despised my table as though I were nothing.''

He afterwards adds, Offer this now to thy governor; will he be pleased with thee? God here complains that less honor is given to him than to mortals; for he adduces this comparison, ``When any one owes a tribute or tax to a governor, and brings any thing maimed or defective, he will not receive it.'' Hence he draws this inference, that he was extremely insulted, for the Jews dared to offer him what every mortal would reject. He thus reasons from the less to the greater, that this was not a sacrilege that could be borne, as the Jews had so presumptuously abused his kindness; and hence he subjoins

Malachi 1:9

9. And now, I pray you, beseech God that he will be gracious unto us: this hath been by your means: will he regard your persons? saith the LORD of hosts.

9. Et nunc deprecamini quaeso faciem Dei, et miserabitur nostri; (e manu vestra factum est hoc;) an suscipiet ex vobis faciem, dicit Iehova exercituum.

He wounds here the priests more grievously, --- because they had so degenerated as to be wholly unworthy of their honorable office and title; ``Go,'' he says, ``and entreat the face of God.'' All this is ironical; for interpreters are much mistaken who think that the Prophet here exhorts the priests humbly to ask pardon from God, both for themselves and for the people. On the contrary, he addresses them, as I have said, ironically, while telling them to be intercessors and mediators between God and the people; and yet they were profane men, who on their part polluted the whole worship of God, and thus subverted the whole of religion: go thou and entreat, he says, the face of God. This duty, we know, was enjoined on the priests; they were to draw nigh to the sanctuary and present themselves before God as though they were advocates pleading the cause of the people, or at least intercessors to pacify God. Since then they were in this respect the types of Christ, it behoved them to strive themselves to be holy; and though the people abandoned themselves to all kinds of wickedness, it yet became the priests to devote themselves with all reverence to the duties of their calling; and as God had preferred them to their brethren, they ought especially to have consecrated themselves to him with all fear; for the more excellent their condition was, the more eminent ought to have been their piety and holiness. Justly then does the Prophet here inveigh so severely against them, because they did not consider that they were honored with the priesthood, that they might entreat God, and thus pacify his wrath, and reconcile to him miserable men: Go, he says, and entreat the face of God; forsooth! he will accept your face. We now understand the real meaning of the Prophet.

And now, he says, he will have mercy on us. Here also the Prophet derides them, because they boasted that they could prevail through their own high dignity to render God propitious; forsooth! he says, he will have mercy on us. But this is done by your hand, i.e., by you. ``Do ye raise up your hands to God? and will he on seeing you be pacified towards you? As then ye are polluted, ye are unworthy of the honor and office, in which ye so proudly glory.''

He does not however, as we have already said, extenuate the fault of the people, and much less does he exempt them from guilt who were implicated in the same crimes; but he shows that the state of things was wholly desperate; for the common people disregarded God, and the priests, neglecting to make any distinctions, received every sort of victims, only that they might not be in want: he shows them that the state of the people was extremely bad, as there was no one who could, according to what his office required, pacify God. Will he then receive your face? The Prophet seems to allude to the person of the Mediator; for as Christ had not as yet appeared, when the priest presented himself before the altar, it was the same as though God looked on the face of one, and became thus propitious to all. On this account he says, that the priests were not worthy that God should look on them, since they had polluted his sanctuary and corrupted his whole service. [358] For the

[358] It is generally admitted that this verse is ironical. The second line has been differently interpreted: some regard the impure sacrifices before mentioned as being referred to, "from your hand have these come," following the Septuagint, where {{זאת is rendered ``{ταυτα} --- these:'' but

same purpose he subjoins ---

Malachi 1:10

10. Who is there even among you that would shut the doors for nought? neither do ye kindle fire on mine altar for nought. I have no pleasure in you, saith the LORD of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand.

10. Quis etiam in vobis qui claudat ostia, et non incenditis altare meum gratis? non mihi placet in vobis, dicit Iehova exercituum; et oblationem non habebo gratam e manu vestra.

He goes on with the same subject, --- that the priests conducted themselves very shamefully in their office, and that the people had become hardened through their example, so that the whole of religion was disregarded. Hence he says, that the doors were not closed by them. Some interpreters connect the two things together --- that they closed not the doors of the temple, nor kindled the altar for nothing; and thus they apply the adverb, {חנם}, chenam, to both clauses; as though he had said, that they were hirelings, who did not freely devote themselves to serve God, but looked for profit and gain in everything: and this is the commonly received explanation. [359] But it seems better to me to take them separately and to say, Who does even shut the doors? not however for nothing, and the copulative, {ו}, vau, as in many other places, may be rendered even: and yet ye kindle not for nothing my altar; as though God had said, ``I have fixed your works; ye are then to me as hired servants; and now since I have ordered a reward to be given to you whenever ye stand at my altar, why do ye not close my door?'' Some render {חנם}, chenam, in vain, and give this explanation ``Who closes the doors? then kindle not afterwards in vain my altar;'' as though God rejected the whole service, which had been corrupted by the avarice or the sloth of the priests, and by the presumption of the people.

It is indeed certain that it is better to separate the two clauses so that the adverb, {חנם}, chenam, may be confined to the letter; but there may yet, as I have said, be a two-fold meaning. If we render, {חנם}, chenam, in vain the import is that the Prophet declares that they labored to no purpose while they thus sacrificed to God contrary to his law for they ought to have attended especially to the rule prescribed to them: as then they despised this, he justly says, ``Offer not to me in vain;'' and thus the future tense is to be taken for the imperative, as we know is the case sometimes in

the most obvious meaning is that given by Calvin, that the sentence is a concession as to what the priests are ironically exhorted to do. I give the following version, --- And now, intreat now God's face that he may favor us; By you (literally by your hand) has this been done: Will he on your account lift up the face? Saith Jehovah of hosts. To ``lift up the face'' is to show favor. The words seem to be spoken by the Prophet, and by saying, ``saith Jehovah,'' at the end, he identifies what he says with the mind of God, as though he said that what he addressed to them was communicated to him from above. Instead of ,{מכם} ``on your account,'' some MS., have ,{לכם} ``for you,'' or ``for your sake.'' --- Ed.

[359] Adopted by Jerome, Cyril, and in our version, and by Henry, Scott, Adam Clarke, and Henderson. But Marckius takes another view, previously taken by Drusius, Gataker, and Cocceius, according to the following version — Who is there moreover among you? let him even close the doors, That ye may not kindle my altar in vain. "What he seems to say is this," observes Drusius, "I wish there were some one so inflamed by a pious zeal, as to close the doors, and thus to exclude all unlawful sacrifices." To kindle or light the altar was to light the fire under it to consume the sacrifice. The Targum favors "in vain," or to no purpose, "Offer ye not on my altar an execrable oblation." The word {{הכם is used in both senses --- ``for nothing'' or without gain, Genesis 29:15; Exodus 21:2,---and ``in vain'' or uselessly, Proverbs 1:27; Ezekiel 6:10 It is difficult to know which of these views is the right one. What seems against our version is the negative {לא} in the second line. The sense given would be better brought out without it; and so Jerome leaves it out in his explanation. The form also of the sentence being changed renders it improbable that {חנם} belongs to the former clause. The version of Drusius comes nearest to the original, and is countenanced by the Septuagint and the Targum. --- Ed.

Hebrew.

But no interpreter seems to have sufficiently considered the reason why the Prophet speaks of not closing the doors of the temple. The priests, we know were set over the temple for this reason --- that nothing polluted might be admitted; for there were of the Levites some doorkeepers, and others stood at the entrance; in short, all had their stations: and then when they had brought in the victim it was the office of the priests to examine it and to see that it was such as the law of God required. As then it was their special office to see that nothing polluted should be received into the temple of God, he justly complains here that they indiscriminately received what was faulty and profane: hence he rightly declares (for this seems to me to be the true exposition) ``Offer not in vain.'' He then draws the conclusion, that the priests lost all their labor in thus sacrificing, because God would not have his name profaned, and justly preferred obedience to all sacrifices. He therefore denies that they did any good in slaying victims, because they ought in the first place to have attended to this --- not to change anything in God's word and not to deviate from it in the least. But I cannot now proceed farther.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou best been pleased in thine infinite mercy not only to choose from among us some to be priests to thee, but also to consecrate us all to thyself in thine only begotten Son, --- O grant, that we at this day may purely and sincerely serve thee, and so strive to devote ourselves wholly to thee, that we may be pure and chaste in mind, soul, and body, and that thy glory may so shine forth in all our performances, that thy worship among us may be holy, and pure, and approved by thee, until we shall at length enjoy that glory to which thou invites us by thy gospel, and which has been obtained for us by the blood of thine only-begotten Son --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Seventy-second

I could not yesterday finish the complaint which God made against the priests --- that no one of them closed the doors of the temple, so that it might continue pure from all defilements; for as their avarice was insatiable, they indiscriminately admitted all sorts of profanations: hence he comes to this conclusion --- ``Offer not hereafter in vain;'' for by saying, Kindle not my altar, he means that they spent their toil to no purpose in offering sacrifices, because God required his worship to be performed according to the prescription of his law. I omit now the two other expositions I mentioned yesterday; for it seems to me that the Prophet meant, that the priests wearied themselves in vain while daily offering victims, because the Lord repudiated their service as impure and vicious.

He now adds, I am not pleased with you, [360] and an offering I will not accept from your hand. In the first clause he says that they were not approved by God, or did not please him; and then he adds, that their offerings were rejected; for where there is no pure heart, there we know all works are impure. For we must remember what Moses says --- that Abel pleased God together with his sacrifices, (Genesis 4:4;) and we have seen in another Prophet, that is Haggai, that what is highly esteemed by

[360] Literally it is — "Not to me is delight in you," i.e., I have no delight in you. — Ed.

men is an abomination to God, when he is not worshipped in sincerity and truth, (Haggai 2:15). Our Prophet now means the same thing --- I am not pleased with you, and I regard not as acceptable the victims from your hand. It now follows

Malachi 1:11

11. For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the LORD of hosts.

11. Quia (vel, certe) ab ortu solis usque ad occasum magnum nomen meum inter gentes; et in omni loco suffitus offertur nomini meo, et oblatio munda; quia (vel, certe est eadem particula [{כי}] magnum nomen meum inter gentes, dicit Iehova exercituum.

Here God shows that he no longer cared for the Jews, for he would bid altars to be reared for him everywhere and through all parts of the world, that he might be purely worshipped by all nations. It is indeed a remarkable prophecy as to the calling of the Gentiles; but we must especially remember this, --- that whenever the Prophets speak of this calling, they promise the spread of God's worship as a favor to the Jews, or as a punishment and reproach.

The Prophets then promised to the Jews that the Gentiles would become allied to them; so does Zechariah,

``In that day lay hold shall ten men on the skirt of the garment, and will say to a Jew, Be thou our leader; for the same God with thee will we worship.'' (Zechariah 8:23.)

It would have been then the highest honor to the Jews had they become teachers to all nations, so as to instruct them in true religion. So also Isaiah says, that is, that those who were before aliens would become the disciples of the chosen people, so that they would willingly submit to their teaching. But as the Jews have fallen from their place, the Gentiles have succeeded and occupied their position. Hence it is that the Prophets when speaking of the calling of the Gentiles, often denounce it as a punishment on the Jews; as though they had said, that when they were repudiated there would be other children of God, whom he would substitute in their place, according to what Christ threatened to the men of his age,

``Taken away from you shall be the kingdom of God, and shall be given to another nation.'' (Matthew 21:43.)

Such is this prophecy: for our Prophet does not simply open to the Gentiles the temple of God, to connect them with the Jews and to unite them in true religion; but he first excludes the Jews, and shows that the worship of God would be exercised in common by the Gentiles, for the doctrine of salvation would be propagated to the utmost extremities of the earth.

This difference ought to be noticed, which interpreters have not observed, and yet it is what is very necessary to be known; and for want of knowing this has it happened that passages wholly different have been indiscriminately blended together. The Prophet then does not here promise, as we have often stated in other places, that the whole world would be subject to God, so that true religion would everywhere

prevail, but he brands the Jews with reproach, as though he had said, ``God has repudiated you, but he will find other sons for himself, who will occupy your place.'' He had repudiated in the last verse their sacrifices, and we know how haughtily the Jews gloried in the holiness of their race. As then they were inflated with so much pride, they thought that God would be no God except he had them as his holy Church. The Prophet here answers them, and anticipates their objection by saying, that God's name would be celebrated through the whole world: ``Ye are a few people, all the nations will unite in one body to worship God together; God then will not stand in need of you, and after he rejects you his kingdom will not decay. Ye indeed think that his kingdom cannot be safe, and that his glory will perish except he is worshipped by you; but I now declare to you, that the worship of God will flourish everywhere, even after he shall cast you out of his family.''

We now then see what the Prophet means when he says, that Great will be the name of God from the rising to the setting of the sun [361] It is simply said in Psalm 113:3

``From the rising to the setting of the sun wonderful shall be the name of God.''

There indeed it is only a promise, but here the Prophet includes the punishment which the Jews had deserved, as though he had said, that after they were rejected by God on account of their ingratitude, the Gentiles would become holy to God, because he would adopt them instead of that wicked and ungodly people.

But I have said, that the calling of the Gentiles is here clearly proved, or may with certainty be elicited from this prophecy, for this reason, because the name of God cannot be great without the teaching of the truth. It is therefore the same thing as though the Prophet had said, that the law which had been given to the Jews would be proclaimed among all nations, so that true religion might spread everywhere: for the basis of true religion is to know how he is to be worshipped by us, inasmuch as obedience is better than all sacrifices. And it is necessary always to begin with this principle --- to know the God whom we worship: and hence Christ himself, in the fourth chapter of John, condemns all the religions which then prevailed in the world, because men presumptuously worshipped gods devised by themselves. Since then it is necessary that the worship of God should be based on the truth, then God declares that his name would become renowned in every place, he doubtless shows that his law would be known to all nations, so that his will might be known everywhere, which is, as we have said, the only rule of true religion.

He afterwards adds --- Everywhere shall be offered incense to my name, and a clean offering. Why? Because my name shall be great. The repetition is not useless; for it was a thing then incredible, inasmuch as God had not in vain separated the Jews from the rest of the world; nor was it an ordinary commendation, when Moses said in the fourth chapter of Deuteronomy --- ``Show me a nation to whom God draws

[361] The verse begins with {,{כ which Calvin suggests may be rendered ``certe --- surely,'' or verily; and this would be most suitable here --- Verily, from the rising of the sun to it setting, Great shall be my name among the nations; And in every place incense shall be brought To my name, and a pure offering: Verily, great shall be my name Among the nations, saith Jehovah of hosts. The Septuagint render the first part as past, ``glorified has been my name;'' and the second in the present, ``is brought.'' But the future is intended, as the last verb is in that tense, ``I will not accept:'' for when there is no verb in a sentence, and the auxiliary verb is understood, as is often the case in Hebrew, the tense is regulated by the context. ``I will not accept your offering, but an offering shall be brought to me,'' and has been or is, but shall be. --- Ed.

nigh as lie does to you: this then is your nobility and your excellency, to have a God nigh and friendly to you.'' Hence also it is said in Psalm 147:20 ---

``He has not done thus to other nations; his judgments has he not made known to them.''

It was then the peculiar privilege of the race of Abraham that God was known and worshipped by them. The very novelty, then, of what is here said might have closed the door against this prophecy; and this is the reason why the Prophet repeatedly confirms what it was then difficult to believe --- the name of God, he says, shall be great in every place

We must also bear in mind that God cannot be rightly worshipped except he is known, which Paul confirms when he says --- ``How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?'' for except the truth shines forth, we shall grope like the blind, and wander through devious ways. There is therefore no religion approved by God except what is based on his word.

Moreover the Prophet, by {מנחה}, meneche, offering, and by incense, means the worship of God; and this mode of speaking is common in the Scriptures, for the Prophets who were under the law accommodated their expressions to the comprehension of the people. Whenever then they intend to show that the whole world would come to the faith and true religion --- ``An altar,'' they say, ``shall be built to God;'' and by altar they no doubt meant spiritual worship, and not that after Christ's coming sacrifices ought to be offered. For now there is no altar for us; and whosoever builds an altar for himself subverts the cross of Christ, on which he offered the only true and perpetual sacrifice.

It then follows that this mode of speaking ought to be so taken, that we may understand the analogy between the legal rites, and the spiritual manner of worshipping God now prescribed in the gospel. Though then the words of the Prophet are metaphorical, yet their meaning is plain enough --- that God will be worshipped and adored everywhere. But what are the sacrifices of the New Testament? They are prayers and thanksgivings, according to what the Apostle says in the last chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews. There was also under the law the spiritual worship of God, as it is especially stated in the fiftieth psalm; but there were then shadows connected with it, as it is intimated in these words of Christ ---

``Now is come the hour when the Father shall be worshipped in spirit and in truth.'' (John 4:13.)

He does not indeed deny that God was worshipped in spirit by the fathers; but as that worship was concealed under outward rites, he says that now under the gospel the simple, and, so to speak, the naked truth is taught. What then the Prophet says of offering and incense availed under the law; but we must now see what God commands in his gospel, and how he would have us to worship him. We do not find there any incense or sacrifices.

This passage contains nothing else than that the time would come when the pure and spiritual worship of God would prevail in all places.

And thus it appears how absurd are the Papists, when they hence infer that God cannot be worshipped without some kind of sacrifice; and on this ground they defend

the impiety of their mass, as though it were the sacrifice of which the Prophet speaks. But nothing can be more foolish and puerile; for the Prophet, as we have said, adopts a mode of speaking common in Scripture. And were we to allow offering and incense to be taken here literally, how could, {מנחה}, meneche, offering, be the body and blood of Christ? ``Oh!'' they say, ``it is a sacrifice made of bread, and wine was added. Oh! Christ has thus commanded.'' But where has he said ``sacrifice?'' [362] They again deny that it is bread? for they say that it is transubstantiated into the body of Christ: now then it is not a sacrifice of bread, nor of fine flour; for the form only, visible to the eyes, and without substance, remains, as they imagine. There is in the meantime no reason for us carefully to discuss a subject so clear; for as we have seen in Joel ---

``In the last days I will pour my Spirit on all flesh, and prophesy shall your sons and your daughters; your old men dreams shall dream, and your young men visions shall see.''
(Joel 2:28.)

So also we find what is similar in this place; for the Apostles, though not taught by visions, were yet we know illuminated; and then visions were not given commonly at the commencement of the gospel, nor dreams; they were indeed very rare things. What then does Paul mean? For he speaks of the whole body of the Church, as though he had said that all, from the least to the greatest, would be Prophets. Did they become Prophets by visions and dreams, whom God illuminated by the doctrine of the gospel? By no means. But Joel, as I have said, accommodated what he said to the time of the law. So also in this place the Prophet, by offering and incense, designates the spiritual worship of God. Let us now proceed-

Malachi 1:12

12. But ye have profaned it, in that ye say, The table of the LORD is polluted; and the fruit thereof, even his meat, is contemptible.

12. Et vos polluistis illud, quum dicitis, Mensa Iehovae polluta est; et proventus ejus (vel, fructus; alii vertunt, sermonem) contemptibilis cibus ejus.

This verse may be confined to the priests, or it may be extended to the whole people; for both views are appropriate. As to my own view, I doubt not but that the Prophet here reproves with additional severity the priests, and that at the same time he extends his reproof to the people in general. We saw in our yesterday's lecture how religion had been polluted by the priests, and how impiously they had profaned the worship of God: but this was the general sin of the whole people, as we shall presently see. Let us then know that the whole people, as well as the priests, are here reproved: but as a crime in the priests was more grievous, they being the occasion of sacrilege to others, the Prophet assails them in an especial manner, Ye, he says, have polluted my name

He gives a reason, and at the same time enhances their guilt: for they might have complained, that God not only put them on a level with the Gentiles, but also rejected them, and substituted aliens in their place. He shows that God had a just

[362] As an instance of a gradual deviation from the truth, Justin Martyr, in the second century, rendered the word "incense," {θυσια}, a sacrifice, while in the Septuagint it is {θυμιαμα}, incense.

cause for disinheriting them, and for adopting the Gentiles as his children, for they had polluted God's name. He at the same time amplifies their sin, when he says, ``The Gentiles, by whom I have been hitherto despised, and to whom my name was not made known, will soon come to the faith; thus my name shall be great, it shall be reverently worshipped by all nations; but ye have polluted it.'' It was certainly very strange, that the Jews, peculiarly chosen and illuminated by the doctrine of the Law, so presumptuously polluted God's worship, as though they despised him, and that the Gentiles, being novices, rendered obedience to God as soon as they tasted of the truth of religion, so that his glory became through them illustrious.

He afterwards shows how the name of Gog was polluted, Ye say, The table of Jehovah is polluted; that is, ye distinguish not between what is sacred and profane: for he repeats what we noticed yesterday, --- that the Jews thought it a frivolous matter, when the Prophets taught them that God was to be worshipped with all reverence. It is not however probable, that they openly uttered such a blasphemy as that the table of God was polluted; but it is easy to conclude from what is said, that God's table was profaned by them, for they made no account of it. The holiness of the table ought to have been so regarded by the Jews, as not to approach the sanctuary without true repentance and faith; they ought to have known that they had to do with God, and that his majesty ought to have deeply touched them. When therefore they came to the temple, and brought with them their uncleanness like swine, it was quite evident that they had no reverence for the temple, or the altar, or the table. According to this sense then are the words of the Prophet to be understood, --- not that the Jews openly mocked God, but that the holiness of the temple was with them of no account.

With regard to the Table, we stated yesterday, that when God ordered sacrifices to be offered to him, it was the same as though he familiarly dwelt among the Jews, and became as it were their companion. It was the highest honor and an instance of God's ineffable goodness, that he thus condescended, so that the people might know that he was not to be sought afar off. And for this reason the less excusable was their impiety, as they did not consider that sacrifices were celebrated on earth, that their minds might be raised up above the heavens: for it is to this purpose that God descends to us, even to raise us above, as we have elsewhere stated. It was then an extremely base and shameful senselessness and stupidity in the Jews, that they did not consider that God's table was set among them, that they might by faith penetrate into heaven, and know it to be even before their eyes.

As to the words, Its fruit is his contemptible food, we must observe, that some render, {ניב}, nib, word, and bring this passage from Isaiah, ``I have created the fruit of the lips, peace, peace,'' (Isaiah 57:19.) The verb, {נוב}, nub, means to fructify; hence, {ניב}, nib, is fruit or produce. Were we to grant that it is metaphorically taken for word, yet I see no reason why we should depart from its simple and real meaning. For first there will be a relative without an antecedent, {ניבו}, nibu, his word; and then there will be a change of number; for they apply it to the priests, his word, that is, the word of them --- of whom? of the priests. It is common, I know, in Hebrew, to put a relative without an antecedent; but as I have said, nothing requires this here. The

most suitable rendering then is, Its provision, that is, of the altar, is the contemptible food of God. [363] I take then the words to mean this, that a speech of this kind was often in the mouth of the people as well as of the priests, --- ``Oh! the provision for the altar is any kind of meat; be not so anxious in your choice, so as to offer the best animals; for God is satisfied even with the lean and the maimed.''

And here again God reproves the impiety and contempt of the people; and at the same time he condemns their avarice, because they took the worst of their animals to offer in the temple, as though they lost everything they consecrated to God.

Why he calls the sacrifices the meat or food of God, we now sufficiently understand. Only this ought to be observed, that the impiety of the people was evident, as they were so unconcerned in their duties; for God had not in vain instituted sacrifices and other rites. The contempt then of the signs openly showed not only the negligence of the people, but also their contempt of all religion. Were any one at this day to regard as nothing outward teaching and the sacraments, would he not prove himself to be an impious despiser of God? Yet religion, I allow, does not consist in these things; for though hypocrites pretend the most ardent zeal, they yet profane the name of God, whenever the truth sounds in their ears and the heart is not touched, and when they come to the Lord's table and are at the same time alienated from Christ. These things I allow; but as no true servant of God can despise these ordinances, which on account of our common infirmity are useful to us, and without which we cannot be as long as we sojourn in this world, whosoever derides our simplicity in frequenting God's house, or if silent abstains from doing so, and regards such a practice as nothing or as unimportant, he is thus, as I have said, proved guilty of impiety. This is the reason why the Prophet so sharply reproves the Jews, because they said that the provision for the altar was God's contemptible food. It follows ---

Malachi 1:13

13. Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness is it! and ye have snuffed at it, saith the LORD of hosts: and ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this of your hand? saith the LORD.

13. Et dixistis, Ecce fatigatio (alii vertunt, Ecce ex fatigatione,) et sufflastis in illud, dicit Iehova exercituum; et obtulistis raptum et claudum et debile; et obtulistis Minchah (hoc est, oblationem;) an gratam hanc habebo e manu vestra, dicit Iehova.

He pursues the same subject --- that the worship of God was despised by them and regarded as almost worthless. We must bear in mind what I have before stated --- that the Jews are not reprehended here as though they had openly and avowedly spoken reproachfully of God's worship; but that this was sufficiently evident from their conduct; for they allowed themselves so much licentiousness, that it was quite manifest that they were trifling with God, inasmuch as they had cast off every fear of him and all reverence towards him.

Ye have said, Behold, labor. This may apply to the whole people, or to the priests

[363] And what is offered thereon, even its food, is despicable.—Newcome. This is nearly the version of the Septuagint. And its fruit, even his food, is contemptible.—Henderson The table of Jehovah, polluted it is and his (or, its) fruit; contemptible is his (or, its) food.—Marckius The last comes nearest to the original, and is the most obvious construction. The verse may be thus rendered: But ye profane it by saying, “The table of Jehovah, Polluted is it and its fruit, Contemptible is its food.” — Ed.

alone. It is commonly explained of the priests --- that they complained that they had a hard office, because they were continually in the temple and constantly watched there, and were much occupied in cleaning the vessels.

The monks at this day under the Papacy, and the priests, boasting of themselves, say, ``While all others sleep, we are watching; for we are constant in prayers.'' Forsooth! they howl at midnight in their temples; and then by massing and by doing other strange things they imagine that they are seriously engaged in pacifying God. In this sense do some understand this passage, as though the priests, in order to commend their work, alleged that they labored much in God's service, and as though God had enjoined on them many and difficult things. But I prefer applying this to the whole people, and yet I do not exclude the priests; for the Prophet here condemns both, and shows that it was wearisome to them to spend labor in worshipping God, that they considered it weariness, as we commonly say, Tu le fais par courvee. [364]

And the import of what follows is the same, Ye have snuffed at it, that is, through disdain. Some give this rendering, ``With sorrow have ye moved him;'' and the verb is in Hiphil, and is often taken in this sense. The verb, {נפח}, nephech, is properly to snuff; and it is here in another conjugation; but even in Hiphil it has this meaning, and cannot be taken otherwise. Now they who render it, to move or touch with sorrow, are under the necessity of turning the words of the Prophet to a sense the most foreign and remote, even that the priests, extremely greedy of gain, compelled the common people to bring sacrifices, and thus extorted sacrifices, but not without sorrow and lamentation. We see how forced this is: I therefore wholly reject it. Some have hammered out a very refined sense, which is by no means suitable, ``Ye have snuffed at it,'' that is, Ye have said indeed that the victims are good and sufficiently fat; and yet ye may by breath blow them into the air. Others render it, to cast down, because they threw the sacrifices on the ground. But what need there is of departing from the common meaning of the word, since it is easy to conclude that both the priests and the people are here condemned, because the worship of God was a weariness to them, as we snuff at a thing when it displeases us. The behavior then of the fastidious is what the Prophet meant here to express. The passage will thus be very appropriate, Ye have said, Behold weariness! Ye have snuffed at it: then he adds, ---

Ye have offered the torn, and the lame, and the weak. These words prove the same thing --- that they performed their duty towards God in a trifling manner by

[364] Variety of meanings has been given to the word {מתלאה} Calvin takes it as one word with two letters added to {לאה}, to be weary or tired. But Drusius, Marckius, Parkhurst, Henderson, and others, regard it as a contraction for {מה} and {תלאה}, according to some other instances in Hebrew, and render it ``What weariness!'' and this corresponds with the context more than any other view. The Septuagint and the Targum considered the {מ} as a preposition, and this mistake has been followed by Jerome and the fathers, and also by Grotius and Newcome. ``Behold, from weariness,'' or from labor, or from affliction: and it has been regarded as an excuse made by the priests on account of their poor and depressed condition. But there is nothing to countenance this notion in the context. Calvin adopted the past tense in this and the preceding verse, and so has Henderson; but Marckius and Newcome, with more correctness, render the verbs in the present tense, for they are all in this verse preceded by a conversive {ו} vau; and the last line shows that the present time is intended, --- 13. And ye say, ``What weariness!'' And ye snuff at it, saith Jehovah of hosts; And ye bring the torn, and the lame, and the sick, When ye bring an offering: Shall I accept it from your hand, saith Jehovah? There are two evils ascribed to the priests---they were discontented with their office and performed it as a drudgery --- and they allowed forbidden victims to be offered. ``Offering,'' {מנחה} signifies a gift or a present, whether a victim or meat-offering. See Genesis 4:2-5. Here evidently it comprehends ``the torn,'' ``the lame,'' etc., as it is clear from the words, ``Shall I accept it?'' that is, the offering, including those specified; for if it meant a meat-offering, as some suppose, non-acceptance would be confined to it alone. --- Ed.

offering improper victims: when they had anything defective or diseased, they said that it was sacred to God, as we find it stated in the next verse. Some improperly render, {גזול}, gazul, a prey, what had been unjustly procured, as though he had said, that they offered victims obtained by plunder: but I wonder how they could thus distort the words of the Prophet without any pretense. He mentions here three kinds --- the torn, the lame, and the maimed or the feeble. Who then does not see that the torn was an animal which had been torn by wild beasts? When therefore they had an animal half dead, having been torn by wolves, they thought that they had a suitable victim: ``I am constrained to offer a sacrifice to God, this lamb is very suitable, for the wolf has devoured a part of it, and it has hardly escaped: as then it is maimed, I will bring it.'' The Prophet then calls those torn victims which had been lacerated by the teeth of wild beasts.

We now understand the import of the words; but we must remember what I have said --- that God required not the performance of external rites, because he had need of meat and drink, or because he set a great value on these sacrifices, but on account of their design. The sacrifices then which God demanded from his ancient people had in themselves nothing that promoted true religion; nor could the odour of sacrifices of itself delight God; but the end was to be regarded. As then God ordered and commanded sacrifices to be offered to him, that he might exercise his people in penitence and faith, it was for this reason that he valued them. But when the people had fallen into gross contempt of them, that they brought to God, as it were to insult him, the maimed and the lame, their extremely base and intolerable impiety, as I have already said, was made fully evident. This is the reason why the Prophet now so vehemently chides the priests and the whole people; they offered to God such sacrifices as man would have rejected, according to what we noticed yesterday. It then follows ---

Malachi 1:14

14. But cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing: for I am a great King, saith the LORD of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen.

14. Maledictus autem dolosus, qui dum est in grege sua masculus, et vovet et sacrificat corruptum Iehovae; quia Rex magnus ego, dicit Iehova exercituum; et nomen meum terribile in gentibus.

I cannot finish today, for I should be too long.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou dost not keep us at this day under the shadows of the law, by which thou didst train up the race of Abraham, but invitest us to a service far more excellent, even to consecrate ourselves, body and soul, as victims to thee, and to offer not only ourselves, but also sacrifices of praise and of prayer, as thou hast consecrated all the duties of religion which thou requirest from us, through Christ thy Son, --- O grant, that we may seek true purity, and labor to render, by a real sincerity of heart, our services approved by thee, and so reverently profess and call upon thy name, that really fulfilled in us may that be which thou best declared by thy Prophet --- that thy name shall be magnified and celebrated through the whole

world, as it was truly made known to us in the person of thine only begotten Son. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Seventy Third

I repeated yesterday the last verse of the first chapter, but I did not explain it. The Prophet declares here, that all who dealt deceitfully and unfaithfully with God were under a curse; and at the same time he specifies the kind of fraud practiced; they chose from the flock such as were diseased or defective to offer as sacrifices to God. It was indeed a proof of extreme dishonesty thus perversely to mock God: for as we have seen no man would bear such an insult. Then the Prophet, in order at once to complete what he had begun, distinctly says, that they were all accursed

The verb, {נכל}, necal, means in Hebrew, to think; but it is taken almost at all times in a bad sense: hence interpreters have not improperly rendered it here, deceitful; but the deceit the Prophet meant to express is of this kind --- when men craftily contrive for themselves vain pretences; for when they can cover their baseness before the world, they think that they are at the same time absolved in heaven. The Prophet then says, that they who think that they can escape God's judgment by such artifices are under a curse.

I come now to the kind of fraud they practiced, If there be, he says, in his flock a male, that is, a lamb or a ram, when he vows, then what is corrupt he offers to Jehovah. He then means, that though they pretended some religion, yet nothing was done by them with a sincere and honest heart; for they immediately repented of the vow made to God; they thought that they might be reduced to poverty, if they were too bountiful in their sacrifices. Hence then the Prophet proves that they offered to God with a double mind, and that whatever they thus offered was polluted, because it did not proceed from a right motive.

We said yesterday, that the Prophet did not require fat or lean beasts, because God valued either the blood or flesh of animals on its own account, but for the end in view; for these were the performances of religion by which God designed to train up the Jews for the end contemplated, and in the duty of repentance. As then they were so sordid as to these sacrifices, it was easy to conclude, that they were gross and profane despisers of God, and had no concern for religion.

The reason follows, For a great king am I, saith Jehovah, and my name is terrible [365] among the nations. God declares here that his majesty was of no account among the Jews, as though he had said, ``With whom do you think that you have to do?'' And this is what we ought carefully to consider when engaged in God's service. We indeed know that it is a vice which has prevailed in all ages, that all nations and individuals thought that they worshipped God, when they devised foolish and frivolous rites according to their own fancies. If then we have a desire to worship God aright, we must remember how great he is; for his majesty will raise us up above the whole world, and cease will that audacity which possesses almost all mankind; for they

[365] Rendered "illustrious — {επιφανὲς}," by the Septuagint, --- ``powerful,'' by the Targum, --- ``dreadful --- horrible,'' by Jerome, --- ``terrible --- terrible,'' by Marckius, --- ``shall be feared,'' by Henderson, --- ``shall be had in reverence,'' by Newcome, and the same with Drusius, ``reverendum.'' The word is literally ``to be feared,'' ;{נורא} it is often rendered ``terrible,'' what causes dread or terror. Some take the present tense, ``my name is terrible,'' i.e., is dreaded on account of my greatness, manifested by my judgments. But if we take the future, then we must render the words --- ``my name shall be feared'' or reverenced. --- Ed.

think that their own will is a law, when they presumptuously obtrude anything on God. The greatness of God then ought to humble us, that we may not worship him according to the perceptions of our flesh, but offer him only what is worthy of his celestial glory.

He again repeats what we have before observed, though it was disregarded by the Jews, --- that he was a great king through the whole world. As then the Jews thought that sacrifices could not be offered to God, such as he would accept, in any other place but at Jerusalem, and in the temple on Mount Sion, he testifies that he is a great king even in the farthest parts of the world. It hence follows, that God's worship would not be confined to Judea, or to any other particular part of the world; for by the gospel the Lord would receive to himself all nations, and come into the possession of his kingdom. Now follows

CHAPTER 2

Malachi 2

Malachi 2:1, 2

1. And now, O ye priests, this commandment is for you.

1. Et nunc ad vos praeceptum hoc, O sacerdotes, ---

2. If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the LORD of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings: yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart.

2. Si non audieritis et non posueritis super cor, ut detis gloriam nomini meo, dicit Iehova exercituum, mittam (copula hic abundat) in vos maledictionem et maledicam benedictionibus vestris, atque etiam maledixi eam (est mutatio numeri, pro eas,) quia non ponitis super cor.

Though the priests did not sin alone, yet it is not without reason, as we have said, that they were regarded as the first in wickedness; for it was their office to correct what the people did amiss. Their dissimulation had the effect of encouraging the common people to sin: hence the Prophet accuses them especially as the authors of impiety; and this is what the words intimate, if they are rightly considered.

To you, he says, O priests. They might have indeed exonerated themselves, or at least transferred a part of their guilt to others: ``Oh! what can we do? for we see that the people are growing cold in God's worship; it is better that imperfect sacrifices should be offered than none at all.'' As then they might by evasion have somewhat extenuated their guilt, the Prophet the more sharply reproves them and says, To you especially is addressed this command, as they ought to have shown to others the right way; for when they dissembled, their connivance was nothing else but a consent; and thus they divested the people of God's fear, and allowed them to corrupt the whole of religion by offering spurious sacrifices. To you then, he says, that is, ``Though the whole people is guilty before God, think not that ye are on this account excused; for it behoves you to check this wickedness, for God has set you over the people as their teachers and guides: as then ye have neglected your

duty, whatever others have done amiss, falls justly on your heads. For how has it happened that the people have dared to proceed so far in impiety? even because you have no concern for religion; for God has promoted you to the priesthood for this end --- to preserve in integrity the worship of his name; but ye know of all the prevailing profanations, and ye hold your peace: To you then is this command.''

He then adds, If ye will not hear nor lay it to heart to give glory to my name, etc. He seems here to threaten the priests alone; and yet if any one carefully considers the whole passage, he will easily perceive that this address extends to the whole people, in such a way however that it is in the first place directed to the priests; for as I have said the greater portion of the guilt belonged to them. God then denounces a heavy punishment on the whole people as well as on the priests, even that he would send a curse. But that they might not object and say that they were too severely dealt with, God shows how justly he was displeased with them, because they hearkened not nor attended to his warnings. What indeed is less tolerable than not to hear God speaking? But as many thought it enough to stretch the ear, and then immediately to forget what had been spoken, it is added, If ye lay it not to heart, that is, If ye attend not and seriously apply your hearts to what is said. We see then that the Prophet shows how that God had a just cause for severely punishing them; for it was an impiety not to be borne, when he could obtain no hearing from men. But the Prophet shows at the same time what it is to hear God; he therefore adds the latter clause as a definition or an explanation of the former: for God is not heard, if we receive with levity his words, so that they soon vanish away; but we hear them when we lay them on the heart, or, as the Latins say, when we apply the mind to them. There is then required a serious attention, otherwise it will be the same as though the ears were closed against God.

Let us further learn from this passage that obedience is of so much account with God, that he bears nothing less than a contempt of his word or a careless attention to it, as though we regarded not its authority. We must also notice that our guilt before God is increased and enhanced, when he recalls us to the right way, and seeks to promote our welfare by warning and exhorting us. When therefore God is thus kindly careful for our salvation, we are doubly inexcusable, if we perversely reject his teaching, warnings, counsels, and other remedies which he may apply.

He now adds, I will send on you a curse; and this curse he immediately explains, I will curse your blessings [366] The word blessing, we know, means everywhere in Scripture the beneficence or kindness of God. God then is said to bless us when he bountifully supports us and supplies whatever is necessary for us. And hence seems to have arisen the expression, that God by his nod alone can satisfy us with all abundance of good things. By blessings then he means a large and an abundant provision, and also rest from enemies, a healthy air, and everything of this kind. Some think that those prayers are intended, by which the priest blessed the people; but there is no reason for this. God then had manifested his favor to the Jews; he now declares that he will deprive them of all his benefits, that they might know that he is

[366] It is “your blessing” in one MS., in the Septuagint, the Targum, and Arabic; and this reading is confirmed by “it” in the next line. By “blessing,” says Newcome, “is meant the portion of the priests:” and as the priests are especially addressed, this is probable. — Ed.

not propitious to them. Blessings then are evidences of God's bounty and paternal favor.

But he immediately adds, Yea, I have cursed. By which words he proves their senselessness: for they were not even taught by their evils, which yet produce some effect even on fools, who, according to the common proverb, begin to be wise when they are chastised. God then here reproves the stupidity of the Jews; for they had already been deprived of his benefits, and they might have known by experience that he was not propitious to them, but on the contrary an angry judge; and yet they were touched by no penitence, according to what we have seen in the other Prophets.

We now understand the import of the words, and at the same time the object of the Prophet: I will then curse your blessings, and what is more, (so I explain, {וגם}, ugam,) I have already cursed them: but ye are like blocks of wood or stones; for the very scourges avail nothing with you. He again repeats, because ye lay it not on your heart, in order to show that he could not bear the contempt of his word, for it was, as we have said, a sign of extreme impiety. It follows

Malachi 2:3

3. Behold, I will corrupt your seed, and spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts; and one shall take you away with it.

3. Ecce ego corrumpo (vel perdo) vobis semen (vertunt Graeci, brachium; sed decepti sunt in una litera,) et spergam stercus super facies vestras, stercus solemnitatum vestrarum; et tollet vos ad se (alii vertunt, tollet vos ad ipsum; sed coacta est illa expositio.)

He confirms here again what he had said in the last verse, --- that they would perceive God's curse in want and poverty. The curse of God is any kind of calamity; for as God declares especially his favor by a liberal support, so the sterility of the land and defective produce most clearly evidence the curse of God. The Prophet then shows, by mentioning one thing, what sort of curse was nigh the Jews, --- that God would destroy their seed. Some read, but improperly, ``I will destroy you and the seed.'' I wonder how learned men make such puerile mistakes, when there is nothing ambiguous in the Prophet's words. I will destroy then for you the seed; that is, ``Sow as much as you please, I will yet destroy your seed, so that it shall produce no fruit.'' In short, he threatens the Jews with want and famine; for the land would produce nothing when cursed by God. [367]

But as the Jews flattered themselves on account of their descent, and ever boasted of their fathers, and as that preeminence with which God had favored them proved to them an occasion of haughtiness and pride, the Prophet here ridicules this foolish confidence, I will scatter dung, he says, on your faces: ``Ye are a holy nation, ye are the chosen seed of Abraham, ye are a royal priesthood; these are your boastings; but the Lord will render your faces filthy with dung; this will be your nobility and preeminence! there is then no reason for you to think yourselves exempt from punishments because God has adopted you; for as ye have abused

[367] The word {זרע} means ``the shoulder'' as well as ``seed,'' and it is so rendered by the Septuagint, and the Arabic, and also by Grotius and Newcome, --- Behold, I will withhold from you the shoulder. The shoulder belonged to the priests, see Leviticus 7:32; Deuteronomy 18:3. This rendering suits the context better than the other. --- Ed.

his benefits and profaned his name, so ye shall also find in your turn, that he will cover you with everything disgraceful and ignominious, so as to make you wholly filthy: ye shall then be covered all over with dung, and shall not be the holy seed of Abraham.''

But as they might have again raised a clamor and say, ``Have we then in vain so diligently served God? Why has he bidden a temple to be built for him by us and promised to dwell there? God then has deceived us, or at least his promises avail nothing.'' --- The Prophet gives this answer, ``God will overwhelm you with disgrace and also your sacrifices.'' But he calls them the dung of solemnities, as though he had said, ``I will cover you with reproach on account of your impiety, which is seen in your sacrifices.'' Had the Jews any holiness they derived it from their sacrifices, by which they expiated their sins and reconciled themselves to God: but the Prophet says that it was their special ill-savor which offended God, and which he abominated, because they vitiated their sacrifices. Nor is that to be disapproved which some of the rabbins have said, that the Prophet alludes to the oxen, calves, and rams; for when the Jews from various places brought their sacrifices, there must have been much dung from all that vast number. There is then here a striking allusion to the victims themselves, as though he had said, ``Ye think that I can be pacified by your sacrifices, as though loads of dung were pleasing to me; for when ye bring such a vast number, even the place itself, the area before the temple, throws an ill-savor on account of the dung that is there. Ye are then, forsooth! holy, and all your filth is cleansed away by means of this dung. Begone then together with the dung of your solemnities; for I will cast this very dung on your heads.''

We now perceive what the Prophet means: and emphatical are the words, Behold I; for God by these single words cuts off all those pretences by which the Jews deceived themselves, and thought that their vices were concealed from God: ``I myself,'' he says, ``am present, to whom ye think your sacrifices to be acceptable; I then will destroy your seed, and I will also cast dung on your faces; all the dignity which ye pretend shall be abolished, for ye think that ye are defended by a sort of privilege, when ye boast yourselves to be the seed of Abraham: it is dung, it is dung,'' he says. He afterwards shows what was especially the dung and the filth: for when they objected and said, ``What! have our sacrifices availed nothing?'' he answers, ``Nay, I will cast that dung upon you, because the chief pollution is in your sacrifices, for ye vitiate and adulterate my service: and what else is your sacrifice but profanation only? ye are sacrilegious in all your empty pomps. Since then all your victims have an ill-savor and displease me, and as I nauseate them, (as it is also said in the first and last chapter of Isaiah,) I will heap the dung on your own heads, because ye think it to be your chief expiation.''

He adds at last, It shall take you to itself; that is, ``Ye shall be dung altogether; and thus all your boastings, that ye are descended from the holy Patriarch Abraham, shall be wholly useless; though I made a covenant and promised that you should be to me a royal priesthood, yet the dung shall take you to itself, and thus whatever

dignity I have hitherto conferred on you shall be taken away.'' [368] Let us proceed

Malachi 2:4

4. And ye shall know that I have sent this commandment unto you, that my covenant might be with Levi, saith the LORD of hosts.

4. Et scietis quod miserim ad vos hoc mandatum ut sit (vel, ut esset; sed magis placet, ut sit; est, ad assendum, ad verbum; ergo ad assendum pactum meum, si posset dici Latine,) pactum meum cum Levi, dicit Iehova exercituum.

Here he addresses in particular the priests; for though the whole people with great haughtiness resisted God, yet the priests surpassed them. And we know how ready men are to turn to evil whatever benefits God may bestow on them. It has been then a common evil in men from the beginning of the world, to exalt themselves and to raise their crests against God, when they found themselves adorned with his benefits: but we know that the more any one is bound to God the more thankful he ought to be, for our gifts are not our own, but the benefits by which God binds us to himself.

``What best thou as thine own?'' says Paul, ``thou best then no reason to glory.'' (1 Corinthians 4:7)

This evil however has ever prevailed among men --- that they have defrauded God of his glory, and have turned to an occasion of pride the favors received from him. But it is an evil which is very commonly seen in all governors; for they who are raised to a high dignity, think no more that they are men, but take to themselves very great liberty when they find themselves so much exalted above others. Thus kings and those in authority seem to themselves to be above the common order of men, and presumptuously disregard all laws; they think that everything is lawful for them, as no one opposes their willfulness. The same thing is also to be seen in teachers. For when God favored the priests with the highest honor, they became blinded, as it will hereafter be seen, by that favor of God, that they thought themselves to be as it were semi-gods; and the same thing has taken place in the kingdom of Christ.

For how have arisen so great impieties under the Papacy, except that pastors have exercised tyranny and not just government? For they have not regarded the purpose for which they have been called into their office, but as the name of pastor is in itself honorable, they have dared to raise themselves above the clouds, and to assume to themselves the authority of God himself. Hence it has been, that they have dared to bind consciences by their own laws, to change the whole truth, and to corrupt the whole worship of God: and hence also followed the scandalous sale of justice. How have these things happened? Because priests were counted as angels come down from heaven; and this same danger is ever to be feared by us.

This then is the vice which the Prophet now refers to; and he shows that the priests had no reason to think that they could shake off the yoke, Ye shall know, he says, that to you belongs this command. We indeed see what they objected to Jeremiah,

``The law shall not depart from the priests nor counsel and wisdom from the elders.'' (Jeremiah 18:18.)

[368] Participles and vers are often connected by "and" in Hebrew, and so in Welsh; but then the auxiliary is understood. Such is the case here, and the Septuagint have so regarded it, "{καὶ} {λήψομαι} {ὑμας} {εἰς} {το} {ἀυ᾽τό} --- and I will take you to the same.'' --- Ed.

These are the weapons by which the Papists at this day defend themselves. When we allege against them plain proofs from Scripture, they find themselves clearly reproved and convicted by God's word; but here is their Ajax's shield, under which they hide all their wickedness, retailing as it were from the ungodly and wicked priests what is related by Jeremiah, ```The law shall not depart from the priests;' we are the Church, can it err? is not the Holy Spirit dwelling in the midst of us? `I am with you always to the end of the world,' (Matthew 28:20;) did Christ intend to deceive his Church when he said this to his Apostles? and we are their successors.'' The Prophet now gives the answer, Ye shall know, he says, that to you, belongs this cornmand

And he adds, not without severity, that my covenant may be with Levi; [369] as though he had said, ``On what account are ye thus elated? for God cannot get a hearing for himself, yet ye say that the covenant with Levi is not to be void, as though God had put Levi in his own place, and divested himself of all authority when he appointed that tribe, and made you ministers of the temple and teachers of the people; is he nothing? What was God's purpose when he honored you with that dignity? He certainly did not mean to reduce himself to nothing, but, on the contrary, his will was, that his own right should remain entire and complete. When therefore I reprove your vices, and show that ye are become vile, and as it were dung, that ye are defiled by everything disgraceful, --- when I make these things openly known, I do not violate the covenant made with Levi. God then justly summons you before his tribunal, and strips you of your honor, in order that the covenant he made with Levi may be confirmed and ratified.'' This is, as I have said, a severe derision.

But we may hence learn a useful truth. The Prophet briefly teaches us that the priestly office takes away nothing from God's authority, who requires a pure and holy worship, and that it lessens in nothing the authority of the law, for sound doctrine ought ever to prevail. So at this day, when we resist the Papal priests, we do not violate God's covenant, that is, it is no departure from the order of the Church, which ought ever to remain sacred and inviolable. We do not then on account of men's vices, subvert the pastoral office, and the preaching of the word; but we assail the men themselves, so that due order may be restored, that sound doctrine may obtain a hearing among men, that the worship of God may be pure, which these unprincipled men have violated. We therefore boldly attempt to subvert the whole of the Papacy, with this full confidence, that we lessen nothing from the authority of teaching, nor in any way defraud the pastoral office; nay, order in the Church, the preaching of the truth, and the very dignity of pastors, cannot exist, except the Church be purged from its defilements, and its filth removed. Thus must we say also of those unprincipled men, who are too nearly connected with us, or too near us, and I wish they were wholly extinct in the world: but how many pests conceal themselves under this covering, or under this mask --- ``What! are we not the ministers of the word?'' So say you who are without any principle; I wish ye were in your dung, or in your cells, where formerly ye too much corrupted the world; but now the devil has brought you forth into the Church of God, that ye may corrupt whatever had hitherto

[369] That any covenant may remain with Levi. — Newcome. This seems to be the sense. He sent "this command," or this message, as {{מצוה may be rendered here, in order that by reforming his sons his covenant might remain in force, for disobedience on their part would abrogate it, as it was a conditional covenant. --- Ed.

remained sound. As then there are many at this day who boast of this honor --- that they are ministers of the word, and pastors, and that they teach the gospel, they ought to be checked by this answer of the Prophet --- that when all their corruptions are fully and really cleansed away, then confirmed and ratified will be the compact which God would have to be valid with his Church and with the ministers of his word. He then adds an explanation ---

Malachi 2:5

5. My covenant was with him of life and peace; and I gave them to him for the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my name.

5. Foedus meum fuit cum eo vitae et pacis; et dedi illi timorem; et timuit me, et a facie nominis mei contritus fuit.

The Prophet now proves more clearly how God violates not his covenant, when he freely rebukes the priests, and exposes also their false attempts in absurdly applying to themselves the covenant of God, like the Papal priests at this day, who say that they are the Church. How? because they have in a regular order succeeded the apostles; but this is a foolish and ridiculous definition; for he who occupies the place of another ought not on that account only to be deemed a successor. Were a thief to kill the master of a family, and to occupy his place, and to take possession of all his goods, is he to be accounted his legitimate successor? So these dishonest men, to show that they are to be regarded as apostles, only allege a continued course of succession; but the likeness between them ought rather to be the subject of inquiry. We must see first whether they have been called, and then whether they answer to their calling; neither of which can they prove. Then their definition is altogether frivolous.

So also our Prophet here shows, that the priests made pretences and deceived the common people, while they sought to prove themselves heirs of the covenant which God had made with Levi their father, that is, with the tribe itself. ``I shall be faithful,'' says God, ``and my faithfulness will be evident from the compact itself; my compact with your father was that of life and peace: [370] but it was mutual: ye seem not to think that there are two parties in a compact, and that there is, according to what is commonly said, a reciprocal obligation: but I on my part promised to your father to be his father, and I also stipulated with him that he was to obey me, to obey my word, and whatever I might afterwards require. Now ye will have me to be bound to you, and yourselves to be free from every obligation. What equity is this --- that I should owe everything to you and you nothing to me? My compact then with him was that of life and peace; but what is your compact? what is it that ye owe to me? Even what the mutual compact which I made with your father Levi and his tribe requires; perform this, and ye shall find that I am faithful and constant in all my promises.'' I cannot go farther now.

PRAYER

[370] That we may understand these terms we must have recourse to the case evidently alluded to, that of Phinehas, in Numbers 25:12,13. God promised to him the covenant of peace and of perpetual priesthood—of peace, that is, of reconcilement, because God through the zeal displayed by Phinehas became reconciled to the children of Israel — and of perpetuity as to the priesthood, signified here by life or “lives,” as the word is plural. — Ed.

Grant, Almighty God that as thou hast been pleased to choose us at this day thy priests, and hast consecrated us to thyself by the blood of thine only-begotten Son and through the grace of thy Spirit, --- O grant, that we may rightly and sincerely perform our duties to thee, and be so devoted to thee that thy name may be really glorified in us; and may we be thus more and more confirmed in the hope of those promises by which thou not only guides us through the course of this earthly life, but also invites us to thy celestial inheritance; and may Christ thy Son so rule in us, that we may ever cleave to our head, and be gathered as his members into a participation of that eternal glory into which he has gone before us. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Seventy-fourth

We began in the last lecture to explain what the Prophet says here of the priesthood, and we have said that the sum of the whole is --- that wicked priests in vain lay claim to the title of honor, who do not faithfully perform their office; for the compact between God and them is mutual, inasmuch as God did not institute priests under the law in order to allow them unbridled liberty, or to deprive himself of every power; but, on the contrary, he set them over the Church in order to retain the people in true religion. As then the obligation is, as they say, reciprocal, there is no reason for the priests to arrogate supreme power and to deprive God of it. The Prophet then had said, that God's compact with Levi was that of life and peace, because God, who is faithful in his promises, had promised to be propitious to the Levites. Our Prophet therefore calls it the compact of life and peace, because the Levites had found that God was in every respect kind and bountiful, whenever they performed their parts.

He now adds, I gave to him fear, and he feared me. The interpreters who consider the preposition for, or, on account of (propter), to be understood, pervert the whole sense; for fear here is to be taken for the rule of worshipping God, as though he had said, ``I have prescribed how he is rightly to perform his office.'' He means then that God gave to the Levites a knowledge of the way in which he was to be served, because he would not have them to wander according to their own notions, but he prescribed to them the duties of their office, as though he had said, ``Ye are indeed endued with no common honor, for ye are the teachers of the Church; but yet I have laid a restraint upon you, as I have commanded the people to obey you, so have I commanded you what to do. Since then I have given my fear to Levi, since I have prescribed how he is to worship me, is it not now most shameless and most impious, to boast of the honorable name of priesthood, and at the same time to be no priests? for what is it to be God's priest, except to govern the Church as God has commanded? I have then given him my fear.'' [371]

[371] Calvin's copy must have had the verb to "give" without the affix {,{ם as it is in two MS., and according to the Septuagint, the Targum, and the Arabic. But even in this case the meaning gien can hardly be defended: for ,{מוראּ} which occurs elsewhere about eleven times, has not the sense here assigned to it. It means fear in the sense of dread or terror, the fear which arises from the apprehension of displeasure or wrath, the fear which a servant has for his master, as in 1:6, where this very word occurs. The idea expressed by Calvin is the same with that of the Targum, and adopted also by Grotius; and the meaning given is, ``the doctrine of the law.'' But that it means fear here, the fear of majesty and the fear of wrath, is evident from the whole context. The subject at the end of the last chapter is the fear inspired by God's greatness, and the conclusion of this verse is sufficiently express. The {ם} after the verb ``gave'' is no doubt the right reading, as it exists in all MS., except two. Then comes the difficulty of construction. There is one MS. which has {ב} before ``fear,'' and the Septuagint have {επι}, for, or, on account of, before it. This removes the difficulty, and the meaning will be found consistent with the facts of the case alluded to, and with the general tenor of this passage. The verse then would run this--- 5. My covenant with him was that of life and peace, And I gave them to him on account of his fear; For he feared me, And at the presence of my name he was terrified.

And he feared me; that is, he observed the law laid down for him; and he was contrite before my name; that is, ``he conducted himself in a humble manner, he did not exalt himself by vain pride, that he might oppress my Church, rule tyrannically, and subvert all due order; but he was an example of humility, for he owned himself the more bound to me, because I honored him with so much dignity as to make him the ruler of my Church.'' It afterwards follows ---

Malachi 2:6

6. The law of the truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity.

6. Lex veritatis fuit in ore ejus, et iniquites non fuit reperta, in labiis ejus; in pace et rectitudine ambulavit mecum; et multos redire fecit (hoc est, convertit) ab iniquitate.

He explains mote fully how Levi responded to God's command, --- that he had the law of truth in his mouth. The chief duty of a priest is to show the right way of living to the people; for however upright and holy one may be through his whole life, he is not on that account to be deemed a priest. Hence our Prophet dwells especially on this point --- that Levi taught the people. He does not speak of Levi himself; for we know that Levi was dead when Aaron was made a priest. For God does not here speak of individuals, but of the tribe; as though he had said, ``Aaron and Eleazar, and those who followed them, knew for what end they were honored with the priesthood, and they faithfully performed their duties.'' The Prophet now explains what God mainly requires from priests --- to show to the people, as I have already said, the way of living a pious and holy life; but he adopts different words, which yet mean the same thing.

The law of truth, he says, was in his mouth. Why does he not commend the integrity of his heart rather than his words? Had he spoken of an individual, the Prophet might have justly said, that he who sought to be an approved servant of God, had conducted himself harmless towards men; but he speaks of a public office, when he says, that the law of truth was in his mouth; for he is not worthy of that honor who is mute: and nothing is more preposterous, or even more ridiculous, than that those should be counted priests who are no teachers. These two things are, as they say, inseparable --- the office of the priesthood and teaching.

And that he might more clearly show that he speaks not of an ordinary matter, he repeats the same thing in other words, Iniquity was not found in his lips. We hence see that all this belongs peculiarly to the sacerdotal office. He afterwards adds, In peace and rectitude he walked before me. The Prophet here commends also the sincere concern for religion which the first priests manifested, for they walked with God in peace and uprightness; they not only carried signals in their lips and mouth, by which they might have been justly deemed the ministers of God and the pastors of his Church; but they also executed faithfully their office. And he alludes to the peace of which he had spoken: as God then had promised peace to the Levites, so also he says, that the Levites had lived themselves peaceably before God; for they did not

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The last verb is the Niphil of ,{nn} which means to break, and to be broken, and hence to be broken in mind by fear and dread, to be dismayed or terrified. ``Dismayed'' is the rendering Newcome, and ``stood in awe'' is that of Henderson. It is rendered ``discouraged'' in Deuteronomy 1:21, but it ought to be ``terrified'' or ``dismayed,'' as in Jeremiah 1:17; Ezekiel 2:6; 3:9 ``At the presence of my name,'' seems to mean the same thing as ``at my presence.'' --- Ed.

break the covenant which he had made with them. As then they had responded to the stipulation of God, he says that they had walked in peace: but he also mentions how this was; it was, because they had walked in uprightness.

And the phrase, {אתי}, ati, with me, ought to be observed; for it confirms what I have stated, --- that the honor of the priesthood in no way lessens God's authority, for he keeps the priests devoted to himself. He intimates then that they were not elevated to such a height, that their dignity took away anything from God's authority: for the obligation, which has been mentioned, ought to be mutual: God is faithful; the priests also must be faithful in their office, and show themselves to be the legitimate ministers of God. [372]

He also mentions the fruit of their doctrine; for Levi turned many from iniquity, that is, he led many to repentance. It afterwards follows (for this verse ought to be joined) ---

Malachi 2:7

7. For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts.

7. Certe labia sacerdotis custodient scientiam, et Legem requirent ex ore ejus, quia nuntius Iehovae exercituum est.

What the Prophet has said of the first priests he extends now to the whole Levitical tribe, and shows that it was a perpetual and unchangeable law as to the priesthood. He had said that Levi had been set over the Church, not to apply to himself the honor due to God, but to stand in his own place as the minister of God, and the teacher of the chosen people. The same thing he now confirms, declaring it as a general truth that the lips of the priest ought to retain knowledge, as though he had said, that they were to be the store-house from which the food of the Church was to be drawn. God then did appoint the priests over his chosen people, that the people might seek their food from them as from a store-room, according to what we find to be the case with a master of a family, who has his store of wine and his store of provisions. As then the food of a whole family is usually drawn out from places where provisions are laid up, so the Prophet makes use of this similitude, --- that God has deposited knowledge with the priests, so that the mouth of every priest might be a kind of store-house, so to speak, from which the people are to seek knowledge and the rule of a religious life: Keep knowledge then shall the lips of the priest, and the law shall they seek from his mouth [373]

He shows how it is to be kept; the priests are not to withhold it, but the whole

[372] "The fear of God," says Cocceius, "which was in the first priests, is more fully declared by its effects, which are twofold—sayings and doings. The doctrine of truth was in their mouth; they taught the truth, they were not silent, but sincerely taught it, without admiring what was false; for what is false is injustice, and it is the truth set forth either in a perverted form, or by addition, or by diminution. As to doings, they walked in peace, they did not rebel against God, nor did they seek devious and crooked ways, but walked in a strait course." The word {עולה} is rendered ``unrighteousness, or, injustice --- {ἀδικία}," by the Septuagint and the Targum, --- ``falsitas, falseness," by Drusius, --- and ``iniquity" by many. There being no agreement in gender between it and the verb ``formed," Marckius suggests that {דבר} is understood, ``the word of iniquity," etc. --- Ed.

[373] The verbs, as here rendered, are future: but being preceded by {כי,} many consider them as declaring what ought to be: and they are thus rendered by Drusius, Dathius, Newcome, and Henderson, ``should keep," or ``ought to keep," etc. We find the future thus used when preceded by {ה,} ``whether," in Ezekiel 34:2; and when preceded by no particle, as in Malachi 1:6, where the version ought clearly to be, --- A son should honor a father, And a servant, his Lord. This use of the future, as designating a duty or obligation, is much more frequent in Hebrew than what is commonly supposed. --- Ed.

Church is to enjoy the knowledge of which they are the keepers. They shall then seek or demand the law from his mouth.

Law may be taken simply for truth; but the Prophet no doubt alludes here to the doctrine of Moses, the only true fountain of all knowledge. We indeed know that God included in his law whatever was necessary for the welfare of his Church; nor was there anything added by the Prophets. Our Prophet then so includes every truth in the word, {תורה}, ture, law, that he might at the same time show that it was laid up in what Moses has taught.

He says in the last place, that the priest is the messenger of Jehovah. He briefly defines here what the priesthood is, even an embassy which God commits to men, that they may be his interpreters in teaching and ruling the Church. What then is a priest? A messenger of God, and his interpreter. It hence follows that the office of teaching cannot be separated from the priesthood; for it is a monstrous thing when any one boasts himself to be a priest, when he is no teacher. The Prophet then draws an argument from the definition itself, when he says that a priest is a messenger of God. Then follows the contrast when he says

Malachi 2:8

8. But ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the LORD of hosts.

8. Atqui vos declinastis e via, impingere (vel, ruere) fecistis multos in lege; corrupistis foedus Levi, dicit Iehova exercituum.

He shows here how far were the priests of his time from fulfilling that compact which he had mentioned. He hence concludes that they were unworthy of the honor of which they were so confidently proud, and under the shadow of which they sought to cover their vices, as though they were not bound to God, and were at liberty to tread the Church under foot with impunity. He then shows that it was an extremely foolish arrogance in them to seek to be exempt from all law, and yet to regard God and the whole Church bound to them.

He says first, that they deviated from the way, that is, they exhibited nothing suitable to their office, on account of which they were counted priests. He then amplifies their guilt --- that they made many to stumble in the law [374] He had before said that Levi walked in peace and uprightness; what he now says is very different --- that the priests, forgetting religion, had first shaken off the yoke. He had said that Levi restored many from iniquity; but he now says that the priests made many to stumble.

He adds in the last place --- Ye have therefore corrupted the covenant. An illative is to be put here, for so ought the sentence to be explained --- ``As ye have deviated from the way, and perverted the whole worship of God, ye have thus violated the compact which had been sanctioned with Levi; ye have then no reason to boast of

[374] "At the law" is our version, and that of Newcome, who adds, "By offering blemished sacrifices." Henderson has "in the law." They departed from the way prescribed in the law, and caused others to fall or stumble in it, that is, in the way which the law pointed out. The way, says Drusius, is the law itself. To stumble in the law is to transgress it. For "causing to stumble," the Septuagint have "ye have weakened—{ησθενήσατε};" Sym. and Theodoret, ``ye have caused to stumble --- {εσκανδαλίσατε};'' and so the Vulgate Dathius gives this paraphrase --- ``ye have caused many to sin against the law.'' --- Ed.

your title of honor, for succession failed when ye fell away from the faithfulness of your father Levi.'' At length it follows ---

Malachi 2:9

9. Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law.

9. Atqui etiam ego dedi vos probrosos et abjectos toti populo, secundum quod non servastis vias meas, et extulistis personas in lege.

The Prophet draws this conclusion --- that the priests in vain gloried in the honor of their office, for they had ceased to be the priests of God. We may now return to the main point.

We perceive what the subject is which the Prophet handles here: as the priests sought by a peculiar privilege to exempt themselves from all reproof, he assails them in particular; for teaching would have been useless as to the common people, except the priests themselves were brought to order. The priests no doubt flattered the people, and thus attempted to deprive the Prophets of every respect, in order that their doctrine might produce no effect. This is the reason why our Prophet so sharply reproves them. But we must consider the state of the case. The priests said that they had been set, by divine authority, over the whole Church, and that they could not be deprived of that honor which they had received from God. They however took only but one part of the covenant, and yet sought to deprive God of his right. The Prophet here answers them --- that God had indeed favored them with no common honor in appointing them the priests of his Church, but that the compact, which included a mutual stipulation, was at the same time to be considered; for God had not simply appointed them the guides of his Church, but had also added a condition.

We hence see that the hinge of the matter was, that the priests presumptuously and absurdly laid hold on what favored only their own cause, and at the same time passed by and cunningly overlooked the chief thing --- that the priesthood was connected with the worship of God. Now had they attained what they wished, there would have been no God in the Church, but they would have exercised over it a tyrannical power. But it has ever been, and is still the will of God, to retain the supreme power over mortals in his own hand.

Having now seen the design of the Prophet, we may easily perceive the import of the whole subject. But before we proceed farther, we must first observe, that we have here described to us the character of true and legitimate priests; for the Prophet not only speaks of the office of priests, but sets before us a living image in which we cannot be deceived: and hence all who are engaged in the pastoral office may know what God requires from them. I will only just mention what he first says --- that God gave fear to priests; for I have already given a sufficient explanation of this by saying, that priests are not to abuse their right, as though the highest power were granted to them; for God will not have his Church subject to tyranny, but his will is to reign alone in it through the ministry of men. The main thing then to be borne in mind is this --- that a rule is prescribed to priests, that though they preside and possess the first rank of honor among the people, it is yet under certain conditions.

We shall now consider only this which the Prophet says --- that Levi faithfully and sincerely performed his office, because the law of truth was in his mouth, and no iniquity was found in his lips; to which we ought yet to add the general truth which immediately follows --- that the priest's lips ought to keep knowledge. It is then a law which cannot be abolished, that those who are priests or pastors in the Church are to be teachers. And not unwisely does Gregory apply a custom under the law to this subject; for we know that appended to the priest's dress were bells; and it is distinctly commanded by Moses, that the priest should not go forth without this sound, (Exodus 28:35.) Gregory, as I have said, accommodated this to teaching --- ``Woe,'' he says, ``to us, if we go forth without sound, that is, if we boast that we are pastors, and in the meantime are dumb dogs; for nothing is less tolerable than that he who speaks not in the Church and whose voice is not clearly heard to the edification of the people, should be deemed a pastor.'' This is what a Roman Pope has said. Let those who now proudly and confidently boast themselves to be his successors, at least give the sound, and let us hear what they teach: but as their whole power is exercised in cruelty, it is evident how faithfully they keep God's covenant! But I now return to the words of the Prophet.

He says, that this law has been fixed by God, and that it cannot be nullified by any decrees or customs of men, --- that the priest is to keep knowledge in his lips. He farther explains himself by showing that the priest is to be the keeper of knowledge, not that he may reserve it for himself, but that he may teach the whole people: they shall seek, he says, the law from his mouth; and afterwards he confines knowledge to true doctrine, as it was to flow from the law of God, the only true fountain of truth; for he had said, that the law of truth was in the mouth of Levi. It would not then be enough for one to have his mouth open and to be prepared to teach others, except purity of doctrine be retained. We hence see, that not only teaching is required from priests, but pure teaching, derived from the very mouth of God, according to what is said in Ezekiel 3:17,

``Thou shalt receive from my mouth the word, and shalt declare it to them from me.''

God shows there that the Prophets had no such authority as that they could bring forth anything they pleased, or what they thought would be right, but that they were so far faithful teachers as they were his disciples alone: hence he bids him to seek the word from his mouth; and then he adds, ``Thou shalt declare it to them from my mouth.'' So also it is said in Jeremiah 23:28,

``What is the chaff to the wheat? The Prophet who has a dream, let him declare his dream; but he who has my word, let him declare my word faithfully.''

Here God limits and defines the prophetic right, as though he had said, that the Prophets were not appointed, that they might bring anything indiscriminately, but that each, according to the measure of what was revealed to him, might faithfully dispense, or deliver, as it were from hand to hand, what he had received from heaven: for by mentioning two things, it was God's design to show that no doctrine is to be allowed, except what he himself has revealed; and he compares to chaff whatever men devise themselves, while the pure doctrine of the law is to be regarded as the

wheat. This is then the second thing to be noticed in what the Prophet says in this passage: but we must also consider the last thing --- that the priest is the messenger of the God of hosts.

This seems to have been said in honor of the priesthood; but the Prophet means that priests have nothing of their own or separate from God, and that whatever reverence is due to them ought to be referred to God himself, whose ministers they are. I have said that he reasons from the definition itself, as though he had said, that every one who would be a priest must also be a teacher. But we must also observe, that there is an implied comparison between God and priests, as though he had said, ``Priests can claim nothing for themselves, but as interpreters of God.'' Hence, the plain conclusion is, that the priesthood takes away nothing from God's authority.

We now see that the Prophet includes in these few words two things of great importance --- that there is no priesthood without doctrine or teaching, and no priest except he who faithfully performs his office as a teacher: and secondly, that God resigns not his own right and power when priests are set over the Church; for God commits to them the ministration only, and on this condition, that the authority remains in himself alone; for otherwise the priest would not be the messenger of the God of hosts. Among other things the Prophet requires also this of the priests --- that they sincerely perform their duties. We indeed know that many apparently discharge their office, and excel in teaching, and carefully apply to their duties; but ambition stimulates some and avarice others. Hence the Prophet lays down another condition --- that they are to walk in uprightness before God; that is, that they are not only to satisfy men, or to catch at the applause of the world, but to discharge their office with a pure conscience.

Thus have I shown that there is here set before our eyes a pattern by which we may know what God requires from us when he makes us pastors over his Church.

Now follows a reprobation of their conduct, for the Prophet says, Ye have departed from the way. Since he so boldly chastises the priests, we hence learn that they were subject to reproof; and nothing is more unreasonable than that the Papal clergy should seek to be exempt from every law and discipline, for the priests are here called to order, that they might know their own faults: Ye have departed, he says, from the way, and then, ye have made many to err in the law. This second thing being added, the priests ought by no means to be spared. When they sin only privately, though they may by bad examples corrupt the Church, yet this may somehow be borne with; but when they corrupt and deprave sound doctrine, when they subvert the order laid down in the law, they deserve no indulgence. This is the reason why Malachi so severely and so boldly reproves them.

He at last adds, Ye have therefore violated the covenant. This third clause may indeed be explained in two ways, --- that the Prophet proceeds with his reproof, or that he draws a conclusion from the preceding clauses, --- that they were deservedly stripped of all honor, because they stood not to the covenant. Now this latter exposition is the most suitable, according to what I have already stated. He then as I have said, draws this conclusion, that their boasting was foolish, that they in vain said that they were a holy tribe whom God had chosen to be a peculiar possession

to himself, for he says that the covenant of Levi had been violated by them; and this clause is set in opposition to the former, in which he says, ye shall know that my covenant was with Levi. We said then that the unfaithful ever contrive some disguise when they are reproved, as though they would deprive God of his right: so the Levitical priests said, that what God had once established could not be made void. Under this pretext, that they were of the holy tribe, they sought to be deemed holy; the Prophet then said to them, ye shall know that God's covenant is holy, and that ye are not holy. So also in this place, Ye have violated [375] the covenant of Levi, that is, ``ye in vain pretend that you have been chosen by God, and that the honor of your priesthood has been confirmed to you; for God intended that his law, laid down by himself, should be kept. As then ye have violated the covenant of Levi, ye are no more Levites; as ye are become degenerated children, your inheritance is rightly taken away from you, and ye are deprived of the honor of the priesthood.

And corresponding with this view is what follows, And I have already rendered (or, will render) you despicable and base to the whole people, [376] as ye have not kept my ways and had respect of persons in the law [377] God first shows that he was now bound by no law, so that he would not cast away these unfaithful priests who had broken his covenant. He also adds, that they had respect to persons in the law, for they coveted gain, and therefore turned to gratify men, and corrupted the whole truth of religion; and this is indeed a necessary consequence, when ambition or avarice bears rule, there can then be no sincerity, and the teaching of true religion will be adulterated. I cannot now finish. We shall consider tomorrow the difference between the ancient priesthood and that of the Christian Church.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou hast deigned to take us as a priesthood to thyself, and hast chosen us when we were not only of the lowest condition, but even profane and alien to all holiness, and hast consecrated us to thyself by thy Holy Spirit, that we may offer ourselves as holy victims to thee, --- O grant, that we may bear in mind our office and our calling, and sincerely devote ourselves to thy service, and so present to thee our efforts and our labors, that thy name may be truly glorified in us, and that it may really appear that we have been in grafted into the body of thy only-begotten Son; and as he is the chief and the only true and perpetual priest, may we become partakers of that priesthood with which thou hast been pleased to honor him, so that he may take us as associates to himself; and may thus thy name be perpetually glorified by the whole body as well as by the head. --- Amen.

[375] The verb means to corrupt, and also to destroy or to make void. The Septuagint give the first meaning, "ye have corrupted — {διεφθείρατε}," and Jerome the second, ``ye have made void --- irritum fecistis.'' Marckius and Henderson have the first word, and Newcome the second, which is more suitable when applied to a covenant, though not when applied to ``ways.'' To ``make void,'' is also the most appropriate when it refers to wisdom, as in Ezekiel 32:7. --- Ed.

[376] Striking and remarkable are the words of Adam Clarke on this verse, "See what happened to the truly abominable priesthood of France and Rome, 1796-8. They were the sole cause of that infidelity that brought to supply by grimace, paltry superstition, and jesuitical cunning, what they want in purity of morals, soundness of doctrine, and unction from God. They must mend, or look for another revolution."

[377] "Having one decision for the poor and another for the rich. See Leviticus 19:15." — Newcome; or, as Jerome says, "Despising the just when poor, and honoring the unjust when rich." — Ed.

Lecture One Hundred and Seventy-fifth

We said yesterday, that the priests of the ancient Church were made its guides on the condition that they faithfully discharged their office, and further, that when wicked priests who acted perfidiously in their office boasted of their dignity, this false pretense was to be deemed as nothing, the title being claimed without the reality. These two things we have explained.

We must now see whether this applies to the state and discipline of the Christian Church. The Papists deny this, for they wish to rule freely and with unbridled license, and to perform nothing to God, as though their very dignity nullified his authority; but they cannot shake off the yoke, except they deprive God of all his right. Nor is it a wonder that they act in this way; for even under the law the Prophet had a hard contest with ungodly priests, who had fallen away from the duties of their office, their calling being ever in their mouths, though they very far departed from the law which God had prescribed to them. There is therefore nothing new in the case of the Papists, who seek to be free from every law, that they may do whatever they please and despise all reproofs; for they indeed possess power, and that tyrannical and barbarous. But what they say we ought to disregard, for God declares from above what we here read in the Prophet's words, --- that he so rules the Church, that he is supreme above all mortals. It was not God's will, most surely, after Christ's coming in the flesh, to abandon the care and government of his Church, nor was it his will to be forced to submit as a private individual. If then the authority of God remains at this day safe and secure, it follows that nothing is changed in this respect as to his right over the priesthood. Whatever authority they pretend, who would be deemed pastors of the Church, they must necessarily so continue in their station as faithfully to perform the office which has been committed to them from above; for as God has raised them to that great honor, so he has also stipulated with them, that they should faithfully rule the Church.

But if the Papal clergy compare themselves with the Levitical priests, they will find that the latter had the advantage; for God, as it is well known, instituted an hereditary priesthood under the law. His purpose was, that after the coming of Christ pastors should be made by the suffrages of the Church; but the Levitical tribe claimed this honor as their own right under the law; for God had deposited the right and honor of the priesthood in that tribe. If then the Papists contend that more is due to them than to the Levitical priests, their claim is absurd; for there is no hereditary right, so that sons succeed their fathers in the ministry or pastoral office. We hence see that if a comparison be in this respect made, the priesthood under the law was as to succession far more important. And we know also what God had promised to Aaron and to his successors. From Aaron the dignity passed to the posterity of Phinehas, and he seems to have been favored, and also his descendants, with an unalienable right. But God here expostulates with the priests, because they had violated the compact; and hence he says that he was no longer bound to them, because they had become covenant-breakers and apostates. Let now the Pope, with all his party, pretend what they please, most certain it is, that all they can allege vanish into nothing compared with the lofty claims which the Levitical priests

might have apparently made.

The Pope says that the apostolic seat was fixed at Rome, because it was said to Peter, ``Thou art Peter,'' etc. (Matthew 16:18.) I will not stop here to refute trifles of this kind; for there is no need of many words in discussing this point --- whether this ought to be confined to the person of Peter, or whether it is to be extended to others; as it is not there stated. He says that Peter was a Roman bishop. Though this be conceded, (which yet can be easily disproved by history,) it does not follow that the primacy by a sort of hereditary right was transferred to all Roman bishops. Hence the succession, of which they proudly boast, is a mere fume. But were we to grant all they require, we must make this exception, --- that the priesthood was not fixed to the place, so that every one called the bishop of the Roman Church should at the same time obtain the primacy, and be reputed head of the whole Church.

We must also in the second place see what sort of thing is the Papal priesthood; for though that beast appoints his own priests, it follows not that it is the ordination of Christ: nor is it anything like it. For what is a priest under the Papacy? even one who sacrifices Christ, that is, who robs Christ of that honor which the heavenly Father has confirmed to him by a solemn oath. Christ was called a priest; and this honor, as I have just said, was confirmed to him by an oath. All the Papal priests are inaugurated into their office, it at they may sacrifice: ``We give to thee power to offer appeasing sacrifices;'' for thus they inaugurate them: and such words are suitable to the Papists; for those magical superstitions, which the Romans formerly used, continue still under the Papacy. We hence see, that when we examine the Papal priesthood according to the rule of Christ, it is altogether profane, nay, wholly sacrilegious.

But were their calling lawful, were we to grant that they are pastors of the Church, by a continued succession from the apostles, we must yet deny that they are to be allowed to claim all kinds of liberty and to tyrannize over the Church without being reproved; for whence do they derive such a privilege?

We therefore in short draw this conclusion --- that what we read here of the Levitical priests not only applies to the Papal priests, but also bears with much more force against them; for they have no hereditary honor, their calling is not true nor legitimate, and they cannot be counted the pastors of the Church; on the other hand, they deprive Christ of his honor, yea, they daily sacrifice and slay him. We hence conclude, that they ought by no means to be suffered in the Church, for the covenant of God ought to remain inviolable; and what is it? that they keep the law of God in their mouth, and be his messengers and interpreters. When we see that these are dumb idols, yea, when we see that they turn the whole truth of God into falsehood, how can this barbarity be suffered? God is excluded, and the devil himself in the persons of men adulterates the whole worship of God, perverts, demolishes, and even reduces to nothing the whole of religion! and he also fills with lies the Church, which ought to be the sanctuary of truth!

These things might have been more fully handled; but it is enough briefly to show how foolishly the Papal clergy boast that they possess the honor of the priesthood, when yet it is evident that there is no right, no authority, when faith is not kept with

God and with his Church. Let us now proceeds

Malachi 2:10

10. Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers?

10. Annon Pater unus omnibus nobis? annon Deus unus creavit nos? cur fraudabimus quisque fratrem suum? (alii, cur trasngredietur quisque in fratrem suum; alii passive accipiunt, cur decipitur quisque a fratre suo) ad polluendum foedus patrum nostrorum.

The Prophet accuses the Jews here of another crime --- that they were perfidious towards God and their own brethren, and departed from that pre-eminence into which God had raised them, when they were chosen in preference to other nations to be a holy and peculiar people. This ingratitude the Prophet now condemns by saying, that they all had one father, and that they had been all created by one God

The word Father may be applied to God as well as to Abraham, and some interpreters will have it repeated, which is no uncommon thing in Hebrew: they say then that all had God as their Father, because he created them all; so that the latter clause is taken as an explanation. But it is better, as I think, to apply the word to Abraham, and the passage requires this; for it follows at the end of the verse, that the covenant which the Lord had made with their fathers had been violated; and this will appear still more certain, when we bear in mind the design of the Prophet. [378] Presently a reproof follows, because they had taken many wives; but the Prophet seems not as yet to mention this vice, but speaks generally, that they did not preserve that purity to which they had been called, for they indiscriminately married heathen wives. As then they mingled without distinction with unbelievers and the despisers of God, the Prophet complains that they were unmindful of that dignity to which they had been elevated, when God deigned to adopt them as his holy people. For thus it happened, that the pre-eminence which Moses celebrates in Deuteronomy 4:8, disappeared, ``What nation is so renowned, to whom God draws nigh, as thou seest that he is nigh to thee?'' When therefore the Jews rendered themselves vile, the Prophet condemns them for ingratitude. He, at the same time, shows that they were become inhuman towards their brethren, with whom they had been united by a most sacred bond. It then seems probable to me, that God and Abraham are mentioned here, because God had chosen the race of Abraham and adopted them as his people, and also, because he had deposited his covenant with Abraham and the fathers: thus Abraham became, as it were, the mediator of the covenant which God made with his whole race. By thus understanding the subject of the Prophet, it is easier for us to see why he mentions Abraham as well as God.

[378] This is the view taken by most—Jerome, Theodoret, Drusius, Grotius, Marckius, and Henry. Henderson has been led astray by a supposed parallelism between this and the next sentence; and he regards God to be meant. Scott has taken it in both views, but this is not to explain the passage. Indeed the very argument here used renders it necessary that Abraham, or Isaac, or Jacob, should be intended. Taking God to be meant by "father," some have been led to think that it is the language of the Jews who married strange wives, in their own defense, "Have we not all, Gentiles as well as Jews, one Father? and has not the same God created me?" This might do well until we come to the conclusion of the verse, where the violation of the covenant of the fathers is mentioned. — Ed.

Is there not one father, he says, to us all? that is, ``Did not God select us from the rest of the world, when he promised to our father Abraham to be a God to him and to his seed? Since then God's favor has flowed to us from that fountain, what sottishness it is to break that sacred bond by which God has joined us to himself in the person of Abraham?'' For when the Jews did not consider that they derived their origin from the holy patriarch, the consequence was, that the covenant of God with them became void and of no effect. This then is the reason why he says, that one God was to them all a Father. And as other nations might have claimed the same privilege, he adds, Has not one God created us? He shows that the Jews had descended in no common or ordinary way from their holy father Abraham, but that God was the maker of his race, that he created them. Did not he also create the rest of the world? Not in the same manner; for this creation ought to be confined especially to the Church. God has created the whole human race; but he created also the race of Abraham: and hence the Church is often called in Isaiah the work and the formation of God, (Isaiah 66:21,) and Paul also adopts the same mode of speaking, (Ephesians 2:10.) Our Prophet then does not mean that the Jews had been created by God when born into this world, but that they had become his holy and peculiar people. As then God had thus created the Jews, and had given to them one father, that being mindful of their origin they might remain united in true religion, the Prophet here reprobates their sottishness in casting away from themselves this invaluable favor of God.

Every one dealt falsely with his brother; and thus they violated the covenant of the fathers. As to the verb, {נכבד}, nubegad, it has been variously explained by grammarians; but as to what is meant it is agreed, that the Jews are here condemned, because they were not only perfidious to God, but also fraudulent as to their neighbors: and thus they doubled their perfidy, the proof which was manifest, because they did not act with sincerity towards their brethren. [379] Why then, he says, do we deal falsely with man, that is, every one with his own brother, so that we pollute the covenant of our fathers? Here the covenant of the fathers is to be taken for that separation or laying apart which we have mentioned, by which God had adopted Abraham and his posterity, that they might be separated from all the nations of the world. Hence under this covenant of the fathers is God himself included; and as this has not been perceived, it is no wonder that this passage has been so frigidly explained, and that Malachi has been as it were wholly buried in darkness; though interpreters have tried to bring light, yet the effect has been to pervert the real meaning of the Prophet. But it appears now plain, I think, that the Jews are here said to be guilty of a twofold perfidy --- because they rejected the honor offered to them

[379] The word {,{בגד as a noun, which is its root, means a robe, a cloak, or a covering; when used as a verb, it signifies to cover or cloak things over, and so to act falsely, hypocritically, or treacherously. Drusius' definition is, to act perfidiously, to prevaricate, to deceive. It is rendered here improperly by the Septuagint ``{εγκατελίπετε} --- ye have forsaken.'' It is here in the future tense, and may be rendered as though it were in the subjunctive mood, --- Why should we act perfidiously, each one with his brother, By violating the covenant of our fathers? ``Violating'' is ,{חלל} which means to perforate, to pierce, and to break in, so as to violate a holy place, and hence to profane; and so it is rendered by the Septuagint---{του} {βεβηλωσαι}. To profane one's word in Numbers 30:2, is to break it; and to profane a covenant in Psalm 55:20, is to break it; and so it is rendered in both these places in our version. To break a covenant is a metaphor not very unlike that of piercing or perforating it. Newcome says that it refers to the ancient mode of cancelling bonds, which was done by striking a nail through them. See Colossians 2:14. ``Hence the word,'' he adds, ``signifies to make void.'' --- Ed.

by God's gratuitous election, and also because they acted fraudulently towards their own brethren. It hence followed that the covenant of the fathers, that is, what God had deposited with the patriarchs, that it might come from hand to hand to their posterity, had been violated and made void by their wickedness.

We must yet notice what I have already referred to --- that the priests are so reproved that the whole people are also included; and this we shall again presently see, and I add also, that the Prophet connects God with Abraham, in order to show that we shall fail to seek God effectually, if we seek him apart from his covenant, and also that our minds ought not to be fixed on men. There are indeed two vices against which we ought carefully to guard. Some, passing by all means, seek to fly upward to God; and so they entertain many vain thoughts and devise for themselves many labyrinths, from which they never emerge. We see how many fanatics there are at this day, who proudly speak against God's word, and yet touch neither heaven nor earth; and why? because they would be superior to angels, and do not acknowledge that they need any helps by which they might by degrees, according to their weakness, ascend up to God himself. Now this is to seek God without the covenant or without the word. This is the reason why the Prophet here unites father Abraham to God himself; it was done that the Jews might know that they were confined by certain limits, in order that they might in humility make progress in God's school, and be carried by degrees into heaven: for God, as it has been said, had deposited his covenant with Abraham. But yet as they might have depended on a mortal man, the Prophet adds a corrective --- that they had been created by God; for they were not to separate their father Abraham from the very author of the covenant.

This passage then is worthy of special notice; for men from the beginning and in all ages have been inclined to the two vices which I have mentioned; and at this day we see that some indulge their dreams and despise the outward preaching of the word; for many fanatics say, that there is no need of rudiments or of the first elements, since God has promised that the sons of the Church would be spiritual. Hence Satan by such delusions strives to draw us away from pure simplicity of doctrine. It is therefore necessary to set up this shield --- that God is not exhibited to us without Abraham, that is, without a Prophet and an interpreter. The Papists are also sunk in the same mud; for they have always the fathers in their mouths, but make no account of God. This is also very preposterous. Let us then remember that God is not to be separated from his word, and that the authority of men is of no account, when they depart from it. And the Prophet confirms the same thing at the end of the verse, when he speaks of the covenant of the fathers; for he does not here simply commend the covenant of the fathers, as the Turks might do, or as it is done by Papists and Jews; but he means the covenant which God had given, and which the holy patriarchs faithfully handed down to their posterity, according to what Paul says in the twenty-second chapter of the Acts, when speaking of his father's religion; he did not speak of it as heathens might do of their religion, but he took it as granted that the law promulgated by Moses was not his invention, but had God as its author. It now follows-

Malachi 2:11

11. Judah hath dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah hath profaned the holiness of the LORD which he loved, and hath married the daughter of a strange god.

11. Perfide egit Iehudah, et abominatio facta est in Israele et Ierusalem; quia polluit Iehudah sanctuarium Iehovae quod dilexit (vel, sanctitatem; dicemus de hac voce) et matrimonium contraxerunt cum filia dei alieni.

The Prophet now explains how the Jews departed from the covenant of their fathers, and he exaggerates their sin and says, that abomination was done in Israel; as though he had said, that this perfidy was abominable. Some render the verb, {בגד}, begad, [380] transgressed, and so it is often taken in Hebrew: but as in the last verse the Prophet had said, {נבגד}, nubegad, ``Why do we deal perfidiously every one with his brother?'' I doubt not but that it is repeated here in the same sense. But as I have already stated, he shows the crime to be detestable, and says that it existed in Judah and in Jerusalem. God had indeed, as it is well known, preferred that tribe to others; and it was not a common favor that the Jews almost alone returned to their own country, while others nearly all remained in their dispersions. He adds Jerusalem, not for honor's sake, but for greater reproach, as though he had said, that not only some of the race of Abraham were subject to this condemnation, but that even the Jews were so, who had been allowed to return to their own country, and that even the holy city rendered itself subject to this reproof, in which the temple was, the sanctuary of God, which was then alone the true one in the whole world. By these circumstances then does the Prophet enhance their crime.

But he immediately comes to particulars: Polluted, he says, has Judah the holiness of Jehovah, which he loved; [381] that is, because they individually indulged their lusts, and procured for themselves wives from heathen nations.

Some take, {קדש}, kodash, for the sanctuary or the temple; others for the keeping of the law; but I prefer to apply it to the covenant itself; and we might suitably take it in a collective sense, except the simpler meaning be more approved --- that Judah polluted his separation. As to the Prophet's object and the subject itself, he charges them here, I have no doubt, with profanation, because the Jews rendered themselves vile, though God had consecrated them to himself. They had then polluted holiness, even when they had been separated from the world; for they had disregarded so great an honor, by which they might have been pre-eminent, had they continued in their integrity. It may be also taken collectively, they have polluted holiness, that is, they have polluted that nation which has been separated from other nations: but as

[380] It is {{בגדה in the feminine gender, because by Judah is meant the tribe or the family; so Ephraim is often regarded. See Hosea 4:18; 5:9; 9:13. We find here Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem mentioned; and probably because the purpose was to include the whole of the people, as some of Israel or of the ten tribes were among them. --- Ed.

[381] This last clause has been variously explained: "whom," i.e., Judah, "he loved," or, "which," i.e., holiness, "he loved," or, "which he," Judah "had loved." The last seems the most natural construction according to the tenor of the passage, if {{אשר be a relative; for Judah is the subject in the sentence. Judah did in former times love and delight in that separating which God had made and appointed between his people and the heathen world. To say that God loved it seems an odd idea; but to say that Judah delighted in it was much to the purpose, and added it for the sake of enhancing the guilt of that generation. Dathius gives this version, --- For he profanes Judah, the holiness of Jehovah, Who loves and marries a foreign wife. But more suitable to the genius of the language would be this, --- For profaned has Judah the holiness of Jehovah, Because he has loved and married The daughter of a strange God. The word {אשר} is often a conjunction as well as a relative; because, for, inasmuch as. See Genesis 34:13; Deuteronomy 30:16; 1 Samuel 15:15. --- Ed.

this exposition may seem hard and somewhat strained, I am inclined to think that what is here meant is that separation by which the Jews were known from other nations. But yet what I have stated may serve to remove whatever obscurity there may be. And that this holiness ought to be referred to that gratuitous election by which God had adopted the Jews as his peculiar people, is evident from what the Prophet says, that they married foreign wives. [382]

We then see the purpose of this passage, which is to show, --- that the Jews were ungrateful to God, because they mingled with heathen nations, and knowingly and wilfully cast aside that glory by which God had adorned them by choosing them, as Moses says, to be to him a royal priesthood. (Exodus 19:6.) Holiness, we know, was much recommended to the Jews, in order that they might not abandon themselves to any of the pollutions of the heathens. Hence God had forbidden them under the law to take foreign wives, except they were first purified, as we find in Deuteronomy 21:11,12; if any one wished to marry a captive, she was to have her head shaven and her nails pared; by which it was intimated, that such women were impure, and that their husbands would be contaminated, except they were first purified. And, yet it was not wholly a blameless thing, when one observed the law as to a captive: but it was a lust abominable to God, when they were not content with their own nation, and burnt in love with strange women. As however the Jews, like all mortals without exception, were inclined to corruptions, God purposed to keep them together as one people, lest the wife by her flatteries should draw the husband away from the pure and legitimate worship of God. And Moses tells us, that there was a crafty counsel given by Balsam when he saw that the people could not be conquered in open war; he at length invented this artifice, that the heathens should offer to them their wives and their daughters. It hence happened that the people provoked God's wrath, as we find it recorded in Numbers 25:4.

As then the Jews after their return had again lapsed into this corruption, it is not without reason that the Prophet so severely reproves them, and that he says, that by marrying strange women they had polluted holiness, or that separation, which was their great honor, as God had adopted them alone as his people; and he calls it a holiness which God loved. Thus their crime was doubled, because God had not only bound them to himself, but he had also embraced them gratuitously. For if the cause of the separation be enquired, whether they excelled other nations, or whether they had any worthiness or merit? the answer is, No; but God loved them freely. For by the word love, the Prophet means the mere kindness and bounty of God, with which he favored Abraham and his race, without regard to any worthiness or excellency. He therefore condemns them for this ingratitude, because they had not only departed from the covenant which the Lord had made with their fathers, but had also neglected and despised that gratuitous love, which ought to have softened even their iron hearts. For if God had found anything in them as a reason why he preferred them to other nations, they might have been more excusable, at least they

[382] "The holiness of Jehovah," i.e., the holiness required and enjoined by Jehovah. Most agree that what is meant is the separation from any alliance with heathens. See Deuteronomy 7:3. Ezra mentions Israel as "the holy seed," Ezra 9:2. See also Jeremiah 2:3. Marckius, after Jerome and Cyril, takes this view, and so do Henry, Scott, Newcome, and Henderson. — Ed.

might have extenuated their fault; but since God had adopted them as his peculiar people, though they were unworthy and wholly undeserving, they must surely have been extremely brutish, to have thus despised the gratuitous favor of God. Their baseness then is increased, as I have said, by this circumstance, --- that so great a kindness of God did not turn their hearts to obedience.

At the end of the verse the Prophet makes known, as I have already stated, their profanation; they had married the daughters of another god. By way of reproach he calls them the daughters of a strange god. He might have simply said foreign daughters; but he intended here to imply a comparison between the God of Israel and idols: as though he had said, ``Whence have these wives come to you? from idols. Ye ought then to have hated them as monsters: had you any religion in your heart, what but detestable to you must have been everything which may have come from idols? but your hearts have become attached to the daughters of false gods.''

And we find that this vice had been condemned by Moses, and branded with reproach, before the giving of the Law, when he said, that the human race had been corrupted, because the sons of God married the daughters of men, (Genesis 6:2,) even because the posterity of Seth, who were born of the holy family, degraded themselves and polluted that small portion, which was holy and consecrated to God, by mixing with the world; for the whole world had at that time departed from God, except the descendants of Seth. The Lord then had before the Law marked this lust with perpetual disgrace; but when the Law itself which ought to have been like a rampart, again condemned it, was it not a perverseness wholly inexcusable, when the wantonness of the people broke through all restraints? He then adds ---

Malachi 2:12

12. The LORD will cut off the man that doeth this, the master and the scholar, out of the tabernacles of Jacob, and him that offereth an offering unto the LORD of hosts.

12. Excidet Iehova virum qui fecerit hoc, excitantem et respondentem, ex tabernaculis Iacob, et qui adducit oblationem Iehovae exercituum.

The Prophet here teaches us, that neither the priests nor the people would go unpunished, because they had mingled with the pollutions of the heathens, and profaned and violated the covenant of God. God then says, Cut off (the word means to scrape off or to blot out) shall God the man who has done this, the mover, or prompter, as well as the respondent [383] Jerome renders the last words, the master and the disciple; and interpreters vary. Some indeed explain the terms allegorically, and apply them to the dead; but by the mover, I have no doubt, he understands every one who was in power, and could command others, and by the respondent the man who was subject to the authority of his master. The masters then prompted or roused, for it belonged to them to command; and the servants responded, for it was their duty to receive orders and to obey them. It is the same as though the Prophet

[383] Him that teacheth and him that answereth.—Newcome or, Him that passeth out and him that returneth.—Ib. Him that watcheth and him that answereth.—Henderson The teacher and the scholar.—Drusius and Grotius The most literal rendering is, — The rouser and the respondent, {ער {ועגה} It seems to mean the leader in the faction and his assistant, the bold answer of his wickedness and his timid follower. Such we find to be in all factions. --- Ed.

had said, that God would punish this perfidy, without passing by any, so that he would spare neither the common people nor the chief men: and he also adds the priests, intimating, that the priests themselves would not be excepted.

In short, he denounces punishment on the Jews universally, and shows that however prevalent had this impiety become everywhere, and that though every one thought that whatever was commonly practiced was lawful, yet God would become an avenger, and would include in the same punishment both the masters and the servants, and would not exempt the priests, who considered themselves safe by peculiar privilege. The rest tomorrow.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as we are so inclined to all kinds of wickedness, we may learn to confine ourselves within the limits of thy word, and thus restrain all the desires of our flesh; and that whatever Satan may contrive to draw us here and there, may we continually proceed in obedience to thy word, and being mindful of that eternal election, by which thou hast been pleased gratuitously to adopt us, and also of that calling by which thy eternal election has been confirmed, and by which thou hast received us in thine only-begotten Son, may we go on in our course to the end, and so cleave, by persevering faith, to Christ thy Son, that we may at length be gathered into the enjoyment of that eternal kingdom which he has purchased for us by his blood. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Seventy-sixth

Malachi 2:13

13. And this have ye done again, covering the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping, and with crying out, insomuch that he regardeth not the offering any more, or receiveth it with good will at your hand.

13. Et hoc secundo fecistis, operiendo lachrymis altare Iehovae fletu et ploratu, eo quod amplius non respicitur ad oblationem, et non suscipitur beneplacitum e manu vestra.

The Prophet amplifies again the fault of the priests, because the people, when they perceived that God was adverse to them, found no means of pacifying him. And when men have an idea that God is inexorable to them, every zeal for religion must necessarily decay; and hence it is said in Psalm 130:4 --- ``With thee is propitiation, that thou mayest be feared.'' As the people then gained nothing by sacrificing, they had now nearly fallen off from divine worship. This evil, a most grievous one, the Prophet says, was to be justly ascribed to the priests; for as they were become polluted, how could their persons have been accepted by God, that they might be mediators to expiate sins and to pacify God?

This is the real meaning of the Prophet, which none of the interpreters have perceived. The Rabbins think that the priests are here reproved, because their wives filled the altar in the sanctuary with weeping, because they saw that their husbands did not faithfully treat them, according to the law of marriage; and almost all have agreed with them. Thus then they explain the verse --- Ye have in the second place done this; that is, ``That sin was of itself sufficiently grievous, when ye suffered lean victims to be sacrificed to me, as it were in mockery; but in addition to this comes

your sin against your wives, who continually complain and deplore their condition before the altar of God, even because they are not loved by you, as the right of marriage requires.'' They thus refer the tears, the weeping, and lamentation, to the wives of the priests, which were so cruelly treated by their husbands: they were not able to do anything else than to fill God's sanctuary with their constant complaints. Hence they render, {פנות} {עוד} {מאין}, main oud penut, ``I will not therefore regard,'' or, ``no one regards;'' but both versions are not only obscure, but wholly pervert the sense of the Prophet.

But what I have already stated is the most suitable --- that it was to be ascribed to the priests that no one could from the heart worship God, at least with a cheerful and willing mind; for God was implacable to the people, because the only way of obtaining favor under the law was when the priests, who represented the Mediator, humbly entreated pardon in the name of the whole people. But how could God attend to the prayers of the priests when they had polluted his altar by the filth of wickedness? We then see the object of this amplification --- Ye cover the altar of Jehovah with tears, with weeping and wailing. The praises of God ought to have resounded in the temple, according to what is said ---

``Praise, O God, waits for thee in Zion.'' (Psalm 65:1.)

And the principal sacrifice was, that the people exercised themselves in contemplating the blessings of God, and in thanksgiving. But he says that none went forth before the altar with a cheerful mind, but all were sad and sorrowful, because they found that God was severe and rigid.

And the reason is added --- {פנות} {עוד} {מאין}, main oud penut, literally, ``Is it not any more by regarding,'' etc.? It is easy to see how far they depart from the meaning of the Prophet who read --- ``They shall therefore offer no more;'' for is this to be applied to God? Others also, who give this rendering --- ``I shall not therefore accept,'' pervert also the very letter of the text. But the most appropriate meaning is this --- that all wept and groaned before the altar, because they saw that they came there without any advantage, that their sacrifices did not please God, and that the whole worship was in vain, inasmuch as God did not answer their prayers. The Prophet ascribes the fault to the priests, that God did not turn to mercy, so as to forgive the people when they sacrificed. With weeping, then, he says, was the altar filled or covered, because God received not what pleased him from their hand; that is, because no victims pleased him which were offered by polluted and impure hands.

[384] He afterwards joins

Malachi 2:14

14. Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant.

14. Et dixistis, In quo (vel, super quo)? Quoniam Iehova testificatus est inter te et inter uxorem adolescentiae tuae, quam tu fraudasti, (vel, erga quam tu praevaricatus es.) cum tamen ipsa esset consors tua, et uxor foederis tui.

The Prophet tells us here as before how prone the priests were to make a clamor, and it is a very common thing with hypocrites immediately to set up a shield to cover their vices whenever they are reproved; and hence it appears, that men are in a manner fascinated by Satan, when they attain such hardness as to dare to answer God, and with obstreperous words to repel all warnings. Malachi has several times already used this mode of speaking; we may hence conclude, that the people had become then so hardened that warnings were of no account with them. But he mentions one particular, by which it seems evident that they had lapsed into vices which were not to be borne. There is indeed no doubt but that he points out one of the many vices which prevailed. There is then in this verse an instance of stating one thing for the whole, as though he had said, ``Your hypocrisy is extremely gross; but, to omit other things, by what pretext can you excuse this perfidy --- that there is no conjugal fidelity among you? Were there any integrity and a sense of religion in men, they would surely appear in their conjugal connection; but ye have cast away all shame, and have taken to yourselves many wives. There is then no ground for you to think that you can escape by evasions, because this one glaring vice sufficiently proves your guilt.'' This is the import of the Prophet's answer.

We have indeed seen that the priests were implicated in other vices; the Prophet then does not now charge them with perfidy as though they were free from other sins, but he meant to show, as I have already said, by one thing, how wickedly and shamelessly they sought to evade God's judgment, though they had violated the marriage pledge, which was wholly to destroy the very order of nature; for there can be, as it has been already said, no chastity in social life except the bond of marriage be preserved, for marriage, so to speak, is the fountain of mankind.

But in order to press the matter more on the priests, he calls their attention to the

[384] It is not easy to give a version of this verse. Henderson renders the first line thus — And this ye have done the second time. The reference is, he says, to the repetition of the evil which had been corrected under Ezra 9 and 10. This seems probable; but we may view this "second," or again, with regard to the previous denunciations. What are regarded as verbs in the infinitive mood are in my view participial nouns; the last, {,לקחת is evidently so. Then the literal rendering would be this--- And this again ye do --- Covering with tears the altar, Weeping and groaning, Because there is no more turning to the offering, Or the receiving of what is acceptable from your hand. That {מאין} is to be rendered ``because not,'' or, ``inasmuch as not,'' is evident from other places. See Jeremiah 10:6; 19:11. ``Turning'' signifies having a regard to. ``What is acceptable,'' ,{רצון} is rendered ``{δεκτον} --- acceptable,'' in the Septuagint; ``{ἐυδοκίαν}---good-will,'' by Aq.; ``{τὸ} {ευδοκημένον} --- what is approved,'' by Sym.; ``{τέλαιον} --- perfect,'' by Theodoret The difference between Calvin and most expositors after him, as well as before him, is, that he regarded the lamentation to have been by the priests and people, and they by the repudiated wives. The cause of the weeping, as stated here, was the rejection of the offerings, as declared by the Prophet; and this seems enough to confirm Calvin's view. The priests and people had been denounced for their wickedness, especially for marrying strange wives. After this denunciation they ``again'' went to the altar and wept because God would not receive their sacrifices; and they did this without amending their ways. Then in the next verse the Prophet explains why God would not receive their offerings. --- Ed.

fact that God is the founder of marriage. Testified has Jehovah, he says, between thee and thy wife [385] He intimates in these words, that when a marriage takes place between a man and a woman, God presides and requires a mutual pledge from both. Hence Solomon, in Proverbs 2:17, calls marriage the covenant of God, for it is superior to all human contracts. So also Malachi declares, that God is as it were the stipulator, who by his authority joins the man to the woman, and sanctions the alliance: God then has testified between thee and thy wife, as though he had said, ``Thou hast violated not only all human laws, but also the compact which God himself has consecrated, and which ought justly to be deemed more sacred than all other compacts: as then God has testified between thee and thy wife, and thou now deceivest her, how darest thou to come to the altar? and how canst thou think that God will be pleased with thy sacrifices or regard thy oblations?''

He calls her the wife of his youth, because the more filthy is the lust when husbands cast away conjugal love as to those wives whom they have married in their youth. The bond of marriage is indeed in all cases inviolable, even between the old, but it is a circumstance which increases the turpitude of the deed, when any one alienates himself from a wife whom he married when a girl and in the flower of her age: for youth conciliates love; and we also see that when a husband and his wife have lived together for many years, mutual love prevails between them to extreme old age, because their hearts were united together in their youth. It is not then without reason that this circumstance is mentioned, for the lust of the priests was the more filthy and as it were the more monstrous, because they forsook wives whom they ought to have regarded with the tenderest love, as they had married them when they were young: Thou hast dealt unfaithfully with her, he says, though she was thy consort and the wife of thy covenant

He calls her a consort, or companion, or associate, [386] because marriage, we know, is contracted on this condition --- that the wife is to become as it were the half part of the man. As then the bond of marriage is inseparable, the Prophet here goads the priests, yea, touches them to the quick, when he reproves them for being unmindful of what was natural, inasmuch as they had blotted out of their minds the memory of a most sacred covenant. The wife of thy covenant is to be taken for a covenanted wife, that is, ``The wife who has been united to thee by God's authority, that there might be no separation; but all integrity is violated, and as it were abolished.'' He then adds

Malachi 2:15

15. And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth.

[385] Or, "a witness has Jehovah been between thee and thy wife." But Theodoret, Cyril, and Jerome, and also Cocceius, refer this to God's testimony in the first institution of marriage, in Genesis 2:24. More suitabele to the context no doubt is to consider God as a witness to the marriage contract; and this is the view taken by Drusius, Henry, Scott, Newcome, and Henderson. — Ed.

[386] "{Κοινωνός} --- partner,'' by the Septuagint; ``{ὁμόσαρκος} --- of the same flesh,'' by Cyril; ``particeps --- partner,'' by Jerome; ``companion,'' in our version, and by Newcome and Henderson. The word comes from ,{חבר} to conjoin, to couple, to fit together. ``Partner'' perhaps would be the most appropriate term. --- Ed.

15. Et non unum fecit? et exuperantia spiritus illi? et quorsum unum? quarens semen Dei: ergo custodiamini in spiritu vestro; et in uxorem adolescentiae tuae ne transgrediatur (vel, ne fraudes; est mutatio personae, ponitur enim tertia persona loco secundae)

There is in this verse some obscurity, and hence it has been that no interpreter has come to the meaning of the Prophet. The Rabbins almost all agree that Abraham is spoken of here. Were we to receive this view a two-fold meaning might be given. It may be an objection, --- ``Has not one done this?'' that is, has not Abraham, who is the one father of the nations, given us an example? for he married many wives: and thus many explain the passage, as though the priests raised an objection and defended the corruption just condemned by the example of Abraham, --- ``Has not one done this while yet an excellency of spirit was in him?'' We indeed know how prone men are to pretend the authority of fathers when they wish to cover their own vices.

Others prefer regarding the words as spoken by the Prophet himself, and at the same time say that there is here an anticipation of an objection, and think that an occasion for an excuse is here cut off, as though the Prophet had said, ``Did not Abraham, when he was one alone, do this?'' For as the Jews might have adduced the example of Abraham, the interpreters, whose opinion I now refer to, think that a difference is here stated, as though he had said, ``Ye reason badly, for every one of you is led to polygamy by the lust of your flesh; but it was far otherwise with Abraham, for he was one, that is, alone;'' and in Isaiah Abraham is called one on account of his having no children. The meaning then they think is this, ``Was not Abraham forced by necessity to take another wife? even because he had no child and no hope of the promised seed. Lust then did not stimulate your father Abraham, as it does you, but a desire of having an offspring.'' And they think, that this view is confirmed by what follows, ``And why alone seeking the seed of God?'' that is, the object of holy Abraham was far otherwise than to indulge his lust; for he sought that holy seed, the hope of which was taken away from him on account of the barrenness of his wife, and of her great age. When therefore Abraham saw that his wife was barren, and that she could no more conceive on account of her old age, he had recourse to the last remedy: hence the mistake of Abraham might have been excused, since his object was right; for he sought the seed of God, the seed in which all nations were to be blessed. Thus far have I told you what others think.

I thought twelve years ago that this passage ought to have been otherwise rendered in the French Bibles, and that, {אחד}, ached, ought to be read in the objective case; ``Has he not made one?'' Jerome seems to me to have had a better notion of what the Prophet means than what others have taught; but he could not attain the real meaning, and therefore stopped as it were in the middle of his course. He read the word in the nominative case, ``Has not one,'' that is, God, ``made them? ``and then he added, ``And in him alone,'' that is, Abraham, ``was an exuberant spirit.'' We see how he dared not to assert anything, nor did he explain what was necessary. The sense is indeed suspended, and is even frigid, if we say, ``Has not

one made them?'' but if we read, ``Has he not made one?'' [387] there is no ambiguity. It is a common thing in Hebrew, we know, that the name of God is often not expressed, when he is referred to; for so great is He, that his name may be easily understood, though not expressed. It ought not therefore to confuse us, that the Prophet withholds the name of God, and mentions a verb without its subject, for such is the usage, as I have said, of the Hebrew language.

I proceed now to explain the meaning of the Prophet. Has he not made one? that is, Was not God content with one man, when he instituted marriage? and yet the residue of the Spirit was in him. The Rabbins take, {שאר}, shar, as meaning excellence; but I know not what reason have induced them, except that they ventured to change the sense of the word, because they could not otherwise extricate themselves; for the mistake, that Abraham is spoken of here, had wholly possessed their minds. What then is, {רוח} {שאר}, shar ruch? Excellence of Spirit, say they; but, {שאר}, shar, we know, is residue or remnant: what then remains of anything is called, {שאר}, shar; for the verb means to remain and to lean. Here then the Prophet takes the residue of the Spirit, so to speak, for overflowing power; for God could have given to one man two or three wives; inasmuch as the Spirit failed him not in forming one woman: as he inspired Eve with life, so also he might have created other women and imparted to them his Spirit. He might then have given two or four or ten women to one man; for there was a spirit remaining in him. We now then understand what the Prophet means at the beginning of this verse.

But before we proceed farther, we must bear in mind his object, which was, to break down all those frivolous pretences by which the Jews sought to cover their perfidy. He says, that in marriage we ought to recognize an ordinance divinely appointed, or, to speak more distinctly, that the institution of marriage is a perpetual law, which it is not right to violate: there is therefore no cause for men to devise for themselves various laws, for God's authority is here to be regarded alone; and this is more clearly explained in Matthew 19:8; where Christ, refuting the objection of the Jews as to divorce, says, ``From the beginning it was not so.'' Though the law allowed a bill of divorce to be given to wives, yet Christ denies this to be right, --- by what argument? even because the institution was not of that kind; for it was, as it has been said, an inviolable bond. So now our Prophet reasons, Has not God made one? that is, ``consider within yourselves whether God, when he created man and instituted marriage, gave many wives to one man? By no means. Ye see then that spurious and contrary to the character of a true and pure marriage is everything, that does not harmonize with its first institution.''

But some one may ask here, why the Prophet says that God made one? for this seems to refer to the man and not to the woman: to this I answer, that man with the woman is called one, according to what Moses says,

``God created man; male and female created he them,''
(Genesis 1:17.)

After having said that man was created, he adds by way of explanation, that

[387] The position of the words shows that it is a question, for there is no interrogative particle. So it is in our language, “Has he not made one?” And that it is a question, is evident from what follows, “and by one?” — Ed.

man, both male and female, was created. Hence when he speaks of man, the male makes as it were one-half, and the female the other; for when we speak of the whole human race, one-half doubtless consists of men, and the other half of women. So also when we come to individuals, the husband is as it were the half of the man, and the woman is the other half. I speak of the ordinary state of things; for if any one objects and says, that bachelors are not then complete or perfect men, the objection is frivolous: but as men were created, that every one should have his own wife, I say, that husband and wife make but one whole man. This then is the reason why the Prophet says, that one man was made by God; for he united the man to the woman, and intended that they should be partners, so to speak, under one yoke. And in this explanation there is nothing strained; for it is evident that the Prophet here calls the attention of the Jews to the true character of marriage; and this could not have been otherwise known than from the very institution of God, which is, as we have said, a perpetual and inviolable law; for God created man, even male and female: and Christ also has repeated this sentence, and carefully explained it in the passage which we have quoted.

And here the Prophet sharply goads the Jews, as though they wished to overcome God, or to be more wise than he; Had he not, he says, an exuberance of spirit? He takes spirit not for wisdom, but for that hidden influence by which God vivifies men. Could not God, he says, have put forth his spirit to create many wives for one man? but his purpose was to create one pair; to make man a husband and a wife: as God then was not without a remaining Spirit, and yet did not exceed this measure; it hence follows, that the law of marriage is violated, when man seeks for himself many wives. The meaning of the Prophet is now, I think, sufficiently clear.

It follows, And wherefore one, {האחד} {ומה}, vame, eached? The interrogatory particle, {מה}, me, refers to the cause, end, form, or manner; we may therefore properly render it, For what, or wherefore, has God made one? even to seek the seed of God. The seed of God is to be taken for what is legitimate; for what is excellent is often called God in Hebrew, and also what is free from all vice and blemish. He sought then the seed of God, that is, he instituted marriage, that legitimate and pure offspring might be brought forth. Hence then the Prophet indirectly shows, that all are spurious who proceed from polygamy, because they cannot be deemed legitimate children; nor ought any to be so counted but those who are born according to God's institution. When a husband violates his pledged faith to his wife, and takes another; as he subverts the ordinance of marriage, so he cannot be a legitimate father. We now perceive why the Prophet says, that it was God's purpose to unite only one wife to one man, in order that they might beget legitimate offspring, for he shows by the effect how frivolous were the evasions which the Jews had recourse to; for however they might contend, their very offspring would prove them liars, as it would be spurious.

He then draws this conclusion, Therefore, watch ye over your spirit; that is, ``Take heed lest any should deceive the wife of his covenant.'' After having shown how perversely they violated the marriage vow who rushed into polygamy, he here counsels and exhorts them; and this is the best mode of teaching, to show first what is

right and lawful, and then to add exhortations. The Prophet then endeavored first to convince the Jews that they were guilty of a nefarious crime: for otherwise his exhortation would not have been received, as they would have always a ready objection, ``It is lawful for us to do so, for we follow the example of our father Abraham; and further, this has been permitted for a long time, and God would have never suffered it, were it wrong, to prevail for so many ages among the people: it hence follows, that thou condemnest what is lawful.'' It was necessary, in the first place, to remove all these false pretences: then follows the exhortation in its proper order, Watch over your spirit; for he speaks of what has been, as it were, sufficiently proved. [388] It now follows

Malachi 2:16

16. For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously.

16. Si odio habeas (quisque odio habet,) dimittat (i.e., uxorem) dicit Iehovah Deus Israel; et operit, (vel, texit) violentiam sub vestimento suo, dicit Iehovah exercituum: ergo custodiamini in spiritu vestro et ne fraudetis.

Here again the Prophet exaggerates the crime which the priests regarded as nothing; for he says, that they sinned more grievously than if they had repudiated their wives. We indeed know that repudiation, properly speaking, had never been allowed by God; for though it was not punished under the law, yet it was not permitted. [389] It was the same as with a magistrate, who is constrained to bear many things which he does not approve; for we cannot so deal with mankind as to restrain all vices. It is indeed desirable, that no vice should be tolerated; but we must have a regard to what is possible. Hence Moses has specified no punishment, according to the heinousness of the crime, if one repudiated his wife; and yet it was never permitted.

But if a comparison be made, Malachi says, that it is a lighter crime to dismiss a wife than to marry many wives. We hence learn how abominable polygamy is in the sight of God. I do not consider polygamy to be what the foolish Papists have made it, who call not those polygamists who have many wives at the same time, but those who marry another when the former one is dead. This is gross ignorance. Polygamy, properly so called, is when a person takes many wives, as it was commonly done in the East: and those nations, we know, have always been libidinous, and never observe the marriage vow. As then their lasciviousness was so great that they were like brute beasts, every one married several wives; and this abuse continues at this day among the Turks and the Persian and other nations. Here, however, where God compares polygamy with divorce, he says that polygamy is the worse and more detestable crime; for the husband impurely connects himself with another woman, and then, not only deals unfaithfully with his wife to whom he is bound, but also

[388] This is the most lucid and satisfactory explanation of a text which has been deemed, and is still deemed by some, difficult. Some moderns have gone back to the track of the ancients, but needlessly. Newcome's attempt at a revision of the text is wholly useless, and renders the passage more abstruse. — Ed.

[389] This is not strictly correct, see Deuteronomy 24:2; and our Savior allows that Moses "suffered" the Israelites to put away their wives, though he says that is was for the hardness of their hearts. See Matthew 19:8. — Ed.

forcibly detains her: thus his crime is doubled. For if he replies and says that he keeps the wife to whom he is bound, he is yet an adulterer as to the second wife: thus he blends, as they say, holy with profane things; and then to adultery and lasciviousness he adds cruelty, for he holds under his authority a miserable woman, who would prefer death to such a condition; for we know what power jealousy has over women. And when any one introduces a harlot, how can a lawful wife bear such an indignity without being miserably tormented?

This then is the reason why the Prophet now says, If thou hatest, dismiss; not that he grants indulgence to divorce, as we have said, but that he might by this circumstance enhance the crime; and hence he adds, For he covers by a cloak his violence. Some interpreters take violence here for spoil or prey, and think that the wife is thus called who is tyrannically compelled to remain with an adulterer, when yet she sees a harlot in her house, by whom she is driven from her conjugal bed: but this is too strained and too remote from the letter of the text. The Prophet here, I doubt not, shakes off from the Jews their false mask, because they thought that they could cover over their vice by retaining their first wives. ``What else is this,'' he says, ``but to cover by a cloak your violence, or at least to excuse it? for ye do not openly manifest it: but God is not deceived, nor can his eye be dazzled by such a disguise: though then your iniquity is covered by a cloak, it is not yet hid from God; nay, it is thus doubled, because ye exercise your cruelty at home; for it would be better for robbers to remain in the wood and there to kill strangers, than to entice guests to their houses and to kill them there and to plunder them under the pretext of hospitality. This is the way in which you act; for ye destroy the bond of marriage, and ye afterwards deceive your miserable wives, and yet ye force them by your tyranny to continue at your houses, and thus ye torment your miserable wives, who might have enjoyed their freedom, if divorce had been granted them.'' [390]

He concludes again with these words, Watch over your spirit; that is, ``Take heed; for this is an intolerable wickedness before God, however you may endeavor to extenuate its heinousness.''

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that though we daily in various ways violate the covenant which thou hast been pleased to make with us in thine only-begotten Son, we may not

[390] The interpretation given of the first clause of this verse is according to the Septuagint and the Targum, and has been adopted by Cyril, Jerome, Theodoret, Drusius, Grotius, Dathius, and others. Our version is derived from Jun. and Trem., and Piscator, and has been followed by Marckius, Lowth, Scott, Adam Clarke, Newcome, and Henderson. The second clause has been variously interpreted both by the ancients and the moderns. The Septuagint make "violence," or wrong, the nominative to "cover," and the Targum the accusative. "Iniquity shall cover his garment," is the version of Jerome. "For he covers violence as with his garments," has been the version of others; which corresponds with the Targum, as the former does with the Septuagint. The most natural construction of the first part is no doubt what our version exhibits; the meaning of the second is less obvious: but they seem connected. What seems to be said is, — that God hates the divorcer, and him also who maltreats his wife without divorcing her. Then we may give this literal rendering, — For he hates the divorcer, (or him who puts away,) Saith Jehovah, the God of Israel; And the coverer of outrage on his own garment, Saith Jehovah of hosts. To speak of God here in the third person is in accordance with the preceding verses. "His own garment," according to Venema, Dathius, and Henderson, is a figurative designation of a wife. See Ruth 3:9; Ezekiel 16:8. The condemning of divorce is more suitable to this place, than any reference to its permission; because in the previous part the allusion is evidently made to the first institution of marriage, and not to any posterior modification. — Ed.

yet be dealt with according to what our defection, yea, the many defections by which we daily provoke thy wrath against us, do fully deserve; but suffer and bear with us kindly, and at the same time strengthen us that we may persevere in the truth and perform to the end the pledge we have given to thee, and which thou midst require from us in our baptism, and that we may each of us so conduct ourselves towards our brethren, and husbands towards their wives, that we may cherish that unity of spirit which thou hast consecrated between us by the blood of thine own Son. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Seventy Seventh

Malachi 2:17

17. Ye have wearied the LORD with your words. Yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied him? When ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and he delighteth in them; or, Where is the God of judgment?

17. Fatigastis Iehovam in verbis vestris, et dixistis, In quo fatigavimus eum? Quum dicitis, Quicunque facit malum gratus est in oculis Iehovae, et in ipsis se oblectat; vel, Ubi Deus judicii?

The Prophet here reproves the Jews who expostulated with God in their adversity, as though he had undeservedly forsaken them, and had not brought them immediate help. Thus are hypocrites wont to do; unless God immediately assists them, they not only indirectly complain, but also break out into open blasphemies; for they think that God is bound to them, and hence they assail him more boldly, and even with greater freedom and insolence. It is indeed a proof of true piety when we patiently submit to the judgments of God, and when, as Jeremiah teaches us by his own example,

``we sustain his wrath, because we know that we have sinned.'' (Jeremiah 3:14.)

But as hypocrites are conscious of nothing wrong, (for they flatter themselves, and stupify their own consciences,) because they examine not themselves, they think that God acts unjustly towards them when he does not immediately bring them aid. Such was the dishonesty of the people of whom the Prophet now speaks.

He says that they had wearied God, that is, that they had been troublesome to him by their clamorous complaints; for the verb, {יגע}, igo, means to be weary; he says then that they unreasonably complained of God's slowness. It is indeed a mode of speaking taken from men, for we know that no passions belong to God; but as elsewhere God reproves them because they saddened his Spirit, (Psalm 106:33,) so he says here that they wearied him. We now perceive the Prophet's meaning.

But there is a dilemma presented in the words; for the Jews thought that God favored the wicked, inasmuch as he did not immediately punish them, or that he was now unlike himself, and forgot his own nature. The difficulty or the dilemma appears not at the first view, as they seemed to have repeated the same thing. But in the first clause they accuse God of injustice; and in the second they intimate that there is no God, for he cannot exist without exercising judgment. Then the passages contains two clauses differing from each other --- ``God has either changed his nature, and so is no God, or he favors our enemies; for he does not immediately execute vengeance.'' We see then that they concluded that God either acted unjustly, or that there was no God. But we have mentioned the cause of this blasphemy --- the

Jews did not examine themselves, and therefore did not confess that they deserved these chastisements. They were like vicious horses, who kick and fling, though gently treated by their riders.

But such insolence is now seen in all masked men, who vauntingly profess religion when they are treated according to their own wishes; but when God deals more sharply with them, they not only murmur, but vomit forth, as I have already said, impious slanders against him, as though he did not render to them the reward due to their just dealings. Admonished by this example, let us learn that it is true wisdom to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, (1 Peter 5:6;) and that though he may suspend the granting of our prayers, we ought still to bear, not impatiently, what is hard and severe, and also to subdue our feelings, and to seek from them the Spirit of meekness, to retain us in a tranquil submission.

He says that they still replied --- In what have we wearied thee? [391] Here he strongly reproves their hardness, because they did not become wise through the rebuke given them, but regarded with scorn the words of the Prophet, by which we clearly see that they must have been convinced of their guilt, had they not been doubly stupid. It was an intolerable reproach cast on God, to say that he favored the ungodly, and was pleased with their crimes; for God would thus not only rule as a tyrant, but also subvert all order. But nothing is more contrary to his nature than to hold forth his hand to the ungodly as though he had an alliance with them. As this then was an evident impiety, it was a monstrous stupidity to ask in what they wearied God; they ought indeed to have known that he regards nothing as precious as his own honor; and yet, as though Malachi had unjustly reproved them, they opposed him with an iron front, according to similar instances which we have before observed; for though they were covenant-breakers as to marriage, though they defrauded God in the tenths, though they cunningly evaded the Prophets, they yet as it were wiped their mouths and asked, In what had they sinned? The Prophet shows that they were become so hardened in their contumacy that they daringly rejected all admonitions; for they did not ask this as though it was a doubtful thing, nor can it be concluded from their words that they were teachable; but it was the same as if they were armed, ready for a contest, yea, armed with effrontery and perverseness; for they no doubt despised and ridiculed the Prophet's reproof.

He then answers them --- When ye say, Whosoever doeth evil is acceptable in the eyes of Jehovah, and in them he delights. The word rendered ``acceptable'' is {טוב}, thub; but such is its meaning often in Hebrew. [392] What they said was, that the ungodly and the wicked pleased God, even because they covered by false colors their sins, so that they were not convinced of anything wrong. They then imputed whatever was evil to their enemies; they did not commonly expostulate

[391] There is a stronger word employed by the Septuagint — "{παρωξύναμεν} --- have we irritated, or, provoked." --- Ed.

[392] Some have contended that from the order in which the words occur, the rendering ought to be as follows — Whosoever makes evil good in the eyes of Jehovah, Even in them he delights. (See Isaiah 5:20.) The Septuagint favor this version, as the word for "good," {καλον}, is in the accusative case. But the usual rendering is the best--- Every doer of evil is good (approved) in the eyes of Jehovah, And in them he delights. Cocceius observes on these words --- ``None are so impiously bold as actually to express such words, but Scripture is wont to ascribe to the wicked such expressions as are suitable to their character.'' --- Ed.

with God because he left sins unpunished, but because they received not his aid. We hence see that the Jews here did not clamor and contend with God through hatred of wickedness, but had only a regard to their own advantages; nor did they condemn the sins of others, except those by which they received some harm or loss, and that they considered none wicked except those by whom they were injured. We hence learn that they did not complain through zeal for what was right, but because they would have God bound to them to undertake their cause like earthly patrons.

We indeed know that even the godly are sometimes wearied, and their faith is ready to fail, when things in the world are in a disturbed and confused state: and this was the case with David, as it is recorded in the seventy-third Psalm; but there is in the servants and sincere worshipers of God some concern for what is just and right, whenever they have such grief and trouble of mind, according to the case of Habakkuk, when he said,

``How long, O Lord!'' (Habakkuk 1:2;)

for no doubt his complaint arose from a right principle, because his desire was that God should be truly served in the world. But there was nothing of this kind in the Jews, with whom our Prophet contends here; for as we have said, there was no hatred of wickedness, but only a care for their own advantage; they hence said, that the ungodly pleased God, because God did not immediately interpose when they apprehended some trouble from their enemies.

The repetition is a proof of greater bitterness; for they were not content with one clamorous expression, but added, that God took delight in them.

Then follows the other clause, or where is the God of judgment? [393] They seem not here to reason amiss, that is, from the nature of God. Men may change their counsel and their design, and remain men still, for they are subject to inconstancy and fickleness; but to God there belongs no change. There seems not then to be an impropriety in this --- that there is no God, except he be the judge of the world; for he cannot divest himself of his office without denying himself. But they maliginantly impeached God; nay, they now insinuate that there is none, because he had abdicated his judgment; for they took it as granted, that God had ceased to be the punisher of wickedness, which was most false; but yet they thought that according to facts it was certain and clear. Hence they concluded that there was no God, as his divinity must have been abolished together with his judgment. We hence see to what extent of insolence they burst forth in their complaints, so that they either charged God with injustice, or alleged that his divinity was annihilated. Now follows

CHAPTER 3

[393] "The God of righteousness — {δικαιοσύνης}," is the version of the Septuagint. --- Ed.

Malachi 3

Malachi 3:1

1. Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, who ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.

1. Ecce ego mitto Angelum meum, et purgabit viam coram facie mea; et mox veniet ad templum suum Dominus, quem vos quaeritis, et Angelo foederis quem vos expetitis; ecce venit, dicit Iehova exercituum.

Here the Prophet does not bring comfort to the wicked slanderers previously mentioned, but asserts the constancy of his faith in opposition to their blasphemous words; as though he had said, ``Though they impiously declare that they have been either deceived or forsaken by the God in whom they had hoped, yet his covenant shall not be in vain.'' The design of what is announced is like that of the declaration made elsewhere,

``Though men are perfidious and false, yet God remains true, and cannot depart from his own nature.'' (Numbers 23:19.)

God then does here gloriously triumph over the Jews, and alleges his own covenant in opposition to their disgraceful slanders, because their wicked murmurings could not hinder him to accomplish his promises and to perform in due time what they thought would never be done; and he adopts a demonstrative adverb in order to show the certainty of what is said.

Behold, he says, I send my messenger, who will clear the way before my face [394] This passage ought doubtless to be understood of John the Baptist, for Christ himself so explains it, than whom no better interpreter can be found; and since John the Baptist was the messenger of Christ, the beginning of the verse can be applied

[394] As quoted by the Evangelists, it is "before thy face." Jerome's observation is, that the apostles and evangelists transferred the truth contained in passages without minding syllables and small words. — Ed.

to no other person. Afterwards the Father himself speaks as we shall see: but as he who appeared in the flesh is the same God with the Father, it is no wonder that he speaks, and then that the words which follow are spoken in the person of the Father.

There is here a striking allusion to Moses, whose office it was to intercede, that God might not in his just wrath destroy the whole people; for as then the majesty of God was more than could be borne without an intercessor, so that the people through fear cried out ``Speak thou to us lest we die,'' (Exodus 20:19,) so also now does Malachi teach us, that there is need of an intercessor, by whom God's wrath might be mitigated, which the Jews had extremely provoked. This office John the Baptist undertook, who prepared the Jews to hear the voice of Christ.

By saying that he would send a messenger to clear his way, he indirectly reproved the Jews, by whom many hindrances were thrown as it were in the way; as though he had said, ``They prevent by the obstacles they raise up the redemption and the promised salvation to be revealed: there will therefore be the need of a messenger to clear the way.'' For the Jews had introduced impediments, as though they designedly wished to resist the favor which had been prepared and promised to them. But how the Baptist performed his work by clearing the way, is evident from the fortieth chapter of Isaiah, as well as from the Gospels; and hence may be gathered what I have already said --- that God by his fidelity and mercy struggled with those obstacles which the Jews had raised up to prevent the coming of Christ. [395]

He afterwards adds, And presently shall [396] come to his temple the Lord, whom ye seek. After having said that he would open a way for his favor, he now adds, come shall the Lord. He introduces here, not Jehovah, but the Lord, {אדון}, Adun; and hence he speaks distinctly of Christ, who is afterwards called the Angel or Messenger of the covenant. But the word {אדון}, Adun, commonly used for a Mediator, as in Psalm 110, and also in Daniel 9:17; where it is expressly said, ``Hear, O Jehovah, for the sake of the Lord,'' {אדוני} {למען}, lamon Aduni; the word is the same as here, come then shall the Lord. The reason for this mode of speaking was, because Christ was shown to them under the type which re presented him. As then the kingdom of David was a representation of the kingdom of Christ our Lord, it is no wonder that the Prophets designate him by this title, especially those who were the nearest to the time of Christ's manifestation. But he is promised by another title, the angel or messenger of the covenant; but it means not the same here as in the first clause. He called John the Baptist at the beginning of this verse a messenger, the messenger of Jehovah; and now he calls Christ a messenger, but he is the messenger of the covenant; [397]

[395] The verb {,{פנה rendered ``purgabit'' by Calvin in the sense of clearing, can hardly bear this meaning. It signifies to turn or look to a thing, and hence to provide or prepare. In this latter sense it occurs in six other places; and is rendered by the Septuagint {ἑτοιμάζω}, as in Genesis 24:31, and Isaiah 40:3, though here {ἐπιβλέψεται}, according to its primary meaning. The version of Theodoret, here is ``{ἑτοιμαζει} --- prepares.'' The idea of Calvin may be said to be included; for as Henderson justly observes, ``The language is borrowed from the custom of sending pioneers before an eastern monarch to cut through rocks and forests, and remove every impediment that might obstruct his course.'' --- Ed.

[396] "{Εξαίφνης} --- suddenly,'' by the Septuagint, ``statim --- immediately,'' by Jerome, and by some others, ``unexpectedly.'' The meaning is, according to some, that his coming would be soon after that of John, about six months; or, according to others, unexpectedly, as a light suddenly arising in darkness, without any previous symptom of its appearance. The literal rendering of these two lines is the following, --- And suddenly shall he come to his temple, The Lord whom ye are seeking. The remark of Henderson and of others on the {ה} before ``Lord'' as being emphatic, is not well founded. It is owing to the relative ``whom'' which follows, as it is in our language. --- Ed.

[397] "A phrase nowhere else in Scripture." — Secker.

for it was necessary that the covenant should be confirmed by him. The title of John the Baptist was then inferior to that of Christ; for though he was God manifested in the flesh, yet this did not prevent him from being God's minister and interpreter in order to confirm his covenant; and we know that the office of Christ consists in confirming and sealing to us the covenant of God, not only by his doctrine, but also by his blood and the sacrifice of his cross.

Malachi then promises here to the Jews both a king and a reconciler, --- a king under tee title of Lord, --- and a reconciler under the title of the messenger of the covenant: and we know it was the main thing in the whole doctrine of the law, that a Redeemer was to come, to reconcile the Church to Cod and to rule it.

And he says that the Mediator was sought and expected by the Jews; and through him God was to be propitious to them: but this was not said but ironically. The faithful indeed at this day have all their desires fixed on Christ, after he has been revealed in the flesh, until they shall partake at his last coming of the fruit of his death and resurrection; and under the law we know that the groaning and the sighings of the godly were towards Christ: but Malachi here, by way of contempt, checks these unreasonable charges, by which the Jews accused God, as though he had disappointed their hope and their prayers. For we have said, and the fact is evident, that God had been presumptuously and shamefully impeached by them, as though he meant not to fulfill his promises: hence the Prophet says ironically, and sharply too, that Christ was expected by the Jews, for they murmured, because God had too long deferred his coming: ``O! where is the Redeemer? when will he be revealed to us?'' Since then they thus pretended that they earnestly expected the coming of Christ, the Prophet upbraids them with this, and justly too, for they had expressly manifested their unbelief.

Behold, he comes, saith Jehovah of hosts [398] Here he introduces the Father as the speaker, as it has been already stated; and the particle {הנה}, ene, behold, is used for the sake of removing every doubt; and then he confirms what he says by the authority of God. He might have asserted this in his own person as a teacher; but in order to produce an effect on the Jews by the majesty of God, he makes him the author of this prophecy. It follows ---

Malachi 3:2

2. But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap:

2. Et quis sustinebit diem adventus ejus? et quis consistet in apparitione ejus? quia ipse quasi ignis purgans, et quasi borith (vel, herba) fullonum.

The Prophet in this verse contends more sharply with the Jews, and shows that it was a mere presence that they so much expected the coming of the Mediator, for

[398] Owing to this repetition, some of the fathers, Theodoret, Eusebius, and Augustine, held that this part refers to Christ's second coming: but the repetition is only to confirm what had been previously said, and according to the usual manner of the Prophets, contains an expansion of the former idea. A literal rendering of the whole verse would exhibit this as the real meaning, — Behold I send my messenger, And he shall prepare the way before me: And suddenly shall he come to his temple, The Lord whom ye are seeking; Yea, the angel of the covenant, in whom ye delight, Behold, he is coming, saith Jehovah of hosts. The four last lines exhibit an example of parallelism which often occurs. The first and the last line correspond, and so do the second and the third. — Ed.

they were far different from him through the whole course of their life. And when he says that the coming of Christ would be intolerable, what is said is to be confined to the ungodly; for we know that nothing is more delightful and sweeter to us than when Christ is nigh us: though now we are pilgrims and at a distance from him, yet his invisible presence is our chief joy and happiness. (Romans 8:22, 23.) Besides, were not the expectation of his coming to sustain our minds, how miserable would be our condition! It is therefore by this mark that the faithful are to be distinguished, --- that they expect his coming; and Paul does not in vain exhort us, by the example of heaven and earth, to be like those in travail, until Christ appears to us as our Redeemer.

But the Prophet here directs his discourse to the ungodly, who though they seem to burn with desire for God's presence, do not yet wish him to be nigh them, but they flee from him as much as they can. We have met with a similar passage in Amos,

``Wo to those who desire the day of the Lord! What will it be to you? for it will be darkness, yea darkness and not light, a day of sorrow and not of joy.'' (Amos 5:18.)

Amos in this passage spoke on the same subject; for the Jews, inflated with false confidence, thought that God could not forsake them, as he had pledged his faith to them; but he reminded them that God had been so provoked by their sins, that he was become their professed and sworn enemy. So also in this place, Come, the Prophet says, come shall the Redeemer; but this will avail you nothing; on the contrary, his coming will be dreadful to you. We indeed know that Christ appeared not for salvation to all, but only to the remnant, and to those of Jacob who repented, according to what Isaiah says. (Isaiah 10:21, 22.) But since they obstinately rejected the favor of God, it is no wonder that the Prophet excluded them from the blessings of the Redeemer.

Who then will endure his coming? [399] and who shall stand at his appearance? as though he had said, ``In vain do ye flatter yourselves, and even upbraid God, that he retains the promised Redeemer as it were hidden in his own bosom; for he will come in due time, but without any advantage to you; nor will it be given you to enjoy his favor; but on the contrary he will bring to you nothing but terrors; for he will be like a purifying fire, and as the herb of the fullers [400] The latter clause may be taken in a good or a bad sense, as it is evident from the next verse. The power of the fire, we know, is twofold; for it burns and it purifies; it burns what is corrupt; but it purifies gold and silver from their dross. The Prophet no doubt meant to include both, for in the next verse he says, that Christ will be as fire to purify and to refine the sons of Levi as gold and silver. With regard then to the people of whom he has been hitherto speaking, he shows that Christ will be like fire, to burn and consume their filth; for

[399] For "who will endure," the Vulgate, after Jerome, has, "quis poterit cogitare — who can think of?" etc. But this is inconsistent with the Septuagint and the Targum, and with the context. The verb indeed is capable of being derived from {{כל as well as from ;{יכל} but the latter is the meaning alone suitable to this passage. --- Ed.

[400] The version of the Septuagint is "{ὡς} {πυρ} {χωνευτηρίου} {και} {ὡς} {ποια}< pluno>{ντων} --- as the fire of the crucible (or, of the furnace) and as the herb of the washers.'' The word, ,{מצרף} may be either a participle or a noun---the refiner or the place or instrument of refining. See Proverbs 17:3; 27:21. The latter sense is most suitable to this place. ``Herb'' is rendered ``smegma --- soap,'' by Picator, --- ``Lanaria -cudwort,'' by Drusius,---and ``alkaline salt,'' by Michaelis. It was probably the salt-wort mentioned by an author quoted by Parkhurst, a plant very common in Judea. It was burned, and water was poured on its ashes. This water became impregnated with strong lixivial salt, ``proper for taking,'' he says, ``stains and impurities out of wool or cloth.'' It is not supposed that what we call ``soap'' was known to the Jews. --- Ed.

though they boasted with their mouth of their religion, yet we know that the Church of God had many defilements and pollutions; they were therefore to perish by fire. But Malachi teaches us at the same time, that the whole Church was not to perish, for the Lord would purify the sons of Levi

There is here a part stated for the whole; for the promise belongs to the whole Church. The sons of Levi were the first-fruits, and the whole people were in the name of that tribe consecrated to God. This is the reason why he mentions the sons of Levi rather than the whole people; as though he had said, that though the Church was corrupt and polluted, there would yet be a residue which God would save, having purified them. The words which I had omitted are these -

Malachi 3:3

3. And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness.

3. Et sedebit purgans et mundans argentum; et mundabit filios Levi, fundetque (vel, conflabit) eos sicut aurum et sicut argentum; et erunt offerentes Iehovae oblationem in justitia.

The Prophet says, that Christ would sit to purify the sons of Levi; for though they were the flower, as it were, and the purity of the Church, they had yet contracted some contagion from the corruption which prevailed. Such then was the contagion, that not only the common people became corrupt, but even the Levites themselves, who ought to have been guides to others, and who were to be in the Church as it were the pattern of holiness. God however promises that such would be the purifying which Christ would effect, and so regulated, that it would consume the whole people, and yet purify the elect, and purify them like silver, that they may be saved. He tells us afterwards that the Levites themselves would need a trial to cleanse them; for they themselves would not be without filth, because they had mixed with a perverse people, who had wholly departed from the law, and from the fear and the worship of God.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that since we are by nature so prone to rash judgement, we may learn to submit to thee, and so quietly to acquiesce in thy judgements, that we may patiently bear whatever chastisements thou mayest daily allot to us, and not doubt but that all is done for our well-being, and never murmur against thee, but give thee the glory in all our adversities; and may we so labor to mortify our flesh, that by denying ourselves we may ever allow thee to be the only true God, and a just avenger, and our Father, and that thus renouncing ourselves, we may yet never depart from the purity of thy word, and be thus retained under thy yoke, until we shall at length attain that liberty which has been procured for us by thine only-begotten Son. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Seventy-eighth

In our last lecture the Prophet delineated the office of Christ, that hypocrites might know that they in vain complained of the tardiness of God, as though he had deserted them at the very time of their extremity. He further said, that there was need of

purifying, not only as to the people, but as to the priests also; and hence it appears how corrupt the state of things had become among all classes. At the same time he seems indirectly to reprove hypocrisy, not only in the common people, but also in the Levites, for there is a contrast to be understood between the sacrifices they then offered, and those offered by their fathers.

By saying then that they would offer to Jehovah an oblation in righteousness, {בצדקה} {מנחה}, meneche betsadke, he intimates that their sacrifices had not been legitimate, for they had become polluted, and hence could not rightly minister to God. We hence see that the Levites are here reproved because they had polluted God's service in not offering the right sacrifices such as he had prescribed in his law. This is not to be applied to the outward acts only, but also to the feelings and motives, because they did come to God's altars with minds well prepared.

To offer in righteousness is a mode of speaking common in Hebrew, and means to offer in a right way, so that there should be nothing wrong or worthy of blame. By the verb {ישב}, isheb, to sit, is intimated continuance; as though the Prophet had said, that corruption was so deeply fixed in the Levites that it could not in one day or by light means be purged away: in short, he meant by this one word to exaggerate the corrupt state of the people, for had only a slight washing been sufficient, he would have simply said, ``he will purify, he will cleanse, he will cast,'' or melt, [401] for he uses these three words: but he says, as I have stated, that he will sit to do these things, in order to show that he would continue in his work and carry it on for a long time, because the diseases being so inveterate they could not be easily healed. We now understand what the Prophet means. He afterwards adds ---

Malachi 3:4

4. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the LORD, as in the days of old, and as in former years.

4. Et gratia erit Iehovae oblatio Iehudah et Ierusalem, sicut a diebus antiquis et sicut annis pristinis.

This verse shows, that though he had just spoken of the sons of Levi, he yet had regard to the whole people. But he meant to confine to the elect what ought not to have been extended to all, for there were among the people, as we have seen and shall again presently see, many who were reprobates, nay, the greater part had fallen away; and this is the reason why the Prophet especially addresses the few remaining who had not fallen away.

But he names Judah and Jerusalem, for that tribe had returned to their own country, and sacrifices were offered at Jerusalem, though not with the splendor of ancient times, the state of things having become much deteriorated among those miser-

[401] "Fundet vel conflabit," so he renders {זקק}, which signifies to fuse, as given by the Septuagint, {χεει}. It properly means to strain off or separate, that is, wine from its lees, as in Isaiah 25:6; or, as here, the pure metal from its dross. It intimates such a process as is successful in separating the gold and silver from the base matter that may adhere to them. So that the ``expurgans --- cleansing'' of Piscator, or the ``defaecans --- defecating or fining from dregs,'' of Junius and Tremelius, very nearly expresses the idea. Newcome and Henderson translate this verb ``refine,'' as they do another verb, or rather participle, at the beginning of the verse. ``He will strain them, (colabit,)'' is the version of Jerome. Our version has ``purge,'' but ``cleanse'' is better. ``Defacate'' comes nearest to the original word. I would offer the following version --- 3. And sit will the fuser and purifier of silver; And he will purify the sons of Levi, And draw off their dross as that of silver and gold; And they shall be to Jehovah The offerers of oblation in righteousness. The paraphrase of Dathius is substantially faithful --- As the gold-finer (or goldsmith --- aurifaber) and the purifier of silver sits, so he will purify the posterity of Levi, and will clarify (eliquabit) them as gold and silver, that they may rightly offer gifts to Jehovah. --- Ed.

able exiles. Hence the Prophet, that he might encourage the faithful, says, that though the temple was then mean, and the worship of God as then performed was unadorned and abject, yet there was no reason for the Levites or for others to despond, because the Lord would again restore the glory of his temple, and really show that what men viewed with scorn was approved by him. It follows ---

Malachi 3:5

5. And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the Lord of hosts.

5. Et appropinquabo ad vos in judicium, et ero testis velox contra praestigiatores, (vel, divinos) et adulteros, et jurantes ad fallendum, et supprimentes mercedem mercenarii, viduae, et pupilli, (aut, viduam et pupillum,) et pervertentes peregrinum, et qui non timuerunt me, dicit Iehova.

Here the Prophet retorts the complaints which the Jews had previously made. There is here then a counter-movement when he says, I will draw nigh to you; for they provoked God by this slander --- that he hid himself from them and looked at a distance on what was taking place in the world, as though the people he had chosen were not the objects of his care. They expected God to be to them like a hired soldier, ready at hand to help them in any adversity, and to come armed at their nod or pleasure to fight with their enemies: this they expected; but God declares what is of a contrary character, --- that he would come for judgment; and he alludes to that impious slander, when they denied that he was the God of judgement, because he did not immediately, or soon enough, resist their enemies: ``Oh! God has now divested himself of his own nature! for his judgement does not appear.'' His answer is, ``I will not forget nay judgement when I come to you, but I shall come in a way contrary to what you expect''. They indeed wished God to put on arms for their advantage, but God declares, that he would be an enemy to them, according to what he also says by the mouth of Isaiah.

He further says, I will be a swift witness. He sets swiftness here in opposition to their calumny, for they said that God was slow and tardy, because he had not immediately, as they had wished, come forth to exercise vengeance on foreign nations: he, on the other hand, says, that he would be sufficiently swift when the time came.

And as there are the like blasphemies prevailing in the world at this day, this passage may be accommodated to our circumstances. Let us then know, that though God may delay and connive at things for a time, he yet knows his own opportunities, so as to appear as the avenger of wickedness as soon as it will be necessary. But let us ever fear lest our haste should prove our ruin, for he has no respect of persons, so as to favor our unfaithfulness and to be rigid towards those who are hostile to us. Let us take heed that while we look for the presence of God, we present ourselves before his tribunal with a pure and upright conscience.

He then mentions several kinds of evils, in which he includes the sins in which the Jews implicated themselves. He first names diviners or sorcerers. It is indeed true, that among various kinds of superstitions this was one; but as the word is found here

by itself, the Prophet no doubt meant to include all kinds of diviners, soothsayers, false prophets, and all such deceivers: and so there is here again another instance of stating a part for the whole; for he includes all those corruptions which are contrary to the true worship of God. We indeed know that God formerly had by his word put a restraint on the Jews, that they were not to turn aside to incantations and magical arts, or to anything of this kind; but he intimates here, that they were then so given up to gross abominations, that they abandoned themselves to magic arts, and to incantations, and the juggleries of the devil. He mentions, in the second place, adulterers, and under this term he includes all kinds of lewdness; and, in the third place, he names frauds [402] and rapines; and if we rightly consider the subject, we shall find that these three things contain whatever violates the whole law.

The design of the Prophet is by no means ambiguous; for he intended to show how perversely they expostulated with God; for they ought to have been destroyed a hundred times, inasmuch as they were apostates, were given to obscene lusts, were cruel, avaricious, and perfidious.

And this reproof ought to be a warning to us in the present day, that we may not call forth God's judgement on others, while we flatter ourselves as being innocent. Whenever then we flee to God for help, and ask him to succor us, let us remember that he is a just judge who has no respect of persons. Let then every one, who implores God's judgement, be his own judge, and anticipate the correction which he has reason to fear. That God therefore may not be armed for our destruction, let us carefully examine our own life, and follow the rule prescribed here by the Prophet; let us begin with the worship of God, then let us come to fornications and adulteries, and whatever is contrary to a chaste conduct, and afterwards let us pass to frauds and plunder; for if we are free from all superstition, if we keep ourselves chaste and pure, and if we also abstain from all plunders and all cruelty, our life is doubtless approved by God. And hence it is that the Prophet adds at the end of the verse, They feared not me; for when lusts, and plunder, and frauds and the corruptions which vitiate God's worship, prevail, it is evident that there is no fear of God, but that men, having shaken off the yoke, as it were run mad, though they may a thousand times profess the name of God.

By mentioning the orphan, the widow, and the stranger, he amplifies the atrocity of their crimes; for the orphans, widows, and strangers, we know, are under the guardianship and protection of God, inasmuch as they are exposed to the wrongs of men. Hence every one who plunders orphans, or harasses widows, or oppresses strangers, seems to carry on open war, as it were, with God himself, who has promised that these should be safe under the shadow of his hand. With regard to the expressions, it seems not suitable to say that the hire of the widow and of the orphan is suppressed; there may therefore be an inversion of the words [403] --- they oppressed the widows, the orphans, strangers. It follows ---

[402] Jurantes and fallandum — swear to deceive: the original literally is, “who swear to a lie,” or to a falsehood. — Ed.

[403] There is no need of this inversion, if we render the word {,{עשק defraud, or rob, or deal wrongfully with, which is no doubt its secondary meaning, --- And against the robbers of the hireling's hire, Of the widow, and of the fatherless, And those who oppress the stranger, And fear not me, saith Jehovah of hosts. The Septuagint give the meaning of the word as above, {αποστερουνται} --- defrauders, robbers, and supply ``tyrannizers --- {καταδυναστεύοντας},'' before ``widow.'' --- Ed.

Malachi 3:6

6. For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.

6. Quia ego Iehova, non muto (alii vertunt, non mutor, et ad rem ipsam parum interest;) et vos filii Iacob non estis consumpti.

Here the Prophet more clearly reproves and checks the impious waywardness of the people; for God, after having said that he would come and send a Redeemer, though not such as would satisfy the Jews, now claims to himself what justly belongs to him, and says that he changes not, because he is God. Under the name Jehovah, God reasons from his own nature; for he sets himself, as we have observed in our last lecture, in opposition to mortals; nor is it a wonder that God here disclaims all inconsistency, since the impostor Balaam was constrained to celebrate God's immutable constancy ---

``For he is not God,'' he says, ``who changes,'' or varies, ``like man.'' (Numbers 23:19.)

We now then understand the force of the words, I am Jehovah. But he adds as an explanation, I change not, or, I am not changed; for if we do not take the verb actively, the meaning is the same, --- that God continues in his purpose, and is not turned here and there like men who repent of a purpose they have formed, because what they had not thought of comes to their mind, or because they wish undone what they have performed, and seek new ways by which they may retrace their steps. God denies that anything of this kind can take place in him, for he is Jehovah, and changes not, or is not changed.

The latter clause is variously explained. The verb {כלה}, cale, means, in the first conjugation, to be consumed; but in Piel, to complete, or to make an end; and this sense would be very suitable; but a grammatical reason interferes, for it is in the first conjugation. Did grammar allow, this meaning would be appropriate, ``Ye children of Israel have not made an end:'' Why? ``From the days of your fathers,'' etc.: then the verse which follows would be connected with this. But we must be content with the present reading; and a twofold view may be taken of it: the copulative ``waw'' may be taken as an adversative, ``Though ye are not consumed, I yet am not changed:'' as though it was said, ``Think not that you have escaped, though I have long spared you and your sins: though then ye are not yet consumed, as I have borne with you in your great wickedness, I yet continue to be Jehovah, nor do I change my nature, and ye shall at length find that I am a just Judge; though I shall not soon execute my vengeance, punishment being held suspended, or as it were buried, yet the end will show that I am not changed.'' [404]

But the Prophet seems rather to accuse the Jews of ingratitude in charging God with cruelty or with negligence, because he did not immediately assist them; and at the same time they did not consider within themselves that they remained alive because God had a reason derived from his own nature for sparing them, and for not rendering to them what they had deserved. The meaning then is this, ``I am

[404] The words may be so rendered as to allow the copulative {ו its ordinary meaning. The verse contains two announcements bearing on the subject in hand, --- For I am Jehovah, I have not changed; And ye are the house of Jacob, ye have not been consumed. This, I conceive, is the natural rendering of the original. God was not changed, because he was Jehovah; and they were not consumed, because they were the house of Jacob, a people in covenant with God. --- Ed.

God, and I change not; and ought ye not to have acknowledged that wonderful forbearance through which I have spared you? for how has it been that you have not perished, and that innumerable deaths have not swallowed you up? How is it that you are yet alive? Is it because you have dealt faithfully faith me, so that it behaved me to exercise care over you? Nay, it is indeed a wonder that I had not fulminated against you so as to destroy you long ago.'' We hence see that he upbraids them with ingratitude for accusing him, because he did not immediately come forth in their defense: For he answers them and says, that had he been rigid and vehement in his displeasure, they could not have continued, for they had not ceased for many successive ages to seek their own ruin, as we find in what follows, for he says ---

Malachi 3:7, 8

7. Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return?

7. A diebus patrum vestrorum declinastis a statutis meis (vel, edictis,) et non servastis: Revertimini ad me, et revertar ad vos, dicit Iehova exercituum; et dixistis, In quo revertemur?

8. Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.

8. An diripiet homo Deum (vel, deos, vel, Iudices,) quia vos diripuistis me? et dixistis, In quo diripuimus te (vel, expilavimus)? In decimis et oblationibus.

The Prophet expands more fully what he had referred to --- that it was a wonder that the Jews had not perished, because they had never ceased to provoke God against themselves. He then sets this fact before them more clearly, From the days [405] of your fathers, he says, ye have turned aside from my statutes. He increases their condemnation by this circumstance --- that they had not lately begun to depart from the right way, but had continued their contumacy for many ages, according to what the apostles, as well as the Prophets in various places, have testified:

``Ye uncircumcised in heart, ye have ceased not to resist the Holy Spirit like your fathers.'' (Acts 7:51.)

``Harden not your hearts as your fathers did; in the righteousness of your fathers walk not.'' (Psalm 95:8.)

But I will not multiply proofs, which very often are to be met with, and must be well known.

We now understand the Prophet's intention --- that the Jews for many ages had been notorious for their impiety and wickedness, and that they had not been dealt with by God as they had deserved, because he had according to his ineffable goodness and forbearance suspended his rigour, so as not to visit them according to their demerits. It hence appears how unreasonable they were, not only in being morose and proud, but especially in being furious against God, when they accused him of tardiness, while yet he had proved himself to be really a God towards them by his continued forbearance.

[405] The words are singular, "days," being preceded by two prepositions, {{ל and ,{מ} ,{למימי} ``to --- from the days,'' etc., which seems to mean, ``To this time from the days of your fathers;'' or it may mean, ``To and from the days of your fathers, your immediate predecessors.'' --- Ed.

The words, And ye have not kept them, are added for amplification; for he expresses more fully their contempt of his law, as though he had said, that they were not only transgressors, but had also with gross wilfulness so departed from the law as to regard it as nothing to tread God's precepts under their feet.

He then exhorts then to repentance, and kindly addresses them, and declares that he would be propitious and reconcilable to them, if they repented. He has hitherto sharply reproved them, because their necks being hard they had need of such correction; for had the Prophet gently and kindly exhorted them, they would either have kicked or have set on him with their horns; be now mitigates his sharpness, not indeed with respect to all, but if there were any healable among the people he meant to try them; and hence he offers them reconciliation with God, as though he had said, ``Though God has been in various ways wantonly offended by you, and though you have repudiated his favor, and have become wholly unworthy of being regarded by him, yet return, and he will meet you.''

We have said elsewhere that all exhortations would be in vain without a hope of pardon; for when God commands us to return to the right way, our hearts would never be touched, nay, they would on the contrary turn away, had we no hope that he would be reconciled to us. This course the Prophet now pursues, when in the person of God himself he promises pardon, provided the Jews repented.

God is said to return to us, when he ceases to demand the punishment of our sins, and when he lays aside the character of a judge, and makes himself known to us as a Father. We indeed know that God neither returns nor departs; for he who fills all places never moves here and there; and we also know that we exist and live in him, but he shows by outward evidences that he is alienated from us, and by the same he shows that he is propitious to us; for when he favors us with fruitful seasons, with peace and with other blessings, he is said to be near us; but when he lets loose the reins of his wrath, or exposes us to the assaults of Satan and to the wanton power of men, he is said to be far removed from us. But this is so well known that I need not dwell longer on the point.

The promise which the Prophet states serves to show, that God would manifest tokens of his paternal favor to the Jews, provided only they were submissive; but that it would be their own fault, if they did not find through his blessings that he was their Father. It would be on account of their sins, which, as Isaiah says, hinder the course of that beneficence to which he is of his own self inclined, (Isaiah 59:2.) And he bids them to return. Hence the Papists very foolishly conclude, that repentance is in the power of man's free-will. But God requires what is above our strength; and yet there is no reason why we should complain that there is a too heavy burden laid on us; for he regards not what we can, or what our ability admits, but what we owe to him and what our duty requires. Though then no one can of his own self turn to God, he is not on this account excusable, because we must consider whence comes the defect; and how much soever, as I have already said, a man may pretend his own impotency, he cannot yet escape from being bound to God, though more is required of him than he of himself can perform. But this subject has often been discussed elsewhere. The import of what is said here is, --- that men are not miserable through

the unjust rigour of God, but always through their own sins.

It follows, Ye have said, In what shall we return? It is an evidence of perverseness, when men answer that they see not that they have erred, and that hence conversion is to no purpose required of them; for this is the meaning of these words, Whereby shall we return? that is, ``What dost thou require from us? for we are not conscious of any defection; we worship God as we ought: now if our duties are repudiated by him, we see not why he should so expressly blame us; let him show in what we have offended; for conversion to him is superfluous, until we be proved guilty of apostasy, or of those sins which God determines to punish in us.'' To this the Prophet answers ---

Will a man defraud the gods? Some give this version, ``Will a man defraud God?'' But it is strained and remote from the Prophet's design; and they pervert the meaning. For I do not see what can be elicited from this rendering, ``Will a man defraud God?'' But there are other two meanings which may be taken. The first is, ``Will a man defraud his gods?'' The word {אלהים}, Aleim, though it be in the plural number, is applied, as it is well known, to the true God; but it is applied also to idols; and in this place the Prophet seems to me to compare the Jews to the Gentiles, that their impiety might be made more evident. The same is the object of Jeremiah, when he says,

``Go, and survey the islands, is there a nation which has changed its gods, while yet they are no gods.'' (Jeremiah 2:10.)

Since their blindness and obstinacy held fast the Gentiles in darkness, that they continued to worship the gods to whom they had been accustomed, it was an abominable wickedness in the Jews, that having been taught to worship the true God, they were yet continually influenced by ungodly levity, and sought new modes of worship, as though they wished to devise another god for themselves. So also in this place the Prophet seems to bring forward the Gentiles as an example to the Jews; for they discharged their duty towards their gods; but the Jews despised the supreme and the only true God: ``Behold,'' he says, ``go round the world, and ye shall not find among the nations so unbridled a liberty as prevails among you; for they render obedience to their gods, and sacrilege is abominable to them; but ye defraud me. Am I inferior to idols? or is my state worse than theirs?''

Some take the word {אלהים}, Aleim, for judges, as judges are sometimes so named; but this meaning seems not suitable on account of the word, Adam. As then this word generally means man, the Prophet, I have no doubt, intimates what I have stated, --- that unbelievers, though sunk in darkness, are yet restrained by reverence and fear from changing their deity, and that they dare not to show levity when the name only of their god is pronounced. Since then such humility prevailed among unbelievers, could the impiety of that people, who had been trained up in the law, be excusable? a people too, upon whom God had ever made the doctrine of the law to shine. [406]

[406] Most differ from Calvin as to the word {אלהים} in this passage. The Septuagint render it ``God --- {Θεον},'' the Targum, ``judges,'' but commentators generally ``God,'' i.e., the true God, supposing the audacity of the people to be here reprobated. The word for ``defraud or rob,'' is only found here and in Proverbs 22:23, and rendered ``supplant'' by the Septuagint, but ``rob --- {αποστερησει},'' by Aq. and Sym., the only meaning consistent with the context. --- Ed.

He afterwards adds, Because ye have defrauded me; and ye have said, Thereby have we defrauded thee? In tenths and in oblations [407] Here the Prophet again proves the people guilty of perverseness: it was indeed hypocrisy, and though gross, it was yet surpassed by impudence; for they asked, whereby they had defrauded God? and yet this was evident even to children: for we know, and we have seen elsewhere, that avarice so ruled among them, that every one, bent on their own profit, neglected the temple and the priests. Since then they were openly sacrilegious, how shameless they must have been to ask whereby they had defrauded God! The thing itself was indeed manifest and commonly known, so that children could see it. God however deemed it enough to convict them by one sentence, --- that they defrauded him in the tenths and in the first-fruits; not that any advantage accrued to him from oblations, as he had no need of any such things; but he rightly calls and counts that his own which he had appointed for his own service. Since then he had instituted that order among the Jews, that they might by the tenths support the priests, and a part also was required for the poor, since God designed the first-fruits and other things to be offered to him, that men might thereby be continually reminded, that all things were his, and that whatever they received from his hand was sacred to him, he had previously called the bread laid on the table his own, and had called the sacrifices his own food, as though he did eat and drink. But as I have already said, we ought to regard the object in view, because his will was to be thus worshipped, and at the same time to keep as his own whatever belonged to his service. This then is the reason why he now complains of being defrauded of the tenths.

But we know that other sacrifices are now prescribed to us; and after prayer and praises, he bids us to relieve the poor and needy. God then, no doubt, is deprived by us of his right, when we are unkind to the poor, and refuse them aid in their necessity. We indeed thereby wrong men, and are cruel; but our crime is still more heinous, inasmuch as we are unfaithful stewards; for God deals more liberally with us than with others, for this end --- that some portion of our abundance may come to the poor; and as he consecrates to their use what we abound in, we become guilty of sacrilege whenever we give not to our brethren what God commands us; for we know that he engages to repay, according to what is said in Proverbs 19:17, ``He who gives to the poor lends to God.''

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou hast been pleased to choose us as priests to thyself, not that we may offer beasts to thee, but consecrate to thee ourselves, and all that we have, --- O grant, that we may with an readiness strive to depart from every kind of uncleanness, and to purify ourselves from all defilements, so that we may duly perform the sacred office of priesthood, and thus conduct ourselves towards thee with chasteness and purity; may we also abstain from every evil work, from all fraud and all cruelty towards our brethren, and so to deal with one another as to prove through our whole life that thou art really our Father, ruling us by thy

[407] Literally it is, "in the tenth (or, tithe) and the heave-offering." The last word comes from {,רם to raise or lift up, because this offering was raised or heaved, and thus presented as it were to the Lord. See Exodus 29:27,28. It is rendered ``first-fruits'' by the Septuagint

Spirit, and that true and holy brotherhood exists between us; and may we live justly towards one another, so as to render to each his own right, and thus show that we are members of thy only-begotten Son, so as to be owned by him when he shall appear for the redemption of his people, and shell gather us into his celestial kingdom. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Seventy-ninth

Malachi 3:9

9. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.

9. Maledictione vos maledicti estis, et me vos diripuistis tota gens.

Malachi pursues the same subject; for he answers the Jews in the name of God --- that they unjustly complained of his rigour as being immoderate, since they themselves were the cause of all their evils. He says that they were cursed, but he adds that this happened to them deservedly, as though he had said --- ``Be that granted what you say, (for lamentations were continually made,) why is it that God afflicts us without end or limits?'' God seems to grant what they were wont reproachfully to declare; but he says in answer to this --- ``But ye have defrauded Me; what wonder then that my curse consumes you? As then I have been robbed by you, as far as ye could, I will render to you your just recompense; for it is not right that I should be bountiful and kind to you, while ye thus defraud me, and take from me what is my own.''

The meaning then is this --- that it was indeed true that the Jews lamented that they were under a curse, but that the cause ought to have been searched out. They indeed wished their rapines and sacrileges to be forgiven, by which they defrauded God; but God declares that he punished them justly in consuming them with poverty and want, since they so sparingly rendered to him what they owed.

He mentions the whole nation, [408] and thus aggravates the wickedness of the Jews; for not a few were guilty of the sacrilege mentioned, but all, from the least to the greatest, they all plundered the tenths and the oblations. It hence follows that God's vengeance did not exceed due limits, since there was as it were a common conspiracy; there were not ten or a hundred implicated in this sin, but, as he says, the whole people. It follows ---

Malachi 3:10

10. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it

10. Adducite omnes decimas (vel, totas) ad domum thesauri (vel, ad repositorium,) et sit cibus in domo mea; et probate me nunc in hoc, dicit Iehova exercituum, annon aperiam vobis fenestras coelorum, depromam vobis benedictionem, ut non sit sufficientia (vel, ut non sit modus sufficientiae.)

He at length declares that they profited nothing by contending with God, but that a better way was open to them, that is, to return into favor with him. After having

[408] The words are expressive, for literally they are — And me have ye robbed, the nation, the whole of it. — Ed.

then repelled their unjust accusations, he again points out the remedy which he had already referred to --- that if they dealt faithfully with God, he would be bountiful to them, and that his blessing would be promptly extended to them. This is the sum of the passage. They had been sufficiently proved guilty of rapacity in withholding the tenths and the oblations; as then the sacrilege was well known, the Prophet now passes judgement, as they say, according to what is usually done when the criminal is condemned, and the cause is decided, so that he who has been defrauded recovers his right.

So also now God deals with the Jews. Bring, he says, to the repository [409] (for this is the same as the house of the treasury, or of provisions) all the tenths, or the whole tenths. We hence learn that they had not withholden the whole of the tenths from the priests, but that they fraudulently brought the half, or retained as much as they could; for it was not without reason that he said, Bring all, or the whole. They then so paid the tenths as to supply the priests with a part only, and thus they trifled with God, according to what hypocrites do, who ever claim to themselves high honor, and try to perform their duty in such a way as not to discover their own perfidy, and yet they are not ashamed of the liberty they take to illude God; and of this we have here a remarkable example. We then see that it is no new or unusual thing for men to pretend to do the duties they owe to God, and at the same time to take away from him what is his own, and to transfer it to themselves, and that manifestly, so that their impiety is evident, though it be covered by the veil of dissimulation.

He then adds, Let there be meat in my house. We have elsewhere explained this form of speaking, and in the last lecture the Prophet spoke also of the meat of God, not that God needs meat and drink, but that whatever he has given us ought to be deemed his. We have already stated, that it has been recorded for our sake, that the Jews offered bread, and victims, and things of this kind, and that they feasted at Jerusalem in the presence of God: for what is more desirable than that God should dwell in the midst of us? and this is often repeated in the law. But this could not have been set forth to us in a way so familiar, as when God is represented as in a manner sitting at table with us, as though he were our guest, eating of the same bread and of the other provisions: and hence it is said in the law, ``Thou shalt feast and rejoice before thy God.'' (Deuteronomy 2:18.) Now as God needs not meat and drink, as it has been said, and as men in their grossness are ever prone to superstitions, he substituted the priests and the poor in his own place, to prevent the Jews from entertaining earthly notions respecting him. And this kind of modification or correction deserves to be noticed: for the Lord on the one hand intended to draw men in a kind manner to himself; but, on the other hand, he proposed to raise their minds upward to heaven, lest they should ascribe to him anything unworthy of himself, as is wont to be done, and is very common.

But, at the same time, he again accuses them of sacrilege, for he complains that he was deprived of meat; Let there then be meat in my house; and prove me by

[409] The literal rendering is — Bring ye the whole of the tenth Into the house, the treasury, And let the prey be in my house. That is — "Let what you rob me of, the prey, or plunder, be in my house." The word is {,{טרף properly prey, or plunder, and so rendered by the Septuagint, ``{διαρπαγὴ}---plunder.'' It was the Targum that gave a wrong meaning to the word, which most have followed. --- Ed.

this, saith Jehovah, if I wily not open, etc. He confirms what he said before, and yet proceeds with his promise, for by subjecting himself to a proof, he boldly repels their calumny in saying that they were without cause consumed with want, and that God had changed his nature, because he had not given a large supply of provisions. God then briefly shows, that wrong had been done to him, for he admits of a proof or a trial, as though he had said, ``If you choose to contest the point, I will soon settle it, for if you bring to me the tenths and them entire, there will immediately come to you a great abundance of all provisions: it will hence be evident, that I am not the cause of barrenness, but that it is your wickedness, because ye have sacrilegiously defrauded me.''

Then he adds, If I will not open to you the windows of heaven. It is the first thing as to fertility that the heavens should water the earth, according to what Scripture declares: and hence God threatens in the law that the heaven would be iron and the earth brass, (Deuteronomy 28:23,) for there is a mutual connection between the heaven and the earth, and he says elsewhere by a Prophet,

``The heaven will hear the earth, and the earth will hear the corn and wine, and the corn and wine will hear men.''
(Hosea 2:22.)

For when famine urges us, we cry for bread and wine, as our life seems in a manner to be dependent on these supplies. When there is no wine nor corn, we meet with a denial; but the wine and the corn cry to the earth, and why? because according to the order fixed by God, they seek as it were to break forth; for when the bowels of the earth are closed, neither the corn nor the vine can come forth, and then they in vain call on the earth. The sense is the case with the earth; for when it is dry and as it were famished, it calls on the heavens, but if rain be denied, the heavens seem to reject its prayer. Then God in this place shows that the earth could not produce a single ear of corn, except the heavens supplied moisture or rain. God indeed could from the beginning have watered the earth without rain, as Moses relates he did at first, for a vapor then supplied the want of rain. Though then rain descends naturally, we are yet reminded here that God sends it. This is the first thing.

But as rain itself would not suffice, he adds, I will unsheath, etc.; for {רק}, rek, means properly to unsheath; but as this metaphor seems unnatural, some have more correctly rendered it, ``I will draw out'' Unnatural also is this version, ``I will empty out a blessing,'' and it perverts the meaning. Let us then follow what I have stated as the first --- that a blessing is drawn out from God when the earth discharges its office, and becomes fertile or fruitful. [410] We hence see that God is not only in one way bountiful to us, but he also intends by various processes to render us sensible of his kindness: he rains from heaven to soften the earth, that it may in its bosom nourish the corn, and then send it forth from its bowels, as though it extended its breast to us; and further, God adds his blessing, so as to render the rain useful.

He subjoins the words {די}-{בלי}-{עד}, od-beli-di, which some render, ``that there may not be a sufficiency,'' that is, that granaries and cellars might not be capable of

[410] The verb in Hiphil, as it is here, is applied to the drawing forth of a sword or lance, Exodus 15:9, and to the drawing out of an army for battle, Genesis 14:14. It is rendered, "{εκχεω}---I will pour out, or forth,'' by the Septuagint. --- Ed.

containing such abundance. They then elicit this meaning --- that so great would be the fruitfulness of the earth, and so large would be its produce, that their repositories would not be sufficiently capacious. But others give this version, ``Beyond the measure of sufficiency.'' The word {די}, di, means properly sufficiency, or what is needful, as by inverting the letters it {יד}, id [411] With regard to the general meaning there is but little difference. Suitable also is this version, ``Beyond sufficiency;'' that is, I will not regard what is needful for you, as though it were measured, but the abundance shall be overflowing. It follows ---

Malachi 3:11

11. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts.

11. Et increpabo vobis devorantem, et non corrumpet vobis fructum terrae, et non abortiet vobis vitis in agro, dicit Iehova exercituum.

God now again confirms the truth, that he would not in one way only be bountiful to them. He might indeed distribute to us daily our food, as we know that he thus fed his people in the wilderness; but his will is that the seed should rot in the earth, that it should then germinate, and in course of time grow, until it shoots into ears of corn; but it is still in no small danger, nay the corn is subject to many evils before it be gathered into the garner; for the locusts, the worms, the mildew, and other things may destroy it. God therefore, in order to set forth his kindness to men, enumerates here the ways and the means by which food is preserved; for it would not be enough that the seed should germinate, and that there should appear evidences of a great produce, the ears being fine and abundant, but it is necessary that the ears of corn themselves, before they become ripe, should be preserved from above; for on the one hand the chafers, the locusts, the worms, and other grubs, may suddenly creep in and devour the corn while in the field, and on the other hand, storms, and hail, and mildew, and oilier pestilential things, as I have said, may prove ruinous to the corn.

Hence God shows here, that he takes constant care of us, and every day and every night performs the office of a good and careful head of a family, who always watches for its benefit.

In the word devourer, I include all the evils to which we see that corn is subject; he therefore says, he shall not destroy the fruit of the earth; nor bereaved shall be the vine for you in the fields. The verb {שכל}, shecal, properly means to bereave or to deprive; but as this version, ``bereaved shall not be vine,'' would be harsh, some have rendered the words thus, ``Miscarry shall not vine,'' which I do not disapprove: Miscarry then shall not the vine for you in the fields, saith Jehovah of hosts [412] It

[411] {{כדי} not only means sufficiency, but also what is necessary to suffice, demand, requirement, as in Leviticus 25:26, {גאלתו} ,{according to the demand of his redemption, or what was necessary or sufficient for his redemption. See Deuteronomy 25:2, where it means ``according to what his sin may require,'' or literally, ``according to the requirement of his sin.'' See also Nahum 2:13, {בדי} ,{גרותיו} ``for the demand of his whelps,'' or, for what was necessary to suffice his whelps. There is a similar phrase to what we find here in Psalm 72:7, {עד} {בלי} ,{ירח} ``until no moon,'' that is, until there be no moon. The literal rendering then of the phrase here would be, ``until no demand,'' that is, until nothing be required fully to suffice. Corresponding with this is the version of the Septuagint ``{εως} {το} {ικανωθηναι} ---until there should be enough.'' --- Ed.

[412] There is no necessity for giving to {שכל} here any other than its ordinary meaning of bereaving or depriving. The reference is to depredators who bereaved or stripped the vine of its fruit---an evil common in a confused and disordered state

follows ---

Malachi 3:12

12. And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the LORD of hosts.

12. Et beatos dicent vos cunctae gentes, quia eritis vos terra desiderii (desiderabilis) dicit Iehova exercituum.

This verse is taken from the law, in which among other things God promises so happy a state to his chosen people, that the nations themselves would acknowledge in them the blessing of God. There is yet a contrast to be understood, --- that having fallen into such misery, they were become as it were detestable to all nations, according to what the law also declares concerning them,

``If thou shalt keep my precepts, all nations shall call thee blessed; but if thou wilt despise me, thou shalt be a sport to all nations, all shall shake the head and move the lips; yea, they shall be astonished at the sight of thy misery, and whosoever shall hear his ears will tingle.'' (Deuteronomy 28:1, 15.)

As then the Jews were consumed as it were in their miseries, the Prophet says, ``If you turn to God, that happiness which he has promised you shall not be withheld; he has it as it were ready in his hand, like a treasure that is hidden, according to what is said in Psalm 31:19, `How great is the abundance of thy goodness! but it is laid up for them who fear thee.''' God then means, that he will not prostitute his blessing to dogs and swine, but that it is always in reserve for his children, who are teachable and obedient. The nations then shall call you blessed, for ye shall be a land of desire

This promise also is taken from the law, in which God says, that he had not in vain separated that land from the rest, because it was to be an example or a representation of his kindness through the whole world. We indeed know that God has ever been bountiful even to all nations, so as to satisfy them abundantly with provisions; but the land of Israel is called the land of desire, or a desirable land, because it was the special scene of God's bounty, not only as to meat and drink, but also as to other more excellent blessings. He now adds ---

Malachi 3:13-15

13. Your words have been stout against me, saith the Lord. Yet ye say, What have we spoken so much against thee?

13. Invaluerunt contra me verba vestra, dicit Iehova; et dixistis, In quo locuti sumus contra te?

14. Ye have said, It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts?

14. Dixistis, Frustra servitur Deo et quae utilitas? quia custodivimus custodiam ejus, et quia ambulavimus supplices (vel, humiles; in obscuro vulta, ad verbum) coram facie Iehovae exercituum.

15. And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered.

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of things. The word ,{לכם} ``on your account,'' is repeated in this verse three times; and it has no doubt an emphatic meaning. What is intimate evidently is, that the evils promised here to be removed were on their account, i.e., for their sins. I render the verse thus, --- And I will restrain on your account the devourer, And he shall not destroy on your account the fruit of the ground, And bereaved on your account shall not be the vine in the field, Saith the Lord of hosts --- Ed.

15. Et nunc nos beatos dicimus superbos; etiam aedificantur qui faciunt iniquitatem, etiam tentant Deum et liberantur.

Here again God expostulates with the Jews on account of their impious and wicked blasphemy in saying, that he disappointed his servants, and that he made no difference between good and evil, because he was kind to the unfaithful and the faithful indiscriminately, and also that he overlooked the obedience rendered to him.

He says now that their words grew strong; by which he denotes their insolence, as though he had said, Vous avez gagné le plus haut; for {חזק}, chezak, is to be strong. He means that such was the waywardness of the Jews that it could not by any means be checked; they were like men whom we see, who when once seized by rage and madness, become so vociferous that they will not listen to any admonitions or sane counsels. At first they murmur and are only heard to whisper; but when they have attained full liberty, they then send forth, as I have said, their furious clamours against heaven. This is the sin which the Prophet now condemns by saying, that the Jews grew strong in crying against God. [413] They again answer and say, In what have we spoken against thee? [414] It appears from these so many repetitions that the hypocrisy, which was united with great effrontery, could not be easily corrected in a people so refractory: it ought indeed to have come to their minds that they had wickedly accused God. But they acknowledge here no fault, ``What meanest thou?'' as though they wished to arraign the Prophet for having falsely charged them, inasmuch as they were conscious of no wrong.

He then gives the reason why he said, that their words grew strong against God, that is, that they daringly and furiously spoke evil of God; and the reason was, because they said, that God was worshipped in vain. They thought that they worshipped God perfectly; and this was their false principle; for hypocrites ever lay claim to complete holiness, and cannot bear to confess their own evils; even when their conscience goads them, they deceive themselves with vain flatteries, and always endeavor to draw over them some veil that their disgrace may not appear before men. Hence hypocrites seek to deceive themselves, God, angels, and men; and when they are inflated with the confidence that they worship God purely, rightly, and without any defect, and that they are without any blame, they will betray the virulence which lies within, whenever God does not help them as they wish, whenever he submits not to their will: for when they are prosperous, God is hauntingly blessed by them; but as soon as he withdraws his hand and begins to prove their patience, they will then show, as I have said, what sort of worshippers of God they are. But in the service of God the chief thing is this --- that men deny themselves and give themselves up to be ruled by God, and never raise a clamor when he humbles them.

[413] Your words have waxen bold against me. — Newcome Your words against me have been hard. — Henderson. Ye have made heavy (or, overcharged — {ἐβαρύνατε}) against me your words. --- Septuagint To ``grow strong'' is the idea expressed by Jerome and Marckius; and it is the common meaning of the verb. ``Strong of forehead'' in Ezekiel 3:7, is rendered ``impudent'' in our version, and very justly. Impudence or insolence is what is here evidently meant, --- Insolent against me have been your words. --- Ed.

[414] Rather, “What have we been talking together against thee? The verb is in Niphal, and only found so here, in the sixteenth verse, Psalm 119:23, and Ezekiel 33:30. It denotes a mutual converse, a talking together, or a frequent converse. — Ed.

We hence see how it was that the Jews found fault with God; for they were persuaded that they fully performed their duty, which was yet most false; and then, they were not willing to submit to God, and to undertake his yoke, because they did not consider in how many ways they had provoked God's wrath, and what just and multiplied reasons he has for chastising his people, even when they do nothing wrong. As then they did not seriously consider any of these things, they thought that he was unjust to them, In vain then do we serve God. These thoughts, as we have said, sometimes come across the minds of the faithful; but they, as it becomes them, resist such thoughts: the Jews, on the contrary, as though they were victorious, vomited forth these blasphemies against God.

In vain we serve God; what benefit? they said: for we have kept has charge, we have walked obscurely, or humbly, before Jehovah of hosts; [415] and yet we are constrained to call the proud, or the impious, happy. Here they bring a twofold accusation against God, that they received no reward for their piety when they faithfully discharged their duty towards God, --- and also that it was better with the ungodly and the despisers of God than with them. We hence see how reproachfully they exaggerated what they deemed the injustice of God, at least how they themselves imagined that he disappointed the just of their deserved reward, and that he favored the ungodly and the wicked as though he was pleased with them, as though he intended the more to exasperate the sorrow of his own servants, who, though they faithfully worshipped, yet saw that they did so in vain, as God concealed himself and did not regard their services.

That the good also are tempted, as we have said, by thoughts of this kind, is no wonder, when the state of things in the world is in greater confusion. Even Solomon says,

``All things happen alike to the just and to the unjust, to him who offers sacrifices, and to him who does not sacrifice,''
(Ecclesiastes 9:2,)

hence the earth is full of impiety and contempt. There is then an occasion for indignation and envy offered to us; but as God designedly tries our faith by such confusions, we must remember that we must exercise patience. It is not at the same time enough for us to submit to God's judgement, except we also consider that we are justly distressed; and that though we may be attentive to what is just and upright, many vices still cleave to us, and that we are sprinkled with many spots, which provoke God's wrath against us. Let us then learn to form a right judgement as to what our life is, and then let us bear in mind how many are the reasons why God should sometimes deal roughly with us. Thus all our envying will cease, and our minds will be prepared calmly to obey. In short, these considerations will check whatever perverseness there may be in us, so that neither our wicked thoughts nor

[415] The verse is differently arranged in our version, and by most interpreters. The first sentence is a general announcement, and what follows is an expansion and an illustration of that announcement — 14. Ye have said, "It is vain to serve God; For what profit is it that we have kept his charge, And that we have walked mournfully before Jehovah of hosts? 15. We therefore now felicitate the proud; Even built up have been the workers of wickedness, They have even tempted God, and escaped." The word for "tempted" is {,בחן which commonly means to try, to prove, to test a thing; but used here evidently in a bad sense: they presumptuously tried, as it were, the patience of God, and ``escaped,'' i.e., from the punishment which they deserved. --- Ed.

our words will be so strong as to rise in rebellion against God.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that since we continue to afford many and various reasons to induce thee to withdraw thy blessing, and to show thyself displeased with us, --- O grant, that we may patiently bear thy scourges, by which thou chastises us, and also profit under them, and so contend with all our depraved affections and the corruptions of the flesh, that we may become partakers of thy paternal kindness, which thou offerest to us, and also so taste of thy goodness, which in innumerable ways is manifested towards us, that it may keep us in the pursuit of true religion; finally, may our tongues be consecrated to magnify thy judgement and to celebrate thy justice, that whatever happens to us, we may always serve thee through our whole life as our Father, and declare also thy goodness towards us, and confess that we are justly punished whenever thou visitest us with severity, until we shall at length reach that blessed rest, which is to be the end of all our evils, and an entrance, not only into life, but also into that full glory and happiness, which has been procured for us by the blood of thine only-begotten Son. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Eightieth

We saw in our last lecture that the Jews were indignant, because God did not treat them with more kindness, as they thought that they rightly performed their duty towards Him. We said that such an expostulation can never be justly made by men; for though they may find God rigid, there are yet always many reasons why he should by various troubles exercise them; but hypocrites seem to themselves to be of all men the most perfect, though they have only the guise or mask of religion. They indeed say that they have kept the Law, but when we come to the test, their emptiness is found out; for the main thing in the Law is wanting, that is, integrity of heart; nay, in the outward life they are found to be transgressors.

However this may be, they boasted that they kept the law, as we find in this passage, We have kept his charge. The doctrine of the law is here by a metaphor called a charge or keeping (custodia,) because it rules us, it confines us also within limits that we may not wander in uncertainty, it restrains our corrupt desires; in short, it keeps us under the fear of God and in the best order. Had the Jews considered this, they could never have dared to ascribe so much to themselves. Now this word, then commonly used, is adopted by the Prophet, and thus he shows how little attention they gave to the consideration of God's law; for they thought that their whole life was conformable to all the commandments, and. yet they conformed hardly to the thousandth part of them. They add, We have walked with a dark face or dress [416] There is here also a metaphor, for they meant that they had been humble and lowly before God. It is indeed no ordinary thing in God's service to lay aside all pride and vain confidence, and to walk humbly with him: but hypocrites, like apes, imitate what

[416] "{Ικεται} --- supplicants,'' by the Septuagint, --- ``tristes --- sad,'' by Jerome, --- ``with a depressed spirit,'' by the Targum, --- ``mournfully,'' in our version, and by Newcome and Henderson. The first meaning of the word is ``black'' or ``dark;'' but it is used to express grief, sorrow, or mourning. It is rendered ``{σκυθρωπαζων} --- being gloomy or sorrowful,'' by the Septuagint, in Psalm 38:6; 42:9; 43:2. It is here used adverbially, and may be rendered either sorrowfully or mournfully. ``The walking mournfully has reference to those going about in sackcloth and ashes, pretending to sorrow on account of their sins.'' --- Henderson ``They walked mournfully before God,'' observes Henry. ``Whereas God had required them to serve him with gladness, and to walk cheerfully before him. They, by their own superstitions, made the service of God a task and drudgery to themselves, and then complained of it as a hard service. The yoke of Christ is easy, it is the yoke of Antichrist that is heavy.'' --- Ed.

God requires and approves; and at the same time they say nothing of changing the heart. Fear and sorrow are required, according to what we have seen in the Prophet Micah; but hypocrites think that a dejected countenance is enough; and hence they often pretend sorrow, while they inwardly please and flatter themselves: and on this account we find in Isaiah, the fifty-eighth chapter, as well as in this place, that they bring a charge against God, that he did not regard them, when they walked with a sad countenance, when they macerated themselves with fastings: in short, when by various other performances they showed great holiness, they brought an accusation against God, because he disregarded all these things, or made not that account of them which they expected.

Let us then remember, that the Jews were guilty of two errors; first, they presented to God an empty appearance for true humility, for they were no doubt swollen with false confidence though they pretended to be abject and low before God; secondly, they claimed for themselves more than what was just, for though there may have been some apparent modesty and submissiveness in them, yet they exceeded due limits; for we always swell with presumption, at least we are never thoroughly freed from it. They then falsely pretended, that they walked lowly and dejectedly before God. It follows ---

Malichi 3:15

15. And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered.

15. Et nunc nos beatos dicimus superbos; etiam aedificantur qui faciunt iniquitatem, etiam tentant Deum et liberantur.

This verse is connected with the last, for the force of these words, ``We have walked sorrowfully before God and have carefully kept his precepts,'' does not fully appear, except this clause be added --- that they saw in the meantime that the proud flourished and had their delights, as though they said, ``We strive to deserve well of God by our services; he overlooks all our religious acts, and pours as it were all his bounty on our enemies, who are yet ungodly and profane.'' We now see how these verses are connected together, for God disappointed the Jews of the reward they thought due to them, and in the meantime bestowed on the impious and undeserving his kindness.

To call any one blessed, as we have before seen, is to acknowledge that God's blessing is upon him, according to what God had promised, ``Behold, all nations shall call thee blessed.'' So a changed state of things is here set forth, for the Jews, when they were miserable, called others blessed; not that they willingly declared this, but envy forced them to complain of the cheerful and hamper state of the Gentiles, who were yet ungodly. And by the proud they meant all the despisers of God, a part being mentioned for the whole; and they were so called, because faith alone humbles us. Many unbelievers are indeed lauded for their humility, but no one becomes really humble without being first emptied of every conceit as to his own virtues. Some rise up against God, and rob him of what is his own, and then it is no wonder that they act insolently towards their neighbors, since they dare even to raise up their horns against God himself. And in many parts of Scripture the unbelieving are called proud,

in order that we may know that we cannot be formed and habituated to humility until we submit to the yoke of God, so that he may turn us wherever he wishes, and until we cast aside every confidence in ourselves. [417]

As well as, they said; for {גם}, gam, is here repeated, and must be rendered ``as well as,'' that is, ``All who do iniquity as well as all who tempt God, are built up and are delivered. In the first place what is general is stated, and then what is particular, and yet the Prophet speaks of the same persons, for he first calls God's despisers iniquitous, and he afterwards says, that the same tempted God, which is more special. The sum of the whole is, --- that God's favor was conspicuous towards the despisers of the law, for they lived prosperously, and were also delivered, and found God their helper in adversity.

The verb, to build, is taken in Hebrew in the sense of prospering, and is applied to many things. When therefore any one grows and increases in honors or in riches, when he accumulates wealth, or when he is raised as it were by degrees to a higher condition, he is said to be built up. It is also added that they were delivered, for it would not be enough to acquire much wealth, except aid from God comes in adversity, for no one, even the most fortunate, is exempt from every evil. Hence to building up the Prophet adds this second clause, --- that God delivered the wicked from all evils, as though he covered them under his shadow, and as though they were his clients. With regard to the second verb, when he says that the ungodly tempted God, it is, we know, the work of unbelief to contend with God. The Prophet used the same word shortly before, when he said, ``Prove me in this:'' but God then, after the manner of men, submitted to a trial; here, on the contrary, the Prophet condemns that insolence which very commonly prevails in the world, when men seek to confine God, and to impose on him a law, and to inquire into his judgements: it is in short as though they had a right to prescribe to him according to their own caprice, so that he should not do this or that, and which if he did, to call on him to plead his own cause. We now then perceive what it is to prove or tempt God. It follows ---

Malachi 3:16

16. Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name.

16. Tunc loqunti sunt timentes Iehovam quisque ad socium suum; et attendit Iehova, et audivit; et scriptus est liber memoriae (vel, memorialis) coram facie ejus pro timentibus Iehovam, et cogitantibus de nomine ejus, (vel, in pretio habentibus nomen ejus.)

In this verse the Prophet tells us that his doctrine had not been without fruit, for the faithful had been stimulated, so that they animated one another, and thus restored each other to a right course. They who explain the words --- that the faithful spoke, indefinitely, pervert the meaning of the Prophet, and they also suppress the particle {אז}, az, then. The very subject proves that a certain time is denoted, as

[417] Leigh says, that the verb, from which the word rendered here “proud” is derived, meand to deal arrogantly, insolently, to be lifted up with swelling pride. It is applied in Psalm 124:5, to the swelling waves of the sea. To be insolent or presumptuous against God seems to be intended here. — Ed.

though the Prophet had said, that before he addressed the people and vehemently reproved their vices, there was much indifference among them, but that at length the faithful were awakened.

We are hence taught that we are by nature slothful and tardy, until God as it were plucks our ears; there is therefore need of warnings and stimulants. But let us also learn to attend to what is taught, lest it should become frigid to us. We ought at the same time to observe, that all were not moved by the Prophet's exhortations to repent, but those who feared God: the greater part no doubt securely went on in their vices, and even openly derided the Prophet's teaching. As then the truth profited only those who feared God, let us not wonder that it is despised at this day by the people in general; for it is given but to a few to obey God's word; and the conversion of the heart is the peculiar gift of the Holy Spirit. There is therefore no reason for pious teachers to despond, when they do not see their doctrine received everywhere and by all, of when they see that but a few make any progress in it; but let them be content, when the Lord blesses their labor and renders it profitable and fruitful to some, however small their number may be.

But the Prophet not only says that individuals were Touched with repentance, but also that they spoke among themselves; [418] by which he intimates, that our efforts ought to be extended to our brethren: and it is an evidence of true repentance, when each one endeavors as much as he can to unite to himself as many friends as possible, so that they may with one consent return to the way from which they had departed, yea, that they may return to God whom they had forsaken. This then is what we are to understand by the words spoken mutually by God's servants, which the Prophet does not express.

He says that Jehovah attended and heard, and that a book of remembrance was written before him. He proves here that the faithful had not in vain repented, for God became a witness and a spectator: and this part is especially worthy of being noticed; for we lose not our labor when we turn to God, because he will receive us as it were with open arms.

Our Prophet wished especially to show, that God attended; and hence he uses three forms of speaking. One word would have been enough, but he adds two more; and this is particularly emphatical, that there was a book of remembrance written. His purpose then was by this multiplicity of words to give greater encouragement to the faithful, that they might be convinced that their reward would be certain as soon as they devoted themselves to God, for God would not be blind to their piety.

The Prophet at the same time seems to point it out as something miraculous, that there were found then among the people any who were yet capable of being healed,

[418] Or, "talked together:" the verb is in Niphal, as we find it in verse 13. The good as well as the wicked talked together, mutually conversed, or talked often. The Targum renders it, "They multiplied speech;" our version introduces "often." Newcome give the simple word, "spake;" and Henderson has "conversed." If the verb in Niphal has a frequentative meaning, and not a reciprocal, our version is right, "spake often." Then it should be so rendered in verse 13. It is to be observed that what the ungodly often spoke or said, is mentioned, but not the frequent or the mutual converse of the godly. Jerome imagines it to have been a defense of God's dealings with them. The words which follow, "Every one to his neighbor," seem to favor the opinion that speaking "often" is the real meaning of the verb here used; for the fact of speaking "together" is conveyed in these words: and yet speaking "together" is more suitable in the thirteenth verse. — Ed.

since so much wickedness had prevailed among the people, nay, had become hardened, as we have seen, to an extreme obstinacy; for there was nothing sound or upright either among the priests or the common people. As then they had long indulged with loose reins in all kinds of wickedness, it was incredible, that any could be converted, or that any piety and fear of God could be found remaining among them. This then is the reason why the Prophet says, that God attended and heard, and that a book was written; he speaks as though of a thing unusual, which could not but appear as a miracle in a state of things so confused and almost past hope. The design of the whole is to show, that the faithful ought not to doubt, but that their repentance is ever regarded by God, and especially when the utmost despair lays hold on their minds; for it often distresses the godly, when they see no remedy to be hoped for; then they think that their repentance will be useless: hence it is that the Prophet dwells so much on this point, in order that they might feel assured, that though no hope appeared, yet repentance availed for their salvation before God; and for this reason he adds, that this book was written for those who feared God [419]

With regard to the participle {חשבים}, cheshebim, the verb {חשב}, chesheb, means to reckon or to count, and also to think; and so some render it here, ``Who think of his name.'' And doubtless this is a rare virtue; for we see that forgetfulness easily creeps over us, which extinguishes the fear of God, so that we take such a liberty, as though they who forget God can sin with impunity: and hence it is said often in the Psalms, that the fear of God is before the eyes of the godly. This seems frigid at the first view; but he who remembers God has made much progress in his religious course; and we also find by experience that the mere remembrance of God, when real, is a bridle to us sufficiently strong to restrain all our depraved lusts. But as the price of a thing is attained by reckoning, the other version is appropriate, --- that the faithful value or esteem the name of God. [420] It follows ---

Malachi 3:17

17. And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.

17. Et erunt mihi, dicit Iehova exercituum, die illa qua ego facio, peculium; et parcam eis (super eos ad verbum) sicuti parcit vir suo filio, qui obsequitur ei.

He shows by the issue itself why a book of remembrance was written --- that God in due time would again undertake to defend and cherish his Church. Though then for a time many troubles were to be sustained by the godly, yet the Prophet shows that they did not in vain serve God; for facts would at length prove that their obedience has not been overlooked. But the two things which he mentions ought to be noticed; for a book of remembrance is first written before God, and then God

[419] In the "book of remembrance" we have an allusion to the records kept by kings. See Ezra 6:2,3; Esther 6:1,2. — Ed.

[420] This latter meaning is the true one. The word never means what is understood by "thinking on" a thing; but to count, to reckon, and hence to contrive, to plan, to devise, and hence also to make an account of, to value, to regard. To make an account of and thus to regard and reverence, is its meaning here. The whole verse may be thus rendered, — 16. Then spake they often who feared Jehovah, Every one to his neighbor; And hearken did Jehovah and hear; And there was written a book of remembrance before him, For those who feared Jehovah, Yea, for those who regarded his name. The last two lines describe the same persons,—they feared God and valued and regarded his name or his authority. — Ed.

executes what is written in the book. When therefore we seem to serve God in vain, let us know that the obedience we render to him will come to an account, and that he is a just Judge, though he may not immediately stretch forth his hand to us.

In the first place then the Prophet testifies that God knows what is done by every one; and in the second place he adds that he will in his own time perform what he has decreed. So also in judgements, he preserves the same order in knowing and in executing. For when he said to Abraham that the cry of Sodom came up to heaven, (Genesis 18:20,) how great and how supine was the security of the city. How wantonly and how savagely they despised every authority to the very last moment! But God had long before ascended his tribunal, and had taken an account of their wickedness. So also in the case of the godly, though he seems to overlook their obedience, yet he has not his eyes closed, or his ears closed, for there is a book of memorial written before him.

Hence he says, They shall be in the day I make. The verb is put by itself, but we may easily learn from the context that it refers to the restoration of the Church. In the day then in which I shall make, that is, complete what I have already said; for he had before promised to restore the Church. As then he speaks of a known thing, he says shortly, In the day I shall make, or complete my work, they shall be to me a peculiar treasure [421] This phrase confirms what I have already stated --- that God has his season and opportunity, in order that there may be no presumption in us to prescribe to him the time when he is to do this or that. In the day then when he shall gather his Church, it will then appear that we are his peculiar treasure.

Thus the Prophet in these words exhorts us to patience, lest it should be grievous to us to groan under our burden, and not to find God's help according to our wishes, and lest also it should be grievous to us to bear troubles in common with the whole Church. Were one or two of us subject to the cross, and doomed to sorrow and grief in this world, our condition might seem hard; but since the godly, from the first to the last, are made to be our associates in bearing the cross of Christ, and to be conformed to his example, there is no reason for any one of us to shun his lot; for we are not better than the holy patriarchs, apostles, and so many of the faithful whom God has exercised with the cross. Since then the common restoration of the Church is here set before us, let us know that a reason is here given for constancy and fortitude; for it would be disgraceful for us to faint, when we have so many leaders in this warfare, who by their examples stretch forth as it were their hands to us; for as Abraham, David, and other Patriarchs and Prophets, as well as Apostles, have suffered so many and so grievous troubles, ought not this fact to raise up our

[421] Such is the arrangement of the sentence as given in the Septuagint, the Targum, and by Jerome, and most interpreters. "The peculiar treasure" is connected with "they shall be to me," and not with the verb "make," as in our version, which is that of Jun. and Trem. The intervening clause, "In the day," etc., may be rendered in a way different. The verb "to make" means something to appoint, to ordain, to constitute. The following version of Newcome is no doubt the correct one — They shall be unto me, saith Jehovah of hosts, In the day which I shall appoint, a peculiar treasure. The "day" is again mentioned in the next chapter, verse 3, and the same words come after it, which ought to be rendered in the same way. Henderson's version is materially the same. The word rendered "jewels" in our version, is everywhere also rendered a peculiar treasure, or a special property. See Exodus 19:5; Deuteronomy 7:6. The common rendering of the Septuagint is either {περιποιησιν} --- a purchased acquisition, as here, or {περιουσιον} --- peculiar, special, as in Exodus 19:5. The latter is the word used here by Symmachus. --- Ed.

spirits? and if at any time our feet and our legs tremble, ought it not to be sufficient to strengthen us, that so many excellent chiefs and leaders invite us to persevere by their example? We then see that this has not been laid down for nothing, when I shall make, or complete my work.

By the words peculiar treasure, God intimates that the lot of the godly will be different from that of the world; as though he had said, ``Ye are now so mixed together, that they who serve me seem not to be peculiar any more than strangers; but they shall then be my peculiar treasure.'' This is to be taken, as I have already mentioned, for the outward appearance; for we know that we have been chosen by God, before the foundation of the world, for this end --- that we might be to him a peculiar treasure. But when we are afflicted in common with the wicked, or when we seem to be even rejected, and the ungodly, on the other hand, seem to have God propitious to them, then nothing seems less true than this promise. I therefore said that this ought to be referred to the outward appearance --- that the faithful are God's peculiar treasure, that they are valued by him, and that he shows to them peculiar love, as to his own inheritance.

And this mode of speaking occurs in many parts of scripture; for God is often said to repudiate his people; the word separation, or divorce, is often mentioned; he is said to have destroyed his inheritance. Grievous is the trial, when God cherishes as it were in his bosom the ungodly, and we at the same time are exposed to every kind of miser; but we see what happened to the ancient Church: let us then arm ourselves for this contest, and be satisfied with the inward testimony of the Spirit, though outward things do not prosper.

He adds, And I will spare them as a man spares, etc. He states here a promise which ought especially to be observed: it contains two clauses; the first is, that the Jews who remained alive would render obedience to God, by which they would prove themselves to be children indeed, and not in name only: and the second is, that God would forgive them, that is, that he would exercise pardon in receiving their services, which could not otherwise please him. And there is no doubt but that the Spirit of regeneration is included in the words, the son who serves him; not that the faithful addressed here were wholly destitute of the fear of God; but God promises an increase of grace, as though he had said, ``I will gather to myself the people who faithfully and sincerely worship me.'' Though then he speaks not here of the beginning of a religious and holy life, it is yet the same as though he had said, that the faithful would be under his government, that they might denote themselves to his service.

The second promise refers to another grace, --- that God in his mercy would approve of the obedience of the godly, though in itself unworthy to come to his presence. How necessary this indulgence is to us, they who are really and truly acquainted with the fear of God, fully know. The sophists daringly prattle about merits, and fill themselves and others with empty pride; but they who understand that no man can stand before God's tribunal, do not dream of any merits, nor do they believe that they can bring anything before God, by which they can conciliate his favor. Hence their only refuge is what the Prophet here teaches us, that God spares them.

And it must be observed, that the Prophet does not speak simply of the remission of sins: our salvation, we know, consists of two things --- that God rules us by his Spirit, and forms us anew in his own image through the whole course of our life, --- and also that he buries our sins. But the Prophet refers here to the remission of sins, of which we have need as to our good works; for it is certain, that even when we devote ourselves with all possible effort and zeal to God's service there is yet something always wanting. Hence it is that no work, however right and perfect before men, deserves this distinction and honor before God. It is therefore necessary, even when we strive our utmost to serve God, to confess that without his forgiveness whatever we bring deserves rejection rather than his favor. Hence the Prophet says, that when God is reconciled to us, there is no reason to fear that he will reject us, because we are not perfect; for though our works be sprinkled with many spots, they will yet be acceptable to him, and though we labor under many defects, we shall yet be approved by him. How so? Because he will spare us: for a father is indulgent to his children, and though he may see a blemish in the body of his son, he will not yet cast him out of his house; nay, though he may have a son lame, or squint-eyed, or singular for any other defect, he will yet pity him, and will not cease to love him: so also is the case with respect to God, who, when he adopts us as his children, will forgive our sins. And as a father is pleased with every small attention when he sees his son submissive, and does not require from him what he requires from a servant; so God acts; he repudiates not our obedience, however defective it may be. [422]

We hence see the design and meaning of the Prophet, --- that he promises pardon from God to the faithful, after having been reconciled to him, because they serve God as children willingly, --- and that God also, though their works are unworthy of his favor, will yet count them as acceptable, even through pardon, and not on the ground of merit or worthiness.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that as Satan strives to draw us away from every attention to true religion, when things in the world are in a state of disorder and confusion, --- O grant, that we may know that thou caress for us; and if we perceive not this by what we find in the world, may we rely on thy word, and doubt not but that thou ever watches over our safety; and being supported by this confidence, may we ever go on in the course of our calling: and as thou hast deigned to make us partakers of that evidence of thy favor, by which we know that we are reconciled to thee in thine only-begotten Son; and being thus made his members, may we never hesitate cheerfully to offer to thee our services, however defective they may he, since thou hast once promised to be a propitious Father to us, so as not rigidly to try what we offer to thee, but so graciously to accept it, that we may know that not only our sins, which justly deserve condemnation, are forgiven and remitted to us, but that thou also so bearest with our infirmities and our defects in our imperfect works, that we shall at length receive the reward which thou hast promised, and which we cannot attain through our merits, but through the sanctification of thy Spirit, and through

[422] There is something more in the verb here used than the idea of "sparing." When followed as here by {.{על it is commonly rendered by ``having pity or compassion.'' See Exodus 2:6; 1 Samuel 15:3; 2 Chronicles 36:17. It means a tender compassion or sympathy for another, such as felt towards a weak, helpless, or miserable object. --- Ed.

the sprinkling of the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Eighty-first

We saw in the last lecture that no works of the faithful please God, except through a gratuitous acceptance: it hence follows, that nothing can be ascribed to merits without derogating from the grace of Christ; for if the value of works depends on this, that God is our Father and is reconciled to us in Christ, nothing can be more absurd than to set up works, which ought to be subordinated to this paternal favor of God.

We now see how these two things harmonize --- that reward is promised to works, and that works themselves deserve nothing before God; for though God can justly reject them, he yet regards them as acceptable, because he forgives all their defects. Thus have we brief stated the reason why our works are approved by God; they are not so on account of any worthiness, but through his favor alone; for there is no work which would not on account of its imperfection be displeasing to God, were he to require that it should be according to the rule of his law. Hence God departs from his own law and turns to mercy, that he may regard works as acceptable, which otherwise could not, being defective, stand before his presence. It now follows ---

Malachi 3:18

18. Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.

18. Et convertemini, et videbitis inter justum et impium, inter servientem Deo et eum qui non servit ei.

This verse at the first view seems to be addressed to the faithful; for there never has been a turning as to the reprobate: but as the word has a wide meaning, the passage may be suitably applied to the whole people, according to what we find in Zechariah, ``They shall see him whom they have pierced;'' for we have said that this might be understood both of the good and of the bad. So also the whole people might be viewed as addressed in these words. But when we more minutely examine all circumstances, it seems that Malachi more particularly addressed the ungodly, and checked again their furious blasphemies; for we find almost the same sentiment expressed here, as when he said, ``The Lord whom ye expect shall come to his temple, and the angel of the covenant whom ye seek;'' and at the same time he showed that the coming of Christ, which they said was advancing too slowly, would not be such as they desired or looked for. ``Let not this delay,'' he says, ``be grievous to you; for everything terrible which his majesty possesses will be turned on your heads; for he will come as an angry judge and an avenger: ye therefore in vain hope for any comfort or alleviation from his presence.''

So also he says in this place, Ye shall see this difference between the just and the unjust; that is, ``Ye shall find that God does not sleep in heaven, when the ungodly grow wanton on the earth and abandon themselves to every kind of wickedness: experience then will at length teach you, that men shall not thus with impunity become insolent against God, but that all your wickedness must come to a reckoning.'' When therefore he says, that they would find the difference between the godly and the ungodly, he means that they would find by the punishments which God would

inflict, that men are not permitted to indulge their own depraved desires, as though God slept in heaven, forgetful of his office. Their blasphemy was, ``In vain is God worshipped; what is the benefit? for we have kept his charge, and yet the proud are more happy than we are.'' As then they accused God of such a connivance, as though he disregarded and cast away his own servants, and showed favor to the wicked, Malachi returns them an answer and says, ``Ye shall see how much the good differ from the evil; God indeed spares the wicked, but he will at length rise to judgement, and come armed suddenly upon them, and then ye shall know that all the deeds of men are noticed by him, and that wickedness shall not go unpunished, though God for a time delays his vengeance.''

We now then perceive the Prophet's meaning --- that the ungodly who clamor against God, as though he made no account either of the just or of the unjust, shall find, even to their own loss, that he is one who punishes wickedness.

As to the verb turn, I have already said that it has a wide meaning, and does not always mean repentance or the renovation of man: it may therefore be taken as signifying only a different state of things; as though he had said, ``The dice shall be turned, and such will be your condition when God shall begin to execute his judgement, that he will then manifestly show that he has not forgotten his office, though he does not immediately hasten to execute his judgements.'' Ye shall return then and see. Yet if any one prefers to regard returning as the feeling of God's judgements, by which even the ungodly shall be touched, though without repentance, the view will not be unsuitable, and I am disposed to embrace it, that is, that the Lord will shake off the stupidity in which they were sunk, and will correct their madness, so that they will not dare to vomit forth so insolently their blasphemies, as they had been wont to do: Ye then shall return; that is, ``I will make my judgement known to you, and ye shall not rush on headlong as wild beasts, for being taught by facts, ye shall learn the difference between the good and the bad.'' [423]

The just, and he who serves God, mean the same person. We hence learn that there is no justice where there is no obedience rendered to God. The first thing then in a good and an upright life, is to serve God; for it would be but of little benefit to be harmless towards men, when his right is denied: and we know that God is not rightly served but according to what his law prescribes. We must then always come to this, --- that men must obey God, if they desire to form their life aright. Now follows ---

Chapter 4

[423] Both Newcome and Henderson regard this verb as used here adverbially. "And ye shall again discern, or, see the difference, between the righteous and the wicked." The Septuagint give it as a verb "{ἐπιστραφήσεσθε}---ye shall return.'' The same is done by Jerome and Marckius; and the latter gives a similar view of its import to what is given here. Dathius takes it meaning to be the same, ``And being better taught (or instructed --- medius edocti) ye shall then understand how great is the difference between the godly and the ungodly, between the worshipper of God and his despiser.'' --- Ed.

Malachi 4

Malachi 4:1

1. For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.

1. Quia ecce dies venit ardens tanquam clibanus; et erunt omnes superbi et omnes facientes iniquitatem stipula; et inflammabit eos dies qui venturus est, dicit Iehova exercituum, qui non relinquet illis radicem et ramum.

He confirms the previous verse, for he denounces ruin on all the reprobate and the despisers of God; and he also confirms what I have mentioned, --- that he sets this threatening in opposition to the slanders which they commonly uttered against God, as though he had ceased to discharge his office as a Judge. Though indeed he speaks in the third person, yet he is not deficient in force when he says,

Behold, come shall the day, which shall consume all the ungodly, as a burning oven the stubble. The comparison is very common which the Prophet uses, when he says, that the ungodly shall be like stubble: I trill not therefore quote passages which must be well known, and they are so many that there is no need to adduce here either two or three of them. The vengeance of God is also often compared to fire and to a flame; and we know how fierce and how dreadful an element is fire, when it lays hold on wood or some other dry material. Hence according to the common usage of Scripture, the Prophet says, that the day of the Lord would be like an oven, and that the ungodly would be like stubble. The demonstrative particle, Behold, shows certainty, Behold, I come. The present time is put here for the future, a common thing in Hebrew. But the Prophet called the attention of the Jews as it were to what was present, that his prophecy might not appear doubtful, and that they might understand that God's vengeance was not far distant, but already suspended over their heads.

There is however a question as to the day which he points out. The greater part

think that the Prophet speaks of the last coming of Christ, which seems not to me probably. It is indeed true that these and similar expressions, which everywhere occur in Scripture, have not their full accomplishment in this world; but God so suspends his judgements, as yet never to withhold from giving evidences of them that the godly may have some props to their faith: for if God gave no specimen or proof of his providence, it would immediately occur to our minds, that there is to be no judgement; but he sets before us some examples, that we may learn that he will some time be the judge of the world. It seems then to me more probable, that the Prophet speaks here of the renovation of the Church: for the wrath of God was then at length more kindled against the Jews, when they had alienated themselves from Christ; for their last hope and their last remedy in their evils was the aid of the Redeemer, and it was for the rejection of his favor that the Jews had to feel the dreadful punishment of their ingratitude. No sin could have been more atrocious than to have rejected the offered favor, in which their happiness and that of the whole world consisted. When the Prophet then says, that the day would come, be refers I think to the first coming of Christ; for the Jews made a confident boast of the coming of a Redeemer, and he gives them this answer --- that the day of the Lord would come, such as they did not imagine, but a day which would wholly consume them, according to a quotation we have made from another Prophet,

``What will be the day of the Lord to you? that day will not be light, but darkness, a thick darkness and not brightness.'' (Amos 5:18.)

The day of the Lord will be an unhappy event to you, as though one escaped from the jaws of a lion, and fell at home on a serpent. So in this place he says that the day would come, which would consume them like an oven.

He says that all the proud and the workers of iniquity would be like stubble. He repeats their words, but somewhat ironically; for when they had said before that the proud were happy, they regarded themselves as being far from being such characters. Isaiah also in like manner condemned hypocrites, because they exposed to contempt their own brethren; for the worshippers of God were at that time in great reproach among the Jews; yea, hypocrites disdainfully treated the godly and the upright, as though they were the dregs and filth of the people. So also they said, ``Behold, we are constrained, not without great sorrow, to look on the happiness of the ungodly; for the proud and the despisers of God enjoy prosperity, they live in pleasures.'' The Prophet now answers them ironically and says, ``Ye shall see the difference which ye so much wish; for God will consume the proud and the ungodly.'' He says this of them; but it is, as I have stated, as though he had said, ``When your mask is taken away, Ye shall see where impiety is, that it is even in you; and therefore ye shall suffer the punishment which you have deserved.'' This is the return which he had before mentioned: for though the ungodly do not seriously and sincerely return to God, yet they are forced, willing or unwilling, to acknowledge their impiety when God constrains them. Hence after they had been constrained to examine their own life, God visited them with the punishment they most justly deserved, though judgement had been invoked by themselves.

He now adds, And it will leave neither root nor branch. He means here that their

ruin would be complete, as though he had said, that no residue of them would be found. As he had made them like stubble, so he mentions root and stalk; for branch is improper here, as he speaks of stubble, and branches belong to trees. The meaning, however, is not obscure, which is --- that such would be the consumption that nothing would remain. This, indeed, properly belongs to the last judgement; but, as I have said, this is no reason why God should not set before our eyes some evidences of that vengeance which awaits the ungodly, by which our faith may be more and more confirmed daily. [424]

With regard to God's name, which is mentioned twice, he reminds us that God does not execute his judgements in an even or a continued course, but that he has a fixed time, now for forbearance, then for vengeance, as it seems good to him. Whenever then the day of the Lord is mentioned in Scripture, let us know that God is bound by no laws, that he should hasten his work according to our hasty wishes; but the specific time is in his own power, and at his own will. On this subject I lightly touch only, because I have explained it more fully elsewhere. It follows ---

Malachi 4:2

2. But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.

2. Et orietur vobis timentibus nomen meum Sol justitiae, et sanitas in alis ejus; et exibitis et salietis quasi vituli saginae (vel, vituli pinguefacti.)

The Prophet now turns his discourse to the godly; and hence it appears more clearly that he has been hitherto threatening those gross hypocrites who arrogated sanctity to themselves alone, while yet they were continuing to provoke God's wrath; for he evidently addresses some different from those previously spoken of, when he says, Arise to you, etc.; he separates those who feared God, or the true servants of God, from that multitude with whom he has been hitherto contending. Arise, then, to you who fear my name, etc

There is to be noticed here a contrast; for the body of the people were infected as it were with a general contagion, but God had preserved a few uncontaminated. As then he had been hitherto contending with the greatest part of the people, so he now gathers as it were apart the chosen few, and promises to them Christ as the author of salvation. For the godly, we know, trembled at threatenings, and would have almost fainted, had not God mitigated them. Whenever he denounced vengeance on sinners, the greater part either mocked, or became angry, at least were not duly impressed. Thus it happens that while God is thundering, the ungodly go on securely in their sinful courses; but the godly tremble at a word, and would be altogether cast down, were not God to apply a remedy.

Hence our Prophet softens the severity of the threatening which we have observed; as though he had said, that he had not announced the coming of Christ as terrible for the purpose of filling pious souls with fear, (for it was not spoken to them,)

[424] Exceedingly forcible are the words of this verse — For behold the day! It comes burning like a furnace; And all the proud, and every worker of iniquity, shall be stubble; And burn them up shall the day that is coming, Saith Jehovah of hosts, So that not left to them shall be a root or a branch. Very many MS., have “workers” instead of “worker;” but it is of no consequence, as the singular is often used poetically for the plural. “Root” and “branch” is no doubt a proverbial phrase, including every thing. — Ed.

but only of terrifying the ungodly. The sum of the whole is briefly this --- ``Hearken ye,'' he says, ``who fear God; for I have a different word for you, and that is, that the Sun of righteousness shall arise, which will bring healing in its wings. Let those despisers of God then perish, who, though they carry on war with him, yet seek to have him as it were bound to them; but raise ye up your heads, and patiently look for that day, and with the hope of it calmly bear your troubles.'' We now understand the import of this verse.

There is indeed no doubt but that Malachi calls Christ the Sun of righteousness; and a most suitable term it is, when we consider how the condition of the fathers differed from ours. God has always given light to his Church, but Christ brought the full light, according to what Isaiah teaches us,

``On thee shall Jehovah arise,
and the glory of God shall be seen in thee.'' (Isaiah 60:1.)

This can be applied to none but to Christ. Again he says, ``Behold darkness shall cover the earth,'' etc.; ``shine on thee shall Jehovah;'' and farther,

``There shall be now no sun by day nor moon by night; but God alone shall give thee light.'' (Isaiah 60:19.)

All these words show that Sun is a name appropriate to Christ; for God the Father has given a much clearer light in the person of Christ than formerly by the law, and by all the appendages of the law. And for this reason also is Christ called the light of the world; not that the fathers wandered as the blind in darkness, but that they were content with the dawn only, or with the moon and stars. We indeed know how obscure was the doctrine of the law, so that it may truly be said to be shadowy. When therefore the heavens became at length opened and clear by means of the gospel, it was through the rising of the Sun, which brought the full day; and hence it is the peculiar office of Christ to illuminate. And on this account it is said in the first chapter of John, that he was from the beginning the true light, which illuminates every man that cometh into the world, and yet that it was a light shining in darkness; for some sparks of reason continue in men, however blinded they are become through the fall of Adam and the corruption of nature. But Christ is peculiarly called light with regard to the faithful, whom he delivers from the blindness in which all are involved by nature, and whom he undertakes to guide by his Spirit.

The meaning then of the word sun, when metaphorically applied to Christ, is this, --- that he is called a sun, because without him we cannot but wander and go astray, but that by his guidance we shall keep in the right way; and hence he says,

``He who follows me walks not in darkness.'' (John 8:12.)

But we must observe that this is not to be confined to the person of Christ, but extended to the gospel. Hence Paul says,

``Awake thou who sleepest, and rise from darkness,
and Christ shall illuminate thee.'' (Ephesians 5:14)

Christ then daily illuminates us by his doctrine and his Spirit; and though we see him not with our eyes, yet we find by experience that he is a sun.

He is called the sun of righteousness, either because of his perfect rectitude, in whom there is nothing defective, or because the righteousness of God is conspicuous

in him: and yet, that we may know the light, derived from him, which proceeds from him to us and irradiates us, we are not to regard the transient concerns of this life, but what belongs to the spiritual life. The first thing is, that Christ performs towards us the office of a sun, not to guide our feet and hands as to what is earthly, but that he brings light to us, to show the way to heaven, and that by its means we may come to the enjoyment of a blessed and eternal life. We must secondly observe, that this spiritual light cannot be separated from righteousness; for how does Christ become our sun? It is by regenerating us by his Spirit into righteousness, by delivering us from the pollutions of the world, by renewing us after the image of God. We now then see the import of the word righteousness. [425]

He adds, And healing in its wings. He gives the name of wings to the rays of the sun; and this comparison has much beauty, for it is taken from nature, and most fitly applied to Christ. There is nothing, we know, more cheering and healing than the rays of the sun; for ill-savor would soon overwhelm us, even within a day, were not the sun to purge the earth from its dregs; and without the sun there would be no respiration. We also feel a sort of relief at the rising of the sun; for the night is a kind of burden. When the sun sets, we feel as it were a heaviness in all our members; and the sick are exhilarated in the morning and experience a change from the influence of the sun; for it brings to us healing in its wing. But the Prophet has expressed what is still more, --- that a clear sun in a serene sky brings healing; for there is an implied opposition between a cloudy or stormy time and a clear and bright season. During time of serenity we are far more cheerful, whether we be in health or in sickness; and there is no one who does not derive some cheerfulness from the serenity of the heavens: but when it is cloudy, even the most healthy feels some inconvenience.

According to this view Malachi now says, that there would be healing in the wings of Christ, inasmuch as many evils were to be borne by the true servants of God; for if we consider the history of those times, it will appear that the condition of that people was most grievous. He now promises a change to them; for the restoration of the Church would bring them joy. See then in what way he meant there would be healing in the wings of Christ; for the darkness would be dissipated, and the heavens would be free from clouds, so as to exhilarate the minds of the godly.

By calling the godly those who fear God, he adopts the common language of Scripture; for we have said that the chief part of righteousness and holiness consists in the true worship of God: but something new is here expressed; for this fear is what peculiarly belongs to true religion, so that men submit to God, though he is invisible,

[425] There is something incongruous in the expression, "the Sun of righteousness." Hence some have considered that {צדקה means here benignity or beneficence. ``Righteousness,'' says Leigh, ``in a special sense, in the Hebrew and the Oriental tongues, signifieth beneficence or bounty;'' and he refers to Mede on Psalm 112:6. It is evidently added as descriptive of what the sun is, and used as the case often is in Hebrew, instead of an adjective. Now a righteous sun would not be proper, but a benignant or a beneficient sun would convey a suitable idea. The real meaning would then be conveyed by such a vision as the following, --- But arise for you, who fear my name, Shall a beneficient sun, With healing in its beams, And ye shall go forth and leap Like calves freed from the stall. ``Understand,'' says Marckius, ``by righteousness either benignity and beneficence, or truth, or complete constancy, or the manifold righteousness of God, which shone in him, or incontaminated uprightness and rectitude which appeared in him both as God and man, or as Mediator, which so shines, that he diffuses it to all the faithful in the gifts of justification and sanctification.'' Jerome's exposition is, that Christ is called the Sun of righteousness, because he determines all things justly, and reveals, discovers what is good and what is evil, what is virtuous and what is vicious. The pronoun affixed to ``wings,'' or beams, or rays, is feminine, which shows the gender of ``sun,'' ;{שמש} but ``its'' is the most appropriate rendering. He or she is everything in Hebrew, and it is in so Welsh. --- Ed.

though he does not address them face to face, though he does not openly show his hand armed with scourges. When therefore men of their own accord reverence the glory of God, and acknowledge that the world is governed by him, and that they are under his authority, this is a real evidence of true religion: and this is what the Prophet means by name. Hence they who fear the name of God, desire not to draw him down from heaven, nor seek manifest signs of his presence, but suffer their faith to be thus tried, so that they adore and worship God, though they see him not face to face, but only through a mirror and that darkly, and also through the displays of his power, justice, and other attributes, which are evident before our eyes.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast appointed thine only-begotten Son to be like a sun to us, we may not be blind, so as not to see his brightness; and that since he is pleased to guide us daily into the way of salvation, may we follow him and never be detained by any of the impediments of this world, so as not to pursue after that celestial life to which thou invitest us; and that as thou hast promised that he is to come and gather us into the eternal inheritance, may we not in the meantime grow wanton, but on the contrary watch with diligence and be ever attentively looking for him; and my we not reject the favor which thou hast been pleased to offer us in him, and thus grow torpid in our dregs, but on the contrary be stimulated to fear thy none and truly to worship thee, until we shall at length obtain the fruit of our faith and piety, when he shall appear again for our final redemption, even that sun which has already appeared to us, in order that we might not remain involved in darkness, but hold on our way in the midst of darkness, even the way which leads us to heaven. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Eighty-second

Malachi, after having said that the Sun of righteousness would arise on the Jews, now adds that it would be for their joy, for as sorrow lays hold on the faithful when they are without Christ, or when they think him far removed from them, so his favor is their chief happiness and real joy. Hence the angel when he made known to the shepherds that Christ was born, thus introduces his message,

``Behold, I declare to you great joy.'' (Luke 2:10.)

Now though the comparison might seem rather unnatural, yet it was not without reason that the Prophet said that the Jews would be like fattened calves, for the change of which he speaks was incredible; hence it was necessary that the subject should be stated in a very homely manner, that they might entertain hope.

There is in the words going forth, an implied contrast, for anxiety had long held them as it were captives, but now they were to go forth and be at liberty, according to what takes place when things change for the better; we then openly declare our joy to one another, and we seek as it were a wide place for giving vent to our feelings. We now see why the Prophet says that the Jews would go forth: they had been before confined as it were within narrow limits, but God would now give them occasion for rejoicing, according to what Paul says,

``Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.''

(2 Corinthians 3:17). [426]

It follows ---

Malachi 4:3

3. And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the LORD of hosts.

3. Et pessundabitis impios, quia erunt pulvis sub plantis pedum vestrorum, in die qua ego facio, (alii vertunt, quam ego facio,) dicit Iehova exercituum.

When God promises redemption to his Church, he usually mentions what is of an opposite character, even the destruction and ruin of his enemies, and he does this on purpose lest envy should annoy or harass the faithful, while seeing the ungodly prosperous and happy. So also in this place Malachi says, that the ungodly would be trodden under foot by the faithful like the dust; and he says this lest the elect, while lying prostrate under the feet of their enemies and proudly trampled upon by them, should succumb under their troubles; but they were to look for what the Prophet declares here, for they were not only to be raised up by the hand of God, but were also to be superior to their enemies, and be enabled in their turn to suppress their pride: in short, he means that they were to be raised above all the height of the world.

At the same time, God does not allow his children cruelly to seek vengeance, for he would have them to be endued with meekness, so as not to cease to do good to the wicked and to pray for them, though they may have been unjustly treated by them. But, as I have already said, he meant here to obviate an evil which is natural to us all, for we are apt to despond when our enemies exult over us, and rage against us. Lest then their temporary success and prosperity should deject our minds, God brings a remedy, and strengthens our patience by this consideration, --- that the state of things will shortly be changed, so that we shall triumph over the ungodly, who thought us to have been undone a hundred times; God will indeed visit them with extreme shame, because they not only fatuitously boast of their unjust deeds, but also raise up their horns against him.

Let us proceed; he says, In the day in which I make [427] He again restrains their desires, that they might not with too much haste look forward, but wait for the day prefixed by the Lord. We indeed know how great is the importunity of men as to their wishes, and how ardently they seek their accomplishment unless God checks them. Whenever then we speak of the destruction of our enemies, let us remember that we ought to regard the day of the Lord, in which he purposes to execute his judgement. Some, as I have said, give a different version, but the one I have given

[426] Newcome's version of the last line is as follows — And ye shall go forth and thrive as bullocks of the stall. Henderson's is — And ye shall go forth and leap as calves of the stall. The latter part is rendered by the Septuagint "Ye shall leap (or frisk — {σκιρτήσετε}) like calves let loose from bonds." This conveys the idea, for ,{פשח} means first to spread, to be diffused, and then to range at large, to leap, to frisk. The context favors this view: they would go forth, that is, from confinement to the fields, and leap like calves of the stall, or from the stall, which are tied up during the night but are let loose when the sun arises, and allowed to range at large in the field. To apply this as a prophecy to the escape of the Christians from Jerusalem when destroyed by the Romans, has nothing in the context to justify it, but everything to the contrary. The effect here produced is ascribed to the influence of the Sun of righteousness, and it is exhilarating and joyful, and followed, as it appears from the next verse, by the subjugation of the wicked. Calvin's view is consistent with the whole tenor of the passage. --- Ed.

[427] See note on Malachi 3:17. — Ed.

is the most probable, and is also more generally approved. It now follows ---

Malachi 4:4

4. Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments.

4. Memores estote legis Mosis servi mei, quam mandavi ei in Horeb ad totum Israelem, (nempe,) statuta et judicia, (vel, statutorum et judiciorum.)

This passage has not been clearly and fully explained, because interpreters did not understand the design of Malachi nor consider the time. We know that before the coming of Christ there was a kind of silence on the part of God, for by not sending Prophets for a time, he designed to stimulate as it were the Jews, so that they might with greater ardor seek Christ. Our Prophet was amongst the very last. As then the Jews were without Prophets, they ought more diligently to have attended to the law, and to have taken a more careful heed to the doctrine of religion contained in it. This is the reason why he now bids them to remember the law of Moses; as though he had said, ``Hereafter shall come the time when ye shall be without Prophets, but your remedy shall be the law; attend then carefully to it, and beware lest you should forget it.'' For men, as soon as God ceases to speak to them even for the shortest time, are carried away after their own inventions, and are ever inclined to vanity, as we abundantly find by experience. Hence Malachi, in order to keep the Jews from wandering, and from thus departing from the pure doctrine of the law, reminds them that they were faithfully and constantly to remember it until the Redeemer came.

If it be asked why he mentions the law only, the answer is obvious, because that saying of Christ is true, that the law and the Prophets were until John. (Matthew 3:13.) It must yet be observed, that the prophetic office was not separated from the law, for all the prophecies which followed the law were as it were its appendages; so that they included nothing new, but were given that the people might be more fully retained in their obedience to the law. Hence as the Prophets were the interpreters of Moses, it is no wonder that their doctrine was subjected, or as they commonly say, subordinated to the law. The object of the Prophet was to make the Jews attentive to that doctrine which had been delivered to them from above by Moses and the Prophets, so as not to depart from it even in the least degree; as though he had said, ``God will not now send to you different teachers in succession; there is enough for your instruction in the law: there is no reason on this account that you should change anything in the discipline of the Church. Though God by ceasing to speak to you, may seem to let loose the reins, so as to allow every one to stray and wander in uncertainty after his own imaginations, it is yet not so; for the law is sufficient to guide us, provided we shake not off its yoke, nor through our ingratitude bury the light by which it directs us.''

He calls it the law of Moses, not because he was its author, but its minister, as also Paul calls the gospel ``my gospel,'' because he was its minister and preacher. At the same time God claims to himself the whole authority, by adding that Moses was his savant: we hence conclude that he brought nothing of himself; for the word servant is not to be confined to his vocation only, but also to his fidelity in executing his office. God then honored Moses with this title, not so much for his own sake, as

in order to give sanction to his law, that no one might think that it was a doctrine invented by man. [428] He expresses the same thing still more clearly by saying, that he had committed the law to him on Horeb; for this clause clearly asserts that Moses had faithfully discharged his office of a servant; for he brought nothing but what had been committed to him from above, and he delivered it, as they say, from hand to hand. Many give this version, ``To whom I committed, in the valley of Horeb, statutes and judgements;'' but I approve of the other rendering --- that God makes himself here the author of the law, that all the godly might reverently receive it as coming from him. Horeb is Sinai; but they who describe these places say, that a part of the mountain towards the east is called Horeb, and that the other towards the west is called Sinai; but it is still the same mountain.

By saying To all Israel, or to the whole of Israel, he confirms what I have already said --- that he had committed to them the law: that the Jews might be the more touched, he expressly says, that the law was given to them, and that this was a singular privilege with which God had favored them, according to what is said in Psalm 147:20,

``He has not done so to other nations, nor has he manifested to them his judgements.''

For the nations had not been laid under such obligations as the Jews, to whom God had given his law as a peculiar treasure to his own children. And that no one might claim an exemption, he says, to the whole of Israel; as though he had said, ``Neither the learned nor the unlearned, neither the rulers nor the common people, can have any excuse, except they all with the greatest care attend to the law, yea, all from the least to the greatest.''

What follows may admit of two explanations: for {חוקים}, chukim, and {משפטים}, meshephethim, may be referred to the verb {זכרו}, zacaru, remember; but as he says Which I have committed, we may take statutes and judgements as explanatory. As to the subject itself, it signifies but little which view we may adopt. There is no doubt but that God by these terms commends his law for its benefits; as though he had said, ``The law includes what the Jews ought rightly to observe, even statutes and judgements.'' We know that other terms are used in Scripture, such as {פקודים}, pekudim, precepts; {מצותים}, metsutim, commandments; and {עדותים}, odutim, testimonies; but here the Prophet is content brief to remind the Jews that their ingratitude would be less excusable if they departed from the law of God, for this would be openly to reject statutes and judgements; and this is what I have stated, that they were here taught by the Prophet that the doctrine of the law is profitable, in order that they might attend to it more willingly. [429] It follows ---

Malachi 4:5

5. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:

[428] "Observe here," says Henry, "the honorable mention that is made of Moses, the first writer in the Old Testament, by Malachi the last writer." — Ed.

[429] The first word, "statutes," {,{חקים means, according to Marckius, the moral and the ceremonial laws; and the second, ``judgments,'' ,{משפטים} the civil or judicial laws. We may consider ``law'' at the beginning of the verse as a general term, comprehending the whole of what was delivered to Moses; and ``statutes'' and ``judgments'' as explanatory of what it was. The Septuagint render the first ``precepts --- {προσταγματα}.'' --- Ed.

5. Ecce ego mitto vobis Eliam prophetam antequam veniat dies Iehovae magnus et terribilis.

The Prophet continues the same subject; for having testified to the Jews, that though God would for a time suspend the course of prophetic teaching, they yet had in the law what was sufficient for salvation, he now promises the renovation of the Church; as though he had said, ``The Lord will again unexpectedly utter his voice after a long silence.'' Isaiah speaks on the same subject, prophesying of the return of the people, when he says,

``Comfort ye, comfort my people, will our God say.'' (Isaiah 40:11)

There is an emphatic import in the use of the future tense. So also in this passage, the Prophet declares that prophetic teaching would be again renewed, that when God showed mercy to his people, he would open his mouth, and show that he had been silent, not because he intended to forsake his people, but as we have said, for another end. At the same time he shows that the time would come, when his purpose was to confirm and seal all the prophecies by his only-begotten Son.

This passage has fascinated the Jews so as to think that men rise again; and their resurrection is, --- that the souls of men pass into various bodies three or four times. There is indeed such a delirious notion as this held by that nation! We hence see how great is the sottishness of men, when they become alienated from Christ, who is the light of the world and the Sun of Righteousness, as we have lately seen. There is no need to disprove an error so palpable.

But Christ himself took away all doubt on this point, when he said, that John the Baptist was the Elijah, who had been promised; (Matthew 11:10:) and the thing itself proves this, had not Christ spoken on the subject. And why John the Baptist is called Elijah, I shall explain in a few words. What some say of zeal, I shall say nothing of; and many have sought other likenesses, whom I shall neither follow nor blame. But this likeness seems to me the most suitable of all, --- that God intended to raise up John the Baptist for the purpose of restoring his worship, as formerly he had raised up Elijah: for at the time of Elijah, we know, that not only the truth was corrupted and the worship of God vitiated, but that also all religion was almost extinct, so that nothing pure and sound remained. At the coming of Christ, though the Jews did not worship idols, but retained some outward form of religion, yet the whole of their religion was spurious, so that that time may truly be compared, on account of its multiplied pollutions, to the age of Elijah. John then was a true successor of Elijah, nor were any of the Prophets so much like John as Elijah: hence justly might his name be transferred to him.

But someone may object and say, that he is here called a prophet, while he yet denied that he was a prophet: to this the answer is obvious, --- that John renounced the title of a prophet, that he might not hinder the progress of Christ's teaching: hence he means not in those words that he ran presumptuously without a call, but that he was content to be counted the herald of Christ, so that his teaching might not prevent Christ from being heard alone. Yet Christ declares that he was a prophet, and more than a prophet, and that because his ministry was more excellent than that of a prophet.

He says, Before shall come the day, great and terrible. The Prophet seems not here to speak very suitably of Christ's coming; but he now addresses the whole people; and as there were many slothful and tardy, who even despised the favor of God, and others insolent and profane, he speaks not so kindly, but mixes these threatenings. We hence perceive why the Prophet describes the coming of Christ as terrible; he does this, not because Christ was to come to terrify men, but on the contrary, according to what Isaiah says,

``The smoking flax he will not extinguish, the shaken reed he will not break; not heard will his voice be in the streets, nor will he raise a clamor.'' (Isaiah 42:3.)

Though then Christ calmly presents himself, as we have before observed, and as soon as he appears to us, he brings an abundant reason for joy; yet the perverseness of that people was such as to constrain the Prophet to use a severe language, according to the manner in which God deals daily with us; when he sees that we have a tasteless palate, he gives us some bitter medicine, so that we may have some relish for his favor. Whenever then we meet with any thing in Scripture tending to fill us with terror, let us remember that such thing is announced, because we are either deaf or slothful, or even rebellious, when God kindly invites us to himself. It follows ---

Malachi 4:6

6. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

6. Et convertet cor patrum ad filios, et cor filiorum ad patres; ne forte veniam et percutiam terram anathemate.

This verse may be viewed as containing a simple promise; but I prefer to regard it as including what is between an exhortation and a promise. The first thing is, that God reminds the Jews for what purpose he would send John, even to turn the hearts of men and to restore them to a holy unity of faith. It must therefore be noticed, that not only the Redeemer would come, but that after some intermission, as it has been said, had taken place, the doctrine of salvation would again have its own course, and would be commenced by John.

Yet the Prophet seems here to concede to men more than what is right, for the turning of the heart is God's peculiar work, and still more, it is more peculiarly his than his other works; and if no one can change a hair on the head of his brother, how can he renew his heart, so as to make him a new man? It is at the same time of more consequence to be regenerated than to be created and to be made only the inhabitants of this world. John then seems to be here too highly extolled, when the turning of the heart is ascribed to him. The solution of this difficulty may be easily given: when God thus speaks highly of his ministers, the power of his Spirit is not excluded; and he shows how great is the power of truth when he works through it by the secret influence of his Spirit. God sometimes connects himself with his servants, and sometimes separates himself from them: when he connects himself with them, he transfers to them what never ceases to dwell in him; for he never resigns to them his own office, but makes them partakers of it only. And this is the import of such expressions as these,

``Whose sins ye remit, they are remitted: whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven,'' (John 20:23;)

or when Paul says, that he had begotten the Corinthians, (1 Corinthians 2:15,) he did not claim for himself what he knew only belonged to God, but rather extolled the favor of God as manifested in his ministry, according to what he declares in another place,

``Not I, but the grace of God which was with me.''
(1 Corinthians 15:10.)

But when God separates himself from his ministers, nothing remains in them: ``He who plants is nothing,'' says Paul in another place,

``And he who waters is nothing, but God who gives the increase.'' (1 Corinthians 3:7.)

When then is it that teachers are co-workers with God? Even when God, ruling them by his Spirit, at the same time blesses their labor, so that it brings forth its fruit.

We now then see that this mode of speaking derogates nothing from God, that is, when the minister is said to turn the hearts of men; for as he implants nothing by his own influence, so God supplies what is necessary that he may fulfill his office.

By saying that he would turn the hearts of fathers to sons and of sons to fathers, [430] he points out not a simple union or consent, for men often unite together, and yet God reprobates and hates their union; but the Prophet here has in view the origin of the people, even Abraham and other holy patriarchs. Had he spoken of the Egyptians or the Assyrians, or some other nations, this turning would not have been so wonderful; but when he speaks of the holy and chosen race, it is no wonder that he mentions it as an instance of the ineffable kindness of God, that they were all to be gathered and restored from discord to unity, so as to become united in one faith.

Since their mutual consent is the subject, we must come to the fountain; for Malachi takes it for granted, that there was formerly true religion in that people, that the true worship of God prevailed among them, and that they were bound together by a sacred bond; but since in course of time various notions rose among them, yea, monstrous dotages, since sincerity had become wholly corrupted, he now recalls them to their first condition, so that sons might unite in sentiment with their fathers, and fathers also with their sons, and become one in that faith which had been delivered in the law.

Were any to object and say, that it was not reasonable that fathers should join themselves to their apostate sons, for this would be to approve of their defection, I answer, that there have been some converted young men who have shown the right way to their fathers, and have carried light before them. We indeed know that old men, as their are morose, not only reject what they hear from the young, but are

[430] Newcome's version is different, That he may convert the heart of the fathers together with the children, And the heart of the children together with their fathers. This is inconsistent with the passage partially quoted in Luke 1:17, and also with the Septuagint version, which is as follows — Who shall restore the heart of the father to the son, And the heart of a man to his neighbor. Internal discord was a prevailing evil among the Jews. What is here promised is union and concord as the effect of the ministry of the second Elijah; but it is announced in terms suitable to a single family. — Ed.

rendered more obstinate, because they are ashamed to learn. Such a dispute the Prophet bids to be dismissed, so that all might in their heart think only the same thing in the Lord.

Lest I come and smite the land with a curse. Here again the Prophet threatens the Jews, and indeed vehemently. He was constrained, as we have said, by necessity, for the torpor of that people was very great, and many of them were hardened in their perverseness. This is the reason why God now declares, that the Jews would not escape unpunished for despising the coming of Christ. And we are at the same time reminded how abominable in the sight of God is the ingratitude of not receiving his Son whom he sends to us. If we wish to derive benefit from what the Prophet teaches us, we ought especially to welcome Christ, while he so kindly calls us, yea, allures us to himself. But if the sloth of our flesh keeps us back, let even this threatening stimulate us; and as we learn that the sin of not embracing Christ when he offers himself to us, shall not go unpunished, let us struggle against our tardiness. At all events, let us take heed to kiss the Son, as in Psalm 2:12, we are exhorted to do.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that as nothing is omitted by thee to help us onward in the course of our faith, and as our sloth is such that we hardly advance one step though stimulated by thee, --- O grant, that we may strive to profit more by the various helps which thou hast provided for us, so that the Law, the Prophets, the voice of John the Baptist, and especially the doctrine of thine only-begotten Son, may more fully awaken us, that we may not only hasten to him, but also proceed constantly in our course, and persevere in it until we shall at length obtain the victory and the crown of our calling, as thou hast promised an eternal inherence in heaven to all who faint not but wait for the coming of the great Redeemer. --- Amen.

The End of all the Lectures of John Calvin on the Minor Prophets

{Τῳ} {Θεῳ} {δοξα}.

To God the Glory

Historical Scripture Translations

Translation: Habakkuk 1

chapter 1

1 the burden which Habakkuk the Prophet saw:

2 How long, Jehovah, shall I cry, And thou wilt not hear? And cry aloud to thee of violence, And thou wilt not save?

3 Why showest thou me iniquity, And makest me to see trouble? And why are violence and plunder in my sight, And he who excites strife and contention? (**19**)

4 Therefore dissolved is the law, And judgment does not continually go forth; For the wicked surrounds the just, Therefore go forth does perverted judgment. (**21**)

5 Look ye among the Gentiles and see, And be astonished, be astonished; For a work will I work in your days, Which ye will not believe, though it be told you:

6 For behold, I will rouse the Chaldeans---A nation bitter and hasty, Which shall march through the breadths of the earth, To possess habitations not its own:

7 Terrible and fearful shall it be, From itself shall its judgment and its dignity proceed:

8 And swifter than leopards shall be its horses, And fiercer than the evening wolves; And numerous shall be its horsemen; And its horsemen from far shall come, They shall fly as an eagle hastening to devour: (**30**)

9 The whole of it for booty shall come; The aspect of their faces will be like the east-wind; And he will gather captives like the sand:

10 And at kings he will laugh, And princes shall be a scorn to him: Every fortress he will scorn, He will gather dust and take it:

11 Then will he change his spirit, And pass through and act impiously, Ascribing this his power to his god. (**37**)

12 Art not thou, Jehovah, from the beginning, my God? My holy One! we shall not die: Thou, Jehovah, for judgment hast set him; And thou strong One, for correction hast established him.

13 Pure art thou of eyes, so as not to behold evil, And on trouble thou canst not

look:---Why lookest thou on transgressors, And takest no notice, when the ungodly devours One more righteous than himself?

14 Thou makest man like the fish of the sea, Like the reptile, which is without a leader: (**46**)

15 The whole by his hook will he draw up, Collect into his drag, and gather into his net; He will therefore rejoice and exult: (**48**)

16 Hence sacrifice will he to his drag, And incense will he offer to his net; For through them fat will be his portion, And his meat will be rich.---

17 Shall he therefore extend his drag, And continue to slay the nations, so as not to spare them?

Translation: Habakkuk 2

CHAPTER 2

1 On my watch-tower will I stand, And set myself on a citadel; And I will watch to see what he may say to me, And what I may answer to the reproof given me.

2 Then answer me did Jehovah and said, Write the vision, and make it plain on tables, That run may he who reads it;

3 For yet the vision shall be for an appointed time, And will speak at the end, and will not deceive: If it tarry, wait for it; (**66**) for coming it will come, and will not delay.

4 Behold the elated! not right is his soul within him; But the just, by his faith, shall he live.'' (**72**)

5 Yea, truly! as by wine, transgress does the proud man, And he will not rest; (**87**) For he enlarges as the grave his soul, And is like to death, and is not satisfied; Yea, he collects to himself all nations, And heaps together for himself all the people.

6 Shall not all these take up against him a parable, And against him an enigmatical taunt, and say,---``Ho! he multiplies what is not his own! how long! And he accumulates on himself thick clay!

7 Shall they not suddenly rise up who shall bite thee, And awake, who shall torment thee? And shalt not thou become tramplings to them?

8 As thou has spoiled many nations, Spoil thee shall all the remnant of the people, On account of men's blood, and of violence To the land, to the city and to all its inhabitants.

9 Ho! he covets an evil covetousness to his house, In order to set on high his nest, That he may keep himself from the hand of evil!

10 Thou hast provided shame for thine own house, By cutting off many nations, And thou hast sinned against thine own soul.''

11 For the stone from the wall shall cry, [431] And the wood from the chamber shall

[431] Calvin makes here a change in the discourse; but the whole to the end of the chapter may be viewed as the parable or the taunt mentioned in verse 6, and the particle Ho! may be retained

answer it,---

12 ``Ho! he builds a town by blood, And sets up a city by iniquity!''

13 Behold, shall nothing be from Jehovah of hosts? Hence labour shall the people in the fire, And weary themselves in vain;

14 For filled shall be earth with the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah, As the waters cover the sea.

15 Woe to him who gives his friend drink!---Uniting thy heat, thou makes them also to drink, That thou mayest look on their nakedness. (**112**)

16 Thou art filled with shame for the sake of glory; Drink thou also, and be thou uncovered: Poured forth to thee shall be the cup of Jehovah's right hand, And shameful spewing shall be on thy glory:

17 For overwhelm thee shall the violence done to Lebanon, And the spoiling of beasts, which terrified them; On account of men's blood, and of violence To the land, to the city, and to all its inhabitants.

18 What avails the graven image? For graven it hath its framer, Even the molten image and the teacher of falsehood; For trust does the framer in his own work, when he makes dumb idols. (**122**)

19 Woe to him who saith to wood, ``Awake;'' And ``Arise,'' to a dumb stone;---it will teach: Behold, it is covered with gold and silver; And there is no spirit in the midst of it. (**124**) But Jehovah is in his holy Temple: Silent at his presence let the whole earth be.

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instead of Wo. The taunt seems to have been formed so as to have been especially suitable to be used by the Jews. By regarding the passage in this light, we can understand the sudden change of person in verse 16, if the proposed emendation be disapproved; for we see the same in the former portions of the “taunt.” See 6 and 7, and also 9 and 10. That the reader may see the whole of this passage, containing the “taunt,” in the light in which I am now fully inclined to regard it, it shall be presented to him complete:— 6. Will not these, every one of them, Raise up a proverb concerning him, And a taunt, enigmas for him, and say,—“Ho! He increases what is not his! how long! And he accumulates on himself thick clay!— 7. Will they not suddenly rise up—thy biters, And awake—thy tormentors, And thou become booties to them? 8. For thou hast spoiled many nation, And spoil thee shall all the remnant of the people, On account of men’s blood, and of violence To the land, to the city, and to all its inhabitants.” 9. “Ho! he has coveted an evil covetousness to his house, To set on high his nest, In order to save himself from the hand of evil!— 10. Thou hast consulted shame to thine house, By cutting off many nations And by sinning against thine own soul: 11. For the stone—from the wall it cries, And the beam—from the woodwork it answers it,— 12. ‘Ho! he builds a town by blood, And sets up a city by oppression!’— 13. Shall nothing be, lo! From Jehovah of hosts? Yea, labor shall the people for the fire, And nations—for vanity shall they weary themselves: 14. For filled shall be the earth With the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah, Like the waters which spread over the sea.” 15. “Ho! he gives drink to his neighbour!—Thou addest thy bottle and also strong drink, In order to look on their nakedness! 16. Thou hast been filled with reproach rather than with glory: Drink thou also, and be uncovered; Come round to thee shall the cup of the right hand of Jehovah; And shameful spewing shall be on thy glory: 17. For the violence done to Lebanon—it shall overwhelm thee, And the plunder of beasts—it shall rend thee; On account of men’s blood, and of violence To the land, to the city, and to all its inhabitants.” 18. “What avails the graven image! For its graver—he forms it—Even the molten image and the teacher of falsehood: Yea, trust in it does the former of its form, After having made dumb idols! 19. Ho! he saith to the wood, ‘Arise, Awake;’ To the dumb stone, ‘It will teach?’ Behold it! covered it is with gold and silver, Yet there is no spirit within it! But Jehovah is in his holy temple: Silent at his presence let the whole earth be.” The “taunt” may be deemed as terminating at the end of the 17th verse; but I regard it as continuing to the end of the chapter. The word “neighbour,” in the 15th verse, is a collective singular, meaning every neighbour: hence “their” at the end of the verse. The same may be said of “image” in verse 18, which means every image or images, as “idols” are mentioned afterwards. Such are common instances in the Prophets. “It will teach,” in verse 19, most evidently refers to “the dumb stone”—the idol; for it is expressly called “the teacher of falsehood” in verse 17.—Ed

Translation: Habakkuk 3

CHAPTER 3.

1 The prayer of Habakkuk the Prophet respecting ignorances:

2 Jehovah! I heard thy voice, and was terrified; Jehovah! thy work in the midst of the years, revive it; In the midst of the years, make it known; In wrath thy mercy remember. (**137**)

3 God! from Teman he came; And the holy One from mount Paran: Selah: Cover the heaven did his glory; Of his praise full was the earth:

4 And brightness,---as the light it was; Horns,---from his hands they were; (**143**) And there was the hiding of his strength:

5 Before his face walked the pestilence, And come forth did burning coals at his feet:

6 He stood, and he measured the earth; He looked, and he dissolved nations; Yea, shattered were perennial mountains, Bent down were hills of antiquity; The ways of ages were his.

7 For iniquity saw I the tents of Cushan; (**150**) Tremble did the curtains of the land of Midian.

8 Wert thou angry with rivers, O Jehovah? Was thine indignation against rivers? Was thy wrath against the sea? For thou didst ride on thy horses, Thy chariots were salvation.

9 Quite bare was made thy bow: The oaths to the tribes was thy word: Selah: (155) With rivers didst thou cleave the earth.

10 See thee did mountains, they fell down; The stream of waters passed away; Utter its voice did the deep, On high did it raise its hands. (**158**)

11 The sun and moon stood still in their habitation; At the light of thy arrows did they proceed, At the brightness of the glittering of thy spear. (**160**)

12 In wrath didst thou tread on the land, In anger didst thou thresh the nations:

13 Go forth didst thou for the salvation of thy people, For their salvation, with

thy Christ: Strike didst thou the head from the house of the wicked, Making bare the foundation even to the neck: (**164**)

14 Smite didst thou with his own staffs the head of his villages: They rushed as a whirlwind to drive me away; Their joy was to devour the poor in secret:

15 A way hast thou made in the sea for thy horses, Through the heap of great waters. (**168**)

16 I heard,---and tremble did my bowels, At thy voice quiver did my lips; Enter did rottenness into my bones, And within me I made a great noise; That I might rest in the day of affliction, When he ascends against the people, Who shall cut them off. (**171**)

17 For the fig-tree shall not flourish, And no fruit shall be on the vines, Fail shall the produce of the olive, And the fields shall not bring forth food; cut off from the fold shall be the flock, And there shall be no ox in the stalls:

18 But I---in Jehovah will I exult, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation:

19 Jehovah, the Lord, is my strength; And he will set my feet as those of hinds, And on my high places will he make me to walk---To the leader on my beatings.

Translation: Zephaniah 1

CHAPTER 1

1 The word of Jehovah, which came to Zephaniah, the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hizkiah, in the days of Josiah, the son of Amon, king of Judah.

2 By removing I will remove all things from the face of the land, saith Jehovah; I will remove man and beast;

3 And I will remove the bird of heaven, And the fishes of the sea: And stumbling-blocks shall be to the ungodly! And I will cut off man From the face of the land, saith Jehovah: (**190**)

4 Yea, I will extend my hand upon Judah, And upon all the inhabitants of Je; And will cut off from this place the remnants of Baal, The name of its worshippers with the priests;

5 And those who worship, On their roofs, the host of heaven; And those who worship and swear by Jehovah, And swear by their own king;

6 And who turn back from following Jehovah, And who seek not Jehovah, And do not inquire of him.

7 Be silent at the presence of the Lord Jehovah! For nigh is the day of Jehovah; Yea, prepared hath Jehovah a sacrifice, He hath prepared his guests:

8 And it shall be in the day of Jehovah's sacrifice, That I will visit the princes and the king's sons, And all who wear foreign apparel;

9 And I will visit all those who dance on the threshold in that day, Who fill the house of their masters By means of rapine and fraud. (**204**)

10 And there shall be in that day, saith Jehovah, The voice of crying from the fish-gate, and howling from the second gate, And great breach from the hills. (**212**)

11 Howl ye, inhabitants of the lower part, For exterminated are the people of traffic, Cut off are all loaded with money.

12 And it shall be in that day, That I will search Jerusalem with candles, And visit

the men, congealed on their lees, Who say in their hearts,---``Good will not Jehovah do, Nor will he do evil:''

13 And their substance shall be a spoil, And their house a water; And houses shall they build and not inhabit; And plant shall they vineyards, And shall not drink the wine of them.

14 Nigh is the great day of Jehovah, Nigh and hastening quickly; The voice of Jehovah's day will cry out bitterly,---then will he be strong; (**222**)

15 A day of wrath shall be that day, A day of distress and of affliction, A day of tumult and of desolation, A day of darkness and of thick darkness, A day of clouds and of mist;

16 A day of trumpet and of shouting over the fortified cities and over the lofty citadels.

17 And I will straiten men, And they shall walk as the blind, Because they have done wickedly against Jehovah; And poured out shall be their blood as dust,

18 Even their silver and their gold shall not avail to deliver them, in the day of Jehovah's wrath; And by the fire of his indignation shall their land be consumed; For a consummation, and a speedy one, Will be made of all the inhabitants of the land.

Translation: Zephaniah 2

CHAPTER 2

1 Gather yourselves, gather, Ye nation, not worthy of being loved;

2 Before the decree brings forth,---(As chaff shall they pass away in a day) Before it comes upon you, The fury of Jehovah's anger,---Before it comes upon you, The day of the anger of Jehovah. (**232**)

3 Seek Jehovah all ye meek of the land, who his judgment have sought; Seek righteousness, seek humility, It may be that ye shall be concealed In the day of Jehovah's anger.

4 For Gaza, it shall be forsaken, And Ashkelon shall be a waste; Ashod shall they at mid-day drive out, And Ekron shall be rooted up.

5 Ho! the inhabitants of the line of the sea, The nation of the Cherethites! The word of Jehovah is against you; Cannaan! the land of the Philistines! I will also exterminate thee, That there may be no inhabitant:

6 And the coast of the sea shall be a habitation For sheepcots of shepherds and folds for sheep; (**242**)

7 And that coast shall be for the residence of the house of Judah; Among them shall they feed; In the houses of Ashkelon shall they in the evening lie down; For visit them shall Jehovah their God, and he will restore their captivity.

8 Heard have I the reproach of Moab, And the revilings of the children of Ammon; By which they have upbraided my people; And they have extended themselves over their border: (**247**)

9 Therefore as I live, Saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel,---Surely Moab like Sodom shall be, And the children of Ammon like Gomorrah, A soil for the nettle and a mine for salt, And a waste for ever; The residue of my people shall plunder them, And the remnant of my nation shall possess them.

10 This shall be to them for their pride; Because they have reproached, And exulted over the people of Jehovah of hosts.

11 Terrible will Jehovah be to them; For he will consume all the gods of the earth, And worship him shall each from his place, All the islands of the nations.---

12 Ye also Ethiopians!---Slain by my sword shall they be.

13 And extend will he his hand to the north, And he will destroy Assyria, And set Nineveh a waste, A desolation like the desert:

14 And lie down within it shall flocks, All the beasts of the nations; Even the bittern and the owl Shall on its pillars pass the night; A voice shall sing in the window, In the door-way there shall be desolation, For he will make bare the cedar.

15 This is the exulting city! Which sat in confidence, Which said in her heart,---``I am, and there is besides me no other.'' How is she become a waste, A resting-place for beasts! Every one who shall pass by will hiss at her, he will shake his hand.

Translation: Zephaniah 3

CHAPTER 3

1 Woe to the polluted and the filthy---The city which is an oppressor! (**261**)

2 She has not attended to the voice, She has not received correction, In Jehovah has she not trusted, To her God she has not drawn nigh!

3 Her princes within her are roaring lions, Her judges, the wolves of the evening; They break not the bones in the morning!

4 Her Prophets are vain, men of deceits; (268) Her Priests have polluted what is holy, They have subverted the law. (**269**)

5 Jehovah is just in the midst of her, He will not do iniquity; Every morning his judgment He brings to light,---he fails not: Yet the unjust knoweth no shame.

6 I have cut off nations, Waste have become their citadels, I have destroyed their streets, So that no one passes through; Wasted have become their cities, That there is not a man, not an inhabitant: (**275**)

7 I said, ``surely, thou wilt fear me, Thou wilt receive instruction;'' Then cut off should not be her habitation, However I might have visited her:---(**279**) Truly! they have hastened, They have corrupted all their doings!

8 Therefore look for me, saith Jehovah, Till the day when I shall rise up for the prey; For my purpose is, To gather nations, to assemble kingdoms, That I may pour upon them my wrath, The whole fury of mine anger; For with the fire of my indignation Shall be devoured the whole earth. (**281**)

9 But I will then turn to the people a pure lip, That they may all call on the name of Jehovah, That they may serve him with one consent. (**283**)

10 Beyond the rivers of Ethiopia shall be my suppliants; The daughter of my dispersed shall bring mine offering.

11 In that day thou shalt not be ashamed on account of all thy doings, By which thou hast transgressed against me; For then will I remove from the midst of thee those who rejoice in thy pride, And thou shalt not take pride any more In my holy

mountain. (**292**)

12 And I will cause to remain in the midst of thee, A people afflicted and poor; And they shall trust in the name of Jehovah.

13 The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, And they shall not speak falsehood, And not found in their mouth shall be a deceitful tongue; And they shall feed and lie down, And there shall be none to terrify them

14 Exult thou daughter of Sion, Exult thou Israel; Rejoice, exult with thy whole heart, Thou daughter of je: (**299**)

15 Removed has Jehovah thy judgments, He has turned aside thine enemies; The King of Israel, Jehovah, is in the midst of thee, Thou shalt see evil no more.

16 in that day it shall be said to je, Fear not; Sion! relaxed let not thine hands be.

17 Jehovah thy God is in the midst of thee, He is strong, he will save; He will exult over thee with joy, He will rest in his love, (**304**) He will exult over thee with triumph.

18 The afflicted, at the appointed time, Will I gather,---who shall be of thee; Who sustained for her reproach. (**308**)

19 Behold, I will destroy all thine oppressors at that time, And I will save the halting, And restore the driven away, To make them a praise and a name In the land of their reproach.

20 At that time will I restore you, At that time will I gather you; For I will make you a name and a praise among all the nations of the earth; When I shall restore your captivities, Before your eyes saith Jehovah.

end of new translation of zephaniah.

Translation: Haggai 1

CHAPTER 1

1 In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, came the word of Jehovah by Haggai the Prophet, to Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, the governor of Judah, and to Joshua, the son of Josedech, the high priest, saying---

2 Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, saying---This people say, ``The time is not come to build the house of Jehovah.''

3 Then came the word of Jehovah, By Haggai, the Prophet, saying---

4 ``Is it time for you to dwell yourselves in your boarded houses, And this house a waste!''

5 And now thus saith Jehovah of hosts,---Apply your heart to your ways:

6 Ye have sown much, and brought in little; Ye have eaten, and were not satisfied; Ye have drank, and were not replenished; Ye have clothed yourselves, and were not warmed; And he who gains wages, Gains wages for a perforated bag. (**330**)

7 Thus saith Jehovah of hosts,---Apply your heart to your ways;

8 Ascend unto the mountain and bring wood, And build the house; And I will be to you propitious in it, And glorified shall I be, saith Jehovah. (**333**)

9 Ye have looked for much, but behold little! And ye brought it home, and I blew on it: Why is this? saith Jehovah; On account of my house, because it is waste, And ye run, each of you to his own house.

10 Therefore restrained over you Are the heavens from dew; And the earth from producing is restrained:

11 Yea, I have called for drought on the land and on the mountains, And on the corn and the wine and the oil, And on everything which the earth produces, on man and on beast, and on every labour of the hands. (**338**)

12 And Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, the governor of Judah, and to Joshua, the son of Josedech, the high priest, and all the residue of the people, attended to

the voice of Jehovah, their God, and to the words of Haggai, the Prophet, as Jehovah their God had sent him; and the people feared Jehovah.

13 Then said Haggai, the messenger of Jehovah, according to Jehovah's message, saying to the people, ``With you am I,'' saith Jehovah.

14 And Jehovah stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, the governor of Judah, and to Joshua, the son of Josedech, the high priest, and the spirit of all the people; and the came and carried on the work in the Temple of Jehovah of hosts, their God,

15 on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king. [432]

[432] What is said in a Note in p. 347 does not apply to what Calvin says. He refers not, as I inadvertently apprehended, to the present division of the chapter, but to that adopted in the Septuagint; for this verse in that version forms the beginning of the next chapter.—Ed.

Translation: Haggai 2

CHAPTER 2.

1 In the seventh month, and on the twenty-first day, came the word of Jehovah to Haggai, the Prophet, saying,---

2 Speak now to Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, the governor of Judah, and to Joshua, the son of Josedech, the high priest, and to all the residue of the people, saying,---

3 Who among you is alive, Who saw this house in its former glory, And how do ye see it now? Is it not to that as nothing in your eyes?

4 Yet now strong be thou Zerubbabel, saith Jehovah; And strong be all the people of the land; And work, for with you am I, Saith Jehovah of hosts,

5 According to the word I covenanted with you, When ye came forth from Egypt, And my Spirit shall be in the midst of you, fear ye not. (**354**)

6 For thus saith Jehovah of hosts,---Yet for a little while shall be this,

7 And I will shake the heavens and the earth, Also the sea and the dry land: Yea, I will shake all nations, And come shall the choice things of all nations; And I will fill this house with glory, Saith Jehovah of hosts:

8 Mine the silver and mine the gold, Saith Jehovah of hosts:

9 Greater shall be the glory of this latter house than that of the former, Saith Jehovah of hosts; And in this place will I give peace, Saith Jehovah of hosts.

10 on the twenty-fourth of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of Jehovah to Haggai, the Prophet, saying,---

11 Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, Ask the priests respecting the law, saying,---

12 If a man carry holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any eatable, shall it be made holy? And the priests answered and said, No.

13 Then said Haggai, If any one polluted in his person touch any of these things, shall it be polluted? The priests answered and said, It shall be polluted.

14 Then answered Haggai, and said,---So is this people, and so is this nation, In my sight, saith Jehovah; And so is every work of their hands, And what they offer,---it is polluted.

15 And now I pray, lay it to heart,---From this day and beyond it, Before a stone was laid on a stone In the temple of Jehovah,---

16 Before this time, when one came to a heap of twenty, there were but ten measures, When he came to the vat to draw fifty, There were from the vat but twenty vessels:

17 I smote you with blasting and mildew and hail, As to every work of your hands; And ye turned not to me, saith Jehovah.

18 Lay it, I pray, to your heart,---From this day and beyond it, From the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, From the day the temple of Jehovah was founded;---Lay it to your heart,---

19 Is there now seed in the barn? And as yet the vine and the fig tree, And the pomegranate and the olive, Have produced nothing;---From this day will I bless you. (**378**)

20 And the word of Jehovah came again to Haggai, on the twenty-fourth of the month, saying,---

21 Speak to Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah, saying,---

22 I will shake the heavens and the earth, And will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, And destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations; Yea, I will overthrow chariots and their riders, And down shall come the horses and their riders, Every one by the sword of his brother:

23 In that day, saith Jehovah of hosts, I will take Zerubbabel, The son of Shealtiel, my servant, saith Jehovah, And I will make thee as a signet, For I have chosen thee, saith Jehovah of hosts.

Translation: Zechariah 1

CHAPTER 1

1 In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of Jehovah to Zechariah, the son of Barachiah, the son of Iddo, the Prophet, saying ---

2 Very angry has Jehovah been with your fathers:

3 Thou shalt therefore say to them, --- Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, --- Return ye to me, saith Jehovah of hosts; And I will return to you, saith Jehovah of hosts:

4 Be ye not like your fathers, For cry to them did the former Prophets, saying, --- Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, --- ``Return ye, I pray, from your evil ways, And from your evil works;'' But they heard not, nor attended to me, Saith Jehovah.

5 Your fathers --- where are they? And the Prophets --- do they for ever live?

6 But my words and my statutes, Which I committed to my servants the Prophets, Have they not laid hold on your fathers? --- When they returned, they said, --- ``As Jehovah of hosts had purposed to do to us According to our ways and our works, So hath he done to us.''

7 On the twenty-fourth of the eleventh month Sebat, in the second year of Darius, came the word of Jehovah to Zechariah, the son of Barachiah, the son of Iddo, the Prophet, saying, ---

8 I saw by night, and behold a man riding on a red horse; and he stood among the myrtles in a low place; and after him were horses, red, variegated, and white.

9 And I said, What are these, my Lord? And the Angel, who spoke with me, said to me, I will show thee what these are.

10 And the Angel, who stood among the myrtles, answered and said, These are they whom Jehovah has sent to walk to and fro through the earth.

11 And they answered the angel of Jehovah, who stood among the myrtles, and said --- ``We have walked to and fro through the earth, and, behold, the whole earth rests and is quiet.''

12 And the Angel of Jehovah answered and said, Jehovah of hosts! How long

wilt thou not pity Jerusalem And the cities of Judah, Which thou hast despised these seventy years! (**42**)

13 Then answered Jehovah the Angel, who spoke with me, with good words, with comfortable words.

14 And the Angel, who spoke with me, said to me, Cry, saying, ------ Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, --- I am zealous for Jerusalem And for Sion, with great zeal: (**44**)

15 And with great anger am I angry With the nations which are quiet; For I was angry a little, And they helped on the evil.

16 Therefore thus saith Jehovah, --- I am turned to Jerusalem in compassions; My house shall be built in it, Saith Jehovah of hosts; And a line shall be extended over Jerusalem.

17 Cry again, saying, --- Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, --- Yet wear out shall cities through abundance, (**51**) And Jehovah shall yet comfort Zion, And will yet choose Jerusalem.

18 And I raised my eyes and saw, and behold four horns;

19 and I said to the angel, who was speaking with me, What are these? and he said to me, These are the four horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem.

20 Then Jehovah showed me four smiths:

21 and I said, What are these coming to do? and he said, saying, Those are the horns which have scattered Judah, so that no one could raise up his head; but these are come to frighten them, to thrust away the horns of the nations, which raised the horn against the land of Judah to scatter it. (**57**)

Translation: Zechariah 2

CHAPTER 2

1 And I raised my eyes and saw, and behold a man in whose hand was a measuring-line:

2 and I said, Where art thou going? And he said to me, To measure Jerusalem, that I may see what is its breadth, and what is its length.

3 And behold the angel who was speaking with me, he went forth, and another angel went forth to meet him, and said to him,

4 Run, speak to this youth, saying, --- In the villages shall dwell Jerusalem, For the number of men and cattle in it:

5 And I shall be to it, saith Jehovah, A wall of fire round about, And for glory shall I be in the midst of it

6 Ho! Ho! flee ye From the land of the north, saith Jehovah: For to the four winds of heaven Have I scattered you, saith Jehovah. (**65**)

7 Ho! Zion! be thou delivered, Who dwellest with the daughter of Babylon.

8 For thus saith Jehovah of hosts, After the glory hath he sent me To the nations with spoiled you: For he who touches you Touches the apple of his eye.

9 For, behold, I shake my hand over them, And they shall be a prey to their servants; And ye shall know That Jehovah of hosts hath sent me.

10 Exult and rejoice, thou daughter of Zion; For behold I am coming, And will dwell in thy midst, saith Jehovah:

11 And join themselves shall many nations To Jehovah in that day; And they shall be to me a people, And I will dwell in the midst of thee; And thou shalt know, That Jehovah of hosts has sent me to thee:

12 And Jehovah will take Judah As his hereditary portion in the holy land; And he will yet choose Jerusalem. Be silent all flesh before Jehovah; Be silent all flesh before Jehovah; Fore roused he is from his holy habitation.

Translation: Zechariah 3

CHAPTER 3

1 And he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of Jehovah, and Satan standing at his right hand to oppose him.

2 And Jehovah said to Satan, --- Rebuke thee, Satan, let Jehovah; Yea, rebuke thee let Jehovah, Who has chosen Jehovah: Is not this a brand snatched from the fire!

3 And Joshua was clad in sordid garments, and stood before the angel:

4 and he answered and said to those who stood before him, saying, Take the sordid garments from off him: and he said to him, See I have made to pass from thee thine iniquity, and I will clothe thee with new garments.

5 And I said, Let them set a pure mitre on his head: and they set a mitre on his head when they had clothed him with garments; and the angel of Jehovah stood by:

6 And protest did the angel of Jehovah to Joshua, saying, ---

7 Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, If in my ways wilt thou walk, And my charge wilt thou keep, thou shalt then rule my house, And thou shalt also keep my courts; And I will give thee a free intercourse Among those who are present. (**94**)

8 Hear now, O Joshua! the high priest, Thou and thy associates who stand before thee; For men of wonder are these; For, behold, I will bring forth my servant, the Branch:

9 For, behold, the stone which I have set before Joshua, On that one stone are seven eyes; Behold, I will engrave its engraving, Saith Jehovah of hosts; And I will remove the iniquity Of that land in one day:

10 In that day, saith Jehovah, Ye shall call, every one his neighbour, Under the vine and under the figtree. (**101**)

Translation: Zechariah 4

CHAPTER 4

1 And return did the angel who had bee speaking with me, and roused me as a man who is roused from his sleep:

2 And he said to me, What dost thou see? and I said, I see and behold a candle-stick, all of gold, and a bowl on its top, and seven lamps on it, seven pourers to the seven lamps, which are on its top,

3 And two olive-trees by it, one on the right of the bowl and one on its left.

4 Then I answered and said to the angel who was speaking with me, saying, What are these, my Lord?

5 And the angel who was speaking with me, answered and said to me, Knowest thou not? and I said, No, my Lord.

6 And he answered and said to me, saying, Not by a host, and not by courage, But by my Spirit, (**110**) Saith Jehovah of hosts.

7 What art thou, great mountain, Before Zerubbabel? --- A plain: And he shall bring forth the top-stone, With shoutings, ``Grace, grace to it.''

8 Then came the word of Jehovah to me, saying, ---

9 The hands of Zerubbabel have founded this house, And his hands shall complete it; And thou shalt know That Jehovah of hosts has sent me to you.

10 For who has despised the day of small things! For they shall rejoice when they see The plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel. These seven, the eyes of Jehovah are they, Which go round through the whole earth.

11 And I answered and said to him, What are these two olive-trees on the right of the candlestick, and on its left?

12 And I answered the second time and said, What are these two flowings of the olive-tree, which are between the two pipes of gold, which pour golden oil from themselves?

13 And he said to me, saying, Knowest thou not what these are? And I said, No,

my Lord.

14 And he said, These are the two sons of oil which stand with the Lord of the whole earth.

Translation: Zechariah 5

CHAPTER 5

1 And I returned and raised my eyes and looked, and behold a flying roll.

2 And he said to me, What dost thou see? And I said, I see a flying roll, its length twenty cubits, and its breadth ten cubits.

3 And he said to me, This is the curse which goeth forth over the face of the whole land; for every one who steals shall on this as on that side be punished, and every one who swears shall on this as on that side be punished. (**129**)

4 I will bring it forth, saith Jehovah of hosts; and it shall come into the house of the thief, and into the house of him who swears by my name falsely; and it shall abide in the midst of his house and consume it, both its timber and its stones.

5 And the angel who had been speaking with me came forth and said to me, Raise now thine eyes, and see what this is that goeth forth.

6 And I said, What is this? And he said, This is a measure which goeth forth: he said also, This is their eye through all the earth.

7 And behold, a thin piece of lead was carried along, and a woman was sitting in the midst of the measure.

8 And he said, This if Wickedness: and he cast the piece of lead on its mouth.

9 And I raised my eyes and saw, and behold two women going forth, and wind in their wings; for they had wings like the wings of a stork; and they raised up the measure between earth and heaven.

10 And I said to the angel who was speaking with me, Where do these carry the measure?

11 And he said to me, To build for it a house in the land of Shinar; and it shall be set and fixed there on its own base.

Translation: Zechariah 6

CHAPTER 6

1 And I turned and raised mine eyes and looked, and behold four chariots going forth from the midst of two mountains, and mountains were mountains of brass:

2 In the first chariot were red horses, and in the second chariot black horses,

3 And in the third chariot white horses, and in the fourth chariot grisled and bay horses.

4 And I answered and said to the angel who was speaking with me, What are these, my Lord?

5 And the angel answered and said to me, These are the four spirits of heaven, going forth from their station before the Lord of the whole earth;

6 And the black horses go forth to the land of the north, and the white go forth after them, and the grisled go forth to the land of the south.

7 When the bay went forth, they asked that they might perambulate through the earth: and the perambulated through the earth.

8 And he called me, and spoke to me, saying, See, those who went forth to the land of the north have quieted my spirit in the land of the north.

9 And the word of Jehovah came to me, saying,

10 Take from the exiles, from Heldai, and from Tobiah, and from Jedaiah (and go in that day into the house of Josiah the son of Zephaniah) who have come from Babylon;

11 Yea take from them silver and gold and make crowns, (**154**,) and set them on the head of Joshua, the son of Josedech, the high-priest;

12 And speak to him, saying, Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, saying, Behold the man! Branch is his name; And from his won place shall he grow up, And shall build the temple of Jehovah;

13 Yea, he shall build the temple of Jehovah, And shall himself bear the glory, And shall sit and rule on his throne, And shall be a priest on his throne, And the counsel

of peace shall be between the two.

14 And the crowns shall be to Heldai and to Tobiah, And to Jedaiah, and to Hen, the son of Zephaniah, For a memorial in the temple of Jehovah.

15 And those afar off shall come and build In the temple of Jehovah; And ye shall know That Jehovah of hosts, has sent me to you: And thus shall it be, if by hearing ye will hear The voice of Jehovah your God.

Translation: Zechariah 7

CHAPTER 7

1 And in the fourth year of king Darius the word of Jehovah came to Zechariah, on the fourth day of the ninth month, even Chisleu:

2 For Sherezer had sent to the house of God, and also Regemmelech and his men, to entreat the favour of Jehovah,

3 And to speak to the priests who were in the house of Jehovah of hosts, and to the Prophets, saying, ``Shall I weep in the fifth month? Shall I separate myself as I have done these years?''

4 And the word of Jehovah came to me saying, (**165**)

5 Speak to all the people of the land and to the priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did you by fasting fast to me to me?

6 And when ye ate and when ye drank, did you not eat and drink for yourselves?

7 Are not these the words which Jehovah proclaimed by the former Prophets, when Jerusalem was quiet and wealthy, and its cities around it, when both the south and the plain country were quiet?

8 And the word of Jehovah came to Zechariah, saying,

9 Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, saying, The judgment of truth pronounce, And kindness and mercies show, Every one to his brother;

10 And the widow and the orphan, The stranger and the poor, rob not; An evil to his brother Let none of you imagine in his heart:

11 But they refused to attend, And presented the withdrawing shoulder, And their ears they made heavy so as not to hear;

12 And their heart they made an adamant, That they might not hear the words Which Jehovah of hosts had sent By his Spirit, through the former prophets; And there was great wrath from Jehovah of hosts:

13 And it was, that as he had called and they heard not, So they shall call, and I

will not hear, Saith Jehovah of hosts;

14 And I will scatter them among all the nations, Whom they have not known, And the land shall be desolate after them, So that there shall be none passing through nor returning: And they made the land of delight a waste.

Translation: Zechariah 8

CHAPTER 8

1 And the word of Jehovah of hosts came, saying, ---

2 Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, --- Zealous have I been for Zion with great zeal, And with great indignation have I been zealous for her.

3 Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, --- I am returned to Zion and will dwell In the midst of Jerusalem; And called shall be Jerusalem, ``The city of truth,'' And the mount of Jehovah of hosts, ``The mount of holiness.''

4 Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, --- Yet dwell shall aged men and aged women In the streets of Jerusalem, Each one with his staff in his hand for very age;

5 And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls, Who shall play in its streets.

6 Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, --- If marvellous it be In the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, Shall it also in mine eyes be marvellous? Saith Jehovah of hosts.

7 Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, --- Behold, I will save my people From the land of the east And from the land of the setting sun;

8 And I will restore them, And they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem; And they shall be to me a people, And I will be to them a God, In truth and in righteousness.

9 Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, --- Strengthened be your hands, Who hear in these days these words From the mouth of the prophets, Who were in the day when founded Was the house of Jehovah of hosts, And the temple, that it might be built.

10 For before those days There was no hire for man, and no hire for beast; And to the goer and to the comer, There was no peace because of distress; (**207**) And I sent forth all men, Each one against his neighbour.

11 But now, not according to former days, Shall I deal with the residue of this people, Saith Jehovah of hosts:

12 For the seed shall be prosperous; The vine shall yield its fruit, And the earth

shall yield its increase, And the heavens shall give their dew; yea, I will cause the remnant of this people To inherit all these things. (**210**)

13 And it shall be, that as ye were a curse among the nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel, So will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing; Fear not, strengthened be your hands.

14 For thus saith Jehovah of hosts, --- As I thought to bring evil on you, When provoke me did your fathers, Saith Jehovah of hosts, And I did not repent;

15 So have I turned, I have thought in these days To do good to Jerusalem And to the house of Judah, fear ye not

16 These are the things which ye shall do, --- Speak ye the truth, each one to his neighbour; The truth and the judgment of peace Proclaim in your gates;

17 And evil to his neighbour Let none of you imagine in your hearts; And a false oath love not; For all these things I hate, saith Jehovah.

18 And the word of Jehovah of hosts came to me, saying, ---

19 Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, The fast of the fourth, and the fast of the fifth, And the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth month, Shall be to the house of Judah For joy, and gladness, and cheerful feasts; Therefore love ye truth and peace. (**223**)

20 Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, --- It shall yet be, that come shall people And the inhabitants of great cities;

21 Yea, come shall the inhabitants Of one to another, saying, ``Going let us go to entreat the face of Jehovah, and to seek Jehovah of hosts, I will also go:''

22 Yea, come shall great and strong nation To seek Jehovah of hosts at Jerusalem, And to entreat the face of Jehovah.

23 Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, --- In those days shall it be, That ten men, of all languages of the nations, Shall lay hold on the skirt of a Jew, saying, ``We will walk with you, For we have heard that God is with you.''

Translation: Zechariah 9

CHAPTER 9

1 The burden of the word of Jehovah On the land of Hadrach, And Damascus its resting-place, When to Jehovah shall be the eye of man And of all the tribes of Israel:

2 Even Hamath shall border on it, Tyre also Sidon, Though it be very wise:

3 And built hath Tyre a fortress for herself, And heaped together silver as dust, And gold as the mire of the streets;

4 Behold, Jehovah will drive her out, And smite in the sea her power, And with fire shall she be consumed. (**239**)

5 See shall Ashkelon, and fear, And Gaza, --- and it will be very sorrowful; Ekron also, --- for confounded shall be her expectation: And perish shall the king from Gaza, And Ashkelon shall not be inhabited;

6 And dwell shall a stranger in Ashdod, For I will cut off the pride of the Philistines;

7 And take away will I his blood from his mouth And his abominations from between his teeth; And he, the remnant, even he shall be for our God; He shall be even as a leader in Judah, And Ekron, as a Jebusite:

8 I will also be a camp to my house From an army, when passing through and returning; And pass through them shall the exactor no more; For now I have seen with mine eyes.

9 Exult greatly, thou daughter of Zion, Shout, thou daughter of Jerusalem; Behold, the King shall come to thee, Just and saved shall he be, Poor and riding on an ass, Even on a colt, the foal of an ass:

10 And cut off shall I the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem; cut off also shall be the bow of war; And speak peace shall he to the nations; And his dominion shall be from sea to sea, And from the river to the extremities of the earth.

11 As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant, Have I sent forth thy captive From the pit, in which there was no water:

12 Return to the stronghold, ye captives of hope; Even to day I declare, Double

blessings will I render to thee;

13 For I will bend for me Judah as a bow, I will fill my quiver with Ephraim; And will rouse thy sons, O Zion, Against thy sons, O Greece; And I will make thee as the sword of a mighty man:

14 Jehovah also shall over them be seen, And go forth as lightning shall his arrow; Yea, the Lord Jehovah, with the trumpet shall he blow, And march forth in the whirlwind of the south. (**269**)

15 Jehovah of hosts will defend them, And they shall devour and subdue with sling-stones; They shall also drink and make a noise as through wine, And filled shall they be as the bowls, As the corners of the altar;

16 And save them shall Jehovah their God In that day, as a flock, his own people; For as the stones of a crown shall they be raised over his land.

17 For how great is his goodness! And how great his beauty! Corn shall refresh young men, And new wine the maids. (**276**)

Translation: Zechariah 10

CHAPTER 10

1 Ask ye from Jehovah rain in the latter season; And Jehovah will make clouds; And rain --- a shower, will he give them, To every one grass in the field. (**279**)

2 Surely the images have spoken vanity, And the diviners have seen falsehood, And dreams of vanity have they spoken; In vain have they comforted: They have therefore wandered like sheep, They were distressed, for there was no shepherd.

3 Against the shepherds was my fury kindled, The he-goats will I punish; For visit will Jehovah of hosts His flock, the house of Judah, And make them as his splendid horse in was.

4 From him shall come forth the corner-stone, From him the nail, From him the bow of war, From him also every exactor. (**286**)

5 And they shall be as mighty men, Treading down their enemies In the mire of the streets in battle; And they shall fight, for Jehovah will be with them; And ashamed shall be the riders on horses.

6 I will also strengthen the house of Judah, And the house of Joseph will I save, And cause them to return and dwell; For I have pitied them, and they shall be As though I had not cast them away; For I Jehovah am their God, And I will hear them:

7 And they shall be as a mighty man, even Ephraim; And rejoice shall their heart as through wine; Their sons also shall see and rejoice, Exult shall their heart in Jehovah.

8 I will whistle for them and gather them: For I have redeemed them, And they shall increase as they had increased.

9 Sow them also will I among the people, And in distant lands will they remember me, And they shall live with their sons and return;

10 Yea, I will restore them from the land of Egypt, And from Assyria will I gather them, And to the land of Gilead and Lebanon will I bring them, And no place shall be found for them. (**196**)

11 And spread shall distress over the sea, For he will smite in the sea the waves,

And dry up shall the depths of the river; Yea, cast down shall be the pride of Assyria,
And the sceptre of Egypt shall depart.

12 I will also strengthen them in Jehovah; And in his name shall they walk, saith Jehovah.

Translation: Zechariah 11

CHAPTER 11

1 Open, Lebanon, thy doors, That consume may the fire thy cedars:

2 Howl, thou fir-tree, Fore the cedar has fallen, For the strong has been laid waste: Howl, ye oaks of Bashan, For fallen has the fortified forest.

3 The voice of the howling of shepherds! For wasted is their excellency; The voice of the roaring of lions! For laid waste is the pride of Jordan.

4 Thus saith Jehovah my God, --- Feed the flock of slaughter:

5 They who possess them, slay them, And consider not that they sin; And he who sells them, says, --- ``Blessed be Jehovah, for I am enriched;'' Yea, he who feeds them spares them not.

6 Surely I will no more spare the inhabitants of the land, saith Jehovah; And behold, I will deliver every man Into the hand of his neighbour, And into the hand of his king; And smite shall they the land, And I will not deliver it from their hand.

7 And I fed the flock of slaughter, especially the poor of the flock; and I took to me two rods; the one I called ``Beauty,'' and the other I called ``Cords;'' and I fed the flock:

8 And I rejected three shepherds in one month: and wearied was my soul with them, and their soul also hated me:

9 And I said, --- I will not feed you; What is to die, let it die, What is to be cast off, let it be cast off, And those which remain, let them devour, Every one the flesh of another.

10 And I took my rod ``Beauty,'' and broke it, that broken might be the covenant which I had made with all the people:

11 And it was broken in that day; and so the poor of the flock, who attended to me, knew that it was the word of Jehovah.

12 Then I said to them, ``If it be good in your eyes, give me my reward; if not, forbear:'' and they weighed as my reward thirty silverings.

13 And Jehovah said to me, ``Cast it to the potter, the magnificent price at which I have been valued by them!'' And I took the thirty silverings and cast them into the temple of Jehovah to the potter.

14 Then I broke my other rod, ``Cords,'' that broken might be the brotherhood between Judah and Israel.

15 And Jehovah said to me, take again to thee the implements of a foolish shepherd; ---

16 For behold, I will raise up a shepherd in the land; What is cut off he will not visit, What is young he will not seek, What is broken he will not heal, What stands sound he will not feed; But the flesh of the fat he will devour, And their hoofs will he break. ---

17 Woe to the worthless shepherd! Who forsakes the flock; The sword shall be on his arm And on his right eye; (**336**) His arm by drying shall dry up, And his right eye by contracting shall be contracted.

Translation: Zechariah 12

CHAPTER 12

1 The burden of the word of Jehovah on Israel; --- Say does Jehovah, Who expanded the heavens and founded the earth, And formed the spirit of man within him, ---

2 Behold, I make Jerusalem A threshold of bruising to all the people around; And as to Judah, so shall he be During the siege against Jerusalem. (**344**)

3 It shall also be in that day That I will make Jerusalem A burdensome stone to all people; Whosoever will lift it shall be cut in pieces, Though assembled against it Should be all the nations of the earth. (**345**)

4 In that day, saith Jehovah, I will smite every horse with stupor, And its rider with madness; and on the house of Judah I will open mine eyes; And every horse of the people Will I smite with blindness:

5 And say will the chiefs of Judah in their hearts, --- ``Strength to me are the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Through Jehovah of hosts their God.'' (**349**)

6 In that day I will make the chiefs of Judah Like a pot fire among wood; And like a torch of fire in a sheaf, And they shall consume, on the right hand And on the left, all the nations around; And inhabited shall be Jerusalem In her own place, in Jerusalem:

7 And save shall Jehovah The tents of Judah as at the beginning; And thus the honour of the house of David, and the honour of the citizen of Jerusalem, Shall not exult over Judah. (**345**)

8 In that day Jehovah will protect The inhabitant of Jerusalem; And the feeble among them shall be like David, And the house of David like angels, (**357**) As the angel of Jehovah before their face.

9 And it shall be in that day, That I will seek to destroy all the nations Who shall come against Jerusalem:

10 And I will pour upon the house of David, And upon the inhabitant of Jerusalem, The spirit of grace and of lamentations; And they shall look to me whom they have

pierced: And lament shall they for him, As with a lamentation for an only-begotten; And bitter shall they be for him, As with a bitterness for a first-born.

11 In that day great shall be the lamentation in Jerusalem, Like the lamentation of Hadadrimmon In the valley of Megiddon:

12 And lament shall the land, Every family apart; The family of the house of David apart, And their wives apart; The family of the house of Nathan apart, And their wives apart;

13 The family of the house of Levi apart, And their wives apart; The family of Shimei apart; And their wives apart;

14 All the remaining families, Every family apart, And their wives apart;

Translation: Zechariah 13

CHAPTER 13

1 In that day shall a fountain be opened To the house of David And to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, For expiation and for sprinkling.

2 And it shall be in that day, saith Jehovah, That I will cut off the names of idols from the land, And they shall be remembered no more; And the prophets also and the unclean spirit Will I exterminate from the land.

3 And it shall be, when prophesy yet shall any one, That say to him will his gather and his mother, Who begat him, ``Thou shalt not live, For a lie hast thou spoken in Jehovah's name;'' And they shall pierce him, Even his father and his mother who begat him; Because he had prophesied.

4 It shall also be in that day That ashamed shall be the prophets, Every on of his vision, when he has prophesied; And they shall not wear a hairy garment, That they may deceive:

5 But he shall say, ``I am not a prophet, A husbandman am I, for man has taught me To be a shepherd from my youth.''

6 When one shall say to him, ``Why are these wounds in thine hands?'' Then he will say, ``Because I have been stricken In the house of my friends.'' (**393**)

7 O sword! awake against my shepherd, And against the man, my associate, Saith Jehovah of hosts: Smite the shepherd, and scattered shall be the sheep; And I will turn my hand to the little ones.

8 And it shall be in all the land, saith Jehovah, That two parts in it shall be cut off --- shall die, And that the third shall remain in it:

9 And I will bring the third part through the fire, And will melt them as silver is melted, And try them as gold is tried; They shall call on my name and I will answer them; I will say, ``My people are the;'' And they will say, ``Jehovah is out God.''

Translation: Zechariah 14

CHAPTER 14

1 Behold, the day of Jehovah cometh! And divided shall be thy spoils in the midst of thee:

2 For I will gather all nations Against Jerusalem for war; And taken shall be the city And plundered shall be the houses, And the women shall be ravished; And go forth shall half of the city into exile; And the residue of the people Shall not be cut off from the city.

3 And go forth shall Jehovah; And he will fight against these nations, As in the day when he fought in the day of battle:

4 And stand shall his feet in that day On the mount of Olives, Which is nigh Jerusalem on the east; And rent shall be the mount of Olives in the middle, From east to west there shall be a great valley; [433] And recede shall half of the mount to the north And half of it to the south:

5 And ye shall flee through the valley of the mountains, For reach shall the valley of the mountains to Azal; And ye shall flee as ye fled from the earthquake In the days of Uzziah, king of Judah: And come shall Jehovah my God; --- All the saints shall be with the. (**416**)

6 And it shall be, that in that day There shall not be clear light nor thick darkness;

7 But it shall be one day, known to Jehovah, Neither day nor night; Bur it shall be, that in the evening There will be light.

8 And it shall be in that day That go forth shall living waters from Jerusalem; Half of them towards the eastern sea, And halt of them towards the western sea; In summer and winter shall they be:

9 And Jehovah shall be king over the whole earth; In that day there shall be one

[433] This is somewhat different from the version of Calvin, which I am not able to follow; I have therefore given what I conceive to be a literal rendering of the Original. — Ed. And inhabited shall be Jerusalem in safety

Jehovah, And his name shall be one.

10 Turned shall be the whole land to a plain, From Geba to Rimmon, south of Jerusalem; And raised shall it be and inhabited in its own place, From the gate of Benjamin, To the place of the first gate, to the gate of the corners, And from the citadel of Hananeel, To the wine-vats of the king.

11 And they shall dwell in it, And there shall be no more utter destruction;.

12 And this shall be the plague, With which Jehovah shall smite all the people, Who shall fight against Jerusalem; --- Melt away shall their flesh, While they stand on their feet, And their eyes shall melt away in their sockets, Their tongue also shall melt away in their mouth.

13 And it shall be, that in that day A great tumult from Jehovah shall be among them, And lay hold shall each one On the hand of his companion, And rise up shall his hand Against the hand of his neighbour.

14 And even Judah shall fight against Jerusalem, And collected shall be the forces of all nations around, Gold also and silver and garments in great abundance.

15 And the plague of the horse, mule, camel, and ass, And of every beast which shall be in their camps, Shall be even as this plague.

16 And it shall be, that every one who shall remain, Of all the nations which shall come against Jerusalem, Shall ascend from year to year To worship the king, Jehovah of hosts, And to celebrate the feast of tabernacles.

17 And it shall be as to those who will not ascend, Of the families of the earth unto Jerusalem, To worship the king, Jehovah of hosts, That upon them there shall not be rain:

18 And if the family of Egypt shall not ascend and come, It shall not be on them; (**447**) There shall also be the plague, With which Jehovah shall smite all the nations, Who shall not ascend To celebrate the feast of tabernacles.

19 Such will be the punishment of Egypt, And the punishment of all the nations, Which will not ascend To celebrate the feast of tabernacle.

20 In that day there shall be on the blinders of horses, Holiness unto Jehovah; And it shall be, that the pots in the house of Jehovah, Shall be like the vessels before the altar:

21 And every pot in Jerusalem and Judah, Shall be holiness to Jehovah of hosts; And come shall all who shall sacrifice, And take them and seethe in them: And there shalt not be a Canaanite any more, In the house of Jehovah of hosts, in that day.

Translation: Malachi 1

CHAPTER 1

1 The burden of the word of Jehovah on Israel, by Malachi, ---

2 I have loved you, saith Jehovah; But ye have said, In what hast thou loved us? Was not Esau a brother to Jacob? saith Jehovah;

3 Yet I loved Jacob, and Esau I hated: And I have set his mountains a waste And his heritage for the serpents of the desert.

4 If Edom shall say, ``We have been diminished, But we shall return and build houses;'' Yet thus saith Jehovah of hosts, --- ``They shall build, but I will pull down;'' And they shall be called, ``The border of ungodliness,'' And, ``The people with whom Jehovah is angry forever:''

5 And your eyes shall see, and ye shall say, --- Magnified let Jehovah be throughout the border of Israel.

6 A son honours his father, and a servant his master: If then I be a father, where is my honour? And if I be a master, where is my fear? Saith Jehovah of hosts to you, priests, Who despise my name: But ye have said, In what have we despised thy name?

7 Ye offer on my altar polluted bread: Ye have also said, By what have we polluted thee? When ye say, The table of Jehovah, It is contemptible.

8 When ye offer the blind for sacrifice, it is no evil! And when the lame and the sick ye offer, it is no evil! Offer it now I pray to thy governor; Will he be pleased with thee, or accept Thy person, saith Jehovah of hosts?

9 And now I pray entreat the favour of God! And merciful will he be to us! By your hand has this been done; Will he regard your persons? Saith Jehovah of hosts.

10 Who is there even among you who closes the doors? And do ye not kindle my altar in vain? I delight not in you saith Jehovah of hosts, And an offering I will not receive from your hand.

11 Verily, from the rising of the sun to its setting Great shall be my name among

the nations. And in every place incense shall be offered To my name, and a pure offering; For great shall be my name among the nations, Saith Jehovah of hosts.

12 But ye have profaned it by saying, The table of Jehovah is polluted, Its provision is his contemptible food. (**505**)

13 Ye have also said, Behold weariness? And ye have snuffed at it, saith Jehovah of hosts; And offered the torn and the lame and the sick, And brought an oblation! Shall I accept this from your hand, Saith Jehovah? (**508**)

14 But cursed be the deceitful, Who, having in his flock a male, Vows and offers what is corrupt to Jehovah For a great king am I, Saith Jehovah of hosts, And my name is terrible among the nations.

Translation: Malachi 2

CHAPTER 2

1 And not to you is this command, O priests;

2 If ye will not hear not lay it to heart, To give glory to my name, Saith Jehovah of hosts, I will send on you a curse, And will curse your blessings; Yea, I have cursed them, Because ye lay it not to heart.

3 Behold, I will destroy your seed And scatter dung on your faces, The dung of your solemn feasts; And it shall take you to itself: And ye shall know,

4 That I have sent to you this command, That my covenant may be with Levi, Saith Jehovah of hosts.

5 My covenant with him was that of life and peace; And I gave him fear, and he feared me, And before my name he was humble; (**524**)

6 The law of truth was in his mouth, And iniquity was not found in his lips; In peace and uprightness he walked before me, And many he restored from iniquity.

7 Verily the lips of the priest should keep knowledge, And the law should they seek from his mouth, For the messenger of Jehovah of hosts is he:

8 But ye have departed from the way, To stumble have ye made many in the law; Ye have therefore violated the covenant of Levi, Saith Jehovah of hosts:

9 Therefore have I also made you Contemptible and base before all the people, As ye have not kept my ways And had respect of persons in the law.

10 Is there not one father to us all? Hath not one God created us? Why do we deal falsely, every one with his brother? So as to pollute the covenant of our fathers.

11 Perfidiously has Judah acted, And abomination has been done In Israel and in Jerusalem; For polluted hath Judah (**544**) The holiness of Jehovah, which he loved, And hath married the daughter of another god.

12 Cut off will Jehovah The man who doeth this, The prompter and the respondent, From the tabernacles of Jacob; And him who bringeth an oblation to Jehovah of hosts.

13 And this have ye in the second place done --- Covering with tears the altar

of Jehovah, With weeping and with wailing, Because there is no more regard to the offering, And no receiving of what is acceptable from you hand.

14 And ye have said, Why is this? Because Jehovah has been witness Between thee and the wife of thy youth; With whom thou hast dealt unfaithfully, When yet she is thy consort, And the wife of thy covenant.

15 But did he not make one? And had he not an exuberance of spirit? And why one? That he might seek [secure] good seed. Therefore watch over your spirit; And with the wife of thy youth Deal not thou unfaithfully.

16 For if thou hatest, dismiss, Saith Jehovah, God of Israel; For he covers violence with his garment, Saith Jehovah of hosts: Therefore watch over you spirit, And deal not unfaithfully.

17 Ye have wearied Jehovah with your words; But ye have said, How have we wearied him? By saying, Whosoever doeth evil Is acceptable in the eyes of Jehovah, And in them he takes delight; Or, Where is the God of judgment?

Translation: Malachi 3

CHAPTER 3

1 Behold I will send my messenger, And he will clear the way before me: And presently he shall come to his temple, The Lord whom ye seek, Even the messenger of the covenant whom ye desire; Behold, he cometh, saith Jehovah of hosts.

2 But who will endure the day of his coming? And who will stand when he appears. For he will be like a purifying fire And like the herb of the fullers:

3 And he shall sit as the purifier and cleanser of silver, And he will cleanse the sons of Levi, And fuse them as silver and gold,

4 That they may offer to Jehovah An offering in righteousness; And acceptable to Jehovah Shall be the offering of Judah and Jerusalem, As in the days of old, as in former years.

5 I will also draw nigh to you for judgment, And will be a swift witness Against the sorcerers and the adulterers And those who swear to a falsehood, And who withhold the wages of the hireling, And wrong the widow, the orphan, and the stranger, And who fear not me, saith Jehovah of hosts.

6 Because I am Jehovah, I change not; Therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.

7 From the days of your fathers Ye have turned from my statutes and have not kept them; Return to me, and I will return to you, Saith Jehovah of hosts: But ye have said, How are we to return?

8 Will a man rob the gods? (**585**) But ye have robbed me: yet ye have said, In what have we robbed thee? In the tithes and in the offerings.

9 With a curse are ye cursed, For ye have robbed me, the whole of the nation.

10 Bring ye all the tithes to the store-house, And let there be food in my house; And prove me now by this, Saith Jehovah of hosts, Whether I will not open for you The windows of heaven, And draw out for you a blessing, Until there be a superabundance:

11 I will also restrain for you the devourer, That he may not destroy the fruit of your land; And not fruitless will be the vine for you in the field, Saith Jehovah of hosts.

12 Then blessed shall all nations call you, For ye shall be a land of delight, Saith Jehovah of hosts.

13 Strong against me have been your words, Saith Jehovah of hosts: But ye have said, In what have we spoken against thee? Ye have said, Vain it is to serve God,

14 And what profit is it, That we have kept his charge, And that we have walked humbly Before Jehovah of hosts:

15 And now happy we call the proud; yea, built up are they who do iniquity, And those who tempt God, and they are delivered.

16 Then spake those who feared Jehovah, Every one to his friend; And hearken did Jehovah and hear, And written was a book of remembrance Before him, for those who feared Jehovah And who thought on his name:

17 And they shall be to me, saith Jehovah of hosts, In the day which I appoint, a peculiar treasure; And I will spare them, As a man spares his son who serves him.

18 Then ye shall return and see the difference Between the righteous and the ungodly, Between him who serves God And him who does not serve him.

Translation: Malachi 4

CHAPTER 4

1 For behold the day! it comes burning as an oven And all the proud and all who do iniquity Shall be stubble; And burn them up shall the day that is coming, Saith Jehovah of hosts; For it shall leave them neither root nor branch.

2 But arise to you, who fear my name, Shall the sun of righteousness, With healing in its beams; And ye shall go forth and leap, Like fattened calves:

3 And ye shall tread down the ungodly, For they shall be dust under the soles of your feet, In the day which I appoint, Saith Jehovah of hosts.

4 Remember the law of Moses my servant Which I committed to him on Horeb, For all Israel, even the statutes and judgments.

5 Behold I send to you Elijah the prophet, Before it comes, the day of Jehovah, great and terrible;

6 And he shall turn the heart of fathers to their sons, And the heart of sons to their fathers; Lest I come and smite the land with a curse.

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- :{קדש} Zechariah 13, note 325 2
- {קדש} :{ליהוה} Zechariah 14 2
- :{קוה} Zechariah 1
- :{קנא} Zechariah 8
- :{קנה} Zechariah 13
- :{קפא} Zechariah 14
- :{קפאון} Zechariah 14, note 337
- :{קרא} Zechariah 7
- :{קרב} Zechariah 14
- :{קשב} Zechariah 1, note 167
- :{ר} Translator's Preface to Zechariah and Malachi, note 7
- :{רבות} Zechariah 8
- :{רוח} Zechariah 6, note 218
- :{רם} Malachi 3, note 407
- :{רעל} Zechariah 12 2
- :{רפה} Zechariah 10, note 271
- :{רצון} Malachi 2, note 384
- :{רק} Malachi 3
- :{רש} Zechariah 9, note 251
- :{שאר} Malachi 2 2 3
- {שאר} :{רוח} Malachi 2
- :{שב} Zechariah 1, note 165 2
- :{שבלים} Zechariah 4 2 3
- :{שוב} Zechariah 5, note 208 2 3
- :{שטז} Zechariah 3, note 187
- :{שכל} Malachi 3 2
- :{שלום} Zechariah 8 2
- :{שמחות} Zechariah 6, note 219

- :{שמע} Zechariah 1, note 166 2
- :{שמש} Malachi 4, note 425
- :{שרקים} Zechariah 1, note 172
- :{ששוז} Zechariah 8, note 244
- :{תהיה} Zechariah 12, note 307
- :{תורה} Malachi 2
- :{תחנונם} Zechariah 12
- :{תחנונים} Zechariah 12
- :{תלאה} Malachi 1, note 364
- :{תפארת} Zechariah 12, note 311
- :{תפוצנה} Zechariah 1

Latin Words and Phrases

- Compositum jus, fasque animi, sanctosque recesssus Mentis, et incoctum generoso pectus honesto: Haggai 2, note 157
- Equidem totum hunc locum pari qua ingressus est magnificentia exornat vates; ex tanta rerum admirandarum copia nobilissima quaeque seligens, eaque coloribus splendidissimis, imaginibus, figuris, dictione elatissima illustrans; quorum summam sublimitatem cumulat et commendat singu-laris clausulae elegantia: ita ut, nisi una atque altera ei insideret obscuri-tatis nebula vetustate, ut videtur, inducta, vix quidquam hoc poemate in suo genere extaret luculentius aut perfectius: Translator's Preface to Habakkuk, Zephaniah, and Haggai, note 2
- Est vaticiniorum ejus argumentum Deo dignissimum, sive serias ejus redargutiones, sive severas comminationes, sive amicas monitiones, sive blandas promissiones, ad gratiam N. T. quam maxime protensas, spectemus. In quabus omnibus non tantum quoad rem consentientes alios habet vates, sed et phrases adhibuit: Translator's Preface to Habakkuk, Zephaniah, and Haggai, note 4
- Hunc librum canonicum esse constat,''---tum 1. quia in Bibliis Hebrais extat; tum 2. quia in N.T. allegatum: Commentary on Habakkuk, note 12
- Is nihil videtur hahere singulare aut eximium, in dispositione rerum, vel colore dictionis: Translator's Preface to Habakkuk, Zephaniah, and Haggai, note 3
- Lagenas: Haggai 2, note 160
- Non ben celestes impia dextra colit: Haggai 2, note 158
- Poeticus est Habbaccuci stylus; sed maxime in Oda, quae inter absolutissimas in eo genere merito numerari potest: Translator's Preface to Habakkuk, Zephaniah, and Haggai, note 1
- Postea vero: Zephaniah 3, note 123
- Remotos a festivitate collegi, Ex to sunt, onus super eam opprobrium: Zepha-

niah 3, note 132

- Segregavit: Zephaniah 1, note 83
- Siccitas: Haggai 1, note 147
- Supra: Haggai 2, note 160
- Unusquisque illorum: Habakkuk 2, note 42
- afflictum et attenuatum: Zephaniah 3, note 127
- appetentiores: Commentary on Haggai, note 13
- carbo ignitus: Habakkuk 3, note 63
- conficiam: Zephaniah 3, note 133
- contritio: Zephaniah 1, note 87
- desiderio affici: Zephaniah 2, note 100
- deugain: Haggai 2, note 160
- diffundentur: Habakkuk 1, note 23
- direptionem: Habakkuk 2, note 44
- erratica cantio: Habakkuk 3, note 58
- et dicetur: Habakkuk 2, note 42
- habitaculum caulis pastorum: Zephaniah 2, note 105
- in postibus ejus: Zephaniah 2, note 114
- interficiam: Zephaniah 3, note 133
- ipsi: Zephaniah 2, note 112
- lignum: Habakkuk 2, note 46
- non fallet: Habakkuk 2, note 37
- pauperem et egenum: Zephaniah 3, note 127
- perfidi: Habakkuk 1, note 19
- perspicue: Habakkuk 2, note 35
- preparavit: Zephaniah 1, note 83
- provocatrix: Zephaniah 3, note 115
- qui: Habakkuk 3, note 75
- quibus: Zephaniah 2, note 107
- quod: Haggai 1, note 146
- reddam: Zephaniah 3, note 123
- restituam: Zephaniah 3, note 123
- tabulatum: Habakkuk 2, note 46
- territus sum: Habakkuk 3, note 59
- ut: Habakkuk 3, note 75 2
- vomitus ignominiae: Habakkuk 2, note 53
- vos: Zephaniah 2, note 112
- Adeo ut reversi dixerint: Zechariah 1, note 171
- Aperte renute: Zechariah 11, note 296
- Et dabo tibi ambulantes de his qui nunc hic assistant: Zechariah 3, note 194
- Fundet vel: Malachi 3, note 401
- Impietas: Zechariah 5, note 211
- Jurantes and fallandum: Malachi 3, note 402
- Lanaria: Malachi 3, note 400

- Nihil date: Zechariah 11, note 296
- Omnes qui in gradibus descendentibus sunt Hebraei filios: Zechariah 1, note 163
- Post Scripturae lectionem, quam vehementer inculco, ad Calvini Commentarios legendos adhortor, quem laudibus majoribus extollo quam ipse Helmichius; dico enim incomparabilem esse in interpretatione Scripturae, et majoris faciendos ipsius Commentarios, quam quicquid Patrum Biblio-theca nobis tradit; adeo ut et spiritum aliquem prophetiae eximium illi prae aliis plerisque, imo et omnibus, concedam: Translator's Preface to Zechariah and Malachi, note 10
- Prophetarum ultimus Malachius medio quodam dicendi genere utitur, atque ejusmodi plane, quod arguere videatur poesin Hebraeam inde a cap-tivitate Babylonica deflorescentem, et inclinata jam aetate in senium quodammodo vergentem. --- Proel: Translator's Preface to Zechariah and Malachi, note 9
- Respicient ad me: Zechariah 12, note 316
- Statuta mea: Zechariah 1, note 169
- Sunt aliqua sub ejus Vaticinii finem (vide cap. 9, 10. et init. 11.) et poetica et valde ornata, et, ut in Vate omnium fortasse obscurissimo, satis perspicua. --- Proel: Translator's Preface to Zechariah and Malachi, note 6
- Varii: Zechariah 1, note 172
- Villa haec merces significat victimas et ritus sine pietate solida: Zechariah 11, note 298
- aurifaber: Malachi 3, note 401
- beneficence: Malachi 4, note 425
- co-haerens: Zechariah 13
- cohaerentem mihi: Zechariah 13
- colabit: Malachi 3, note 401
- consanguineus: Zechariah 13
- contribulis: Zechariah 13
- decreta: Zechariah 1, note 169
- defaecans: Malachi 3, note 401
- deprecationum: Zechariah 12, note 315
- devincientes: Zechariah 11, note 291
- eliquabit: Malachi 3, note 401
- et dixit: Zechariah 3, note 193
- expurgans: Malachi 3, note 401
- falsitas: Malachi 2, note 372
- funiculi: Zechariah 11, note 291
- idolum: Zechariah 11, note 303
- incessus, vias, aditus: Zechariah 3, note 194
- intentum: Zechariah 12
- irritum fecistis: Malachi 2, note 375
- medius edocti: Malachi 3, note 423
- modius: Zechariah 5, note 212
- non in exercitu nec in robore: Zechariah 4, note 200

- non virtute neque vi: Zechariah 4, note 200
- occisio: Zechariah 14, note 345
- ouibus: Zechariah 1, note 166
- particeps: Malachi 2, note 386
- propter hostem: Zechariah 8, note 239
- proximum: Zechariah 14, note 335
- quasi: Zechariah 13, note 327
- quia: Zechariah 1, note 166
- quis poterit cogitare: Malachi 3, note 399
- reverendum: Malachi 1, note 365
- simulacra: Zechariah 10, note 271
- smegma: Malachi 3, note 400
- statim: Malachi 3, note 396
- sumfulon: Zechariah 13
- supervenerunt: Zechariah 1, note 170
- transitus: Zechariah 3, note 194
- tristes: Malachi 3, note 416