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JOHN CALVIN

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Commentary on Isaiah

Volume 2: Chapters 33–66

John Calvin

Translated by the Rev. William Pringle

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Commentary on Isaiah
Volume 2: Chapters 33–66

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Chapter 33

CHAPTER 33

Isaiah 33:1-24

1. Woe to thee that spoilest, and thou wast not spoiled; and dealest treacherously, and they dealt not treacherously with thee! when thou shalt cease to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled; and when thou shalt make an end to deal treacherously, they shall deal treacherously with thee.

1. Vae qui spolias, nec fuisti spoliatus; qui inique agis, nec inique actum in to fuit! Ubi desieris spoilare, spoliaberis; ubi tinem inique agendi feceris, inique in to agetur.

2. O LORD, be gracious unto us; we have waited for thee: be thou their arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble.

2. Iehova, miserere nostri; in to speravimus; esto, qui fuisti brachium eorum in matutinis, etiam salus nostra in tempore tribulationis.

3. At the noise of the tumult the people fled; at the lifting up of thyself the nations were scattered.

3. A voce tumultus fugerunt pcpuli; ab exaltatione tua dissipatae sunt gentes.

4. And your spoil shall be gathered like the gathering of the caterpillar: as the running to and fro of locusts shall he run upon them.

4. Et colligetur praeda vestra collectione bruchorum; secundum discursum locustarum pergens illuc.

5. The LORD is exalted; for he dwelleth on high: he hath filled Zion with judgment and righteousness.

5. Exaltatus est Iehova, qui habitat in excelsis. Implevit Sion judicio et justitia.

6. And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation: the fear of the LORD is his treasure.

6. Et erit stabilitas temporum tuorum fortitudo, salutes, sapientia, et scientia; timor Jehovae ipse thesaurus ejus.

7. Behold, their valiant ones shall cry without: the ambassadors of peace shall weep bitterly.

7. Ecce nuncii eorum vociferabuntur foris; legati pacis amare flebunt.

8. The highways lie waste, the wayfaring man ceaseth; he hath broken the covenant, he hath despised the cities, he regardeth no man.

8. Desolatae sunt viae, cessavit viator; irritum fecit foedus, sprevit civitates, nihil reputavit hominem.

9. The earth mourneth and languisheth: Lebanon is ashamed and hewn down: Sharon is like a wilderness; and Bashan and Carmel shake off their fruits.

9. Luxit, emarcuit terra; pudefactus est Libanus et succisus; facta est Saron instar deserti; excussus est Basan et Carmelus.

10. Now will I rise, saith the LORD; now will I be exalted; now will I lift up myself.

10. Nunc surgam, dicit Jehova; nunc exaltabor, nunc extollar.

11. Ye shall conceive chaff; ye shall bring forth stubble: your breath, as fire, shall devour you.

11. Concipietis quisquilias, parietis stipulas; spiritus vestri ignis devorabit vos.

12. And the people shall be as the burnings of lime: as thorns cut up shall they be burned in the fire.

12. Et erunt populi combustiones calcis, (vel, calx combusta,) tanquam spinae abscissae igni exurentur.

13. Hear, ye that are far off, what I have done; and, ye that are near, acknowledge my might.

13. Andite, qui longe abestis, quid fecerim; cognoscite, vicini, potentiam meam.

14. The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?

14. Expaverunt in Sion impii; terror apprehendit hypocritas (vel, sceleratos.) Quis ex nobis (vel, pro nobis) habitabit cam igne devorante? Quis ex nobis habitabit cum ardoribus aeternis?

15. He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil;

15. Ambulans injustitiis, loquens recta, aspernars lucrum ex vi et calumnia, excutiens manus suas a susceptione muneris; obturans aurem suam, ne audiat sanguines; comprimens oculos suos, ne videat malum.

16. He shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure.

16. Hic in excelsis habitabit; propugnacula petrarum asylum ejus; huic panis dabitur, et aquae ejus certae (erunt.)

17. Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off.

17. Regem in decore suo videbunt oculi tui; videbunt terram procul remotam.

18. Thine heart shall meditate terror. Where is the scribe? where is the receiver? where is he that counted the towers?

18. Cor tuum meditabitur terrorem. Ubi scriba? Ubi appensor? Ubi qui annotat domos insigniores?

19. Thou shalt not see a fierce people, a people of a deeper speech than thou canst perceive; of a stammering tongue, that thou canst not understand.

19. Popalum trucem non videbis, populum abstrusi labii, ut non intelligas; linguae balbae, ut non capins.

20. Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken.

20. Aspice Sionem civitatem solennitatum (vel, conventuum) nostrarum; oculi tui videbunt Ierusalem, habitaculum tranquillum, tentorium quod non transferetur; cujus paxilli non amovebuntur in seculum, et cujus funes cuncti non rumpentur.

21. But there the glorious LORD will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams; wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby.

21. Adeo (vel, quia si) illic fortis nobis Iehova locus fluminum, rivorum spatiis amplorum, per quem non transibit navis remigum, et per quem navis magnifica non pertransibit.

22. For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; he will save us.

22. Quia Iehova judex noster, Iehova legislator noster, Iehova rex noster; idem servabit nos.

23. Thy tacklings are loosed; they could not well strengthen their mast, they could not spread the sail: then is the prey of a great spoil divided; the lame take the prey.

23. Laxati sunt funes tui, ut non solidaverint malum suum, neque expanderint velum; tunc divisa est praeda spolii multi, claudi quoque dirlpuerunt praedam.

24. And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity.

24. Nec dicet habitator, AEgrotus sum; populus habitans in ea solutus est ab iniquitate.

1. *Wo to thee that spoilest.* If these words shall be expounded as relat-

ing to the Babylonians, the strain will flow easily enough; for, after having promised freedom to the prisoners, (Isaiah 32:15,) he now appropriately taunts the conquerors. Besides, they needed to be peculiarly confirmed, that they might give credit to a prediction which appeared to be incredible; for they could not think it probable that such vast power would be destroyed and overthrown, and that, the wretched prisoners who were now in a state of despair would speedily be permitted to return to their native country. Amidst such distresses, therefore, they might have fainted and given up all hope of safety, if the Prophet had not met them with these exhortations. Accordingly, he anticipates those doubts which might have tormented their minds and tempted them to despair, after having been carried away by the Babylonians, and reduced to slavery; for they saw none of those things which are here promised, but everything entirely opposite.

Yet, as it is almost universally agreed that this is the beginning of a new discourse, and that it is addressed to Sennacherib and his army, I am not unwilling to believe that the Prophet pronounces against the Assyrians, who unjustly oppressed all their neighbors, a threatening which was intended to alleviate the distresses and anxieties of the people. He therefore means that there will be a wonderful revolution of affairs, which will overthrow the flourishing condition of Nineveh, though it appears to be invincible; for the Babylonians will come in a hostile manner to punish them for that cruelty which they exercised on other nations.

In order to impart greater energy to this discourse, he addresses the Assyrians themselves, *"Wo to thee that plunderest;* you may now ravage with impunity; no one has power to resist you; but there will one day be those who in their turn shall plunder you, as you have plundered others." He speaks to them in the singular number, but in a collective sense, which is very customary. Others read it as a question, "Shalt thou not be spoiled? Dost thou think that thou wilt never be punished for that violence? There will one day be those who will render to thee the like." But we may follow the ordinary exposition, according to which the Prophet exhibits in a striking light the injustice of enemies, who were so eager for plunder that they spared nobody, not even the innocent who had never injured them; for that is a demonstration of the utmost cruelty. I am therefore the more disposed to adopt this exposition, according to which he describes in this first clause what the Assyrians are, shews them to be base and cruel robbers, and gives a strong exhibition of their cruelty in harassing and pillaging harmless and inoffensive persons; so that, when the Jews beheld such unrestrained injustice, they might consider that God is just, and that such proceedings will not always pass unpunished.

When thou shalt have ceased to plunder. This is the second clause of the sentence, by which the Prophet declares that the Assyrians now plunder, because God has given loose reins to them, but that he will one day check them, so that they will have no power to do injury. If we were to understand

him to mean, "when they would no longer wish to plunder," that would be a feeble interpretation; but the Prophet advances higher, and declares that the time will come "when they shall make an end of plundering," because the Lord will restrain and subdue them. The meaning is therefore the same as if he had said, "When thou shalt have reached the height;" for we see that tyrants have boundaries assigned to them which they cannot pass. Their career is rapid, so long as they keep their course; but as soon as the goal, their utmost limit, has been reached, they must stop.

Let us cheer our hearts with this consolation, when we see tyrants insolently and fiercely attack the Church of God; for the Lord will at length compel them to stop, and the more cruel they have been, the more severely will they be punished. The Lord will destroy them in a moment; for he will raise up against them enemies who will instantly ruin and punish them for their iniquities.

Here we ought also to acknowledge the providence of God in the overthrow of kingdoms; for wicked men imagine that everything moves at random and by the blind violence of fortune; but we ought to take quite another view, for the Lord will repay their deserts, so that they shall be made to know that the cruelty which they exercised against inoffensive persons does not remain unrevenged. And the event shewed the truth of this prediction; for not long afterwards Nineveh was conquered by the Babylonians, and lost the monarchy, and was even so completely destroyed that it lost its name. But as Babylon, who succeeded in her room, was not less a "spoiler," the Prophet justly foretells that there will be other robbers to rob her, and that the Babylonians, when their monarchy shall be overthrown, will themselves be plundered of those things which they seized and pillaged from others.

2. *O Jehovah, have pity upon us.* This sentiment was added by the Prophet, in order to remind the godly where they ought to go amidst such distresses, even when they shall appear to be deprived of all hope of safety; that they ought to betake themselves to prayer, to supplicate from God the fulfillment of these promises, even when they shall be most wretched, and when the power of the enemy to oppress them cruelly shall be very formidable. And here we ought carefully to observe the order which the Prophet has followed, in first exhibiting the promise of God and immediately exhorting to prayer. Not only so, but he breaks off the stream of his discourse, and suddenly bursts out into prayer; for although the Lord hastens to perform what he has promised, yet he delays for a time, in order to exercise our patience. But when we ought to wait, there is found in us no steadfastness or perseverance; our hearts immediately faint and languish. We ought, therefore, to have recourse to prayer, which alone can support and gladden our hearts, while we look earnestly towards God, by whose guidance alone we shall be delivered from our distresses. Yet let us patiently, with unshaken hope and confidence, expect what he has promised to us; for at length he will shew that he is faithful, and will not disappoint us.

At the same time the Prophet bids us not only consider in general the judgment of God against the Assyrians, but God's fatherly kindness towards his chosen people; as if he had said that the Assyrians will be destroyed, not only that they may receive the just reward of their avarice and cruelty, but because in this manner God will be pleased to provide for the safety of his Church. But while he exhorts us to pray for mercy, he likewise declares that we shall be miserable.

In thee have we hoped. In order to cherish the hope of obtaining favor, believers next declare that they "have hoped in God," on whom they now call; and indeed our prayers must be idle and useless, if they are not founded on this principle.

"Let thy mercy be upon us," saith David,
"according as we have hoped in thee." (Psalm 33:22.)

For to go into the presence of God, if he did not open up the way by his word, would be excessively rash; and, therefore, as he kindly and gently invites us, so we ought to embrace his word, whenever we approach to him. Besides, patience must be added to faith; and, therefore, when faith is taken away, we do not deserve that the Lord should hear us, for it is by faith that we call upon him. Now faith alone is the mother of calling on God, as is frequently declared in many passages of Scripture; and if faith be wanting, there can be nothing left in us but hypocrisy, than which nothing is more abhorred by God. (Romans 10:14.)

And hence it is evident that there is no Christianity in the whole of Popery; for if the chief part of the worship of God consists of prayer, and if they know not what it is to pray, (for they bid us continually doubt, and even accuse of rashness the faith of the godly,) what kind of worshippers of God are they? Can that prayer be lawful which is perplexed by uncertainty, and which does not rely with firm confidence on the promises of God? Do not those Rabbins, who wish to be reckoned theologians, shew that they are mere babes? Certainly our children excel them in knowledge and in the true light of godliness. [1]

Let us also learn from these words that our faith is proved by adversity; for the actual trial of faith is when, with unshaken patience in opposition to all dangers and assaults, we continue to rely on the word and the promises. Thus we shall give practical evidence that we have sincerely believed.

Be what thou hast been, their arm in the morning. Others render it as if it were a continued prayer, "Be our arm in the morning, and our salvation in tribulation." As to believers speaking in the third person, they consider it to be a change which is frequently employed by the Hebrews. But I think that the Prophet's meaning is different; for he intended to express that desire which is rendered more intense by benefits formerly received; and, therefore, in my opinion, that clause is appropriately inserted, "their arm in

[1] "Certainement nos enfans sont plus savans et religieux qu'eux." "Certainly our children are more learned and religious than they are."

the morning," in which I supply the words "who hast been," in order to bring forward the ancient benefits bestowed by God on the fathers. "Thou, Lord, didst hearken to the prayers of our fathers; when they fled to thee, thou gavest them assistance i now also be thou our salvation, and relieve us from our afflictions."

"Arm" and "salvation" differ in this respect, that "arm" denotes the power which the Lord exerted in defense of his Church, and that before she was afflicted; while "salvation" denotes the deliverance by which the Lord rescues the Church, even when she appears to be ruined. He therefore places on record ancient benefits which the Lord formerly bestowed on the fathers, that he may be moved to exercise the same compassion towards the children. As if he had said, "O Lord, thou didst formerly turn away the dangers which threatened thy Church; relying on thy favor she flourished and prospered. Thou didst also deliver her when oppressed. In like manner wilt thou act on our own account, especially since it belongs to thy character to render assistance when matters are desperate and at the worst." [2]

The particle {אף}, *(aph,) even,* is very emphatic for confirming our faith, that we may not doubt that God, who always continues to be like himself, and never degenerates from his nature or swerves from his purpose, will also be our deliverer; for, such have believers found him to be. We ought, therefore, to place continually before our eyes the manner in which the Lord formerly assisted and delivered the fathers, that we may be fully convinced that we also shall not fail to obtain from him assistance and deliverance.

3. *At the voice of the tumult the peoples fled.* He now returns to the former doctrine, or rather he continues it, after having inserted a short exclamation. He had already shewn that the Assyrians would be defeated, though they appeared to be out of the reach of all danger; and now he bids the Jews look upon it as having actually taken place; for their power was vast, and all men dreaded them and reckoned them invincible. Isaiah therefore places before the eyes of the Jews the dreadful ruin of the Assyrians, as if it had been already accomplished. He makes use of the plural number, saying that they were *peoples;* for the kingdom of the Assyrians consisted of various "peoples," and their army had been collected out of various nations; and therefore he affirms that, although their number was prodigious and boundless, yet they would miserably perish.

At thy exaltation. The word "exaltation" is explained by some to mean the "manifestation" by which the Lord illustriously displayed what he was able to do. But I explain it in a more simple manner, that the Lord, who formerly seemed as it were to remain at rest, when he permitted the Babylonians to ravage with impunity, now suddenly came forth to public view; for his delay was undoubtedly treated with proud scorn by the enemies, as if the God of Israel had been humbled and vanquished; but at length he arose and sat

[2] "Puis que ton naturel est d'assister aux tiens, quand tout est reduit au desespoir." "Since thy disposition is to assist thy people when all is reduced to despair."

down on his judgmentseat, and took vengeance on the crimes of the ungodly. There is therefore an implied contrast between the "exaltation" and that kind of weakness which the Lord appeared to exhibit, when he permitted his people to be afflicted and scattered. [3]

By "the voice of the tumult" some suppose to be meant that the Lord will put the enemies to flight by merely making a noise; but that interpretation, I fear, is more ingenious than solid. I therefore willingly interpret the word "voice" to mean the loud noise which would be raised by the Medes and Persians.

4. *And your prey shall be gathered.* Here he addresses the Assyrians, if it be not thought preferable to refer it to the Jews, and to take the word "prey" in an active sense. But the former opinion is more *appropriate;* and this sudden turn of direct address imparts great vehemence to the prediction, when he openly and expressly taunts the proud adversaries. Yet it is doubtful whether it denotes the final ruin of the nation, or the defeat of King Sennacherib, when his army was destroyed by the hand of an angel before the walls of Jerusalem. (2 Kings 19:35.) The latter opinion has been adopted by almost all commentators, but it appears to me to be too limited; for I think that the Prophet, from the beginning of the chapter, intended to express something more, when he spoke of the destruction of that nation, The prophecy might even be still farther extended, as I suggested a little ago, so as to include likewise the Babylonians, who were the latest enemies of the Church; but, passing this, it is sufficiently evident that his pen is directed against the monarchy of Nineveh.

By your gathering of caterpillars. He compares that warlike nation to "caterpillars," because they will have no power to resist, but will all tremble and faint, so that they shall be gathered into large heaps to be destroyed. The comparison is highly appropriate, and is employed also by the Prophet Nahum, (Nahum 3:15,) though in a somewhat different sense; for that insect, we know, is exceedingly destructive to trees, and exceedingly hurtful, so that it may justly be called The calamity of the earth. But as their vast number gives no power to defend themselves, even children can easily shake off, and gather, and slay them in heaps wherever they meet with them. This also, the Prophet declares, will befall those insatiable robbers; for, although they did much injury by plundering for a long period, they will at length be slain and destroyed without the smallest effort; because, deprived of manly vigor, and almost of life, they will fall into the power of their enemies; and the wealth of Nineveh, amassed by robbery, shall be carried to Babylon.

According to the running of locusts. He now adds another comparison, that the Babylonians will "run like locusts," to devour the whole country; for those creatures, being exceedingly voracious, and moving forward without interruption, and leaping with astonishing rapidity, consume all the fruits of

[3] The rising meant is not the ascent of the Judge to the judgmentseat, (Piscator,) nor the exaltation of the Assyrian power, (AbenEzra.) but the act of rising from a state of seeming inaction, as when one rouses himself to strike, (Barnes.)" — Alexander.

the earth. Some refer it to the same Assyrians, as if the Prophet compared them to "locusts," because they will be easily dispersed; but that interpretation does not apply, for the Prophet draws up an army of "locusts," so as completely to cover in its march the whole land; and he beautifully draws a comparison between the "caterpillars" and the "locusts," on account of their insatiable avarice and vast numbers.

5 *Jehovah is exalted.* He explains more fully what we briefly noticed a little before, about the exaltation of God, and follows out the subject which we formerly mentioned, that the destruction of a monarchy so powerful will make it evident how highly God values the salvation of his Church, for whose sake he will utterly ruin Nineveh, the queen of cities, and her inhabitants. This lesson is highly useful, that God does not spare reprobate and irreligious men; for, by opposing their unlawful desires, his object is to testify how much he loves his elect; and it is no ordinary consolation that the glory of God shines most brightly in the salvation of the Church.

Who dwelleth on high. First, he declares that God is raised "on high," whereas wicked men imagine that he was cast down and humbled by the destruction of the people. Again, lest any one should think that God has only recovered what he lost, as it frequently happens in the world that they who have been vanquished, as soon as a favorable change takes place, again put forth fresh vigor, he expressly declares that God is "exalted" before the eyes of men, because this is due to him on account of his greatness, for he inhabiteth the heavens. Hence it follows, that although he frequently conceals his power, yet he never loses his right, but, whenever he thinks proper, openly displays his exalted rank; for to dwell "in the heavens" denotes, as we know, supreme authority, to which the whole world is subject. (Psalm 115:3.) In this manner he not only shews that God can easily and readily cast down all that is lofty in the world, but argues from God's eternal nature, that when God is despised by wicked men, he cannot, at length, do otherwise than manifest his glory; for otherwise he would "deny himself." (2 Timothy 2:13.)

He hath filled Zion with judgment and righteousness. Thus he again confirms the statement, that it will be a proof of God's wonderful kindness, when the Jews shall be delivered from the tyranny of the Babylonians. It was proper to place before their eyes the Author of so great a blessing; for we see how basely his glory is obscured by our ingratitude. Now, "the fullness of righteousness and judgment" means, that God will largely and copiously pour forth his kindness in restoring the Church. Yet it will not be unsuitable to view these words as referring to lawful order, when everything is justly and properly administered; for without this the Church will never enjoy prosperity, though everything else may succeed according to the wish. Holy and welladjusted order, therefore, and not corruptible riches, is the standard by which our prosperity should be judged.

6. *And the stability of thy times shall be.* He promises that the state of

the kingdom under the reign of Hezekiah will yet be happy and prosperous, especially when he contrasts it with the wretched, destructive, and ruinous aspect which it exhibited under the reign of Ahaz; for, although the enemy had been driven out, hardly any one would have expected that the Jews, who had been so heavily oppressed, would be restored to their former order. As to the words, some translate them, "Truth, and strength, and salvation shall be in thy times;" as if the Prophet described the prosperity which the nation should enjoy under a pious king; and they think that each of those terms denotes so many of God's benefits. Others think that {אמונת} *(emunath)* denotes "fidelity," as if the Prophet said that it would be "salvation and strength." Others draw from it a somewhat different sense, that "strength, salvation, and knowledge" will be "stable" under the reign of Hezekiah. But when I examine closely the words of the Prophet, I choose rather to make a different distinction, that "stability, strength, and salvation will be established by wisdom, and knowledge," during the reign of Hezekiah.

The fear of Jehovah is his treasure. When he says that "the fear of God is the treasure" of a pious king, this accords with the explanation which we have now given; for during peace all men wish to lead a safe and easy life; but few care how they shall enjoy such distinguished benefits. Indeed the greater part of men would desire to fatten like a herd of swine; and thus while all are eagerly directed by blind lust to seek outward benefits, the light of heavenly doctrine, which is an invaluable blessing, is almost set at nought. He therefore means that the prosperity of the Church will be "stable," [4] when "wisdom and knowledge" shall reign in it; that its "strength" will be lasting, when the "knowledge" of God shall prevail; and that its salvation will be eternal, when men shall be well instructed in the knowledge of God.

This is a very remarkable passage; and it teaches us that our ingratitude shuts the door against God's blessings, when we disregard the Author of them, and sink into gross and earfifty desires; and that all the benefits which we can desire or imagine, even though we actually obtained them, would be of no avail for our salvation, if they were not seasoned with the salt of faith and knowledge. Hence it follows that the Church is not in a healthy condition unless when all its privileges have been preceded by the light of the knowledge of God, and that it flourishes only when all the gifts which God has bestowed upon it are ascribed to Him as their author. But when the knowledge of God has been taken away, and when just views of God have been extinguished or buried, any kind of prosperity is worse than all calamities.

For these reasons I consider *stability, strength,* and *salvations,* to denote the same thing, that the condition of the Church will be secure, when men shall have been cured of blindness and ignorance, and shall begin to know God. And hence we see what kind of Church the Papists have, distinguished, indeed, by pomp and splendor, but they want this "knowledge," and, there-

[4] This word is rendered by Calvin and our own translators, "stability."

fore, it cannot be stable or secure, and is not a Church of God. If, therefore, the Lord shall grant to us this blessing, that the brightness of faith shall actually shine in the midst of us, other blessings will follow of their own accord, and if we are shaken and tossed about by various tempests, we shall always be supported by the arm of God.

Of thy times. He addresses Hezekiah, not as a private individual, but as the head of the whole people; and he includes the whole people in this description. But since the kingdom of Hezekiah was but a slender shadow of the kingdom of Christ, as we formerly remarked, these words must be referred to Christ, in whom is found true wisdom and knowledge. (Colossians 2:3.)

It is proper to observe the designations which are here employed in order to commend the word of God and the gospel. They are likewise employed by Paul, when he speaks of "teaching in all wisdom and knowledge;" for by this commendation he extols the dignity of the gospel. (Colossians 1:9, 28.) Hence also it ought to be inferred that, where Christ is not known, men are destitute of true wisdom, even though they have received the highest education in every branch of learning; for all their knowledge is useless till they truly "know God." (John 17:3.)

The fear of Jehovah is his treasure. [5] I think that the expression, "the fear of Jehovah," was added by the Prophet for the sake of explanation, in order to state more fully that the knowledge of which he spoke is the teacher of piety, and is not cold or lifeless, but penetrates powerfully into our heart, to form us to "the fear of God." Hence also, in other passages of Scripture, this "fear" is called "wisdom," or rather "the beginning of wisdom," that is, the substance and chief part of it. (Proverbs 1:7, and 9:10.) It is a mistake to suppose that the word "beginning" denotes rudiments or elements, for Solomoil means by it the chief part and design; and the reason is, that, as men are fools till they submit to the word of God, so the perfection of wisdom springs from the docility or obedience of faith. "The fear of God" is therefore called a "treasure," without which all prosperity is miserable; and this shews more fully the scope of the passage, that the full perfection of a happy life consists in the knowledge of God, which we obtain by faith.

Thus, in the person of the king he shews that it is an invaluable blessing to worship God with due piety and reverence. They who are destitute of "the fear of God" are pronounced by him to be miserable and ruined; and, on the other hand, they who "fear the Lord" are declared to be very happy, even though in other respects they be reckoned in the judgment of men to be very miserable. He speaks of that "fear" which contains within itself true obedience, and renews our hearts; for it is a different kind of fear which influences even wicked men, and leads them to dread God as criminals dread a judge. That "fear" does not deserve to be so highly applauded; for it springs neither from a true knowledge of God, nor from a cheerful desire to worship

[5] "Here Judah is spoken of in the third person, though mentioned in the second just before; an enallage frequent in Hebrew poetry." — Stock.

him, and therefore differs widely from that wisdom which Isaiah describes. These statements were made by him in reference to Hezekiah, but, as we have already said, they related to the whole body of the people; and hence we infer that they apply both to men of ordinary rank and to the king, but more especially to Christ, who was filled with "the Spirit of the fear of the Lord," as we formerly saw, [6] (Isaiah 11:2,) that he might make us partakers of it.

7. *Behold, their messengers* [7] *shall cry without.* It is difficult to determine whether Isaiah relates historically the fearful perplexity and imminent danger to which the Jews were reduced, in order to exhibit more strikingly the favor of deliverance, or predicted *a* future calamity, that the hearts of the godly might not soon afterwards faint under it. For my own part, I think it probable that this is not the history of, a past transaction, but that, as a heavy and sore temptation was at hand, it was intended to fortify the hearts of believers to wait patiently for the assistance of God when their affairs were at the worst. However that may be, the sad and lamentable desolation of the Church is here described, that believers may not cease to entertain good hope even in the midst of their perplexity, and that, when they have been rescued from danger; they may know that it was accomplished by the wonderful power of God.

The ambassadors of peace wept bitterly. It is given as a token of despair, that the ambassadors who had been sent to appease the tyrant were unsuccessful; for every way and method of obtaining peace was attempted by Hezekiah, but without any success. Accordingly, "the ambassadors" returned sad and disconsolate, and even on the road could not dissemble their grief, which it was difficult to conceal in their hearts, when matters were in so wretched a condition. He undoubtedly means that Sennacherib has haughtily and disdainfully refused to make peace, so that "the ambassadors," as; if they had forgotten their rank, are constrained to pour out in public their grief and lamentations, and, ere they have returned to their king and given account of their embassy, openly to proclaim what kind of answer they have obtained from the cruel tyrant, [8] Others think, that by "the ambassadors of peace" are meant those who were wont to announce peace; but that interpretation appears to me to be feeble and farfetched. By "the ambassadors of peace," therefore, I understand to be meant those who had been sent to pacify the king, that they might purchase peace on some condition.

8. *The roads are deserted.* He now adds, that "the roads" will be shut up, so that no one shall go in or out; which commonly happens when war has been declared. The Prophet appears to represent the ambassadors as declar-

[6] See Commentary on Isaiah, vol. 1, p. 374.

[7] "Their valiant ones, or messengers." — (Eng. Ver.) "The Targum and some other ancient versions seem to treat {,{אראל (erellam,) as a contraction of {אראה} ,{לם} (ereh lam, or eraeh lam.) Thus Aquila has {ὁραθήσομαι} {αὐτοῖς} Symmachus,{ὀφθήσομαι}; the Vulgate, videntes But there is no example of the form {לם} (lam) for {להם} (lahaem). — Alexander.

[8] "Eliakim, with the rest, who returned to Hezekiah, with their clothes rent, in despair at the rejection of all conditions of peace. Isaiah 36:2, 22." — Stock.

ing that henceforth there will be no opportunity of carrying on merchandise, and even that the highways will not be safe. [9] It is immediately added, —

They have violated the treaty. These words are viewed by some commentators as a complaint made by hypocrites that God does not fulfill his promises. If it were thought proper to view them as referring to God, still it would not be necessary to say that such a complaint proceeds from none but wicked men; for sometimes believers also quarrel with God in this manner. But I cannot approve of that interpretation; and, therefore, consider this to be a part of the description which the Prophet gives of the cruelty and insatiable rage of Sennacherib, in treacherously breaking the treaty which he had formerly made with Hezekiah; for, although he had promised that he would maintain peace, yet as soon as an opportunity presented itself for invading Judea, he violated his promise and made preparations for war. Such is also the import of the conclusion of the verse, that *he hath despised the cities, he hath regarded no man,* which means that his cruelty will be so great that he will not be restrained by shame or fear.

9. *The earth hath mourned and languished.* Here he describes more fully how wretched and desperate the Jews would perceive their condition to be, that their confidence might nevertheless come forth out of a deep gulf. The places are also specified by him, *Lebanon, Bashan,* and *Carmel,* which are widely distant from each other, and which form almost the farthest boundaries of the holy land, in order to shew that no part of it; will remain safe or uninjured. He describes this calamity in such a manner as to assign to each place what peculiarly belongs to it. To "Lebanon" he assigns confusion, because it is elsewhere mentioned as beautiful and glorious, in consequence of having been covered with lofty and valuable trees. He declares that "Sharon," which was a level and fertile district, will be "like a wilderness," and that "Bashan and Carmel," which abounded in "fruits," will be "shaken." Thus he alludes to the natural character of each place, and describes the misery and distress in such a manner as to magnify and illustrate the kindness of God, by whom they would be delivered, even though they appeared to be utterly ruined; for here we may see the hand of God openly displayed, if it be not thought preferable to view the Prophet as relating a past transaction in order to excite them to thankfulness.

10. *Now will I rise.* There is great force in the particle *now,* and likewise in the repetition which is added, "I shall be exalted, I shall be lifted up on high." We ought to observe the time to which these statements relate, that is, when the Church appeared to be utterly ruined; for God declares that he will judge that to be the most suitable time for rendering assistance. This is, therefore, a comparison of things which are contrary to each other;

[9] "These are not the words of the ambassadors reporting the condition of the country (Grotius), but of the Prophet himself describing it. The scene presented is not that of Protestant cities seized by Antichrist, and a stop put to a religious course and conversation (Gill), but the actual condition of Judea during the Assyrian invasion. (Compare Judges 5:6)." — Alexander.

for he exhibits to believers the heavy and grievous calamities by which they should be oppressed, and under which they would easily sink, if they were not upheld by some consolation. As if he had said, "The Lord will suffer you to be brought very low, but when your affairs shall be at the worst, and when you shall have in vain tried every remedy, the Lord will arise and succor you." Thus even when we are afflicted and brought very low, we ought to acknowledge that our safety cometh from God alone.

Accordingly, the word *now* denotes a period of the deepest distress. Men might think it exceedingly strange, but we plainly see the best reason why God thus delays to render assistance. It is, because it is useful to exercise the patience of the godly, to try their faith, to subdue the desires of the flesh, to excite to earnestness in prayer, and to strengthen the hope of a future life; and, therefore, he lays a restraint, that they may not with headlong eagerness anticipate that period which God has already marked out for them. The repetition is very emphatic, and is added for the purpose of confirming the statement; for when our affairs are desperate, we think that we are ruined, but at that very time we ought especially to hope, because the Lord generally selects it for giving a display of his power. For this reason, by extolling his loftiness, he arouses believers to the exercise of courage, that they may boldly defy the insolence of their enemies. [10]

11. Ye *shall conceive chaff.* He now addresses his discourse to the enemies of the Church, whose insolence, he says, is foolish and to no purpose; for when God shall have brilliantly displayed his power, they shall know that their efforts will be fruitless, and that they will accomplish nothing, even though they be leagued together in vast crowds. The Lord laughs at their madness, in thinking that everything is in their power, when he can instantly, by the slightest expression of his will, restrain and destroy them, though they may be defended by a very powerful army.

It is customary in the Scriptures to employ the word *conceptions* for denoting the designs and efforts of men. (Job 15:35; Psalm 7:14; Isaiah 26:17, and 59:4.) The metaphor is taken from pregnant women. Men are said to "conceive" and to "bring forth," when they attempt anything; but he declares that their "conception" shall be fruitless, and that they shall also "bring forth" to no purpose, for whatever they undertake shall be unsuccessful. There is nothing, therefore, in the brilliant military forces of our adversaries that ought to alarm us; for, although God may permit them for a time to bustle, and toil, and rage, yet God will at length turn into *"chaff"* all their rash and daring attempts. Let us learn that what Isaiah foretold about Sennacherib relates to all the adversaries of believers and of the Church.

The fire of your breath shall devour you. That they "shall be devoured by the fire of their breath" is usually explained to mean, "Your breath, like fire,

[10] "The emphasis is not upon the pronoun (Barnes), which in that case would have been expressed in Hebrew, but upon the adverb now, which is twice repeated to imply that the time for the divine interposition is arrived, and that there shall be no more delay." — Alexander.

shall devour you." But that is an unsuitable and even absurd comparison, and the true meaning readily suggests itself, "The fire kindled by your breath shall devour you." We commonly kindle a fire by blowing, and therefore he declares, that the fire which wicked men have blown by their wicked contrivances shall be destructive to them, because it shall consume them. It is the same statement which is often conveyed by a variety of metaphors in Scripture.

"They shall fall into the pit which they have digged. They are entangled in a net which they had prepared for others. The sword which they had drawn hath entered into their own bowels. Their arrow hath been turned back to pierce their own hearts." (Psalm 7:15; 37:15; 57:6.)

Thus the Prophet shews that the wicked tyrant who laid waste Judea and besieged Jerusalem with a numerous army, and all others who in like manner are adversaries of the Church, bring down destruction on themselves, and will at length be destroyed; and, in short, that they will be consumed by that "fire" which they have kindled.

12. *And the peoples shall be the burnings of lime.* He compares them to "the burning of lime," because their hardness shall be bruised, as fire softens the stones, so that they shall easily be reduced to powder; and, undoubtedly, the more powerfully wicked men are inflamed with a desire to commit injury, the more do they bruise themselves by their own insolence.

As thorns cut up. [11] This metaphor is not less appropriate; for although they hinder men from touching them by the painful wounds which they inflict on the hands, yet there is no kind of wood that burns more violently or is more quickly consumed. Something of the same kind, we have said, may be observed in "lime," which at first is hard, but is softened by the fire. The Prophet declares that the same thing will happen to the Babylonians, whom the Lord will easily destroy, though at first they appear to be formidable, and though it may be supposed to be unlikely that they shall be consumed by any conflagration. Whenever, therefore, we behold the enemies of the Church collecting all sorts of wealth and forces, and military preparations, in order to destroy us and set on fire the whole world, let us know that they are kindling a fire which shall miserably destroy them.

We know that this was fulfilled in Sennacherib, for the event proved the truth of these predictions, though they appeared to be altogether incredible. Let us hope that the same thing shall happen to all others who shall imitate the actions of this tyrant, and let us comfort ourselves by that example, and innumerable others, amidst our distresses and afflictions, which shall be followed by certain deliverance and dreadful vengeance on our enemies.

13. *Near, ye that are far off.* Isaiah here makes a preface, as if he were about to speak on a very weighty subject; for he bids his hearers be attentive, which is commonly done when any important and remarkable

[11] "In the Chaldee {{נסכ (chasach) signifies "to prune," and in the Syriac it denotes "the pruning of vines," as in Asseman. Bibl. Orient., tom. 1, p. 374. The meaning therefore is, as thorns lopped off and dried are quickly consumed, with a crackling noise, by the fire laid under them." — Rosenmuller.

subject is handled. He addresses both *those who are near,* who would be eyewitnesses of this event, and the most distant nations to whom the report would be communicated; as if he had said that the power of God will be such as to be perceived not only by a few persons, or by those who are at hand, but also by those who shall be at a very great distance. Thus he means that it will be a striking and extraordinary demonstration of the power of God, because wicked men, who formerly were careless and unconcerned, as if they had been free from all danger of distress or annoyance, shall be shaken with terror.

14. *The sinners in Zion are afraid.* But some one might object that the subject here treated is not so important as to need that lofty preface intended to arouse the whole world. Was it a matter of so great importance that wicked men were struck with fear? But by an attentive examination it will be found that it is no ordinary exhibition of divine power, when wicked men are aroused from their indolence, so that, whether they will or not, they perceive that God is their judge, especially when contempt of God is accompanied by hypocrisy, For although it is difficult to arouse irreligious men, when a veil is spread over their hearts, [12] yet still greater is the obstinacy of hypocrites, who imagine that God is under obligations to them. Thus we see that men are so bewitched by madness, that they despise all threatenings and terrors, and mock at the judgments of God, and, in short, by witty jesting, set aside all prophecies, so that it ought to be regarded as a miracle that men who make such resistance are overthrown. Hence Isaiah, with good reason, kindles into rage against them;for, when he employs the word *Zion,* he undoubtedly reproves the degenerate Jews, because, when they were covered with the shadow of the sanctuary, they thought that they were in possession of a fortress which could not be stormed; and undoubtedly, as I remarked a little before, the haughtiest and proudest of all men are they who shelter themselves under the name of God, and glory in the title of the Church.

Terror hath seized the wicked, {הנפים} *(chanephim)* is translated *hypocrites,* but still more frequently it may be viewed as denoting *"treacherous* revolters and men utterly worthless." Since, therefore, they were so wicked, and mocked at God and the prophets, he three, tens that God will be a judge so sharp and severe, that they shall no longer find pleasure in their impostures. Next is added a conression which wears the aspect of humility, in order to shew more clearly that hypocrites, who do not willingly obey God, at length find that experience is their instructor how dreadful is the judgment of God. As soon, therefore, as their "laughing" is turned into "gnashing of teeth," they begin to acknowledge that their whole strength is chaff or stubble. (Luke 6:25; Matthew 8:12.)

Which of us shall dwell with the devouring fire? As to the meaning of the words, some translate them, "Who shall dwell *instead of us?"* Others,

[12] "Quand leurs coeurs sont endureis." "When their hearts are hardened."

"Which *of us* shall dwell?" If we view them simply as meaning "to us," or "for us," the meaning may be thus explained, "Who shall encounter the fire, or place himself between, so that the flame may not reach us?" There are also other interpretations which amount to the same thing; but commentators differ in this respect, that some view the words as relating to the king of Assyria, and others as relating to God. I prefer the latter opinion, as has been already shewn; for although the king of Assyria might be regarded as a "fire" that would burn up the earth with his heat, yet the Prophet intended to express something far more dreadful, namely, the inward anguish by which ungodly men are tormented, the stings of conscience which cannot be allayed, the unquenchable burning of crimes which exceeds every kind of torments; for whatever is the course pursued by ungodly men, such will they find the dispensations of God to be towards them.

On their account, therefore, God is called *a devouring fire,* as we may learn from Moses, (Deuteronomy 4:24, and 9:3,) from whom the prophets, as we have frequently remarked, borrow their doctrines, and who is also followed by the Apostle. (Hebrews 12:29.) This exposition is confirmed by the Prophet himself, who shews what was the cause of that terror. It might be objected that God was excessively severe, and that he terrified them beyond measure; but he is usually kind and gentle to the godly, while wicked men feel that he is severe and terrible. Some think that the Prophet intended to convince all men of their guilt, in order that they might abandon all confidence, in their works, and in a lowly and humble manner betake themselves to the grace of God, as if he had said, "None but he who is perfectly righteous can stand before the judgmentseat of God, and therefore all are accursed."

But he rather speaks in the name, and agreeably to the feelings, of those who formerly scorned all threatenings; and he now represents those very persons as inquiring with trembling dismay, "Who shall dare to go into the presence of God?" This mournful complaint is a manifestation of that terror which hath lately seized them, when, being convinced of their frailty, they cry out in sorrow, "Who shall endure the presence of God?" But since they still murmur against God, though he compels them reluctantly to utter these words, the Prophet, on the other hand, in order to restrain their wicked barkings, replies that God is not naturally the object of terror or alarm to men, but that it arises through their own fault, because conscience, which God does not suffer to lie idle, terrifies them with their crimes.

15. *He that walketh in righeousness.* Now, therefore, he explains more fully what we briefly remarked a little before, that they who provoke his anger, and thus drive away from them his forbearance, have no right to complain that God is excessively severe. Thus he convinces them of their guilt and exhorts them to repentance, for he shews that there is a state of friendship between God and men, if they wish to follow and practice "righteousness," if they maintain truth and integrity, if they are free from all corruptions and act inoffensively towards their neighbors; but because they

abound in every kind of wickedness, and have abandoned themselves to malice, calumny, covetousness, robbery, and other crimes, it is impossible that the Lord should not strike them down with fear, by shewing that he is terrible to them. In short, the design of the Prophet is to shut the mouths of wicked babblers, that they may not accuse God of cruelty in their destruction; for the whole blame rests on themselves. By evasions they endeavor to escape condemnation. But the Prophet declares that God is always gracious to his worshippers, and that in this sense Moses calls him "a fire," (Deuteronomy 4:24, and 9:3,) that men may not despise his majesty and power; but that every one who shall approach to him with sincere piety will know by actual experience that nothing is more pleasant or delightful than his presence. Since, therefore, God shines on believers with a bright countenance, they enjoy settled peace with him through a good conscience; and hence it follows that God is not naturally terrible, but that he is forced to it by our wickedness.

This discourse is directed chiefly against hypocrites, who throw a false veil of piety over their hidden pollutions and crimes, and make an improper use of the name of God, that they may indulge more freely in wickedness. By the examples which he adduces in illustration of "righteousness," the Prophet more openly reproves their crimes. He enumerates the principal actions of life by means of which we shew what sort of persons we are. Here, as in many other passages, he treats of the second table of the Law, by which the sincerity of godliness is put to the test; for, as gold is tried in the fire, so the dispositions which we cherish towards God are ascertained from the habitual course of our life, when our sincerity comes to be seen by the duties which we owe to each other.

The word *walketh* is the wellknown metaphor of a road, which is frequently employed in Scripture for describing the manner of life or habitual conduct. By righteousness he means not the entire keeping of the Law, but that equity which is included in the second table; for we must not; imagine that subtle disquisitions about "righteousness" are here intended.

Who speaketh what is right. He now enumerates the chief parts of that uprightness which ought to be maintained; and as the tongue is the chief instrument by which a man regulates his actions, he places it in the second rank after "righteousness." He who restrains it from slander and evilspeaking, from deceit, perjury, and falsehood, so as not to injure his brother in any matter, is said to "speak what is right." Next is added another department,

Who despiseth the gain arising from violence and calumny. He might have said in a single word, "who despiseth money;" but he employed more homely language, and accommodated himself to the ignorance of men. He who is desirous of riches, and does not refrain from robbery or from base and unlawful means of making gain, harasses and oppresses the poor and feeble, and cares for nothing else than to lay hold on money in every direction, and by every method either right or wrong. He next proceeds farther, and

describes corruptions of every sort.

Who shaketh his hands from accepting a bribe. Under the name of *bribes,* by which judges are corrupted, he likewise includes everything else. There is nothing by which the dispositions of men and righteous judgment are so much perverted; and therefore he bids them "shake their hands," so as to intimate in what abhorrence they should be held, and with what care they should be avoided by all, lest, if they only handled or were tainted by barely touching them, they should be drawn aside kern what is just and right; for "bribes" have wonderful powers of fascination, so that it is very difficult for judges to keep their hands altogether clean and uncorrupted by them. What, then, can we think of those who always have their hands stretched out and ready to receive, and crooked nails ready to catch; and not only so, but, like harlots, openly hire themselves out for gain? Need we wonder if God thunders against them with unrelenting vengeance?

Who stoppeth his ear that it way not hear blood. At length he demands that the manifestation of uprightness shall be made in the *ears.* By *blood* he means murder and manslaughter, but he likewise includes wicked conspiracies of every kind, that the "ears" may not be open to hear them, so.as to give our consent.. He does not mean that our "ears" should be shut against the cries of the poor, when they suffer injuries and oppression; but he means that we should detest wicked devices by which unprincipled men contrive the ruin of the innocent, that we may not even lend our "ears" to their discourses, or allow ourselves to be solicited in any way to do what is evil.

Who shutteth his eyes. At length he demands the same holiness in the "eyes." In short, he teaches that we ought to restrain all our senses, that we may not give to wicked men any token of our approbation, if we wish to escape the wrath of God and that terrible burning of which he formerly spake.

16. *He shall dwell in high places.* That the Jews may know that the chastisements which God had inflicted on them were righteous, and may endeavor to be restored to his favor, he says that his blessing is ready to be bestowed on good and upright men, such as he described in the former verse, and that they are not subject to any danger, and have no reason to dread that burning which he mentioned, because they shall be made to dwell in a place of the greatest safety. As to wicked men, slanderers, robbers, and deceitful persons, on the other hand, who cannot restrain their tongue, and hands, and ears, and eyes from base and wicked actions, the Prophet shews that we need not wonder if God treat them with severity, and that, while God is their judge, their own conscience is at the same time their executioner; and consequently, that the only means of hindering them from dreading the presence of God, is to keep themselves voluntarily in the fear of God. By "high places," he means a very safe place, and free from all danger, which ns attack of the enemy can reach, as he declares plainly enough immediately afterwards by assigning to them a habitation among "fortified rocks."

Bread shall be given to him. To a safe dwelling he adds an abundance of good things; as if he had said that the holy and upright worshippers of God shall lack nothing, because God will not only protect them so as to *keep* them safe from all danger, but will also supply them abundantly with all that is necessary for the support of life. By the words "bread" and "water" he means all the daily necessaries of life.

And his waters shall be sure. Though wicked men have abundance for a time, they shall afterwards be hungry; as God threatens in the Law, that they shall have famine and hunger. (Leviticus 26:19; Deuteronomy 28:23, 48.) The same remark may be made with regard to "bread," for the word "sure" relates to both; as if he had said, that all believers shall have their food made "sure." "Lions are hungry, and wander about; but they that fear God shall not want any good thing," (Psalm 34:10;) because God, who is by nature bountiful, is not wearied by bestowing liberally, and does not exhaust his wealth by acts of kindness.

Besides, as the life of men is exposed to various dangers, and as abundance of meat and drink is not all that is necessary for our support, unless the Lord defend us by his power, we ought, therefore, to observe carefully what he formerly mentioned, that believers are placed in a safe abode. The Lord performs the office of a shepherd, and not only supplies them with food, but also defends them from the attacks of robbers, enemies, and wolves; and, in short, keeps them under his protection and guardianship, so as not to allow any evil to befall them. Whenever, therefore, it happens, that enemies annoy us, let us consider that we are justly punished for our sins, and that we are deprived of God's assistance because we do not deserve it; for we must reckon our sins to be the cause of all the evils which we endure.

Yet let not those who are conscious of their integrity imagine that God has forsaken them, but let them to the latest day of their life rely on those promises in which the Lord assures his people that he will be a very safe refuge to them. No man, indeed, can be so holy or upright as to be capable of enduring the eye of God; for "if the Lord mark our iniquities," as David says, "who shall endure?" (Psalm 130:3.) We therefore need a mediator, through whose intercession our sins may be forgiven; and the Prophet did not intend to set aside the ordinary doctrine of Scripture on this subject, but to strike with terror wicked men, who are continually stung and pursued by an evil conscience, [13] This ought to be carefully observed in opposition to the Popish doctors, by whom passages of this kind, which recommend works, are abused in order to destroy the righteousness of faith; as if the atonement for our sins, which we obtain through the sacrifice of Christ, ought to be set aside.

17. *The king in his beauty.* Although the Prophet changes the person, yet this verse must be connected with the preceding verse; for he addresses the sincere worshippers of God, to whom he promises this additional blessing,

[13] "D'un remords de mauvaise conscience." "By the remorse of a bad conscience."

Thou shalt see the king in his beauty This promise was highly necessary for supporting the hearts of believers, when the state of affairs in Judea was so lamentable and so desperate. When Jerusalem was besieged, the king shut up within the city and surrounded by treacherous counsellors, the people unsteady and seditious, and everything hastening to ruin, there appeared to be no hope left. Still the royal authority in the family of David was a remarkable pledge of the love of God. Isaiah, therefore, meets this danger by saying, that though they behold their king covered with filthy garments, yet he shall be restored to his former rank and splendor.

First, it ought to be observed how invaluable is the kindness of God, when the commonwealth is at peace, and enjoys good princes, by whom everthing is administered justly and faithfully; for by their agency God rules over us. Since, therefore, this happiness is not inconsiderable, the Prophet was unwilling to leave out this part, in promising prosperity to the worshippers of God. Yet it, ought also to be observed, that that kingdom was a type of the kingdom of Christ, whose image Hezekiah bore; for there would be a slight fulfillment of this promise, if we did not trace it to Christ, to whom all these things must be understood to refer. Let no man imagine that I am here pursuing allegories, to which I am averse, and that this is the reason why I do not interpret the passage as relating directly to Christ; but, because in Christ alone is found the stability of that frail kingdom, the likeness which Hezekiah bore leads us to Christ, as it were, by the hand. I am, therefore, disposed to view Hezekiah as a figure of Christ, that we may learn how great will be his beauty. In a word, Isaiah here promises the restoration of the Church.

The land very far off. The restoration of the Church consists of two parts; first, that "the king shall be seen in his beauty;" and secondly, that the boundaries of the kingdom shall be extended. We know that the appearance of Christ is so disfigured as to be contemptible in the eyes of the world, because "no beauty or loveliness" (Isaiah 53:2) is seen in him; but at length, his majesty and splendor and beauty shall be openly displayed, his kingdom shall flourish and be extended far and wide. Although at present wicked men have everything in their power, and oppress the true servants of God, so that they scarcely have a spot on which they can plant their foot in safety, yet with firm hope we ought to look for our King, who will at length sit down on his bright and magnificent throne, and will gloriously enrich his people.

18. *Thy heart shall meditate terror.* Believers are again informed what calamities are at hand, lest, by being suddenly overtaken with such heavy afflictions, they should sink under them. {יהגה} *(yehgeh)* is translated by some in the preterite, "meditated," and by others in the future, "shall meditate;" because such an exchange of tenses is customary in the Hebrew language. For my own part, believing that he warns the people of approaching distresses, instead of relating those which had been formerly endured, I willingly retain the future tense, which is also the tense employed by the Prophet, "shall

meditate."

Where is the scribe? He relates in a dramatic and lively manner ({μιμητικῶς}) the speeches of those who, overcome by terror, break out into these exclamations: *Where is the scribe? Where is the weigher?* thus expressing the powerful impression made on their minds. If any one suppose that the line of thought is suddenly broken off, because the Prophet, having in the former verse spoken of "the kings beauty," now brings forward terrors, I have no doubt that he magnifies the kindness of God by means of comparison, in order that believers, when they have been delivered, may set a higher value on the condition to which they have attained. Men are forgetful and niggardly in judging of God's favors, and, after having been once set free, do not consider what was the depth of their misery. Such persons need to be reminded of those wretched and disastrous times, during which they endured great sufferings, in order that they may more fully appreciate the greatness of the favor which God has bestowed on them. We ought also to observe another reason why it was advantageous that the people should be forewarned of that terror. It was that, after having heard of the kings magnificence, they might not promise themselves exemption from all uneasiness, but might be prepared to undergo any kind of troubles and distresses, and that, even while they were subject to tribute and placed under siege, they might, know that the kingdom of Judah was the object of God's care, and would be rescued from the hands of tyrants.

It is a very wretched condition which the Prophet describes, that a free people should be oppressed by such cruel tyranny as to have all their property valued, and an inventory taken of their houses, possessions, families, and servants. How grievous this slavery is, many persons formerly unaccustomed to it actually know by experience in our times, when their property is valued to the very last farthing, and a valuation is made not only of their undoubted incomes but also of their expected gains, and not only their money and possessions, but even their names are placed on record, while new methods of taxation are contrived, not only on food but on the smallest articles, so that tyrants seize on a large portion of those things which are indispensably necessary to the wretched populace; and yet those calamities do not restrain men from insolence, licentiousness, and rebellion. What then will happen when they shall be free and at full liberty? Will they not, forgetful of all their distresses, and unmindful of God's kindness, abandon themselves more freely than before to every kind of indulgence and licentiousness? It is not without good reason, therefore, that the Prophet places before the eyes of the people that wretched condition, that they may not, when delivered from it, giveway to their unlawful passions, but may acknowledge their deliverer and may love him with all their heart.

Some have falsely imagined that Paul (1 Corinthians 1:20) quotes this passage; for that would spoil the Prophet's meaning and torture his words to a different purpose. They have been led into a mistake by the mere use of

the word "scribe," which there denotes a Teacher. Isaiah gives the name of "the scribe" to the person who took account of persons, families, lands, and houses, and, in short, who kept the registers of the taxes. By "the weigher," he means the person who received the taxes, for he "weighed" the money which was paid. That office is discharged in the present day by those who are called treasurers.

Where is he who singles out the principal houses? He now.adds a very troublesome and exceedingly disliked class of men, "the describers of the towers," that is, of the more remarkable buildings; for they visit and examine each person's house, in order to know who are more wealthy than others, that they may demand a larger sum of money. Such men, like hunting-hounds, are commonly employed by tyrants to scent the track of money, for the sake of laying on some unusual impost in addition to the ordinary taxes. The arrival of such persons must have been exceedingly annoying to the people, for they never cease till they have sucked all the blood and marrow. If any one prefer to view this term as denoting the servants of the king himself, whose business it was to destroy the houses adjoining to the walls of the city, let him enjoy his opinion. For my own part, I think it probable that the Prophet speaks of the receivers of taxes, whom conquerors appoint over vanquished nations for the sake of maintaining their authority.

19. *Thou shaft not see a fierce people.* The word {נועז} *(nognaz)* is translated by some "strong," and by others "impudent;" but, undoubtedly, he intends to express the fierceness of the Assyrians, which he afterwards affirms by saying that they would have no intercourse with them, because they spoke a different language. Nothing is more fitted to excite men to compassion than the intercourse of speech, by which men explain their distresses to each other. When this is wanting, there can be no means of gaining their hearts; each party is a barbarian to the other; and nothing more can be obtained from them than if one were dealing with wild and savage beasts. The Prophet, therefore, dwells largely on the wretched condition of the people, in order to shew, on the other hand, how great was the kindness of God in delivering them from so great terror. In like manner, the Holy Spirit magnifies the grace of God, in preserving his people in Egypt, though

"they did not understand the language of that nation."
(Psalm 131:5.)

20. *Behold Zion.* Some read it in the vocative case, "Behold, O Zion;" but it is preferable to read it in the accusative case. He brings forward a promise of the restoration of the Church, which ought to have great weight with all godly persons; for when the Church shakes or falls, there can be no hope of prosperity. That the Church will be restored he shews in such a manner that he places it before our eyes as having actually taken place, though he speaks of what is future; and his object is to give greater energy to his style, as if he had said, "Again you will see Zion restored and Jerusalem flourishing." Although believers see everything destroyed and scattered, and

although they despair of her safety, yet in Jerusalem there shall be a quiet and safe habitation.

The city of our solemnities, or *of our assemblies.* By this designation he shews that we ought to judge of the restoration of Zion chiefly on this ground, that the people "assembled" there to hear the Law, to confirm the covenant of the Lord, to call upon his name, and to offer sacrifices. When the people were deprived of these things, they were scattered and nearly lost, and appeared to be separated from their head and utterly abandoned. Accordingly, nothing was so deeply lamented by godly persons, when they were held in captivity at Babylon, as to be banished from their native country and at the same time deprived of those advantages; and that this was the chief complaint of all believers is very manifest from many passages. (Psalm 137:4.)

"Zion" is called by him "a city," because it formed the middle of the city, and was also called "the city of David." (Isaiah 22:9.) The extent of Jerusalem was different and larger; for, as we mentioned in the explanation of another passage, [14] there was a double wall, which is customary in many cities. Here it ought to be observed that the restoration of the Church is the most valuable of all blessings, and ought above all things to be desired; that everything else, even though it should be most abundant, is of no avail, if this single blessing be, wanting; and, on the other hand, that we cannot be unhappy, so long as Jerusalem, that is, the Church, shall flourish. Now, it is restored and flourishes, when God presides in our assemblies, and when we are assembled in his name and thus cleave to him. Wicked men indeed shelter themselves under the name of God, as if they were assembled at his command; but it is an empty mask, for in their heart they are very far from him, and attempt nothing in obedience to his authority.

Jerusalem a peaceful habitation. He says that believers, who had long been agitated amidst numerous alarms, will have a safe and "peaceful habitation" in the Church of God. Although God gave to his people some taste of that peace under the reign of Hezekiah, yet it was only in Christ that the fulfillment of it was manifested. Not that since that time the children of God have had a quiet habitation in the world; even in the present day this peacefulness is concealed; for we lead an exceedingly wandering and uncertain life, are tossed about by various storms and tempests, are attacked by innumerable enemies, and must engage in various battles, so that there is scarcely a single moment that we are at rest. The peace which is promised, therefore, is not that which can be perceived by our bodily senses, but we must come to the inward feelings of the heart, which have been renewed by the Spirit of God, so that we enjoy that peace which no human understanding is able to comprehend; for, as Paul says, "it goes beyond all our senses." (Philippians 4:7.) The Lord will undoubtedly bestow it upon us, if we dwell in the Church.

[14] Commentary on Isaiah

A tent which shall not be carried away, the stakes of which shall never be removed. By these metaphors of "a tabernacle" and of "stakes," he describes accurately the condition of the Church. He might have called it a well-founded city, but he says that it is "a tabernacle," which, by its very nature, is such that it can be speedily removed to a different place, in order that, though we may consider the condition of the Church to be uncertain and liable to many changes, yet we may know that it cannot be moved or shaken; for it will remain in spite of storms and tempests, in spite of all the attacks of enemies, and in opposition to what appears to be its nature, and to the views of our understanding. These two statements appear to be inconsistent with each other, and faith alone reconciles them, by maintaining that it is safer to dwell in this "tabernacle" than in the best defended fortresses.

We ought to employ this as a shield against temptations, which otherwise would speedily destroy our faith, whenever we perceive the Church to be not only shaken, but violently driven about in all possible directions. Who would say that amidst that violent storm the "tabernacle" was safe? But since God does not wish his people to be wholly fixed on the earth, that they may depend more on himself alone, the protection which he promises to us ought to be reckoned better than a hundred, better than a thousand supports.

21. *Because there the mighty Jehovah will be to us.* The two particles {כי} {ים} (ki im) often serve the place of a double affirmative, but here a reason is assigned, and they might even be appropriately rendered, *For if;* but I willingly retain what is more clear. The Prophet assigns the reason why the Church, which appears to resemble a movable "tent," exceeds in stability the best founded cities. It is because "the Lord is in the midst of her," as it is also said, (Psalm 46:5,) and "therefore she shall not be moved." If we separate the Church from God; it will immediately fall without any attack; for it will consist of men only, than whom nothing can be more weak or frail.

Will be to us a place of rivers. When God dwells with us, he confirms and supports what was naturally feeble, and supplies to us the place of a very strong fortress, a very broad ditch, and walls and "rivers" surrounding the city on every side. He alludes to the situation of the city Jerusalem, which had only a small rivulet, and not large and rapid rivers, like those of Babylon and other cities; for in another passage (Isaiah 8:6) he enjoined them to rest satisfied with the power of God alone, and not to covet those broad rivers. As if he had said, "Our strength shall be invincible, if God rule over us; for under his guidance and direction we shall be abundantly fortified."

There shall not pass a ship with oars. Large rivers are attended by this inconvenience, that they may give access to enemies, so as to enable them to approach with their ships nearer than is desirable; and thus, very frequently, what appeared to be of service is found to be injurious. But while the Lord says that he will be "a river," he says also that there will be no reason to dread such an inconvenience, and that enemies will not be allowed to

approach, he mentions two kinds of ships, long ships, and ships of burden, in order to shew that enemies will be shut out in every possible way. Hence we ought to draw a very useful doctrine, that the hope of safety should not be sought from any other than from God alone, and that it is in vain to collect various means of defense, which will be useless, and even hurtful, if He be not on our side.

22. *For Jehovah is our judge.* The Prophet now explains the manner in which God dwells in the Church. It is, that he is there worshipped and acknowledged as *Judge, Lawgiver,* and *King;* for they who obey God and yield subjection to him as their King, shall know by experience that he is the guardian of their salvation; but they who falsely glory in his name, vainly hope that he will assist them. Let us only yield to his authority, hear his voice, and obey him; and, on the other hand, he will shew that he is our protector and most faithful guardian. But when we despise his voice and disobey his word, we undoubtedly have no reason to wonder that he abandons and forsakes us in dangers.

Hence, also, we ought to observe what is the true Church of God. It is that which acknowledges God to be a "Lawgiver" and "King." With what effrontery, therefore, do the Papists dare to boast that they are the Church of God, seeing that they reject that lawful government of it which was enjoined by Moses, and the Prophets, and Christ, and substitute in the room of it inventions and base traffic? They exert a cruel tyranny over consciences, and, by taking away all the liberty which Christ has bestowed on us, they wretchedly harass souls and lead them to perdition; but God alone has the right to rule the conscience, because he alone is "Lawgiver" and "Judge," and he alone ought to rule and guide us by his word. He combines here the three words, "Judge," "Lawgiver" and King," because the subject is of very great importance, and ought not to be lightly set aside. If, therefore, we permit ourselves to be guided by his word, he will never fail us; and this is the only way of obtaining salvation.

23. *Thy cords were loosed.* He directs his discourse to the Assyrians, in whose person he likewise addresses all the enemies of the Church. After having promised to the Church such stability as shall never be disturbed, he rebukes the foolish confidence with which ungodly men are puffed up; as if they had been so deeply rooted as to reach the center of the earth. Although, during the intoxicating influence of prosperity, they imagine that their wealth is exceedingly secure, he foretells that ruin will quickly overtake them, because they are not supported by the hand of God.

He follows out the comparison which he had employed at the commencement. Having said that the Church resembles a place that is fortified and surrounded by very broad rivers which do not admit the approach of enemies, he now compares the condition of wicked men to ships; by which he means that they have no solid foundation, though they appear to be formidable, and though they are madly eager and fiercely cruel, and imagine that none

can resist their rage. Although, therefore, they have long ships and ships of burden, by which they may be said to form a union between countries placed at great distances from each other, and to make themselves masters of sea and land, still they shall have no permanency or stability. The Lord will sink their ships, will take away their ropes and masts, and will involve them in a universal shipwreck. Let us not therefore be terrified by their fury and insolence, but let us look for the day of the Lord, when he shall make their rage and violence to fall on their own heads.

24. *And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick.* The Prophet again returns to the Church; for the destruction which he threatened against the Assyrians tended also to the consolation of the godly, since the safety of the Church could not be maintained unless the Lord granted his protection against so many adversaries who attack and molest her on every hand. Accordingly, having briefly remarked that all the reprobate who annoy the children of God shall be defeated, he appropriately follows out his subject by affirming that God will leave nothing undone that could promote the salvation of the godly. He says, therefore, that the citizens of the Church shall be freed from every inconvenience, because through the favor of God they shall enjoy prosperity.

The people that dwell in it have been freed from iniquity. This latter clause of the verse explains the former; for it shews that there is nothing to prevent the blessings of God from being largely enjoyed by us, when our sins have been pardoned. Hence, also, we conclude, that all the miseries which press upon us spring from no other source than from our sins. On any other ground the reason which he assigns might appear to be, farfetched and inappropriate; but we must hold this principle, that all the evils which God inflicts upon us are so many tokens of his anger. Hence it follows that, when guilt has been removed, nothing remains but that God will regard us with the affection of a father, and will graciously bestow upon us all that we need. If, therefore, we desire to be delivered from afflictions, we ought to observe this order, to seek first to be reconciled to God; for the removal of the cause would be speedily followed by the removal of the effect.

But seeing that our desires, are illregulated, and that, in consequence of being anxious merely to avoid punishments, we shut our eyes against the root of our distresses, we need not wonder that we obtain no alleviation of them. Those persons, therefore, are mistaken who indulge in their vices, and yet wish to be exempted from every kind of afflictions. If they do not suffer and adversity, still they will not cease to be miserable, and cannot enjoy peace of mind so long as they are pursued by the consciousness of their crimes. Consequently, true happiness consists in this, that we have obtained pardon from God, and sincerely believe that all the blessings which we receive from his hand are the results of his fatherly kindness.

Let us also learn that there is no other way in which we can please God, or obtain the honor of being accounted his children, than when he ceases to impute to us our sins; and therefore it is only the reconciliation which

we obtain by free grace that pacifies God toward us, and opens up the way to the enjoyment of his goodness. That there is no visible evidence of that exemption from afflictions does not lessen the truth of the promise, because believers are abundantly satisfied with this comfort in their afflictions, that even when they are chastened by the hand of God, still they are his beloved children. So far as they have been renewed by his Spirit, they begin to taste the blessing which was in full perfection before the fall of Adam; but because they are burdened with many sins, they constantly need to be cleansed. Still, however, through compassion on their weakness, God mitigates their punishment, and, if not by removing altogether, yet by abating and soothing their grief, shews that he promotes their happiness; and therefore it is not without good reason that the Prophet declares the Church to be exempted from ordinary calamities, so far as they proceed from the curse of God.

Hence, also, we see clearly how childish is the distinction of the Papists, that the removal of guilt is of no avail; as if we had to satisfy the judgment of God. But far otherwise do the prophets teach, as may be easily learned from various passages; and if there had been nothing more than this single passage, can anything be plainer than that sicknesses come to an end, because iniquity has been pardoned? The meaning is undoubtedly the same as if he had said, that punishment ceases because sin has been pardoned. True, indeed, though God has been pacified towards them, [15] he sometimes inflicts punishment on believers; and the object is, that by fatherly chastisement he may instruct them more fully for the future, and not that he may take vengeance on them, as if he had been but half reconciled. But Papists think that their punishments are of the nature of satisfactions, and that by paying them the sinner in some measure redeems himself, and puts away his guilt; which is absolutely inconsistent with a free pardon. Thus their abominable inventions, both about satisfactions, and about the fire of purgatory, fall to the ground.

It is also worthy of observation, that none but the citizens of the Church enjoy this privilege; for, apart from the body of Christ and the fellowship of the godly, there can be no hope of reconciliation with God. Hence, in the Creed we profess to believe in "The Catholic Church and the forgiveness of sins;" for God does not include among the objects of his love any but those whom he reckons among [he members of his onlybegotten Son, and, in like manuel', does not extend to any who do not belong to his body the free imputation of righteousness. Hence it follows, that strangers who separate themselves from the Church have nothing left for them but to rot amidst their curse. Hence, also, a departure from the Church is an open renouncement of eternal salvation.

[15] "Encore qu'il leur air pardonne." "Though he has forgiven them."

Chapter 34

CHAPTER 34

Isaiah 34:1-17

1. Come near, ye nations, to hear; and hearken, ye people: let the earth hear, and all that is therein; the world, and all things that come forth of it.

1. Accedite gentes ad audiendum, et populi attendite. Audiat terra, et plenitudo ejus; orbis, et cuncta germina ejus.

2. For the indignation of the LORD is upon all nations, and his fury upon all their armies: he hath utterly destroyed them, he hath delivered them to the slaughter.

2. Quia indignatio est Iehovae super omnes gentes, et furor super omnem exercitum earum; vastavit eas, tradidit eas in mactationem.

3. Their slain also shall be cast out, and their stink shall come up out of their carcases, and the mountains shall be melted with their blood.

3. Interfecti earum abjicientur, et e cadaveribus eorum ascendet foetor earum, ac liquefient montes prae sanguine eorum.

4. And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig tree.

4. Et tabescent omnes exercitus coelorum, et complicabuntur ut liber. Coeli et onmes exercitus eorum defluent, sicut defiuit folium e vite, et sicut defiuit ex ficu.

5. For my sword shall be bathed in heaven: behold, it shall come down upon Idumea, and upon the people of my curse, to judgment.

5. Quoniam inebriatus est in coelis gladius meus. Ecce, super AEdom descendet, super populum, inquam, anathematis met in judicium.

6. The sword of the LORD is filled with blood, it is made fat with fatness, and with the blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of the kidneys of rams:

for the LORD hath a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Idumea.

6. Gladius Iehoae impletus eat sanguine, impinguatus est ab adipe; sanguine, inquam, agnorum et hircorum, adipe renum arietum. Quoniam victima Iehova in Bozra, et mactatio magna in terra AEdom.

7. And the unicorns shall come down with them, and the bullocks with the bulls; and their l.and shall be soaked with blood, and their dust made fat with fatness.

7. Et descendent unicornes cum eis, et juvenci cum tauris; et inebriabitur terra eorum sanguine, et pulvis adipe impinguabitur.

8. For it is the day of the LORD'S vengeance, and the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion.

8. Quoniam dies ultionis Iehovae, annus retributionum in causam Sion.

9. And the streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch.

9. Et convertentur flumina ejus in picem, et pulvis ejus in sulphur; eritque terra ejus in picem ardentern.

10. It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up for ever: from generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it for ever and ever.

10. Noctu et die non extinguetur, perpetuo ascendet fumus ejus; a generatione in generationem devastabitur, perpetuis aeternitatibus nemo transibit per cam.

11. But the cormorant and the bittern shall possess it; the owl also and the raven shall dwell in it: and he shall stretch out upon it the line of confusion, and the stones of emptiness.

11. Itaque accipient eam in possessionem pelicanus et ulula; noctua et corvus habitabunt in ea; extendetque super earn funiculum inanitatis et lapides perpendiculares vantratis.

12. They shall call the nobles thereof to the kingdom, but none shall be there, and all her princes shall be nothing.

12. Nobiles ejus sine regno vacabunt, et cuncti principes ejus erunt nihilum.

13. And thorns shall come up in her palaces, nettles and brambles in the fortresses thereof: and it shall be an habitation of dragons, and a court for owls.

13. Proferet in palatiis ejus spinas, et urticam, et carduum in arcibus ejus; eritque habitaculum draconum, et mansio pullis struthionis.

14. The wild beasts of the desert shall also meet with the wild beasts of the island, and the satyr shall cry to his fellow; the screech owl also shall rest there, and find for herself a place of rest.

14. Et occurrent bestiae sylvestres satyris, et stryx ad socium suum vociferabur;etiam Lamina ibi per noctabit, invenietque sibi mansionem quietam.

15. There shall the great owl make her nest, and lay, and hatch, and

gather under her shadow: there shall the vultures also be gathered, every one with her mate.

15. Ulula faciet ibi nidum, et incubabit, et excludet, et congregabit in umbra ejus; quinetiam vultures ibi congregabuntur, unaquaeque cum socia sua.

16. Seek ye out of the book of the LORD, and read: no one of these shall fail, none shall want her mate: for my mouth it hath commanded, and his spirit it hath gathered them.

16. Sciscitamini ex libro Iehovae, et legite. Nunquid unum ex illis substractum; nullum sociae suae deerit; quoniam os ejus praecepit, et spiritus ejus congregavit eas.

17. And he hath cast the lot for them, and his hand hath divided it unto them by line: they shall possess it for ever, from generation to generation shall they dwell therein.

17. Et ipse projecit eis sortem, etmarius ejus divisit illis in perpetuum, quasi per funiculum. Ideo haereditabunt eam, in generationem et genereationem illic habitabunt.

1. *Draw near, ye nations.* Hitherto the Prophet, intentding to comfort the children of God, preached, as it were, in the midst of them; but now, directing his discourse to the Gentiles, he pursues the same subject, but in a different manner. Having formerly shewn (Isaiah 33:6, 20) that the Lord takes such care of his people as to find out the means of preserving them, he now likewise adds, what we have often seen in earlier parts of this book, that, after having permitted wicked men to harass them for a time, he will at length be their avenger, He therefore pursues the same subject, but with a different kind of consolation; for he describes what terrible vengeance the Lord will take on wicked men who had injured his people.

Hearken, ye peoples. In order to arouse them the more, he opens the address by this exclamation, as if he were about to discharge the office of a herald, and summon the nations to appear before the judgmentseat of God. It was necessary thus to shake off the listlessness of wicked men, who amidst ease and prosperity despise all threatenings, and do not think that God will take vengeance on their crimes. Yet amidst this vehemence he has his eye principally on the Church; for otherwise he would have spoken to the deaf, and without any advantage.

Let the earth hear. He addresses the Edomites who would haughtily despise these judgments, and therefore he calls heaven and earth to bear witness against them; for he dedares that the judgment will be so visible and striking, that not only all the nations but even the dumb creatures shall behold it. It is customary with the prophets thus to address the dumb creatures, when men, though endued with reason and understanding, are stupid, as we have formerly seen. (Isaiah 1:2; Deuteronomy 32:1.)

2. *For the indignation of Jehovah is on all the nations.* He undoubt-

edly means "the nations" which were hostile to the Jews, and at the same time were contiguous to them; for, being surrounded on all sides by various nations, they had almost as many enemies as neighbors. Though this hatred arose from other causes, such as envy, yet the diversity of religion very greatly inflamed their rage, for they were exceedingly offended at having their superstitions condemned. So much stronger was the reason why God proraised that he would be a judge and avenger.

On all their army. This is added because the Jews were few in number when compared with the rest of the nations. Although, therefore, "the nations" were proud of their vast numbers, and despised the Jews because they were few, yet he declares that God will easily diminish and crush them, in order to preserve, his little flock, of which he is the guardian.

He hath destroyed them. Though he speaks of future events, yet he chose to employ the past tense, in order to place the event immediately before the eyes of those who were lying low and overwhelmed with adversity. These predictions were made, as I briefly noticed a little before, not on account of the Edomites, who paid no regard to this doctrine, but for the sake of the godly, whom he wished to comfort, because they were wretchedly harassed by their enemies.

3. *Their slain shall be cast out.* By this circumstance he shews that it will be a great calamity, for if a few persons are "slain," they are committed to the earth; but when so great a multitude is slain at one time, that there are not left as many as are necessary for burying them, there is no thought of interment, and therefore the air is polluted by *the stench of their carcases.* Hence it is evident, that God is sufficiently powerful to lay low innumerable armies. Perhaps, also, the Prophet intended to heighten the picture of the judgment of God, because to the slaughter of the nations there will be added shame and disgrace, so that they shall be deprived of the honor and duty of burial

And the mountains shall melt on account of their blood. Another figure of speech is employed to shew more fully the extent of the slaughter, for the "blood" will flow from "the mountains," as if the very mountains were melted, just as when the waters run down violently after heavy showers, and sweep away the soil along with them. Thus, also, he shows that there will be no means of escape, because the sword will rage as cruelly on the very mountains as on the field of battle.

4. *And all the armies of heaven shall fade away.* Isaiah employs an exaggerated style, as other prophets are accustomed to do, in order to represent vividly the dreadful nature of the judgment of God, and to make an impression on men's hearts that were dull and sluggish; for otherwise his discourse would have been deficient in energy, and would have had little influence on careless men. He therefore adds that "the stars" themselves, amidst such slaughter, shall gather blackness as if they were ready to faint, and he does so in order to show more fully that it will be a mournful calamity. In like

manner, as in a dark and troubled sky, the clouds appear to be folded together, the sun and stars to grow pale and, as it were, to faint, and all those heavenly bodies to totter and give tokens of ruin; he declares that thus will it happen at that time, and that everything shall be full of the saddest lamentation.

These statements must be understood to relate to men's apprehension, for heaven is not moved out of its place; but when the Lord gives manifestations of his anger, we are terrified as if the Lord folded up or threw down the heavens; not that anything of this kind takes place in heaven, but he speaks to careless men, who needed to be addressed in this manner, that they might not imagine the subject to be trivial or a fit subject of scorn. "You will be seized with such terror that you shall think that the sky is falling down on your heads." It is the just punishment of indifference, that wicked men, who are not moved by any fear of God, dread their own shadow, and tremble "at the rustling of a falling leaf," (Leviticus 26:36,) as much as if the sun were falling from heaven. Yet it also denotes a dreadful revolution of affairs, by which everything shall be subverted and disturbed.

5. *For my sword is made drunken in the heavens.* He says that the "sword" of the Lord is bloody, as extensive slaughter makes the "swords" wet with gore; and, in order to give greater weight to his style, he represents the Lord as speaking. But why does he say that it is *in heaven?* for God does not call men to heaven to inflict punishment on them, but executes his judgments openly in the world, and by the hand of men. [16] Here the Prophet looks at the secret decree of God, by which he appoints and determines everything before it is executed; and he does not mean the act itself, but extols the efficacy of the prediction, because the certainty of the effect is manifest from the unchangeable purpose of God; that unbelievers may know that the Lord in heaven takes account of the crimes of wicked men, although for a time they may pursue their career of iniquity without being punished, and that, although they enjoy profound peace, still the sword by which they shall be slain is even now bloody in the sight of God, when he determines to inflict punishment on them. In like manner Sodom (Genesis 19:28) was already burning in the sight of God, while it freely indulged in wine and feasting, and in satisfying its lust; and the same thing must be said of other wicked men, who, while they are wallowing in pleasures, are held as appointed by God to be slain. We ought not, therefore, to fix our attention on the present state when we see wicked men enjoy prosperity and do everything according to their wish. Though no one annoys them, still they are not far from destruction when God is angry with them and is their enemy.

So it shall come down on Edom. He expressly mentions the Edomites,

[16] Nothing is more customary among Eastern poets than to employ a 'sword drunken with blood' to denote extensive slaughter. (Schurrer on Habakkuk 3:9.) Or, perhaps, in this verse the sword in heaven ought rather to be understood to be drunk with the divine anger, before it is let down on the earth to be glutted with the blood of enemies; in which case the following verse would fifty describe that sword as glutted with blood in the land of the Edomites." — Rosenmuller.

who were hostile to the people of God, though related to them by blood, and distinguished by the same mark of religion; for they were, as we have formerly mentioned, [17] descended from Esau, (Genesis 36:8,) and were the posterity of Abraham. At the present day, in like manner, we have no enemies more deadly than the Papists, who have publicly received the same baptism with ourselves, and even profess Christ, and yet cruelly persecute and would wish utterly to destroy us, *because* we condemn their superstitions and idolatry. Such were the Edomites, and therefore the Prophet has chiefly selected them out of the whole number of the enemies.

On the people of my curse. By giving them this appellation he confirms the sentence which he had pronounced, for in vain would they endeavor to escape that destruction to which they were already destined and devoted. By this term he declares that they are already destroyed by a decree of heaven, as if they had been already separated and cut off from the number of living men. That it may not be thought that God has done it unjustly, he adds, *to judgment;* for there is nothing to which men are more prone than to accuse God of cruelty, and the greater part of men are unwilling to acknowledge that he is a righteous judge, especially when he chastises with severity. Isaiah, therefore, shews that it is a just judgment, for God does nothing through cruelty or through excessive severity.

6. *The sword of Jehovah is filled with blood.* He follows out the same statement, but by a different description, which places the matter in a much stronger light, in order to shake off the drowsiness of wicked men, who are wont to laugh and scoff at all doctrine, as we have formerly remarked. It is therefore necessary that the judgments of God should be set forth as in a lively picture, that it may not only make a deep impression on their dull minds, but may encourage believers by holy confidence, when they learn that the pride and rebellion of their enemies cannot at all hinder them from being dragged like cattle to the slaughter, whenever it shall be the will of God.

He compares it to *sacrifices,* for animals are slain in sacririce for the worship and honor of God, and in like manner the destruction of this people will also tend to the glory of God. And here he confirms what was formerly said about *judgment,* for when God executes his judgments, he shews forth his glow; so that the destruction of wicked men is justly compared to "sacrifices," which belonged to his worship. "Sacrifices," indeed, were undoubtedly not very pleasant and agreeable to behold, for the revolting act of taking away life, the reeking blood, and the stencil of the smoke, might have a repulsive effect; and yet in these things the honor of God shone brightly. Thus, also, this slaughter was hideous to behold, and little fitted to obtain regard; but believers, in order that they may hallow the name of God in this respect, are commanded to lift up their eyes to heaven; because, in executing such punishment, God erects altars to himself for slaying sacrifices. Because they unjustly oppressed the Church of God, and, forgetful of all humane feelings,

[17] Commentary on Isaiah, vol. 1 p. 393.

treated the children of God with cruelty, Isaiah declares that in their blood is offered a sacrifice of sweet savor, and highly acceptable to God, because he executes his judgment.

With the blood of lambs and of goats. Under this appellation he describes metaphorically the people that were to be slain, and, alluding to the various kinds of victims, includes not only all men of ordinary rank, but all the nobles, in order to intimate that the Lord will punish his enemies in such a manner that no man of any class whatever shall be exempted he mentions *Bozrah,* the chief city and metropolls, as it were, of the nation, where the greatest slaughter shall take place; and next, he adds, the country of *Edom,* through the whole of which this calamity shall take its course. [18]

7. *And the unicorns shall come down with them.* This verse is closely connected with the former, for he adds nothing new, but proceeds with the same figure, amplifying what he had said about "rams" and "goats," to which he adds not only *bullocks* but wild and savage beasts. It amounts to this, that the vengeance of heaven will be so unrelenting as to spare neither age nor rank, and to mark; for slaughter even cruel giants, notwithstanding their silly fierceness, just as if one were preparing a sacrifice which consisted indiscriminately of every kind of animals. It ought not to be thought strange that lambs are mingled with cruel beasts, for the term "lambs" is not employed in commendation of their mildness or harmlessness, but is applied comparatively to those who are feeble and who belong to the ordinary rank, which lays them under the necessity of having some appearance of modesty.

Although God may appear to be harsh in thus directing his hostility against all classes, yet, by the use of the word "sacrifice," he claims for himself the praise of justice; and indeed no man, when he comes to the trial, will be found to be without blame, so that on good grounds all, without exception, are irrecoverably ruined. Such is the destruction which awaits all the reprobate, who of their own accord refuse to devote themselves to the service of God; irreligious hands shall offer them in sacrifice. [19]

{אבירים} *(abbirim)* is translated *strong* by some commentators; I have preferred to follow those who explain it to mean *bulls,* which it means also in Psalm 50:13, though in this passage the Prophet employs the word *bulls* to denote metaphorically those who are very strong and powerful.

8 *For it is the day of vengeance of Jehovah.* This verse must be viewed as closely connected with the preceding verses, for it points out the object which the Lord has in view in punishing the Edomites with such severity; and that object is, that he wishes to avenge his people and defend their cause. If, therefore, he had not also assigned this reason, the former statements might have appeared to be obscure or inappropriate; for it would, have been an uncertain kind of knowledge if we did not consider that God, in punishing

[18] "Au travers de la quelle ceste desconfiture passera sans espargner endroit quelconque." "Across which this overthrow shall pass without sparing any place whatever."

[19] "Ils seront sacrifiez par les mains d'aussi mecans qn'eux." "They shall be sacrificed by the hands of persons as wicked as themselves."

wicked men, testifies his unceasing affection and care to preserve his own people.

What was formerly said about the Edomites must undoubtedly be extended to the enemies of the Church, for all of them were included by the Prophet under a particular class; and, therefore, in adversity our hearts ought to be supported by this consolation, that the attacks which we now suffer shall come into judgment before God, who justly claims for himself this office. The Prophet does not only mean that it is in his power to punish wicked men whenever he thinks proper, but, that he reigns in heaven, in order to punish every kind of injustice at the proper time.

But we must attend to the words *day* and *year,* by which he reminds us that God does not sleep in heaven, though for a little time he does not come forth, but delays his vengeance till a fit season, that believers may in the meantime "possess their souls in patience," (Luke 21:19,) and may leave him to govern according to his inscrutable wisdom.

9. *And its streams shall be turned into pitch.* What the Prophet now adds contains nothing new, but describes more fully this desolation. We have formerly explained the reason wily the prophets employ these lively pictures in representing the judgments of God. It is for the purpose of leading men to view them as actually present, and of compelling them to acknowledge those things which their eyes and minds do not discern, or which, as soon as they are beheld and known, are immediately forgotten. But it ought also to be observed that the Prophets spoke of things which were dark and secret, and which were generally thought to be incredible; for many persons imagined that the Prophets uttered them at random. It was, therefore, necessary to add many confirmations, such as those which he employs in this and in other passages; and thus he denotes a horrible change, which shall destroy the whole face of Judea.

Moreover, he alludes to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, (Genesis 19:24,) as the prophets very frequently do. In that destruction, as Jude informs us, we have a perpetual representation of the wrath of God against the reprobate, (Jude 7;) and it is not without good reason that the prophets call it to our remembrance, that all may learn to dread the judgments of God. To the same purpose is what he adds, —

10. *By night and by day it shall not be quenched.* The Prophet's language is undoubtedly hyperbolical; but the Lord is compelled to act towards us in this manner, for otherwise plain words would produce no impression on us. When he declares that the wrath of God against the Edomites will resemble a fire that burns continually, he cuts off from them all hope of pardon, because, having never ceased to provoke God, they find that he is implacable; and Malachi also pronounces this expression of reprobation, that the curse of God will for ever rest on that nation. (Malachi 1:4.) The contrast must be supplied, because some mitigation is always held out to the people of God for their comfort. But this does not need a lengthened interpretation. It is

enough that we understand the meaning and design of the Prophet.

11. *Therefore the pelican and the owl shall possess it.* As to these animals there are various opinions, and Hebrew commentators are not agreed about them; but the design of the Prophet is evident, which is, to describe a desert place and an extensive wilderness. He undoubtedly mentions dreadful beasts and hideous monsters, which do not dwell with men, and are not generally known by them, in order to shew more fully how shocking will be this desolation. The former clause therefore is plain enough, but the latter is attended by some difficulty.

He shall stretch over it the cord of emptiness. Some view the phrase "an empty cord" as bearing an opposite sense, and apply it to the Jews; but I take a more simple view, and think that, like all the preceding statements, it must relate to the Edomites. Anti to make it more clear that this is Isaiah's natural meaning, we read the same word in the Prophet Malachi, who lived a long time afterwards. That passage may be regarded as an approbation of this prophecy.

"If Edom shall say, We have been diminished, we shall therefore return and rebuild the desolate places; thus saith the Lord of Hosts, They shall indeed build, but I shall pull down, and they shall call them the borders of wickedness, and the people against whom the Lord is angry for ever. And your eyes shall see, and ye shall say, Let the Lord be magnified on the borders of Israel." —
(Malachi 1:4, 5.)

What Isaiah had foretold more obscurely, Malachi explains with greater clearness. The latter declares that "the Edomires shall build in vain," and the former that "they shall stretch an empty cord." As if he had said, "In vain shall the masterbuilders bestow their exertions on rebuilding the cities;" for builders make use of cords and plummets in all their measurements. He therefore shews that the efforts of those who shall intend to restore the land of Edom will be fruitless; for his meaning is, that they shall be destroyed in such a manner that they cannot at all recover from that destruction, though God usually alleviates other calamities by some consolation.

And hence we ought to draw a very profitable doctrine, that when cities are in some measure restored after having been thrown down, this arises from the distinguished kindness of God; for the efforts of builders or workmen will *be* unavailing, if he do not put his hand both to laying the foundation and to carrying forward the work. Fruitless and unprofitable also will their work be, if he do not conduct it to the conclusion, and afterwards take it under his guardianship. In vain shall men bestow great expense, and make every possible exertion, if he do not watch over and bless the work. It is only by the blessing of God, therefore, that we obtain any success; and hence also it is said that "his hands have built Jerusalem." (Psalm 147:2; Isaiah 14:32.) What Isaiah threatens in this passage against the Edomites, the Holy Spirit elsewhere declares as to the house of Ahab, meaning that it shall be razed

to the very foundation. (2 Kings 21:13.)

12. *They shall call her nobles without a kingdom.* This passage has received various interpretations, which I do not quote, because it would be tedious to refute them. One of the most probable is, "They shall call his nobles to reign, but in vain." As if he had said, "In their wretched condition none will be found willing to rule over them, and to undertake the charge of the commonwealth." A statement of the same kind is found elsewhere, and we have formerly (Isaiah 3:6,7) seen one that is almost alike; but the words do not correspond. When the Prophet speaks thus, "They shall call her nobles, and they shall not be there," he employs, I doubt not, witty raillery to censure the pride of that nation which had been cherished by longcontinued peace and abundance. When the Edomites, therefore, out of their mountains breathed lofty pride, the Prophet declares that they shall be disgracefully cast down, so that they shall have no nobility and no government; just as, when a kingdom has been overturned, government is taken away, so that the general mass of the people resembles a maimed or disfigured body, and there is no distinction of ranks. To those stately nobles who vaunted themselves so much, he says in mockery, that they shall be princes without subjects.

And all her princes shall be nothing. The meaning of the former clause is still more evident from this second clause, in which he adds for the sake of explanation, that her princes "shall be reduced to nothing.' It amounts to this, that the land of Edom shall resemble a mutilated body, so that nothing shall be seen in it but shocking confusion. This is the utmost curse of God; because, if men have no political government, they will hardly differ at all from beasts. Indeed, their condition will be far worse, for beasts can dispense with a governor, because they do not make war against their own kind; but nothing call be more cruel than man, if he be not held by some restraint, for every one will be driven by the furious eagerness of his own passions to every kind of vicious indulgence.

13. *In her palaces she shall bring forth thorns.* He pursues the same subject; for he describes a frightful desolation, by which splendid houses and palaces are levelled to the ground, or reduced to a state so wild that they are of no use to men, but produce only *briers, thorns,* and *nettles;* which is more disgraceful than if they had been turned into fields and meadows. In this manner does the Lord punish the insolence of those who built lofty and magnificent houses and costly palaces, that the remembrance of them might be handed down to the latest posterity. Having banished men, he turns those dwellings into nests of birds and dens of wild beasts, that, instead of being, as they expected, the trophies of their name and renown, they may stand as monuments of foolish ambition. Thus the place of men is nearly supplied by beasts, which represent the dispositions of those who reared those goodly edifices. This overthrow of order is likewise a sad token of the wrath of God, when the earth, which was created for the use of man, beholds its natural lords banished, and is compelled to admit other inhabitants; for

then, undoubtedly, it is cleansed from the defilements with which it was polluted.

14. *And the wild beasts shall meet with the satyrs.* [20] These animals are thought by some commentators to mean fauns, by others screechowls or goblins, and by others satyrs; and it is not fully agreed what is the exact meaning of the Hebrew words; but it would serve no good purpose to give ourselves much uneasiness about them, for it is quite enough if we understand the meaning and design of the Prophet. He draws a picture of frightful desolation, as if he had said that Idumea shall be destroyed so as to be without inhabitants, and instead of men it shall be inhabited by frightful beasts. This reward is most justly reaped by the ambition of those who built costly palaces to be, as we have already said, monuments of their name and reputation. Yet this is also a punishment threatened against the cruelty of a wicked nation, which was eagerly bent on the oppression of neighbours and brethren.

Though we cannot absolutely determine whether the Prophet means witches, or goblins, or satyrs and fauns, yet it is universally agreed that these words denote animals which have the shape of men. We see also what various delusions are practiced by Satan, what phantoms and hideous monsters are seen, and what sounds and noises are heard. But of these we have already spoken under the thirteenth chapter. [21]

The sin which God punished so severely in a single nation, is common to almost every nation; for hardly ever are those splendid buildings reared without committing much violence and injustice against the poor, and giving great and numerous annoyances to others; so that the lime, and stones, and timber, are filled with blood in the sight of God. Therefore, as Habakkuk says,

"the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall bear witness to it." (Habakkuk 2:11.)

Let us not wonder, therefore, at those dreadful changes, when ambition lays hold on plunder and wicked extortions, but let us contemplate the righteous judgments of God.

16. *Inquire at the book of Jehovah.* By "the book of the Lord" some understand this prophecy, as if he had enjoined them to read attentively this prediction; for not even in the minutest point will it fail at the appointed time, as he will afterwards add. Others explain it more ingeniously as denoting the eternal decree of God; "inquire if such be not the purpose of God;" but this exposition is not sufficiently natural. I willingly interpret it as denoting the Law itself, which by way of eminence is called "the book of the Lord;" for from the Law, as from its source, the Prophets drew their doctrine, as we have frequently remarked.

Lest the strangeness of the event should prevent the prediction from being

[20] "Les bestes sauvages (assavoir Ziim avec Iim,) s'y rencontreront." "The wild beasts (that is, the Ziim with the Iim) shall meet there."

[21] Commentary on Isaiah, vol 1, p. 429.

believed, Isaiah says that the Jews had been warned of it long before; and thus he indirectly censures the unbelief of those who stared at the announcement, as if it had been something uncommon. He appropriately brings them back to the Law, in which God frequently declares that he will take care of his people, and that he will punish the wicked and reprobate. Moses having long ago spoken in this manner, the Prophet says that there is no reason why it should be difficult to believe what he foretells, since he brings forward nothing new, but only confirms now what Moses declared and testified. Such appears to me to be the natural meaning of the Prophet, and by these words he intended to fortify the Jews, patiently to look for what the Lord promised, and fully to believe that all that had been foretold about the Edomites and the other adversaries of the Church would at length be actually fulfilled, since Moses was a credible witness, that God would always be the avenger of his people. Besides, it was proper that they should be reminded of this, in order that, when these things should befall the Edomites, they might not think that they had happened by chance, but might know that they were brought about by the judgment of God. Such is the rebellion of men, that they do not believe God when he forewarns them, and what afterwards takes place by the judgment of God is ascribed by them to fortune. Isaiah therefore meets this, and bids them inquire at Moses, whose authority they all revered.

Not one of those; that is, of the animals; for the Hebrew writers employ these terms, {איש} *(ish)* and {אשה}, *(ishshah,)* not only for men and women, but for males and females of any species.

For his mouth hath commanded. He confirms what he formerly said; for although the works of God are sufficiently plain, yet by *his mouth,* that is, by the word, he makes them plainer to us, that we may see them more clearly. And this is the true contemplation of the works of God, when we keep our eye fixed on the mirror of the word; for otherwise our boldness is carried to excess, and we tke greater liberty than is proper, if heavenly doctrine do not guide us like a lamp. This ought therefore to restrain the boldness and rashness of men, who, despising the doctrine of the word, wish to dispute and form opinions about the judgments of God and all his worlds. If they "inquired at the book," and asked at the mouth of the Lord, we should see greater piety and religion among them.

Yet by "the mouth of the Lord" the Prophet intended to confirm the vengeance which he had foretold, because nothing that has come out of God's holy mouth can fail of its effect. Isaiah affirms that what God has once decreed, and published in his own name, cannot be reversed. By this shield he thus wards off all the doubts which quickly arise, whenever the promises of God go beyond our senses. Sometimes, indeed, he threatens conditionally, as he threatened the Ninevites, (Jonah 1:2,) Pharaoh, (Genesis 12:17,) and Abimelech, (Genesis 20:3,) whom he spared, because they repented; but when he has once determined to revenge and punish, he gives actual proof

that he is not less true and powerful than when he promised salvation to his people. The agreement of the words *Mouth* and *Spirit* makes it still more evident.

And his Spirit hath gathered them. Although "the breath of the mouth" often means the same thing as "speech," and although it is customary with the Hebrew writers to repeat the same thing twice, yet here he alludes elegantly to the breath, from which the words proceed, and by which they are formed; as if he had said that this prediction is abundantly powerful, because the same God who by his voice commanded the brute animals to possess the land of Edom, will bring them by merely breathing. He speaks of a secret influence; and we ought not to wonder that the slightest expression of the will of God causes all the animals to assemble, as happened at the flood, (Genesis 7:15,) and likewise at the very creation of the world, when, as Moses relates, all the animals were gathered together, by the command of God, to the first man, that they might be subject to his authority. (Genesis 2:19.) And undoubtedly they would have continued to be subject and obedient to him, had not his own rebellion deprived him of that power and authority; but when he revolted from God, the animals at the same time began to refuse subjection and to attack him.

17. *And he hath cast the lot for them.* He says that to those wild beasts and monsters there hath been granted a secure and permanent habitation, from which they cannot be easily banished or driven out; because God hath allotted it to them as.their portion by inheritance. This means that the whole of Idumea is at the disposal of the Lord, to drive out the inhabitants, and to grant possession of it to whomsoever he pleases, either wild beasts, or birds, or monsters.

Hence infer that it is vain for men ever to promise themselves a permanent abode, unless so far as every person has obtained his place "by lot," and on the express condition that he shall instantly leave it, whenever God calls. We lead a dependent life wherever he supports us; and either on our native soil, or at a distance from our fatherland, we are strangers. If he shall be pleased to give us a peaceable habitation for a long time in one place, it will only be by his special favor that we shall dwell there; and as soon as he thinks proper, he will constrain us to change our abode. Besides, if we acknowledge that a residence in this or that country has been appointed to us by God, we may dwell in it with safety and composure; for if he keeps wild beasts in possession of the place which he has allotted to them, how much more will he preserve men, for whose sake he created heaven, earth, the seas, and all that they contain?

Chapter 35

CHAPTER 35

Isaiah 35:1-10

1. The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.

1. Laetabuntur solitudo et desertum; exultabit locus squalidus, et florebit quasi lilium.

2. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the execellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the LORD, and the excellency of our God.

2. Florens florebit, et exultabit adhuc (vel, etiam) exultatione, at. que jubilabit; gloria Libant dabitur ei, decor Carmel et Saron. Ipsi videbunt gloriam Iehovae, majestatem Dei nostri.

3. Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees.

3. Confortate manus remissas, genua labantia roborate.

4. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you.

4. Dicite eis qui trepidi sunt corde: confortemini, ne timeatis. Ecce Deus vester cum ultione veniet; cum retributione Deus (vel, Dei) ipse veniet, et salvabit nos.

5. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped:

5. Tunc aperientur oculi caecorum, et antes surdorum aperientur.

6. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.

6. Tunc saliet instar cervi claudus, clare personabit lingua muti; quoniam effodientur in deserto aquae, et flumina in solitudine.

7. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass, with reeds and rushes.

7. Vertetur locus aridus in stagnum, et regio siticulosa in scaturigines aquarum; in habitaculo draconum, cubili, inquam, ejus locus erit arundini et junco.

8. And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.

8. Et erit illic semita et via, et via suncta vocabitur. Per cam non transibit immundus; et erit illis ambulans in via, ut stulti non errent.

9. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there:

9. Non erit illic leo, nec fera bestia ascendet per eam, neque ibi invenietur, ut redempti ambulent.

10. And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

10. Itaque redempti Jehovae redibunt, et venient in Sion cum exultatione; et gaudium perpetuum erit super caput eorum; et apprehendent gaudium et laetitiam, fugientque tristitia et gemitus.

1. *The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad.* Here the Prophet describes a wonderful change; for having in the former chapter described the destruction of Idumaea, and having said that it would be changed into a wilderness, he now promises, on the other hand, fertility to the wilderness, so that barren and waste lands shall become highly productive. This is God's own work; for, as he blesses the whole earth, so he waters some parts of it more lightly, and other parts more bountifully, by his blessing, and afterwards withdraws and removes it altogether on account of the ingratitude of men.

This passage is explained in various ways. I pass by the dreams of the Jews, who apply all passages of this kind to the temporal reign of the Messiah, which they have contrived by their own imagination. Some explain it as referring to Judea, and others to the calling of the Gentiles. But let us see if it be not more proper to include the whole world along with Judea; for he predicted the destruction of the whole world in such terms as not to spare Judea, and not only so, but because "the judgment of God begins at his house or sanctuary," (1 Peter 4:17,) the singularly melancholy desolation of the Holy Land was foretold, that it might be a remarkable example. Thus beginning appropriately and justly with Judea, he calls the whole world a *wilderness,* because everywhere the wrath of God abounded; and, therefore, I willingly view this passage as referring to Judea, and afterwards to the other parts of the world. As if he had said, "After the Lord shall have

punished the wickedness and crimes of men, and taken vengeance on Jews and Gentiles, the wilderness shall then be changed into a habitable country, and the face of the whole earth shall be renewed." Now this restoration is a remarkable instance of the goodness of God; for, when men have provoked him by their revolt, they deserve to perish altogether, and to be utterly destroyed, especially they whom he has adopted to be his peculiar people. Isaiah has his eye chiefly on the Jews, that in their distressful condition they may not faint.

Let us now see when this prophecy was fulfilled, or when it shall be fulfilled. The Lord began some kind of restoration when he brought his people out of Babylon; but that was only a slight foretaste, and, therefore, I have no hesitation in saying that this passage, as well as others of a similar kind, must refer to the kingdom of Christ; and in no other light could it be viewed, if we compare it to other prophecies. By "the kingdom of Christ," I mean not only that which is begun here, but that which shall be completed at the last day, which on that account is called "the day of renovation and restoration," (Acts 3:21;) because believers will never find perfect rest till that day arrive. And the reason why the prophets speak of the kingdom of Christ in such lofty terms is, that they look at that end when the true happiness of believers, shall be most fully restored.

After having spoken of dreadful calamities and predicted the lamentable ruin of the whole world, the Prophet comforts believers by this promise, in which he foretells that all things shall be restored. This is done by Christ, by whom alone they can be renewed and made glad; for he alone renews everything, and restores it to proper order; apart from him there can be nothing but filth and desolation, nothing but most miserable ruin both in heaven and in earth. But it ought to be carefully observed, that the world needed to be prepared by chastisements of this nature, in order that it might be fit and qualified for receiving such distinguished favor, and that the grace of Christ might be more fully manifested, which would have been concealed if everything had remained in its original state. It was therefore necessary that the proud and fierce minds of men should be cast down and subdued, that they might taste the kindness of Christ, and partake of his power and strength.

2. *Flourishing it shall flourish.* He describes more fully how great, will be the effect of the grace of Christ, by whose power and might those places which had been overgrown with filthy and noxious weeds "flourish" exceedingly and regain their vigor. This repetition is used for the sake of amplification. The doubling of the word "flourish" may be taken in two senses; either to denote the prolongation of time in incessant vegetation; as if he had said, "It shall not flourish with a passing or fading blossom, so as to return immediately to the foul condition in which it once was, but with a continual, uninterrupted, and long-continued bloom, which can never fade or pass away;" or to denote the increase and daily or yearly progress of improvement; for Christ enriches

us in such a manner as to increase his grace in us from day to day.

The glory of Lebanon, the beauty of Carmel and Sharon. These metaphors display more fully the fertility already described; for the Prophet is not satisfied with saying that where formerly there was a gloomy wilderness smiling fields will be seen, and that dry places will be clothed with the beauty of flowers, but adds that there will be such luxuriant beauty as "Lebanon, Carmel, and Sharon" were celebrated for possessing. Though *Carmel* denotes a cultivated and fertile field, yet here it is a proper name, like the other two. We have seen in other passages [22] that these mountains were highly celebrated, and throughout the whole of Judea held the undisputed preeminence both for delightfulness and for abundance of fruits.

They shall see the glory of Jehovah. What he had formerly spoken metaphorically he now explains clearly and without a figure. Till men learn to know God, they are barren and destitute of everything good; and consequently the beginning of our fertility is to be quickened by the presence of God, which cannot be without the inward perception of faith. The Prophet undoubtedly intended to raise our minds higher, that we may contemplate the abundance and copiousness of heavenly benefits; for men might be satisfied with bread and wine and other things of the same kind, and yet not acknowledge God to be the author of them, or cease to be wretched; and indeed men are often blinded and rendered more fierce by enjoying abundance. But when God makes himself visible to us, by causing us to behold *his glory and beauty,* we not only possess his blessings, but have the true enjoyment of them for salvation.

3. *Strengthen ye the weak hands.* We might explain this passage generally, as if he had said, "Let those who have feeble hands strengthen them, let; them whose knees tremble and totter compose and invigorate their hearts." But the following verse shews that the whole of this passage relates to the ministers of the word; for he addresses the teachers of the Church, and enjoins them to exhort, arouse, and encourage weak men whose hearts are broken or cast down, that they may be rendered more firm and cheerful. This exhortation is seasonably introduced, because he saw that so many tokens of God's anger, of which he had spoken, could not do otherwise than fill even the strongest minds with alarm and dread; for, seeing that we are always enfeebled by adversity, when God himself proclaims what may be called open war against us on account of our sins, who would not tremble? But the Prophet commands that they who are cast down and almost lifeless shall be enlivened, and the manner of doing it is explained by him in the following verse.

4. *Say to them that are faint hearted.* That strength of which he spoke is breathed into our hearts by God through his word, as "by faith alone we stand" (2 Corinthians 1:24) and live; and therefore he adds the promise of grace yet to come.

[22] Commentary on Isaiah, vol 2, pp. 330 and 420.

Behold, your God will come. First, it ought to be observed that God does not wish that his grace should remain concealed and unknown, but rather that it should be proclaimed and imparted, that they who totter and tremble may compose and invigorate their hearts. And this is one method by which our hearts may be cheered amidst heavy distresses; for if we are not supported by the word of the Lord, we must faint and despair. This, then, is the office assigned to the teachers of the word, to raise up them that are fallen down, [23] to strengthen the feeble, to upheld the tottering.

We ought also to observe how great is the efficacy of the word in "invigorating the feeble hands and strengthening the tottering knees;" for if it had not been a powerful instrument in communicating this strength, the Prophet would never have spoken in this manner; and, indeed, if God struck only our ears by his word, and did not pierce our hearts, these words would have been spoken in vain. Since, therefore, the Lord assigns this office to the word, let us know that he also imparts this power to it, that it may not be spoken in vain, but may inwardly move our hearts, not always indeed or indiscriminately, but where it pleases God by the secret power of his Spirit to work in this manner. And hence we infer that the same word makes us disposed to obey him; for otherwise we shall be indolent and stupid; all our senses shall fail, and we shall not only waver, but shall be altogether stupified by unbelief. We, therefore, need to receive aid from the Lord, that the removal of our fear and the cure of our weakness may enable us to walk with agility.

Fear not; behold, your God will come. This warning deeply fixed in our minds will banish slothfulness. As soon as men perceive that God is near them, they either cease to fear, or at least rise superior to excessive terror.

"Be not anxious," says Paul, "for the Lord is at hand." (Philippians 4:5, 6.)

On this subject we have spoken largely on other occasions; and the Apostle to the Hebrews appears to allude to this passage, when, after having charged them not to be wearied and faint-hearted, he quotes the words of the Prophet. (Hebrews 12:3, 12.) Yet he directs this discourse to every believer, that they may be excited to perseverance, and because they have many struggles to maintain, may advance steadfastly in their journey. Nor is it superfluous that he adds *your God;* for if we do not know that he is our God, his approach will produce terror, instead of giving cause of joy. Not the majesty of God, which is fitted to humble the pride of the flesh, but his grace, which is fitted to comfort the fearful and distressed, is here exhibited; and, therefore, it is not without reason float he is represented as a guardian, to shield them by his protection.

If it be objected that he brings terror when he comes to take vengeance, I reply that this vengeance, is threatened against wicked men and enemies of the Church. To the latter, therefore, he will be a terror, but to believers he will be a consolation; and accordingly he adds that he will come to save them,

[23] "Fortifier ceux qui sont prests a tomber." "To support those who are ready to fall."

because otherwise it might be objected, "What is it to us if our enemies be punished? What good does it do to us? Must we take delight in the distresses of enemies?" Thus he expressly declares that it will promote our "salvation;" for the vengeance which God takes on wicked men is connected with the salvation of the godly. In what manner the godly are delivered from anxiety and dread by the favor of God and by the expectation of his aid, has been explained at a former passage). [24] (Isaiah 7:4.) At present it ought to be observed, that God is prepared and armed with vengeance, that believers may learn to lean on his aid, and not to fancy some deity unemployed in heaven. Such is also the object of the repetition of the words, "he will come;" because distrust is not all at once banished from the hearts of men.

The end of the verse may either be rendered, *God himself will come with a recompense,* or *He will come with the recompense of God;* but as the meaning is the same, the reader may make his choice Yet if it be thought preferable to view {אלהים} *(elohim)* as in the genitive case, *"of God,"* then by "the recompense of God" is emphatically meant that which belongs peculiarly to God, that believers may be fully convinced that he is a "rewarder" as truly as he is God. [25]

5. *Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened.* [26] He continues the promise about the restoration of the Church, in order to encourage the hearts of the godly, who must have been grievously dismayed by the frightful calamities which he foretold. Since a true restoration is accomplished by Christ, we must therefore come to him, if we wish to know the meaning of the words which Isaiah employs in this passage; and indeed it is only by his kindness that we rise again to the hope of a heavenly life. Isaiah probably alludes to a former prediction, (Isaiah 29:10,) in which he threatened against the Jews dreadful blindness, madness, and total stupefaction of the soul. He now promises that, when Christ shalt shine forth, those senses of which they were deprived for a time shall be renovated and brightened to a new life. There is weight in the adverb *Then;* for we ought to infer from it that, so long as we are alienated from Christ, we are dumb, blind, and lame, and, in short, that we are destitute of all ability to do what is good, but that we are renewed by the Spirit of Christ, so as to enjoy real health.

By the *tongue* and *ears* and *feet* he means all the faculties of our soul, which in themselves are so corrupt that nothing that is good can be obtained from them till they are restored by the kindness of Christ. The eyes cannot see what is right, and the ears cannot hear, and the feet cannot guide us

[24] Commentary on Isaiah, vol 1, p. 232.

[25] "Vengeance shall come. The meaning is the same as if he had said, 'God will come in vengeance, or as an avenger.' Again, the retribution of God shall come against your enemies and deliver you." — Jarchi. "The construction of the second clause is greatly perplexed by making {{אלהים (elohim) the subject of {יבוא (yabo.) The true construction as given by Junius, Cocceius, Vitringa, and most later writers, makes behold your God an exclamation, and vengeance the subject of the verb." — Alexander.

[26] "That is," says Jarchi, "who have hitherto been blind so as not to know the reverence (or fear) of me upon them." Or, as explained by his annotator Breithaupt, "Who have hitherto shaken off the yoke of the fear of God, and have not manifested the reverence that is due to God."

in the right way, till we are united to Christ. Though the senses of men are abundantly acute wherever they are impelled by sinful passions; though the tongue is eloquent for slander, perjury, lying, and every kind of foolish speaking; though the hands are too ready for thefts, extortions, and cruelty; though the feet are swift to do injury; and, in short, though the whole of our nature is not only willing but strongly bent on doing what is evil; yet we are altogether slothful and dull to do what is good, and therefore every part of us must be created anew by the power of Christ, that it may begin to understand aright, to feel, to speak, and to perform its offices; for

"no man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Spirit." (1 Corinthians 12:3.)

This renewal proceeds from the grace of Christ alone, and, therefore, sound strength is regained by those who are converted to Christ, and who formerly were in all respects useless, and resembled dead men; for, while we are separated from Christ, we either are destitute of everything that is good, or it is so greatly corrupted in us, that it cannot be applied to its proper use, but on the contrary is polluted by being abused. Christ gave abundant proofs and examples of this, when he restored speech to the dumb, eyes to the blind, and perfect strength to the feeble and lame; but what he bestowed on their bodies was only a token of the far more abundant and excellent blessings which he imparts to our souls.

6. *For waters shall be dug.* He next adds other blessings with which believers shall be copiously supplied, as soon as the kingdom of Christ is set up; as if he had said, that there will be no reason to dread scarcity or want, when we have been reconciled to God through Christ, because perfect happiness flows to us from him. But he represents this happiness to us under metaphorical expressions; and, first, he says that "waters shall be dug;" because, where formerly all was barren, there the highest fertility shall be found. Now, we are poor and barren, unless God bless us through Christ; for he alone, brings with him the blessing of the Father, which he bestows upon us. Wicked men, indeed, have often a great abundance of good things, but their wealth is wretched; for they have not Christ, from whom alone proceeds a true and salutary abundance of all blessings. Death unquestionably would be more desirable than that abundance of wine and of food with which we, at the same time, swallow the curse of God. When, therefore, Christ shall gloriously arise, rivers and waters shall flow out and yield true and valuable advantage.

7. *The dry place shall be changed into a pool.* He confirms the former statement, that Christ will come in order to enrich his people with all abundance of blessings; for waters shall flow out of "dry places." [27] We must

[27] "Instead of the general meaning put upon {שרב (sharab,) by the older writers following the Septuagint ({ἄνυδρος}) and the Vulgate (quoe erat arida) it is now agreed that the word denotes the illusive appearance caused by the unequal refraction in the lower strata of the atmosphere, and often witnessed both at sea and land, called in English, looming, in Italian, fata morgana, and in French, mirage In the deserts of Arabia and Africa, the appearance presented is precisely that of an extensive sheet of water, tending not only to mislead the traveler, but to aggravate his thirst by disappointment. The phenomenon is well described by Quintus Curtius, in his Life of Alexander the Great." — Alexander. The same view is given by

keep in remembrance what we mentioned a little before, that the Prophet delineates to us what may be called a picture of a happy life; for although this change was not openly visible at the coming of Christ, yet with good reason does the Prophet affirm that, during his reign, the whole earth shall be fruitful; for he had formerly said that without Christ all things are cursed to us.

In the habitation of dragons. The whole world, therefore, shall resemble a parched wilderness, in which lions, "dragons," and other wild beasts prowl, till the kingdom of Christ shall be set up; and, on the other hand, when he is established on his throne, the godly shall lack nothing. An instance of this was given, when the Lord delivered his people and brought them out of Babylon; but the accomplishment of this prophecy must be looked for in Christ, through whom their ruinous condition is amended and restored; for that deliverance was but a feeble representation of it. And yet the full accomplishment of this promise ought not to be expected in the present life; for as it is through hope that we are blessed, (Romans 8:24,) so our happiness, which is now in some respects concealed, must be an object of hope till the last day; and it is enough that some taste of it be enjoyed in this world, that we may more ardently long for that perfect happiness.

8. *And a path shall be there.* Here it is promised to the Jews that they shall be allowed to return to their native country, lest, when they were carried into Babylon, they should think that they were led into perpetual banishmerit. Yet this statement is, in my opinion, extended much farther by the Prophet; for, as he promised a little before, that there would be plenty and abundance of provisions where there had been barrenness, so now he says that those places where formerly no man dwelt shall be occupied with the.journeys and habitations of a vast multitude of men; and, in short, that the whole of Judea shall enjoy such harmony and peace with other countries, that men shall pass from the one country to the other without fear; for where there are no inhabitants, there can be no intercourse and no roads. He therefore means that the Jews will carry on intercourse and merchandise with other nations, after having been brought back and restored to their own land.

And it shall be called, The holy way. Not without reason does the Prophet add that "the way shall be holy;" for wherever there is a great multitude of men, innumerable vices and corruptions abound. What else is done by a crowd of men than to pollute the land by infecting each other with mutual contagion? The Prophet therefore means that not only the earth, but also the minds of men are renewed by the kindness of Christ, so that they sanctify the earth which they formerly were wont to corrupt by their pollution. Yet what I stated briefly ought to be remembered, that the Jews, to whom the way shall be consecrated, will return to their native country, that they may worship their Redeemer in it in a holy manner; as if he had said that the

Vitringa, who speaks of it as held by other learned men, and illustrates it very happily. It is also maintained by Rosenmuller, who supports it by curious and instructive extracts from Arabic scholiasts, and from the Koran, and by a host of other authorities. — Ed

land will be cleansed from the disgraceful rabble of a wicked people, that it may be inhabited by the true worshippers of God.

The unclean person shall not pass through it. He now adds a more full explanation; for polluted persons shall not tread the land which God hath set apart for his children; as if he had said, that the Lord will separate believers in such a manner that they shall not be mingled with the reprobate. This ought, unquestionably, to be reckoned among the most valuable blessings of the Church; but it is not fulfilled in this life; for both despisers of God and hypocrites rush indiscriminately into the Church and hold a place there. Yet some evidence of this grace becomes visible, whenever God, by various methods, cleanses his Church; but the full cleansing of it must be expected at the last day. Even the worshippers of God, whom he has regenerated by his Spirit, are attended by much uncleanness. Though they have been sanctified by God, yet their holiness cannot be perfect; their flesh is not wholly dead, but subdued and restrained so as to obey the Spirit. Now, it is because the Lord reigns in them, and subdues their natural dispositions, that, on account of that part of them which is the most important, they are called Saints.

And he shall be to them one that walketh in the way. This clause has been tortured in various ways by commentators. Some render it "This shall be their road; they who have been used to the road, and they who are unacquainted with it, shall not go astray." Others render it, "This shall be the road for the children of Israel, and they who walk shall not go astray, though they be unacquainted with it." But the demonstrative pronoun {הוא}, (hu,) *he,* is more correctly, in my opinion, viewed as referring to God; as if he had said, that God will go before them to lead and direct the way. And the context absolutely demands it; for it would not be enough to have the way opened up, if God did not go before to guide his people. The Prophet therefore extols this inestimable kindness, when he represents God as journeying along with his people; for, if he do not point out the road, our feet will always lead us astray, for we are wholly inclined to vanity. Besides, though the road be at hand, and though it be plain before our eyes, yet we shall not be able to distinguish it from the wrong road, and if we begin to walk in it, our folly will quickly lead us off on the right hand or on the left. But the Prophet shews that we shall be in no danger of going astray, when we shall follow God as the leader of the way; for he condescends to perform this office; and he probably alludes to the history of the first redemption, for at that time God directed his people

"by means of a cloud by day, and of a pillar of fire by night." (Exodus 13:21.)

At the same time he points out how necessary it is that God should govern us, in directly laying folly to our charge, when he adds —

Fools shall not go astray; for they who are wise in their own eyes, and who rely on their own guidance, will be permitted by God to wander in uncertain

courses; and therefore, if we wish that he should walk along with us, let us know that we need his guidance. Yet he offers us this most excellent reward, that they who follow him, even though they did not formerly possess any wisdom, shall be in no danger of going astray. Yet the Prophet does not mean that believers, after the Lord has taken them by the hand, will be ignorant; but he shews what they are before the Lord becomes their leader.

9. *There shall not be there a lion.* He adds another favor of God, that the people, though they travel through a wilderness, will be protected against every hostile attack. Formerly he mentioned it (Isaiah 34:14) as one of the curses of God, that wild beasts would meet the Jews wherever they went; but now he declares that, when they have been received into favor, no lions and no beasts of prey shall attack them; because the Lord will ward them off, so as to open up a way for his people free from all danger and from all fear. For although they had received liberty to return, yet they might have met with many obstacles; and therefore he says that the Lord will remove every annoyance and obstruction.

We may draw from this a profitable doctrine, namely, that God not only begins, but conducts to the end, the work of our salvation, that his grace in us may not be useless and unprofitable. As he opens up the way, so he paves it, and removes obstacles of every description, and is himself the leader during the whole journey. In short, he continues his grace towards us in such a manner that he at length brings it to perfection. And this ought to be applied to the whole course of our life. Here we walk as on a road, moving forward to that blessed inheritance. Satan presents numerous obstructions, and dangers surround us on every side; but the Lord, who goes before and leads us by the hand, will not leave us in the midst of the journey, but at length will perfectly finish what he has begun in us by his Spirit. (Philippians 1:6.) Yet it ought to be observed that the very beasts, through God's kindness, shall be tamed, so as not to direct their rage and cruelty against us, as it is said,

"I will make a covenant for you with the fowls of heaven, and with the beasts of prey." (Hosea 2:18.)

10. *Therefore the redeemed of Jehovah shall return.* The Prophet confirms the former doctrine, that God hath determined to redeem his people, and therefore that nothing can resist his decree. He calls them "the redeemed of God," that they may consider his power, and may not estimate by human means the promise which he has made about their return. He says also, that *they will come to Zion,* because God does not in vain wish to bring them out of Babylon, and to leave them when they have commenced their journey. At the same time, it ought to be observed, that we have no means of entering the Church but by the redemption of God; for under the example of the ancient people, a general representation is placed before our eyes, that we may know that no man is rescued from the tyranny of the devil, to which we are all subject, till the grace of God go before; for no man will redeem

himself. Now, since this redemption is a gift peculiar to the kingdom of Christ, it follows that he is our only deliverer, as is also attested by the declaration,

"If the Son shall make you free,
you shall be free indeed." (John 8:36.)

Yet it is not enough that we have once been redeemed; for the design is, that we should dwell in the Church of God, and make progress from day to day. Since therefore we have been delivered by Christ, we ought to labor with all our might, and continually to strive to gain that end. If it be said that we do not need to perform a long journey, in order to be admitted into the Church of God, (for we are received into it by baptism,) I reply, that here the Prophet discourses metaphorically about the whole course of life; because the time when" the redeemed of God" shall actually "come to Zion," is when the course of life is closed, and they pass into a blessed life. And it ought also to be observed, that the greater the progress which we make in the grace of God, and the more close our alliance to the Church, the nearer do we approach to Zion.

And they shall obtain joy and gladness. By the words "joy and gladness," he means that there will be so great happiness under the reign of Christ, that we shall have abundant reason to rejoice. And indeed the true and only ground of rejoicing is, to know that we are reconciled to God, whose favor is sufficient for our perfect happiness, "so that we may glory even in tribulation," (Romans 5:3;) and, on the other hand, when Christ does not enlighten us, we must, be darkened by sorrow. Besides, it is certain that the godly do not rejoice in a proper manner without also expressing grafftude to God; and therefore this spiritual joy must be distinguished from that ordinary joy in which irreligious men indulge; for the reprobate also rejoice, but their end at length shews how pernicious is the wantonness of the flesh, which leads them to take delight in despising God. This kind of "joy" Paul justly (Romans 14:17; Galatians 5:22) calls spiritual; for it does not depend on fading things, such as honor, property, riches, and other things of that nature which quickly perish; but this joy is secret and has its seat in the hearts, from which it cannot be shaken or torn away in any manner, though Satan endeavors by every method to disturb and afflict us; and therefore the Prophet justly adds —

Sorrow and sighing shall flee away. The joy is everlasting, and all "sadness flees away;" for although many bitter griefs are daily endured by the children of God, yet so great is the power and strength of their consolation, that it swallows up all sorrow. "We glory," says Paul, "in our tribulations," (Romans 5:3;) and this glorying cannot be without joy. The Apostles

"departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were accounted worthy of suffering dishonor for the name of Jesus." (Acts 5:41.)

Yet the godly often suffer heavy distresses, and are not exempt from grief. This is undoubtedly true, but they are not overwhelmed; for they look

straight towards God, by whose power they become victorious, just as if a person, elevated on a lofty mountain, looking at the sun, and enjoying his brightness, beheld others in a low valley, surrounded by clouds and darkness, whom that brightness could not reach.

Chapter 36

CHAPTER 36

Isaiah 36:1-22

1. Now it came to pass in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah, that Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the defenced cities of Judah, and took them.

1. Accidit anno decimo quarto regis Ezechiae, ut ascenderet Sennacherib rex Assur contra omnes urbes Iuda munitas, et caperet eas.

2. And the king of Assyria sent Rabshakeh from Lachish to Jerusalem unto king Hezekiah with a great army. And he stood by the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller's field.

2. Tum misit rex Assur Rapsacen e Lachis Ierosolymam ad regem Ezechiam cum manu valida, qui stetit in aquae ductu piscinae superioris, in via agri fullonis.

3. Then came forth unto him Eliakim, Hilkiah's son, which was over the house, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah, Asaph's son, the recorder.

3. Et egressus est ad eum Eliacim filius Helchiae praefectus domus, et Sobna cancellarius, et Ioach filius Asaph secretarius.

4. And Rabshakeh said unto them, Say ye now to Hezekiah, Thus saith the great king, the king of Assyria, What confidence is this wherein thou trustest?

4. Et dixit illis Rapsaces: Dicite agedum Ezechiae, Sic dicit rex magnus, rex Assur, Quae fiducia haec qua confisus es?

5. I say, sayest thou, (but they are but vain words,) I have counsel and strength for war: now, on whom dost thou trust, that thou rebellest against me?

5. Dixi: (tantum verbum labiorum:) Consilium et fortitudo ad bellum. Nunc super quo confisus es, quod rebellasti adversum me?

6. Lo, thou trustest in the staff of this broken reed, on Egypt; whereon if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all that trust in him.

6. Ecce confiusus es super baculo isto arundineo confracto, super AEgypto; eui si quis innititur, penetrabit in manum ejus, et perforabit eam. Talis est Pharao rex AEgypti erga omnes qui fiduciam habent in eo.

7. But if thou say to me, We trust in the LORD our God: is it not he, whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah hath taken away, and said to Judah and to Jerusalem, Ye shall worship before this altar?

7. Quod si dixeris mihi, In Iehova Deo nostro confidimus; annon hic est enjus abstulit Ezechias excelsa et altaria, dixitque ad Iuda et Ierusalem, coram altari hoc adorabitis?

8. Now therefore give pledges, I pray thee, to my master the king of Assyria, and I will give thee two thousand horses, if thou be able on thy part to set riders upon them.

8. Nunc age, da obsidem domino meo regi Assur. Dabo tibi duo millia equorum; an tibi erunt equites quos illis imponas?

9. How then wilt thou turn away the face of one captain of the least of my master's servants, and put thy trust on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen?

9. Et quomodo aspernaris faciem ducis unius e servis domini mei minoribus, et fiduciam tibi statuis in AEgypto ob currus et equites?

10. And am I now come up without the LORD against this land to destroy it? The LORD said unto me, Go up against this land, and destroy it.

10. Et nunc an absque Iehova ascendi ad terrain hanc, ut perdam eam? Iehova mihi dixit: ascende in terram hanc, ut perdas eam.

11. Then said Eliakim and Shebna and Joah unto Rabshakeh, Speak, I pray thee, unto thy servants in the Syrian language; for we understand it: and speak not to us in the Jews' language, in the ears of the people that are on the wall.

11. Et dixit Eliacim, et Sobna, et Ioach, ad Rapsacem: loquere quaeso ad servos tuos Syriace, quoniam nos intelligimus, et non loquaris nobiscum Iudaice, audiente populo qui est super murum.

12. But Rabshakeh said, Hath my master sent me to thy master and to thee to speak these words? hath he not sent me to the men that sit upon the wall, that they may eat their own dung, and drink their own piss with you?

12. Et dixit Rapsace: Nunquid ad dominum tuum et ad to misit me dominus meus, ut loquar verba ista? Annon ad viros sedentes super murum, ut comedant stercora sua et bibunt lotium suum vobiseum?

13. Then Rabshakeh stood, and cried with a loud voice in the Jews' language, and said, Hear ye the words of the great king, the king of Assyria.

13. Stetit ergo Rapsace, et cla—mavit voce magna Iudaice, ac dixit: Audite verba regis magni, regis Assur.

14. Thus saith the king, Let not Hezekiah deceive you: for he shall not

be able to deliver you.

14. Sic dicit rex: Ne vobis imponat Ezechias, quia non poterit vos liberare.

15. Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD, saying, The LORD will surely deliver us: this city shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria.

15. Neque vos confidere faciat Iehovae Ezechias, dicens, Liberando liberabit nos Iehova; non tradetur haec urbs in manum regis Assur.

16. Hearken not to Hezekiah: for thus saith the king of Assyria, Make an agreement with me by a present, and come out to me: and eat ye every one of his vine, and every one of his fig tree, and drink ye every one the waters of his own cistern;

16. Ne audieritis Ezechiam; quoniam sic dicit rex Assur: Facite mecum benedictionem, et egredimini; et comedant singuli e ficu sua, et bibant singuli aquas putei sui.

17. Until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards.

17. Donec veniam et assumam vos in terrain similem terre vestrae, terrain frumenti et vini, terrain panis et vinearum.

18. Beware lest Hezekiah persuade you, saying, The LORD will deliver us. Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria?

18. Ne forte decipiat vos Ezechias, dicens, Iehova eripiet nos. An eripuerunt dii Gentium quisque terram suam e mann regis Assur?

19. Where are the gods of Hamath and Arphad? where are the gods of Sepharvaim? and have they delivered Samaria out of my hand?

19. Ubi est Deus Amath et Arpad? ubi Dens Sepharvaiim? An liberaverunt Samariam e manu mea?

20. Who are they among all the gods of these lands, that have delivered their land out of my hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?

20. Quis est in omnibus diis istarum terrarum qui liberaverit terram suam e manu mea; ut eruat Iehova Ierusalem e mann mea?

21. But they held their peace, and answered him not a word: for the king's commandment was, saying, Answer him not.

21. Tacuerunt, nec responderunt ei verbum; quoniam praeceptum hoc regis erat, qui dixerat: Ne respondeatis illi.

22. Then came Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, that was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph, the recorder, to Hezekiah with their clothes rent, and told him the words of Rabshakeh.

22. Venit antem Eliacim praefectus palatii, et Sobna cancellarius, et Ioach, filius Asaph, secretarius, ad Ezechiam scissis vestibus, et nuntiaverunt illi verba Rapsace.

1. *It happened in the fourteenth year.* In this and the following chapter

the Prophet relates a remarkable history, which may be regarded as the seal of his doctrine, in which he predicted the calamities that would befall his nation, and at the same time promised that God would be merciful to them, and would drive back the Assyrians and defend Jerusalem and the Holy Land. What had already been accomplished made it evident that he had not spoken in vain; but God intended that it should also be testified to posterity. Yet to the men of that age it was not less advantageous that such a record should be preserved. He had often threatened that the vengeance of God was near at hand, and that the Assyrians were ready at his bidding to be employed by him as scourges; and st the same time he promised that he would assist Jerusalem even when matters were come to the worst. Both were accomplished, and the greater part of the nation passed by, as with closed eyes, those evident judgments of God, and not less basely despised the assistance which was offered to them. So much the more inexcusable was their gross stupidity.

But to the small number of believers it was advantageous to perceive such illustrious proofs of the hand of God, that greater credit might afterwards be given to Isaiah. The Prophet also might pursue his course more ardently and with unshaken firmness, since God had given so splendid an attestation of his doctrine from heaven. And because the truth of God scarcely obtains from us the honor due to it, unless it be supported by strong proofs, God has provided not less largely for our weakness, that we may perceive as in a mirror that the power of God accompanied the words of Isaiah, and that what he taught on earth was confirmed from heaven. More especially has calling was manifestly sealed, when God delivered Jerusalem from the grievous siege of Sennacherib, and when no hope of safety remained; so that believers saw that they had been rescued from the jaws of death by the hand of God alone. For this reason I have said that it was a seal to authenticate the prophecies which might otherwise have been called in question.

In the fourteenth year. Not without reason does he specify the time when these things happened; for at that time Hezekiah had restored the worship of God throughout the whole of his dominions, (2 Kings 18:4;) and, not satisfied with this, sent messengers in various directions to invite the Israelites to come with speed from every place to Jerusalem, to offer sacrifices, and, after long disunion, again to unite in holy harmony of faith, and to worship God according to the injunctions of the Law. While such was the condition of the kingdom that superstitions were removed and the Temple cleansed, and thus the true worship of God was restored, Judea is invaded by the king of Assyria, fields are pillaged, cities are taken, and the whole country is subject to his authority. Jerusalem alone, with a few inhabitants, is left; and in that city Hezekiah was shut up as in a prison.

We must now consider what thoughts might occur to the pious king and to other persons; for if we judge of this calamity according to the perception of the flesh, we shall think that God was unjust in permitting his servant

to be reduced to such extremities, whose piety seemed to deserve that the Lord would preserve him in safety and free from all molestation, since his whole desire was to maintain the true worship of God. This was no small trial of the faith of Hezekiah, and ought to be continually placed before our eyes, when we are subjected to the same temptations. The Lord did not punish Hezekiah for carelessness, pleasures, or luxury, and much less for superstitions, or unholy contempt of the Law; for as soon as he began to reign, he labored with the utmost zeal and carefulness and industry to restore the purity of religion. God therefore intended to try his faith and patience.

2. *Then the king of Assyria Rent Rabshakeh.* The order of the narrative may here have been altered; for he had formerly said that Sennacherib had taken all the cities of Judea, and now he says that he sent Rabshakeh [28] from Lachish, implying that he was besieging it, and consequently he had not yet stormed them all. But it ought to be observed that historical connection is frequently disturbed, and that what was first in the order of time, comes last in the narrative. Besides, the Scriptures frequently make use of a figure of speech in which a part is taken for the whole, and by which it might be said that all the cities were taken, because those which had been left were few, and Hezekiah had no means of intercourse with them. It appeared, therefore, that the king of Assyria had brought the whole of Judea under his dominion, because nearly all that remained was Jerusalem alone, in which Hezekiah was shut up.

This history is more fully related in the Books of Kings, where it is shewn how eager for peace Hezekiah was; for he labored to obtain it on any terms. He had delivered up "three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold," which that tyrant had demanded; and he found it necessary to seize the vessels of the Temple, and the golden plates which had been attached to its doors, to make up that sum, because his treasury was exhausted. (2 Kings 18:14.) But as such gulfs are insatiable, when he had received that money, he next demanded more, and sought to enforce harder conditions. This was done partly, in order to provoke and torment Hezekiah, (for, having once abused the ready compliance of the pious king, he thought that he would obtain anything,) and partly because he sought an occasion of renewing the war. Yet it ought to be observed that the people were justly punished for their iniquities, as had been foretold; for although true religion flourished as to external worship, yet their life was not changed for the better, and their wickedness was not removed, nor was the inward pollution cleansed from their hearts. Accordingly, because the people did not repent, it was

[28] "The Hebrew doctors will have it that this Rabshakeh was an apostate Jew, and Procopius is of the same opinion, which is not altogether improbable, both because he could speak readily in the Hebrew tongue, and when he blasphemed the Divine Majesty, the king and nobles rent their clothes, which was not usual unless he that uttered such blasphemous words was an Israelite. Some think his name imports that he was the principal cupbearer to the king of Assyria, who assumed to himself the title of the Great King, because of his great conquests and large dominions." — White.

necessary that their obstinate depravity should be severely chastised. But because the measure of their iniquities was not yet full, God abated the fierceness of his anger, and suddenly, when matters were desperate, brought such assistance as could not have been believed.

3. *And Eliakim went to him. Eliakim* was formerly mentioned. It was he to whom the Lord promised that he would give him the chief power in the kingdom after the banishment of Shebna. (Isaiah 22:20.) It now appears as if that promise had failed, when he is sent to an enemy as a suppliant, and as one who is about to surrender himself and his companions, and to undergo cruel tyranny. This might also fill the hearts of believers with anxiety, and lead them to doubt the promises of God. Besides, the godly king had such a scarcity of good men, that, along with Eliakim, he was compelled to send Shebna, whom he knew well to be deceitful and treacherous.

{ספר} *(sopher)* means *scribe;* and accordingly it often denotes learned men or doctors, and sometimes those who took charge of writings and those who had the custody of the royal records. I have translated it *chancellor,* for unquestionably it does not relate to legal skill; and we may infer that this Shebna held a high rank, though he had been deprived of his office as governor. {מזכיר} *(mazkir)* denotes a secretary or recorder.

4. *Say now to Hezekiah.* He relates that the three ambassadors, though they were attended by all the magnificence that yet remained in the kingdom, were not only repulsed, but disdainfully treated by the tyrant's delegate, and loaded with disgraceful reproaches; for, as if Hezekiah had been convicted of wicked revolt, Rabshakeh asks how he had dared to rebel. The particle {נא} (*na*) is supposed by some to denote entreaty, and is rendered by them *I pray;* but it would be unsuitable to a proud and insolent man to entreat in this manner. He speaks in the ordinary language of those who lay conditions on the vanquished, or on those who are overwhelmed with fear, whom they wish to compel to make an unconditional surrender, or, as we commonly say, *(sommer) to summon.*

Thus saith the great king. In order to give greater validity to the summons, that general speaks in the name of his king, whose greatness he extols to the skies, in order to terrify Hezekiah, when he learns that he has to do with a king of such vast resources. He does not only mean that the first monarch in the world was far superior to Hezekiah, who in comparison of him was but a petty prince; but he calls the king of Assyria *great,* because by his power he eclipsed all others, so that he stood alone in his lofty rank. By these thunderbolts of words Hezekiah might have been overthrown and subdued, especially since he was so far from being able to resist the power of that tyrant that he was shut up in the city and unable to move out of it.

5. *I have said (only a word of the lips.)* In the sacred history (2 Kings 18:20) the word employed is, *Thou hast said* This may be explained as a declaration what kind of courage Rabshakeh thinks that Hezekiah possesses; as if he had said, "Such are thy deliberations." In this passage the use of the

first person, "I have said," does not alter the sense; because Rabshakeh, as if he had examined the counsels of Hezekiah and fully understood them all, ironically reproaches him; "I see what thou art thinking, but they are *words of the lips."* This passage is explained in various ways. Some interpret it, "Thou sayest, that thou hast not merely words of the lips," that is, "Thou boastest that thou excellest not only in the use of words, but likewise in courage and wisdom." Others interpret it, "Thou hast words indeed, but wisdom and courage are necessary in war."

Some think that by "words" are meant "prayers." I do not approve of that exposition; for it is excessively farfetched and unnatural, and therefore I view it thus: "Hezekiah has words of lips, that is, he employs a beautiful and elegant style, to keep the people in the discharge of their duty, or, as we commonly say, *He has fine speeches;* [29] but it is not by these that war can be begun or carried on." He therefore means, that he perfectly understands what Hezekiah is doing, and what it is on which he places his chief reliance, namely, on words and eloquence; [30] but these are of no use for war, in which wisdom and courage are needed. It might also be appropriately viewed as relating to the Egyptians, as if he had said that Hezekiah acts foolishly in allowing himself to be cheated by empty promises; and undoubtedly the Egyptians were liberal in promising mountains of gold, though they gave nothing in reality. But as we shall find that he speaks of the Egyptians, soon afterwards, in a particular manner, I have no doubt that here he ridicules Hezekiah, as if he fed the expectation of the people by empty boasting, while he was not provided with military preparations.

6. *Behold, thou hast trusted in, that broken staff of reed.* This is probably separate from the former verse; for, having formerly said that the eloquence by which he flatters the people is all that Hezekiah possesses, and having inferred from this that his confidence is exceedingly foolish, he now comes to other particulars. He employs every method for shaking the hearts of the people, that all, being stunned, may absolutely surrender. Accordingly, after having represented Hezekiah to be contemptible as to his internal resources, he next adds, that the external resources are idle and useless, and says that they are greatly mistaken in expecting any assistance whatever from the Egyptians.

And, first, he compares the Egyptians to "a staff of reed" on account of their weakness; secondly, for the sake of amplification he calls them "a broken staff;" thirdly, he says that it is so far from supporting that it *pierces the hands that lean upon it.* The meaning may be thus summed up, "the hope which the Jews entertain of receiving aid from the Egyptians is not only false and unfounded, but pernicious." And indeed with truth might Rabshakeh have said this, if it had been true that Hezekiah relied on the Egyptians; but he slanderously and falsely accuses the pious king of this vain

[29] Il a de belles paroles.

[30] "Assavoir, sur belles paroles." "Namely, on fine speeches."

confidence Yet God justly rewarded a rebellious and disobedient people by allowing this filthy dog to reproach them with their wicked revolt. Isaiah had formerly (Isaiah 30:1, and 31:1, 6) condemned this crime in severe terms, but their deaf ears refused to admit the reproof; and therefore the Jews, who had wickedly despised a Prophet that spoke to them in the name of God, deserved to have Rabshakeh for their instructor.

We are therefore warned by this example, that there is no reason to wonder if unbelievers, who do not obey the counsel of God for their salvation, and reject all prophecies, are subjeered to the jeers of their enemies, as Rabshakeh, the captain of the Assyrian king, now haughtily taunts the rebellious Jews. Yet it is of importance to consider how great a difference there is between the warnings of God and the mockeries of Satan. When God wishes to dissuade us from sinful confidence in the flesh, he declares in general terms, "Cursed be he that trusteth in man," (Jeremiah 17:5.) that the whole world may be reduced to nothing, and that thus we may be satisfied with himself alone; and therefore, when he has brought us low, he instantly imparts courage to us by holding out a remedy. But when Satan deceitfully blames any vain hope, he drives us to despair, and urges us to many other hopes equally bad or still worse, and tempts us to adopt unlawful methods; as Rabshakeh does not smite the hope which the Jews entertained from the Egyptians, in order that they may rely on God alone, but substitutes the king of Assyria, as if safety ought not to be expected from any other quarter, tie names *Pharaoh,* but likewise includes the whole nation.

7. *And if thou shalt say to me.* Rabshakeh employs an argument which consists of three parts. Either Hezekiah thinks that he has sufficient strength to resist, or he expects assistance from Egypt, or he trusts in God. If he trusts in himself, he is mistaken; for what is he when compared to my king? As to Egypt, it will render him no assistance, but on the contrary will inflict serious damage. It remains therefore that he expects some assistance from God. But he has thrown down his altars and curtailed his worship; will he not rather be punished on that account? In short, this Rabshakeh takes away from the pious king all assistance, both divine and human.

By this slander Satan attempted not only to wound the heart of the king, that it might sink under the weight, of affliction, but to make an impression on the light and fickle multitude; because hitherto in the hearts of many there remained an attachment to superstition, and there was a strong tendency to fall back into this imposture, because the religion which was ancient, and to which they were long accustomed, had been changed, and, in their opinion, [31] Hezekiah was about to be chastised for his own rashness. In like manner, the Papists in the present day, whenever any adverse event befalls us, maintain that we are punished by God, because we have ventured to set aside ancient ceremonies. [32]

[31] "A leur advis."

[32] "Pource que nous avons ose abolir les traditions et ceremonies qui estoyent en usage de long temps." "Because we ventured to abolish the traditions and ceremonies which had been

8. *Now come, give a hostage.* [33] He concludes that there will be nothing better for Hezekiah than to lay aside the intention of carrying on war, to surrender himself, and to promise constant obedience to the king of Assyria. To persuade him the more, Rabshakeh again reproaches him with his poverty. "If I shall give thee two thousand horses, thou wilt not find among all thy people men to ride on them. What then is thy strength; or with what confidence dost thou dare to oppose my king?" He does not offer him horses for the sake of respect or of kindness, but in order to terrify and shake still more the heart of Hezekiah. The future tense ought therefore to be explained by the subjunctive mood, "*Although I give* thee two thousand horses, yet thou wilt not find an equal number of riders." I am aware of what is alleged by other commentators; but whoever examines the matter fully will quickly perceive that this is ironical language. [34]

9. *And how dost thou despise?* [35] He confirms the preceding statement, and shews that ttezekiah is so far from being able to endure the presence of his king, that he ought not to be compared to the very smallest of his captains. In this insolent manner does he taunt him, that the Jews may not derive courage from the absence of Sennacherib, who was still detained by the siege of Lachish. Although, therefore, Sennacherib does not yet appear before them with his whole army, Rabshakeh boasts that his lieutenants are sufficiently powerful, so that Hezekiah ought not to hesitate to make submission.

10. *And now have I come up without Jehovah?* He now attacks Hezekiah in another manner, by telling him that it will serve no purpose to assemble his forces and to make other warlike preparations. For he alleges that Hezekiah has not to do or to contend with a mortal man, but with God himself, at whose suggestion, and not at his own, he camo hither to destroy the country; and therefore that they who oppose him will fight against God, and consequently all their efforts will be fruitless.

Hence we ought to learn that however earnestly we may be devoted to godliness, and however faithfully we may labor to advance the kingdom of Christ, still we must not expect to be free from every annoyance, but ought rather to be prepared for enduring very heavy afflictions. The Lord does not always recompense our piety by earthly rewards; and indeed it would be an exceedingly unsuitable recompense that we should possess abundant wealth

long used."

[33] "Now therefore give pledges or hostages." — Eng. Ver.

[34] "He seems to challenge him to come out and fight with his master, and if he would give security to make that use of them, he would furnish him with two thousand horses, provided he was able to find so many men to set upon them, which are words of the highest contempt and undervaluing of his power; or the meaning may he, he would lay a wager with him he could not find men to sit on so many horses, for few were good horsemen in Judea, where horses were scarce." — White. "He taunts Hezekiah on account of the want of cavalry. These words do not refer to the small number of men, but to the very small number of Jews who were skilled in horsemanship; for after Jotham the kings of Judea did not maintain any cavalry, and hence we have already seen (Isaiah 30, 31.) that a part of the Jews sought cavalry from the Egyptians." — Rosenmuller.

[35] "How then wilt thou turn away?" — Eng. Ver.

and enjoy outward peace, and that everything should proceed to our wish; for the world reckons even wicked men to be happy on this ground, that they do not endure bad health or adversity, and are free from the pressure of poverty, and have nothing to disturb them. In this respect our condition would not differ at all from that of the reprobate.

This example of Hezekiah, who labored with all his might to restore religion and the true worship of God, and yet endured calamities so heavy and violent that he was not far from despair, ought to be constantly placed before our eyes, in order that, when we shall think float we have discharged our duty, we may nevertheless be prepared to endure conflicts and troubles of every kind, and may not be disturbed if enemies gain an advantage at the first onset, as if all at once they would swallow us up. Those proud and haughty minds will quickly fall, when the first ardor has boiled over and spent its foam, and their eagerness and pride will speedily disappear Rabshakeh boasted of the greatness and power of his king, in order to terrify Hezekiah. Such is the manner in which wicked men act towards us. By threatening words they attack us, and by various terrors they try our patience, or rather through their agency Satan labors, whom we plainly see speaking by the mouth of Rabshakeh. Nay, Satan assumes the character of God himself, and "is transformed into an angel of light." (2 Corinthians 11:14.) Thus also the Spirit of God himself declares, that the strength of man is frail and fading, and that every one who leans on it seeks his own destruction. (Jeremiah 17:5.) Rabshakeh says the same thing, and discourses as if he were discharging the prophetical office by the command of God.

We ought therefore to distinguish wisely when God speaks, and when, on the other hand, his name is falsely assumed by men; for Satan resorts to various artifices to make himself appear to be like God. All these reproaches were unjustly, as we have said, brought by Rabshakeh against Hezekiah, who did not place his hope in his own strength, and did not vaunt himself through reliance on the Egyptians; but godly men, even when they do well, must be exposed to evil reports. By these stratagems Satan attacks our faith, and unjustly slanders us among men. This temptation is highly dangerous, for we are desirous that our integrity should be well known; and when we are well disposed, we take it ill if other men put a different interpretation on our conduct. Thus Satan endearours by slander to overturn all that has been done out of a good conscience, or accuses us of something with which we are not at all chargeable, or loads us with unfounded slanders, or contrives what never came into our mind; but an upright conscience ought to be like a brazen wall to us, that, imitating the example of Hezekiah, we may stand unshaken against such accusations and slanders.

So far as relates to the last clause, in which Rabshakeh reproaches him with having overturned the worship of God, [36] every person must plainly see how slanderous is that charge; for Hezekiah had taken away false gods and

[36] Our author refers to the charges contained in the 7th verse of this chapter. — Ed.

superstitious [37] worship, which God abhors. (2 Kings 18:4.) But we need not wonder that wicked men cannot distinguish between the true God and the false, between superstition, and religion. And the same thing is practiced amongst us every day; for the Papists, who are delighted with nothing but their own superstitions, accuse us of having taken away innumerable inventions of men, and complain that we have impaired and almost abolished the worship of God. They taunt us also in the same manner as that Rabshakeh, "Would God assist those who have taken away his worship, profaned the holy temples, and everything that was established in that beautiful order?" The reason is, that in Popery everything had a dazzling appearance, and drew the admiration of men; while we retain no ceremonies but those which are plain and simple, and free from all pageantry, and therefore they think that we have taken away the worship of God, which they estimate by outward appearances. If any adverse event befalls us, they exclaim that it; is richly deserved, that all the blame attaches to us, that the whole world is punished for our ungodliness, and if we ourselves suffer any calamity they taunt us still more.

Yet with resolute faith we must stand out against such ungodly speeches, by shewing that what they call the worship of God is not his worship, but that we have taken away, and have justly taken away, mere trifles, and that all the contrivances of men do not belong to the worship of God, but are delusions of Satan, and that nothing is more destructive. We must therefore stand out with unshaken faith against reproaches of every kind, by which Satan endeavors to throw a shade over the practice of godliness. At first sight it appears to be shameful that he overthrew many altars and left but one, that he profaned many temples that one might remain. (2 Kings 18:4.) But Hezekiah was fully acquitted by this single defense, that he undertook nothing but by the word of God; and therefore that he was satisfied with a single altar, because God had forbidden him to erect more, and that he had thrown down all images, because they had been unlawfully set up in opposition to the instructions of the Law. (Exodus 20:4.) We have the same dispute with the Papists in the present day, because they blame us on no other ground than that we have set aside a huge mass of ceremonies, and retain only what God has enjoined. In such cases, however, we must not argue about what pleases men, but what is approved by God.

11. *Then said Eliakim.* This circumstance again shews how deeply Hezekiah was depressed, when by his ambassador he entreats so humbly the servant of his enemy. It shews also with what pride Rabshakeh was puffed up, when he rejected so insolently all entreaties; and the refusal was the more shameful, because what was requested was not of great value. From these matters we learn that it was not owing to Hezekiah that he did not pacify the rage of the enemy; for forgetful almost of his royal rank, Hezekiah endearours with all possible modesty to soothe him. If at any time we hap-

[37] "Les idols et l'idolatrie." "Idols and idolatry."

pen to be oppressed by unjust violence, let us not be ashamed to yield up our rights and to supplicate with humility. Now, when Hezekiah was so submissive, because he saw that he was unable to resist the king of Assyria, this tends powerfully to magnify the glory of God in preserving a nation which was nearly ruined. For that deliverance would have been less remarkable, if they had been rescued only from an ordinary danger; but when they were not far from destruction, so much the more manifest is the hand of God, who by an extraordinary miracle subdued and ruined an enemy that had already set his feet on their neck. (2 Kings 19:31.)

Speak, I pray thee, to thy servants in the Syrian language. [38] They request that he will not speak in this manner in the presence of the people; because it is difficult to restrain a people naturally giddy and fickle, for they are easily moved, and tremble at the smallest alarm. [39] They would have wished that Rabshakeh should not speak to them in the Jewish language, because they were desirous to enter into any moderate terms of peace. For that good king tried every method of allaying the rage of that tyrant, but without any success. [40] These ambassadors therefore gain nothing from Rabshakeh; when he is entreated, he grows worse, and (as is usually the case with haughty men) becomes moro insolent.

12. *And Rabshakeh said.* Hence we see the fierceness and insolence of the enemy, and hence also it is evident that Hezekiah's kingdom was on the brink of ruin; for here Rabshakeh speaks like a conqueror, and does not address Hezekiah as a king, but as if he had been his slave. When therefore we see Rabshakeh swelled with so much pride, we ought at the same time to recollect that Hezekiah was entirely overwhelmed and destitute of all confidence, so that he was looked upon as ruined. Hence we also infer that Rabshakeh was not sent for the purpose of offering any conditions of peace, but rather to obtain an unconditional surrender, and to strike the people with alarm; for Sennacherib had sent him for this purpose with a powerful army. Hence also he boasts that he has nothing to do with the king, that he addresses the people for their advantage, and, in order to terrify them still more, mentions the distress and calamities into which they will throw themselves if they choose to obey Hezekiah; that they will perish through hunger, and will be compelled to eat and drink what is revolting; and therefore, that their wisest course will be to surrender in good time, and to provide for their safety.

13. *Therefore Rabshakeh stood, and cried with a loud voice in the Jewish*

[38] "In Aramean. This request implies an apprehension of the bad effect of his address upon the multitude. Aramean corresponds very nearly to Syrian in latitude of meaning; but the language meant is not what we call Syriac, but an older form, which was probably current, as the French is now, at the courts and among the educated classes of an extensive region. Jewish is Hebrew, so called by the Jews, as the language of the whole British empire is called English, or as German is sometimes called Saxon." — Alexander.

[39] "I suppose Eliakim perceived the people to be frightened with big words, and therefore entreated him in the name of the other commissioners sent to treat with him, to speak no longer in the Jews' language, but in his own; for he was not sent to treat with the people, but with them who understood the Syrian tongue very well." — White.

[40] "Mais c'estoit temps perdu." "But it was time thrown away."

language. The Prophet shews by what expedients Rabshakeh endeavored to shake the heart of the people, and first relates that he spoke in the Jewish language, though the ambassadors entreared him not to do so. It was, indeed, exceedingly shocking that the holy language, which had been consecrated to the mysteries of heavenly wisdom, was profaned and prostituted to wicked blasphemies; and this must undoubtedly have been a sore temptation to weak minds. But this should lead us to remark, that no enemies are more destructive than those who speak the same language as ourselves. At the present day we find this to be true in many who learn our language, that is, our way of speaking, that they may be able to insinuate themselves into the ears of weak and ignorant persons, so as to draw them aside from the true faith. Thirty years ago, the Papists had a language which was barbarous and totally at variance with the style of the Holy Spirit; scarcely were they heard to utter a word which breathed of Christian piety; but now they have succeeded in acquiring such skill as to know how to cloak their impieties under the ordinary language of Scripture, as if they were speaking in a Christian manner. Thus we see that it was Satan who framed that style; for he is their teacher and instructor as truly as he formerly was the teacher and instructor of Rabshakeh.

When the Prophet says that he *stood,* he expresses the fierceness and insolence of the wicked man; for the very attitude shews how haughtily he conducted himself. Formerly he *stood,* but now he placed himself in such an attitude as to be better seen, and strike greater terror into the Jews.

Hear the words of the great king. Having already spoken of the greatness of his king, he repeats his commands. It is customary with Satan to exaggerate in words the power of the enemies, and to represent the dangers as greater than they really are, in order to compel us to lose courage; for when our eyes are dazzled by the vain splendor of earthly objects, we faint. We ought therefore to contrast the power of God with all dangers; and if we have that power constantly placed before our eyes, there is nothing that can do us injury. With high disdain and great insolence the enemies will boast of their greatness and strength, and, on the other hand, will meek at our feebleness and our small numbers; but if the Lord is with us, we have nothing to fear.

14. *Thus saith the king.* While he claims for his master the name of *king,* he speaks of Hezekiah as a private individual, without adding any title.

Let not Hezekiah impose upon you. He goes on to utter impudent calumnies against him, and at the same time vomits out his venom against God himself; for he calls it "imposture" and "deception" for Hezekiah to rely on his favor, and to exhort his subjects to cherish the same confidence. But with similar calumnies are we now assailed by the Papists, who say that we bewitch the minds of men and lead them to destruction, and who have no pretext for saying so, except that we teach them that they ought to hope in the true God. But we have no reason to wonder that the same things which were spoken against the good king are likewise brought forward against us,

since they proceed from the same inventor and teacher of slander, Satan.

For he will not be able to deliver you. Rabshakeh's assertion, that they cannot be delivered by the hand of Hezekiah, is indeed true, unless God assist; and Hezekiah did not lay claim to this or rob God of the honor due to him, but, on the contrary, testified that his own safety and that of the people were in the hand of God. But the enemy found it necessary to employ some pretext, as wicked men commonly do at the present day, when they slander our doctrine; for they employ pretexts which give high plausibility to what they say, and which actually deceive men, when they are not closely examined.

15. *And let not Hezekiah make you trust in Jehovah.* He quotes the exhortation by which Hezekiah encouraged the people, and speaks lightly of it as an idle and unfounded speech. Hence we see plainly that wicked men, though they assert the power of God, treat it with contempt; for although he does not openly deny that God can assist, if he choose, yet, by sapping the foundations of their faith, he does all that he can to reduce the power of God to nothing. His intention is, to discourage the hearts of the people in such a manner that they may be constrained, as if in despair, to submit and receive laws from a victorious tyrant.

But in order to destroy their confidence in the assistance of God, he employs also another expedient, by flattering their hearts with the allurements of a more comfortable life; for there is nothing to which we are more prone than to revolt from God, when we are drawn away by the appearance of advantage. If the world flatter and caress, the hope of eternal salvation quickly passes away; for our senses are always fixed on the present state of things. Fortified by this resource, Rabshakeh advises, "Do not depend on an uncertain hope, but rather receive what is certain." And this discourse is powerfully fitted to persuade; for nothing is more agreeable to men than to have in hand what they consider to be desirable; and they are so impatient of delay that they prefer an immediate advantage to what is very distant. Rabshakeh, therefore, reasons thus: "Hezekiah promises to you the assistance of God, but we do not see it; he holds you in suspense about what is uncertain; but my king proraises to you those things which are at hand, and will assuredly bestow them." This might appear to be a strong argument; but we must observe the sophistry; for by the same stratagem does Satan frequently attack us, and lead us aside from confidence in God.

The Lord calls us to the hope of eternal life; that hope is concealed, "for we hope (Romans 8:25) for what we do not see;" he promises that he will be our deliverer, and yet allows us to languish and hint.; so that it appears that our hope is vain, if we look at the present condition of things. On this ground Satan attacks us. "Why dost thou hope in vain? What is the fruit of thy faith? What dost thou expect beyond the world?" In short, this is our daily lamentation. When Christ calls us to heaven, Satan endeavors to keep us still on the earth; and therefore we must adhere firmly to the promises,

that, "hoping against hope," (Romans 4:18,) we may trust in God, and not suffer ourselves to be drawn away from him by any allurements.

16. *Do not listen to Hezekiah.* While he labors to turn away the hearts of the people from Hezekiah, he at the same time invites them to pleasures, that they may forget God and not expect anything from him. It is as if he had said, "Do not believe God, but rather believe my king." Thus Satan deals with us; for, darkening the goodness of God by his clouds, and holding out to us the masks of false hope, he secretly and indirectly creeps into the place of God, or employs creatures to entangle us in his nets. He holds out pleasures, and some kind of more agreeable life, with this boast, "God shews it to you at a distance, I present it to you."

Though Hezekiah is mentioned, yet the comparison is actually made between God and the king of Assyria; for Hezekiah, as he was the servant of God, made no false pretensions, and did not boast of any vain confidence, but, relying on true and most certain promises, faithfully exhorted the people to seek God; but Rabshakeh adorned his king by robbing God, and yet was the servant of Satan, to withdraw the people from confidence in God to all impiety.

Make with me a blessing. [41] "To make a blessing" is to conduct themselves in a friendly manner; as if he had said, "Do not give any hostile indication, or risk a battle. Surrender, make your submission to my king." Sennacherib does not merely demand that he shall be heard, but likewise that the people shall swear allegiance to hint; and, in order to allure them to him the more powerfully, he makes use of the word *blessing* as a cloak to that bondage which was in itself hateful. He bids them purchase a quiet life, and other conveniencies which they formerly enjoyed, by that miserable revolt; that is, by forsaking Hezekiah and going out to him; for to revolt from a pious king, whom God had appointed, and who was a type of Christ, was more wretched and miserable than anything else that could befall them, and could not take place without denying God himself, who had set up in Judea that token of heavenly favor.

17. *Till I come and take you away.* He now adds another condition far harder than the former; for he declares that peace cannot be made with Sennacherib in any other way than by the people going into banishment. This was nothing else than to abandon the worship of God and degenerate into superstition, and voluntarily to quit the inheritance which God had given them. But because he addresses a people whose distressed condition and extreme danger had struck them with terror, he insolently commands them to save their lives.

Into a land of corn and wine. Here we see more clearly that Rabshakeh's

[41] "Make [an agreement] with me [by] a present, or seek my favor by a present. — Hebrews Make with me a blessing. — Eng. Ver. {εἰ} {βούλεσθε} {σὺλογηθῶναι} "if you wish to be blessed." — Sept. "Come out to me for the sake of peace, and bless me, and bring me a peace-offering." — Jarchi. {ברכה} (berachah,) blessing is here figuratively used for peace; for since blessings commonly ran in this form, Peace to thee, to you, it appears that peace was called blessing. The Chaldee interpreter has therefore rendered it correctly, — {עבדו} {עמי} ,{שלמא} (guabdu gnimmi shalma,) make peace with me." — Rosenmuller.

speech is nothing else than an image of the temptations by which Satan daily attacks our faith; for there is nothing which Satan more constantly attempts [42] than to withdraw us from confidence in God by the allurements and pleasures of this world; that we ought to enjoy peace and quietness, and to purchase them at any price; and that happiness consists in plentiful abundance of good things. But most of all, he makes a wicked use of adversity to press upon us, and more eagerly urge us to shake off the yoke of God. Gently indeed, and by secret and unseen methods, he insinuates himself; but, after having once inveigled and caught us in his net, so as to lead us to value present advantages more highly than those which are future, he adds this condition, that he shall hold us entirely bound and devoted to him; which we certainly cannot avoid, when he holds us entangled by his plausible hopes, and by the relish of present objects.

Into a land like your own land. Because the word banishment was harsh and disagreeable, and it was not easy to part with the delightfulness of their native country, in order to shew that they sustain no loss by leaving it, he says, that the country into which they are about to be conveyed is equally fertile and productive. [43] Thus he draws a veil over their eyes, that they might not think that they were losing anything. Yet he cunningly passes by what ought above all other things to be valued by them, the worship of God, the temple, the kingdom, the order of holy government, and everything else that belonged to the heavenly inheritance. Without these what happiness can there be? Let every one therefore learn diligently to apply his mind to spiritual blessings; "for to dwell in the house of God," is justly pronounced to be a far more valuable blessing than all the luxuries and prosperity of the world. (Psalm 84:4, 10.) Thus shall we guard against being led away by the hope of present objects and deprived of true happiness; for this is a dreadful punishment by which the Lord takes vengeance on the unbelief of men, and which all godly persons ought to dread, that they may not faint or give way under any distresses and calamities.

18. *Lest perhaps Hezekiah deceive you.* This is another argument different from the former, by which he endeavors to withdraw the people from Hezekiah and from confidence in God. Formerly he boasted that he was God's servant, and that God had sent him to destroy Judea, and on that ground he assured himself of certain victory; but now he openly insults God himself. At the first onset wicked men do not usually betray their scorn and impiety, but at length the Lord makes known their dispositions, and constrains them to discover the venom of their own heart. Now therefore the wicked Rabshakeh bursts forth with greater violence, and boasts that he will gain the victory over God himself.

[42] "Car tonte son etude est." "For his whole study is.'"

[43] "It has been disputed what particular land is here meant, some saying Mesopotamia, to which others object that it was not a winegrowing country. But, as Knobel observes, there its no need of supposing that the Assyrian's description was exactly true he may indeed have intended merely to promise them in general country as abundant as their own." — Alexander.

Have any of the gods of the nations rescued their land? He speaks in the person of his master, that he had obtained great victories over many and powerful nations. They had their "gods," by whose protection they thought that they were defended; and therefore Sennacherib thought that he had vanquished the "gods" themselves, because he had vanquished the nations which relied on their aid. The consequence is, that he breaks out into such insolence as not to hesitate to compare himself to the living God, and is impelled by such rage that he brings his own strength into conflict with the power of God.

Thus, although at first wicked men conceal their contempt of God, yet they afterwards shew that they claim everything for themselves, and that they are "without God." [44] (Ephesians 2:12.) In words, indeed, they pretend to ascribe victories to their idols; but afterwards, as Habakkuk says, they

"sacrifice to their net, and offer incense to their drag."
(Habakkuk 1:16.)

We see hypocrites do this also at the present day; for they run to do honor to their idols after having obtained a victory, but immediately afterwards boast of their plans, and wisdom, and courage, and military forces; which plainly shews that they ascribe to themselves and not to their idols all that has happened.

By such insolent boasting, therefore, he shewed that it was a lie, when he said that he acknowledged God to be the author of his victories. Besides, it was impossible that these words should not give dreadful agony to the heart of the good king, when he was informed that the promises of God were condemned as false, when that wicked man openly insuited God and linked their cause with idols. And these things are related, in order that we may behold the patience of the good king, and may resolve to imitate him when anything of the same kind shall take place.

Have they delivered? When he sets himself in opposition to all the gods, and declares that he is more powerful than they are, this is so much at variance with common sense, that it is abhorred even by wicked men themselves; yet if the Lord press hard upon them, if he put them to the torture, he speedily extorts from them such language. When they make a premeditated speech, they pretend that they are worshippers of God, but afterwards God constrains them to bring out and acknowledge what was lurking within. Let us therefore learn, that superstition is always accompanied by pride; so that they who do not know God, do not scruple to rise up against everything that is called God; and let us not be astonished at the rebellion and insolence of wicked men, for nothing but the pure knowledge of God can teach us humility. And yet that wicked man cannot be excused as if he justly reproached idols with their weakness and uselessness; for we ought to observe his sentiments and the purpose of his heart, since he does not ridicule the superstition and vain confidence of the nations, but in the idols themselves

[44] "Et n'ont que faire de luy" "And have nothing to do with him."

he pours contempt on the power of God. In like manner, when Dionysius the tyrant ridiculed his gods, he fought with God and defied him to a contest; for he attacked, in opposition to his conscience, such a deity as his mind could comprehend. The same observation might be made on all other infidels who treated with scorn false religions which they supposed to be from God.

Here we ought also to observe another kind of blasphemy, by which the majesty of God is wickedly dishonored; which is, that Rabshakeh confounds God with idols, and represents him to be one of the multitude. For what blasphemy is it to confound the immortal God and creator of all things with what is most detestable, to confound truth with falsehood, glory with shame, heaven with earth?

"The Lord is great," says David, "and worthy of the highest praise; he is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the nations are nothing; but the Lord made the heavens. Majesty and honor are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary." — (Psalm 96:4-6.)

19. *Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad?* It is supposed that *Hamath* was Antioch in Syria, that *Arpad* was that city from which colonies were brought to Damascus, and that *Sepharvaim* was a city situated in the country of Damascus. If this be true, Rabshakeh mentions the ancient names of cities, from which many nations had formerly come, and which afterwards lost not only their celebrity, but likewise their distinctive names, and aims at producing in them greater alarm, by reminding them of so great revolutions. However that may be, he mentions chiefly the neighboring cities, the destruction of which might affect them more deeply on account of their being better known to the Jews. And I have no doubt that these places belonged to Syria and Israel; as if he had said, "Look at these two kingdoms subdued, which were presided over by their gods as their guardians. Will your God resist me?"

20. *That Jehovah should rescue Jerusalem out of my hand?* [45] The particle {כי} (*ki*) is taken by commentators in both places interrogatively, "Did the gods of the nations deliver? And will your God deliver?" But in order to make the meaning flow more smoothly, I have preferred to render the second clause, "that your God should deliver;" for the repetition of the same word marks a resemblance. Yet the words appear also to contain irony; as if he had said in mockery, "Yes; as the gods of the nations delivered their worshippers, so will your God assist you."

This insolence of ungodly men arises from their not understanding that God punishes the sins of men when they suffer any adversity. And first they go wrong in this respect that they institute a wicked and absurd comparison, "I have conquered that nation, and therefore I am better or stronger." They do not perceive that they were appointed to be the executioners of God's

[45] "And (when or where was it) that they delivered Samaria out of my hand? {כי (ki) is not an interrogative pronoun, (Who have delivered?) nor an interrogative particle, (Have they delivered?) but a connective particle, dependent upon something not expressed." — Alexander.

anger for the punishment of iniquities; for, although they say that they have received something from God, they do it hypocritically, and do not consider his will or his justice. They afterwards rise higher, for they venture to make a comparison between them and God himself, "I have conquered those over whom God presided, and therefore I have conquered God himself."

And here we see painted in a lively manner what was formerly expressed,

—

"Ah! Assyria, the rod of my indignation; but he thought not so." (Isaiah 10:5.)

In that passage God forewarned believers, that although Sennacherib, in blind madness, lifted himself up and attempted to overthrow all divine power, still they should continue to believe this doctrine, that he could do nothing more than what he was permitted by heaven to do. It is our duty to acknowledge that God inflicts punishment by the hand of wicked men, who may be regarded as the instruments of God's anger; and therefore we ought to turn away our eyes from them, that we may look directly at God, by whom we are justly punished. If wicked men are more powerful, let us not think that the arm of God is broken, but let us consider that we do not deserve his assistance; for he arms enemies for our destruction, supplies them with vigor and with armies, drives them backwards and forwards whenever he thinks proper, and gives us up into their hands when we have turned away from him.

Accordingly, when the Turk now rises up haughtily against us, because he has already vanquished so great a multitude of Christians, we need not be alarmed on that account, as if the power of God were diminished, and as if he had not strength to deliver us. But we ought to consider in how many ways the inhabitants of Greece and of Asia provoked his anger, by the prevalence of every kind of base and shocking licentiousness in those countries, and by the dreadful superstitions and wickedness which abounded. On this account very severe chastisement was needed for restraining the crimes of those who made a false profession of the name of God. Hence came the prosperity of the Turk, and hence was it followed by a shockingly ruinous condition throughout the whole of the east. Yet we see him insolently raising his crest, laughing at our religion, and applauding his own in a strange manner; but still more does he applaud himself, and "sacrifice to his net," (Habakkuk 1:16,) as we have already said of other infidels.

We ought, therefore, to direct our minds towards the judgments of God, that we may not think that the Turk acquired such extensive dominion by his own strength. But the Lord allowed him greater freedom, for the purpose of punishing the ungodliness and wickedness of men, and will at length restrain his insolence at the proper time. Now, although prosperity is a token of the blessing of God, yet we must not begin with it if we wish to form right views of God himself, as Mahometans and Papists infer from the victories which they have gained, that God is in some respects subject to their control. But

when we have known the true God, blessings are added in the proper order to testify his grace and power.

Yet we ought always to beware of making the smallest claim for ourselves, for as soon as foolish confidence has gained admission, we shall immediately be seized with such fury as to believe that even God is not equal to us. At first, even wicked men will be shocked at anything so grossly irreligious; but when we are maddened by such diabolical pride as to rob God and adorn ourselves with the spoils, we easily fall into the practice of open insult. Sennacherib still retained some form of piety, for we shall afterwards read (Isaiah 37:38) that "he was slain in the temple of his god, while he was worshipping there;" and he undoubtedly wished that God would be gracious to him; but, as in this passage he treads under his feet the Creator of heaven and earth along with the gods of the nations, so he would not have hesitated, when an opportunity occurred, to act in the same manner towards his own idol.

21. *And they were silent.* This is added in order that we may more fully understand how deep was the affliction which prevailed throughout the whole of Judea; for the good king, having hardly any strength or means of defense, is therefore struck dumb even when an enemy insults him. Ambassadors were sent to soothe the enemy; when they are unsuccessful they are enjoined to be silent, that they might not provoke that savage beast, which already was too much excited, to cruelty. Yet it is uncertain whether these words relate to the ambassador or to the people, against whom Rabshakeh threw out these reproaches; and indeed it is probable, that it rather refers to those who guarded the walls, who, though they were sharply piqued by the taunts of the enemy, yet were not provoked to quarrels or disturbance, because they obeyed the kings command. Hence, also, we infer that it arose from the peculiar kindness of God, that they were so much disposed to yield obedience when matters were desperate.

It will perhaps be objected that they ought not to have been silent when such blasphemies were uttered against God; for we ought not to conceal our sentiments when wicked men mock, and jeer, and reproach God, even though our life should be put in danger. We ought, at least, to testify that we cannot patiently endure that his honor and glory should be attacked. But it is not said that they were silent because they expressed their assent, or cared nothing about the reproaches which were cast on God, and which, though not a word was uttered by them, gave deep pain to the ambassadors, and prompted them to the attitudes and tokens of grief; for afterwards, such is the bitterness of their sorrow that they tear their garments, and by this token they shew that they hold such blasphemies in abhorrence and detestation. But as it would have been of no avail for the ambassadors to debate with Rabshakeh, they returned peaceably and without any tumult; and the people, because it was useless to make any disturbance, reckoned it enough to meet the wicked man's impertinence by silent groans. And it

is no despicable courage, even when we have it not in our power to utter a syllable, still not to shrink or flinch, but to remain quietly in our place.

Hence we are also reminded, that we ought not always to contend with wicked men when they reproach and tear in pieces the name of God; for amidst bitter strife and confused noise the truth will not be heard. And yet we must not on that account give way to cowardice, by thinking that we ought to be excused for being silent, whenever wicked men rise up against God; for our silence will have no excuse if we do not in some way testify that it is highly displeasing to us, and if we do not, as far as lies in our power, declare that nothing is more distressing to us than that the name of God should be dishonored. We must, therefore, give expression to our zeal, that wicked men may not think that we have no regard for the honor of God, and that we are not moved when they blaspheme it.

22. *Then came Eliakim.* We now see that Eliakim and the other ambassadors were not silent as if they either approved of the impiety of Rabshakeh, or through dread of danger connived at such blasphemies; for they tear their garments, and in that manner give visible display how highly they are offended at those wicked slanders. I except *Shebna,* who was destitute of piety, and was only driven by shame to assume the dress of mourning along with others as a matter of form. It was customary among the Jews and other eastern nations, when they viewed anything with strong abhorrence, to tear their garments; for those nations, having much greater warmth of temperament than we have who inhabit cold countries, display greater vehemence in gesture, deportment, dress, and other outward signs. Here it ought also to be observed, that they who took no notice of the insults offered to them as private individuals, whenever they hear reproaches uttered against God, "tear their garments;" for they who are ready to take offense at an insult offered to them in their private, capacity, where patience was needed, and who are unmoved when they learn that the name of God is dishonored, give evidence that they have no zeal or piety.

Chapter 37

CHAPTER 37

Isaiah 37:1-38

1. And it came to pass, when king Hezekiah heard it, that he rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the LORD.

1. Factum est autem ut, hoc audito, rex Ezechias scinderet vestimenta sua, et sacco opertus veniret in domum Iehovae.

2. And he sent Eliakim, who was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the priests covered with sackcloth, unto Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz.

2. Simul misit Eliacim praefectum palatii; et Sobnam cancellarium, et seniores sacerdotes, saccis opertos, ad Isaiam filium Amoz, prophetam.

3. And they said unto him, Thus saith Hezekiah, This day is a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and of blasphemy: for the children are come to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth.

3. Qui dixerunt illi: Sic dicit Ezechias: Dies angustiae et increpationis et blasphemiae dies hic, quia filii venerunt ad partum, neque est vis pariendi.

4. It may be the LORD thy God will hear the words of Rabshakeh, whom the king of Assyria his master hath sent to reproach the living God, and will reprove the words which the LORD thy God hath heard: wherefore lift up thy prayer for the remnant that is left.

4. Si forte audiet Iehova Deus tuus verba Rapsacae, quem misit rex Assur dominns ejus, ad maledicendum Deo viventi, et arguendum ver. bis, quae audivit Iehova Deus tuus. Tu ergo levabis orationem pro reitquiis quae adhuc extant.

5. So the servants of king Hezekiah came to Isaiah.

5. Venerunt servi regis Ezechiae ad Isaiam.

6. And Isaiah said unto them, Thus shall ye say unto your master, Thus saith the LORD, Be not afraid of the words that thou hast heard, wherewith the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me.

6. Et dixit illis Isaias: Sic dicetis domino vestro: Sic dicit Iehova, Ne timeas a verbis quae audiisti quae mihi exprobrarunt servi regis Asstir.

7. Behold, I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumour, and return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.

7. Ecce apponam illi ventum; audiet enim rumorem, et revertetur in terrain suam; et faciam ut cadat gladio in terra sua.

8. So Rabshakeh returned, and found the king of Assyria warring against Libnah: for he had heard that he was departed from Lachish.

8. Reversus autem Rapsaces invenit regem Assur oppugnantem Lobnam. Audivit enim profectum a Lachis.

9. And he heard say concerning Tirhakah king of Ethiopia, He is come forth to make war with thee. And when he heard it, he sent messengers to Hezekiah, saying,

9. Audiens autem a Thirhaka rege Æthiopiae, egressus est, ut pugnet contra to; ex quo audivit, misit nuntios ad Ezechiam, dicens:

10. Thus shall ye speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying, Let not thy God, in whom thou trustest, deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.

10. Sic dicetis Ezechiae regi Iuda: Non to decipiat Deus tuus, in quo tu confidis, dicens: Non tradetur Ierusalem in manum regis Assur.

11. Behold, thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands by destroying them utterly; and shalt thou be delivered?

11. Ecce tu audiisti quae fecerunt reges Assur universis terris, quomodo vastaverunt eas; et tu liberaberis?

12. Have the gods of the nations delivered them which my fathers have destroyed, as Gozan, and Haran, and Rezeph, and the children of Eden which were in Telassar?

12. An liberaverunt dii gentium, quos perdiderunt patres mei, Gozam, et Harum, Rezeph, et filios Edom, qui fuerunt in Bithlassar?

13. Where is the king of Hamath, and the king of Arphad, and the king of the city of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah?

13. Ubi rex Amath, rex Arpad, rex civitatis Sepharvaiim, Hena et Ira?

14. And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it: and Hezekiah went up unto the house of the LORD, and spread it before the LORD.

14. Accepit Ezechias literas e manu nuntiorum, et legit eas, et ascendit in domurn Iehovae, et expandit eas coram Iehova.

15. And Hezekiah prayed unto the LORD, saying,

15. Tum oravit Ezechias ad Deum, dicens:

16. O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, that dwellest between the cherubims,

thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth: thou hast made heaven and earth.

16. Iehova exercituum, Deus Israel, qui habitas inter cherubin: tu ipse Deus solus super omnia regna terrae; tu fecisti ccelos et terrain.

17. Incline thine ear, O LORD, and hear; open thine eyes, O LORD, and see: and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent to reproach the living God.

17. Inclina Iehova aurem tuam, et audi; aperi Iehova oculos tuos et vide; et audi cuneta verba Sennacherib, qui misit ad exprobrandum Deo vivo.

18. Of a truth, LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations, and their countries,

18. Sane Iehova, perdiderunt reges Assur cunctas terras terrain, inquam, eorum,

19. And have cast their gods into the fire: for they were no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone: therefore they have destroyed them.

19. Posueruntque deos earum in ignem, quoniam non sunt dii, sed opus manuno hominis, lignum, et lapis; ideo perdiderunt cos.

20. Now therefore, O LORD our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the LORD, even thou only.

20. Et nunc Iehova Dens noster, serra nos e mann ejus; ut cognoscant omnia regna terrae quod tu Iehova es solus.

21. Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent unto Hezekiah, saying, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Whereas thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria:

21. Tunc misit Isaias filius Amoz ad Ezechiam, dicens: Sic dicit Iehova Deus Israel; Quoniam me precatus es de Sennacherib rege Assur;

22. This is the word which the LORD hath spoken concerning him; The virgin, the daughter of Zion, hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee.

22. Hoc est verbum quod loquutus est Iehova de eo: Sprevit to, subsannavit to, virgo filia Sion; movit post to caput filia Ierusaleto.

23. Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? and against whom hast thou exalted thy voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high? even against the Holy One of Israel.

23. Quem probris affecisti? et quem contumeliose aggressus es? Super quem exaltasti vocem tuam, et in sublime extulisti oculos tuos? nempe, super sanctum Israelis.

24. By thy servants hast thou reproached the Lord, and hast said, By the multitude of my chariots am I come up to the height of the mountains, to the sides of Lebanon; and I will cut down the tall cedars thereof, and the choice fir-trees thereof: and I will enter into the height of his border, and the forest of his Carmel.

24. In manu servorum tuorum exprobrasti Domino ac dixisti: Ego in multitudine curruum meorum ascendam in excelsa montium, ad latera Libani,

succidam summa cedrorum ejus, electas ejus abietes; tum veniam ad summum extremitatis, sed sylvam ejus campestrem, (vel, planitiei ejus.)

25. I have digged, and drunk water; and with the sole of my feet have I dried up all the rivers of the besieged places.

25. Fodiam, et bibam aquas; exsiccabo planta pedum meorum cunctos lacus obsidionis.

26. Hast thou not heard long ago, how I have done it; and of ancient times, that I have formed it? now have I brought it to pass, that thou shouldest be to lay waste defenced cities into ruinous heaps.

26. Annon audiisti quod a longinquo tempore fecerim eam; a diebus antiquis formaverim ipsam? Nunc vero adducerem earn, ut sit in desolationem, in acervos ruinarum, quemadmodum urbes munitas.

27. Therefore their inhabitants were of small power, they were dismayed and confounded: they were as the grass of the field, and as the green herb; as the grass on the housetops, and as corn blasted before it be grown up.

27. Nam incolae earurn manu fuerunt mutilati, territi et confusi sunt; facti sunt tanquam gramen agri, olus viride, herba tectorum, quae ante maturitatem exarescit.

28. But I know thy abode, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy rage against me.

28. Sessionem tuam, exitum tuum, et introitum tuam novi, et iracundiam tuam contra me.

29. Because thy rage against me, and thy tumult, is come up into mine ears, therefore will I put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest.

29. Quoniam iratus es contra me; ideo tumultus tuns ascendit in auras mens. Itaque ponam hamum (vel, circulum) meum in narem tuam, et framum meum in labia tua; et reducam to per viam ubi venisti.

30. And this shall be a sign unto thee, Ye shall eat this year such as groweth of itself; and the second year that which springeth of the same: and in the third year sow ye, and reap, and plant vineyards, and eat the fruit thereof.

30. Hoc autem erit tibi signum: Comedes hoc anno quae sponte nascuntur, secundo etiam sponte provenientia, in tertio vero anno seminabiris et metetis, et plantabitis vineas, et comedetis fructum earurn.

31. And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward:

31. Et adjiciet quod servatum erit e domo Iuda, quodque residuum erit, radicem jacere deorsum, et fructum proferre seorsum.

32. For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and they that escape out of mount Zion: the zeal of the LORD of hosts shall do this.

32. Nam e Ierusalem egredientur reliquiae, et quod serratum erit e monte Zion. Zelus Iehovae exercituum hoc faciet.

33. Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning the king of Assyria, He

shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shields, nor cast a bank against it.

33. Propterea sic dicit Iehova de rage Assur: non ingredietur urbem hanc, neque projiciet illuc sagittam, et non occupabit eam clypeo munitus, neque fundet contra earn ballstam.

34. By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the LORD.

34. Per viam qua venit revertetur, neque ingredietur urbem hanc dicit Iehova.

35. For I will defend this city to save it for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake.

35. Et protector ero super hanc urbem, ut servem eam, propter me et propter David servum meum.

36. Then the angel of the LORD went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses.

36. Et egressus angelus Iehovae percussit in castris Assyriorum centum octaginta quinque millia; et cum mane surrectum esset, ecce omnes cadavera mortuorum.

37. So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh.

37. Tum profectus abiit, et reversus est Sennacherib rex Assur, et habitavit in Nineve.

38. And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword; and they escaped into the land of Armenia: and Esarhaddon his son reigned in his stead.

38. Et accidit quum adoraret in templo Nisroch deum suum (vel, dei sui,) Adrammelech et Sarrezer filii ejus percusscrunt eum gladio, fugeruntque in terram Armeniae, et regnavit Essaradon filius ejus pro eo.

1. *And it came to pass.* The Prophet declares that the only hope of safety that was left to the pious king was to bring his complaints before God as a righteous judge; as it is said in the Psalm, that

"in the same manner as servants or handmaids, when they are injured, look to the protection of their master or mistress, so the eyes of believers are fixed on the assistance of God." —
(Psalm 123:2.)

Thus, when Jerusalem appears to be completely ruined, Hezekiah, being bereft of earthly assistance, betakes himself to the protection of God, and thus acknowledges that there is no other remedy for heavy distresses. Hence also the grace of God shone more brightly, so that it was evidently miraculous, when the pious king was rescued from the jaws of that lion. We ought, therefore, to observe this circumstance, that we may better understand the

great excellence of the work of God. Here we are also taught what we ought to do in the most desperate circumstances, not to be indolent or sluggish in supplicating the assistance of God, who himself invites us to come to him. We must not tremble or despair, but, on the contrary, ought to be stimulated by the necessity which presses upon us to seek his aid; as we see what Hezekiah did, who immediately betook himself to the temple in the same manner as to a place of safety, that he and all his people might take refuge under the shadow of God.

That King Hezekiah rent his clothes. He likewise adds the outward expressions of repentance, the "rending of the clothes and wearing sackcloth," sprinkling of ashes, and other things of the same kind; for these were the ordinary signs of repentance, when, under the weight of any calamity by which they were afflicted, they confessed their guilt before God and implored pardon from him. Wonderful is the modesty of the holy king, who, after having performed so many illustrious works, and after having been adorned by the excellence of so many virtues, does not hesitate to prostrate himself humbly before God; and, on the other hand, wonderful is his courage and the steadfastness of his faith, in not being hindered by the weight of so heavy a temptation from freely seeking God by whom he was so severely smitten. Scarcely do we find one man in a hundred who does not murmur if God treats him with any degree of severity, who does not bring forward his good deeds as a ground of complaint, and remonstrate that he has been unjustly rewarded. Other men, when God does not comply with their wishes, complain that their worship of God has served no good purpose.

We perceive nothing of this kind in Hezekiah, who, though he is conscious of possessing uncommon piety, does not shrink from a confession of guilt, and therefore if we desire to turn away God's anger, and to experience his favor in adversity, we must testify our repentance and sincerely acknowledge our guilt; for adversity does not fall out to us by chance, but is the method by which God arouses us to repentance. True, indeed, sackcloth and ashes will be of little avail, if they be not preceded by the inward feelings of the heart; for we know that hypocrites are abundantly liberal in the use of ceremonies; but as we have formerly said, the Holy Spirit justly commends those exercises, when they are directed to their proper object. And indeed it was a proof of uncommon piety and modesty, that the pious king and the whole nation excited themselves in this manner to fear God, and that he made a voluntary acknowledgment of guilt in a form attended by wretched filthiness; for we know how unwilling kings are to let themselves down from their rank.

2. *And he sent Eliakim.* This message was not intended merely to invite Isaiah to join with him in lamentation, but to request some consolation from his doctrine. And indeed to no purpose shall prayers be poured into the air, if they do not rest on the word of God. Thus we see that unbelievers are exceedingly noisy in their prayers, and yet they flee from God by despising

or disregarding his promises. It was therefore a proof of sincere piety in Hezekiah, that, while he was earnestly employed in prayer, he at the same time added a confirmation of his hope, that he might not yield to temptation.

To Isaiah, the son of Amos the Prophet. He follows the method appointed by God, when he wishes to hear God speaking by the mouth of "the Prophet." (Deuteronomy 18:15; Malachi 2:7.) Though he relies on God alone, he does not reject the testimony of a mortal man; and therefore not without reason does he expressly add the designation *Prophet;* for he sends to Isaiah, that he may be confirmed by some new prediction, and names him, not as a private individual, but as the servant of God, whose duty it was to soothe the pious king by some consolation.

There are therefore two remedies that deserve our attention, by which we are soothed in affliction. First, we ought to call on God to deliver us; and, secondly, we ought to consult the prophets, at least, if we can obtain them, that they may bring us some comfort out of the word of God; for it is their duty to encourage and comfort the afflicted by promises, and if they fail to do so, still abundant consolation is communicated to us from the word. And we ought to consult the prophets, who were appointed, not only for their own age, but also for posterity and for every age; for although the men are dead, yet their books survive; their doctrine lives and shall never die. We shall never, therefore, be destitute of true remedies, if we do not reject them; but, in a word, we ought always to consult God.

It may be asked, "Was not Hezekiah abundantly supplied and fortified by the promises of God? Was it not a sign of distrust to seek new promises from the Prophet?" I reply, it ought not to be ascribed to unbelief or distrust, that he seeks a new promise; for, being conscious of his weakness, he does not scruple to ask new confirmations. The flesh always excites us to distrust, and therefore we ought not to despise additional aid; on the contrary, we ought always to seek every kind of assistance, by which we may resist various temptations; for on all sides Satan attacks and besieges us in such a manner that, if we are not strongly fortified, we shall scarcely be able to escape his snares and devices till the end. Although, therefore, we have been taught by the word of God that he will assist us in adversity, yet when we are engaged in any arduous contest, it is proper that we should again and again ask at the mouth of the Lord, and seek new confirmations for the purpose of strengthening our faith. There are indeed no prophecies of the same kind that are given to us in the present day; but we ought to apply to our use the general prophecies, which were also written for our benefit. (Romans 15:4.)

As to the reason why Hezekiah sent ambassadors, and did not himself go to Isaiah, it was obviously because he was praying in the Temple; for the circumstance, that all the elders and counsellors were clothed with sackcloth, shews clearly that the mourning was general; and it is probable that prayers were publicly offered by the command of the king. Yet it ought to be observed, that the Prophet did not remain at home for his own ease or

pleasure, but by his absence God intended to try the faith of the pious king.

4. *If perhaps Jehovah thy God will hear.* Hezekiah appears to doubt whether, or not the Lord is willing to hear him; for the particle {אולי} *(ulai)* is translated *perhaps,* and this is the meaning which it frequently bears in Scripture. But it ought to be observed that believers, even though they know with certainty that the Lord will assist them, yet, in consequence of being perplexed by the difficulty of the case, often speak in this manner. Hezekiah had reasons for hesitating, if we look at the matter itself; but when he turns his eyes to the word, he is made certain as to the will of God, so that he ceases to tremble. But as it is impossible that the flesh should not retard believers by making them walk in a halting and staggering manner, [46] they sometimes accommodate their language to the present appearances of things.

It may also be observed, in other passages of Scripture, that the saints, even while speaking of what was certain, spoke in this manner; for Peter, in exhorting Simon, says,

"*If perhaps* this thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee."
(Acts 8:22.)

He does not advise Simon to tremble and hesitate in prayer; for such a supplication would have been vain; but he points out the heinousness of the offense; that he may strike his mind more forcibly, and may at length constrain him to rouse himself that he may approach God with true repentance. This word *perhaps,* therefore, does not imply doubt, but is equivalent to an expression which we commonly use, *if it be possible,* when we venture to hope and promise to ourselves something. And Hezekiah did not speak as if God were deaf to the words of the ungodly, or as if anything escaped his notice; but because it was a fixed principle in his heart that "God is near to all that truly call upon him," (Psalm 145:18,) he determines to strive against despondency, and arms himself by prayer; and because he does not expect to gain the conquest without difficulty, he says, *If perhaps.* [47] Besides, he mentions two kinds of hearing, which in some measure removes the difficulty.

If perhaps Jehovah, thy God shall hear the words which Jehovah thy God hath heard. At first sight there is some apparent contradiction in these words; but the manner of speaking is highly appropriate, because Hezekiah was assuredly and beyond all controversy convinced that nothing is hidden from God; only he argues with himself on this point, whether or not, God determines to call in question the blasphemy of this filthy dog; because frequently he delays and conceals vengeance for a time, and thus seems to shut his eyes and overlook it. In short, taking for granted that

"all things are open and manifest to God," (Hebrews 4:13,)

he only asks with earnestness whether or not God actually shews that he is so highly offended by the blasphemies of Rabshakeh that he determines not to allow them to remain unpunished. In a word, he wishes God to

[46] "Tellement qu'ils ne marchent qu'en trainant les jambes ou a clochepied," "So that they walk only by dragging their limbs or limping."

[47] "Paraventure, ou possible." "Perhaps, or possible."

hear effectually, that is, by restoring those things which were scattered and confused, and shewing himself to be a judge; for then do we know that he actually sees and observes all things. In this manner Hezekiah asks, "Hath not the Lord heard the blasphemies of Rabshakeh, to take vengeance on them, and to shew that he hath a regard to the glory of his name?"

Jehovah thy God. By calling him "the God of Isaiah," Hezekiah does not mean that there is only one man who worships God, nor does he exclude himself from the number of the godly; but because prayers flowed from doctrine, the pious king wished to speak in commendation of the ministry of the Prophet, and to testify that he was a true servant of God. That relation is somewhat more extensive; for all believers call on God, and, on the other hand, God reckons them among his people; but God is reckoned in a peculiar manner to be the God of Isaiah and Paul, because they have a special calling. In a word, these words expressly contain praise and commendation of Isaiah's calling.

Thou wilt therefore lift up a prayer. This is the second reason why Hezekiah sent messengers to Isaiah; namely, that he also would pray along with others. Hence we learn that it is the duty of a prophet, not only to comfort the afflicted by the word of the Lord, but also to offer his prayers for their salvation. Let not pastors and ministers of the word, therefore, think that they have fully discharged their duty, when they have exhorted and taught, if they do not also add prayer. This indeed is what all ought to do; but Hezekiah sent to Isaiah in a particular manner, because he ought to lead the way to others by his example. Besides, "to lift up a prayer" is nothing else than "to pray," but the mode of expression deserves attention; for it shews how our feelings ought to be regulated when we pray. Scripture everywhere enjoins us to "lift up our hearts to heaven," (Lamentations 3:41;) for otherwise we would have no fear of God. Moreover, our stupidity is so great that we are immediately seized by gross imaginations of God; so that if he did not bid us look to heaven, we would choose rather to seek him at our feet. "To lift up a prayer," therefore, is to pray in such a manner that our hearts may not grovel on the earth, or think anything earthly or gross about God, but may ascribe to him what is suitable to his majesty, and that our warm and earnest affections may take a lofty flight. In this sense it is said in the Psalm,

"Let my prayer come up before thee as incense,
and as the evening sacrifice." (Psalm 141:2.)

For the remnant that is still left. When he desires that prayer should be offered "for the remnant of the people that was left," this circumstance was fitted powerfully to move the Lord; not that he is moved after the manner of men, but he acts towards us in this manner, and accommodates himself to our weakness. Thus when our affairs are brought to such an extremity that we are not far from destruction, we ought to spread our misery before God, that our minds may receive some consolation; for God declares that he hath

regard to "the poor and afflicted." (Psalm 22:24.) And the nearer we appear to be to destruction, so much the more warmly and earnestly ought we to implore that he would render assistance to us, as we see here that Hezekiah did when matters were desperate.

5. *And the servants of King Hezekiah came to Isaiah.* As the Prophet formerly related that the pious king had no other refuge than to consult the mouth of the Lord, so he now shews that he did not consult in vain; for he received the consolation which he desired. Instructed by this example, if we seek relief from him by pouring our cares and anxieties into the bosom of God, our hope shall never be disappointed; and although there will not always be prophets in the world, such as Isaiah was, yet he will come forth seasonably to render assistance in an appropriate manner.

6. *Thus saith Jehovah.* Isaiah begins by saying that he gives the reply in the name of God, and expressly declares that the oracle comes from God, both because prophets ought always to beware of bringing forward anything of their own, and because in so difficult a matter the authority of God was needful. In this manner also, the Prophet shewed that he met the prayers of the pious king. Even false prophets, indeed, boast of the name of God, but falsely. Isaiah was truly the organ of the Holy Spirit, and therefore he has a right to mention the holy name of Him that sent him.

Fear not. When he bids him "not fear," he exhorts Hezekiah to be of a courageous or, at least, a calm disposition. Whenever we hear this word, let us be reminded that we are enjoined to cultivate that peace which faith produces in our hearts; for all who trust in God, and expect from him deliverance from their distresses, rise superior to all fears by the exercise of patience, so that even in the midst of affliction they have peace. Besides, in order that the pious king may continue cheerfully to expect a joyful issue, he plainly declares that God conducts his own cause which he has undertaken to defend, because he cannot permit wicked men unpunished to dishonor his name without making it appear at length that he is a righteous judge. [48]

The servants of the king of Assyria. By calling them *servants,* he presents in a stronger light the baseness of the action; for although the king himself had spoken in this manner, still it would have been intolerable that the Lord should be despised and so shamefully attacked by a mortal man. Hence it might easily be concluded that much less would he endure to be so highly insulted by "servants," [49] and therefore the rank of the person increases the heinoushess of the attack.

7. *Behold, I will bring a wind upon him.* Others translate it, "I will put my Spirit in him," as if the Prophet were speaking of a secret influence of the heart; but that is a forced interpretation. It is a highly appropriate

[48] "En les punissant." "By punishing them."

[49] "The word translated servants, is not the same with that in the preceding verse, but strictly means young men or boys, and is so translated in the Targ. and Vulg. Many interpreters regard it as a contemptuous description, and it is so translated by Hitzig, (knappen, attendants.) Umbreit, (buben, boys or lads,) Henderson, (striplings,) and in other modern versions." — Alexander.

metaphor that there is in the hand of God a wind or whirlwind to drive Sennacherib in another direction. To compare wicked men to "straw or chaff,' (Psalm 1:4) is a mode of expression frequently employed in Scripture, because God easily drives them wherever he thinks proper, when they think that they are standing very firm. The commotion that arose in the kingdom of Sennacherib is compared by the Prophet to a "wind" or "storm" which drove him out of Judea, and then he shews that the Lord will find no more difficulty in repelling that enemy than if he wished to move straw or chaff; and the very same thing might be said of all tyrants, however powerful.

For he shall hear a report. The words "and he shall hear" are evidently added for the sake of explanation, and therefore I have chosen to interpret them as assigning a reason, "For he shall hear." [50] This is the wind by the raising of which Sennacherib was suddenly driven away; for a report which he heard about the kings of Egypt and Ethiopia constrained him to return to his own country.

And I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land. This means as if he had said, "He now annoys and harasses others, and endeavors to extend widely the limits of his empire; but I will raise up enemies to him, in the very bosom of his own land, who shall discomfit him." Some expound it to mean the land of Israel, but that is an excessively forced interpretation; for he speaks of the land of the king of Assyria himself, and there is an implied contrast, "He who subdued other men's cities and kingdoms shall not be able to defend his own country, but shall be destroyed and perish in it."

8. *And Rabshakeh having returned.* He now declares how Rabshakeh, without doing anything, returned to his king, not to the same place where he had left him; for he understood that he had raised the siege of Lachish, and had departed into Egypt for the purpose of attacking Libnah. Some think that this city is Pelusium, others choose rather to assign it to Judea. It is, indeed, probable that, in consequence of a report that reached him about the approach of enemies, he moved his camp towards Egypt, that by meeting them he might prevent them from advancing. Though God restrained the violence of the tyrant by a new war, in order to give some relief to the Jews, yet he did not wish to conquer the tyrant by the hand of man, but only to shew openly and, as it were, to display on a theater his unconquerable pride; because, even when he was in great danger, he did not cease to vomit out the same blasphemies, as we shall soon see.

9. *And hearing concerning Tirhakah king of Ethiopia.* From what follows we may conjecture the reason why the king of Assyria suddenly departed from Judea; for the kings of Egypt and Ethiopia had formed a league with each other against Sennacherib, because they saw that his power was becoming excessive, and that his invasion of other countries had no limit, and therefore they readily concluded that, unless they opposed his violence at an

[50] {ἀκούσας} {ἀγγελίαν}, "having heard a message." "Havendo inteso un certo grido," "having heard a certain noise." — Ital. "Uno foll etmas heren," "and shall hear something." — Luth. Germ.

early period, they also would be in imminent danger from him. These kings did not intend to provide for the safety of Judea at their own loss, but looked to themselves; for so great power possessed by one individual is commonly and deservedly viewed with suspicion by other princes and nations. They therefore act wisely in joining their forces and meeting him early; for separately they would easily have been subdued and destroyed. For this reason these two kings took arms together, in order to repel the power and violence of that tyrant.

He sent messengers to Hezekiah. The king of Assyria, being involved in so hazardous a war, "sends messengers to Hezekiah," to induce him by terrors and threatenings to surrender; for tyrants are maddened by ambition and by a false opinion of their own greatness, and therefore imagine that their words, the report of their name, and even their shadow, will strike terror into all men. Entangled in a hazardous war, he thinks of subduing Judea, from which he had been compelled to withdraw, ashamed of not having continued the siege, but perhaps thinking that he will gain in his absence what he could not accomplish by his presence. But the Lord miraculously assisted his people who appeared to be very near destruction. And, first, in order to restrain the violence of this tyrant, he presented hinderances and obstructions, from which he could not so speedily extricate himself; just as if one should "lay a bridle on the mouth or a hook on the nose" of a wild and savage beast, as the Prophet will afterwards say. (Isaiah 37:29.) His rage and cruelty, indeed, are not abated, but are restrained so that they can do no harm.

We see the same thing in the present day. How many cruel tyrants would wish that the Church of God were destroyed! What schemes are employed for the accomplishment of it! How diversified are the plans which they form! What forces do they assemble from every quarter! But when they think that they will accomplish anything, the Lord suddenly raises up enemies against them, sometimes even brings them to fight with each other, and turns against themselves that cruelty which they wished to exercise against the children of God. Yet they go on in their cruelty, and cease not to attempt this or that; as this Sennacherib, though he is surrounded by difficulties, ceases not to annoy Hezekiah, and addresses him from his royal throne, as if he were a despicable slave, and commands him as if he were his vassal, and even to God himself addresses insolent and opprobrious language, and goes beyond his agent Rabshakeh in arrogance; for, although Rabshakeh's words had the same meaning, still this man, in a more impudent manner, and, as we may say, with more open mouth reviles God.

10. *Let not thy God deceive thee.* How shocking is this blasphemy, to speak of God the Author of truth, and to accuse him of falsehood and deceit, as if he actually imposed on his people! What is left to God when his truth is taken away, for nothing is more absolutely his own? God extorted this word from the wicked man, although he formerly pretended to revere some deity;

for such impiety, as we have formerly said, God does not permit to remain any longer concealed.

Saying, Jerusalem shall not be delivered. This quotation of the words uttered by God himself, that "Jerusalem would be preserved," has led some to conjecture that Isaiah's prediction had been disclosed to the king of Assyria by the traitor Shebna. But there is no need of such conjectures; for the Assyrian knew well that Hezekiah placed his hope in God, and was not ignorant of the promises which were made both to him and to David,

"This is my rest; here will I dwell for ever and ever."
(Psalm 132:14.)

Not that he gave himself any trouble about heavenly oracles, but because every person knew and talked of them, and the Jews gloried in them wonderfully, and often boasted of the assistance and protection of God in opposition to their enemies.

These promises, therefore, the tyrant meets by this blasphemy, — "Let not thy God deceive thee." And thus he exalts himself against God, as if God were not sufficiently powerful to defend Jerusalem, and as if his own power were greater, not only than all the power of men, but even than the power of God himself. He endeavors to prove this by examples, because he has vanquished nations which were under the protection of other gods, and draws an argument from the power of his ancestors, — "They conquered the gods of other nations, and I am far superior to my ancestors; therefore the God of Israel will not conquer me."

Thus do wicked men commonly exalt themselves more and more in prosperity, so that at length they forget that they are men, and not only claim for themselves, but even think that they surpass, Divine Majesty. Setting aside all distinction between right and wrong, satisfied with the mere power of doing injury, they glory in their own crimes and those of their ancestors, and egregiously flatter themselves on the ground of their being descended from robbers and infamous men; for frequently the most powerful of monarchs is the best entitled to be called the rich son of a great robber. This tyrant does not consider whether it was in a right or a wrong manner that so many countries came into the power of his ancestors; for they have no regard to justice or injustice, when they aim at greatness; it is enough for them if in any way, either lawful or unlawful, they can bring others under their yoke. Thus they think that they are at liberty to do whatever they can. They hold by that proverb, (εἰ ἀδικητέον τυραννίδος περὶ ἀδικητέον) "if justice ought to be violated, it ought to be violated for the sake of reigning;" and this vice was not peculiar to a single age, but even now we feel it to be excessive.

11. *Behold, thou hast heard.* Here we ought to observe a twofold comparison; for he compares Hezekiah to other kings of Judah who preceded him, because he was inferior to them, and yet they were vanquished by the kings of Assyria; and Sennacherib, on the other hand, having obtained greater power

than all the rest, is more daring and insolent. It followed, that Hezekiah could not resist him. The other comparison is that of the kings of Assyria, and Sennacherib himself, with the idols of the nations; for if the idols could not protect the nations that adored them, consequently neither will the God of Israel defend the nation by which he is adored.

When we thus read that singular assaults of temptations were directed against the faith of Hezekiah, let us prepare ourselves for the contest by being equipped with the same armor. Even while leisure is granted to us, let us endeavour to fortify ourselves early, in order that, when we come into such a field of battle, we may fight courageously. And if Satan taunt us with the destruction of many nations, we must attend to the difference of our condition; because, although we are liable to similar calamities, still we have assured hope of our salvation, of which they are destitute.

12. *Gozan.* This place is mentioned in 2 Kings 17:6, and 18:11. We may infer that it was a town in Media, though some think that it was situated elsewhere; but it is enough that, with regard to Jerusalem, it lay in an easterly direction. *Haran* is often mentioned in Scripture. Pliny places this town in Arabia; but it is more generally believed to have been in Mesopotamia, and this is confirmed by the journeyings of Abraham, who came to it along with his father, after having left his native country Chaldaea. (Acts 7:24; Genesis 11:31.) It is called Charrae, in the plural number, by heathen historians, who also mention that Crassus and his son were killed there.

14. *Hezekiah took the letters.* The Prophet now shews what kind of refuge Hezekiah had amidst so great calamities. He immediately went into the Temple, to lament before the Lord the calamity which: he could not remove, and to "cast upon him" (Psalm 55:22) his grief and his anxieties. [51] Nor was this a blind or confused lamentation, but the pious king wished to move God by his tears and complaints to render assistance. We are taught by his example that, when we are sore pressed, there is nothing better than to east our burden into the bosom of God. All other methods of relief will be of no avail, if this single method be wanting.

And spread them before Jehovah. In "spreading the letters before the Lord," he does not do this as if the Lord did not know what was contained in the letters, but God allows us to act in this manner towards him in accommodation to our weakness Neither prayers, nor tears, nor complaints make known to God what we need; for he

"knows our wants and necessities before we ask anything
from him." (Matthew 6:8.)

But here we ought rather to consider what is necessary for us, that is, that God should manifest that he knows the blasphemies of adversaries, and that they who have uttered them will not remain unpunished. The reason and design, therefore, why Hezekiah "spread before the Lord the letters" of

[51] "Et jetter au sein d'iceluy sa tristesse et soliciltude." "And to pour into his bosom his grief and anxiety."

the wicked tyrant was this, that he might excite his own earnestness, and inflame his own ardor, in prayer.

15. *Then Hezekiah prayed to God, saying, O Jehovah of hosts.* Because Sennacherib was the agent employed by Satan to shake the faith of Hezekiah, he defends himself by this rampart, that God possesses infinite power; for, by bestowing on God those lofty praises, he undoubtedly encourages himself to confidence in supplication. That out' prayers may not be unsuccessful, we ought always to hold it as certain that God "is the rewarder of all who seek him." (Hebrews 11:6.) It was especially necessary for the pious king, that he might boldly and undauntedly remove the obstruction by which Satan had attempted to stop the progress of his confidence, to believe that although wicked men mock and undervalue the power of God, still it remains undiminished. The heroic, courage of the pious king appeared by not only contending with a wicked king in maintaining the power of God, but by exalting it in his own heart and appealing to God as the witness of his inward feelings. Accordingly, before forming any prayer, he overturns the delusions by which Satan had endeavored to shake his courage.

16. *Thou alone art God over all the kingdoms of the earth.* Not only does he assert God's almighty power, but likewise maintains the authority which he exercises over the whole world. And these statements are made by the pious king for the purpose of strengthening himself in the faith which he entertained about the providence of God, by which he governs the world and every part of it. All believers ought above all to believe this, that they may not think that they pray in vain. Nor would the prayer of the king have had so much efficacy if he had only said, "Incline thine ear, O Lord," or something of that sort, as when he believes that the Lord takes care of his works. He persuades himself that God will undertake that cause. If it belongs to God to rule and govern the whole world, he will not permit this tyrant to act in this insolent manner without restraining his insolence; for Sennacherib claims for himself what belonged to God, and at length would not pass unpunished.

The statement, that all the kingdoms of the earth are under the power and authority of God, applies especially to the present subject. Yet while this title always belongs to God alone, that he "rules over all kingdoms," Still the Prophet does not deny that kings also, and princes, and magistrates hold their dominion, but so as to be subject to God, and to owe to him all their power and authority. In like manner, when Paul asserts that government belongs to God alone, (1 Timothy 6:15,) he does not overthrow princes and magistrates, but shews that all, how great and powerful soever they may be, depend on God alone, that they may not imagine themselves to be his equals or companions, but may acknowledge him as their Lord and Prince. Thus will kings, therefore, retain their authority, if they keep an intermediate position between God and men, and do not wish to rise higher.

Thou hast made heaven and earth. Hezekiah draws the same inference

from creation itself; for it is impossible that God, who is the Creator of heaven and earth, should forsake his work; on the contrary, he governs by his providence the human race, which is the chief part of the world. It would be absurd to confine creation within such narrow boundaries as if it were a proof of a sudden and transitory exercise of the power of God; but we must extend it to perpetual government. Hence it is evident that tyrants who wish to rule at their pleasure rob God of his honor, and therefore are justly punished for their insolence.

O Jehovah of hosts, God of Israel, who dwellest between the Cherubim. Here are other titles employed by Hezekiah for the confirmation of his faith. And, first, by calling him "Jehovah of hosts," he again extols his power. But when he adds "God of Israel," he brings him near, and on familiar terms; for it was no ordinary token of love to take that nation under his protection. Such is also the import of "sitting between the cherubim;" as if he had said, "Thou hast here placed thy seat, and promised that thou wilt be the protector of those who call upon thee before the ark of the covenant. Relying on this promise, I flee to thee as my guardian."

Hezekiah had in view, I have no doubt, the form of the ark, which was surrounded by two cherubim. Others interpret Cherubim to mean angels, as if it were said, that God reigneth in heaven and sitteth among the angels. But this interpretation is unsuitable; for he is said to "sit between the cherubim," on account of the form of the ark, which was constructed in this manner. (Exodus 25:18.) We know that it was a symbol of the presence of God, though his power was not confined to it; and Hezekiah, by mentioning it, intended to express his firm belief that God was present with him, and had designed to gather a people to himself by spreading, so to speak, his wings over them. There being a wide distance between God and us, Hezekiah embraced that token of adoption. Yet there was nothing gross or earthly in his conceptions of God, as superstitious men would desire to bring him down from heaven, but, satisfied with the promise which he had received, he expresses his firm belief that we do not need to go far to seek the grace of God.

This mode of expression, therefore, deserves our attention, and teaches us, that while we gradually ascend to heaven by the light of the word which leads the way, still, in order to obtain assistance, we must not think of God as absent; for he has chosen his dwelling in the midst of us. Since his majesty far exceeds heaven and earth, we must not limit him within the capacity of our understanding; and yet, as he has revealed himself to us by the word, we may comprehend him in proportion to the small ability and measure of our understanding, not that we may bring him down from his heavenly throne, but that our understandings, which are naturally feeble and sluggish, may approach to him by degrees; for it is proper that we should strive to approach to his loftiness, since he invites us by the Word and sacraments. If we are skillful interpreters, the spiritual knowledge of God will always

flourish among us; we shall not give the name of God to stones, or wood, or trees; there will be nothing earthly or gross in our conceptions of him; but the nearer he comes down to us, the more earnestly shall we labor to make a proper use of those aids which he holds out, that our minds may not grovel on the earth; since God accommodates himself to our weakness for no other reason than that the sacraments may serve to us the purpose of ladders, [52] which superstition abuses for a contrary purpose.

17. *incline thine ear, O Jehovah.* From these words we conclude how great was the perplexity of Hezekiah; for the earnestness that pervades the prayer breathes an amazing power of anguish, so that it is easily seen that he had a struggle attended by uncommon difficulty to escape from the temptation. Though his warmth in prayer shews the strength and eminence of his faith, yet at the same time it exhibits, as in a mirror, the stormy passions. Whenever we shall be called to sustain such contests, let us learn by the example of the pious king to combat our passions by everything that is fitted to strengthen our faith, so that the very disturbance may conduct us to safety and peace, and that we may not be terrified by a conviction of our weakness, if at any time we shall be powerfully assailed by fear and perplexity. It is, indeed, the will of the Lord that we shall toil hard, and sweat and shiver; for we must not expect to gain the victory while we repose in indolence, but after diversified contests he promises to us a prosperous issue, which he will undoubtedly grant.

But why does Hezekiah demand that God should listen? Does he think float he is asleep or does not hear? By no means; but in a matter of such difficulty we frequently speak in such a manner as if we thought that God was absent or did not attend to our afflictions. He shews that he was oppressed by so great perplexity that he almost thought that God had forsaken him; that is, according to the eyes of the flesh; for if he had not by the eyes of faith beheld God as present, he would have lost courage.

Open thine eyes, O Jehovah, and see. It is as if Hezekiah had prayed that the assistance of God, which he had long kept in his heart committed to the guardianship of hope, would be actually and publicly manifested; and therefore he prays that Jehovah would "open his eyes and see;" that is, would shew that he cares about these matters. Hezekiah shews plainly what was the subject about which he was most anxious, namely, that God would revenge the insults offered to him; for although he was deeply affected by anxiety about his kingdom and people, yet he set a higher value on the glory of God than on all other sources of uneasiness. The advancement of that glory ought, indeed, above all things, to move and impress our hearts, and the more especially because we know that it is closely connected with our salvation.

Thus Hezekiah here represents this tyrant as an enemy of God, who dishonors him by reproaches and curses because Jerusalem glories in his name

[52] D'escheles.

and protection, and concludes that God cannot forsake the city which he hath undertaken to defend, without at the same time abandoning his own name. Since, therefore, God in his infinite goodness chooses to connect our salvation with his glory, we ought to lay held on those promises for the purpose of strengthening our hearts, that although the wicked, while they reproach God and pour and vomit out the venom of their breast, harden themselves in the vain hope that they shall not be punished, still there will not be a syllable which the Lord does not hear, and which he does not at length call to account.

18. and **19.** *Truly, O Jehovah.* Here Hezekiah begins to distinguish between the false gods and the true God, which we also ought to do very carefully. Wicked men, who have no light, indulge in some confused imaginations about God, which quickly pass away, so that they think that there is no God, or care nothing about him. [53] But God does not wish that his people shall be moved by a slight and passing opinion, but that he shall be acknowledged by them as the true God, who drives away all superstitions by the brightness of his power. [54] It is not; enough, therefore, that we believe in something which heathens imagine to be a deity, but we must believe in God in such a manner as to distinguish him from pretended gods, and to separate truth from falsehood; and, indeed, when he has once shone into our hearts, those false religions which formerly occupied our minds immediately give way.

This doctrine ought to be the more carefully held, because many persons rest satisfied with dark speculations, and think that it is enough if they acknowledge some deity. They evidently do not know whether they ought to worship the God of the Mahometans or of the Jews; and fly in the air, so that, as the saying is, they neither touch heaven nor earth. Nothing can be more destructive than this imagination; for it mingles and confounds idols with God, whose majesty does not hold its due rank if it does not reign in solitary grandeur over the ruins of all the false gods. Thus the beginning of true piety is, that from the whole multitude of false gods we shall wisely distinguish that one God to whom we ought to be entirely devoted.

For they are not gods, but the work of the hands of man, wood and stone. By two arguments Hezekiah shews that "they were not gods;" first, because they consisted of matter, [55] and secondly, because they were formed by the hands of men. Nothing can be more absurd than for a man to assume the right to create a god, not only because he had a beginning, while God is eternal, but because not even for a single moment does he subsist by his own power. Let the whole world collect all its strength into a single man, [56] he

[53] "Encor qu'il y en air un." "Though there be a God."

[54] "Dechassant par la splendeur de sa vertu toutes tenebres d'ignorance." "Who drives away by the brightness of his power all the darkness of ignorance."

[55] "D'autant qu'ils estoyent de matire corruptible." "Because they were of corruptible matter."

[56] "En un seul homme."

will not even be able to create a fica. What presumption is it, therefore, that every mortal man shall make for himself either one god or many! [57] Since, therefore, there is nothing in us but what is frail and fading, we shall never be able to produce a deity.

Besides, it is in the highest degree absurd to attempt, as an exercise of skill, to frame some deity out of matter which is corruptible and devoid of feeling, as if "wood or stone," whenever it received a shape, began to be a god. In this manner, therefore, all the superstitions that men have ever invented are speedily overturned; for the existence of those gods can be found nowhere but in their own brains, and, indeed, all that they have of themselves contrived is condemned as empty and false.

20. *And now, O Jehovah our God.* At the conclusion of his prayer, the pious king now rises above that fear with which he had struggled; for the aids by which he had hitherto fortified himself undoubtedly encouraged him boldly to add this short clause. Although God does not always deliver his people from temporal evils, yet as he had promised that he would be the protector of the city, Hezekiah could firmly believe that all the efforts of that wicked tyrant, which were directed to the destruction of that city, would be fruitless.

May know that thou alone art Jehovah. When he pleads it as an argument with God that the deliverance of the city will be an occasion of promoting his glory, we conclude that nothing is more desirable than to make his name glorious in every possible way; and this is even the chief design of our salvation, from which we are not at liberty to depart, if we desire that God should be gracious to us. Hence we conelude that those men are unworthy of his assistance, who, satisfied with their own salvation, disregard or forget the reason why God chooses to preserve them. Not only do they dishonor God by this ingratitude, but they likewise inflict grievous injury on themselves, by separating those things which God had joined; for in saving his people he glorifies his name, which must be, as we have already said, our highest consolation. Besides, Hezekiah does not only desire that the God of Israel shall hold a certain rank, but that all idols shall be abolished, and that he shall reign alone; for at that time many idolaters would have allowed him to be worshipped along with others, but, since he does not admit companions, every deity framed by the hand of man must be destroyed, that He may hold the undivided sovereignty.

21. *Then Isaiah sent to Hezekiah.* This shews the result of the prayer; for, as soon as matters have come to an extremity, God suddenly holds out his hand to assist the pious king by the Prophet Isaiah. (2 Kings 19:20.) Not that he immediately stretches out his arm to drive away the enemies, but he promises deliverance by the mouth of the Prophet, and thus calls even now into exercise the faith of his servant. Isaiah undoubtedly could not of

[57] "Quel orgueil estce donc que le premier qui voudra mettre la main a la besogne se face autant de dieux que bon luy semblera!" "What presumption is it then that whoever shall first put his hand to the work shall make as many gods as he thinks proper!"

himself render any assistance, and therefore it would have been foolish for him to promise this or that, if Hezekiah had not been convinced that God had sent him. Thus, until God should give a manifestation of his power, he rested satisfied with this consolation.

Thus saith Jehovah the God of Israel. Here we are taught that we ought always to ask at the mouth of God, if we wish to obtain any alleviation in our anxieties and distresses; for if we reject the doctrine which he communicates to us by the hand of faithful teachers, we are utterly unworthy of receiving any consolation. Fed and nourished by it, we ought to make continual progress, and to seek from it new confirmations, that new remedies may be constantly found for new distresses, and that we may never be destitute of consolation even amidst the sharpest afflictions; for even they whose resources and means of defense are most extensive cannot be too abundantly supplied with this doctrine. In Hezekiah a striking instance of faith and steadfastness is here exhibited; and yet the Lord does not merely comfort him once or only by a single prophecy, but confirms him by many prophecies, in order that we, who are far removed from such steadfastness, may know that we need many and various aids, to give uninterrupted support to our faith.

Since thou hast prayed to me. In the sacred history (2 Kings 19:20) the word *I have heard,* is used; and consequently in that passage {אשר} (*asher*) is a relative pronoun; but here, as in many other passages, it is introduced either for the sake of explanation or in assigning a reason. [58] To supply the word *I have heard,* as some commentators do, is harsh and unnatural; and the sentence flows on in unbroken connection, when God declares that he grants it as an answer to the prayers of Hezekiah, that he will frustrate all the efforts of the tyrant, and restrain his violence and rage; as if he had said, that God's answer corresponded to the prayers of the pious king. And, indeed, whoever addresses prayers to him will at length experience how ready he is to answer; but very frequently he is silent, and offers no consolation from his word, because amidst our distresses we are dumb.

Concerning Sennacherib king of Assyria. The prediction amounts to this, that there is no reason why Hezekiah, under a consciousness of destitution and weakness, should faint or despair, when he sees the insolence of this haughty tyrant; because God will interpose between them. Sennacherib having offered those insults to the wretched Jews, God declares that he takes this cause into his own hands, because the affront was directed against himself. By these words he shews that he will take vengeance, when his grace is despised by unbelievers; and he advises believers not to be greatly distressed on account of their being despised by the world, provided that their weakness finds assistance ready prepared in heaven.

22. *The virgin daughter of Zion.* There is greater emphasis in this address to the whole Church than if he had said the same tiring to Hezekiah as a

[58] That is, it means either since or because. — Ed.

private individual; for this circumstance heightens the baseness of treating with scorn the defencelessness of a wretched people, as if the aid of heaven had been of no avail. Thus he censures the blindness of Sennacherib, in disregarding God and haughtily despising an afflicted Church. Cities are frequently called *daughters.* (Psalm 9:14.) Sometimes also, as we have formerly seen, delicate cities are called *virgins.* (Isaiah 1:8, and 23:12.) But here he intended to express the weakness of the city of Jerusalem, because she was like an orphan and destitute *virgin,* who was insulted by this base ruffian and infamous robber; while God, as the father to whom this insult is offered, declares that he knows well what are the schemes of that wicked man, and what is the condition of the whole of Judea.

23. *Whom hast thou reproached?* In the former verse he describes the fact, such as it might be seen and beheld by all; but now he raises their minds higher, by shewing that this tyrant insults not only Jerusalem but God himself. Let this passage be brought to our remembrance, whenever we see ourselves exposed to the taunts and insolence of wicked men; for, though we have no armor, and though no one undertakes our defense, and though our weakness prompts our enemies to growing insolence, yet the Lord is near and will defend us as with an ample shield, for they who fight against us wage war with the living God. Nor were these words spoken merely for the sake of a single age, but on the contrary, as this promise is perpetual,

"I will be thy God and thy shield,"
(Genesis 15:1, and 17:7,)

"I will be a friend to thy friends, and an adversary to thy adversaries,"
(Genesis 12:3; Exodus 23:22,)

so the less strength that is left to us, let us be more fully convinced that the power of God is close at hand. Since therefore the Lord hath entered into covenant with us on the condition of undertaking our cause, let us not doubt that he will actually fulfill it, and will shew that the insults which are offered to us are offered to himself. In a word, he is joined to us in such a manner that he wishes all that belongs to him and to us to be in common.

Besides, those reproaches which Sennacherib had thrown out against the Church God applies to himself, in order to shew that wicked men are greatly mistaken when they are proud of their greatness, as if they would escape punishment for treading on the Church, because she is lying at their feet. We know that they treat with contempt the providence of God; and especially when they see believers groaning under the yoke, they think them unworthy of receiving assistance from God, who therefore rises up and testifies that the contempt shewn to his poor flock grieves him as much as if his majesty were openly dishonored. Although, therefore, enemies think that we are forsaken by God when they see us destitute of earthly resources, and on that account commit grosser outrage, as if we were given to them for a prey, yet, on the other hand, God declares that our salvation is dear and precious to him.

Against whom hast thou raised thy voice? The Prophet employs a variety

of terms in describing the disdain and insolence of this haughty man, as one who in speech, in face, in gesture, in his eyes, and, in short, in the whole attitude of his body, was absolutely intolerable; for tyrants, having such an opinion of themselves, assume such airs and look down on every one else as if they had fallen down from heaven.

Against the Holy One of Israel. At length he adds, that, although the affairs of the nation are at a low ebb, still God, under whose protection they are placed, remains in heaven as powerful as ever, he thus censures the madness of Sennacherib in judging of a nation from earthly appearances, and not considering that they were dedicated and consecrated to God. In order, therefore, that we may remain safe through the power of God: and that his arm may give us seasonable aid, we must be his *Israel;* which will be the case if, relying on his word, we

"recline under the shadow of his wings." (Psalm 36:7.)

24. *By the hand of thy servants.* This also heightens the baseness and cruelty of the insult, for it is harder to bear reproaches from a servant than from his master, the insult being rendered more grievous by the meanness of the person. Renee also proud and insolent men, in order to render their threatenings more galling and offensive, boast that they will do this or that by one of their servants or footmen, for the purpose of testifying more strongly their contemptuous feelings towards those whom they hate. The Prophet therefore intended to represent more strongly the baseness of the blasphemy by this circumstance, that Sennacherib had not only vomited it out of his own mouth, but had employed *"his servant"* Rabshakeh to utter scornful language against the holy name of God.

I will ascend the heights of the mountains, the sides of Lebanon. What he now repeats as having been spoken by Sennacherib, some understand to relate generally to former victories which he had gained, and by which, as we have already said, he had vanquished many nations. But I choose rather to take a more simple view, and to interpret it as relating to the present siege. Perceiving almost the whole of Judea subjected to his power, having taken possession of the hills which surrounded that country on all sides, he swells with insolence as if he had gained a complete victory, and threatens that he will take within his grasp those battlemerits and Mount Lebanon, with its cedars and firs and ether attractions; as if he had said that nothing shall hinder him from taking possession of the bulwarks, castles, and best fortified places, and wielding the whole of Judea at his pleasure. Thus do tyrants, though they acknowledge that war is doubtful, still dream of having in their power the successful results of battles.

25. *I shall dig and drink water.* The tyrant still goes on to boast of his strength, and threatens that e will bring so powerful an army that by means of their numbers he will dry up all the fountains and rivers. Yet, when he says, "With the sole of my feet I shall dry up all the lakes of the siege," by *the*

lakes of the siege [59] some understand the fountain of Siloah, and the cisterns and pools of which the besieged Jews could not be deprived without being consumed by thirst. And, indeed, in the former clause he appears to say that, though the whole country were dry, still he does not dread a scarcity of water, because his vast military forces will be abundantly able to dig wells. In the second clause he adds, that he will have at his command the means of drying up all the waters of the city, so as to slay the Jews by thirst. In short, he means that Jerusalem will be unable to resist the siege, and will not be able to stand out any longer, but must immediately surrender. But while wicked men thus vaunt, God sits in heaven, from which he will at length execute judgment against them; for this narrative of the Prophet is intended to lead us to consider the stupendous judgment of God against that tyrant.

26. *Hast thou not heard?* The greater part of commentators explain this verse as if the Lord declared that nothing was now done, or had formerly been done by this tyrant, which he had not foretold by the mouth of the Prophet, and thus affirmed that he was the author of those things. But I explain it in a different manner, which is, that Jerusalem will be preserved by the assistance of God, because he is the protector of it.

That I made it long ago. For the sake of giving greater emphasis, he suppresses the name of the city, and employs the demonstrative pronoun *it,* as if all other cities had been of no value in the sight of God. [60] Others view the pronoun *it* as referring to the deliverance which depended on the secret decree of God; but whoever examines judiciously the design and words of the Prophet, will acknowledge that *it* rather denotes Jerusalem. God had complained that he was dishonored by base reproaches; and yet, in repeating the words of Sennacherib, he mentioned only "Lebanon" and the adjacent country. In order now to shew that under the name "Lebanon" war has been declared against himself, he affirms, as in many other passages of Scripture, that Jerusalem was founded by his own hand and built by his direction, and therefore that, until he was conquered, Sennacherib could not overthrow it.

This doctrine is found everywhere, and frequently repeated in the Scriptures, (Psalm 48:8; 67:5; 78:69; Isaiah 14:32,) and contains a remarkable consolation, by which the godly may be sustained amidst the severest afflictions that can befall them; and that consolation is, that they will continually be under God's protection, because he has elected them. He employs this argument, "I have founded the Church, and therefore the salvation of the Church shall always be my care; because I will not leave unfinished the work which I have begun, but will carry it forward to perfection." In short, the Lord testifies that he defends and preserves his work, because it involves his honor and our salvation. Yet he is called "the maker of the Church," in a different sense from that in which he is commonly called the Creator of heaven and earth; for we are his peculiar work, "his workmanship, ({τὸ}

[59] The rivers of besieged places. — (Eng. Ver.)

[60] "Comme si toutes les autres villes n'estoyent rien derant Dieu au pris de cesteci." "As if all other cities were nothing before God in comparison of this."

{ποίημα},) created anew by his Spirit," as Paul speaks, and as we have formerly explained on other passages. [61] This work is, therefore, more excellent than the whole creation of the world; that no one may ascribe it to his own exertions or power that he has been adopted into the Church of God; for it is not without good reason that we are called "his workmanship."

It may be asked, "Why does the Lord say that *he formed Jerusalem from ancient days?* for there were other cities far more ancient." I reply, this must not be viewed as referring to the outward form or structure of the city, but to that eternal decree by which he chose it to be his dwelling-place; for although it was declared, even when the ark was built, "This is my rest, here will I dwell," (Psalm 132:14;) and again by Moses,

"Wherever I shall record my name, I will come to thee and will bless thee," (Exodus 20:24;)

yet it had been ordained by God long before. "We were chosen," as Paul also informs us,

"before the foundations of the world were laid,"
(Ephesians 1:4;)

and James declares that

"we were begotten by the word of truth, that we might be as it were the first-fruits of all the creatures." (James 1:18.)

He will, therefore, preserve us above all creatures, and will never allow us to perish; and indeed, for the same reason that Christ is called "the firstborn of every creature," (Colossians 1:15) "the Church, which is his body," (Ephesians 1:22, 23,) possesses the highest honor and dignity in the whole world. I leave to the Rabbins their dreams, that God created the Messiah and Jerusalem with a throne of glory before he created heaven and earth. But we must maintain this doctrine, that God will be the faithful guardian of his Church, because he has deigned to prefer her to the whole world.

And should I now bring it to be desolation? Others take these words in a different sense. I acknowledge that the Prophet's words are in the past tense, *Now have I brought and placed it;* but as the change of tenses is frequent in the Hebrew language, the Prophet, after having said that God is the founder of his Church, and that it is the most illustrious of all his works, undoubtedly argues from it that it is impossible that he shall involve his Church in the same ruin as ordinary things. We must therefore read it as a question, "Shall I now bring it?" or, "Shall I now have brought it?" As if he had said, "Should I allow it to be ruined, like other cities that have been destroyed and razed?" [62] For he compares Jerusalem to other cities which had been overthrown by the king of Assyria, and subjected to his power, that no one may think

[61] Commentary on Isaiah, vol. 2, pp. 26 and 83.

[62] "The marginal reading of the English version runs thus, "Hast thou not heard how I have made it long ago, and formed it of ancient times? Should I now bring it to be laid waste, and defenced cities to be ruinous heaps?" The coincidence with the version given by Calvin is striking. Was it accidental? — Ed.

that the tyrant can so easily overturn it; because it holds a different position from other cities which have been destroyed and levelled with the ground. It ought not therefore to be compared even to the best fortified cities, for they quickly fall with their earthly strength; but the Church, though small and feeble, has a firm and solid foundation.in the election of God, and cannot be overturned by any billows or tempests.

We see wonderful changes that have often taken place throughout the whole world, republics subverted, empires overthrown, very powerful nations subdued, their name extinguished, and their glory effaced. Where is now the majesty of the Roman Empire? Where is the grandeur of that nation which was mistress of the whole world? If there are any remains of it, (and they are few,) do they not aid the wretched bondage of that detestable monster, Antichrist, whose tyranny is exercised over the whole world? Where is now the liberty of Rome? Where is the beauty of that illustrious republic? May not Rome be justly called the workshop of iniquity, and the lodginghouse of every crime?

But amidst those frightful changes, the Lord declares that he will assist Jerusalem, that is, his Church, and that although amidst those changes she may be afflicted and tossed in various ways, yet she shall stand erect, or at least the shaking and oppression which she may suffer shall not hinder her from being renewed and multiplied from age to age by various resurrections. Although there are not always in the world the same members of the Church, yet it is the same body joined to the same head, that is, Christ. The Lord will therefore defend his city, and will cause

"the children of his servants to continue, that their seed may be established for ever." (Psalm 102:28.)

27. *For their inhabitants were maimed.* [63] Here the Prophet expresses more fully what he had formerly glanced at briefly, that we ought not to judge of the condition of the Church from the stability of this world; for although fortified cities are taken, and the strongest men lose courage and fall into the hands of their enemies, yet the Church shall stand and flourish, because it does not rest on its own strength, and has its foundation not on the earth but in heaven. There is thus an implied contrast between fortified cities, which alarmed and terrorstruck inhabitants are unable to defend, and the Church of God, which rests on his grace alone, and therefore resists every attack, so that it never fails; for the Church refers everything to God alone, from whom she receives the commencement of life, uninterrupted strength, perseverance, every part of salvation, and every blessing.

Hence we learn that all fortresses are of no avail, if the hand of the Lord do not assist. All human strength will be broken and decay, if it be not supported by his power; castles, bulwarks, and the most powerful armies

[63] "Their inhabitants were of small power. Heb., short of hand." — (Eng. Ver.) "Their inhabitants are short of hand, that is, I have made them weak, they are ashamed and confounded. By these and the following expressions he shews how easily the nations were vanquished by the king of Assyria, when it had been so determined by Jehovah." — Rosenmuller.

will be of no use without him. This is expressed more fully by the following metaphors,

Like the grass of the field and the green herb. It is of importance that believers should be led to admire the wonderful grace which God exercises towards them, that they may not envy the earthly wealth possessed by irreligious men. Although their power be dazzling and magnificent, yet he shews that they are like "the green herb and the grass," which indeed flourish for a time, but quickly wither. He dwarfs them still more by another metaphor which he adds,

The grass of the housetops. It is indeed lofty and seen by all, but the more elevated its position, it is the nearer to the heat, and withers more quickly, and is of no use whatever; and it is said also in the psalm, that

"they who pass by do not bless it." (Psalm 129:8.)

Though the enemies of the Church [64] are high, and as it were exalted to heaven, though they flourish and have abundant wealth, yet they quickly fall. In like manner, therefore, as the corn which lies on the ground at our feet is more valuable than the unfruitful herb that grows on the housetops; so the Lord shews that the low condition of his servants is far more desirable than that of those who, leaning on their own strength, vaunt themselves above others, and boast against God himself. [65]

Which withereth before it is ripe. Some think that this is a fourth comparison, but I think that the Prophet added it for the sake of exposition; as if he had said, that grass of this kind withers before it come into the stalk, that is, before it is fully ripe; in the same manner as it is said in the psalm, "Before it is grown up, it withereth." (Psalm 129:6.)

28. *I know thy sitting down and thy rising up.* He returns to the insufferable pride of that tyrant, who claimed everything for himself, as if he had not been subject to any one, and dared to despise God as compared to himself, and to load him with reproaches. He rebukes that man's pride and insolence, "But I know thy sitting down." This being the cause of the fierceness of wicked men, that they think that no one is above them, and that they are not even subject to the providence of God, he shews that they can absolutely do nothing except so far as he permits them. By *sitting down, and rising up,* are here denoted deliberations, plans, and schemes. Wicked and irreligious men enter into various deliberations how they may be able to oppress and destroy the people of God; but to whatever hand they turn, and which way soever they pursue, they will accomplish nothing without the will of God. The providence of God restrains them, and drives them hither and thither, so that frequently, contrary to their intention, they are conducted to a very good end, as God thinks fit, to whom it peculiarly belongs to "direct

[64] Les ennemis de l'Eglise.

[65] "On the flat roofs of the east, if they be not carefully kept clean, herbage grows from seeds, which perhaps had been left there while they were in process of being dried, or had been brought thither by the wind. But in consequence of the want of soil it quickly withered." — Rosenmuller.

the steps of men." (Proverbs 16:9.)

And thy indignation against me. He warns Sennacherib that he is well aware of his rage, and declares that, while wicked men storm on the earth, he preserves calm silence, and laughs at their madness; and because Sennacherib was furious, and thought that he would not be punished for it, the Prophet expressly adds this, that believers may not think that this is new or unknown to God, or that he pays no attention to them.

29. *Because thou wast angry against me.* The more furiously wicked men rise up against God, and the more outrageous the violence by which they are actuated, so much the more is he wont eventually to set himself in opposition to them. For a time, indeed, he permits them to domineer and to have everything that they wish, but after long forbearance he restrains them, and, as it were, puts a bridle on their neck, that they may not imagine that they have everything in their power. Sennacherib was a remarkable instance of this, for in his rage against God, the more insolently he vaunted, the heavier did he find the wrath of God to be against him; which all wicked men ought also to expect.

Therefore will I put my hook (or, *my ring) in thy nose.* This is pleasant mockery of stupidity and wantonness; as if he had said, "I see how it is, by treating thee mildly and gently, I would gain nothing; for thy rage is insatiable. But since thou canst not be tamed, I will curb thee like a savage beast." And in this manner he declares more plainly, that God not only sees and knows what is proposed or contrived by wicked men, but also subdues and restrains their fierceness in such a manner, that he drags them reluctantly where ever he pleases, as one would lead a wild beast held by a bridle or a ring. {חח} *(chach)* [66] is translated by some a *hook,* but I have preferred to translate it a *ring;* because a *hook* is used for catching fishes, and would not so well apply to a beast.

Sennacherib was compelled to *return by the way by which he came,* because, while he was revolving the project of subduing every part of Judea and Egypt, he hastily, without having accomplished anything, took the speediest method of returning, which he would net have done of his own accord, if God had not drawn him back by unseen methods.

30. *And this shall be a sign to thee.* He now directs his discourse to Hezekiah and the whole nation; for he did not address Sennacherib as if he expected him to listen, but in order that, by contemptuously mocking at the absent tyrant, he might more powerfully stimulate the minds of believers to stronger confidence. If he had simply said, "Take courage, Hezekiah; though Sennacherib is insolent, yet in due time I will restrain him;" that discourse would have been less impressive, than when he addresses the tyrant, and, by

[66] "{חח (chach) denotes a ring inserted in the nose pierced for that purpose, by means of which the Arabs and neighboring nations are wont to tame and guide buffaloes and camels, and which is so much the more powerful instrument in curbing the camel, that by drawing a rein which hangs from it on both sides, the obstinate and refractory animal is prevented from breathing." — Rosenmuller.

thundering against him, encourages believers to despise his presumption. [67] Accordingly, the speech directed to the tyrant is now followed by a seasonable address to Hezekiah and the nation, and a promise of deliverance to them; not only that he will rescue them from the jaws of a savage beast, but also that Hezekiah shall enjoy a peaceful reign, and that the rest of the people shall have everything necessary for leading a prosperous and happy life. Thus he enlarges on the benefit derived from the deliverance in such a manner as to shew that he intends, not in one way only, but in a variety of ways, to promote the interests of his people; for not only does he once and instantaneously rescue them from dangers, but largely and bountifully bestows his kindness upon them, so that the fruit is seen long afterwards.

But there is an apparent impropriety in putting as "a sign" an event which occurred later than the deliverance itself; for if he intended to encourage the besieged to entertain favorable hopes, he ought to have made some exhibition beforehand, instead of relating what he would do afterwards. [68] I reply, there are two kinds of signs. Some go before the event, and lead us to it as by the hand; while others follow for the purpose of confirming the event, that it may be more strongly impressed upon our minds, and may never be effaced from our remembrance. For instance, when the Lord brought back his people out of Egypt, he gave many signs to Moses beforehand; but he also appointed another that should be after the deliverance,

"You shall sacrifice to me three days afterwards."
(Exodus 3:12, 18.)

The design was, that they should not forget so great a blessing, but should give thanks to God after having received this additional favor. It is a sign of this nature which Isaiah here describes; and certainly it tends greatly to confirm our faith, to place before our eyes the uninterrupted course of God's favours towards us, that we may consider how various they are.

When the enemy had been repelled, there was danger from famine, which most commonly comes after war; for the wasting and pillaging of the fields must have been followed by great scarcity of provisions. Amidst so great scarcity as seemed likely to ensue, the Lord promises that there will be no lack of food, and holds out this as a very evident sign of deliverance, in order to convince them the more that he will be the author of the deliverance, or, at least, to fix it more deeply on their hearts. This was indeed incredible, and exceeded all expectation and belief; but it was necessary that the faith of Hezekiah and of the people should be excited in such a manner that, after having heard of so great kindness, they might be more ready to hope well, and next, that the event might shew that those illustrious works of God could not be ascribed to chance.

The meaning therefore is, "After having driven out the enemy, God will

[67] "A ne tenir conte des menaces d'iceluy." "To pay no attention to his threatenings."

[68] "Il devoit (ce semble) monstrer la vertu de bonne heure, et non pas declarer ce qu'il feroit apres le siege leve." "He ought (one would think) to have shewn his power at an early period, and not to have declared what he would do after the siege had been raised."

restrain him so that he cannot bring fresh troops, and thou shalt peacefully possess thy country; he will also supply thee with food and nourishment, so that thou shalt be in want of nothing." But because, as usually happens, they had consumed a large portion of the crop, and destroyed a part of it, and because they who were besieged or fugitives had it not in their power to attend to agricultural labors, he promises that they shall have food without sowing till they sow on the third year.

31. *And that which shall be preserved of the house of Judah.* He follows out the former statement; for he declares that the Lord will deliver Jerusalem so as not to east away his care of her afterwards, but will be her savior to the end. And indeed all the blessings that the Lord bestows upon us are a sign and testimony of continued kindness towards us, that we may know that we shall never be forsaken by him. But here we ought chiefly to remember what we formerly remarked, that the defense of Jerusalem belonged to God, because he had chosen it to be his sanctuary, and because the Messiah would proceed from it.

And that which shall be left. {פליטה} *(peletah)* literally signifies *deliverance;* but here it is a collective noun for "men delivered," in the same manner as in other passages, "captivity" is put for "captives." (Psalm 14:7, and 53:6; Jeremiah 29:14.) And it is not without reason that he promises increase to a small remnant; for although the siege had been raised, still the people, being greatly diminished, had slight cause of joy, and full restoration could scarcely be expected by so small a number of persons. For the purpose of soothing this grief, therefore, he declares that the land will be full of inhabitants, as if a very abundant harvest would fill the granaries which had formerly been empty.

Nor was it merely the desolation of the land of Judah that might have discouraged the hearts of believers or pierced them with sorrow, but likewise that greater diminution which arose from the ten tribes being led into captivity. (2 Kings 15:29, and 17:6.) Although they have been thus cut down, Isaiah declares that the Lord will cause them to recover their former condition, and a vast multitude to spring up; for the Lord permits his people to be thus diminished and brought very low, that his glory may afterwards be illustriously displayed in their deliverance. What he accomplished at that time ought also to be expected in the present day; so that in proportion as we see the strength of the Church weakened and brought low, we may be more fully convinced that. God has in his power the means of multiplying a small number; for this restoration must not be measured by our powers of judging.

Shall strike root downward. He declares that there will be so great desolation that it shall seem as if the Church had been uprooted, and had utterly perished; and indeed the destruction of the kingdom of Israel was a very sad spectacle of cutting off. But the Prophet says, that there shall be such an increase that the tree which had been nearly torn up shall "strike its

roots" deep; for although the Church does not make professions of towering greatness, as is commonly done by the rulers of this world, yet the Lord imparts a secret vigor which causes it to spring up and grow beyond human expectation. Let us not be terrified, therefore, when no roots are seen, or when we think that they are dead; for he hath promised that he will cause it to "strike root downwards."

And bear fruit upwards. This is added, because the Church does not only flourish like grass, (which was formerly said of the condition of the wicked, [69]) but brings forth abundant fruit; and thus the Lord completes in her what he hath once begun.

32. *For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant.* Formerly by the metaphor of a root and of fruits he foretold the deliverance of the Church; he now declares the same thing without a figure. He alludes to the siege by which a small number of people, who had been left in the city, were shut up as in a prison and reduced to very great straits; he says that they shall now go out, and that the whole country shall be open to them, and that they shall be at liberty to move wherever they please without fear. The *going forth* is thus contrasted with the narrow limits within which the trembling Jews had been forced by the dread of enemies to confine themselves. Yet by this word he expresses not only liberty to go out, but the increase of the nation, which had been reduced to a small number. When not only was Judea again covered by a multitude of men, but from the remnant there sprung vast multitudes who were spread over the various countries of the world, this could not have been done, unless out of that small number the Lord had created not merely a single nation, but many nations.

The zeal of Jehovah of hosts will do this. Not only does he contrast "the zeal of God" with the purposes of men, in order to extol the excellence of the work, but he states that it is sufficient for every purpose, that God may give an astonishing demonstration of his power. At first sight, as we have said, the thing was incredible; there were obstacles on every side, and no means of relief; and therefore he declares that God regards his Church with such fervent love, that he does not hesitate to work in an extraordinary manner for promoting her salvation. The same mode of expression was employed by him on a similar occasion. (Isaiah 9:7.)

33. *Therefore thus saith Jehovah.* He now returns to the deliverance of which he had formerly spoken; for God proraised, first, that he would drive out Sennacherib; secondly, that he would grant food and nourishment for the sustenance of the people, though the country had been wasted and pillaged; and, thirdly, that he would cause flint small number to grow into a vast multitude. Having made these declarations, he returns to the first, because without it all the rest might appear to be useless; that is, if the people were not rescued from the hands, of that tyrant.

He shall not enter into the city. God threatens that he will be as a fortress,

[69] See verse 28.

to hinder him from "entering into the city," and that he will even meet him, so as to hinder him from coming nearer or fighting against it; for he says that he shall not *cast an arrow* nor a *balister.* I think that in this passage {סללה} *(solelah)* denotes a balister, or some such machine for throwing darts, rather than a *mound;* for "mounds" are not thrown or poured.

34. *By the way that he came shall he return.* We have formerly explained what it is to return by the same way, that is, to depar without having accomplished anything, as we commonly say, (*Il s'en est retourne comme il est venu,)* "he returned as he came," when nothing has been accomplished, and the efforts are unsuccessful. To confirm this, he adds, that "thus hath the Lord spoken;" for as soon as he "who cannot lie" (Titus 1:2) hath spoken, we ought to embrace and kiss his word, as if the result were rendered certain by the removal of every obstruction.

35. *And I will be a protector.* This is the reason of the preceding statement, why Sennacherib should not enter into the city; because the Lord will protect it. The Prophet therefore bids Hezekiah and the whole nation turn their eyes towards God, because the sight of that tyrant was so alarming that they might tremble at it. In like manner, if we now contemplate the power of our enemies, we shall be overpowered by fear, and there will scarcely be any room for hope; but we ought to look directly to God, and embrace his promises, by which we are defended as by a shield; and since God is sufficiently powerful to restrain a mortal man, to him ought we to turn our eyes; for this promise must not be limited to that time, but ought to be extended to all times. Yet the expression used by the Prophet is more extensive, and conveys fuller meaning; for God affirms that he will be the guardian and protector of the city; that is, because he had pledged himself to defend it. Hence he infers that it will be preserved, because God's protection renders its preservation certain.

For my own sake. When he says that he will do this "for his own sake," he calls on Hezekiah and all believers to remember his gracious covenant For the Jews, though often and severely chastised, had obstinately provoked the wrath of God against them, and therefore deserved not only that he should deprive them of all assistance, but that he should execute against them the highest examples of dreadful vengeance. In order therefore to prevent them from despairing, he shews that God will be their defender, not because he finds any cause in them, but rather because he looks to himself first, that he may adhere firmly to his purpose, not to cast away the posterity of Abraham which he adopted, not to abolish religious worship, not to blot out the remembrance of his name on the earth by destroying his sanctuary; and, secondly, not to expose his name to the jeers and blasphemies of the nations. And these words contain an implied reproof which that nation ought to have felt to be severe, and justly; because the good king had more difficulty in pacifying them than in repelling the enemy; for they distrusted, and stormed, and thought that no hope of safety was left for them. The Lord, therefore,

did not look at the merits of the people or of any other person, but only had regard to his own glory; for the contrast which is expressed by Ezekiel must here be understood, "Not for your sakes, O house of Israel, will I do this, but for my own sake." [70] (Ezekiel 36:22.) Now, since we have the same argument to plead in the present day, let us not hesitate to make use of this shield against our sins, "Though we most highly deserve a thousand deaths, yet it is enough for God to look to his goodness and faithfulness, that he may fulfill what he hath promised." Though it is of no advantage to hypocrites that God is the continual protector of his Church, yet the elect will always have this as a very safe refuge, that although they bring nothing of their own to appease the wrath of God, yet since God, moved by nothing else than his infinite goodness, built his Church and determined to defend it, he will never suffer it to perish.

And for my servant David's sake. This is highly worthy of observation; for although God needed not to seek in any one but in himself the reason why he embraced that nation with a gracious regard, yet it is not without good reason that he brings forward, as a very sure pledge of his love, *David,* by whose hand he had made a covenant, and to whom he, had promised to be a Father. (2 Samuel 7:12.) The Prophet does not speak of David as a private individual, but as a holy king whose throne was established by the hand of God, under whose guidance the Church would continue to be safe, and, in short, who would be the mediator between God and the Church; for in this capacity he surpassed even the angels themselves, so far as he represented the person of Christ. His throne was, indeed, soon afterwards cast down, and his crown torn in pieces, yet this was no unmeaning confirmation, that God intended to protect the city for a time, because he determined not to make void what he had testified to David concerning the eternity of his kingdom. And we know that the captivity of the people did not wholly set aside the kingly power in the posterity of David till at length Christ came, who on this account is called *David* in other passages. (Jeremiah 30:9; Ezekiel 37:24; Hosea 3:5.)

This shews the great absurdity of the Papists in alleging that it is through the merits of the saints that God pardons us; for here the case of David is widely different from that of other saints, on account of the promise which had been made to him. He might have named Abraham, or any other person, who possessed no small authority in the Church; but since he was now speaking of the preservation of the Church, and of the eternity of the kingdom of Christ, he named in a peculiar manner him who expressly, along with others, received that promise, "This is my rest, here will I dwell." (Psalm 132:14.) Since therefore this passage has regard to the promise, and not to the person, the Papists are doubly foolish in thinking that it affords support to the intercession of the saints, which is of their own contrivance. On the contrary, what they plead in their own behalf absolutely contradicts their

[70] "Pour l'amour de mon sainct nom," "For the love of my holy name."

error; because David is here represented as the type of the only Mediator, who sets aside the intercessions which they have invented.

36. *And the angel of Jehovah went out.* The Prophet now relates what happened to the Assyrian, that we may not think that the Lord spoke in vain. He shews, therefore, that his prediction was proved by the event, that it might clearly appear that God had sent him, and that he had not uttered anything rashly. Yet we ought not to limit so remarkable a work of God to a single prediction; but the authority of the Prophet was sustained, and his calling sanctioned, as to the whole course of his doctrine. He has related a singular and wellknown event which had recently happened, in order to prove, by means of it, to the end of the world, that God had spoken by his mouth.

Where that slaughter was carried into effect by the angel is not very evident. The opinion generally entertained is, that it happened at the siege of Jerusalem; but it is also possible that it may have happened during the march of Sennacherib's army; that is, while he was coming to besiege the city. I leave that matter uncertain, because it is of little importance. From the context, certainly, we may clearly learn that the tyrant did not approach so near as to be able to throw a dare into the city.

We must indeed reject that invention by which Satan, through profane historians, has attempted to obscure this extraordinary judgment of God, that, in consequence of a part of the army having been destroyed by a plague during the war in Egypt, Sennacherib returned into his own dominions. So great a number of persons dying in one night cannot be attributed to a plague; and the father of lies, with his wonted cunning, has turned aside into Egypt the blessing which God bestowed on his Church. The event itself cries aloud that Jerusalem was miraculously rescued, as it were, out of the midst of destruction; especially since Isaiah had already delivered that message by which God testified, in a manner which could not be mistaken, that God would bestow this deliverance on the Jews and not on the Egyptians.

And slew in the camp ofthe Assyrians. That no one may ascribe the miracle to natural causes, it is expressly added, that so great a multitude was slain by the hand of *the angel.* Nor is it a new thing for the Lord to make use of the ministractions of angels to promote the safety of believers, for whose advantage he appointed all the armies of heaven; and it tends greatly to confirm our faith when we learn that an infinite number of guardians keep watch over us. (Psalm 91:11.) The Lord alone, indeed, is of himself able, and undoubtedly he alone preserves us; for the angels may be regarded as his hand, and on that account they are called "principalities and powers." (Romans 8:38; Ephesians 1:21.) But it contributes much to aid our weakness that he hath appointed heavenly messengers to be our defenders and guardians. Yet all the praise is due to God alone, of whom the angels are only instruments; and therefore we must beware of falling into the superstition of the Papists, who, by their absurd worship of angels, ascribe to them that power which

belongs to God; an error with which we know that some very learned men in all ages have been chargeable. Whether it was done by the hand of one angel or of many angels, we cannot absolutely ascertain, nor is it a matter of great importance; for the Lord can do it as easily by one angel as by a thousand, and does not make use of their agency as if he needed the assistance of others, but rather, as we have formerly said, in order to support our weakness. Yet it is more probable, and agrees better with the words of the Prophet, that a single angel was commissioned to execute this judgment, as in the ancient redemption an angel passed through the whole of Egypt to slay the firstborn. (Exodus 12:29.) Although God sometimes executes his vengeance by means of evil angels, yet he chose one of his willing servants, that by means of him he might provide for the safety of the Church.

A hundred and eighty-five thousand. That the army was so vast need not make us wonder, as ignorant people do, who reckon it to be incredible and fabulous when they are told that so great a multitude went into the field of battle, because we are accustomed to carry on war with much smaller troops. But that the case was very different with eastern nations, is fully testified by historians and by wellknown transactions of the present day. Nor ought we to be astonished at the vast forces which they led into battle, for they are much more capable of enduring heat, and toil, and hunger, and are satisfied with a much smaller portion of food, and do not care about those luxuries by which our soldiers in the present day are corrupted.

As to the way and manner of the slaughter, this passage gives no definite statement. The Jews conjecture that the soldiers were struck by thunder, but they do so without any authority or probable evidence; for, being bold in contriving fables, they unwarrantably affirm as certain whatever comes into their mind, as if it were supported by some history.

Behold, they were all dead corpses. That the slaughter was not done so openly as the Jews allege is very evident from this narrative, which states that they were lying dead. Now, if they had been struck by a thunderbolt, every person must have known it, and it would not have been omitted by the Prophet. This might serve to refute the conjecture of the Jews, but I choose rather to leave the matter doubtful. It is enough that the Lord, having determined to save Jerusalem from the hand of the Assyrian, cut off his army by a sudden death, without any agency of man.

37. *Then Sennacherib, king of Assyria, went away and returned.* He now shows how disgraceful was the retreat of this haughty tyrant, who in the wishes of his heart had already devoured the whole of Judea, and formerly dared to pretend to be more powerful than God himself. By employing a variety of words to express his departure, the Prophet indirectly censures the shameful flight; for the repetition is not superfluous, "He set out, he went away, he returned." The title of *king* is added for the sake of greater disgrace. "Lo, this is the great king of whose power Rabshakeh boasted so highly."

And dwelt in Nineveh. He did not come into Judea, that: he might depart

from it in that disgraceful manner; and therefore the hand of God throws him back, even as straw is driven by the wind. The circumstance of his dwelling in Nineveh reminds us also that he had lost his courage as well as his forces; for he would not willingly have remained at rest, if despair had not held him like a chain. This means, therefore, that he was satisfied with his ancient domains, of which Nineveh was the chief city and royal residence. At a later period, when the Assyrians were conquered by the Chaldeans, the seat of government was removed to Babylon, that is, ten years after the death of Sennacherib, and during the reign of Esarhaddon, his successor, who is here mentioned, for since parricides did not want defenders, a nation torn by factions was easily subdued and conquered by foreign enemies. Availing himself of this opportunity, Merodach invaded the Assyrians, and subjected them to his power.

38. *While he was worshipping.* Here the Jews allow themselves that liberty of conjecture in which they are always accustomed to indulge. They contrive a stow, that Sennacherib consulted an oracle, and asked why he could not conquer the Jews; that the answer was, that Abraham wished to sacrifice his son to God; that the tyrant, following that example, then determined to slay his son, in order to appease his god; and that his sons, enraged at the cruel design of their father, slew him in the temple of his idol. But it is unnecessary to spend time in such conjectures, in which the Jews display excessive impudence.

Here it is highly important to behold, as in a picture, the unhappy death of tyrants, whom the Lord destroys without the agency of men, when everything appears about to be overthrown by their violence, and whom he exposes with all their power to universal scorn. Sennacherib, who had come into Judea with a vast army, returns home with few soldiers, and is led in triumph, as it were, by God as a conqueror. But the matter does not end here; for in the very heart of his empire, in the metropolis, in the temple itself, the reverence for which defended the meanest persons from the mob, he is slain, not by a foreign enemy, not by a people in a state of sedition, not by traitors, and in a word, not by servants, but by his own sons, that the murder may be more disgraceful. It ought to be observed, that those insatiable gluttons, who freely wallow in the blood of others, are slain by their own followers, and are punished by those from whom above all others they ought to have been safe. This is more shocking than if they had been put to death by strangers; but God thus punishes the cruelty of those who, in their eagerness to enjoy power, did not even spare the innocent. Even in profane historians we find various examples of this kind, in which we may easily behold the judgments of the Lord.

Besides, the insatiable ambition of Sennacherib receives its just reward, because, while he is intent on the wide extension of his territories, he cannot secure the peace of his own family, by leading his children to live at peace; for out of his neglect of some, and undue attachment to others, the conspiracy

arose. And not only was this tyrant slain, but his kingdom also was soon afterwards overthrown, as we have already said; and, in the meantime, that his successor might not dare to make any attempt against the Jews, God kept him also within the country by internal broils.

Chapter 38

CHAPTER 38

Isaiah 38:1-22

1. In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came unto him, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live.

1. In diebus illis aegrotavit Ezechias usque ad mortem. Et vemt ad eum Isaias filius Amoz Propheta, dixitque illi: Sic dicit Iehova, Praeeipe quoad domum tuam; (vel, domui tuoe;) quia tu morieris, et non rives.

2. Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed unto the LORD,

2. Tunc vertit Ezechias faciem suam ad parietem, oravitque Iehovam.

3. And said, Remember now, O LORD, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore.

3. Ac dixit: Obsecro, Iehova, recordare nunc quod ambulaverim coram to in veritate, in corde perfecto, et recte fecerim in oculis tuis. Flevitque Ezechias fletu magno.

4. Then came the word of the LORD to Isaiah, saying,

4. Tunc factum fuit verbum Iehovae ad Isaiam, dicendo:

5. Go, and say to Hezekiah, Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years.

5. Vade, et dic Ezechiae: Sic dicit Iehova Deus David patris tui: Audivi orationem tuam, et vidi lachrymas tuas: Ecce ego adjicio ad dies tuos annos quindecim.

6. And I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria: and I will defend this city.

6. Et eruam to de manu regis Assur, atque urbem hane; et protector ero huic urbi.

7. And this shall be a sign unto thee from the LORD, that the LORD will do this thing that he hath spoken;

7. Erit autem hoc tibi signum ab Iehova, quod Iehova hanc rem facturus sit, de qua loquutus est:

8. Behold, I will bring again the shadow of the degrees, which is gone down in the sundial of Ahaz, ten degrees backward. So the sun returned ten degrees, by which degrees it was gone down.

8. Ecce ego reduco umbram graduum, quibus descendit in horologio Achaz per solem decem gradibus; et reversus est sol decem gradibus in horologio, quibus jam descenderat.

9. The writing of Hezekiah king of Judah, when he had been sick, and was recovered of his sickness:

9. Scriptum Ezechiae regis Iuda, cum aegrotasset, ac convaluisset a morbo Suo.

10. I said in the cutting off of my days, I shall go to the gates of the grave: I am deprived of the residue of my years.

10. Ego dixi in successione dierum meorum, vadam ad portas sepulchri; privatus sum residuo annorum meorum.

11. I said, I shall not see the LORD, even the LORD, in the land of the living: I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world.

11. Dixi, Non videbo Deum, Deum in terra viventium; non aspiciam hominem ultra cum incolis seculi.

12. Mine age is departed, and is removed from me as a shepherd's tent: I have cut off like a weaver my life: he will cut me off with pining sickness: from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me.

12. Habitatio mea discessit, et convoluta est a me, quasi tabernaculum pastoris; succidi quasi textor vitam meam; ab elevatione (vel macie ant morbo) succidet me; a die usque ad noctem conficies me.

13. I reckoned till morning, that, as a lion, so will he break all my bones: from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me.

13. Supputabam ad auroram; sicut leo, its contrivit ossa mea; ab aurora ad noctem conficies me.

14 Like a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter: I did mourn as a dove: mine eyes fail with looking upward: O LORD, I am oppressed; undertake for me.

14. Sicut grus aut hitundo garriebam, gemeban, quasi columba. Elevabantur ocnli mei in sublime, Domine, vim fecit mihi, recrea me.

15. What shall I say? he hath both spoken unto me, and himself hath done it: I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul.

15. Quid loqusr? Qui dixit mihi, ipse fecit: Movebor (vel, trepidus incedam) omnibus diebus vitae meae in amaritudine animae meae.

16. Lord, by these thing men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit: so wilt thou recover me, and make me to live.

16. Domine, etiam omnibus qui ultra eos vivent, vita spiritus mei in illis (nota erit,) et me quod dormire feceris, et vivificaveris me.

17. Behold, for peace I had great bitterness: but thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back.

17. Ecce in pace amaritudo mihi amara, et tibi placuit animam meam (eruere) a fovea; (vel, amasti animam meam a fovea interitns;) quia projecisti post tergum omnia peccata mea.

18. For the grave cannot praise thee; death can not celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth.

18. Quoniam non infernus confitebitur tibi neque mors laudabit to; nec expectabunt qui in foveam descendunt veritatem tuam.

19. The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day: the father to the children shall make known thy truth.

19. Vivens, vivens, ipse confitebitur tibi; sicur ego hodie. Pater filiis notam faciet veritatem tuam.

20. The LORD was ready to save me: therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments all the days of our life in the house of the LORD.

20. Iehova ad me servandum; et cantica nostra cantabimus omnibus diebus vitae nostrae in domo Iehovae.

21. For Isaiah had said, Let them take a lump of figs, and lay it for a plaister upon the boil, and he shall recover.

21. Dixit autem Isaias, Accipient massam ficuum, et adhibebunt ulceri, et vivet.

22. Hezekiah also had said, What is the sign that I shall go up to the house of the LORD?

22. Dixerat enim (vel, autem) Ezechias, Quod signum, quod ascensurus sim in domum Iehovae?

1. *In those days.* The Prophet now relates that the pious king was violently assailed by a different kind of temptation, namely, that he was seized with a mortal disease and despaired of life; and not only so, but likewise that he suffered dreadful agony, in consequence of having received from God a warning of his death, as if in a hostile manner God had thundered on his head from heaven. At what time that happened, whether after the siege, or during the siege, is not very evident; but it is unnecessary to give ourselves much trouble on that subject. It may be easily inferred from the sacred history, that this event happened about the fourteenth year of his reign, either while he was invaded by the Assyrian, or after he was delivered, for he reigned twenty-nine years, (2 Kings 18:2;) in the fourteenth year of his reign the Assyrian attacked Judea, (2 Kings 18:13,) and fifteen years were added by the promise which is here related by the Prophet, (2 Kings 20:6,) and this makes up twenty-nine years. Hence it appears that it must have been about the fourteenth year of his reign that Hezekiah was afflicted by

this disease.

The only doubtful point is, whether it was during the time of the siege, or afterwards, that *he was sick.* For my own part, I look upon it as a more probable conjecture, that he was attacked by this disease after the siege had been raised; for if he had been sick during the time of the siege, that circumstance would not have been left out by the Prophet, who, on the other hand, has related that Hezekiah sent messengers, went into the temple, spread a letter before the Lord, and sent for the Prophet. These circumstances do not at all apply to a man who was suffering heavy sickness; and if disease had been added to so many distresses, that circumstance would not have been omitted. In doubtful matters, therefore, let us follow what is more probable, namely, that the pious king, having been delivered from the enemy, is attacked by disease and is in great danger.

Yet it is not without reason that our attention is also directed to an almost uninterrupted succession of events, that we may know that he scarcely had leisure to breathe, but, after having scarcely reached the shore from one ship-wreck, suddenly fell into another equally dangerous. Let us therefore remember that believers must endure various temptations, so that they are assailed sometimes by wars, sometimes by diseases, sometimes by other calamities, and sometimes one calamity follows another in unbroken succession, and they are laid under the necessity of maintaining uninterrupted warfare during their whole life; so that, when they have escaped from one danger, they are on the eve of enduring another. They ought to be prepared in such a manner, that when the Lord shall be pleased to add sorrow to sorrow, they may bear it patiently, and may not be discouraged by any calamity. If any respite be allowed, [71] let them know that this is granted for their weakness, but let not a short truce lead them to form a false imagination of a lengthened peace; let them make additional exertions, till, having finished the course of their earthly life, they arrive at the peaceful harbor.

Even unto death. The severity of the disease might be very distressing to the good man. First, mortal disease brings along with it sharp pains, especially when it is attended by an inflammatory boil. But the most distressing of all was, that he might think that God opposed and hated him, because, as soon as he had been rescued from so great a calamity, he was immediately dragged to death, as if he had been unworthy of reigning. Besides, at that time he had no children; and there was reason to believe that his death would be followed by a great disorder of public affairs. (2 Kings 21:1.) This dread of the wrath of God occasions far more bitter anguish to the consciences of believers than any bodily disease; and if they lose their perception of the favor of God, it is impossible that they should not be immediately grieved. But God, as if he expressly intended to add oil to the flame, absolutely threatens death, and, in order to affect him more deeply, takes away all hope of life.

[71] "S'ils ont quelque loisir de reprendre haleine." "If they have any leisure to draw breath."

For; thou shalt die, and shalt not live. The clause, *thou shalt not live,* is not superfluous, but is added for the purpose of giving intensity or confirmation, as if it had been said that there will be no hope of remedy. Men practice evasion, even though death is at hand, and eagerly seek the means of escape; and, therefore, that Hezekiah may not look around him as if he were uncertain, he is twice informed that he must die.

Give charge concerning thy house, [72] or, *to thy house.* [73] In order that he may bid adieu to the world, the Prophet enjoins him speedily to order what he wishes to be done after his death; as if he had said, "If thou dost not wish that death shall seize thee, give immediate orders about thy domestic affairs." Here we see in passing, that the Lord approves of a practice which has been always customary among men, namely, that when they are about to die, they give orders to their neighbors or servants, and arrange the affairs of their family.

Jonathan renders it, "Give up thy house to another;" but the construction conveys a different meaning. Every person, when he must depart from this life, ought to testify that he pays regard to his duty, and that he provides even for the future interests of his family. But his chief care ought to be, not about testaments and heirs, but about promoting the salvation of those whom the Lord has committed to his charge.

2. *Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall.* He now relates the manner in which Hezekiah was affected when he received this message, that we may see his piety and faith. He does not break out into rage or indignation like unbelievers, but bears this affliction patiently. He does not debate with God, as if he had already endured enough of distresses from enemies, and ought not to be again chastised so severely by a new kind of afflictions. And this is true patience, not merely in a single instance to endure patiently any distress, but to persevere to the end, and always to be prepared for enduring new troubles, but, above all, to bow to the judgments of God in calm silence, and not to murmur at his severity, though it appear to be great; as David acknowledges that *"he* was dumb, because he saw that he had to deal with God." (Psalm 39:9.)

And such is the import of "turning the face *to the wall;"* for, in consequence of being overwhelmed by shame and grief, as if he shunned the face of men, he summons up his energy, and turns wholly to God, so as to rely entirely upon him. The mere attitude, indeed, is immaterial; but it is of very great importance to us, that nothing should be presented to our eyes or senses which would drag us away from prayer, that we may pour out our desires more freely before God. We are naturally unsteady, and easily drawn aside; and therefore we cannot be too diligent in fixing our attention. If we must pray in public, we are restrained by shame, lest, if we manifest excessive vehemence, we should be thought to do so for the sake of ostentation;

[72] "Set thine house in order. Heb., Give charge concerning thy house." — Eng. Ver.
[73] Quoad domum taam, vel, domui tuae.

or we are afraid of falling into improper attitudes; and therefore we ought to remove everything that would lead us aside.

Hezekiah, therefore, does not turn away his face, as if he were overwhelmed, or as if he bitterly and obstinately rejected the message that had been brought to him, but in this manner sharpens his eagerness for prayer. That he does not present his prayers openly, as when he formerly went up into the temple, followed by the rest of the multitude, (Isaiah 37:14,) is an indication of the deepest anxiety, as if grief had seized his whole frame. Yet it is a remarkable pattern of piety, that, when he has received the sentence of death, he does not cease to call upon God.

These words, *Thou shalt die, and shalt not live,* tended not only to startle him, but deeply to wound and pierce his heart, as if God were rushing upon him in a hostile manner to destroy him. It was an alarming token of wrath to be thrown headlong out of life in the very flower of his age, and to be cast out of the world, as if he were unworthy of the society of men; and therefore he had to contend not only with death, but with hell itself and with frightful torments.

Hence it follows that he attached to the Prophet's words more meaning than they actually conveyed; for, although he could not all at once disentangle himself, yet the Holy Spirit suggested to his dark and confused heart "groanings that could not be uttered." (Romans 8:26) And indeed it would have been a foolish message if God had not supported him by secret influence, when he appeared to have been slain by the external voice of his servant. But since he would never have aimed at repentance if he had been seized with despair, the slaying came first, and was next followed by that secret energy which dedicated the dead man to God.

3. *And said, I beseech thee, Jehovah.* He appears here to expostulate with God, and to remonstrate with him about his own past life, as if he were undeservedly distressed; but the case is far otherwise. On the contrary, he strengthens and fortifies himself against a heavy and dangerous temptation, which might otherwise have been suggested. For the great severity with which the Lord chastised him might lead him to think that the Lord had cast off, forsaken, and disapproved him, and had rejected all that he had formerly done. On this account he strengthens and encourages himself, and declares that whatever he did was done by him with a good conscience. In short, he concludes that, although he must die, still his services have not been displeasing to God, that he may thus open up for himself a path to prayer and good hopes.

Remember now that I have walked before thee in truth. He does not plead his merits against God, or remonstrate with him in any respect, as if he were unjustly punished, but fortifies himself against a sore temptation, that he may not think that God is angry with him for correcting the vices and removing the corruptions which prevailed throughout the whole of his kingdom, and especially in regard to religion. Yet the Lord permits his people

even to glory, in some degree, on account of their good actions, not that they may boast of their merits before him, but that they may acknowledge his benefits, and may be affected by the remembrance of them in such a manner as to be prepared for enduring everything patiently. But sometimes the unreasonable conduct of their enemies constrains them to holy boasting: that they may commend their good cause to their judge and avenger; as David boldly meets the wicked slanders of enemies by pleading his innocence before the judgment-seat of God. (Psalm 7:8; and 17:2.) But here Hezekiah intended to meet the craftiness of Satan, which believers feel, when, under the pretense of humility, he overwhelms them with despair; and therefore we ought earnestly to beware lest our hearts be swallowed up by grief.

With a perfect heart. We learn from his words what is the true rule of a pious life; and that is, when integrity of heart holds the first place, for nothing is more abhorred by God than when we endeavor to deceive either him or men by our hypocrisy. Although the eyes of men are dazzled by the splendor of worlds, yet pretended holiness, which is as it were a profanation of his name, provokes his anger; and, because "he is a Spirit," (John 4:24,) he justly demands spiritual obedience, and declares that he abhors "a double heart." (Psalm 12:2.) Most properly, therefore, does Hezekiah begin with sincerity of heart. The Hebrew word {שלם}, *(shalem,)* which is translated *perfect,* means nothing else than integrity as contrasted with hypocrisy, which is also evident from the use of the word *truth;* as Paul affirms that

"the end of the law is brotherly love, out of a pure heart and a good conscience and unfeigned faith." (1 Timothy 1:5.)

And have done what is good in thine eyes. He brings forward also the fruits which spring from an upright heart as from a root, not only to confirm himself, but likewise to confirm others, in reference to those things which might have given any occasion of offense. Hezekiah therefore did not hesitate or waver, but wished to take away what might have given offense to many persons. But again, it ought to be observed in what manner we must regulate our life, if we desire that God shall approve of our conduct. We must do nothing but what is agreeable to his command; for, as he rejects and condemns all the pageantry of which hypocrites boast, so he likewise reckons of no value all the false worship in which foolish men weary themselves in vain, while they labor to obtain his favor by disregarding his word. Accordingly, Hezekiah, who knew that "obedience is of greater value than sacrifice," (1 Samuel 15:22,) says not only that he ran, (which is often done in a disorderly manner,) but that he regulated his life in obedience to God, who alone is competent to judge. Hence we may conclude how great was his earnestness in prayer; for though he sees on every hand nothing but the tokens of God's anger, yet he does not cease to fly to him, and to exercise faith, which all believers ought earnestly and diligently to do amidst the heaviest afflictions.

4. *Then came the word of Jehovah.* Isaiah had departed, leaving the

sting, as the saying is, in the wound, reckoning as abandoned him on whom he had pronounced sentence in the name of God himself. Yet with what trembling uneasiness he was tormented, and even with what terror he was seized, may be partly learned from the song. What interval of time elapsed between the Prophet's departure and return we know not, but it is certain that the glad tidings of life were not brought until, after long and severe struggles, he perceived that he was utterly ruined; for it was a severe trial of faith that he should be kept plunged in darkness by the hiding of God's face. We have said that, while the doctrine of consolation was taken away, still the faith of the good king was not extinguished so as not to emit some sparks, because, by the secret influence of the Spirit, "groans that could not be uttered" (Romans 8:26) arose to God out of the gulf of sorrow. Hence also we conclude that, while "in the day of trouble" (Psalm 50:15) God heareth believers, yet the favor of God does not all at once shine on them, but is purposely delayed till they are sincerely humbled. And if a king so eminent in piety needed almost to suffer anguish, that he might be more powerfully excited to seek the favor of God, and, being almost wasted by grief, might groan from hell to God; let us not wonder if he sometimes permits us for a time to be agitated by fears and perplexities, and delays longer to bestow consolation in answer to our prayers.

But it may be thought strange that God, having uttered a sentence, should soon afterwards be moved, as it were, by repentance to reverse it; for nothing is more at variance with his nature than a change of purpose. I reply, while death was threatened against Hezekiah, still God had not decreed it, but determined in this manner to put to the test the faith of Hezekiah. We must, therefore, suppose a condition to be implied in that threatening; for otherwise Hezekiah would not have altered, by repentance or prayer, the irreversible decree of God. But the Lord threatened him in the same manner as he threatened Gerar for carrying off Sarah, (Genesis 20:3,) and as he threatened the Ninevites. (Jonah 1:2; and 3:4.)

Again, it will be objected, that it appears to be inconsistent with the nature of God to threaten what he does not intend to execute, and that it takes away from the authority of the word, and causes the promises and threatenings to have less weight. But what we have already said as to the sentence must likewise be maintained as to the form of the words. God threatened the death of Hezekiah, because he was unwilling that Hezekiah should die; and, indeed, it would have been unnecessary and even useless to predict it, if a remedy had not been provided. Now, as it was the purpose of God to humble his servant by fear and terror, that he might voluntarily condemn himself, and might thus escape punishment through prayer; so by harsh language and an absolute threatening of death, he intended to slay him, that, rising like a dead man out of the grave, he might feel that life had been restored to him. And thus we must suppose an implied condition to have been understood, which Hezekiah, if he did not immediately perceive

it, yet afterwards in good time knew to have been added. Nor are we at liberty to infer from it that God used dissimulation by accommodating his discourse to the capacity and attainments of man; for it is no new thing if he "kill before he make alive." (Deuteronomy 32:39; 1 Samuel 2:6.) In order to prepare Hezekiah by a spiritual resemblance of death, and gradually form him to a new life, he keeps back a part of the discourse.

5. *Thus saith Jehovah the God of David thy father.* At first, when he struck terror alone, he reckoned it enough to mention the bare and simple name of God, to whose heavenly judgmentseat he summoned him as a criminal; but now, when he brings consolation, he distinguishes God by a peculiar and honorable title in order to point out the cause and origin of grace; as if he had said that, from a regard to his covenant which he made with David, he is inclined to mercy, so that he does not deal rigorously with Hezekiah. (2 Samuel 7:12.) We know that nothing is more difficult than for hearts that have been greatly alarmed by the conviction of God's anger to be encouraged to entertain favorable hope, so as to perceive that God is reconciled to them. That confirmation was therefore necessary, that the pious king, who in himself was ruined, might know that he could be again raised up to that life from which he had fallen; for the prophecy concerning the eternity of that kingdom could not fail. Since, therefore, he fainted when he thought that he had no hope of living, in order that he may breathe again, he is reminded of a promise, which at that time was universally known, that kings of the seed and posterity of David would always reign over the elect people,

"as long as the sun and moon should shine in the heavens."
(Psalm 89:36, 37.)

That was the plank which he seized, and by which he escaped shipwreck.

David is not mentioned in this passage as a private individual, but as an eternal king, to whom had been committed the promise which might support Hezekiah; eternal, I say, not in himself, but in his blessed seed. Now, since that eternity was at length to be manifested in Christ, of whom Hezekiah along with other kings was a type, it must have been a solid ground of favorable hope that he was a son of David. [74] Whenever, therefore, we feel that our own sins hinder us from drawing near to God, in order that we may obtain his favor, let us think of this preface, that, although we have been estranged from him by our own fault, still he is the Father of Christ, who is our head, and

"in whom our salvation always remains hidden."
(Colossians 3:3.)

In a word, God had lately spoken in the character of a judge, but now he is reconciled, and points out a Mediator who comes forth to appease him.

I have heard thy prayer. Having opened the door of hope, he tells Hezekiah that God "has heard his prayers." This ought greatly to encourage us to earnestness in prayer; for, although God of his own accord takes a deep

[74] "Puis qu'il estoit ills et successeur de David." "Since he was a son and successor of David."

interest in our salvation, and anticipates us by his kindness, not only while we are asleep, but "before we were born," (Romans 9:11,) yet, when he testifies that all the benefits which he bestows are granted in answer to our prayers, our negligence is altogether inexcusable, if, after having received such large invitations, we neglect to perform the duty of prayer, [75] And yet we must not imagine that prayers, to which God so graciously listens, are meritorious; but, in giving freely what he freely promised, he adds this as the crowning excellence of his kindness, in order more strongly to stimulate our faith. It is no ordinary privilege to be able to approach to him freely, and in a familiar manner to lay our cares in his bosom. If Hezekiah had not prayed, God would undoubtedly have secured that, in one way or another, some government of the kingdom should be preserved in the posterity of David; but what he would do from a regard to his truth, he says that he will give in answer to the prayers of Hezekiah, that he may acknowledge that he has obtained very abundant fruit from his faith which he exercised in prayer.

And I have seen thy tears. He mentions *tears* as a sign of repentance, and likewise of warmth and earnestness; not that in themselves tears procure favor, or have any power of appeasing God, but because they distinguish sincere prayers from those which are offered in a careless manner.

Behold, I add to thy days fifteen years. At length he adds that God has prolonged the life of Hezekiah to the extent of "fifteen years." This might, indeed, at first sight, appear to be absurd; for we were created on the condition of not being able to pass, by a single moment, the limit marked out for us; as Job also says, "Thou hast appointed his bounds which he cannot pass." (Job 14:5.) But the solution is easy. What is said about an extended period must be understood to refer to the views of Hezekiah, who had been excluded from the hope of life, and, therefore, must; have justly reckoned to be gain what was afterwards added, as if he had been raised up from the grave to a second life.

6. *And I will deliver thee.* Those who think that Hezekiah was sick during the time of the siege found an argument on this, that otherwise this promise would appear to be superfluous. But there is little force in that reasoning; for the Assyrian might have recruited his forces, and mustered a fresh army, at a later period, for the purpose of again invading Judea and attacking Jerusalem. The very defeat of which we have now read might have been a provocation to his rage and cruelty, so that the Jews had good reason for being continually alarmed at any reports which they heard. [76] That promise, therefore, is far from being superfluous, because along with life it promises protection from the enemy, against whom he would not otherwise have been secured, and may be regarded as an enlargement and increase of that blessing which the Lord promised to Hezekiah; as in the former chapter he promised

[75] "Si nous ne daignons ouvrir la bouche pour prier." "If we do not deign to open our mouth in prayer."

[76] "Quand on leur apportoit nouvelles de l' ennemi." "When news were brought to them about the enemy."

abundance of fruits to accompany the deliverance. (Isaiah 37:30.)

7. *And this shall be a sign to thee.* The sacred history relates in the proper order that Hezekiah asked a sign from the Lord, (2 Kings 20:8,) and that it was granted to him; which the Prophet will likewise mention at the end of this chapter. But it is no new thing for Hebrew writers to reverse the order of the narrative. God gives some signs of his own accord, without being asked; and he grants other signs to his people who ask them. Signs being generally intended to aid our weakness, God does not for the most part wait till we have prayed for them; but at first he appointed those which he knew to be profitable to his Church. If at any time, therefore, believers wished to have their faith confirmed by a sign, this circumstance, being rare, ought not to be produced as an example. Thus, to Gideon, whom he called from the sheepfold to govern Israel, he gave one sign and then another, when he asked them, (Judges 6:17, 37, 39,) that he might be more fully convinced of his calling. He commonly gave, as we have said, other signs, in accommodation to the weakness of men; as to Adam the tree of life, (Genesis 2:9,) to Noah the bow in heaven, (Genesis 9:12,) and next the cloud and pillar of fire, (Exodus 13:21,) and the serpent of brass in the wilderness. (Numbers 21:8.) The same remarks apply to the passover, (Exodus 12:8,) and to all the sacraments, both those which were formerly observed, and those which have now been appointed by Christ, [77] and which no one asked from God.

But it may be thought that Hezekiah insults God, by refusing credit to his word, when he asks a sign. I reply, we must not accuse him of unbelief, because his faith was weak; for we shall not find any person who ever had faith which was perfect and complete in every respect. In seeking some assistance to support his weakness, he cannot, be blamed on that account; for, having embraced the promise made to him by the Prophet, he shews his confidence in God by seeking a remedy for distrust. And if there had been no weakness in man, he would not have needed any signs; and consequently we need not wonder that he asks a sign, since on other occasions the Lord freely offers them.

Yet it is proper also to observe, that believers never rushed forward at random to ask signs, but were guided by a secret and peculiar influence of the Spirit. The same thing might be said about miracles. If Elijah prayed to God for rain and for drought, (James 5:17, 18,) it does not follow that others are at liberty to do the same. We must, therefore, see what God permits to us, lest, by disregarding his word, we bargain with him according to the foolish desires of our flesh.

8. *Lo, I bring back the shadow of degrees.* The sign which is here given to Hezekiah is the going back of the shadow on the sundial, along with the sun, *ten degrees by which it had already gone up,* [78] that is, had advanced

[77] "Tant sous le vieil que sous le nouveau testament." "Both under the Old and under the New Testament."

[78] This is evidently an oversight, but the author's reading is "ascenderat." which corresponds

above the horizon. And this sign bears a resemblance to the event itself, as all other signs generally do; for it is as if he had said, "As it is in my power to change the hours of the day, and to make the sun go backwards, so it is in my power to lengthen thy life." As to the shadow not going back as many degrees as there were years added to his life, that was impossible, because there were not more than twelve degrees on the sundial; for the day was divided by them into twelve hours, either longer or shorter, according to the change of the season. We need not, therefore, give ourselves any uneasiness about the number; it is enough that there is a manifest correspondence and resemblance.

On the sundial of Ahaz. [79] Here the Jews make fables according to their custom, and contrive a story, that the day on which *Ahaz* died was shorter than ten hours, and that what God had justly inflicted on him as a punishment for his sins was reversed for the benefit of Hezekiah; because the shortening of one day was the lengthening of another. But there is no history of this, and it is entirely destitute not only of evidence but of probability; nor is there anything said here about the death of Ahaz, or about the change which took place when he died, but about the sundial which he had made.

9. *The writing of Hezekiah.* Though sacred history gives no account of this writing, yet it deserves to be recorded, and is highly worthy of observation; for we see that Hezekiah was unwilling to pass in silence, or to bury in forgetfulness, so remarkable a blessing which he had received from God. By his example he shews what all believers ought to do, when God miraculously and in an unusual manner exerts his power on their behalf. They ought to make known their gratitude, not only to their contemporaries, but also to posterity; as we see that Hezekiah did by this song, which may be regarded as a public record. We see that David composed many psalms on this subject, when he had been delivered from very great dangers, so that he took care to celebrate till the end of the world what was worthy of being remembered by all ages. (Psalm 18:2, and 27:1.) Especially, the more eminent any man is, and the higher the station which he occupies, the more is he bound to consider himself as placed by God on a theater, and enjoined to perform this duty. [80] Yet all men, whether they be of ordinary rank or nobles and great men, ought to beware of ambition, lest, while they profess to imitate Hezekiah and David, they magnify their own name more than the name of God. [81]

to the French version, "qu'il estoit monte" In Calvin's version, prefixed to the commentary on this chapter, {{ירדה (yaradah) is correctly rendered "descenderat," that is, "had gone down." — Ed

[79] See Note at the end of this volume — Ed.

[80] "Doit considerer et savoir que ce que fait ici Ezechias, luy est enjoint en cas semblable." "Ought to consider and know that what Hezekiah does here is enjoined on him in a similar case."

[81] "The conjecture of Grotius, that Isaiah dictated the psalm, or put it into Hezekiah's mouth, is perfectly gratuitous. That Hezekiah should compose a psalm is not more strange than that he should make a collection of proverbs. (Proverbs 25:1.) It would have been far more strange if one so much like David, in character and spirit, had not followed his example in the practice of devotional composition." — Alexander.

10. *I said in the cutting off of my days.* This is a very melancholy song; for it contains complaints rather than prayers. Hence it is evident that he was oppressed by so great perplexity, that he was weary with groaning, and sunk in lamentations, and did not venture to rise up freely to form a prayer. Murmuring thus within himself, he expresses the cause and intensity of his grief.

As to the cause, it might be thought strange that he had so strong an attachment, and so ardent a longing for this fading life, and that he so much dreaded death. The tendency of the first elements of heavenly doctrine is, that we may learn to sojourn in this world, and to advance swiftly towards the heavenly life. Hezekiah appears to be as warmly devoted to the earth as if he had never had the smallest particle of piety; he shuns and abhors death, as much as if he had never heard a word about heavenly doctrine. Now, what purpose did it serve to commit to writing those stormy passions which would rather prompt readers to the same excess than induce them to obey God? For we are too prone to rebellion, though there be no additional excitements of any kind.

But when it shall be minutely, and wisely, and carefully examined, we shall find that nothing could have been more advantageous to us than to have this picture of a man overwhelmed with grief painted to the life. It was not the object of the good king, in proclaiming his virtues, to hunt for the applause of the world. His prayer was undoubtedly a proof both of faith and of obedience; but, as if he had been overcome by fear, and dread, and sorrow, he leaves off prayer, and feebly utters complaints. He unquestionably intended to make known his weakness, and thus to give a lesson of humility to all the children of God, and at the same time to magnify the grace of God, which had brought out of the lowest depths of death a ruined man.

As to the manner in which he deplores his lot, when he is near death, as if he placed his existence on the earth, and thought that death reduced men to nothing, we must attend to the special reason. For while death is not desirable on its own account, yet believers ought to "groan continually," (Romans 8:23,) because sin holds them bound in the prison of the flesh. They are forbidden also to "mourn as unbelievers usually mourn," (1 Thessalonians 4:13,) and are even commanded to "lift up their heads," when they are about to depart from the world, because they are received into a happier life. (Luke 21:28.) Nor was the ancient Church under the Law destitute of this consolation; and, although the knowledge of a blessed resurrection was less clear, yet it must have been sufficient for mitigating sorrow. [82] If that impostor Balaam was forced to exclaim, "Let my soul die the death of the righteous," (Numbers 23:10,) what joy must have filled the hearts of believers, in whose ears resounded that voice, "I am the God of Abraham!" (Exodus 3:6.)

[82] "Pour adoucir la tristesse des fideles de ces tempsla." "For soothing the grief of the believers of that age."

But although with steady and assured hope they looked forward to the heavenly life, still we need not wonder to see in Hezekiah what David confesses as to himself, (Psalm 30:9,) who yet, when his time was come, full of days, calmly left the world. (1 Kings 2:10.) It is therefore evident that both of them were not assailed by the mere dread of death, but that they prayed with tears to be delivered from death, because they saw in it manifest tokens of God's anger. We ought to remember that the Prophet came as a herald, to announce the death of Hezekiah in the name of God. This messenger might naturally have plunged all the senses of Hezekiah into a frightful deluge of grief, so that, thinking of nothing but God's wrath and curse, he would struggle with despair.

Thus the piety of Hezekiah already begins to shew itself, when, placing himself before the tribunal of his judge, he applies his mind to meditation on his guilt. And, first, there might occur to him that thought by which David confesses that he was tempted: "What did God mean by treating his servants with cruel severity and sparing profane despisers? (Psalm 73:3.) Next, he saw that he was exposed to the jeers of the wicked, by whom true religion also was basely reviled. He saw that it was scarcely possible that his death should not shake the minds of all good men; but especially, he was oppressed by God's wrath, as if he had been already condemned to hell and to the eternal curse. In a word, because our true and perfect happiness consists in having fellowship with God, Hezekiah, perceiving that he was in some measure alienated from him, had good reason for being so greatly alarmed; for that word, "Thou shalt die, and shalt not live," had seized his mind so completely, that he believed that he must die. [83] This is expressed by the phrase *I said;* for in Hebrew it does not mean merely to speak, or to pronounce a word, but to be persuaded or convinced in one's own mind. Even though hypocrites receive a hundred threatenings from God, still they look around them on all sides, so that if they see any opening by which they think that they can escape, they may mock God, and give themselves up to luxury and indifference. But Hezekiah, being a sincere worshipper of God, did not resort to subterfuges; but, on the contrary, believing the words of the Prophet, he concluded that he must prepare for dying, because it was God's good pleasure.

In this sense he speaks of *the cutting off of his days,* because he believed that an angry and offended God had broken off the course of his life; for he does not merely say in the ordinary manner that his life is cut short by a violent disease, but recognises that undoubted judgment of God as the cause of "the cutting off." Now, life is "cut off," whether we die at the entrance of life, or in middle life, or in old age; but they who are hurried away in the very flower of their age are said to be "cut off" from life, because they appear to die too soon, and before they have finished their course. The case was different with Hezekiah; for he perceived that the remaining part of life was

[83] "Qu'il faisoit son conte de mourir." "That he laid his account with dying."

"cut off" by the sword of God, because he had provoked God's wrath by his offenses. Thus he complains that, as if he had been unworthy of enjoying it, God suddenly deprives him of life, which otherwise would have lasted longer. Such is the import of the phrase, "the residue of the years;" for although, being born mortal, we have reason to expect death every moment, yet since it was threatened as a punishment, he has good reason for saying that those years had been taken from him which he might have lived, if it had been the good pleasure of God.

11. *I said, I shall not see God.* Amidst such earnest longing for an earthly life, Hezekiah would have gone beyond bounds, if his grief had not been aggravated by the conviction of God's wrath. Since, therefore, he is violently dragged away by his own fault, as if he were unworthy of enjoying the ordinary light of the sun, he exclaims that he is miserable, because henceforth he shall never see either God or man. Among believers the statement would have been regarded as liable to this exception, that, so long as we dwell on the earth, we wander and are distant from God, but that, when the entanglements of the flesh shall have been laid aside, we shall more closely "see God."

In the land of the living. These words are indeed added as a, limitation; but in this way Hezekiah appears to limit "the seeing of God" to the present life, as if death extinguished all the light of understanding. We must therefore keep in view what I formerly remarked, that when he received the message of God's vengeance, it affected him in such a manner as if he had been deprived of God's fatherly love; for if he was unworthy of beholding the sun, how could he hope for what was of higher value? Not that hope was altogether effaced from his mind, but because, having his attention fixed on the curse of God, he cannot so soon or so quickly rise to heaven, to soothe present grief by the delightfulness of a better life.

Thus it sometimes happens that godly minds are overclouded, so that they do not always receive consolation, which for a time is suppressed, but still remains in their minds, and afterwards manifests itself. Yet it is an evidence of piety, that, by the proper and lawful object of life, he shews how grievous and distressing it is to be deprived of it. Even to cattle it gives uneasiness to die, but they have almost no use for their life except to feed and eat to the full; while we have a far more excellent object, for we were created and born on the express condition, that we should devote ourselves to the knowledge of God. And because this is the chief reason why we live, he twice repeats the name of God, and thus expresses the strength of his feelings; "I shall not see God, God in the land of the living." [84]

If it be objected that here we do not "see God," the answer is easy, that he is visible in his works; because "through the visible workmanship of the world," as Paul says, "his eternal power and Godhead are known." (Romans

[84] "{יה {יה} (Yahh Yahh) is not an error of the text for {יהוה} (Yehovah) (Houbigant,) but an intensive repetition similar to those in verses 17, 19. Or the second may be added to explain and qualify the first. He did expect to see God, but not in the land of the living." — Alexander.

1:20.) Hence also the Apostle calls this world a mirror of invisible things. (Hebrews 11:3.) The more nearly he manifests himself to be known by believers, the more highly did Hezekiah value that spiritual beholding; as David also says that they see the face of God who confirm their faith by the exercises of piety in the sanctuary. (Psalm 42:2; 63:2.) So far as relates to men, he grieves that he is withdrawn from their society, because we were born for the purpose of performing mutual kind offices to each other.

12. *My dwelling is departed.* He proceeds in his complaints, by painting his life under a beautiful metaphor; for he compares it to *a shepherd's tent.* Such indeed is the condition of human life in general; but he does not relate so much what happens to all universally as what has befallen himself as an individual. The use of *tents* is more common in those countries than in ours, and shepherds often change their residence, while they drive their flock from one place to another. He does not therefore say absolutely that men dwell in a frail lodginghouse, while they pass through the world, but that, after he had dwelt at ease in a royal palace, his lot was changed, just as if "a shepherd's tent" were pitched for two days in one field and afterwards removed to another.

I have cut off, as a weaver, my life. It is worthy of observation, that he indiscriminately ascribes the cause of his death, sometimes to himself, and sometimes to God, but at the same time explains the grounds; for when he speaks of himself as the author, he does not complain of God, or remonstrate that God has robbed him of his life, but accuses himself, and acknowledges deep blame. His words are equivalent to the proverbial saying, "I have cut this thread for myself, so that I alone am the cause of my death." And yet it is not without reason that he soon afterwards ascribes to God what he had acknowledged to have proceeded from himself; for although we give to God grounds for dealing severely with us, yet he is the judge who inflicts punishment. In our afflictions, therefore, we ought always to praise his judgment; because he performs his office when he chastises us as we deserve.

From lifting up he will cut me off. Some translate {מדלה} *(middallah)* "through leanness," or "through sickness," and others translate it "by taking away." The former derive this noun from {דלל} *(dalal)* which means "to diminish," and the latter from {דלה} *(dalah)* which means "to carry off by lifting up." But let my readers consider if the word "lifting up" be not more appropriate; for Hezekiah appears to complain that his life, while it tended to advance farther, was suddenly cast down; just as if God should cause the sun to set, while it was still ascending in the sky.

From day even to night. He now adds that in a short space of time he was brought down; and by this circumstance again expresses the severity of God's wrath; because he consumes men by the breath of a moment; for to be laid low in a single day means that men die very rapidly.

13. *I reckoned till the dawn.* Others translate it "I determined," or "I laid down." Here it means what we express by the ordinary phrase, *(Je fasoye*

mon compte,)" I laid my account." From this verse it may be inferred that Hezekiah labored two days at least under the disease; for in the preceding verse he pronounced its severity to be so great that he expected immediate death. And now, when one day was past, he still waited *till the dawn,* and again, *from day even to night,* so that he said that he would die every moment. The meaning therefore is, that though he reached "the dawn," still through constant tossings he was hastening to death, because, having been struck by a terrible judgment of God, he cared nothing about his life; and as the Greeks, when they intended to say that nothing is more vain than man, said that he was (ἐφήμερον) "an *ephemeral* animal," that is, "the creature of a day," so Hezekiah means by "the life of a day" that which is fading and has no duration.

As a lion, so hath he broken my bones. The comparison of God to *a lion* ought not to be reckoned strange, though God is naturally "gracious, merciful, and kind." (Exodus 34:6.) Nothing certainly can more truly belong to God than these attributes; but we cannot be aware of that gentleness, when we have provoked him by our crimes and urged him to severity by our wickedness. Besides, there is no cruelty and fierceness in wild beasts that is fitted to strike such terror as we feel from the bare mention of the name of God, and justly; for the Lord's chastisements must have sufficient power to humble and cast us down to hell itself, so that we shall be almost destitute of consolation and regard everything as full of horror. In like manner also, we see that David has described these terrors, when he says that "his bones are numbered, his couch is moistened with tears, his soul is troubled, and hell is opened." (Psalm 6:3-6; 22:17; 38:6.) Thus must the godly be sometimes terrified by the judgment of God, that they may be more powerfully excited to desire his favor.

14. *As a crane, or a swallow.* Hezekiah cannot satisfy himself in explaining the severity of his anguish. He now says that he was reduced so low that he could not utter an articulate voice, but muttered some confused sound, like persons who are almost at the point of death. Hence it is evident that his distress was excruciating; for the severity of the pain took away his voice, and his voice, he says, stuck in his throat; nothing was heard but indistinct groans.

Such is the import of these metaphors of "the crane and the swallow," which the Prophet employs. Still it is certain that this indistinct sound of the voice is nevertheless heard by God; though all our senses are oppressed by pain, and our throat is choked by grief, still God beholds our hearts and listens to godly sighs, [85] which will be even more powerful than plain and direct words, provided that the Spirit is present, who produces in us those "groanings that cannot be uttered," of which Paul speaks. (Romans 8:26.) There is no believer who does not feel that in prayer, when his heart is oppressed by any heavy sorrow, he either stammers or is almost dumb.

[85] "Et exauce les souspirs faits en foy." "And listens to sighs heaved in faith."

My eyes were lifted up on high. These words are translated by some, "My eyes are weakened;" but that would not agree with the phrase, "on high." [86] On this account we must adopt a simpler meaning, that, although Hezekiah's eyes were nearly worn out with weakness, so that he almost fainted, yet he did not cease to lift up his eyes to heaven; and that he never was stupified to such a degree as not to know that he ought to ask assistance from God. Let us therefore learn by the example of Hezekiah to lift up our eyes to heaven, when our hearts are afflicted and troubled; and let us know that God does not demand from us great eloquence.

O Lord, it hath oppressed me; [87] *comfort me.* He confirms the sentiment already expressed, by immediately directing his discourse to God and imploring his aid. Being oppressed by the violence of disease, he desires that God would be present to assist him. Some render the words, "Be surety for me;" [88] and the verb {ערב} *(gnarab)* is often used in this sense; but it is more appropriate to say, "Comfort me," or "Cheer me." Or perhaps it will be thought preferable to translate, as some have done, "Cause me to rest." Undoubtedly he asks comfort from God, that he may not sink under the violence of disease; and we ought to be assured of this, that the greater the weight of afflictions that oppresses us, the more will God be ready to give us assistance.

15. *What shall I say?* This is generally supposed to be an exclamation, such as frequently bursts forth in a season of joy, as if he congratulated himself on having already obtained his wish. But I think differently. Hezekiah appears to proceed in his complaints; for he speaks as men commonly do when they are overcome by grief; "What shall I say? for *he who said it hath also done it;"* that is, "life and death are in his hand; *it is useless for me to argue or contend* with him; it is useless for me to complain." In the book of Job also words and sayings of this sort are often found. (Job 7:4.) I think that this is the true meaning; for Hezekiah previously looked around on all sides to see if any assistance appeared, and now, when he sees that he is about to die, and that God has threatened it, he concludes that he ought no longer to resist but to obey.

Yet we ought to mark the emphatic statement, that God hath actually fulfilled what he had threatened by his word. They who explain it to mean simply, "what God said to me by the Prophet he hath fulfilled," express a part of the truth, but not the whole; for Hezekiah does not coldly relate that

[86] The sense of "lifting-up" belongs not to {דלל (dalal) but to {דלה (dalah) Jerome adopted the sense of "weakened," and brought out the meaning by a supplement, in which he has been followed by almost all modern commentators. "My eyes were weakened (looking) on high." This rendering has been almost literally adapted in diodati's Italian version. "I mici occhi erano scemati (riguardando) ad alto." Professor Alexander translates thus, "My eyes are weak (with looking) upward, or, on high.)" — Ed.

[87] "Le mal m' oppresse." "Disease oppresses me."

[88] "Undertake for me; rescue me out of the hand of the angel of death, and answer for me, to deliver me. The word signifies 'answering,' or, as we say, 'suretiship;' as in that passage, Answer (or, be surety) for thy servant for good. (Psalm 119:122.)" — Jarchi. "Or, contend for me, undertake my cause; for thus, according to Jarchi, {{עשוק (gnashuk) must be translated, if we read it with Sin, (not Schin,) as he appears to have done; and in the Hebrew copy which I have used the point is on the left horn of the letter." — Breithaupt.

he has perceived the effect of the word, but, by bringing forward the power of God, he cuts off every occasion to murmur or complain. Thus also David says, "I am dumb, because thou hast done it." (Psalm 39:9.) We never cease to complain until we are restrained by the fear of the power of God. Thus also Job, considering that he has to deal with God, says, "I will lay my finger on my mouth," (Job 40:4,) and "I will humbly make supplication to my judge." (Job 9:15.) Hezekiah, therefore, enjoins silence on himself on this ground, that it is useless to contend with God.

At the same time, he means that he has no hope of life, because the Lord gives actual demonstration that it was a serious threatening; and hence he infers that he gains nothing, because there are no means of evasion. This sentiment, it is true, proceeds from despair; because in this manner, thinking that God is his enemy, he shuts the door against his prayers. But that in very severe distresses words of this kind should escape our lips, which deter us from confidence in prayer, is neither new nor strange, provided that, on the other hand, we rely on that calling upon God which the views of the flesh pronounce to be of no avail. There is reason to believe that the pious king labored under such perplexity that he fainted through weakness; but that he chiefly considered what I have said, that there was nothing preferable to silence, because that it would serve no purpose to dispute with God, will appear more clearly from what immediately follows.

I shall walk trembling [89] *all my life.* Hence we may infer that he now holds out to his view the dreadful power of God, in order to dispose himself to true humility. As {דדה} *(dadah)* sometimes signifies "to move," and sometimes "to walk softly," {אדדה} *(eddaddeh)* is translated by some commentators, "I shall be moved," or "I shall be troubled," and by others, "I shall walk softly." For my own part, I have no doubt that it denotes a trembling and feeble step; for Hezekiah had been reduced to so great weakness that he despaired of ever afterwards recovering his former strength. This trembling must be attributed to fear, for it immediately follows, *in bitterness;* which means, that the sorrow which he had endured was so deeply rooted in his heart, that it could never be removed. Hence arose that weakness which he mentioned.

{אדדה} *(eddaddeh)* is translated by the Vulgate, "I will call to remembrance," on which account this passage has been tortured by Papists to support auricular confession, but so absurdly that even old wives can laugh at it. But the plain meaning is, that Hezekiah does not speak of calling to remembrance, but of that agitation and trembling with which he says that he will be struck during the whole period of his life.

16. *O Lord, even to all who shall live after them.* The concise style of the Prophet has given rise to various interpretations. The interpretation most commonly received is "O Lord, they shall live beyond those years, [90]" that is, "they shall lengthen their life." This is equivalent to saying, "When

[89] I shall go softly. — Eng. Ver.

[90] Outre ces ans-ci.

thou shalt have lengthened my life, thou wilt grant that others also shall enjoy the same favor." But that meaning does not agree with the text, and I look upon it as forced. I rather think that Hezekiah's meaning was this *" O Lord, whosoever shall live beyond those years, to them also will the life of my spirit be known."* We must therefore supply the relative {אשר}, *(asher,) who,* as the Hebrew writers frequently do, and there will be nothing forced in this interpretation; for there can be no doubt, and nobody denies it, that he speaks of the years which the Lord had lengthened out to him. Thus he means that, this favor will be acknowledged not only by the men of that age, but also by posterity.

And didst cause me to sleep, and didst make me alive. In this way he magnifies the greatness of the favor, because it will also be well known to a future age, and will continue to be engraven on the remembrance of all, even when Hezekiah himself is dead, and not only so, but will be reckoned to be a kind of resurrection. By the word *sleep* he means death, as the Scriptures frequently do. (1 Corinthians 11:30; 1 Thessalonians 4:14; 2 Peter 3:4.) Thus he compares this mortal disease to death; for he was so near death that he utterly despaired of life.

17. *Lo, in peace ray bitterness was bitter.* [91] Again, another circumstance aggravates the severity of the distress; for sudden and unexpected calamities disturb us more than those which come upon us in a gradual manner. The grievousness of the disease was the more insupportable, because it seized him suddenly while he enjoyed ease and quietness; for nothing was farther from his thoughts than that he was about to depart from this life. We know also that the saints sometimes rely too much on prosperity, and promise to themselves unvarying success, which David too acknowledges to have happened to himself, "In my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved; but thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled." (Psalm 30:6, 7.)

Nothing more distressing, therefore, could happen to Hezekiah than to be taken out of life, especially when the discomfiture and ruin of his enemy left him in the enjoyment of peace; for I think that Hezekiah fell into this disease after the defeat of Sennacherib, as has been already said. Amidst that joy and peace which smiled upon him, lo, a heavy sickness by which Hezekiah is fearfully distressed and tormented. This warns us that, since nothing is solid or lasting in this life, and since all that delights us may be speedily taken away, we ought not to grow sluggish in prosperity, but, even while we enjoy peace, we ought to think of war, and adversity, and afflictions, and, above all, to seek that peace which rests on God's fatherly kindness, on which our consciences may safely repose.

And thou hast been pleased (to rescue) my soul from the pit. This part of the verse admits of two meanings. Since the verb {חשק} *(chashak)* signifies sometimes "to love," and sometimes "to wish," that meaning would not

[91] "Behold, for peace I had great bitterness," or, "On my peace came great bitterness." — Eng. Ver.

be unsuitable, "It hath pleased thee to deliver my soul." But if nothing be understood, the style will be equally complete, and will flow not less agreeably, "Thou, O God, didst embrace my soul with favor and kindness, while it was lying in the grave." [92] It is well known that "soul" means "life;" but here the goodness of God is proclaimed, in not ceasing to love Hezekiah, even when he might be regarded as dead. In this way the copulative particle must be translated *But.*

For thou hast cast behind thy back all my sins. By assigning the reason, he now leads us to the fountain itself, and points out the method of that cure; for otherwise it might have been thought that hitherto he had spoken of nothing else than the cure of the body, but now he shews that he looks at something higher, namely, that he had been guilty before God, but by his grace had been forgiven. He affirms, indeed, that life has been restored to him, but reckons it of higher value that he has been reconciled to God than a hundred or a thousand lives. And, indeed,

"it would have been better for us never to have been born" (Matthew 26:24)

than by living a long life to add continually new offenses, and thus to bring down on ourselves a heavier judgment. He therefore congratulates himself chiefly on this ground, that the face of God smiles cheerfully upon him; for to enjoy his favor is the highest happiness.

At the same time he declares that all the distresses which God inflicts upon us ought to be attributed to our sins, so that they who accuse God of excessive severity do nothing else than double their' guilt; and he does not only condemn himself for one sin, but confesses that he was laden with many sins, so that he needed more than one pardon. If, then, we sincerely seek alleviation of our distresses, we must begin here; because when God is appeased, it is impossible that it can be ill with us; for he takes no pleasure in our distresses. It often happens with us as with foolish and thoughtless persons, when they are sick; for they fix their attention on nothing but ({συμπτώματα}) symptoms or accidental circumstances, and the pains which they feel, and overlook the disease itself. But we ought rather to imitate skillful physicians, who examine the causes of disease, and give their whole attention to eradicate those causes. They know that outward remedies are useless, and even hurtful, if the inward cause be unknown; for such remedies drive the whole force of the disease inward, and promote and increase it, so that there is no hope of cure.

Hezekiah therefore perceived the cause of his distress, that is, his sins; and when he had received the forgiveness of them, he knew that punishment also ceased and was remitted. Hence we see how absurd is the distinction of the Papists, who wish to separate the remission of punishment from the

[92] "Thou hast loved my soul, from the pit of destruction. (This exactly agrees with our authors marginal reading.) "We have here another instance of pregnant construction, to love from, that is, so to love as to deliver from. This sense is expressed in the English Bible by a circumlocution." — Alexander.

remission of guilt. But Hezekiah here testifies that punishment has been remitted to him, because guilt has been remitted.

We ought carefully to observe the form of expression which Isaiah employs, *thou hast cast behind thy back;* for it means that the remembrance of them is altogether effaced. In like manner, a Prophet elsewhere says that God

"casteth them into the depths of the sea." (Micah 7:19.)

It is likewise said in another passage, that he casteth them away

"as far as the east is distant from the west."

(Psalm 103:12.)

By these modes of expression God assures us that he will not impute to us the sins which he has pardoned; and if, notwithstanding of this, he chastise us, he does it not as a judge, but as a father, to train his children and keep them in the discharge of their duty. Papists are mistaken in dreaming that punishments contain some kind of satisfaction, [93] as if God exacted vengeance, because he would not bestow a free pardon. But when God chastises his people, he promotes their future advantage.

18. *For hell shall not confess thee* [94] When he says that he would not have celebrated the praises of God, if his life had been taken away, he promises that he will be thankful and will keep it in remembrance, and at the same time declares that the highest and most desirable advantage that life can yield to him is, that he will praise God. But although it is a sign of true piety to desire life for no other reason than to spend it in the unceasing praises of God, yet Hezekiah appears to employ language which is too exclusive; for the death of believers declares the glory of God not less than their life, and, being after death perfectly united to God, they do not cease to proclaim his praises along with the angels. Again, another question arises, "Why was Hezekiah so eager to avoid death and so earnestly desirous of an earthly life?" And though even this second question were answered, still the reader will likewise call to remembrance, that this terror was not produced by death alone, for the same Hezekiah, when his life was ended, did not resist, but willingly yielded to God; but that the pious king, when he had been struck by God's wrath, grieved only on this account, that by his sins he had excluded himself from life, as if he would never afterwards enjoy any favor or blessing.

On this also depends the answer to the first question; for we need not wonder if the pious king, not only supposing that he must depart out of life, but thinking that death is the punishment of sins and the vengeance of God, groan and weep that he is condemned as unworthy of devoting himself to the advancement of the glory of God. All who have been struck by this thunderbolt are unable, either living or dead, to celebrate the praises of God, but, being overwhelmed with despair, must be dumb. In the same sense also David says,

"In death there is no remembrance of thee; in the grave who shall praise

[93] "Satisfaction ou recompenses." "Satisfaction or compensations."

[94] "For the grave cannot praise thee." — Eng. Ver. "For the grave shall not confess thee." — Alexander.

thee?" (Psalm 6:5.)

And the whole Church says,

"The dead shall not praise thee, nor those that go down into silence." (Psalm 115:17.)

The reason is, that they who are ruined and lost will have no ground of thanksgiving.

Yet it ought likewise to be observed that the saints, when they spoke in this manner, did not consider what kind of condition awaited them after death, but, under the influence of the pain which they now felt, looked only at the end for which they were created and preserved in the world. The chief object of life, as we said a little before, is that men should be employed in the service of God; and with the same design God protects his Church in the world, because it is his will that his name shall be celebrated. Now, he who sees himself cast down, because he does not deserve to be reckoned, or to hold a place, among the worshippers of God, does not calmly and attentively, consider what he shall do after death, but, under the darkening influence of grief, as if after death all the exercise of piety would cease, takes from the dead the power of praising God, because the glory of God appears to be buried along with the witnesses of it.

19. *The living, the living, he shall confess thee.* He does not include all men without exception; for many *live,* who yet extinguish the glory of God by their ingratitude, as far as lies in their power, and undoubtedly have nothing farther from their thoughts than that they were born to praise God. But he simply declares that men, so long as God supports them in this life, may justly be regarded as the lawful heralds of his glory, when he invites them, by his kindness, to the discharge of that office. And this contrast shews that the statement which he made a little before, that "in death or in the grave there is no remembrance of God," is a general declaration, that they who would willingly be employed in praising God are deprived of this favor, when they are driven out of the world.

As I do this day. He solemnly declares that he will be one of the witnesses of the glory of God, and thus gives a manifest indication of gratitude towards God; for he declares that he will not be forgetful, but will continually give thanks to God, and will make known the favor which he has received; and that not only to the men of his own age, but also to posterity, that they too may celebrate those praises and adore the author of so great a favor.

The father shall make known to the sons thy truth. Hence we ought to learn a useful lesson, that children are given to men on the express condition, that every man, by instructing his children, shall endeavor, to the utmost of his power, to transmit the name of God to posterity; and, therefore, the fathers of families are chiefly enjoined to be careful in this respect, that they shall diligently mention the benefits which God has bestowed on them. By the word *truth h*e means that faithfulness which God exercises towards his people, and all the testimonies of his grace by which he proves that he is

true.

20. *Jehovah to save me.* [95] He acknowledges that he was delivered, not by the aid or industry of men, but solely by the kindness of God. The rendering given by some, "It belongs to the Lord to save me," does not express enough, and appears to be more remote from the literal meaning; for he praises not only the power of God, but also the work by which he hath given an evident proof of it. In a word, he contrasts God's keeping with the death to which he had been sentenced; because, having formerly dreaded him as a severe judge, he now avows him as his deliverer, and leaps with joy. [96]

And we will sing our songs. For the reason now stated, he not only prepares himself for singing in token of gratitude, but also calls on others to join and accompany him in this duty, and on this account mentions *the Temple,* in which the assemblies of religious men were held. Had be been a private individual and one of the common people, still it would have been his duty to offer a public sacrifice to God, that he might encourage others by his example. Much more then was the king bound to take care that he should bring others to unite with him in thanksgiving; especially because in his person God had provided for the advantage of the whole Church.

All the days of our life. He declares that he will do his endeavor that this favor of God may be known to all, and that the remembrance of it may be preserved, not only for one day or for one year, but as long as he shall live. And indeed at any time it would have been exceedingly base to allow a blessing of God so remarkable as this to pass away or be forgotten; but, being forgetful, we continually need spurs to arouse us. At the same time, he takes a passing notice of the reason why God appointed holy assemblies. It was, that all as with one mouth might praise him, and might excite each other to the practice of godliness.

21. *And Isaiah said* Isaiah now relates what was the remedy which he prescribed to Hezekiah. Some think that it was not a remedy, because*figs* are dangerous and hurtful to *boils;* but that the pious king was warned and clearly taught by this sign that the cure proceeded from nothing else than from the favor of God alone. As the bow in the sky, [97] by which God was pleased to testify that mankind would never be destroyed by a flood, (Genesis 9:13,) appears to denote what is absolutely contrary to this; (for it makes its appearance, when very thick clouds are gathering, and ready to fall as if they would deluge the whole world;) so they think that a plaster, which was not at all fitted for curing the disease, was purposely applied by the Prophet, in order to testify openly that God cured Hezekiah without medicines. But since figs are employed even by our own physicians for maturing a pustule, it is possible that the Lord, who had given a promise, gave also a medicine, as

[95] "Le Seigneur m'a delivre." "The Lord hath delivered me."

[96] "The obvious ellipsis in the first clause may be variously filled with 'came, hastened, commanded, was ready, be pleased,' or with the verb 'is,' as an idiomatic periphrasis of the future, 'is to save' for 'will save." — Alexander.

[97] "L'arc en la nuce." "The bow in the cloud."

we see done on many other occasions; for although the Lord does not need secondary means, as they are called, yet he makes use of them whenever he thinks proper. And the value of the promise is not lessened by this medicine, which without the word would have been vain and useless; because he had received another supernatural sign, by which he had plainly learned that he had received front God alone that life of which he despaired.

22. *Now, Hezekiah had said.* Some explain this verse as if this also had been a sign given to Hezekiah, and therefore, view it as connected with the preceding verse, and look upon it as an exclamation of astonishment. But it is more probable that in this passage the order has been reversed, as frequently takes place with Hebrew writers, and that what was spoken last is related first. Isaiah did not at the beginning say that Hezekiah had asked a sign, though the sacred history (2 Kings 20:8) attests it; and therefore he adds what he had left out at the proper place.

That I shall go up. He means that it will be his chief object throughout his whole life to celebrate the name of God; for he did not desire life for the sake of living at ease and enjoying pleasure, but in order to defend the honor of God and the purity of his worship. Let us therefore remember that God prolongs our life, not that we may follow the bent of our natural disposition, or give ourselves up to luxury, but that we may cultivate piety, perform kind offices to each other, and frequently take part in the assembly of the godly and the public exercises of religion, that we may proclaim the truth and goodness of God.

Chapter 39

CHAPTER 39

Isaiah 39:1-8

1. At that time Merodachbaladan, the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezzekiah: for he had heard that he had been sick and was recovered.

1. Tempore illo misit Merodach Baladan, filius Baladan, rex Babel, ad Ezechiam literas et munus, ex quo audieret eum aegrotasse, et convaluisse

2. And Hezekiah was glad of them, and shewed them the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious ointment, and all the house of his armour, and all that was found in his treasures: there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah shewed them not.

2. Laetatus est autum de iis Ezechias, et ostendit illis domum thesauri sui, argentum et aurum et aromata, unguentum pretiosum, et omne armamentarium suum, et quicquid inveniebatur in thesauris suis: non fuit res ulla, quam non ostenderit Ezechias in domo sua, totoque regno suo.

3. Then came Isaiah the prophet unto king Hezekiah, and said unto him, What said these men? And from whence came they unto thee? And Hezekiah said, They are come from a far country unto me, even from Babylon.

3. Tum venit Isaias propheta ad regem Ezechiam, dixitique illi: Quid dixerunt viri isti? Et unde venerunt ad te? Respondit Ezechias, E terra longinqua venerunt ad me, e Babel

4. Then said he, What have they seen in thine house? And Hezekiah answered, All that is in mine house have they seen: there is nothing among my treasures that I have not shewed them.

4. Tunc dixit: Quid viderunt domi tuae? Et dixit Ezechias: Cuncta quae domi meae sunt viderunt; nec res ulla est, quam non illis ostenderim

in thesauris meis.

5. Then Isaiah to Hezekiah, Hear the word of the LORD of hosts:

5. Tunc ait Isais Ezechiae: Audi verbum Iehovae exercituum.

6. Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house and that which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the LORD.

6. Ecce dies veniunt, ut tollatur in Babylonem quicquid est domituae, et quicquid recondiderunt patres tui ad hunc usque diem; nec residuum quicquam manebit, dicit Iehova.

7. And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.

7. E filiis tuis qui egressi fuerint ex te, quos genueris, tollent; eruntque eunuchi in palatio regis Babel.

8. Then said Hezekiah to Isaiah, Good is the word of the LORD which thou hast spoken. He said moreover, For there shall be peace and truth in my days.

8. Dixit Ezechias Isiae: Bonus est sermo Iehovae quem pronumtiasti. Et dixit: Saltem erit pax et stabilitas in diebus meis.

1. *At that time.* Some think that this was the first king of the Chaldee nation; for his father, *Baladin,* had held the government over the Babylonians without the title of king. This Merodach, therefore, after having reigned twelve years, subdued the Assyrians, and made them tributaries to the Chaldeans; for it is a mistake to suppose that the war was begun by Nebuchadnezzar. It is indeed possible that he completed the subjugation of them; but it is probable that already they were half subdued, so that nothing else remained than to establish the royal power gained by the victory of his predecessor.

Sent letters and a present to Hezekiah Although the Prophet simply relates that messengers were sent, yet it is of importance to observe that this was done craftily by the Babylonian, in order to flatter and cajole Hezekiah. He was at this time threatening the Assyrians, whom he knew to be justly disliked by the Jews on account of their continual wars; and therefore, in order to obtain Hezekiah as an ally and partisan in the war which was now waging against him, endeavors to obtain his friendship by indirect methods. The mind of the good king was corrupted by ambition, so that he too eagerly *accepted* the false blandishments of the tyrant, and swallowed the bait.

The pretence was, to congratulate Hezekiah on having recovered from his disease. And yet sacred history appears to assign another reason, which was, that Merodach was induced by a miracle. (2 Chronicles 32:31.) There is certainly no doubt that the report of that prodigy, which took place when the sun went back, was yew widely spread; and it might have produced an impression on many nations. Yet it can hardly be believed that a heathen

had any other object in view than to draw Hezekiah into his net; but since, by a remarkable sign, God had shewn that he cared for the safety of Hezekiah, and since wicked men commonly apply to a base purpose all the proofs of God's favor, Merodach thought that, if he could obtain the alliance of Hezekiah, he would carry on war under the protection and favor of heaven. [98]

The consequence was, that he sent messengers to Hezekiah with presents, for the sake of expressing his good-will; for he wished to obtain his favor, believing that his friendship would be useful and advantageous to him; and his intention was, to make use of him afterwards against the Assyrians, to whom he knew well that the Jews entertained a deadly hatred. Such are the designs of kings and princes, to transact their affairs by fraud and craftiness, and bysome means to gain as many allies as possible, that they may employ their exertions against their enemies

2. *And Hezekiah was glad* The Prophet performs the part of the historian; for he merely relates what Hezekiah did, and will afterwards explain why he did it; that is, that Hezekiah, blinded by ambition, made an ostentatious display to the messengers; while he censures an improper kind of joy, which afterwards gave rise to an eager desire of treating them in a friendly manner.

Any person who shall barely read this history will conclude that Hezekiah did nothing wrong; for it was an act of humanity to give a cheerful and hospitable reception to the messengers, and to shew them every proof of good-will; and it would have been the act of a barbarian to disdain those who had come to him on a friendly visit, and to spurn the friendship of so powerful a king. But still there lurked in his heart a desire of vain ostentation; for he wished to make a favorable display of himself, that the Babylonian might be led to understand that this alliance would not be without advantage to him, and might ascertain this from his wealth, and forces, and weapons of war. He deserved to be reproved on another ground, that he directed his mind to foreign and unlawful aid, and to that extent denied honor to God, whom he had recently known to be his deliverer on two occasions; for otherwise the Prophet would not have censured this act so severely.

This is a remarkable example; and it teaches us that nothing is more dangerous than to be blinded by prosperity. It proves also the truth of the old proverb, that "it is more difficult to bear prosperity than adversity;" for when everything goes on to our wish, we grow wanton and insolent, and cannot be kept in the path of duty by any advices or threatenings. When this happened to Hezekiah, on whom the Prophet had bestowed the high commendation, that "the fear of God was his treasure," (Isaiah 33:6,) we ought to be very much afraid of falling into the same dangers. He is carried away by idle boasting, and does not remember that formerly he was half-dead, and that God rescued him from death by an extraordinary miracle.

[98] "Que la guerre qu'il entreprendoit de faire auroit heureuse issue, et seroit benite du ciel." "That war which he carried on would have a successful result, and would be blest of heaven."

Formerly he made a solemn promise that he would continually celebrate the praises of God in the assembly of the godly, (Isaiah 38:20,) and now, when he sees that his friendship is sought, and that a powerful monarch sends to salute him, he forgets God and the benefits which he had received from him. When we see that this good king so quickly falls and is carried away by ambition, let us learn to lay upon ourselves the restraint of modesty, which will keep us constantly and diligently in the fear of God.

3. *Then came Isaiah the Prophet* He continues the same narrative, but likewise adds doctrine. Although he does not say that God had sent him, yet it is certain that he did this by the influence of the Holy Spirit and by the command of God; and, therefore, he bestows on himself the designation of *the Prophet,* by which he intimates that he did not come as a private individual, but to perform an office which God had enjoined on him, that Hezekiah might clearly see that he had not to deal with a mortal man.

Now, when he says that he *came, we* ought to infer that he was not sent for, but was allowed to remain quietly at home, while Hezekiah was making' a boastful display of his treasures; for prophets are not usually invited to consultations of this sort. But formerly, while he was weighed down by extreme distress, while Rabshakeh insulted him so fiercely, and uttered such daring blasphemies against God, he sent, to Isaiah, and requested him to intercede with God, and to soothe his anguish by some consolation. (Isaiah 37:2, 3, 4.) Thus in adversity and distress the prophets are sought, but in prosperity are disregarded or even despised; because they disturb our mirth by their admonitions, and appear to give occasion of grief. But Isaiah *came,* though he was not invited; and in this we ought to observe and praise his steadfastness, and are taught by his example that we ought not to wait till we are sent for by men who need the discharge of our duty, when they flatter themselves amidst the heaviest distresses, and bring danger on themselves either by levity, or by ignorance, or even by malice; for it is our duty to gather the wandering sheep, and we ought to do this diligently, even though we be not requested by any person.

Though Hezekiah may be justly blamed for having been corrupted by the flatteries of the king of Babylon so as not to ask counsel of God, yet it is a manifestation of no ordinary modesty, that he does not drive away or despise the Prophet, as if he had found fault without reason, but replies gently, and at length receives calmly and mildly a very severe reproof. It would have been better that he had, from the beginning, inquired at the mouth of God, as it is said in the psalm,

"Thy commandments are the men of my counsel,"
(Psalm 119:24;)

but, having committed a mistake, it was his next duty to receive submissively the remedy for the fault.

What did those men say? The Prophet does not immediately inflict on him the pain of a severe reproof, but wounds him gently, so as to lead him

to a confession of his sin; for Hezekiah flattered himself, and thought that all was going well with him, and, therefore, needed to be gradually aroused from his slothfulness. Still these words gave a sharp wound; as if he had said, "What have you to do with *those men?* Ought you not to keep at the greatest distance from a plague so contagious?" He likewise inquires about the contents of the message, in order to make Hezekiah ashamed of not having perceived the deceit that was practiced on him; for *there* is reason to believe that he would not have censured the congratulation, if there had not been some poison mingled with it, but he points out those snares in which the Babylonians wished to entangle him.

And yet it is evident from the reply, that Hezekiah was not yet struck by that gentle reproof; for he is still on good terms with himself, and boasts that those men *came from a distant country, from Babylon.* There is reason to believe that Isaiah was not ignorant of that country, so that Hezekiah did not need to express the distance in such magnificent language; but he boasts in this manner, because he was under the influence of ambition. It was therefore necessary that he should be more keenly pressed, and that sharper spurs should be applied.

4. *Then he said.* Isaiah proceeds in his indirect admonition, to see if Hezekiah shall be moved by it and displeased with himself. But still he does not succeed, though it can hardly be believed that the king was so stupid as not to feel the punctures of the spur; for he knew that the Prophet had not come, as persons addicted to curiosity are wont to do, for the purpose of hunting out news; and he knew also that the Prophet had not come to jest with him, but to state something of importance. However that may be, we ought to put a favorable construction on his mild reply; for he does not break out against the Prophet, but modestly confesses the state of the fact, though he does not yet acknowledge that he has sinned, or at least is not brought to repentance; for he does not judge of his sin from that concealed disposition. Ambition deludes men so much, that by its sweetness it not only intoxicates but drives them mad, so that, even when they have been admonished, they do not immediately repent. When, therefore, we see the godly Hezekiah struck with such stupidity as not to perceive that he is reproved, or at least not to be stung by it so as to know himself, we ought carefully to guard against so dangerous a disease.

5. *Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah.* From this judgment of God we perceive that the sin of Hezekiah was not small, though common sense judges differently; for since God always observes the highest moderation in chastising men, we may infer from the severity of the punishment that it was no ordinary fault, but a highly aggravated crime. Hence also we are reminded that men judge amiss of words or actions, but that God alone is the competent judge of them. Hezekiah shewed his treasures. Had they been heaped up, that they might always lie hidden in the earth? He received the messengers kindly. Should he have driven them away? He lent an ear to their instruc-

tions. But that was when the rival of the Assyrian voluntarily desired his friendship. Ought he to have rejected so valuable an advantage? In a word, so far as appearances go, we shall find nothing for which an apology may not be offered.

But God, from whom nothing is hidden, observes in Hezekiah's joy, first, ingratitude; because he is unmindful of the distresses which lately pressed him down, and, in some respects, substitutes the Chaldeans in the room of God himself, to whom he ought to have dedicated his own person and all that he possessed. Next, he observes pride; because Hezekiah attempts too eagerly to gain reputation by magnificence and riches. He observes a sinful desire to enter into an alliance which would have been destructive to the whole nation. But the chief fault was ambition, which almost entirely banishes the fear of God from the hearts of men. Hence Augustine justly exclaims, "How great and how pernicious is the poison of pride, which cannot be cured but by poison!" For he has his eye on that passage in one of Paul's Epistles, in which he says that "a messenger of Satan had been given to buffet him, that he might not be puffed up by the greatness of revelations." (2 Corinthians 12:7.) Hezekiah was unshaken, when all was nearly ruined; but he is vanquished by these flatteries, and does not resist vain ambition. Let us, therefore, attentively and diligently consider what a destructive evil this is, and let us be so much the more careful to avoid it.

Hear the word of Jehovah of hosts Being about to be the bearer of a harsh sentence, he begins by saying that he is God's herald, and a little afterwards, he again repeats that God has commanded him to do this, not merely for the purpose of protecting himself against hatred, [99] but in order to make a deep impression on the heart of the king'. Here again we see his steadfastness and heroic courage. He does not dread the face of the king, or fear to make known his disease, and to announce to him the judgment of God; for although, at that time as well as now, kings had delicate ears, yet, being fully aware that God had enjoined this duty upon him, he boldly executes his commission, however much it might be disliked. Prophets were, indeed, subject to kings, and claimed nothing for themselves, unless when it was their duty to speak in the name of God; and in such cases there is nothing so lofty that it ought not to be abased before the majesty of God. And if his object had been to gain the good graces of his prince, he would have been silent like other flatterers; but he has regard to his office, and endeavors to discharge it most faithfully.

6. *And nothing shall be left* It is proper to observe the kind of punishment which the Lord inflicts on Hezekiah; for he takes from his successors those things of which he vaunted so loudly, in order that they may have no ground for boasting of them. Thus the Lord punishes the ambition and pride of men, so that their name or kingdom, which they hoped would last for ever,

[99] "Non pas que pour crainte d'estre mal voulu, il se descharge sur le Seigneur." "Not that, through fear of bringing ill-will on himself, he throws the blame on the Lord."

is blotted out, and they are treated with contempt, and the remembrance of them is accursed. In a word, he overthrows their foolish thoughts, so that they find by experience the very opposite of those inventions by which they deceive themselves.

If it be objected that it is unreasonable, that the sacking of a city and the captivity of a nation should be attributed to the fault of a single man, while the Holy Spirit everywhere declares (2 Chronicles 36:14-17) that general obstinacy was the reason why God delivered up the city and the country to be pillaged by the Babylonians; I answer, that there is no absurdity in God's punishing the sin of a single man, and at the same time the crimes of a whole nation. For when the wrath of the Lord overspread the whole country, it was the duty of all to unite in confessing their guilt., and of every person to consider individually what he had deserved; that no man might throw the blame on others, but that every man might lay it on himself. Besides, since the Jews were already in many ways liable to the judgment of God, he justly permitted Hezekiah to fail in his duty to the injury of all, that he might hasten the more his own wrath, and open up a way for the execution of his judgment. In like manner we see that it happened to David; for Scripture declares that it was not an accidental occurrence that David numbered the people, but that it took place by the fault of the nation itself, whom the Lord determined to punish in this manner.

"The anger of the Lord was kindled against the nation, and he put it into the heart of David to number the people." (2 Samuel 24:1.)

Thus in this passage also punishment is threatened against Hezekiah; but his sin, by which he provoked God's anger, was also the vengeance of God against the whole nation.

7. *Of thy sons* It might be thought that this was far more distressing to Hezekiah, and therefore it is put last for the sake of heightening the picture. Even though any calamity spread widely in a nation, it is commonly thought that kings and their families will be exempted, as if they were not placed in the same rank with other men. When he understood, therefore, that his sons would be made captives and slaves, this must have appeared to him to be exceedingly severe. Hence again we may learn how much God was displeased with Hezekiah for seeking aid from earthly wealth, and boasting of it in the presence of wicked men, when God by a dreadful example punishes it as an unpardonable crime, that Hezekiah made an ambitious display of his wealth in presence of unbelievers.

8. *Good is the word of Jehovah* From this reply we learn, that Hezekiah was not a stubborn or obstinately haughty man, since he listened patiently to the Prophet's reproof, though he was little moved by it at the commencement. When he is informed that the Lord is angry, he unhesitatingly acknowledges his guilt, and confesses that he is justly punished. Having heard the judgment of God, he does not argue or contend with the Prophet, but conducts himself with gentleness and modesty, and thus holds out to us an example of genuine

submissiveness and obedience.

Let us therefore learn by the example of the pious king' to listen with calmness to the Lord, not only when he exhorts or admonishes, but even when he condemns and terrifies by threatening just punishment. When he says that "the word of God is good," he not only gives him the praise of justice, but patiently acquiesces in that which might have been unwelcome on account of its harshness; for even the reprobate have sometimes been compelled to confess their guilt; while their rebellion was not subdued so as to refrain from murmuring against their Judge. In order, therefore, that God's threatenings may be softened to us, we must entertain some hope of *mercy,* otherwise our hearts will always pour forth unavailing bitterness; but he who shall be convinced that God, when he punishes, does not in any degree lay aside the feeling of a father's affection, will not only confess that God is just, but will calmly and mildly bear his temporary severity. In a word, when we shall have a powerful conviction of the grace of God, so as to believe that he is our Father, it will not be hard or disagreeable to us to stand and fall according to his pleasure; for faith will assure us that nothing is more advantageous to us than his fatherly chastisement.

Thus David, having been very severely reproved by Nathan, humbly replies, *"It* is the Lord, let him do whatever is right in his eyes;" [100] for undoubtedly the reason why he is dumb is, not only because it would be of no use to murmur, but because he willingly submits to the judgment of God. Such is also the character of Saul's silence, when he is informed that the kingdom shall be taken from him. (1 Samuel 28:20.) But because it is only punishment that terrifies him, and he is not moved by repentance for his sin, we need not wonder if he be full of cruelty within, though apparently he acquiesces, because he cannot resist, which otherwise he would willingly do, like malefactors who, while they are held bound by chains or fetters, are submissive to their judges, whom they would willingly drag down from the place of authority and trample under their feet. But while David and Hezekiah are "humbled under the mighty hand of God," (1 Peter 5:6,) still they do not lose the hope of pardon, and therefore choose rather to submit to the punishment which he inflicts than to withdraw from his authority.

Which thou hast spoken. It is worthy of notice that he acknowledges not only that the sentence which God has pronounced is just, but that the word which Isaiah has spoken is good; for there is great weight in this clause, since he does not hesitate to receive the word with reverence, though it is spoken by a mortal man, because he looks to its principal Author. The freedom used by Isaiah might undoubtedly be harsh and unpleasant to the king; but acknowledging him to be the servant of God, he allows himself to be brought to obedience. So much the more insufferable is the delicacy of those who are offended at being admonished or reproved, and scornfully reply to teachers

[100] Our author, quoting from memory, relates the words, not of David to Nathan, (2 Samuel 12:12,) but of Eli to Samuel. (1 Samuel 3:18) — Ed.

and ministers of the word, "Are not you men as well as we?" As if it were not our duty to obey God, unless he sent angels from heaven, or came down himself.

Hence also we learn what opinion we ought to form concerning fanatics, who, while they pretend to adore God, reject the doctrine of the prophets; for if they were ready to obey God, they would listen to him when he spoke by his prophets, not less than when he thundered from heaven. I admit that we ought to distinguish between true and false prophets, between *"the* voice of the shepherd (John 10:3, 5) and the voice of the stranger;" but we must not reject all without distinction, if we do not wish to reject God himself; and we ought to listen to them, not only when they exhort or reprove, but also when they condemn, and when they threaten, by the command of God, the just punishment of our sins.

At least [101] *there shall be peace* The particle {כי} *(ki)* sometimes expresses opposition, but, here it denotes an exception, and therefore I have translated it *at least;* for Hezekiah adds something new, that is, he gives thanks to God for mitigating the punishment which he had deserved; as if he had said, "The Lord might have suddenly raised up enemies, to drive me out of my kingdom; but he now spares me, and, by delaying, moderates the punishment which might justly have been inflicted on me." Yet this clause may be explained as a prayer, [102] expressing Hezekiah's desire that the punishment should be delayed till a future age. But it is more probable that what the Prophet had said about the days that were to come, Hezekiah applied for soothing his grief, to encourage himself to patience, because sudden vengeance would have alarmed him still more. This exception, therefore, is highly fitted to induce meekness of spirit, *"At least* God will spare our age." But if any person prefer to view it as assigning a reason, "*For* there shall be peace," [103] him enjoy his opinion.

Peace and Truth. Some think that {אמת}, *(emeth,) Truth,* denotes the worship of God and pure religion, as if he were thanking God that, when he died, he would leave the doctrine of godliness unimpaired. But I consider it to denote "permanency," or a peaceful condition of the kingdom; if it be not thought preferable to view it as denoting, by the substitution of one word for another, that there will be certain and long-continued prosperity.

But it may be thought that Hezekiah was cruel in taking no care about posterity, and not giving himself much trouble about what should happen afterwards. Such sayings as, ({ἐμοῦ} {θανόντος} {γαῖα} {μιχθήτω} {πυρί},) "When I am dead, let the earth be committed to the flames," that is, "When I am dead, all are dead;" and other sayings of the same kind, which are now in the mouths of many swine and Epicureans, are profane and shocking. But Hezekiah's meaning was quite different; for, while he wished well to those

[101] "For there shall be peace." — Eng. Ver.
[102] "Au moins qu'il y ait paix." "At least let there be peace."
[103] Car il y aura paix.

who should live after him, yet it would have been undutiful to disregard that token of forbearance which God gave by delaying his vengeance; for he might have been led by it to hope that this mercy would, in some degree, be extended to posterity.

Some reply that he rejoiced at the delay, because

"we ought not to be anxious about to-morrow, seeing that sufficient for the day is its own affliction." (Matthew 6:34.)

But this does not apply to the present passage; for Hezekiah does not disregard posterity, but, perceiving that God moderates the punishment by forbearance, he gives thanks to God, as we have already said; for although this punishment awaited a future age, still it was his duty to acknowledge the present favor. And indeed we ought to labor most for our own age, and to pay our chief regard to it. The future ought not to be overlooked; but what is present and immediate has stronger claims on our services; for we who live at the same time are bound by God with a stronger tie, in order that, by mutual intercourse, we may assist each other, as far as shall be in our power. It ought likewise to be observed that, while the Lord had formerly promised a lengthened life to hezekiah, when he was very near death, there was now strong reason to fear that he would again cut short his life on account of that sin. When he is informed that the promise is ratified, he gives thanks to God, and bears more patiently the calamity which was to come, though he felt it to be grievous and distressing.

Chapter 40

CHAPTER 40

Isaiah 40:1-31

1. Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.

1. Consolamini, consolamini populum meum, dicit Deus rester.

2. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins.

2. Loquimini secundum cor Ierusalem, et clamate ad eam, quod impleta sit militia ejus, quod remissa sit iniquitas (vel, miseria) ejus, quoniam accepit e manu Iehovae duplicia in onmibus peccatis suis.

3. The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

3. Vox clamans in deserto: Parate viam Iehovae; Dirigite in solitudine semitam Deo nostro.

4. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain:

4. Omnis vailis exaltabitur, et onmis mons et collis humiliabitur; et erit praeruptum in rectitudinem, et loca confragosa in planiciem.

5. And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

5. Et revelabitur gloria Iehovae, videbitque omnis caro pariter, quod os Iehovae loquutum sit.

6. The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field:

6. Vox dixit (vel, dicebat): Clama. Et dixi, Quid clamabo? Omnis caro herba, et omnis gratia ejus quasi flos eampi.

7. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass.

7. Exaruit herba, emarcuit flos, quia spiritus Iehovae sufflavit in co. Sane herba est populus.

8. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.

8. Arescit herba, emarcet flos. At sermo Dei nostri stabit in aeternum.

9. O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!

9. Ascende in montem excelsum, annuntiatrix Sion; attolle fortiter vocem tuam, annuntiatrix Ierusalem. Attolle, ne timeas. Die civitatibus Iuda: Ecce Deus rester.

10. Behold, the Lord GOD will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him.

10. Ecce Dominus Iehova in robore veniet; et brachium ejus sibi potens. Ecce merces ejus cure co, et opus ejus coram ipsius facie.

11. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.

11. Sicuti pastor gregem suam pascet, brachio suo colliget agnos, sinu suo portabit, foetus suaviter ducet.

12. Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?

12. Quis mensus est pugillo suo aquas, et coelos palma mensus est, et comprehendit tribus digitis pulverem terrae, et appendit montes in statera, et colles in trutina?

13. Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or, being his counsellor, hath taught him?

13. Quis erudivit Spiritum Iehovae, aut consilio eum instruxit, et eum docuit?

14. With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding?

14. A quo petlit consilium, ut eum moneret? et docuit eum semitam judicii, erudivit scientia, et viam prudentiae ostendit ei?

15. Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing.

15. En gentes quasi gutta situlae, et quasi pulvisculus trutinae reputantur; en insulas quasi rein minimam tollit.

16. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering.

16. Nec Libanus sufficeret ad incendium, nec bestiae ejus ad holocaustum.

17. All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity.

17. Omnes gentes quasi nihilum sunt corameo, et praeipso reputantur minus quam nihil, et quod non est.

18. To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?

18. Cui igitur similem fecistis Deum, aut quam similitudinem ordinabitis ei?

19. The workman melteth a graven image, and the goldsmith spreadeth it over with gold, and casteth silver chains.

19. Artifex parat sculptlie, aurifaber aurum aptat illi, et catenas argenteas (conflat) aurifaber.

20. He that is so impoverished that he hath no oblation chooseth a tree that will not rot; he seeketh unto him a cunning workman to prepare a graven image, that shall not be moved.

20. Pauper oblationi eligit lignum quod non putrescat; artificem peritum quaerit sibi qui sculptlie praeparet, ne moveatur.

21. Have ye not known? have ye not heard? hath it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth?

21. An nescitis? An non audistis? An non vobis annuntiatum est ab initio? An non edocti estis a fundamentis terrae?

22. It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in:

22. Is sedet super gyrum terrae, cujus habitatores sunt vehti locustae, extendit coelum ut cortinam; expandit, inquam, quasi tentorium, ut inhabitetur.

23. That bringeth the princes to nothing; he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity.

23. Redigit potentes in nihilum, gubernatores terrae quasi non slut.

24. Yea, they shall not be planted; yea, they shall not be sown: yea, their stock shall not take root in the earth: and he shall also blow upon them, and they shall wither, and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble.

24. Perinde ut non plantati, perinde ut non sati, perinde acsi non radix in terra stirps eorum. Etiam dum sufflat in eos arescunt, et turbo quasi stipulam aufert eos.

25. To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One.

25. Et cut assimilabitis me, ut similis sim? dicit Sanctus.

26. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth.

26. Tollite in sublime oculos vestros, et aspicite quis creaverit ea producens ad numerum exercitum eorum; omnibus nominatim acclamabit; a magnitudine virium et robore fortitudinis nullum deficiet (vel, deerit).

27. Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the LORD, and my judgment is passed over from my God?

27. Quare dices, Iacob, et loqueris Israel? Abscondita est via mea ab Iehova, eta Deo meo judicium meum transit.

28. Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding.

28. An non scivisti? An non audiisti (quod) Deus seculi sit Iehova, qui fines terrae creavit? Non laborat, nec lassitudine fatigatur; et non est investigatio intelligentiae ejus.

29. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.

29. Dot lasso virtutem, et cui nihil est virium robur suppeditat.

30. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall:

30. Fatigantur adolescentes et lassantur; juvenes cadendo cadunt.

31. But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

31. At expectantes Iehovam vires novas colligent; sustollent alas ut aquibe; current, nec fatigabuntur; ambulabunt, nec deficient.

1. *Comfort ye.* The Prophet introduces a new subject; for, leaving the people on whom no favorable impression was made either by threatenings or by admonitions, on account of their desperate wickedness, he turns to posterity, in order to declare that the people who shall be humbled under the cross will experience no want of consolation even amidst the severest distresses. And it is probable that he wrote this prophecy when the time of the captivity was at hand, that he might not at his departure from life leave the Church of God overwhehned by very grievous calamities, without the hope of restoration. Though he formerly mingled his predictions with threatenings and terrors for this purpose, yet he appears to have contemplated chiefly the benefit of those who lived at that time. What will afterwards follow will relate to the future Church, the revival of which was effected long after his death; for he will next lay down a perpetual doctrine, which must not be limited to a single period, and especially when he treats of the commencement and progress of the reign of Christ. And this prophecy must be of so much the greater importance to us, because it addresses us in direct terms; for, although it may be a spiritual application of what goes before, so as to be doctrine that is common both to the Jews and to us, yet, as he leaves the Jews of that age, and addresses posterity down to the end of the world, it

appears to belong more especially to us.

By this exhortation, therefore, the Lord intended to stir up the hearts of the godly, that they might not faint, amidst heavy calamities. First, he addresses the Jews, who were soon after to be carried into that hard captivity in which they should have neither sacrifices nor prophets, and would have been destitute of all consolation, had not the Lord relieved their miseries by these predictions. Next, he addresses all the godly that should live afterwards, or that shall yet live, to encourage their heart, even when they shall appear to be reduced very low and to be utterly ruined.

That this discourse might have greater weight, and might mere powerfully affect their minds, he represents God as raising up new prophets, whom he enjoins to soothe the sorrows of the people by friendly consolation. The general meaning is, that, when he shall have appeared to have forsaken for a time the wretched captives, the testimony of his grace will again burst forth from the darkness, and that, when gladdening prophecies shall have ceased, their proper time will come round. In order to exhibit more strongly the ground of joy, he makes use of the plural number, *Comfort ye;* by which he intimates that he will send not one or another, but a vast multitude of prophets; and this he actually accomplished, by which we see more clearly his infinite goodness and mercy.

Will say. First, it ought to be observed that the verb is in the future tense; and those commentators who render it in the present or past tense both change the words and spoil the meaning. Indircetly he points out an intermediate period, during which the people would be heavily afflicted, as if God had been silent. [104] Though even at that time God did not cease to hold out the hope of salvation by some prophets, yet, having for a long period cast them off, when they were wretchedly distressed and almost ruined, the consolation was less abundant, till it was pointed out, as it were with the finger, that they were at liberty to return. On this account the word *comfort* must be viewed as relating to a present favor; and the repetition of the word not only confirms the certainty of the prediction, but applauds its power and success, as if he had said, that in this message there will be abundant, full, and unceasing cause of joy.

Above all, we must hold by the future tense of this verb, because there is an implied contrast between that melancholy silence of which I have spoken, and the doctrine of consolation which afterwards followed. And with this prediction agrees the complaint of the Church,

"We do not see our signs; there is no longer among us a prophet or any one that knows how long." (Psalm 74:9.)

We see how she laments that she has been deprived of the best kind of comfort, because no promise is brought forward for soothing her distresses. It is as if the Prophet had said, "The Lord will not suffer you to be deprived of prophets, to comfort you amidst your severest distresses. At that time he

[104] "Comme si Dieu n'en cust rien veu." "As if God had not at all seen it."

will raise up men by whom he will send to you the message that had been long desired, and at that time also he will show that he takes care of you."

I consider the future tense, *will say,* as relating not only to the captivity in Babylon, but to the whole period of deliverance, which includes the reign of Christ. [105] To the verb *will say,* we must supply "to the prophets," whom he will appoint for that purpose; for in vain would they have spoken, if the Lord had not told them, and even put into their mouth what they should make known to others. Thus there is a mutual relation between God and the prophets," whom he will appoint for that purpose; for in vain would they have spoken, if the Lord had not told them and even put into their mouth what they should make known to others. Thus there is a mutual relation between God and the prophets. In a word, the Lord promises that the hope of salvation will be left, although the ingratitude of men deserves that this voice shall be perpetually silenced and altogether extinguished.

These words, I have said, ought not to be limited to the captivity in Babylon; for they have a very extensive meaning, and include the doctrine of the gospel, in which chiefly lies the power of "comforting." To the gospel it belongs to comfort those who are distressed and cast down, to quicken those who are slain and actually dead, to cheer the mourners, and, in short, to bring all joy and gladness; and this is also the reason why it is called "the Gospel," that is, good news, [106] Nor did it begin at the time when Christ appeared in the world, but long before, since the time when God's favor was clearly revealed, and Daniel might be said to have first raised his banner, that believers might hold themselves in readiness for returning. (Daniel 9:2.) Afterwards, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, Nehemiah, Ezra, and others, down to the coming of Christ, exhorted believers to cherish better and better hopes. Malachi, the last of them that wrote, knowing that there would be few prophets, sends the people to the law of Moses, to learn from it the will of God and its threatenings and promises. (Malachi 4:4.)

Your God. From this passage we learn what we ought chiefly to seek in the prophets, namely, to encourage the hopes of godly persons by exhibiting the sweetness of divine grace, that they may not faint under the weight of afflictions, but may boldly persevere in calling on God. But since it was difficult to be believed, he reminds them of the covenant; as if he had said that it was impossible for God ever to forget what he formerly promised to Abraham. (Genesis 17:7.) Although, therefore, the Jews by their sins had fallen from grace, yet he affirms that he is *their God,* and that they are his peculiar people, both of which depended on election; but, as even in that nation there were many reprobates, the statement implies that to believers only is this discourse strictly directed; because he silently permits unbelievers, through constant languishment, to be utterly wasted and destroyed. But to believers there is held out an invaluable comfort, that, although for a time

[105] "Qui comprend en soy le regne de Christ jusqu' a la fin du monde." "Which includes the reign of Christ till the end of the world."

[106] Evangile, c'est a dire Bonne nouvelle.

they are oppressed by grief and mourning, yet because they hope in God, who is the Father of consolation, they shall know by experience that the promises of grace, like a hidden treasure, are laid up for them, to cheer their hearts at the proper time. This is also a very high commendation of the prophetic office, that it supports believers in adversity, that they may not faint or be discouraged; and, on the other hand, this passage shews that it is a very terrible display of God's vengeance when there are no faithful teachers, from whose mouth may be heard in the Church of God the consolation that is fitted to raise up those who are cast down, and to strengthen the feeble.

2. *Speak ye according to the heart of Jerusalem.* Here God commands his servants the prophets, and lays down the message which he wishes them to deliver publicly, when believers shall be called to change their strain from mourning to joy. And yet he does not exhort and encourage them to the cheerful and courageous discharge of their office, so much as he conveys to the minds of believers an assured hope that they may patiently endure the irksomeness of delay, till the prophets appear with this glad and delightful message. To *speak to the heart* [107] is nothing else than "to speak according to the wish or sentiment of the mind;" for our heart abhors or recoils if any sad intelligence is communicated, but eagerly receives, or rather runs to meet, whatever is agreeable. Now, in consequence of the people having been apparently rejected, nothing could be more agreeable than a reconciliation [108] which should blot out all offenses. By a figure of speech in which a part is taken for the whole, *Jerusalem,* as is well known, denotes the Church.

And cry to her. The word *cry* means that the promise of this grace will be open and manifest, so as to resound in the ears of all and be understood; for if prophets only muttered or spoke indistinctly, the belief of this consolation would be doubtful or weak, but now that they publish it boldly and with open mouth, all doubts are removed.

That her warfare is accomplished. This is the desirable message, that the Lord determines to put an end to the warfare of his people. I consider {כי} *(ki)* to be used for introducing an explanation. Some think that {צבאה}, *(tzebaahh,)* which we have translated "her warfare," simply denotes "time," as if it had been said, "her time is accomplished." [109] Others think that it expresses the time of visitation, but this is incorrect; for among the Hebrews it literally denotes a time previously appointed and set apart for lawful work or labor. (Numbers 4:23.) But here unquestionably the metaphor is taken from the discharge of soldiers; for it means that the end and issue of their vexations is at hand, and that God does not wish to harass his people continually, but to set a limit to their afflictions. He therefore compares the time of the captivity in Babylon to a righteous warfare, at the end of which

[107] "Selon le coeur;" "according to the heart." Our author employs both "secundum cor" and "ad cor." — Ed.

[108] "La reconciliation avec Dieu." "The reconciliation with God."

[109] Que nons avons traduit Guerre, pour "le temps," comme s'il estoit dit Son temps est accompli.

the soldiers, having obtained an honorable discharge, will return home to enjoy peace and quietness.

That her iniquity is pardoned. This means that God is so gracious to them that he is unwilling to treat them with the utmost severity. These words, therefore, assign a reason; for, as physicians, in curing diseases, first remove the causes from which diseases arise, so does the Lord deal with us. The scourges by which he chastises us proceed from our sins; and therefore, that he may cease to strike, he must first pardon us; and consequently, he says that there will be an end of punishments, because he no longer imputes sin. Others think that {עונה} *(gnavonahh)* means "her misery," and that it denotes that her misery is ended. This meaning also is highly appropriate, and thus the Prophet will make the same announcement in two ways; for to finish her warfare, and to put an end to her miseries, mean the same thing. Yet we must hold this principle, that God ceases from inflicting punishment when he is appeased, so that pardon and the forgiveness of sins always come first in order, as the cause. But the word {נרצה} *(nirtzah)* demands, in my opinion, the former meaning; as if he had said, that God has been appeased in such a manner that, having pardoned and forgiven their sins, he is ready to enter again into a state of favor with his people.

Double for all her sins. This passage is explained in two ways. Some say that the people, having deserved a double punishment, have obtained a double favor; and others, that they have received enough of punishment, because God is unwilling to exact more. The former interpretation, though it contains an excellent and profitable doctrine, does not agree with the text, and must therefore be set aside; and it is evident that the Prophet means nothing else than that God is abundantly satisfied with the miseries which have befallen his Church. I could have wished, therefore, that they who have attacked Jerome and other supporters of this interpretation, had been more moderate; for the natural meaning belongs to this interpretation, and not to the more ingenious one, that the Lord repays double favor for their sins. The general meaning is, that God is unwilling to inflict more severe or more lengthened punishment on his people, because, through his fatherly kindness, he is in some sense displeased with the severity.

Here the word *double* denotes "large and abundant." It must not be imagined that the punishments were greater than the offenses, or equal to them; for we ought to abhor the blasphemy of those who accuse God of cruelty, as if he inflicted on men excessively severe punishment; for what punishment could be inflicted that was sufficiently severe even for the smallest offense? This must therefore relate to the mercy of God, who, by setting a limit to the chastisements, testifies that he is unwilling to punish them any more or longer, as if he were abundantly satisfied with what had gone before, though that nation deserved far severer chastisements. God sustains the character of a Father who, while he compassionates his children, is led, not without reluctance, to exercise severity, and thus willingly bends his mind to grant

forgiveness.

3. *A voice crying in the wilderness.* He follows out the subject which he had begun, and declares more explicitly that he will send to the people, though apparently ruined, ministers of consolation. At the same time he anticipates an objection which might have been brought forward. "You do indeed promise consolation, but where are the prophets? For we shall be 'in a wilderness,' and whence shall this consolation come to us?" He therefore testifies that "the wilderness" shall not hinder them from enjoying that consolation.

The wilderness is employed to denote metaphorically that desolation which then existed; though I do not deny that the Prophet alludes to the intermediate journey; [110] for the roughness of the wilderness seemed to forbid their return. He promises, therefore, that although every road were shut up, and not a chink were open, the Lord will easily cleave a path through the most impassable tracts for himself and his people.

Prepare the way of Jehovah. Some connect the words "in the wilderness" with this clause, and explain it thus, "Prepare the way of Jehovah in the wilderness." But the Prophet appears rather to represent a voice which shall gather together those who had wandered and had, as it were, been banished from the habitable globe. "Though you behold nothing but a frightful desert, yet this voice of consolation shall be heard from the mouth of the prophets." These words relate to the hard bondage which they should undergo in Babylon.

But to whom is that voice addressed? Is it to believers? No, but to Cyrus, to the Persians, and to the Medes, who held that people in captivity. Having been alienated from obedience to God, they are constrained to deliver the people; and therefore they are enjoined to "prepare and pave the way," that the people of God may be brought back to Judea; as if he had said, "Make passable what was impassable." The power and efficacy of this prediction is thus held up for our applause; for when God invests his servants with authority to command men who were cruel and addicted to plunder, and who at that time were the conquerors of Babylon, to "prepare the way" for the return of his people, he means that nothing shall hinder the fulfillment of his promise, because he will employ them all as hired servants. Hence we obtain an excellent consolation, when we see that God makes use of irreligious men for our salvation, and employs all the creatures, when the case demands it, for that end.

A highway for our God. When it is said that the way shall be prepared not for the Jews, but for God himself, we have here a remarkable proof of his love towards us; for he applies to himself what related to the salvation of his chosen people. The Lord had nothing to do with walking, and had no need of a road; but he shews that we are so closely united to him that what is done on our account he reckons to be done to himself. This mode

[110] "Au chemin d'entre Iudee et Babylone." "To the road between Judea and Babylon."

of expression is frequently employed elsewhere, as when it is said that God "went forth into battle with his anointed," (Habakkuk 3:13,) and that "he rode through the midst of Egypt," (Exodus 11:4,) and that he lifted up his standard and led his people through the wilderness. (Isaiah 63:13.)

This passage is quoted by the Evangelists, (Matthew 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4,) and applied to John the Baptist, as if these things had been foretold concerning him, and not unjustly; for he held the highest rank among the messengers and heralds of our redemption, of which the deliverance from Babylon was only a type. And, indeed, at the time when the Church arose out of her wretched and miserable condition, her mean appearance bore a stronger resemblance than the Babylonish captivity to a "wilderness;" but God wished that they should see plainly, in the wilderness in which John taught, the image and likeness of that miserably ruinous condition by which the whole beauty of the Church was injured and almost destroyed. What is here described metaphorically by the Prophet was at that time actually fulfilled; for at an exceedingly disordered and ruinous crisis John lifted up the banner of joy. True, indeed, the same voice had been previously uttered by Daniel, Zechariah, and others; but the nearer the redemption approached, the more impressively could it be proclaimed by John, who also pointed out Christ with the finger. (John 1:29.) But because, in the midst of a nation which was ignorant and almost sunk in stupidity, there were few that sincerely grieved for their ruinous condition, John sought a wilderness, that the very sight of the place might arouse careless persons to hope and desire the promised deliverance. As to his denying that he was a Prophet, (John 1:21,) this depends on the end of his calling and the substance of his doctrine; for he was not sent to discharge apart any continued office, but, as a herald, to gain an audience for Christ his Master and Lord. What is here said about removing obstructions, he applies skilfully to individuals, on this ground, that the depravity of our nature, the windings of a crooked mind, and obstinacy of heart, shut up the way of the Lord, and hinder them from preparing, by true self-denial, to yield obedience.

4. *Every valley shall be exalted.* He confirms and asserts the preceding statement; for he shews that no difficulties can prevent the Lord from delivering and restoring his Church whenever he shall think fit. These words might with propriety be rendered in the imperative mood, "Let every valley be exalted," [111] so as to be placed in immediate connection with the command which God gives by his prophets to prepare and level the way for himself; but it makes hardly any difference in the meaning. Let us be satisfied with understanding the Prophet's design, "that, although many and formidable difficulties are started to hinder the salvation of the Church, still the hand

[111] "Grotius supposes the command at the beginning of the chapter to be still continued, ('Let every valley, etc.,) and the latest German writers give the same construction of this verse, although they make a new command begin in the one preceding. The form of the following verb {,והיה (vehayah,) though not incompatible with this explanation, rather favors the strict interpretation of the future, which is, of course, on general principles to be preferred." — Alexander.

of God will be victorious and will prevail."

And every mountain and hill shall be laid low. It ought to be observed that many obstructions always arise whenever God makes provision for our deliverance, or wishes to aid the afflicted; and although his glory is more fully displayed by these obstructions, yet we suffer no loss; for we behold more clearly his wonderful power when no strength, or efforts, or contrivances of men can prevent him from gaining his object. He conducts his people through "mountains" and steep places in such a manner as if the road were perfectly level; and by the words *mountains and hills,* the Prophet undoubtedly intends to denote metaphorically obstructions of every kind; for Satan attempts in every way to hinder our salvation. When we come, therefore, to spiritual redemption, these words undoubtedly include both internal and external obstacles, — lusts and wicked desires, ambition, foolish confidence, and impatience, which retard us wonderfully, but the Lord will break them all down; for when he stretches out his hand, nothing can restrain or drive him back.

5. *And the glory of Jehovah shall be revealed.* He means that this work of redemption will be splendid, so that the Lord will shew that he is the Author of it, and will illustriously display his majesty and power. This, indeed, is very openly manifested in all places and in all events, but he promises that he will do this especially in protecting and delivering his Church, and not without good reason; for the deliverance of the Church, from its commencement down to the coming of Christ, might be called a renewal of the world. [112] And because the power of God, which he had formerly been accustomed to display, was almost extinguished, so that scarcely the slightest traces were discernible, as it is said in the Psalm, "We do not see our signs," (Psalm 74:9;) this was a very seasonable warning, that a new and striking demonstration is promised, by which they may perceive that God has in his power various methods of giving relief, even when he conceals them for a time.

And all flesh shall see. He now heightens the miracle by an additional circumstance, that it will be known not only in Judea, but in foreign and distant countries; for by these words "All flesh shall see," he means that there will be no nations that do not see clearly that the return of the people is a heavenly work, and that God did not speak in vain by the Prophet. Thus he censures the unbelief of men, who never rely on the promises of God, and who treat as fables whatever is said by the prophets, till by beholding the actual fact they are constrained to yield.

That the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken. Here we are taught what is the true method of correcting our unbelief; that is, to be employed in meditating on the promises of God, and to have our faith strengthened by all the proofs of them which he exhibits. Thus it is proper to join doctrine with experience;

[112] "Un renonvellement incroyable, ou seconde creation du monde." "An incredible renewal or second creation of the world."

for since the sight of God's works would produce little impression on us, he first enlightens us by the torch of his word, and next seals the truth of it by the actual accomplishment.

6. *The voice said, Cry.* He now describes a different "voice" from that of which he formerly spoke; for hitherto he had spoken about the "voice" of the prophets, but now he means the "voice" of God himself commanding the prophets to *cry.* Although the voice of the prophets is also the voice of God, whose instruments they are, (for they do not speak of themselves,) (2 Peter 1:20, 21,) yet this distinction is necessary, that we may know when the Lord commands, and when the prophets and ministers execute his commandments. There is also a beautiful comparison between the two "voices," that we may receive with as much reverence what the prophets utter as if God himself thundered from heaven; for they speak only by his mouth, and repeat as ambassadors what he has commissioned them to declare. Besides, this preface gives notice that the Prophet is about to speak of something highly important; for, although he everywhere testifies that he faithfully delivers from hand to hand what he has received from God, yet, in order to obtain closer attention, he states that the voice of God has expressly enjoined the mode of speaking which he shall employ. Such is also the import of the word *Cry,* as if he had said that he must proclaim this commandment in a clear and loud voice, that it may make the deeper impression.

And I said, What shall I cry? The addition of this question has great weight; for the Prophet means that he does not break forth at random, and boast of what he appeared to have heard in a confused manner; but that he received clear and undoubted instruction, after having waited for it with composure. Besides, from the fact itself we may learn that there is nothing here that is superfluous, because two chief points of heavenly doctrine were to be briefly handled; that, although man is smoke and vanity, and all his excellence is deceitful and fading, yet believers have the best reason for glorying, because they seek salvation not from themselves; and that, although they are strangers on the earth, (Hebrews 11:13,) yet they possess heavenly happiness, because God unites himself to them by his word; for by renouncing ourselves we are led to desire the grace of God. The Prophet knew, indeed, what he ought to say; but by this question he intended to make a stronger impression on their minds, in order to shew that he and all the other servants of God are constrained by necessity to utter this sentiment, and that they cannot begin to teach in any other manner, though they should put a hundred questions and inquiries; as indeed they will gain nothing by choosing to adopt any other method.

As to the word *Cry,* I have no objection to view it as denoting both boldness and clearness; because prophets ought not to mutter in an obscure manner, but to pronounce their message with a distinct voice, and to utter boldly and with open mouth whatever they have been commanded to declare. Let every one, therefore, who is called to this office constantly remember

and believe, that he ought to meet difficulties of every sort with unshaken boldness, such as was always manifested both by prophets and by apostles.

"Wo to me," says Paul, "if I do not preach the gospel; for necessity is laid on me."*

*(1 Corinthians 9:16.)

All flesh is grass. First, it ought to be observed, that he does not speak merely of the frailty of human life, but extends the discourse farther, so as to reduce to nothing all the excellence which men think that they possess. David indeed compares this life to grass, (Psalm 103:15,) because it is fading and transitory; but the context shews that the Prophet does not speak only of the outward man, but includes the gifts of the mind, of which men are exceedingly proud, such as prudence, courage, acuteness, judgment, skill in the transactions of business, in which they think that they excel other animals; and this is more fully expressed by that which immediately follows

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All the grace of it. Some translate {חסדו} *(chasdo)* "his glory;" others, "his kindness;" but I have preferred the word "grace," by which I mean everything that procures honor and esteem to men. Yet a passive signification may also be admitted; as if the Prophet had said, that all that is excellent and worthy of applause among men is the absolute kindness of God. Thus David calls God "the God of his kindness," (Psalm 59:10, 17,) because he acknowledges him to be the author of all blessings, and ascribes it to his grace that he has obtained them so largely and abundantly. It is indeed certain that {חסד} *(chesed)* here denotes all that is naturally most highly valued among men, and that the Prophet condemns it for vanity, because there is an implied contrast between the ordinary nature of mankind and the grace of regeneration.

Some commentators refer this to the Assyrians, as if the Prophet, by extenuating their power and wealth, and industry and exertions, or rather by treating these as they had no existence, freed the minds of the Jews from terror. They bring out the meaning in this manner, "If you are terrified at the strength of men, remember that they are flesh, which quickly gives way through its own weakness. But their error is soon afterwards refuted by the context, in which the Prophet expressly applies it to the Jews themselves. We ought carefully to observe that man, with his faculties, on account of which he is accustomed to value himself so highly, is wholly compared to *a flower.* All men are fully convinced of the frailty of human life, and on this subject heathen writers have argued at great length; but it is far more difficult to root out the confidence which men entertain through a false opinion of their wisdom; for, if they imagine that they have either knowledge or industry beyond others, they think that they have a right to glory in them. But he shews that in man there is nothing so excellent as not to fade quickly and perish.

As the flower of the field. The Prophet seems, as if in mockery, to add a

sort of correction; for *a flower* is something more than *grass.* It is, therefore, an acknowledgment, that, although men have some shining qualities, like flowers in the fields, yet the beauty and lustre quickly vanish and pass away, so that it is useless for them to flatter or applaud themselves on account of this idle and deceitful splendor.

7. *The grass is withered.* This might be understood to relate to the beauty of the fields, which is spoiled by a single gust of wind, as it is said, (Psalm 103:16,) "As soon as the wind passeth over it, it is gone;" for we know that the wind is called "the Spirit of God" in other passages. But I am more inclined to think that the metaphor is adapted to the present subject; for otherwise the application of it would be somewhat obscure. The Prophet therefore explains what object he has in view, by saying that men, with all their glory, are nothing else than grass; theft is, because *the Spirit of God* will quickly carry them away by a single breath.

Because the Spirit of Jehovah hath blown upon it. The meaning may be thus explained, "However illustrious are the gifts with which men are endowed, yet as soon as the Spirit of God shall blow upon them, they shall feel that they are nothing." For the false confidence with which they intoxicate themselves springs from this source, that they do not appear before God, but, in order to indulge freely in flattering themselves, creep into places of concealment. That they may no longer deceive themselves by a foolish delight in falsehood, the Prophet drags them into the presence of God, and admits that apparently they flourish, when they have been withdrawn from God; but as soon as the Lord has breathed upon them, all their strength and beauty perish and decay.

But it may be thought that he assigns to "the Spirit of God" an office which is greatly at variance with his nature; for it belongs to him "to renew by his power the face of the earth." (Psalm 104:30.) On the other hand, if the Lord withdraw his Spirit, all is reduced to nothing. Here Isaiah asserts what is exceedingly different, and appears to contradict David. But there is no absurdity in saying that all things are renewed by the power of the Spirit, and again, that what formerly appeared to be something is reduced to nothing; for we are nothing but in God, and, in order that we may begin to be something in him, we must first be convinced, and made thoroughly to know, that we are vanity. Therefore does the Lord breathe upon us, that we may know that of ourselves we are nothing.

Surely the people is grass. The Prophet added this, that all might know that he was not speaking of foreigners, but of that people which gloried in the name of God; for the Jews might have thought that they were more excellent, and held a higher rank than other men, and that on this account they ought to be exempted from the common lot. He therefore addresses theta expressly and by name, that they may not claim anything for themselves above others; as if he had said, that they would act wisely if, through a conviction of their poverty, they should cast away all confidence in themselves. In a word,

the Prophet, after having mentioned consolation, shews in what way men must be prepared to receive it; for they are not capable of it till they have formerly been reduced to nothing. Our hardness must therefore be softened, our haughtiness must be east down and laid low, our boasting must be put to shame, and our hearts must be subdued and humbled, if we wish to receive with any advantage the consolations which the prophets bring to us by the command of God.

8. *The grass withereth.* This repetition is again added for the purpose of bringing to nought the glory of the flesh, but at the same time contains within itself a highly valuable consolation, that God, when he has cast down his people, immediately raises up and restores them. The context therefore runs thus: "The grass indeed withereth and perisheth, but the word of the Lord endureth for ever." After having learned how empty and destitute we are of all blessings, how transitory and fading is the glory of the flesh, the only consolation left for us, that we may be raised up by the word of the Lord, as by an outstretched hand, is, that we are frail and fading, but that the word of the Lord is durable and eternal, and, in a word, that the life which we need is offered to us from another quarter.

But the word of our God shall stand for ever. This passage comprehends the whole Gospel in few words; for it consists of an acknowledgment of our misery, poverty, and emptiness, that, being sincerely humbled, we may fly to God, by whom alone we shall be perfectly restored. Let not men therefore faint or be discouraged by the knowledge of their nakedness and emptiness; for the eternal word is exhibited to them by which they may be abundantly supported and upheld. We are likewise taught that we ought not to seek consolation from any other source than from eternity, which ought not to be sought anywhere else than in God; since nothing that is firm or durable will be found on the earth. Nothing is more foolish than to rest satisfied with the present state, which we see to be fleeting; and every man is mistaken who hopes to be able to obtain perfect happiness till he has ascended to God, whom the Scripture calls eternal, in order that we may know that life flows to us from him; and indeed he adopts us to be his children on this condition, to make us partakers of his immortality.

But this would be of no avail, if the manner of seeking him were not pointed out; and therefore he exhibits *the word,* from which we must not in any respect turn aside; for if we make the smallest departure from it, we shall be involved in strange labyrinths, and shall find no way of extricating ourselves. Now, the word is called eternal, not merely in itself, but in us; and this ought to be particularly observed, because otherwise we could obtain no consolation. And thus Peter, a faithful expounder of this passage, applies it to us, when he says that "we are regenerated by this incorruptible seed, that is," says he, "by the word which is preached." (1 Peter 1:23, 25.) Hence we infer, what I mentioned a little before, that life is prepared for the dead who shall come thirsting to the fountain that is exhibited to them; for the power

which is hid in God is revealed to us by the word.

9. *Ascend on the high mountain.* He proceeds with the same subject; for the Lord, having formerly promised that he would give prophets who should soothe the grief and fear of the people by promises, now commands that this consolation shall be more widely spread; because it is his pleasure to diffuse his grace throughout the whole of Judea.

Lift up thy voice aloud, O Jerusalem. Formerly he had given to *Jerusalem,* and *Zion* the hope of this joyful message; now he commands that the same voice shall be spread and shall be heard through other cities, and, for this reason, gives orders that the loud voice shall be lifted up, and proclaimed from a lofty place. Although by the words "Zion" and "Jerusalem" he means the same thing, yet the repetition is emphatic; for he shews that one city excels all other cities, for no other reason than because God hath chosen it to be his sanctuary.

That bringest tidings. He gives to the city this appellation, because there the priests and Levites were instructed according to the injunctions of the Law, that they might be the teachers of the whole people, and by their labors might spread the doctrine of salvation. (Malachi 2:7.) Yet we ought carefully to observe this commendation which God bestows on his Church, that it may not be without a clear mark of distinction; for an assembly in which the preaching of heavenly doctrine is not heard does not deserve to be reckoned a Church. In this sense also, Paul calls it (1 Timothy 3:15) "the pillar and foundation of the truth;" for although God might have governed us by himself, and without the agency of men, yet he has assigned this office to his Church, and has committed to it the invaluable treasure of his Word. For the same reason it will be called in another passage, "the mother of all believers." (Isaiah 54:1; Galatians 4:26.) Hence it follows that nothing is more absurd and wicked than for dumb idols to boast of the name of the Church, as is done in Popery.

We are likewise taught, that the Church has not been instructed by God, in order that she may keep her knowledge hidden within herself, but that she may publish what she has learned. Besides, he commands that grace shall be freely and boldly proclaimed, that prophets and teachers may not speak with timidity, as if it were a doubtful matter, but may shew that they are fully convinced of the certainty of those things which they promise, because they know well that "God, who cannot lie," (Titus 1:2,) is the Author of them. He enjoins the witnesses of his grace to proceed from Zion, that they may fill with joy the whole of Judea.

Behold your *God!* This expression includes the sum of our happiness, which consists solely in the presence of God. It brings along with it an abundance of all blessings; and if we are destitute of it, we must be utterly miserable and wretched; and although blessings of every kind are richly enjoyed by us, yet if we are estranged from God, everything must tend to our destruction. From this circumstance it ought also to be remarked, that

nothing is more opposite to faith than to estimate by the present appearances of things what God declares by his prophets, who at that time must have been struck dumb, had they not raised their views above the world, and thus, through the power of unshaken boldness and perseverance, dared to draw others along with them, that they might cherish good hopes when matters were at the worst. And indeed when wicked men and wickedness prevail, the greater the terror that is spread all around, and the greater the seeming wretchedness of the Church, the more ought we to extol the grace of God, and to point out his presence to believers. [113]

10. *Behold, the Lord Jehovah.* He adorns this short sentence by many words, because some explanation was needed; and he again uses the word *Behold* for the sake of certainty, in order to impart greater confidence to the hearts of good men. Thus he shews more clearly how great advantage they derive from the presence of God. And first, he says, *that he will come with strength,* and that strength not unemployed, but accompanied by such an effect as we shall perceive.

And his arm *shall be powerful to him* [114] {לו} *(lo),* which we have translated to *him,* is translated by others *of himself;* or, perhaps, it will be thought preferable to translate it, "He is powerful, or reigns *for himself."* The meaning is, that God is sufficient for himself, and does not need the assistance of any one.

Behold, his reward is with him, and his work before his face. By the repetition of the words "reward" and "work," he states more clearly what has been already expressed; for it is very customary with Hebrew writers to express the same thing in two different ways. "Reward" does not here denote what is due to merits, but the justice of God, by which he testifies that he is a rewarder to all who truly and sincerely call upon him. (Hebrews 11:6.) That this is the signification of the word {שכר} *(sachar)* is known to all who are moderately acquainted with the Hebrew language. The meaning may be thus summed up: "God will not come to be beheld by us as unemployed, but to display his power, and to make us feel it;" and thus, instead of the word "work," the word "effect" would not be inapplicable. Many persons attempt an ingenious exposition of these words, and enter into childish discussion about the words "work" and "reward," as if the "work" were a merit on which a "reward" is bestowed. But nothing was farther from the view of the Prophet; for he repeats the same thing, as we have already said, and declares the result of the coming of the Lord, from which believers will derive the highest advantage.

11. *As a shepherd.* In this verse he declares what is the nature of that work of the Lord; for since he works in various and, indeed, in innumerable

[113] "A ceux qui la veulent contempler en foy." "To those who wish to behold it by faith."

[114] "With strong (hand), or, against the strong." — Eng. Ver. "Against the strong one, that is, against (foreign) nations to punish them." — Jarchi. Vitringa gives the same version, though with a different explanation, and quotes the authorities of Junius and Piscator, while he states that all the ancient interpreters, among whom he enumerates the Septuagint, Jerome, and the Chaldee Paraphrast, render the phrase with strength. — Ed.

ways, the hearer might have been kept in suspense as to the work which God intended to accomplish; and thus the general doctrine would have been less efficacious in exciting hope. Though he does not describe every part, yet he states in a few words that God has determined to protect and guard his Church. On this account he compares him to "a shepherd;" and under this designation he expresses his infinite love towards us, when he does not refuse to stoop so low as to perform towards us the office of "a shepherd." In other passages, and even a little before, (Isaiah 34:2, etc.,) he described himself as armed with terrible power for the defense of his people, and a little after this he repeats the same statement; but here he ascribes to him a more amiable character, that believers may sweetly repose under his protection.

He will feed his flock. Now, although by the word "flock" he describes an elect people, whom he had undertaken to govern, yet we are reminded that God will be a shepherd to none but to those who, in modesty and gentleness, shall imitate the sheep and lambs. For this reason we ought to observe the character of the flock; for he does not choose to feed savage beasts, but lambs. We must therefore lay aside our fierceness, and permit ourselves to be tamed, if we wish to be gathered into the fold of which God promises that he will be the guardian.

He will carry them in his bosom. These words describe God's wonderful condescension; for not only is he actuated by a general feeling of regard to his whole flock, but, in proportion to the weakness of any one sheep, he shews his carefulness in watching, his gentleness in handling, and his patience in leading it. Here he leaves out nothing that belongs to the office of a good shepherd; for the shepherd ought to observe every sheep, so as to treat it according to its capacity; and especially they ought to be supported, if they are exceedingly weak. In a word, God will be mild, kind, gentle, and compassionate, so that he will not drive the weak harder than they are able to bear.

12. *Who hath measured?* After having spoken of God's friendly care in defending his people, he now proclaims his power, and bestows upon it all possible commendations, which, however, would produce less impression upon us, if we did not attend to the Prophet's design. At first sight, ignorant readers would think that the Prophet crowds together unfinished sentences, which would be absurd. But if we look at his object, he adorns the power of God by a seasonable and elegant discourse, which is a true support of our faith, that we may not hesitate to believe that he will do what he has promised. Not without reason does Paul say that Abraham did not hesitate, because he believed that God who had promised was able to perform what he had said. (Romans 4:20, 21.) In the same sense also he testifies of himself in another passage,

"I know whom I have believed; God is able to keep what I have committed to him."
(2 Timothy 1:12.)

Such is also the import of those words of Christ,

"My Father who gave you to me is greater than all."

(John 10:29.)

Since, therefore, we ought continually to strive against distrust, and since Satan attacks us by various contrivances, it is of great importance that the promises of God should be believed by us, to give to his power the praise which it deserves. Now, because the restoration of the people was beyond belief, it was necessary that godly minds should he raised above the world, that they might not view the grace of God as limited to human means.

We see that the Prophet does not merely teach that God is the Creator of heaven and earth, but applies to the present subject all that he relates concerning God's infinite power; and in like manner it is fitted for our guidance. When any adversity befalls us, our salvation is hidden, and, as if a cloud had come between, the power of God is concealed; we are held in astonishment, as if the Lord had forsaken and overlooked us. Let us not, therefore, think that the Prophet speaks of some ordinary matter; for if this conviction of the power of God were deeply seated in our hearts, we would not be so much alarmed, and would not be disturbed by any calamity whatever. On this power, as we have said, Abraham leaned, that he might cordially embrace what was otherwise incredible; and, accordingly, Paul affirms (Romans 4:18) that "he hoped against hope;" for he believed that God was able to do what he had said, and did not waver or stagger in his mind. We are thus taught to raise our eyes above this world, that we may not judge by outward appearances, but may believe that what God hath spoken will come to pass; because all things are at his disposal.

While this conviction is necessary for all, I have said that the Jews had very great need of it; for they were pressed hard by very powerful enemies, they had no means of escape and no hope of freedom, and nothing was to be seen on every hand but a large and frightful wilderness. In vain, therefore, would consolation have been offered to them, had they not, at the suggestion of the Prophet, raised their minds to heaven, and, disregarding the appearances of things, fixed their whole heart on the power of God.

When he names "measures," which are used by men in very small matters, he accommodates himself to our ignorance; for thus does the Lord often prattle with us, and borrow comparisons from matters that are familiar to us, when he speaks of his majesty; that our ignorant and limited minds may better understand his greatness and excellence. Away, then, with all gross conceptions of God; for his greatness far exceeds all creatures, so that heaven, and earth, and sea, and all that they contain, however vast may be their extent, yet in comparison of him are nothing.

13. *Who instructed the Spirit of Jehovah?* What the Prophet had formerly taught concerning the Lord's goodness and power he now adds concerning his wisdom. And we ought to observe the connection; for, us carnal sense wickedly limits the power of God to human means, so it improperly

subjects his inscrutable counsel to human reasonings. Till God be exalted above all creatures, many difficulties present themselves to interrupt the course of his works; and, therefore, if we form a judgment according to our own opinion, various scruples will immediately arise. Thus, whenever we do not see how God will do this or that, we doubt if it will take place; because what surpasses our reason appears to be impossible. Consequently, as we ought to contrast the power of God with our weakness, so our insolence ought to be repressed by his incomparable, wisdom.

By inquiring who guided or directed the Spirit of God, he means that God had no need of a teacher, to go before and inform him about things unknown. *Spirit* here denotes reason, judgment, or understanding; for he borrows a comparison from the nature of men, that he may more fully accommodate himself to them; and I do not think that this ought to be understood as denoting the essential Spirit of God.

14. *From whom took he counsel?* The Prophet expresses the same thing in many ways; that we may know that nothing is more foolish than man, [115] when he ventures to lift himself up into heaven, to examine or judge by his own ability the works of God. In these words, therefore, Isaiah intended to repress more and more the insolence and rashness of men. Paul quotes this proof for the same purpose, to deter us from judging of the unsearchable counsel of God; for God does not wish us to inquire concerning his wisdom but in a sober and becoming manner. (Romans 11:34.) There is one difference, that Paul affirms that the spiritual mystery of the gospel cannot be fathomed by the human understanding, while the Prophet pronounces a commendation, in general terms, on the providence of God. But on both points we ought to learn humility, and to bring all our senses captive to obedience. All the reason or understanding that we have is mere darkness, till we have been enlightened by Christ.

15. *Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket.* If we wish to understand the Prophet's meaning, and to read these words with advantage, we must (as I remarked a little before) understand his design. He does not celebrate the greatness of God in a detached manner, but extols it with the utmost possible adaptation to the present subject, that Israelites may know that this shield alone is sufficient to protect them, and that they will have no reason to dread the efforts, or rage, or violence of the world, if God be reconciled to them, and that they may thus learn to betake themselves to God's protection; for if they were not fully convinced of this, there would arise at every moment various causes of despair. Isaiah thus continues the subject, when he says that all nations and peoples are nothing when compared with God; for, by simply breathing on them, he will scatter like *small dust* all the inhabitants of the earth. In consequence of our being excessively prone and foolishly ingenious in devising reasons of distrust, we imagine that everything that

[115] "Que l'homme est plus beste que los bestes mesmes." "That man is more a beast than the beasts themselves."

Satan does for the purpose of hindering our salvation blocks up the path of God. For the purpose of correcting this error, the Prophet declares that all the creatures are nothing before God, and that all the nations resemble small and inconsiderable drops of water. Hence we infer that nothing can be more contrary to reason than to exalt creatures for the sake of diminishing the power of God, which is high above all, and ought to be so acknowledged.

16. *And Lebanon would not be sufficient.* That is, "If we must sacrifice to God according to what he deserves, neither the whole of Lebanon, nor the beasts that graze upon it, would be sufficient for a sacrifice." By various forms of expression he dwells largely on this power of God, that men, being convinced of it, may care nothing about creatures and all their might. Yet the Prophet appears to speak expressly of the worship of God, in order to lead readers to cherish deeper reverence for him; as if he had said, "Will you dare to measure by your own judgment the power of God, whom you will not be prepared, for worshipping aright, even though you should amass all the beasts and all the wood that are on Lebanon?" Hence some infer that no man can entitle himself to the favor of God by sacrifices. This, indeed, is true; but we ought, as has been already said, to consider the design of the Prophet, who, for the purpose of encouraging the Jews to cherish stronger confidence, shews that in comparison of God all things are nothing.

17. *All nations.* He repeats what he had said, that it is in the power and at the disposal of God to destroy "all nations," whenever he shall think proper; and that, even while they remain in their present condition, they are reckoned as nothing before him. But it may be thought absurd for him to say, that "the nations are nothing," since God created them, that they might be something. I reply, this is said by comparison; for the depravity of the human mind is such that it obscures the divine majesty, and places above it those things which ought to have been subject to God; and, therefore, when we come to that contest, we may boldly declare that everything that is compared with God is worthless. Nor does Isaiah speak merely about the nature of men, such as it was created by God; but his aim is to abase and restrain their pride, when they venture to exalt themselves against God. We know that we cannot subsist but in God, in whom alone, as Paul declares, "we live, and move, and are." (Acts 17:28.) Nothing is more vain than man; and, as David says,

"If he be laid in the balance with vanity, he will be found to be even lighter than vanity." (Psalm 62:9.)

In the same manner does Isaiah affirm that "the nations" are not only "nothing," but "less than nothing." in order to exhibit more fully their feebleness and vanity. [116]

18. *To whom then have ye likened God?* The Jews were in great danger from another temptation; for there was reason to believe that the Assyrians

[116] The ambiguous use of the word "vanity," and of the corresponding term in the Latin language, "vanitas," is avoided by our author's version; "and in comparison of him they are reckoned less than nothing, and what is not." — Ed.

and Babylonians would not have obtained so many victories without their assistance; and hence they might naturally conclude, "Of what avail is it to us to have a peculiar manner of worshipping God which differs from other nations; for our enemies fight under the favor and protection of heaven, while we are not cheered by any assistance from the God whom we worship?" Neither can there be any doubt, that the captives were taunted by unbelievers, as is evident from other passages. (Psalm 137:3; Lamentations 2:15.) That true religion may not be ruined among the Jews on account of the calamity which they had sustained, God rises up, and proclaims that a grievous injury is done to him, if believers, discouraged by adversity, turn aside to the idols and superstitions of the Gentiles. Thus he confirms them in the faith of the promises, that they may not sink under the weight of the punishments which they endure.

The Prophet, as we formerly suggested, does not address merely the men of his own age, but posterity, who would have a still severer contest with the mockeries of the nations whose captives they were, and likewise with bad examples and customs; for when, in consequence of being mingled with heathen nations, they daily beheld many corruptions of piety, it was more difficult for them steadily to persevere. That they might not entertain any foolish notion that high prosperity attended the worshippers of false gods, the Prophet meets this error, and reminds them that God, whom they and their fathers worshipped, ought not to be compared with the gods of the Gentiles; for these were made by men, and were composed of gold or silver, wood or stone; but God created all things; and therefore that the highest injury is done to God, not only by comparing his majesty with things of no value, but even by not, placing him far above all the angels and everything that is reckoned divine.

When Paul employs this passage (Acts 17:29) as a proof against idolaters, or at least quotes the words of the Prophet, he does not wrest them from their true meaning. He infers, indeed, from them that to frame any image of God is exceedingly wicked, while the Prophet, in guarding the Jews against distrust, at the same time condemns the superstitions of the Gentiles, and declares that it is inconsistent with the nature of God to be represented by painting or by any kind of likeness. This shews clearly that Paul's doctrine fully agrees with it; for the Prophet, after having shewn that the power of God is infinite, since he holds all things in his fist, at length concludes, *"To whom then will ye liken me?* for no image that is formed will have any likeness or resemblance to me."

Or, what resemblance will you appoint to him? This is a useful doctrine, and worthy of observation; for were there nothing more than this single passage, it would be perfectly sufficient for refuting the inventions by which Papists deceive themselves, when they think that they have a right to represent God by outward figures. The Prophet declares that it is impossible to frame out of dead matter an image which shall have any resemblance to

the glory of God. He openly rejects idols, and does not even speak of the worship of them, but affirms that to manufacture and set them up before God is wicked and abominable. The Scripture is full of such proofs. Moses warned a people prone to this vice,

"Thou sawest no image or shape in the mountain, thou only heardest a voice. See then and beware that thou be not led astray so as to frame for thyself any image."
(Deuteronomy 4:12, 15.)

In order to know God, therefore, we must not frame a likeness of him according to our own fancy, but we must betake ourselves to the Word, in which his lively image is exhibited to us. Satisfied with that communication, let us not attempt anything else of our own. Other ways and methods, such as idols and images, teach us vanity and falsehood, and not truth, as Jeremiah beautifully says, "The wood is the instruction of vanities," (Jeremiah 10:8,) and Habakkuk, "His graven image is falsehood." (Habakkuk 2:18.) When the Lord sometimes compares himself to a lion, a bear, a man, or other objects, this has nothing to do with images, as the Papists imagine, but by those metaphors either the kindness and mercy of God, or his wroth and displeasure, and other things of the same nature, are expressed; for God cannot reveal himself to us in any other way than by a comparison with things which we know. In short, if it were lawful to frame or set up an image of God, that would be a point of resemblance to the gods of the Gentiles, and this declaration of the Prophet could not be maintained.

19. *The carver prepares a graven image.* As public opinion has great force, and everything that pleases the multitude passes for a law, the Prophet fortifies believers against this error. These words therefore convey an anticipation, that the Jews may not be terrified when they see the Gentiles laboring with all their might to make idols, for in this way they deceive and ensnare each other. But he attacks the madness of the whole world, [117] on this ground, that all are impelled by such outrageous zeal to the practice of superstition, and every man is his own instructor in the formation of idols.

20. *The poor chooseth for his offering wood that will not rot.* He concludes that no class of men is free from that crime, that the rich and poor alike are guilty and condemned; for the rich make their gods of gold or silver, and the poor of wood which they had selected. Hence he shews that all men are carried away by strange madness, and that even though they have not the means, still they desire to have something excellent for the worship of their gods. Men wish to enjoy the presence of God, and this is the beginning and source of idolatry; for God is not present with us by an idol, but by his word and by the power of his Spirit; and although he holds out to us in the sacraments an image both of his grace and of spiritual blessings, yet this is done with no other intention than to lead us upwards to himself. Yet the

[117] "Il s'esleve d'une saincte colere alencontre de la folie desesperee des hommes." "He rises in holy wrath against the desperate folly of men."

Prophet censures the folly of men, who are so blind as to labor with excessive industry and ingenuity in highly adorning their idols.

21. *Do ye not know?* After having ridiculed the stupidity and madness of the Gentiles, the Prophet turns to the Jews; for we are all prone to superstition, and thus we easily fall into it when any example is placed before our eyes. In consequence of mixing with the Babylonians during their captivity, the Jews were constrained to behold daily the basest examples of idolatry, and might be led away to wicked imitation. Isaiah therefore anticipates this at an early period, and warns them not to be carried away by the sight of such things.

He asks, "Have they not been taught, and have they not learned who is God?" The greater part of commentators think that all the questions here put are a repetition of the same truth, namely, that the creation of the world shews clearly that nothing can be more inconsistent than to seek God in wood and stone, silver and gold. But we may infer from the context that there are two clauses. Had he proceeded in his expostulation with the Gentiles, he would have brought forward no other witnesses than heaven and earth. But because he addresses the Jews who had been plainly taught by the Law, he brings forward direct arguments to refute them, drawn both from the order of nature and from the voice of God. And, first, he puts the question in general terms, "Do ye not know?" Next, he adds two methods by which they ought to have distinguished between the true God and the false gods. The former is drawn from the hearing of the Word, and therefore he expressly says, "Hath it not been told you? Have ye not heard?"

The latter method is borrowed from that magnificent theatre [118] in which the glory of God shines above and below. If the discourse had been addressed to foreigners and heathens, he would have been satisfied with this second demonstration, as we see that Paul also was; for, having to do with the inhabitants of Lystra, to whom no knowledge of heavenly doctrine had been conveyed, he employs none but natural arguments, that "God, by giving rain and sunshine, did not leave himself ({ἀμάρτυρον}) without witness." (Acts 14:17.) But when the Prophet spoke to the Jews about true godliness, it would have been improper for him to pass by the Law, which rendered them doubly inexcusable if, by neglecting it, they profaned themselves with unbelievers; for they had been convinced not only by the sight of their eyes, but also by the hearing of their ears, which God beat incessantly by the preaching of his Law. Since, therefore, from their mother's womb they had sucked along with the milk the true knowledge of God, and had been taught by their fathers through a long succession of generations, the Prophet justly argues that they will be exceedingly ungrateful and wicked, if such assistance produce no good effect upon them.

Hath it not been told you from the beginning? The phrase, *from the beginning,* or "long ago," conveys the idea that not only had they been educated

[118] "De ce beau theater du monde." "From that beautiful theater of the world."

from childhood in the pure worship of God, but during a succession of ages there had been largely enjoyed by that nation a doctrine which would not suffer them to go astray, provided that they were attentive; as if he had said, "Ye have not any new God, but the same God who revealed himself from the beginning to Abraham, Moses, and the rest of the fathers." And indeed it yields no small confirmation, that the doctrine which had been continued among believers during so many ages must have been ancient. Not that antiquity alone is sufficient for establishing the certainty of faith, (for, on the contrary, the Gentiles might easily have objected, that their superstitions were not less ancient,) but since "from the beginning" the authority of the Law had been abundantly ratified, and God had testified that it came from him, long experience added no small confirmation, when they knew that their ancestors had delivered to posterity a form of religion which they could not throw away without receiving the stamp of base apostasy. Such a commencement, therefore, and such progress quickly remove all doubt. It is one and the same faith that has been held by us and by our fathers, for they and we have acknowledged the same God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The same word, the same promises, and the same end, have been exhibited to all believers.

From the foundations of the earth. This is figurative language, in which a part is taken for the whole; for a part of the world is put; for the whole world. God has exhibited this world as a mirror to men, that by beholding it they may acknowledge his majesty, so that it is a lively image of invisible things, as Paul explains at great length in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. Their ignorance is therefore "without excuse;" for they cannot allege that they do not know God who has revealed himself in so many ways. (Romans 1:20.) And indeed men sin more through insolence and pride than through ignorance; for they despise God who manifests himself openly and speaks plainly, and their attention is occupied with creatures, and with the most trifling matters. Has such contempt any title to be excused? Do they not deserve to be blinded, and to adore their own inventions instead of God, which we see has happened to almost all? Such punishment is unquestionably just and due to so great pride. And if to that knowledge which we obtain through the creatures there be likewise added the doctrine of the word, we are much less excusable. Isaiah has therefore joined both kinds of knowledge, in order to shew that the Jews ought to be doubly condemned, if they did not place confidence in God, after having received instruction concerning his power and goodness.

22. *It is he that sitteth.* He pursues the same subject, though in a different manner, and extols the glory and power of God. Why he does so we have already in some measure explained. It is because we are so prone to distrust, that the very smallest occasion makes us waver; and therefore the Prophet is constrained to repeat the same thing in many ways, that he may keep our weak and inconstant hearts in the exercise of confidence in God. Formerly

he spoke of the creation of the world, but now he comes to the continual government of it; for God did not only for a single moment exert his power for creating the world, but he manifests his power not less efficaciously in preserving it. And this is worthy of observation; for our minds would be little impressed by knowing that God is the creator of the world, if his hand were not continually stretched out for upholding it in existence. By the word *sitteth* the Prophet means, that the earth does not remain firmly and permanently in its place any further than as it is upheld by the power of God; for "sitting" is a metaphorical term which denotes "government."

The inhabitants of which are as locusts. By comparing the inhabitants of the earth to *locusts,* he reminds us that God cannot be confined within such narrow boundaries, because "even the heavens (1 Kings 8:27) do not contain him;" that we may learn, whenever we mention God, to conceive nothing earthly or human as belonging to his incomprehensible glory. Besides, this metaphor shews how ridiculous is the blindness of men when they claim anything for themselves; for they gain by their boastings just as much as if some small creatures, such as locusts, would elevate themselves by leaping; but they must immediately fall back on the earth.

Spreadeth it out as a tent. David also employs the same form of expression, (Psalm 104:2,) and both speak of the aspect and spreading out of the heavens with respect to us; for they do not mean that God spreads out the heavens, that he may dwell in them, but rather that there may be given to us a place of habitation under them; for while the earth sustains, the heavens cover us, so that we have a dwelling close and covered on all sides.

But it may be thought that these metaphors detract greatly from the dignity of the subject of which the Prophet discourses, while his object is to commend and exalt it to the utmost of his power. What is a *curtain?* What is a *tent?* I reply, these metaphors tend nevertheless to exalt the *subject;* for it is as if he had said, "that it is as easy for God to spread out heaven, as for a man to spread out a curtain." And he leaves to every person to consider how great is the difference between heaven and a curtain, and what is their size, which any person may easily understand. Lastly, there is an implied contrast between tabernacles or houses [119] which men are long, and laboriously, and at great expense employed in building, and yet which hardly rise to a hundred feet, and the immeasurable height of the heavens spread out by an instantaneous act of the will of God, which makes abundantly manifest how great and how excellent a workman he is.

23. *He bringeth the mighty to nothing.* He proceeds in extolling the providence of God, by which he governs the whole world, but more especially mankind. Already and but a little ago he had begun to remark that God did not create the world, so as afterwards to allow it to be governed by chance, but that he undertakes the preservation of it, and keeps it under his power and authority; but as he deigns to look more closely at mankind, so the

[119] Les maisons.

Prophet selects this department, that by means of it he may extol God's providence. The sum of what he says is, that God's government extends far and wide, so that he directs and governs everything according to his pleasure; but he shews, (what was also highly advantageous to be known,) that even in the life of men striking proofs of the immediate exercise of the power of God are visible, and, not even satisfied with the general doctrine, he brings forward one class which ought still more to arouse our attention.

The governors of the earth as if they were not. [120] Anything that happens to the undistinguished mass of common people is despised and passed by as unworthy of being observed; but when kingdoms and monarchies, or men of high rank, fall from their elevation, it seems as if the earth had been shaken; and the Prophet skilfully avails himself of such proofs to arouse us. It might, indeed, be supposed that princes and magistrates are exempted from the common lot, and are not subject to the ordinary miseries of men; for by their splendor they dazzle the eyes and understandings of all men. But their lustre is entirely dimmed; and therefore the Prophet especially mentions them, and declares that the Lord "bringeth them to nothing." And if the hand of God is so powerful against nobles and princes, what must we think of the common people? Will he not also treat the ordinary crowd according to his pleasure, and drive them wherever he thinks fit? Will he not either give or take away from them, whenever he pleases, both strength and courage?

24. *It is as if they had not been planted.* Though the particle {אף} (*aph*) signifies *also,* yet in this passage it may be more appropriately rendered "so that;" and thus the plain meaning will be, "So that you may say that they were not planted or sown." It is an amplification of what he had formerly said, for he shews that the princes are totally destroyed and rooted out, so that no trace of them is left, any more than if they had never existed. So long as they remain in prosperity, they appear to be so strong as to be beyond the possibility of being thrown down by any adverse event, [121] but such changes happen as blot out their name and remembrance, so that you would say that they had never existed; and we see that this has happened not only to men but even to very flourishing kingdoms.

Since, therefore, great downfalls are so many tokens of God's dreadful power, let us learn not to lean on earthly and deceitful supports, but, whatever may be the amount of our riches or strength, let us depend on him. God does not, as heathen men babble, turn about this world like a ball, as if he took pleasure in this game; but whenever any person is highly elevated, he never ceases from insolent boasting till he is thrown down headlong, so that the judgments of God are always manifest. We are also reminded by it, that it is wrong to ascribe to fortune or to any other cause the various events that happen; for God was not an instantaneous Creator, that would immediately

[120] "He maketh the judges of the earth as vanity." — Eng. Ver. "The judges (or rulers) of the earth like emptiness (or desolation) he has made." — Alexander.

[121] "Que le vent d'adversite ne les puisse abattre." "That the wind of adversity cannot throw them down."

abandon the charge of his work, but incessantly applies his hand, so that nothing is done but by his will and pleasure. Seeing that various changes thus happen in the world, seeing that those things which were thought to be firm and stable are transitory and fading, let us turn our minds to that supreme providence of God.

Even while he bloweth on them. Hence he shows how light and trivial before God are those things which commonly dazzle our eyes and fill us with amazement; for we cannot think of any great king without being perfectly alarmed and stupified. But he shows that kings and princes are like stubble before God, by whose breath they are driven, as by a whirlwind, at any instant that he pleases. We are therefore taught that we ought never to be overwhelmed by the sight of any creature, so as not to render to God the honor and glory that are due to him. This ought to have been carefully considered by the Jews, who would have thought that that monarchy of the Babylonians, whose captives they were, would never be destroyed, and that they could not be rescued out of their hands, if they had not called to remembrance this doctrine, that nothing in this world is so durable that it may not be dissolved by the breath of God. That they may not despair of their salvation, the Prophet reminds them that God, as soon as he shall be pleased to thunder from heaven, will crush all that strength in their enemies that terrifies them, so that it shall vanish away.

25. *And to whom will ye liken me?* He repeats the former statement, (verse 18,) by which he said that the Lord would not suffer himself to be likened to idols; that the Jews might not in any degree detract, from his power, on account of their having been so long held captive in the hand of unbelievers, or think that idols are anything on account of the prosperity of their worshippers, whom they were compelled to serve; for, by reasoning in this manner about the power of the true God and of idols, they would have compared him with idols. On this account he repeats, as it were in indignation, "To whom will ye liken me?" as if he had said, "Will you rob me of my majesty by your comparisons?" For although men have various thoughts of God, and transform him according to their fancy, yet he continues to be like himself, for he does not change his nature on account of the inventions of men.

Saith the Holy One. He appropriately applies to God the term *Holy,* by which title he indirectly blames or accuses the Jews of base ingratitude, if, as they have been set apart by him, they do not sanctify him in return. No holiness will be found in the gods of the Gentiles; they are the mere inventions of men. A grievous injury therefore is done to God, and he is basely degraded from his rank, when idols are brought into collision with him, and when it becomes a subject of debate if they can do more than God himself.

26. *Lift up your eyes on high.* The Prophet appears to linger too long on this subject, more especially because it presents no obscurity; for he repeats

by many statements what is acknowledged by all, that God's wonderful power and wisdom may be known from the beautiful order of the world. But we ought to observe what I have already said, that we are so wicked and ungrateful judges of the divine power, that we often imagine God to be inferior to some feeble man. We are more terrified frequently by the empty mask of a single man [122] than we are strengthened by all the promises of God. Not in vain, therefore, does the Prophet repeat that God is defrauded of his honor, if his power do not lead us to warm admiration of him; nor does he spend his labor in what is superfluous, for we are so dull and sluggish that we need to be continually aroused and excited.

Men see every day the heavens and the stars; but who is there that thinks about their Author? By nature men are formed in such a manner as to make it evident that they were born to contemplate the heavens, and thus to learn their Author; for while God formed other animals to look downwards for pasture, he made man alone erect, and bade him look at what may be regarded as his own habitation.

This is also described beautifully by a poet: [123] "While other animals look downwards towards the earth, he gave to man a lofty face, and bade him look at heaven, and lift up his countenance erect towards the stars." [124] The Prophet therefore points out the wickedness of men who do not acknowledge what is openly placed before their eyes concerning God, but, like cattle, fix their snout in the earth; for, whenever we raise our eyes upwards, with any degree of attention, it is impossible for our senses not to be struck with the majesty of God.

And see who hath created them. By mentioning the stars, he states more clearly that the wonderful order which shines brightly in the face of the heavens preaches loudly that there is one God and Creator of the world; and all who shall observe, that amidst the vast number and variety of the stars, so regular an order and course is so well maintained, will be constrained to make this acknowledgment. For it is not by chance that each of the stars has had its place assigned to it, nor is it at random that they advance uniformly with so great rapidity, and amidst numerous windings move straight forwards, so that they do not deviate a hairbreadth from the path which God has marked out for them. Thus does their wonderful arrangement shew that God is the Author and worker, so that men cannot open their eyes without being constrained to behold the majesty of God in his works.

Bringing out by number their army. Under the word *army* he, includes two things; their almost infinite number, and their admirable arrangement; for a small number of persons do not constitute an army, and not even a considerable number, if there be not also numerous companies. Besides, it is not called an "army," when men are collected together at random, and

[122] "L'apparence d'un ver de terre." "The appearance of a worm of the earth."

[123] "Par un poete profane." "By a heathen poet."

[124] "Mais celle ou il y aura des sergens de bande, capitaines, colonels et autres conducteurs." "But where there shall be serjeants of companies, captains, colonels, and other officers."

without any selection, and in a confused manner, or when they wander about in a disorderly state, but where there are various classes of officers, who have the charge of ten, or a hundred, or a thousand men, [125] and where the ranks are drawn up and arranged on a fixed plan. Thus the wonderful arrangement of the stars, and their certain courses, may justly be called an "army."

By the word *number* he means that God always has this "army" at his command. In an army the soldiers may wander, and may not be immediately collected or brought back to their ranks by the general, though the trumpet sound. But it is otherwise with God. He always has his soldiers in readiness, and that "by number;" that is, he keeps a reckoning of them, so that not one of them is absent.

He will call to all of them by name. The same expression occurs, (Psalm 147:4,) and in the same sense. Some explain it to mean that God knows the number of the stars, which is unknown to us. But David and Isaiah meant a different thing, that is, that God makes use of the stars according to his pleasure; as if one should command a servant, calling him to him by name; and the same thing will afterwards be said of Cyrus, whose labors and service the Lord employed in delivering his people. (Isaiah 45:1.) In a word, it denotes the utmost submission and obedience, when he who is called instantly answers to his name.

By the greatness of his strength. Those who explain the preceding clause to mean that the Lord knows the number of the stars, are also mistaken in supposing that by giving them their names is meant their power and office. Others explain it, that there is not a star that has not its own power and energy, because the Lord gave to them those qualities they would always possess. But others connect these words with {יקרא}, *(yikra,)* "he shall call;" as if he had said, "The Lord is so powerful that all the stars listen to his commands." But a meaning which appears to me to be more appropriate is, that God is so powerful, that, as soon as he has issued an order, all the armies of the stars are ready to yield obedience. In this we have an extraordinary proof of his power, when those highly excellent, creatures unhesitatingly submit to him, and by executing his orders testify that they acknowledge him to be their Author.

Not one shall be wanting. The word {איש} *(ish)* is applied by Hebrew writers not only to men and women, but also to other animals, and even to inanimate objects, as in a former passage, (Isaiah 34:16,) when, speaking of the birds that should occupy those splendid abodes, he said that "*not one* should be wanting," he used the word {איש}*(ish).* [126] These words commend to us the power of God, that we may know that there is nothing in heaven or in earth that does not depend on his will and pleasure. Nothing, therefore, can be more shameful or unreasonable than to compare him to idols, which

[125] In the passage referred to, although not {{איש (ish) but the feminine form {אשה} (ishshah) is used, this does not invalidate our author's argument. — Ed.

[126] "Qui sont plus vaines que la vanite mesme." "Which are more vain than vanity itself."

are as worthless as anything can possibly be. [127]

27. *Why wilt thou say?* The Prophet now expostulates either with the Jews, because they were almost overcome by despair, and did not look to the promises of God, by which they ought, to have supported their minds; or he makes provision for posterity, that they may not sink under any distresses however long continued. The verbs are in the future sense, which might also be explained by the subjunctive mood, *Why wouldst thou say?* For Isaiah justly infers front the preceding statement, that the chosen people, whatever may happen, ought to wait patiently for God, till he give assistance in due time. He argues from the less to the greater: "Since God keeps every part of the world under his authority, it is impossible that he shall forsake his Church." Yet it is probable that at that time there were heard among the people complaints, by which they murmured against God, as if he did not care about their salvation, or were slow in rendering assistance, or even shut his eyes and did not see their distresses. The fault which is now corrected is, that they thought that God did not care about them; as usually happens in afflictions, in which we think that God has forsaken us, and exposed us for a prey, and that he takes no concern about the affairs of this world. [128]

O Jacob and Israel! By these names he calls to their remembrance the Lord's covenant, which had been ratified by promises so numerous and so diversified; as if he had said, "Dost thou not think that thou art that people which God hath chosen peculiarly for himself? Why dost thou imagine that he who cannot deceive does not attend to thy cause?"

My way is hidden from Jehovah. He employs the word *way* for "condition" and 'cause," and *hidden,* for "disregarded" or "unknown;" for if God delay his assistance for a short time, we think that his care does not extend to us. Some explain it differently, that is, that the people are here reproved for thinking that they would not be punished for sinning, and they think that this sentiment resembles such as, "The wicked man hath said in his heart, There is no God." (Psalm 14:1.) But the Prophets meaning unquestionably was, "Thinkest thou, O Israel, that the Lord taketh no concern about thine affairs?" For he exclaims against the distrust of the people, and chides them sharply, that he may afterwards comfort them, and may show that the Lord will continually assist his people whom he hath undertaken to defend.

And my judgment passeth away from my God. The word *judgment* confirms our interpretation of the preceding clause; for "judgment" is implored in affliction, when we are unjustly oppressed, or when any one does us wrong; and God is said to favor and undertake "judgment," or "our right," when, after having known our cause, he defends and guards us; and he is said to *pass by it,* when he overlooks us, and permits us to be devoured by our enemies. It is as if he had said, that the Jews act unjustly in complaining that God has disregarded their cause and forsaken them; and by that re-

[127] "Et qu'il ne se soucie des choses de ce monde."

[128] "Men in full vigor, picked men, in military language." — Stock.

proof he prepares them for receiving consolation, for they could not receive it while their minds were occupied with wicked or foolish thoughts. It was therefore necessary first to remove obstructions, and to open up the way for consolation.

28. *Hast thou not known?* He repeats the same statement which he had formerly made, that the people who had been carefully taught in the school of God were inexcusable for their slothfulness, and chides them sharply for not having profited more by the doctrine of the Law, and by the other means which God had bestowed in addition to that knowledge which they possessed in common with the Gentiles. The word *know,* which is more general, is put first; because by many miracles and other proofs God had manifested his glory. Next, he asks, *Hast thou not heard?* As if he had said, "If thou hast profited nothing by being taught by actions and by word that God is never unemployed, it is evident that thou are excessively unteachable."

That Jehovah is the God of eternity. The Prophet calls him "eternal," and thus distinguishes him from all idols, which endure but for a time, and were made by men; and truly, if this were deeply seated in our hearts, there would no longer be any room for distrust; for if God is eternal, he never changes or decays, eternity being uniformly attended by this quality, that it is never liable to change, but always remains the same. Since the Jews did not sufficiently believe these things, though they had often "heard" them, the Prophet intended to arouse them by this reproof, in order to shew that they will be doubly guilty before God, if, after having been taught both by his numerous benefits, and by the word, they do not render the honor and glory which are due to him.

And is not wearied by weariness, and there is no searching of his understanding. Here the Prophet makes two statements; first, that God is not wearied in doing good; and, secondly, that no man can explore his wisdom. In the former clause he shews that, nothing will hinder God from continuing to exercise his kindness; for he is not like men whose resources are exhausted by giving frequently, or who are wearied by continually bestowing new favors, or who repent of their generosity. His kindness is never exhausted; if he was kind to the fathers, he will be not less kind and bountiful to posterity. As to the allegation, that God very often acts differently from what we think to be best for us, the Prophet meets it by saying that his purpose is incomprehensible, and warns us that we ought not to murmur, though he does not all at once comply with our wishes; because nothing is better adapted to cherish our hope than this sobriety, which leads us to consider how marvellously God works in preserving us, and thus to submit to his secret counsel.

29. *He giveth power to the faint.* The Prophet now applies to the present subject the general statements which he made; for we have said that his intention was to give warmer encouragement to the people, and to lead them to cherish better hope. Because the Jews were at that time weakened

and destitute of all strength, he shews that on this account it belongs to God to give assistance to those who were thus exhausted and weakened. He therefore magnifies the power of God on this ground, that they may conclude and believe that they ought not to doubt of their salvation so long as they enjoy his favor. It was indeed to the people who were held captive in Babylon that the Prophet looked; but we ought also to apply this doctrine to ourselves, that whenever our strength shall fail, and we shall be almost laid low, we may call to remembrance that the Lord stretches out his hand "to the faint," who are sinking through the want of all help. But first, we must feel our faintness and poverty, that the saying of Paul, "The power of God is made perfect in our weakness," (2 Corinthians 12:9,) may be fulfilled; for if our hearts are not deeply moved by a conviction of our weakness, we cannot receive seasonable assistance from God.

30. *The youths are wearied and faint.* By this comparison the Prophet illustrates more powerfully what he had formerly said, that the strength which God imparts to his elect is invincible and unwearied; for men's strength easily fails, but God's strength never fails. It is indeed certain that all the vigor which naturally dwells in us proceeds from God; but since men claim as their own what God has bestowed generally on all, the Prophet thus distinguishes between the strength of men which appears to be born with them, and that strength by which God peculiarly supports his elect; for God's kindness, which is diffused throughout all nature, is not sufficiently perceived. And thus by "men's strength" he means that which is generally possessed by mankind, and by "God's assistance," he means that by which he peculiarly assists us after our strength has failed; for the Prophet speaks of the grace of God which is cormmonly called supernatural, and says that it is perpetual, while men can have nothing in themselves but what is fading and transitory; that by this mark he may distinguish between the Church of God and the rest of the world, and between spiritual grace and earthly prosperity.

And the young men by falling fall. In the former clause he made use of the word {נערים}, *(negnarim,) youths,* but now he adds {בחרים}, *(bachurim,)* which means not only that they were "young men," but also that they had been selected. [129] The repetition of the same statement may be supposed to refer particularly to age, though he means that they were persons of the choicest vigor and in the prime of life. With this design he recommends that excellent privilege which God bestows on his children in preference to other men; that they may be satisfied with their lot, and may bear no envy to earthly men, [130] for that strength of which they boast. In a word, he shews that men are greatly deceived if they are puffed up by confidence in their

[129] "Aux enfans de ce monde." "To the children of this world."

[130] "The phrase translated 'they shall gain new strength,' properly means 'they shall exchange strength;' but the usage of the verb determines its specific meaning to be that of changing for the better, or improving. The sense is therefore correctly given in the English Version ('they shall renew their strength')." — Alexander.

own strength, for they immediately sink and faint.

He appears to allude to what happens every day, that the stronger any person is, the more boldly does he attempt what is exceedingly difficult, and the consequence is, that they who are naturally more robust seldom live to be old men. They think nothing too hard or difficult, they attempt everything, and rashly encounter all dangers; but they give way in the middle of their course, and suffer the punishment of their rashness. The same thing befalls those who are proud of any gift which God has bestowed on them, and are full of confidence in themselves; for all that they have received from God is reduced to nothing, or rather turns to their ruin and destruction; and thus they are justly punished for their insolence.

31. *But they that wait for Jehovah.* Hebrew writers employ the phrase, "exchanging strength," [131] to denote "gathering new strength," and thus "being restored." The Prophet therefore shews, that godly persons, who shall hope in God, will not be deficient in strength; and he confirms what he formerly said,

"In rest and silence shall be your strength." (Isaiah 30:15.)

We must not become agitated, or throw ourselves forward rashly, but "wait" patiently. In this passage, therefore, *waiting* means nothing else than patience. Violent men dash themselves to pieces by their own eagerness, but the vigor of godly men, though it has less display, and often appears to lie buried while they calmly "wait for" God's assistance, is refreshed and renewed. We must therefore return to the saying of Paul, that

"the power of God is made perfect in our weakness."
(2 Corinthians 12:9.)

We must, therefore be fully convinced of our weakness, that we may yield to the power of God. The Jews, who were oppressed by that cruel captivity, had great need of this doctrine; but for us also, during this wretchedly ruinous condition of the Church, it is exceedingly needful.

They shall raise their wings as eagles. It is generally believed that the Prophet uses this phrase in the same sense that the Psalmist says,

"Thy youth shall be renewed like that of the eagle."
(Psalm 103:5.)

It is certain that the "eagle" is very long-lived as compared with other birds.

Aristotle and Pliny affirm that it never dies of old age, but of hunger; that is, that when the upper part of the beak becomes too large, it cannot take food into its mouth, and for a long time subsists entirely on what it drinks. One Zaadias, as all Jews are audacious in constructing fables, pretends that the eagle flies upward into the region that is near the sun, and approaches the sun so closely, that its old wings are burned, and other new ones grow in their place; but this is utterly absurd and fabulous. The Prophet means that they who trust in the Lord will be vigorous, like eagles, till the most advanced old

[131] Les fideles.

age. But seeing that eagles fly higher than other birds, by which they shew remarkable swiftness, which has also given rise to the proverb, "An eagle among the clouds," this passage may be understood to denote not only long life, but also strength and agility; so that Isaiah, after having shewn that their strength is recruited, adds that they are more vigorous, and ascend to a great height. Such is also the import of what follows, —

They shall run and shall not be weary. It is as if he had said, that the Lord will assist them, so that they shall pursue their course without any molestation. It is a figurative expression, by which he intimates that believers [132] will always be ready to perform their duty with cheerfulness. But it will be said, "There are so many troubles which we must endure in this life; how then does he say that we shall be exempt from weariness?" I reply, believers are indeed distressed and wearied, but they are at length delivered from their distresses, and feel that they have been restored by the power of God; for it happens to them according to the saying of Paul,

"While we are troubled on every side, we are not overwhelmed; we are perplexed, but are not in despair; we suffer persecution, but are not forsaken; we are cast down, but are not destroyed."
(2 Corinthians 4:8, 9.)

Let us therefore learn to flee to the Lord, who, after we have encountered many storms, will at length conduct us to the harbor; for he who hath opened up a path, and hath commanded us to advance in that course in which he hath placed us, does not intend to assist us only for a single day, and to forsake us in the middle of our course, (Philippians 1:6,) but will conduct us to the goal.

[132] "Devant moy" "Before me."

Chapter 41

CHAPTER 41.

Isaiah 41:1-29

1. Keep silence before me, O islands; and let the people renew their strength: let them come near; then let them speak: let us come near together to judgment.

1. Tacete mihi insulae; et colligant populi vires; accedant, tunc loquentur; pariter ad judicium accedamus.

2. Who raised up the righteous man from the east, called him to his foot, gave the nations before him, and made him rule over kings? he gave them as the dust to his sword, and as driven stubble to his bow.

2. Quis excitavit ab oriente justitiam, vocavit eum ad pedem suum, dedit coram co gentes, et reges subjugavit; dedit quasi pulverem gladio ejus, et quasi stipulam propulsam arcui ejus?

3. He pursued them, and passed safely; even by the way that he had not gone with his feet.

3. Persequutus est cos; evasit in pace, semita qua non ingressus est pes ejus.

4. Who hath wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning? I the LORD, the first, and with the last; I am he.

4. Quis designavit, et fecit, vocans nationes ab initio? Ego Iehova prius, et cum novissimis ego idem.

5. The isles saw it, and feared; the ends of the earth were afraid, drew near, and came.

5. Viderunt insulae et timuerunt; extremi fines terrae expaverunt, accesserunt, et venerunt.

6. They helped every one his neighbour; and every one said to his brother, Be of good courage.

6. Quisque proximo suo opem tulit, et fratri suo dixit, Sis strenuus.

7. So the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, and he that smootheth with the hammer him that smote the anvil, saying, It is ready for the sodering: and he fastened it with nails, that it should not be moved.

7. Confortavit faber conflatorem, malleo percutiens tundentem vicissim, et dixit, Bonum hoc ad plumbaturam; firmavitque clavis, ut non moveretur.

8. But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend.

8. At tu Israel servus meus, Iacob quem elegi, semen Abrahae amici mei.

9. Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, Thou art my servant; I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away.

9. Quoniam apprehendi to ab extremitatibus terrae, ab eminentiis ejus vocavi to, ac dixi tibi, Servus meus es tu, elegi to, et non repudiavi to.

10. Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.

10. Ne timeas, quoniam ego tecum sum; non terrearis, quoniam ego Deus tuus sum, qui to corroboro, adhuc (vel, utique) opem tibi feram, adhuc to sustentabo dextera justitiae meae.

11. Behold, all they that were incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded: they shall be as nothing; and they that strive with thee shall perish.

11. Ecce pudefient et erubescent omnes qui to provocant; erunt quasi in nihilum, et peribunt qui tecum litigant.

12. Thou shalt seek them, and shalt not find them, even them that contended with thee: they that war against thee shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nought.

12. Quaeres cos, nee invenies; qui contendunt tecum erunt quasi nihilum, et qui tecum belligerantur, quasi consumptio.

13. For I the LORD thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee.

13. Quoniam ego Iehova Deus tuus, apprehendens dextram tuam, ac dicens tibi, Ne timeas, ego tibi opitulabor.

14. Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the LORD, and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.

14. Ne timeas, vermis Iacob, mortui Israel; ego auxiliabor tibi, dicit Iehova, et redemptor (vel, vindex) tuus, Sanctus Israelis.

15. Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth: thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff.

15. Ecce posui to in traham; ut tribula nova habens dentes, triturabis montes et comminues, et colles in pulverem rediges.

16. Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the

whirlwind shall scatter them: and thou shalt rejoice in the LORD, and shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel.

16. Ventilabis eos, et ventus toilet, et turbo sparget eos. Tu vero exultabis in Iehova, in Sancto Israel gloriaberis.

17. When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the LORD will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.

17. Egeni et pauperes quaerent aquas, quae non apparent; lingua eorum siti exarebit. Ego Iehova exaudiam cos; ego Deus Israelis non descram eos.

18. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water.

18. Aperiam in editis cacuminibus flumina, et fontes in media planitie; desertum ponam in stagna aquarum, et terram vastam in scaturigines aquarum.

19. I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah-tree, and the myrtle, and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the fir tree, and the pine, and the box tree together:

19. Dabo in deserto cedrum, spinum, myrtum, et pinum; ponam in solitudine abietem, ulmum, et popu-lure sired.

20. That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the LORD hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it.

20. Itaque videant, et cognoseant, cogitent, et intelligant simul, quod manus Iehovae fecerit hoc, et Sanctus Israelis creaverit istud.

21. Produce your cause, saith the LORD; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob.

21. Adeste cansae vestrae, dicit Iehova; afferte firmamenta vestra, dicit rex Iacob.

22. Let them bring them forth, and shew us what shall happen: let them shew the former things, what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come.

22. Adducant, et annuntient nobis quae ventura sunt; priora quae fuerunt nuntient, et apponemus cor nostrum; et sciemus novissima eorum; et quae ventura sunt praedicate nobis.

23. Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods: yea, do good, or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold it together.

23. Nunciate quae futura sunt in posterum, ut sciamus vos deos esse; quin benefacite, ant malefacite, ut enarremus, et videanus (vel, mire-mur) pariter.

24. Behold, ye are of nothing, and your work of nought: an abomination is he that chooseth you.

24. Ecce vos estis ex nihilo, et factura vestra ex nihilo; abominationem elegit in vobis (homo.)

25. I have raised up one from the north, and he shall come: from the rising

of the sun shall he call upon my name: and he shall come upon princes as upon morter, and as the potter treadeth clay.

25. Excitavi ab aquilone, et venit; ab oriente solis vocabit in nomine meo; et veniet ad principes, quasi ad lutum, et tanquam figulus calcabit lutum.

26. Who hath declared from the beginning, that we may know? and beforetime, that we may say, He is righteous? yea, there is none that sheweth, yea, there is none that dcclareth, yea, there is none that heareth your words.

26. Quis nuntiavit ab initio, ut cognoscamus? Jam ante, et dicemus, justus. Utique non est annuntians; utique non audire faciens; utique non audiens verba vestra.

27. The first shall say to Zion, Behold, behold them: and I will give to Jerusalem one that bringeth good tidings.

27. Primus Sioni, Ecce, ecce ipsi; et Ierosolymae nuntium dabo.

28. For I beheld, and there was no man; even among them, and there was no counsellor, that, when I asked of them, could answer a word.

28. Aspexi, nec nullus erat; de istis inquisivi, et nullus erat consiliarius; interrogavi cos, nec responderunt verbum.

29. Behold, they are all vanity; their works are nothing; their molten images are wind and confusion.

29. Ecce onmes vanitas, et defectus opera; eorum; ventus et chaos simulachra eorum.

1. *Be silent to me,* [133] *O islands.* Though the Prophet's discourse appears to be different from the former, yet he pursues the same subject; for, in order to put the Jews to shame, he says that he would have been successful, if he had been called to plead with unbelievers and blind persons. Thus he reproves not only the sluggishness, but the stupidity of that nation, "to whom God had been so nigh" and so intimately known by his Law. (Deuteronomy 4:7.) Yet we need not wonder that the people, overtaken by many terrors, trembled so that they scarcely received solid consolation; for we have abundant experience how much we are alarmed by adversity, because amidst; this depravity and corruption of our nature, every man labors under two diseases. In prosperity, he exalts himself extravagantly, and shakes off the restraint; of humility and moderation; but, in adversity, he either rages, or lies in a lifeless condition, and scarcely has the smallest perception of the goodness of God. We need not wonder, therefore, that the Prophet dwells so largely on this subject, and that he pursues it in many ways.

He gives the name of *islands* to the countries beyond the sea; for the Jews, having no intercourse with them, gave to all that lay beyond the sea the name of "islands;" and therefore he addresses not only the nations which were at hand, but likewise those which were more distant, and requires them "to

[133] "He alludes to the method observed in courts of judicature, where silence is always commanded to prevent interruption; he calls upon the idolatrous nations to appear at the bar with him, and see if they could give so convincing proofs of the divinity of their gods as he could of his own." — White.

keep silence before him." But of what nature is this silence? Isaiah describes a kind of judicial pleading which the Lord is not unwilling to enter into with all nations. He demands only that he shall be heard in his own cause, and that there shall be no confusion or disorder in the proceedings, which would be altogether at variance with a court of justice. On this account he commands the Gentiles to keep silence, that, when this has been done, he may openly plead his cause; for the order of a court of justice demands that every person shall speak in his turn; for, if all should cry aloud together, there must be strange confusion. [134]

This reminds us, that the reason why we do not think with so much reverence as we ought concerning the power and goodness and wisdom and other attributes of God, is, that we do not listen to him when he speaks. Men roar and murmur against God; some, swelling with their pride, openly despise his word; while others, through some kind of slothfulness, disregard him, and, in consequence of being buried in earthly delights, take no concern about aspiring to the heavenly kingdom. Even now we perceive with what insolence and rebellion many persons speak against God. How comes it that Papists are so obstinate and headstrong in their errors, but because they refuse to listen to God? for if they would listen to him in silence, the truth would speedily convince them. In a word, the Lord shews by these words that he will be victorious, if men listen to him attentively. He does not wish that they shall listen to him in a careless manner, as unjust and corrupt judges, having already determined what sentence they shall pronounce, are wont to do; but that they shall examine and weigh his arguments, in which they will find nothing but what is perfectly just.

It may be asked, "Does the Prophet now exhort the Gentiles to hear?" I reply, these things relate chiefly to the Jews; for it would be long before this prophecy would reach the Gentiles. But this discourse would be fitted more powerfully to remove the obstinacy of the Jews, when he shows that the Gentiles, though they were estranged from him, would speedily acknowledge his power, provided only that they chose to listen to him in silence. There is greater weight and force in these words addressed directly to the "islands" themselves than if he had spoken of them in the third person.

And let the people collect their strength. The Lord defies all the Gentiles to the contest, and in a contemptuous manner, as is commonly done by those who are more powerful, or who, relying on the goodness of their cause, have no doubt about the result. "Let them collect their strength and league against me; they will gain nothing, but I shall at length be victorious." As we commonly say, *"I disdain them, (Je les despite.)* Even though they bend all their strength both of mind and of body, still they shall be conquered; all I ask is, that they give me a hearing." By these words he declares that truth possesses such power that it easily puts down all falsehoods, provided

[134] "Puisque sa force n'estoit point diminuee, ni sa beneficence refroidie." "Since his strength was not diminished, nor his benevolence cooled."

that men give attention to it; and, therefore, although all men rise up to overwhelm the truth, still it will prevail. Consequently, if we are led astray from God, we must not throw the blame on others, but ought rather to accuse ourselves of not having been sufficiently attentive and diligent when he spoke to us; for falsehoods would not have power over us, nor would we be carried away by any cunning attempt of Satan to deceive us, or by the force of any attack, if we were well disposed to listen to God.

As to his assuming the character of a guilty person, in order that he may appear and plead his cause before a court of justice, it may be asked, "Who among men will be competent to judge in so hard and difficult a cause?" I reply, there is nothing said here about choosing judges; the Lord means only, that he would be successful, if impartial judges were allowed to try this cause. He cannot submit either to men or to angels, so as to render an account to them; but, for the purpose of taking away every excuse, he declares that victory is in his power, even though he were constrained to plead his cause; and, consequently, that it is highly unreasonable to dispute among ourselves, and not to yield to him absolute obedience; that we are ungrateful and rebellious, in not listening to him, and in not considering how just are his demands. And, indeed, though nothing can be more unreasonable than for mortals to judge of God, yet it is still more shocking and monstrous, when, by our blind murmuring, we condemn him before he has been heard in his own defense.

2. *Who shall raise up righteousness from the east?* This shews plainly what is the design of the Prophet; for he intends to assure the Jews that they will be in no danger of going astray, if they choose to follow the path which he points out to them. And this is the reason why he mentions Abraham; for he might have enumerated other works of God, but selected an example appropriate to his subject; for, having been descended from Abraham, whom God had brought out of Chaldea amidst so many dangers, they ought also to have hoped that he would equally assist them; since his power was not diminished, and he is not wearied by acts of kindness. [135] Because it was difficult for captives and exiles, while they were at a great distance from their native country, to hope for a return, he exhorts them by a similar example to cherish favorable hopes. Having been scattered throughout Chaldea and the neighboring countries, they thought that the road which led homeward was shut up against them on account of numerous obstructions. But from the same place Abraham their father had traveled into Judea. (Genesis 11:31, and 12:1.) Could not he who conducted one poor, solitary man, with his father, his nephew, and his wife, safe and sound amidst so ninny dangers, be the leader of his people in the journey? Since, therefore, God had called Abraham out of his native country, and delivered him from all distresses, this fact drawn from the family history ought to have made a deeper impression on his children, that the departure of their father Abraham might be a pledge

[135] "L' a-il pas appele pour venir apres soy." "Called him to come after himself."

or mirror of their future deliverance from Babylon.

When he calls Abraham *righteousness,* he does so, not for the purpose of extolling the man, but of shewing that God had assigned to him a character which belonged to the whole condition of the Church; for he was not called as a private individual, but the demonstration of God's eternal justice which was given in his calling is common to all believers; as if he had said, that in his person the Church had once been delivered, in order that he might confidently believe that his salvation and the justice of God would be alike eternal. And indeed in a single individual we behold the calling of believers, and a sort of model of the Church, and the beginning and end of our salvation. In short, Abraham may be regarded as a mirror of the justice of God, so far as it shines in the affairs of this world. This word is used for the sake of amplification, ({πρὸς} {αὔξησιν}); for to "raise up *righteousness* from the east," where everything had been corrupted and polluted by the most abominable superstitions, was an astonishing work of God. If, therefore, such a display of God's goodness and power had once been given, why ought; they not to expect the same or a similar display in future?

Called him to his foot. [136] Some interpret this as meaning that Abraham, wherever he went, called on the name of the Lord; for as soon as he came into any country, he erected an altar to God, that he might offer sacrifice upon it. (Genesis 12:7, and 13:18.) This is indeed true, but I interpret it differently, that the Lord was the leader in the journey to Abraham, who followed him step by step; for when he was commanded to depart, no particular country was pointed out to which he should go; and thus when he set out he knew not either how far, or in what direction he should travel, but God kept him in suspense till he entered into the land of Canaan. (Genesis 12:1; Acts 7:3.) When Abraham had been called, he immediately appeared, and though he was uncertain as to his journey, he listened to the mouth of God, and was satisfied with having God for his leader. On this account the expression is appropriate, that he followed him "to his foot," because he surrendered himself to God to be a footman, like obedient and submissive servants who follow the footsteps of their master, though they are uncertain whither he is leading them.

Gave nations before him. This means that although the good man might be afflicted and tormented every moment by many anxieties, yet God removed every obstruction that could annoy him. Moses does not enumerate all the difficulties which Abraham encountered at his departure, but any person may conclude that this journey could not be free from very great annoyances; for it was impossible for him, when he set out, not to draw upon himself the hatred of the nation, and to be universally condemned as a madman for leaving his native land, and relations, and friends, and wandering to an unknown country. After having come into the land of Canaan, he had to do with wicked and cruel men, with whom he could not be agreed, because

[136] "Afin de ne la point voir." "That they might not see it."

he was entirely opposed to their superstitions. What Moses relates shews plainly enough that Abraham was never at rest, and yet that wicked men durst not attempt to do anything against him; so that when he wished to purchase a sepulcher from the children of Heth, they offered it to him freely and for nothing, and acknowledged him to be a man of God and a prince. (Genesis 23:6.)

And subdued kings. The Prophet illustrates the grace of God, by shewing that he did not spare even *kings,* so as to make it evident that he was a faithful protector of his servant or vassal Abraham. The history of the four kings whom he vanquished and routed is well known, (Genesis 14:14, 15,) and might be extended to Pharaoh, (Genesis 12:17,) and Abimelech, (Genesis 20:3,) who are also mentioned in Psalm 105:14, where this subject is handled; for they were chastised because they dared to "touch the Lord's Anointed." (Psalm 105:15.) But strictly it denotes that victory which he obtained over four kings, (Genesis 14:14, 15,) who had carried off his nephew Lot, with all that belonged to him; for it is very evident from the context that the Prophet does not speak of kings or nations that had been soothed, but of armed enemies that had been violently made to pass under the yoke.

As dust to his sword. Lastly, he magnifies the ease with which that victory was gained, and thus expresses the highest contempt by comparing those kings to *dust* and *stubble;* for he subdued them without exposing himself to danger. At the same time he reminds us that this ought not to be ascribed to the power of man, but to the assistance of God; because it is not by human power that victory can be so easily gained.

3. *He pursued* them. The Prophet again commends, by the greatness of the victory, the extraordinary kindness of God. It is of the highest importance that he obtained it in a country which was unknown to him; for it is difficult and hazardous to pursue enemies in unknown countries; and how great is the value of a knowledge of places is plainly shewn by history, and daily experienced by those who carry on war. That was no obstacle to Abraham; and hence it is still more evident, that he was led and assisted by the hand of God to conduct his followers courageously.

4. *Who hath appointed?* Although Isaiah has exhibited in this passage nothing more than the example of Abraham, yet he undoubtedly intended to remind the people of all the benefits which the fathers had received in ancient times; as if he had said, "Call to remembrance what is your origin, whence I raised up your father Abraham, by what path I led him; and yet this was not the termination of my favors, for since that time I have never ceased to enrich you with every kind of blessings." When he asks therefore who he is, he does not speak merely of a single performance, but adds other benefits, which followed at various times, and which the people ought also to remember.

Calling the nations from the beginning. This must relate to the constant succession of ages. In the Hebrew language {דור} *(dor)* means not only

"an age," or the duration of human life, but the men who lived at that time. Thus one generation is distinguished from another, as fathers from their children, and grandchildren from their grandfathers; for posterity will call us the former generation, and will call our ancestors a generation more remote and ancient. Again, because any one age would consume mankind, if it were not renewed by offspring, the Prophet shows that God multiplies men by an uninterrupted course, so that they succeed each other. Hence it follows, that he presides over all ages, that we may not think that this world is governed by chance, while the providence of God is clearly seen in the succession of ages. But because, in consequence of various changes, the world appears to revolve by blind impulse, the Prophet declares by these words that those manifold events were known "from the beginning"' of the world, which amounts to this, that amidst that variety which time brings, God reigns, and accomplishes by a uniform course what he decreed from the beginning.

I Jehovah. At length he asserts more plainly that God is the author of these blessings, that Abraham conquered enemies, (Genesis 14:16,) that he lived among wicked men without suffering harm, that he put kings to flight, (Psalm 105:14,) that the Lord avenged him, when Abimelech (Genesis 20:18) and also Pharaoh (Genesis 12:17) had violently seized his wife. Besides, he shows that it ought to be ascribed to him, that other blessings of various kinds had been bestowed on every generation; for his power had been manifested not only to the race of Abraham, but to the whole world.

Am the first, and likewise with the last. This relates not only to the eternity of essence, but to the government which he exercises on earth; as if he had said, that God does not grow old by any length of time, and never will surrender his authority; for he does not sit unemployed in heaven, but from his throne, on the contrary, he regulates the affairs of this world. But although the world put in his place an innumerable crowd of gods, yet he declares that he sustains no loss, because he will always continue to be like himself.

5. *The isles saw, and feared.* He now shows the excessive ingratitude of the world, which, after having perceived the works of God, still continued in the same blindness to which it had been formerly abandoned. A little before, he had said that he would easily gain a victory, if they would only listen to him; and now he adds, that the Gentiles knew his power, and yet were rebellious and obstinate. The consequence is, that they are altogether inexcusable; because the majesty of God was abundantly revealed, if they had not chosen to shut their eyes of their own accord. [137] In order, therefore, to take away the excuse of ignorance even from the most distant nations, he says that they trembled at the sight of his works, and yet returned immediately to their natural dispositions, so as to be entangled by many errors and superstitions. There is an elegant allusion in the two verbs {ראו} {ויראו}, *(rau veyirau)* which

[137] "De la droite fiance en luy." "From proper confidence in him."

cannot be expressed in the Latin language; but the general meaning is, that they not only were eyewitnesses, but also were so deeply convinced, that fear was awakened in them by what they knew.

The farthest boundaries of the earth trembled. It might be objected, that the blessings which God bestowed on Abraham could not be celebrated throughout the whole world, so as to be known to foreign nations. But, as we have said, although Abraham alone was mentioned by him, yet he intended also to bring to remembrance other instances of his kindness which their fathers experienced, that these might lead them to entertain better hope; for not only did he bring Abraham out of Chaldea, but he rescued all his posterity from the bondage of Egypt, (Exodus 13:16,) and put them in possession of the land of Canaan. He says therefore, that the Gentiles had experience of his power when he delivered and preserved his people, that they might know that he is the only true God; for amidst so many miracles his power was clearly and manifestly displayed. In short, he declares that the Gentiles were terrified by the wonderful power of God, when he delivered his people; for wicked men, when they hear something of that power, are every day terrified and filled with amazement, because they perceive that God is their enemy.

Drew near and came. This expression, *drew near,* is interpreted by some to mean, that unbelievers observed more closely the works of God; for, when we wish to perceive anything more accurately, we approach nearer. Others refer it to the king of Sodom, "who went out to meet Abraham." (Genesis 14:17.) But those interpretations are unsuitable, and indeed have nothing to do with the subject.

6. *Every one brought assistance to his neighbor.* What now follows agrees well with what goes before, if you connect this verse with the last clause of the former verse, "They drew near, they were assembled, every one assisted his neighbor;" so that the meaning is, "Although the islands saw and knew my works, so that they trembled at them, yet they assembled in crowds to make a league among themselves." Why? That they might encourage each other to frame new gods, and might confirm each other more and more in their blindness. He therefore aggravates the guilt of the Gentiles by saying, that "every one assisted his neighbor;" and indeed whoever shall make careful inquiry will find that this is the source of all superstitions, that men by mutual consent darken the light brought to them from heaven. But although the Lord here expostulates with idolaters, yet he does it for the sake of the Jews, that they may not fall into the impiety of the Gentiles, or permit themselves to be turned aside from God and from sincere faith. [138] On this account he brings forward the ingratitude of the Gentiles, that the Jews may

[138] {חרש (charash) denotes any kind of workman, who devotes himself to his work, whatever may be the material on which he is employed. It is employed particularly to denote a 'worker in iron,' (Isaiah 44:12,) 'a carpenter,' (Isaiah 44:13,) 'a worker in stone,' (Exodus 28:11,) and a 'worker in brass,' (1 Kings 7:14.) {צרף} (tzoreph) is more definite. It is the participle of the verb ,{צרף} (tzaraph,) which signifies 'the melting and casting of metals;' and hence {צרף} (tzoreph) is one who melts metals in the fire, purifies them from dross, separates one metal from another, and prepares them by the hammer. (Isaiah 41:7, and 46:6.)" — Rosenmuller.

not imitate it, but may remain steadfast in the true worship of God.

And said to his neighbor, Be courageous. Here we see, as in a mirror, how great is the wickedness of men, who profit nothing by considering the works of God, and are even rendered more rebellious, and harden themselves more and more; for they choose of their own accord to be blind, and to shut their eyes against the clearest light, rather than to behold God who manifests himself before their eyes. To blindness is added rage, in consequence of which they rise up against God, and do not hesitate to wage war with him for defending their superstitions; so that this vice is not idol worship but idol madness. Isaiah describes this madness by saying, "Be bold, act courageously;" for he means that men have entered into a base conspiracy, by which they naturally encourage and inflame each other to the worship of idols, and to drive away the fear of God which his power might have led them to entertain.

7. *The workmen encouraged the founder.* This verse is explained in various ways, and indeed is somewhat obscure; and even the Jewish writers are not agreed as to the meaning of the words. I see no reason why {חרש} *(cherish)* should be here understood to mean simply a carpenter, for it means any kind of workman. [139] The word {מהליק}, *(mahalik,)* which means *one that strikes,* is generally rendered in the accusative case; I prefer to render it, in the nominative case. {פעם} *(pagnam)* [140] is generally translated anvil, and by others a *smaller hammer;* but; as it sometimes signifies *by turns,* that interpretation appears to agree best with the context; for the Prophet means that workmen, by beating "in their turn," mutually excite each other, because by being earnestly employed in the same work, they grow warm, and each of them urges and arouses the other, to perform in the shortest time what they have undertaken. In short, he describes the rebellion and madness of idolaters, by which they excite each other to oppose God.

From this passage and from all histories it is manifest that this vice was not peculiar to a single age, and at the present day we know it by experience more than is desirable. We see how men, by mutual persuasion, urge one another to defend superstition and the worship of idols; and the more brightly the truth of God is manifested, the more obstinately do they follow an opposite course, as if they avowedly intended to carry on war with God. Since religion was restored to greater purity, idols have been multiplied and set up in hostility to it in many places; pilgrimages, masses, unlawful vows, and, in some cases, anniversaries, have been more numerously attended than before. During that ancient ignorance there was some kind of moderation; but now idolaters, as if they had been seized by madness, run about, and are driven by blind impulse. There is nothing which they do not attempt in order to prop up a trifling superstition and tottering idols. In a word, they join hands,

[139] "'Him that striketh by turns with him.' {{פעם (pagnam) is not here a noun substantive, signifying an anvil, as it has been generally understood, but an adverb, denoting that reciprocal action of two smiths on the same anvil, of which Virgil speaks. Aen. 8:452." — Stocks.

[140] That is, instead of the usual and natural rendering, "whom I have taken," Calvin renders the clause, "because I have taken thee." — Ed.

and render mutual aid, in order to resist God. And if any person wish to throw back the blame on his brother, he will gain nothing; for it adheres to every one in such a manner that it cannot in any way be removed. All are devoted to falsehood, and almost avowedly devise methods of imposture, and, trusting to their great numbers, each of them places himself and others above God. They excite each other to the worship of idols, and burn with such madness of desire that nearly the whole world is kindled by it.

8. *But thou, Israel, art my servant.* He now shews how unreasonable it is to confound the people of Israel with the heathen nations, though all have lifted up a standard and agree in error, and though the whole world be abandoned to impostures; for, since by a calling of free grace God had chosen and set them apart, they ought not to have given themselves up to the same rage. This is a remarkable passage, and teaches us that we ought to be satisfied with our calling, so as to be restrained from the pollution of this world. Though corruptions abound, and though we indulge freely in every kind of iniquity, yet we ought to be restrained by this consideration, that we are God's elect, and therefore we are not at liberty to go beyond bounds like Gentiles, and ungodly men. "Such were some of you," says Paul,

"but now you have been washed, now you have been sanctified by the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." (1 Corinthians 6:11.)

Indeed, nothing is more unreasonable than that we should wander like blind men in darkness, when the sun of righteousness hath shined upon us. We ought therefore to consider our calling, that we may follow it with all zeal and industry, and, "walking as becomes the children of light," (Ephesians 5:8,) may shun that manner of life to which we were formerly habituated. For this reason he calls Israel his *servant;* not that the Israelites deserved anything on account of their obedience, but because he had set them apart for himself; and accordingly, for the same reason he adds —

Jacob, whom I have chosen. This is a remarkable commendation of undeserved favor; as if he had said, "You are indeed my servants, not through your own merit, but through my bounty; for by my election I have prepared and formed you to be my peculiar people." In short, he reminds them that it was not by their own industry that they obtained the honor of being called God's *servants,* and that they did not differ from others so as to excel them in any respect, but that it was because it so pleased God, who has a right to select this or that person according to his pleasure. Yet at the same time he explains what is the design of our election, namely, that we may serve God. "He hath chosen us," as Paul says, "that we may be holy and unreprovable before him." (Ephesians 1:4.) The object to be gained by election is, that they who were the slaves of Satan may submit and devote themselves unreservedly to God.

The seed of Abraham. This is added in the third place, in order to inform us that election depends on the promise of God; not that the promise goes before the election, which is from eternity, but because the Lord has bestowed

his kindness from a regard to the promise; for he said to Abraham,

"I am thy God and the God of thy seed." (Genesis 17:7.)

This favor has therefore been continued to posterity, and on account of the promise the Lord took peculiar care of that people, as Paul also declares that "to them belonged the testament, the promise, and the giving of the Law." (Romans 9:4.) Hence also they were called "that holy nation," (Exodus 19:6,)

"God's sacred inheritance, and a priestly kingdom."

(1 Peter 2:9.)

My friend. It was an extraordinary honor which the Lord bestowed on Abraham, when he called him his *friend.* To be called "the servant of God" is high and honorable; for if it be reckoned a distinguished favor to be admitted into the family of a king or a prince, how much more highly should we esteem it, when God accounts us as his servants and members of his family? But, not satisfied with that, he bestows on him even a higher honor, and adorns him with the name of "friend." What is here said about Abraham relates to all believers; and Christ declared more plainly, "Now I call you not servants, but ye are my friends; for servants know not their Lord's will, but to you have been revealed secret and divine mysteries, and hence you may know my friendly and kind disposition towards you." (John 15:15.) Having therefore obtained from God so great an honor, we ought to remember our duty, that the more abundantly he has testified his kindness towards us, we may the more earnestly and with deeper reverence worship him continually. But we ought always to remember that Abraham was God's friend on no other ground than that of adoption; as Moses also says that the Jews enjoyed their high rank merely through the good pleasure of God, "because God loved their fathers." (Deuteronomy 4:37, and 7:6-8.)

9. *For I have taken thee from the end of the earth.* Isaiah continues the same subject; for we know by experience how necessary it is that consolations be repeated when adversity presses upon us; so that it is not wonderful that the Prophet dwells so largely on this subject. But from one person, Abraham, he passes to the whole nation, mentioning the benefits which all of them have received from God. The relative {אשר} *(asher)* [141] appears to me to be here put for an illative particle; for he assigns the reason why the people ought to be courageous amidst adversity. It is because they have formerly experienced his kindness, and consequently ought to cherish equally favorable expectations for the future. "The ends of the earth" may be understood in two ways; either that the people were brought from a distant country, of which Abraham was a native, or that God, who embraces within his dominion the utmost boundaries of the world, deigned to stretch forth his hand to none but a single people.

[141] "As the parallelism, seems to require an analogous expression of contempt in the next clause, some either read {מתי (methe) (dead men) with Aquila ({τεθνεῶτες}), Theodotion ({νεκροί}), and Jerome (qui mortui estis in Israel), or regard {מתי} (methe) as a modification of that word, denoting mortals. Vitringa and Hitzig gain the same end by explaining it as an ellipsis for {מתי} ,{מספר} (methe mispar,) men of number, that is, few men, used in Psalm 105:12." — Alexander.

From its eminences have I called thee. {אצילים} *(atzilim)* has been generally translated "eminences." Others prefer to take it in the masculine gender, as meaning "princes" or "nobles," in a sense not very different from the other; for the Prophet extols the grace of God, because, passing by very illustrious nations, he has adopted to himself a mean and obscure people. Others refer it to the kingdom of Egypt, from which the Jews were brought out; for we know how great was the renown of that people, and how far superior to other nations they reckoned themselves to be in learning, antiquity, nobility, and many other accomplishments.

But I interpret it differently; for I refer it to the election of the people, who were chosen out of the midst of other nations far superior to them; and therefore I consider {מ} *(mem)* to mean "from," or "more than," so that there is a comparison between the Jews and other nations. In like manner also, Moses shews that they were not elected,

"because they were more or better than other nations, (for they were far fewer,) but because the Lord loved them, and determined to keep the covenant which he had sworn to their fathers." (Deuteronomy 7:7, 8.)

Again, he says,

"Not for thy righteousness, or the uprightness of thy heart, dost thou come to possess the land." (Deuteronomy 9:5.)

Thus, while they were far less than other nations, still they were elected; and this shews the greatness of the love of God, and that there was no reason why, after having received blessings so numerous and so great, they should afterwards distrust so kind a Father. Besides, he adds, that a proof of this favor was given to the people in the Law; as if he had said that it was not hidden, but, on the contrary, was engraven on public tables, when God made a covenant with them by giving them the Law; for God did not wish that they whom he had taken to be his own people should wander hither and thither, but bound them to himself by a promise of salvation.

And have not cast thee off. This last expression might be thought superfluous, and even unseasonable, if Jewish writers had not frequently employed this form of speech, which is very emphatic; for it denotes the firmness of election, as if he had said, "After having once adopted thee, I did not desert or forsake thee, though I had various occasions for casting thee off." So great had been the ingratitude of the Jews, that he might justly have rejected them if he had not resolved to continue to be like himself.

What is said about them relates also to us; for the saying of Paul holds good, that "the gifts of God are without repentance." (Romans 11:29.) Though he cut off the greatest part of men on account of their unbelief, yet he reserves some seed of adoption, that the calling may continue in some furrows; for the wickedness of men cannot change the election of God. Let us therefore remember that we have been elected by God on this condition, that we shall continue in his family, though we might justly have been abandoned.

10. *Fear not.* The former doctrine having had for its aim that the people

should rely on God, the Prophet concludes from the numerous blessings by which the Lord manifested his love, that the people ought not to be afraid. And we ought carefully to observe the reason which he assigns —

For I am with thee. This is a solid foundation of confidence, and if it be fixed in our minds, we shall be able to stand firm and unshaken against temptations of every kind. In like manner, when we think that God is absent, or doubt whether or not he will be willing to assist us, we are agitated by fear, and tossed about amidst many storms of distrust. But if we stand firm on this foundation, we shall not be overwhelmed by any assaults or tempests. And yet the Prophet does not mean that believers stand so boldly as to be altogether free and void of all fear; but though they are distressed in mind, and in various ways are tempted to distrust, they resist with such steadfastness as to secure the victory. By nature we are timid and full of distrust, but we must correct that vice by this reflection, "God is present with us, and takes care of our salvation."

Yet I will assist thee. {עזרתיך} {אף} *(aph gnazarticha)* is rendered by some in the past tense, "Yet I have assisted thee;" but I render it in the future tense, "I will assist thee." I translate {אף} *(aph) yet,* as it is usually translated in many other passages. Yet it is not inappropriate to translate it *even,* and accordingly my readers are at liberty to make their choice. If the past tense of the verb be preferred, it will mean *"moreover"* or *"also."*

With the right hand of my righteousness. Under the word "righteousness," Scripture includes not only equity, but that fidelity which the Lord manifests in preserving his people; for he gives a display of his righteousness when he faithfully defends his people against the contrivances and various attacks of wicked men. He therefore gives the appellation of "the *right hand* of righteousness" to that by which he shews that he is faithful and just. Hence we ought to draw a remarkable consolation; for if God has determined to protect and defend his servants, we ought not to have any terror; because "God cannot deny himself" (2 Timothy 2:13) or lay aside his righteousness.

11. *Lo, all shall be ashamed and blush.* Here the Prophet expressly promises assistance to the Jews against their enemies; for if he had merely promised safety, without making any mention of enemies, various thoughts and anxieties might have arisen in their minds. God indeed promises that we shall be saved, but yet our adversaries prevail, and treat us with the utmost scorn and cruelty; where then is that salvation which was so freely and abundantly promised? To the general promise, therefore, there is likewise added this circumstance: "Though the enemies flourish, yet they shall at length be driven back, covered with shame and disgrace." Salvation is therefore promised on this condition, that we must, in the meantime, encounter enemies and maintain various contests with them, that we may not promise to ourselves external peace, for we must incessantly carry on war.

12. *Thou shalt seek them.* That is, *if thou seek them;* for enemies are not sought, when they have been put to flight; and therefore I think that

this future ought to be rendered as a subjunctive*, "If thou seek them, thou shalt not find them;* for they shall be destroyed and reduced to nothing." Here it ought to be observed that he describes two kinds of enemies, one, of those who attack us by open violence, the other, of those who attack us by words, that is, who tear us by slanders, curses, and reproaches, and who, as if they were defending a righteous cause, carry on various controversies with us, and summon us to courts of justice, and often accuse us of those crimes of which they have been guilty. But these are the stratagems of Satan, and we need not wonder that they who are his servants imitate their lord and master. The Prophet therefore mentions armed enemies who violently fight against the Church, and next brings forward wranglers, who annoy the Church by deceit and slander, and by false pretense of justice. We need not wonder, therefore, that such accusations are directed against us, and we ought not to think it strange, if many unprincipled men in the present day sell themselves to Antichrist to slander us; for the same thing happened formerly to prophets and other servants of God.

13. *For I am Jehovah thy God.* The Prophet had already shewn where the hope of salvation ought to be placed, so as to hold out against every attack; that is, when we are convinced that God is our God, and is on our side. He now lays down the same doctrine, but in different words; and yet the repetition is not superfluous, for we know how easily this doctrine slips out of our minds, even though it be frequently repeated; and it was impossible to bestow excessive commendation on this promise, which it is so difficult to root in our hearts. Let us therefore know that we shall have a prosperous issue of all our contests, for the Lord is present with us; and whenever we are attacked by any severe contest, let us learn to look to Him; for if we hesitate and look hither and thither, we shall never enjoy peace of mind. When he calls himself *our God,* he not only mentions his power, but gives proof of his goodness, which he intends to exercise towards us; for it would not be enough to be convinced of the power of God, if we were not equally certain of his love; and even when we are terrified by the mention of his power alone, his goodness is well fitted to give us peace.

Taking hold of thy right hand, and saying to thee. He now speaks about "taking hold of the hand," and about his voice; for it is of great importance to us to believe the signs which God has given us of his love, and to connect with them the doctrine which assures us of his eternal favor. The word *saying* is therefore highly emphatic; for we must remain in suspense till the Lord speak, whose voice alone can remove fear and bring peace. If, then, we desire to have composure of mind, and to conquer the vexations which come upon us from various quarters, we must pay close attention to his voice, so as never to withdraw our mind from it; for they who refuse to hear this voice of God, or do not hear it attentively, must be miserably tormented by continual doubt and uncertainty.

14. *Fear not, thou worm Jacob, ye dead Israel.* He appears to speak of

the Jews very disrespectfully when he calls them "a worm," and afterwards "dead;" but this comparison agrees better with the distresses of the people, and is more adapted to console them than if he had called them an elect nation, a royal priesthood, a holy tree from a holy root, and adorned them with other titles of that kind. It would even have been absurd to call them by those high-sounding names while they were oppressed by the deepest wretchedness. Accordingly, by the word *worm* he may be viewed as bewailing the disgraceful condition of the people, and encouraging them to cherish better hope; for he shews that he keeps his eye upon them, though they are mean and despised. It is as if he had said, "Although thou art nobody, yet I will assist thee, and, by restoring thee to thy former freedom, will cause thee to come out of thy filth and pollution."

Some translate {מתים} *(methim) men,* which does not at all agree with the context. We are therefore constrained by obvious argument to translate it *dead,* for it is an exposition of the former word by repetition, which is very customary among Jewish writers. On this account I agree with Jerome, who translates it in that manner, and attaches no importance to the circumstance that the first syllable of {מתים} *(methim)* is here written with Scheva (:) instead of Tzere (..); for points so closely allied might easily have been interchanged. [142] The subject ought also to be considered; for nothing could be more foolish than to put "men" instead of "worms," unless perhaps it be thought preferable to render it "mortals."

But, undoubtedly, God intended that this voice should be heard by persons most deeply afflicted, so as to reach even to the grave; for he promises, on the contrary, that he will be a *Redeemer* of "dead men." Besides, while the Prophet had in view his own age, he extended this doctrine to all the ages of the world. Whenever, therefore, we shall see the Church oppressed by the cruelty of wicked men, it will be our duty to bring these things to remembrance, that we may believe that the children of God, who are trodden under foot by the pride of the world, and are not only reckoned contemptible, but oppressed by every kind of cruelty and reproaches so that they are scarcely allowed to breathe, are held by God in the highest honor and esteem, so that they will soon lift up their head; and let every one of us apply this to himself, so that we may not be terrified by reproaches, nor by our wretchedness, nor by anguish, nor by death itself. Though we resemble dead men, and though all hope of salvation has been taken from us, yet the Lord will be present with us, and will at length raise up his Church even from the grave.

The Holy One of Israel. By adding these words, the Prophet again reminds believers, as he did a little before, of that covenant by which Israel had been separated to be God's sacred heritage; and thus he imparts courage, that they may not faint or give way on account of their wretched condition, when they look upon themselves as "worms" and "dead men."

15. *Lo, I have made thee.* The Prophet still speaks of the restoration

[142] "Aux causes secondes." "To second causes."

of the Church, and promises that she will be so victorious over her enemies as to crush and reduce them to powder; and he declares this by a highly appropriate metaphor. The Jews, whom he addresses, were nearly crushed, but he declares that, on the contrary, they shall crush their enemies, so that, after having been delivered, they shall render to them what had been done to themselves. It was necessary that this should be added, for, if they had not regained new strength, they would always have been exposed to the unlawful passions of their enemies; and therefore they needed that God should give them strength to repel the attacks which were made upon them. Yet Isaiah at the same time declares that they shall be executioners of the vengeance of God.

But it may be thought that in this way he inflames the Jews to be desirous of taking revenge. Now, this is quite contrary to the nature of the Spirit of God; and, while we are too much inclined to this disease, the Lord is so far from treating with forbearance these purposes of revenge, that in many passages he commands us to repress them; for he exhorts us rather to pray for our enemies, and not to take delight in their distresses and afflictions. (Matthew 5:44.) I reply, the Prophet here shews what will happen, but neither commands nor exhorts us to desire the destruction of our enemies. If it be again objected that we ought not only to expect but even to desire what the Lord promises, when it tends to his glory and our salvation; I acknowledge that this consolation tends greatly to alleviate our sorrows, when he promises that he will one day inflict punishment on enemies who have cruelly distressed us, and will render to them the measure which they have meted out. (Matthew 7:2.) Yet this is not inconsistent with the command of God, that we should be kind-hearted, and should pity them on account of the evils which they bring upon themselves, and bewail their wretched condition, instead of being led by cruel dispositions to rejoice in their destruction. (Matthew 5:44.)

If we embrace this promise with that faith which we ought to cherish, we shall bring into subjection all the violence of the flesh, and consequently shall first be disposed to endure, and afterwards with moderate zeal shall desire the judgment of God. Accordingly, it ought to be our first aim to repress and lay aside every violent emotion of the flesh, and thus to await with an honest and sincere heart the fit season of the divine judgment; and that not so much from a regard to our private advantage as that due praise may be given to the justice of God. To the same purpose David wrote —

"The righteous shall rejoice when they shall see the vengeance; they shall wash their feet in the blood of wicked men."
(Psalm 58:10.)

Not that they delight in their distresses, but because, as he afterwards adds, the righteous man receives his reward, and the righteous judgments of God are made known in the earth when the wicked are punished for their transgressions.

The Jews, being by nature cruel and eager of bloodshed, seize on these promises after the manner of wild and savage beasts, which eagerly devour the prey that is offered to them, and, as soon as they smell it, are mad with rage. But the Lord does not wish his people to forget that kindness which he recommends above all things; for we cannot be his, if we are not guided by the same spirit, that is, by the spirit of mildness and gentleness. In a word, by this metaphor of "a harrow having teeth," he means nothing else than the wretched destruction of the wicked, whom the Lord will put to flight by the hand of the godly; and that for the purpose of comforting the godly, and not of inflaming them with eagerness for shedding blood.

16. *Thou shalt winnow them.* The meaning is the same as in the former verse, but by a different metaphor; for he compares the Church to a sieve, and wicked men to the chaff which is driven away by the sieve and scattered in every direction. As if he had said, "Though for a time the Gentiles bruise and winnow you, yet a severer judgment awaits them; for by their destruction they shall be bruised and driven away like chaff." But we ought to observe the difference, because here believers are bruised for their good, for they suffer themselves to be subdued and placed under the authority of God; while others, who obstinately resist and do not suffer themselves to be brought into subjection, are scattered by the wind like chaff or stubble, as the Prophet tells us. Thus God had struck them with his flails, had bruised and trodden them, had winnowed and tossed them about, in order that, when the wheat had been well cleansed, he might gather them to himself; but the heathen nations he assigns as chaff to the dunghill.

To this is added, that the victorious Church bruises some unbelievers, so that, being purified from their pollution, they obtain a place in God's barn; and thus was this prediction fulfilled, whenever by the agency of believers some of the Gentiles were subdued, so as to yield obedience to the authority of Christ; for they were never invested with any earthly power, so as to rule over all his enemies, but on the contrary they found it necessary to "possess their souls in patience." (Luke 21:19.) But the Lord raised them up like palm-trees bent down by so many burdens, so that they not only were safe and sound, but also, with unshaken firmness of mind, trod their enemies under their feet.

It ought also to be observed, that Scripture is frequently accustomed to apply to the Church what strictly belongs to God alone. Since, therefore, God afflicted the ungodly Gentiles for the sake of his Church, he is said to have given them to be trodden under the feet of believers, who reaped the advantage. Whenever we read those prophecies, our minds ought to be raised to the kingdom of Christ, that, free from every wicked disposition, we may observe becoming moderation, and may not desire that this bruising should take place before the proper time; for it ought to be abundantly sufficient for us, if our Head shall at length prostrate his enemies under his feet, that we may share in the triumph of his victory.

But thou shalt rejoice in Jehovah. When he adds that the Jews will have cause to rejoice in the Lord, though by this confidence he intends to alleviate their grief, yet at the same time he admonishes the godly to be modest, that they may not exult with fierceness of mind, if at any time it happen that they are raised up by the hand of God, and exalted in such a manner as to reduce their enemies under their power; for there is nothing to which men are more prone than to become proud and insolent when everything happens to their wish. They forget that they are men, and blot out the remembrance of God, whom they ought to have acknowledged as the author of all blessings. In order, therefore, to restrain that immoderate exultation in which the flesh always indulges, and by which we often suffer ourselves to be carried away, the Prophet adds, "in the Lord," because on him all our glory and all our joy ought to rest. In a word, the Prophet exhorts to gratitude, that, the more highly God exalts us, the more carefully ought we to repress all the vanity of ambition, and rejoice and glory in him alone.

17. *The needy and poor shall seek water.* Here he follows out the subject which he had begun to handle at the beginning of the fortieth chapter; for he describes the wretched and afflicted condition in which the Jews should be in Babylon, till at length God should have compassion on them and render assistance. He therefore prepares them for enduring extreme poverty, by saying that they will be *thirsty;* for this figure of speech, by which a part is taken for the whole, is better adapted to express the severity of the affliction. We know that nothing gives men greater distress than the want of water when they are "thirsty."

I Jehovah will listen to them. God declares that he will relieve them, when they are brought to this necessitous condition; and hence we ought to learn to whom this promise belongs, namely, to those who, having been reduced to extremity, are as it were, parched with thirst and almost fainting. Hence also we see that the Church does not always possess an abundance of all blessings, but sometimes feels the pressure of great poverty, that she may be driven by these spurs to call upon God; for we commonly fall into slothfulness, when everything moves on according to our wish. It is therefore advantageous to us to thirst and hunger, that we may learn to flee to the Lord with our whole heart. In a word, we need to be deeply affected with a conviction of our poverty, that we may feel the Lord's assistance. The Prophet unquestionably intended, by this circumstance, partly to illustrate the greatness of the favor, and partly to advise the people not to lose heart on account of their poverty.

The needy and poor. We ought to observe the names by which the Prophet here denominates the people of God. When he calls them "afflicted and poor," he does not speak of strangers, but of those whom the Lord had adopted and chosen to be his heritage, and whom he forewarns that they must patiently endure some severe hardships. Hence we ought not to wonder if the Lord sometimes permit us almost to languish through hunger and

thirst, since he dealt not less severely with our fathers.

When he says that waters *are nowhere to be seen,* let us learn that the Lord, in order to try our patience and faith, withdraws from us every assistance, that we may lean on him alone. Thus, when we look around on every side, and see no relief, let us know that still the Lord will assist. By the expression, *I will listen,* he means that God does not assist every kind of persons, but those who pray to him; for if we are so slothful as to disregard his aid, it is right that we should be altogether deprived of it, and, on account of our unworthiness, should feel no alleviation.

18. and **19.** *I will open rivers.* He illustrates the former doctrine in a different manner, namely, that God has no need of outward and natural means for aiding his Church, but has at his command secret, and wonderful methods, by which he can relieve their necessities, contrary to all hope and outward appearance. When no means of relief are seen, we quickly fall into despair, and scarcely venture to entertain any hope, but so far as outward aids are presented to our eyes. Deprived of these, we cannot rest on the Lord. But the Prophet states that at that time especially they ought to trust, because at that time the Lord has more abundant opportunities of displaying his power, when men perceive no ways or methods, and everything appears to be utterly desperate. Contrary, then, to the hope and belief of all men, the Lord will assist his people, that we may not suffer ourselves to be driven hither and thither by doubt and hesitation.

On lofty mountain tops. In order to confirm his statement more fully, he promises that he will perform miracles contrary to the nature and order of things, that we may not imagine that we should think and judge of these things according to human capacity, or limit the power and promises of God to these inferior means. [143] The Lord has sufficient power in himself, and needs not to borrow from any other, and is not confined to the order of nature, which he can easily change, whenever he thinks fit; for when he says that he will make waters to flow on *the tops of mountains, and fountains in valleys, and pools in deserts,* we know that all this is contrary to the order of nature. The reason why he promised these things is abundantly evident. It was that the Jews might not think that they were prevented from returning to Judea by that vast desert in which travelers are scorched by the heat of the sun, and deprived of all the necessaries of life. The Lord therefore promises that he will supply them with water, and with everything else that is necessary for the journey. Now, these things were fulfilled when the Lord brought his people out of Babylon, but much more abundantly when he converted the whole world to himself by Christ the Redeemer, from whom flow in great abundance throughout the whole world waters to quench the thirst of poor sinners. [144] At that time such a change took place as could never have entered into the imaginations of men.

[143] "Des poures pecheurs."

[144] "Comme celuy qui fut donne a Pyrrhus."

20. *Therefore let them see and know.* While God leads us by all his works to adore him, yet when the restoration of his Church is the matter in question, his wonderful power is manifested, so as to constrain all to admire him. As we have seen elsewhere, and as he will afterwards repeat frequently, when he brought back his people from banishment, he gave a proof fitted for being remembered in all ages, as he declares in this passage that he will do. But because we are either sluggish or careless in considering his works, and because they quickly pass away from our view in consequence of our giving so little attention to them, he repeats the same statement in many forms. We give our attention to vain and useless matters, instead of admiring these works of God; and if at any time they excite our admiration, yet we quickly forget them, because we are speedily led aside to different and very unimportant matters. The Prophet therefore arouses us, in order to shake off our slothfulness, and to quicken and direct all our senses to understand the power of God. On this account he places in the first rank *looking,* which produces certain *knowledge,* and next adds *thought,* which more fully and abundantly confirms the knowledge.

It is uncertain whether the Prophet speaks of the Jews, who were the citizens of the Church, or of foreigners; but in my opinion we may view it as having a general meaning, that in the restoration of the Church the hand of God will be visible even to very remote Gentiles, so that all shall be constrained to admire the work of God. Yet it is certain that the Persians and Medes, after having conquered the Jews, were singularly astonished when they heard those passages from the prophets, and especially when they beheld the accomplishment of them before their eyes; for they knew that such things could not be performed by men, though they were not converted to God.

21. *Plead your cause.* There was also a necessity that this should be added to the former doctrine; for when we associate with wicked men, they pour ridicule on our hope and charge us with folly, as if we were too simple-minded and credulous. Our faith is attacked and frequently shaken by jeers such as the following, "These people hang on the clouds, and believe things that are impossible and contrary to all reason." Since, therefore, the Jews, in their captivity, would hear such mockeries, it was of importance that they should be fortified by these warnings of the Prophet; and in order to give greater weight to this address, he comes forth of his own accord, for the sake of inspiring confidence, and challenges the Gentiles themselves, charging them to bring forward everything that could support their cause, as is usually done in courts of justice.

Saith the king of Jacob. When he calls himself "the king of Jacob," he defies all idols, and shews that he undertakes the cause of his people, so as to be at length acknowledged to have vindicated his glory by delivering those who were unjustly oppressed. And yet the godly needed to possess a strong faith; for what was the aspect of the kingdom, when they were captives

and so severely oppressed? This was also the reason why he formerly (verse 14) called them "the worm Jacob" and "dead men." But they comforted their hearts by that promise by which he formerly said that their root was concealed under ground, when he compared the people to a tree that had been cut down.

"A branch shall spring from the stock of Jesse, and a sprout from his roots shall yield fruit." (Isaiah 11:1.)

They beheld by the eyes of faith that kingly power which lay concealed; for it could not be seen by the bodily eyes or comprehended by the human understanding.

22. *Let them bring them forth.* Not only does he attack idolaters, but he bids them bring forward the gods themselves along with them; as if he had said, "Whatever may be their ingenuity, they will not be advocates able to defend so bad a cause." Here we see God sustaining the character of an advocate, and speaking in the name of the whole nation; for he does not wish to be separated from his Church, which he therefore confirms and fortifies against the mockeries of wicked men, and other contrivances by which they attack our faith. We ought therefore to be of good cheer, when God undertakes our cause, and comes forth publicly against idolaters, and, armed with his invincible truth, rises up against the idols and puts to silence their vanity.

In this manner he shews, that by his word he has most abundantly armed his elect for certain victory, so that they ought not to hesitate to attack and join battle with all unbelievers; and indeed whoever has profited, as he ought, by heavenly doctrine, will easily repel all the tricks of Satan by steadfast and victorious faith. It is true, indeed, that our faith begins with obedience; but submissiveness, by which we place our senses in obedience to God, goes before understanding, in such a manner that it illuminates our minds by certain knowledge. And by this mark the true religion is distinguished from superstitions, for it is regulated by a rule which is not doubtful and cannot deceive. Idolaters are indeed exceedingly proud of their errors, but all their obstinacy proceeds from stupidity, madness, or fanatical violence; for if they would soberly and calmly attend to sound doctrine, that pride by which they obscure the light of truth would speedily give way.

It is far otherwise with the godly, whose faith is indeed founded on humility, but is not rashly led away by foolish and inconsiderate zeal, for it has for its guide and teacher the Spirit of God, that it may not go astray from the sure light of the word. Accordingly, when there is no rule to distinguish, as the Prophet declares, it is absolute superstition. Now, since nothing ought to be rejected at random, believers say, "Bring them forth, and we will give our heart to them;" not that they whom God has taught ought still to be ready to turn to either side, but because superstitious persons can bring forward no argument but what is ridiculous. Again, therefore, he points out the distinction between stupid obstinacy and true faith, which has its

foundation in the word of God, so that it can never fail.

And let them tell us what is to come. We must now inquire by what arguments the Prophet maintains the majesty of God; for God claims for himself Almighty power and foreknowledge of all things, in such a manner that they cannot be ascribed to another without the most shocking blasphemy. Hence it is concluded that these things are peculiar to the Godhead, so that whoever it be that knows all things and can do all things, is justly believed to be God. In this manner, therefore, the Prophet now argues, "If the idols which you worship be gods, they must know all things, and be able to do all things; but they can do nothing either in prosperity or in adversity, and they know nothing that is past or that is future; and therefore they are not gods."

Here arises a difficult question. In the writings of heathen authors we find many predictions which they received from the oracles of their gods, which might lead us to believe that Apollo, Jupiter, and others, foreknew future events, and consequently were gods. I reply, first, if we consider what was the nature of those oracles which are reported to have been uttered by idols, we shall find that they were all obscure and doubtful, like that which was given to Pyrrhus, [145] —

"Aio to A*Eacida Romanos vincere posse,"*

or that to Croesus, —

"Croesus Halym penetrans magnam pervertet opum vim." [146]

By embarrassing ambiguities of this sort did Satan torture the minds of men; so as to send away in uncertainty those who were the victims of that imposture.

But we must also believe what Paul teaches, that Satan has received power of giving effect to error, that he may deceive all the ungodly men who willingly give themselves up to his delusions. (2 Thessalonians 2:11.) Thus, when they consulted Satan, "the father of falsehood," (John 8:44,) it was not wonderful that they should be deceived under the pretense of truth; but it was a most righteous reward of their ingratitude. We see that Satan was freely permitted to increase, by means of the false prophets, the blindness of Ahab, who took pleasure in such delusions. (1 Kings 22:22.) Equally just was it that heathen nations, having alienated themselves from the true God, should be caught by idle snares, and even drawn to destruction. And here it is superfluous to pursue the argument on which Augustine bestows so much toil and pains, how far the devils approach to the heavenly angels in foreknowledge; for the cause must be sought in something else than in their nature. Thus, in ancient times, by giving to wicked teachers the opportunity of practising deception, God revenged the crimes of his people, not that they excelled in the gift of understanding, but so far as they were adapted to this

[145] The former of these hexameters is perhaps the finest recorded specimen of that intentional ambiguity which the Pythian and kindred oracles so successfully cultivated. It may either mean, "I say that thou, the son of Aeacus, canst conquer the Romans," or, "I say that the Romans can conquer thee, the son of Aeacus." — Ed.

[146] "A l'idole corruptible." "To the corruptible idol."

purpose, they freely exercised the permission which was granted to them.

So far as relates to God himself, though his foreknowledge is concealed, and is even a deep abyss, yet he plainly enough revealed it to the elect people, so as to distinguish himself from the multitude of false gods. Not that he foretold everything by his prophets; for the curiosity of men is insatiable, and it is not advantageous to them to know everything; but because he concealed nothing that is profitable to be known, and by many remarkable predictions shewed, as far as was necessary, that he takes a peculiar care of the Church; as Amos says,

"Shall there be any secret that God doth not reveal to his servants the prophets?"
(Amos 3:7.)

This privilege was wickedly and shamefully abused by the Jews, who universally made traffic of their trivial predictions among the Gentiles. But the truth always shone so brightly in the heavenly oracles, that all who guarded against snares clearly perceived by means of it that the God of Israel, and he alone, is God. So far were the idols from demonstrating their foreknowledge, that believers, who had been taught in the school of God, could no more be deceived by them, than a person who had the proper use of his eyes could be made to mistake black for white at noon-day. Much less could they ascribe power to the idols, since it was evident from the predictions which were daily uttered, that God alone directs both prosperity and adversity. The Assyrian conqueror rendered thanks to his idols; but God had previously forewarned the Jews what would happen, and had even shewed plainly that he armed that wicked man for the purpose of executing his vengeance.

23. *Do good, or do evil.* It must not be supposed that *to do evil* denotes, in this passage, to commit injustice, which is contrary to the nature of God; but it means to inflict punishment, and to send adversity, which ought to be ascribed to the providence of God, and not to idols or fortune. In this sense it is very frequently found in Scripture.

"Is there evil in a city which the Lord hath not done?"
(Amos 3:6.)

In like manner Jeremiah accuses the people of not acknowledging God to be "the author of good and of evil." (Lamentations 3:38) By "evils" of that kind, therefore, such as wars, pestilence, famine, poverty, disease, and others of the same kind, the Lord punishes the sins of the people, and wishes to be acknowledged as the author of them all. Now, Isaiah does not bring forward all the examples and arguments by which God could be distinguished from idols, for that would have required a very long discourse; but he is at present satisfied with those which would give a short and yet clear demonstration; for he has not yet concluded his argument.

24. *Lo, ye are of nothing.* He now mocks at idols, in order to confirm the godly in the belief and worship of one God, when by the comparison they see that those who worship idols are miserably deceived and blind.

And your work is of nothing. Work must here be taken in a passive sense, as if he had said that it is a vain imagination, a contrivance of no value. But it may be thought that Isaiah speaks inaccurately, when he says that idols are of nothing, for they are composed of gold, or silver, or brass, or stone, or other materials. The solution is easy, for Isaiah did not look at the material, but at the quality, that is, the notion of divinity which men erroneously attribute to them. Superstitious people do not adore wood, or brass, or metal, viewed in themselves, but the majesty which they foolishly attach to the idol; [147] and this undoubtedly is nothing else than a vain imagination. Hence also Paul, in like manner, declares that "an idol is nothing;" for what reality can be ascribed, or what name can be given, to a mere image (1 Corinthians 8:4.)

He hath chosen abomination in you. Some translate *abomination* in the nominative case, and suppose the meaning to be, that the men who choose the idols are abominable; but I think that the meaning is different. The verb *hath chosen,* appears to me to be used indefinitely, as the grammarians call it, and in that manner it is often used in other passages of Scripture; for when the Prophets speak of the generality of men, and relate any common or ordinary occurrence, they do not employ a substantive. I consider the meaning therefore to be, that men cannot frame idols without at the same time framing abomination. This is a remarkable passage for abhorring idols and the presumption of men who make them, which they cannot do without offering the highest insult to God. Some men think that it is amusement, but the Prophet declares it to be "abomination," which God cannot endure, and will not permit to be unpunished. The word choose points out, as with the finger, the origin of idol-worship; for pure religion would never have been contaminated by so many corruptions, if they had not dared to make gods for themselves according to their own caprice; and therefore it ought to be remarked, that all kinds of worship that are the result of "choice" are at variance with true godliness.

25. *I have raised him from the north.* He again returns to that argument which he had briefly handled, respecting the foreknowledge and power of God, and shews that to him alone in whom these are found, the name of God belongs; and therefore that they are empty idols, which neither know nor can do anything. When he says that he "raised him from the north," some explain this as relating to Cyrus, and others as relating to Christ. But I think that here the Prophet denotes two things; for when he says "from the north," he means the Babylonians, and when he says "from the east," he means the Medes and Persians; as if he had said, "Two changes shall happen that are worthy of remembrance; for I will raise up the Babylonians, whose empire I will exalt on high, and next shall come the Persians, who shall become their masters."

Though these events happened afterwards, and after a long interval, he

[147] "And he shall come." — Eng. Vet.

shews that they were already well known to him, and appointed by his decree, so that the accomplishment of them is a clear proof of his divinity. Yet, in the former clause, he threatens punishment for the purpose of terrifying the Jews; in the latter he commends his mercy; because he testifies that both the captivity and the deliverance of the people will be his work, so that it is evident that both foreknowledge and power belong to him. Heathens make a division of various offices among their gods: Apollo foretells what is to come, Jupiter executes it, and another god does something else. But it belongs to God, not only to foretell or declare what shall happen, but to arrange everything according to his pleasure; for every divine attribute belongs to God alone, and cannot be ascribed to another; and this is the reason why he claims for himself foreknowledge and execution as inseparable.

When he says that he calls him "from the north," as I suggested a little before, he predicts the future captivity of which at that time there was no expectation, because the Jews were friends and allies of the Chaldeans, and at the same time he prophesies concerning the restoration of the people who were permitted by Cyrus to return into their native land. Who would have thought, when matters were in that state, that such things could be believed? Especially since it was after a long interval that they followed; for they happened two hundred years after having been predicted by the Prophet. The Lord testifies that he is the author of these events, that all may know that the Babylonians did not attack them by chance, but that the Lord raised them up as scourges for chastising the Jews, and that the Persians and Medes did not subdue the Babylonians by their own power, but because they were led and prompted by the hand of God. In these words, therefore, he describes the greatness and power of God, and so much the more plainly by declaring that kings and princes, with respect to him, are clay. Hence we see more clearly that the Prophet had regard not only to his own age, but to posterity; for these things could not be known to the men who lived at that time, but posterity, who had actual experience of their accomplishment, understood them better; so that none could doubt that it is God alone "to whom all things are naked and open," (Hebrews 4:13,) and who directs everything according to his pleasure.

This is a remarkable passage for establishing the full and perfect certainty of the oracles of God; for the Jews did not forge these predictions while they were captive in Babylon, but long after the predictions had been delivered to their fathers, they at length recognised the righteous judgment of God, by whom they had been warned in due time, and then embraced his mercy, having learned that they would be at length delivered by the Lord, who wished to preserve his Church, and whom they had found to be faithful to his promises. Hence, therefore, we may conclude with certainty, that Isaiah did not speak at his own suggestion, but that his tongue was moved and guided by the Spirit of God.

And he has come. [148] When he says that "he has come," the meaning is, that all that has been foretold by the command of God will infallibly be accomplished. He speaks of a future event, and thus illustrates the foreknowledge of God; and when he says that God is the author of these events, this relates to his power and might.

He shall call on my name. To call "on the name of God" means nothing else than to undertake anything in obedience to his authority. It is true, indeed, that nothing was farther from the intention of Cyrus than to be employed in the service of the God of Israel, or to follow him as a leader; but the event shewed that God, in a secret manner, led the way, so as to conduct him by successive and incredible victories to Babylon.

And as a potter he shall tread the clay. This comparison is added, because the power of the Babylonians was so vast that it was universally believed that it could not be assailed, and they looked upon themselves as invincible. Since therefore the Babylonians, trusting to their resources, despised all their adversaries, and were elated with pride, the Prophet says, that not only they, but many others shall be subdued and "trodden down like the clay." In short, he means that the wealth of the Babylonians shall not prevent this change from being made, or the Medes and Persians from becoming masters of the empire; and, indeed, the propriety of this metaphor was clearly proved by the event, when Cyrus, after having conquered so many nations, and gained so many brilliant victories, within a short period subdued the whole of the East.

26. *Who hath declared from the beginning?* Again the Lord attacks idols, after having maintained his divinity; for he asks if idolaters can produce anything of a similar nature to support their worship; that is, if they can bring forward any such instance of foreknowledge or power. And because beyond all controversy he could claim this prerogative for himself alone, he tauntingly says, "We will acknowledge that he by whom such things shall be done is the true God."

We will say he is righteous. This is the literal rendering, but the word "righteous" has an extensive meaning, and sometimes denotes "true and approved;" hence the saying, "Wisdom is justified," that is, approved, "by her children." (Matthew 11:19.) These are then clear proofs of the divine majesty, which demonstrate the vanity of idols, because by the disposal of God alone all things are governed, and by the slightest expression of his will the mightiest monarchies are overthrown. The Lord speaks in the plural number, in order to shew that he does not defend his own cause, but the cause of the whole nation. He is, indeed, satisfied with his own eternity; but as we are weak, it is therefore necessary that it should be proved to us that he is God, that our minds may not go astray, or wander in uncertainty, but may rest entirely upon him; and therefore to the word is added experimental

[148] "I, saith Jehovah, am the first that has foretold by my prophets to the Jews those things which none of the false gods, and none of their prophets could foretell, the destruction of Babylon and the return of the banished Jews into their native country." — Rosenmuller.

knowledge, that it may more fully support our faith, if it should still be liable to waver.

There is none that heareth your words. He says that the idols are dumb, and leave their worshippers in suspense, while he kindles the torch of his word, to enlighten his elect people, and lead them forward to righteous judgment.

27. *The first to Zion.* [149] In this verse God states more clearly that he predicts future events to the Jews, in order to encourage them to believe; because if prophecies had not their end and use, it would not in itself be of very great advantage to know future events. God therefore testifies that prophecies are intended by him to promote the faith and edification of the Church. It was necessary that this should be added to the former statements, that the people might know that those examples were exhibited, not only in order to magnify the power of God, but that all believers might reap advantage from it; for all the instances of the power and foreknowledge of God ought to be viewed by us in such a light as will enable us to know that he takes care of us, (1 Peter 5:7,) and that he does everything for promoting our salvation. *Zion* is therefore commanded to acknowledge him as the true and only God, not merely because he has punished their crimes, but because they are restored from captivity, and thus learn that God is reconciled to them.

Behold! Behold! Here we must regard Mount Zion as desolate and uninhabited, and Jerusalem as reduced to a wilderness. Hence also Jeremiah represents Jerusalem as speaking in the manner that is usual with afflicted and distressed women. (Lamentations 1:20.) Thus the Lord now exhibits her as a widow and forsaken. Isaiah will afterwards arouse her to rejoice as a woman who had formerly been barren, and to whom the Lord had given new fertility for bearing offspring. (Isaiah 54:1.) At the same time he now declares that he will comfort Jerusalem, at a time when nothing was to be seen but what was melancholy and revolting in her hideous ruins. Now, the present message is, either that she shall give birth to children, though she was long a widow and desolate, or that they who had been scattered in distant captivity will return to her in vast numbers. With that desolation, therefore, we must contrast the restoration which was effected through Cyrus, when it is said, "Behold, they come;" and by the word "first," is denoted not only the eternal essence of God, but likewise the antiquity of the prediction.

And I will send a messenger to Jerusalem. He now describes the manner in which God informs believers about future events, that is by the agency and ministry of the prophets. {מבשר} *(mebashsher)* is translated by Jerome "Evangelist," or "a bringer of good tidings;" but it literally means a "messenger." This makes little difference, however, as to the meaning; for it denotes the prophets who should bring the glad and cheering message of this deliverance, as God had formerly promised by Moses, that he would raise up, in

[149] Commentary on Isaiah, vol. 1 p. 246.

uninterrupted succession, faithful ministers who should surpass all the magicians, and soothsayers, and diviners. (Deuteronomy 18:15.) For this reason also he formerly bestowed on the Church a remarkable appellation, calling her "a bearer of tidings," (Isaiah 40:9,) because in the Church the word of God ought to sound aloud.

This tends greatly to the commendation of preaching; for the Lord does not descend from heaven to instruct us, but employs the ministry of his servants, and declares that he speaks to us by their mouth; and this distinguished blessing of God ought to be embraced with our whole heart. He had promised in the Law, as I mentioned a little before,

"I will raise up to you a prophet from the midst of you." (Deuteronomy 18:15.)

He now confirms that promise, by saying that there shall never be wanting "messengers" to soothe the people amidst their griefs, and to comfort them amidst their severest afflictions. Hence also we ought to conclude, that there is no condition of the Church in which prophecies cease; that is, in which the word of God brings no alleviation of our distresses.

28. *I looked, and there was none.* After having spoken of himself, the Lord returns to idols; for these are continued contrasts by which a comparison is drawn between God and idols. As if he had said, "I do these things, but idols cannot do them; they have no counsel, or wisdom, or understanding; they cannot give an answer to those that ask them, and cannot yield any alleviation to the wretched." In this comparison we ought to observe that he plainly shews himself to be God, first, by the prophets and by their doctrine, and, secondly, by his works in a similar manner; and that nothing of this kind is found in idols; from which it follows, that they are not gods, and that we ought to rely on him alone. Besides, the eyes of men are darkened by slothfulness; because they neither inquire, nor consider, nor observe. Thus they are stupified by idols, for they are willingly deceived; because they would immediately perceive the emptiness of idols, if they carefully applied their minds to examine them. This shews that idolaters cannot be excused on the plea of ignorance, for they choose to be blind and to wander in darkness, rather than to see the light and embrace the truth.

29. *Behold, they are all vanity.* After having spoken of idols, he makes the same statement as to their worshippers; as it is also said,

"They who make them, and all that trust in them, are like them." (Psalm 115:8.)

Thus he shews that all superstitious persons are full of "vanity," and have no judgment or reason. They cannot, indeed, believe this; for, inflated with pride, they look upon themselves as men of the highest ability, and despise us as stupid and ignorant of the affairs of men, when compared with themselves. With what pride do the Papists and their learned doctors scorn us! With what haughtiness did the Romans in ancient times despise the Jews! But we need not spend time on such pride, for in this passage God condemns them

all for "vanity."

Their works are a failure. He gives the name of "works" both to the images which superstitious men make for themselves, and to all false worship, which has no end or measure, and in which every person desires to be a master and teacher of religion. He pronounces all of them to be a "failure," that is, of no value. He declares this still more plainly, when he says, that they are *wind and chaos,* that is, confusion; for I explain {תהו} (tohu) in the same sense that it has in the first chapter of Genesis, where Moses says that

"the earth was at first shapeless and confused."
(Genesis 1:2.)

This passage against idolaters ought to be carefully studied; for they think that images were appointed to preserve religion, and that minds are kindled by the sight of them, as by the visible presence of God. They think that they are the books of the ignorant and unlearned, who cannot be instructed by the reading of the Scriptures. But the Spirit of God here declares that it is a confused and shapeless thing, that is, because it disturbs and retains in superstition the minds of men; and indeed all true knowledge that exists among men is choked and quenched by this worship of idols. In short, he teaches that all images, and the homage that is paid to them, and they who have made and follow them, are mere vanity, and that we may safely condemn them.

Chapter 42

CHAPTER 42.

Isaiah 42:1-25

1. Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.

1. Ecce servus meus, innitar illi, (vel, suffulciam ipsum) electus meus, in quo sibi placuit anima mea. Posui Spiritum meum super eum; judicium Gentibus proferet.

2. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street.

2. Non clamabit, neque attollet, neque audire faciet in plateis vocem suam.

3. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth.

3. Arundinem quassatam non perfringet, nec linum fumans extinguet; in veritate proferet judicium.

4. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law.

4. Non deficiet, neque frangetur, donec ponat in terra judicium; et legem ejus insulae expectabunt.

5. Thus saith God the LORD, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein:

5. Sic dicit Deus (vel, potens) Iehova, creator coelorum, et expandens cos, dilatans terram, et germina ejus; dans flatum populo in ea habitanti, et spiritum ambulantibus in ea.

6. I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles;

6. Ego Iehova vocavi to in justitia, et tenebo to manu tua; custodiam to, et ponam in foedus populi, in lucem Gentium;

7. To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.

7. Ut aperias oculos caecorum, ut educas ex ergastulo vinctos, et e domo carceris sedentes in tenebris.

8. I am the LORD; that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.

8. Ego Iehova; hoc nomen meum; et gloriam meam alteri non dabo, nec laudem meam sculptilibus.

9. Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them.

9. Priora ecce venerunt, et nova ego annuntio; antequam oriantur nota faciam vobis.

10. Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise from the end of the earth, ye that go down to the sea, and all that is therein; the isles, and the inhabitants thereof.

10. Cantate Iehovae canticum novum, laudem ejus ab extremo terrae; qui descenditis in mare, et plenitudo ejus, insulae et incolae earurn.

11. Let the wilderness and the cities thereof lift up their voice, the villages that Kedar doth inhabit: let the inhabitants of the rock sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains.

11. Exclament desertum et urbes ejus, villae ubi habitat Kedar; cantent incolae petrae, et e vertice montium jubilent.

12. Let them give glory unto the LORD, and declare his praise in the islands.

12. Dent Iehovae gloriam, et laudem ejus in insulis annuntient.

13. The LORD shall go forth as a mighty man, he shall stir up jealousy like a man of war: he shall cry, yea, roar; he shall prevail against his enemies.

13. Iehova tanquam gigas egredietur, et sicut praeliator zelum excitabit. Vociferabitur, jubilabit; super inimicos suos roborabitur.

14. I have long time holden my peace; I have been still, and refrained myself: now will I cry like a travailing woman; I will destroy and devour at once.

14. Tacui a multo tempore, silui et continui me; tanquam parturiens clamabo; vastabo, et deglutiam simul.

15. I will make waste mountains and hills, and dry up all their herbs; and I will make the rivers islands, and I will dry up the pools.

15. In solitudinem redigam montes et coiles; omnem herbam eorum exsiccabo; ponam flumina in insulas, et stagna exsiccabo.

16. And I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead

them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them.

16. Et ducam caecos per viam quam nesciebant; per semitas quas non noverant faciam cos ingredi; ponamque tenebras eoram els in lucca, et obliqua in planum, Haec (vel, Hoec verba, vel, Has res) faciam els, et non derelinquam eos.

17. They shall be turned back, they shall be greatly ashamed, that trust in graven images, that say to the molten images, Ye are our gods.

17. Agentur retrorsum, pudefient pudore qui confidunt sculptill, et fusili dicunt, Vos dii nostri.

18. Hear, ye deaf; and look, ye blind, that ye may see.

18. O surdi, audite, et caeci, intenti estote ad videndum.

19. Who is blind, but my servant? or deaf, as my messenger that I sent? who is blind as he that is perfect, and blind as the LORD'S servant?

19. Quis caecus nisi servus meus? Quis surdus sicut nuntius meus quem mitto? Quis caecus sicut perfectus, et caecus nt servus Iehovae?

20. Seeing many things, but thou observest not; opening the ears, but he heareth not.

20. Videndo multa quae non observas; aperiendo aures, at non audiat.

21. The LORD is well pleased for his righteousness' sake; he will magnify the law, and make it honourable.

21. Iehova voluntarius propter justitiam snare, ut magnificet legem ac extollat.

22. But this is a people robbed and spoiled; they are all of them snared in holes, and they are hid in prison houses: they are for a prey, and none delivereth; for a spoil, and none saith, Restore.

22. At hic populus direptus est ac conculcatus; illaqueandi in carceribus omnes, et in speluncis abscondentur. Erunt in direptionem, nec erit qui liberet; in praedam, nee quisquam dicet, Redde.

23. Who among you will give ear to this? who will hearken and hear for the time to come?

23. Quis in vobis auribus percipiet hoc? Quis advertet? Quis attendet in postcrum?

24. Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers? did not the LORD, he against whom we have sinned? for they would not walk in his ways, neither were they obedient unto his law.

24. Quis in praedam dedit Iacob, et Israel exposuit direptoribus? Nonne Iehova? Eo quod peccaverimus in eum, nec voluerunt ambulare in viis ejus, nec audierunt legem ejus.

25. Therefore he hath poured upon him the fury of his anger, and the strength of battle: and it hath set him on fire round about, yet he knew not; and it burned him, yet he laid it not to heart.

25. Itaque effudit super eum furorem irae suae, et robur belli, Inflammavit

eum undique, neque advertit; exarsit in eum, neque posuit super cor.

1. *Behold my servant.* The Prophet appears to break off abruptly to speak of Christ, but we ought to remember what we mentioned formerly [150] in expounding another passage, (Isaiah 7:14,) that the prophets, when they promise anything hard to be believed, are wont immediately afterwards to mention Christ; for in him are ratified all the promises which would otherwise have been doubtful and uncertain. "In Christ," says Paul, "is Yea and Amen." (2 Corinthians 1:20.) For what intercourse can we have with God, unless the Mediator come between us? We undoubtedly are too far alienated from his majesty, and therefore could not be partakers either of salvation or of any other blessing, but through the kindness of Christ.

Besides, when the Lord promised deliverance to the Jews, he wished to raise their minds higher, that they might look for greater and more valuable gifts than bodily freedom and a return to Judea; for those blessings were only the foretaste of that redemption which they at length obtained through Christ, and which we now enjoy. The grace of God in the return of his people would indeed have been imperfect, if he had not, at that time revealed himself as the perpetual Redeemer of his Church. But, as we have already said, the end of the captivity in Babylon included the full restoration of the Church; and consequently we need not wonder if the prophets interweave that commencement of grace with the reign of Christ, for that succession of events is mentioned in ninny passages. We must therefore come to Christ, without whom God cannot be reconciled to us; that is, unless we be received into the number of God's children by being ingrafted, into his body. It will be evident from what follows, that the Prophet now speaks of Christ as the First-born and the Head, for to no other person could the following statements be applied, and the Evangelists place the matter beyond all controversy. (Matthew 12:17-21.)

He calls Christ his *Servant,* ({κατ} {ἐξοχήν},) by way of eminence; for this name belongs to all the godly, because God has adopted them on the condition of directing themselves and their whole life to obedience to him; and godly teachers, and those who hold a public office in the Church, are in a peculiar manner denominated the servants of God. But there is something still more extraordinary, on account of which this name belongs especially to Christ, for he is called a "Servant," because God the Father not only enjoined him to teach or to do some particular thing, but called him to a singular and incomparable work which has nothing in common with other works.

Though this name is ascribed to the person, yet it belongs to human nature; for since his divine nature is eternal, and since he has always possessed in it a glory equal and perfectly similar to that of the Father, it was neces-

[150] The former is found in the text of our author's version, and the latter in his marginal reading. — Ed.

sary that he should assume flesh in order that he might submit to obedience. Hence also Paul says,

"Though he was in the form of God, he accounted it not robbery to make himself equal to God, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant," etc. (Philippians 2:6.)

That he was a servant was a voluntary act, so that we must not think that it detracted anything from his rank. The ancient writers of the Church expressed this by the word "Dispensation," by which it was brought about, they tell us, that he was subject to all our infirmities. It was by a voluntary determination that he subjected himself to God, and subjected himself in such a manner as to become also of service to us; and yet that exceedingly low condition does not hinder him from still continuing to possess supreme majesty. Hence also the Apostle says that he was "exalted above every name." (Philippians 2:9.) he employs the demonstrative particle *Behold,* in order to lead the Jews to regard the event as having actually taken place; for the objects which were before their eyes might have led them to despair, and therefore he bids them turn away their eyes from the actual condition of things and look to Christ.

I will lean upon, him, or, *I will uphold him.* [151] {אתמך} *(ethmoch)* is interpreted by some in an active, and by others in a passive sense. If it be taken in a passive sense, the meaning will be, that God will "lean on" his Anointed in such a manner as to lay the whole charge upon him, as masters commonly do to their faithful servants; and it is a proof of extraordinary fidelity, that God the Father will deliver all things to him, and will put into his hand his own power and authority. (John 13:3, and 17:10.) Yet I do not object to the active signification, "I will raise him up," or, "I will exalt him," or, "I will support him in his rank;" for what immediately follows, *I will put my Spirit in him,* is a repetition of the same sentiment. In the former clause, therefore, he says, *I will uphold him,* and afterwards describes the manner of "upholding," that he will direct him by his Spirit, meaning by this phrase that he will assist Christ in all things, and will not permit him to be overcome by any difficulties. Now, it was necessary that Christ should he endued with the Spirit of God, in order to execute that divine office, and be the Mediator between God and men; for so great a work could not be performed by human power.

My elect. In this passage the word *Elect* denotes "excellent," as in many other passages; for they who are in the very flower of their age are called chosen youths. (1 Samuel 26:2, and 2 Samuel 6:1.) Jehovah therefore calls him "an excellent servant," because he bears the message of reconciliation, and because all his actions are directed by God. At the same time he demonstrates his undeserved love, by which he embraced us all in his only-begotten Son, that in his person we may behold an illustrious display of that election by which we have been adopted into the hope of eternal life. Now, since

[151] "Il ne fait pas grand bruit."

heavenly power dwells in the human nature of Christ, when we hear him speak, let us not look at flesh and blood, but raise our minds higher, so as to know that all that he does is divine.

In whom my soul is well pleased. From this passage we learn that Christ is not only beloved by the Father, (Matthew 3:17,) but is alone beloved and accepted by him, so that there is no way of obtaining favor from God but through the intercession of Christ. In this sense the Evangelists quote this passage, (Matthew 12:18,) as Paul also declares that we are reconciled "in the beloved" in such a manner as to be beloved on his account. (Ephesians 1:6.) The Prophet afterwards shews that Christ will be endued with the power of the Spirit, not solely on his own account, but in order to spread it far and wide.

He will exhibit judgment to the Gentiles. By the word *judgment* the Prophet means a well-regulated government, and not a sentence which is pronounced by a judge on the bench; for to *judge* means, among the Hebrew writers, "to command, to rule, to govern," and he adds that this judgment will be not only in Judea, but throughout the whole world. This promise was exceedingly new and strange; for it was only in Judea that God was known, (Psalm 76:2,) and the Gentiles were shut out from all confidence in his favor. (Ephesians 2:12.)

These clear proofs were therefore exceedingly needful for us, that we might be certain of our calling; for otherwise we might think that these promises did not at all belong to us. Christ was sent in order to bring the whole world under the authority of God and obedience to him; and this shows that without him everything is confused and disordered. Before he comes to us, there can be no proper government amongst us; and therefore we must learn to submit to him, if we desire to be well and justly governed. Now, we ought to judge of this government from the nature of his kingdom, which is not external, but belongs to the inner man; for it consists of a good conscience and uprightness of life, not what is so reckoned before men, but what is so reckoned before God. The doctrine may be thus summed up: "Because the whole life of men has been perverted since we were corrupted in every respect by the fall of Adam, Christ came with the heavenly power of his Spirit, that he might change our disposition, and thus form us again to 'newness of life.' " (Romans 6:4.)

2. *He shall not cry aloud.* The Prophet shews of what nature the coming of Christ will be; that is, without pomp or splendor, such as commonly attends earthly kings, at whose arrival there are uttered various noises and loud cries, as if heaven and earth were about to mingle. But Isaiah says that Christ will come without any noise or cry; and that not only for the sake of applauding his modesty, but, first, that we may not form any earthly conception of him; secondly, that, having known his kindness by which he draws us to him, we may cheerfully hasten to meet him; and, lastly, that our faith may not languish, though his condition be mean and despicable.

He shall not lift up his voice; that is, he shall create no disturbance; as we commonly say of a quiet and peaceable man, "He makes no great noise." [152] And indeed he did not boast of himself to the people, but frequently forbade them to publish his miracles, that all might learn that his power and authority was widely different from that which kings or princes obtain, by causing themselves to be loudly spoken of in order to gain the applause of the multitude. (Matthew 8:4; 9:30; 12:16; Mark 5:43; Luke 8:56.)

3. *A bruised reed he shall not break.* After having declared in general that Christ will be unlike earthly princes, he next mentions his mildness in this respect, that he will support the weak and feeble. This is what he means by the metaphor of "the bruised reed," that he does not wish to break off and altogether crush those who are half-broken, but, on the contrary, to lift up and support them, so as to maintain and strengthen all that is good in them.

Nor will he quench the smoking flax. This metaphor is of the same import with the former, and is borrowed from the wicks of lamps, which may displease us by not burning clearly or by giving out smoke, and yet we do not extinguish but trim and brighten them. Isaiah ascribes to Christ that forbearance by which he bears with our weakness, which we find to be actually fulfilled by him; for wherever any spark of piety is seen, he strengthens and kindles it, and if he were to act towards us with the utmost rigor, we should be reduced to nothing. Although men therefore totter and stumble, although they are even shaken or out of joint, yet he does not at once cast them off as utterly useless, but bears long, till he makes them stronger and more steadfast.

God gave a manifestation of this meekness when he appointed Christ to begin the discharge of his office as ambassador; for the Holy Spirit was sent from heaven in the shape of a dove, which was a token of nothing but mildness and gentleness. (Matthew 3:16; Mark 1:10; Luke 3:22; John 1:32.) And indeed the sign perfectly agrees with the reality; for he makes no great noise, and does not render himself an object of terror, as earthly kings commonly do, and does not wish to harass or oppress his people beyond measure, but, on the contrary, to soothe and comfort them. Not only did he act in this manner when he was manifested to the world, but this is what he daily shows himself to be by the gospel. Following this example, the ministers of the gospel, who are his deputies, ought to shew themselves to be meek, and to support the weak, and gently to lead them in the way, so as not to extinguish in them the feeblest sparks of piety, but, on the contrary, to kindle them with all their might. But that we may not suppose that this meekness holds out encouragement to vices and corruptions, he adds —

He shall bring forth judgment in truth. Although Christ soothes and upholds the weak, yet he is very far from using the flatteries which encourage

[152] That is, {{תורה (torah), "a law," is derived from {ירה} (yarah), which in the Hiphil conjugation, {הורה} (horah), signifies "he taught." — Ed.

vices; and therefore we ought to correct vices without flattery, which is in the highest degree inconsistent with that meekness. We ought therefore to guard diligently against extremes; that is, we must neither crush the minds of the weak by excessive severity, nor encourage by our smooth language anything that is evil.

That we may better understand who those persons are towards whom, following the example of Christ, we ought to exercise this mildness, we ought to weigh carefully the Prophet's words. He calls them "a bruised reed" and "smoking wick." These words do not apply to those who boldly and obstinately resist, nor to those who are fierce and headstrong; for such persons do not deserve this forbearance, but rather must be broken and crushed, as by the strokes of a hammer, by the severity of the word. While he praises meekness, he at the same time shews to whom it is adapted, and at what time and in what manner it ought to be employed; for it is not suitable to hardened and rebellious persons, or to those whose rage sends forth flames, but to those who are submissive, and who cheerfully yield to the yoke of Christ.

The word *smoking* shews that he maintains and cherishes not darkness, but sparks, though feeble and hardly perceptible. Wherever then there is impiety and stubbornness, there we must act with the utmost severity, and exercise no forbearance; but, on the other hand, where there are vices that have not gone beyond endurance, yet by gentleness of this nature, instead of encouraging, we must correct and reform them; for we must always pay regard chiefly *to truth,* of which he speaks, that vices may not be concealed, and thus acquire a secret corruption, but that the weak may be gradually trained to sincerity and uprightness. These words, therefore, relate to those persons who, amidst many deficiencies, have integrity of mind, and earnestly desire to follow true religion, or, at least, in whom we see some good beginning. It is clearly shewn by many passages (Matthew 12:39; 22:18; 23:13) how severely Christ deals with despisers; for he is constrained to employ "a rod of iron" to crush those who do not submit to be governed by his shepherd's crook. As he justly declares that "his yoke is easy, and his burden is light," (Matthew 11:30,) to willing disciples, so with good reason does David arm him with "a scepter of iron" (Psalm 2:9) to break his enemies in pieces, and declare that he will be wet with their blood. (Psalm 110:6, 7.)

4. *He shall not faint, nor be discouraged.* The Prophet alludes to the preceding verse, and confirms what he formerly said, that Christ will indeed be mild and gentle towards the weak, but that he will have no softness or effeminacy; for he will manfully execute the commission which he has received from the Father. This is what he means when he says that "he shall not faint;" and in this verb {יכהה} *(yichheh)* there is an allusion to a former verse, in which he spoke of "smoking flax." Now, he shews what is the true moderation of meekness, not to turn aside to excessive indulgence; for we ought to use it in such a manner as not to swerve from our duty. Many

persons wish to profit by the name of gentleness, so as to gain the applause and esteem of the world, but at the same time betray truth in a base and shameful manner.

I remember that there were in a populous city two preachers, one of whom boldly and loudly reproved vices, while the other endeavored to gain the favor of the people by flatteries. This fawning preacher, who was expounding the Prophet Jeremiah, lighted on a passage full of the mildest consolation, and having found, as he imagined, a fit opportunity, began to declaim against those harsh and severe reprovers who are wont to terrify men by thunderbolts of words. But on the following day, when the Prophet changed his subject and sharply rebuked wicked men with his peculiar vehemence of style, the wretched flatterer was constrained to encounter bitter scorn by retracting the words which were fresh in the recollection of all his hearers. Thus the temporary favor which he had gained speedily vanished, when he revealed his own disposition, and made himself abhorred by the good and the bad.

We must therefore distinguish between the submissive and the obstinate, that we may not abuse that mildness by using it on every occasion. Yet Isaiah declares that Christ's fortitude will be unshaken, so that it shall surmount every obstacle; for by these words, *Till he put judgment,* he means that the ministry of Christ will be so efficacious that the fruit of his doctrine shall be manifested. He does not merely say, "Till he shall have made known the will of his Father," but "Till he establish *judgment,"* that is, as we formerly said, the proper exercise of government. Christ's ministry, therefore, he testifies, will not be unfruitful, but will have such efficacy that men shall be reformed by it.

This must not be limited to the person of Christ, but extends to the whole course of the gospel; for he not only discharged the embassy committed to him for three years, but continues to discharge the same embassy every day by means of his servants. Yet we are reminded that it is impossible for us to discharge that office without being laid under the necessity of suffering many annoyances, and sustaining contests so severe and dangerous, that we shall be almost overwhelmed and ready to abandon everything. Still we must not desist, but persevere constantly in our duty, and run to the very end; and therefore the Prophet testifies that Christ will be so steadfast that he will pursue his calling to the end; and, following his example, we ought boldly to persevere.

And the isles shall wait for his law. Here he employs the word *Law* to mean "doctrine," as the Hebrew word for "law" is derived from a verb which signifies to teach; [153] and thus the prophets are accustomed to speak of the gospel, in order to shew that it will not be new or contrary to what was taught by Moses.

The isles. We have formerly shewn that the Hebrew writers give the name

[153] "There is no sufficient ground for the opinion that the pronoun {{הוא (ha) is ever used as a divine name, cognate and equivalent to Jehovah. In this case the obvious and usual construction is entirely satisfactory." — Alexander.

of *isles* to countries beyond the sea.

The Prophet confirms the former statement, by which it was declared that Christ had been appointed not only for the Jews, but also for the Gentiles, though they had nothing in common with the Jewish commonwealth. In short, that promise relates to all nations, that the advantages of this restoration and reformation may be shared by every part of the world.

By the word *wait,* he means that the elect will eagerly embrace the gospel offered to them; for the Lord displays in it the power of his election, when "they who wandered in darkness," (Matthew 4:16,) as soon as they hear the voice of the gospel, embrace it with the utmost eagerness, and although they formerly wandered, like scattered and lost sheep, yet hear immediately the voice of the shepherd, and cheerfully submit to him, as Christ himself has also spoken. (John 10:16.) Hence we learn that the saying of Augustine is exceedingly true, "that many sheep wander out of the folds, while wolves frequently dwell within the folds." This attention is the work of God, when men who thought that they were wise give up their own judgment, and have to learn the gospel of Christ, so as to depend entirely on this teacher.

5. *Thus saith Jehovah.* He confirms what he said in the beginning of the chapter about the reign of Christ, that he will renew and restore all things; and as this might be thought to be incredible, he has here added a magnificent description of the power of God, by which our faith ought to be confirmed, especially when the outward aspect of things is directly contrary. On this account he brings forward clear proofs of the power of God, that all may be aroused by the mention of them, and may be convinced that he who created all things out of nothing, who spread out the heavens, who produced vegetation, who gave life to animals, and who upholds and defends all things by his power, will easily perform what he promises concerning the reign of Christ. These forms of expression remind us that we ought always to consider the power of God, that we may be fully convinced of the authority and undoubted certainty of his word; for it is not without reason that Isaiah makes this preface, but in order to remove every doubt, because nothing is too hard for God, who keeps the whole world in subjection to his authority; and in the following chapters he will employ similar modes of expression.

{האל} (*hael*) is rendered by some "powerful," and by others "God;" but it is of little consequence, for the meaning is the same; because he exhibits his power and majesty, and adorns him with this variety of titles, that we may know that he will easily restore all that is fallen and laid low.

6. *I Jehovah have called thee in righteousness.* He again repeats the name of God, in which we ought to supply what he stated in the former verse about his power. It is generally thought that this points out the end of Christ's calling, that he was sent by the Father to establish "justice" among men, who are destitute of it so long as they have not Christ, and, being given up to all the corruptions of crimes and vices, are held captive under the tyranny of Satan. But because the word "righteousness" has a more

extensive signification, I pass by that ingenious distinction; for it is not even said that he shall be called "to righteousness," but this phraseology ought to be viewed as equivalent to the adverbial expression, "righteously," or "in a holy manner." I rather suppose the meaning to be, that Christ was "called in righteousness," because his calling is lawful, and therefore shall be firm and secure. We know that what is not done in a proper and regular manner cannot be of long duration. Or perhaps it will be thought preferable to view it thus, that God, in appointing Christ to restore the Church, seeks no reason but from himself and his own righteousness; but it is certain that this word denotes stability, as if he had said, "faithfully."

And will hold thee by thy hand. By "the holding of the hand" he means the immediate assistance of God; as if he had said, "I will direct and establish thee in the calling to which I have appointed thee. In a word, as thy calling is righteous, so I will defend and uphold thee, as if by taking hold of thy hand I were thy leader."

I will keep thee. This word "keep" plainly shews what is the meaning of holding by the hand, namely, that Christ will be directed by the Father in such a manner that he shall have him as his protector and guardian, shall enjoy his assistance, and, in short, shall feel his presence in all things.

And will place thee for a covenant. He now states the reason why God promises that he will be a guardian to Christ. Besides, the Prophet spoke of the Jews and the Gentiles separately; not that they differ by nature, or that the one is more excellent than the other, (for all need the grace of God, (Romans 3:23,) and Christ has brought salvation to all indiscriminately,) but because the Lord assigned the first rank to the Jews, (Matthew 10:6,) it was therefore proper that they should be distinguished from the others. Accordingly, before "the partition-wall" (Ephesians 2:14) was thrown down, they excelled, not by their merit, but by the favor of God, because with them in the first instance the covenant of grace was made.

It may be objected, "Why is Christ appointed to a covenant which was ratified long before? for, more than two thousand years before, God had adopted Abraham, and thus the origin of the distinction was long previous to the coming of Christ." I reply, the covenant which was made with Abraham and his posterity had its foundation in Christ; for the words of the covenant are these, "In thy seed shall all nations be blessed." (Genesis 22:18.) And the covenant was ratified in no other manner than in the seed of Abraham, that is, in Christ, by whose coming, though it had been previously made, it was confirmed and actually sanctioned. Hence also Paul says, "that the promises of God are yea and amen in Christ," (2 Corinthians 1:20,) and in another passage calls Christ "the minister of circumcision, to fulfill the promises which were given to the fathers." (Romans 15:8.) Still more clearly does he declare that Christ is "the peace" of all, so that they who were formerly separated are united in him, and both they who were far off and they who were near are thus reconciled to God. (Ephesians 2:17.) Hence

also it is evident that Christ was promised, not only to the Jews, but to the whole world.

For a light of the Gentiles. We have here another clear proof of the calling of the Gentiles, since he expressly states that Christ was appointed to be "a light" to them. He calls him *a light,* because the Gentiles were plunged in the deepest and thickest darkness, at the time when the Lord illuminated none but the Jews. Now, then, the blame lies solely with ourselves, if we do not become partakers of this salvation; for he calls all men to himself, without a single exception, and gives Christ to all, that we may be illuminated by him. Let us only open our eyes, he alone will dispel the darkness, and illuminate our minds by the "light" of truth.

7. *That thou mayest open the eyes of the blind.* Here he explains more fully for what end Christ shall be sent by the Father, that we may see more clearly what advantage he yields us, and how much we need his assistance. He reminds all men of their "blindness," that they may acknowledge it, if they wish to be illuminated by Christ. In short, under these metaphors he declares what is the condition of men, till Christ shine upon them as their Redeemer; that is, that they are most wretched, empty, and destitute of all blessings, and surrounded and overwhelmed by innumerable distresses, till they are delivered by Christ.

Now, though the Prophet addresses Christ himself, yet he has in his eye believers, that they may know that in him they ought to trust, and may not doubt that a remedy will be provided for all their distresses, if they implore his aid. God does not here enjoin Christ what he shall do, as if he needed to be taught or to receive commandments; but he addresses him for our sake, that we may know why the Father sent him; as he says also, (Psalm 2:7, 8,) "I will make known the decree; ask of me, I will give thee the Gentiles;" for in that passage the rank and authority of Christ are declared, that we may know that the Father has bestowed on him the highest authority, in order that we may more securely place all our hope and confidence in him.

8. *I am Jehovah.* Hence infer what is the nature and extent of the disease of unbelief, since the Lord can hardly satisfy himself with any words to express the cure of it. By nature we are prone to distrust, and do not believe God when he speaks, till he entirely subdue our stubbornness. Besides, we continually fall back into the same fault through our levity, unless he employ many bridles to restrain us. Again, therefore, he returns to that confirmation of which we have spoken formerly, that his promises may remain unshaken.

This is my name. {הוא} (*hu*) is sometimes taken for a substantive, so as to be a proper name of God; [154] but I explain it in a more simple manner, *"It* is my name," that is,* "Jehovah* is my own name, and cannot lawfully be given to any other." In a word, by this expression he seals all that was said about the office of Christ, and adds as it were a seal to the promise:

[154] "By the former things he means those things which had been done in order to protect and deliver the Hebrew nation from the power of barbarians; and those things which Jehovah had foretold by his prophets came, that is, they happened." — Rosenmiiller.

"He who declareth these things testifieth that he alone is God, and that this name dwelleth in him alone."

And I will not give my glory to another; that is, "I will not suffer my glory to be diminished, which it would be, if I were found to be false or fickle in my promises." He therefore declares that he will abide by his promises, because he wishes to vindicate his glory and preserve it entire, that it may not be in any respect diminished.

This is a remarkable passage, by which we are taught that the glory of God is chiefly visible in his fulfillment of what he has promised. And hence we obtain a singular confirmation of our faith, that the Lord never deceives, never swerves from his promises, and nothing can hinder what he has once determined. But since Satan, by amazing arts, endeavors to obscure this glory of God, and to bestow it on men and on false gods, he therefore testifies that he will not permit himself to be regarded as fickle or deceitful in his promises.

Nor my praise to graven images. A contrast is drawn between the only God and idols with reference to time; for, had not God been the Redeemer of his people, unbelievers would have boasted as if true religion had been false and useless. God therefore declares that he will not permit wicked men to triumph by oppressing the Church; and, beyond all doubt, God has hitherto spared us, and still deals so gently with us, in order that he may not expose his Gospel to the blasphemous reproaches of the Papists. We ought to draw from this a universal doctrine, namely, that the Lord wishes that his glory may remain unimpaired; for he defends and maintains it everywhere with the utmost zeal, in order to shew that he is exceedingly jealous of it, (Exodus 20:5,) and does not permit the smallest part of it to be given to another.

9. *The former things.* He now recalls to remembrance the former predictions, by the fulfillment of which he shews that confidence ought to be placed in him for the future; for what we have known by actual experience ought to tend greatly to confirm our belief. It is as if he had said, "I have spoken so frequently to your fathers, and you have found me to be true in all things; and yet you cannot place confidence in me about future events: the experience of past transactions produces no effect upon you, and does not excite you to do better." God's favors, therefore, ought to be mentioned by us in such a manner that, whenever our salvation lies concealed in hope, we may rest on the word of God, and be confirmed by it during the whole course of our life.

Behold! they came. [155] By the adverb *behold,* he points out, as with the finger, that they had learned by experience, that God is not false, and did not; speak in vain by the prophets; because clear proofs openly testified and

[155] "That is, before they took place, as in Isaiah 43:12. The metaphor is taken from plants, which put forth the buds and flowers before their fruits are visible. (Genesis 2:5; Exodus 10:5.) The meaning is, that God does not foretell those things which have already begun to be accomplished, and which sagacious men may conjecture to be future; but before anything has happened, from which a conjecture may be formed as to future events." — Rosenmuller.

proclaimed the truth of God.

Before they spring forth. [156] He distinguishes God from idols by this mark, that he alone knows and predicts future events, but idols do not; know them. As to the greater part of the responses which were given by the gods of the Gentiles, we have formerly seen that they were either false or ambiguous; for they who relied on them were often shamefully deceived, and this is the reward which they richly deserved. And if at first sight the event corresponded, this plunged them deeper in eternal perdition; and by the righteous judgment of God it was brought about that Satan imposed upon them by such delusions. Far otherwise was it with the sacred oracles, by which the Church, for her own advantage and salvation, was at one time brought to repentance, and at another time encouraged to entertain favorable hope, that she might not sink under the burden of punishments. It remains a settled principle, that all that God has foretold is verified by the event; for he rules and directs all things by his providence.

10. *Sing to Jehovah.* He now exhorts the people to gratitude; for God's favors ought always to excite us, by the remembrance of them, to give thanks and to celebrate his praises. Besides, by that exhortation he calls believers to behold the prophecy as actually accomplished, and confirms those promises of which he spoke. We ought to observe this as the design of the Prophet, that there is no reason why believers, though they are severely oppressed, should give way to sorrow, but that good hope ought to encourage them to gladness, that they may now prepare to render thanksgiving.

The subject of this song is, that Christ has been revealed to the world, and sent by the Father, in order to relieve the miseries of his Church, and to restore her to perfect order, and indeed, as it were, to renew the whole world. As it was difficult to believe this, the Prophet wished to remove every doubt, in order to fix these predictions more deeply in their hearts. Nor ought we to wonder that the Prophet labors so hard to arouse them when they were reduced to the greatest straits, and had no longer any hope of safety. The mere aspect of things might shake their faith, and even produce suspicion that all that the prophets had foretold was unfounded and absurd. The object, of this exhortation therefore is, that when affairs are utterly desperate, they should be cheerful and rely on these promises.

A new song. By *new* he means an excellent, beautiful, and elegant song, not one that is ordinary or common, but a song which may arouse men to admiration, as relating to the extraordinary grace of God, of which there had never been so remarkable an example. In this sense it is also used in Psalm 33:3, and 96:1 *New* is here contrasted with what is Ordinary, and thus he extols the infinite mercy of God, which was to be revealed in Christ, and

[156] "If these are not all parts of the same great picture, it is impossible to frame one. If they are, it is absurd to take the first and last parts in their widest sense as an extravagant hyperbole, and that which is between them in its strictest sense as a literal description. The only consistent supposition is, that sea, islands, deserts, mountains, towns, and camps, are put together as poetical ingredients of the general conception, that the earth in all its parts shall have reason to rejoice." — Alexander.

which ought therefore to be celebrated and sung with the highest praises. Hence we infer that each of us ought to be the more zealous in proclaiming the praises of God, in proportion to the greater number of favors which we have received. It is indeed the duty of all men to sing praise to God, for there is no person who is not bound to it by the strongest obligations; but more lofty praises ought to proceed from those on whom more valuable gifts have been bestowed. Now, since God has laid open the fountain of all blessings in Christ, and has displayed all spiritual riches, we need not wonder if he demand that we offer to him an unwonted and excellent sacrifice of praise.

It ought to be observed that this *song* cannot be sung but by renewed men; for it ought to proceed from the deepest feeling of the heart, and therefore we need the direction and influence of the Spirit, that we may sing those praises in a proper manner. Besides, he does not exhort one or a few nations to do this, but all the nations in the world; for to all of them Christ was sent.

11. *Let the desert and it's cities cry aloud.* While the Prophet includes all the parts of the world, he mentions particularly those which were better known to the Jews; for on the west Judea had the sea, and on the east the desert and Arabia. When he speaks of the tents of *Kedar,* the *desert,* and the *rocks,* he means Arabia; but it is a figure of speech by which a part is taken for the whole, for it includes the whole of the east. It is as if he had said, that from the rising to the setting of the sun these praises shall be heard; for God shall be worshipped everywhere, though formerly he was worshipped in Judea alone; and thus the state of affairs shall be changed, and that praise shall be beard in the most distant parts of the earth. [157]

The towns where Kedar dwells. He mentions *Kedar,* because the Scenite [158] Arabians, as is well known, dwelt in tents. But he employs the word *towns,* while he is speaking of a desert; and therefore it ought to be remarked, that *desert* denotes not only the vast wilderness which lay between Judea and Arabia, but the more distant countries which were commonly designated from that part which was adjoining to them, as some people give the name of "mountainous" to those plains which lie beyond the mountains; for the common people have their attention so much directed to what they see close at hand, that they suppose them to resemble other places that are more distant. Yet the Prophet here exalts and magnifies the greatness of the grace of God, in reaching even rude and barbarous nations, whose savage cruelty was well known.

12. *Let them give glory to Jehovah.* He explains what the nature of that shouting will be, that is, to celebrate the praises of God; for his goodness and mercy shall be everywhere seen; and therefore he enjoins them to celebrate this redemption with a cheerful voice, because the blessed consequences of it shall be shared by all the nations. And thus we are reminded to cry aloud in

[157] The name is derived from {σκηνὴ} (skene), "a tent," because they dwelt in tents. Their modern name is Saracens. — Ed

[158] "Non pas a ces sages mondains." "Not to these worldly wise men."

the present day with the greatest earnestness when we proclaim the praises of God, that we ourselves may be inflamed, and may excite others by our example to act in the same manner; for to be lukewarm, or to mutter, or to sing, as the saying is, to themselves and to the muses, is impossible for those who have actually tasted the grace of God.

13. *Jehovah like a giant.* What Isaiah now adds is intended to surmount the temptations of believers. He ascribes to God strength and power, that they may know that they shall find in him a sure defense; for in adversity we are perplexed, because we doubt whether or not God will be able to render us assistance, especially when by delaying he appears in some measure to reject our prayers; and therefore the Prophet loudly extols the power of God, that all may learn to rely and place their confidence in him.

Will go forth. The *going forth* that is here mentioned must be taken metaphorically; for God seemed to be concealed at the time when he permitted his people to be affiicted and oppressed without any appearance of aid; and therefore the word means "to come forth publicly for the sake of giving assistance." This is confirmed by what follows.

And as a warrior. When he attributes to God burning indignation, with which he rushes forth "like a warrior" against his enemies, the comparisons are drawn from human feelings, and declare to us the powerful assistance of God, which would not otherwise make a sufficiently powerful impression on our minds. He therefore accommodates himself to our capacity, as we have often said, that we may know how ardently he desires to preserve us, and how much he is distressed by the affliction and oppression of believers, and likewise how terrible is his anger, whenever he girds himself for battle.

We ought always to observe that peculiar season which the Prophet had in his eye, to which these predictions must be applied; for while the enemies were becoming more and more fierce, and were taunting a wretched people, it was the duty of believers to look at something quite different from what they beheld with their eyes, and to believe that God is sufficiently powerful to subdue their enemies, and rescue them out of their hands. Nor was it only during the captivity that it was of importance for them to have their sorrow alleviated by this promise, but almost till the coming of Christ; for they were continually and painfully constrained to encounter severe distresses, as is evident from history.

14. *I have kept silence.* The Prophet meets the temptations which commonly give us great uneasiness, when God delays his aid. We are tempted by impatience, and dread that his promises are false. We reckon it unreasonable that God should be silent, and fall asleep, so to speak, while the wicked carry themselves high; that he should be cool, while they burn with eagerness to do mischief; and that he should wink at their crimes, while they keenly pursue every kind of cruelty. When their minds were distressed and almost overwhelmed, the Prophet wished to comfort them, that they might not think that God had forsaken them, though everything appeared to be

desperate.

For a long time. He expressly mentions "the great length of time," that their hearts might not languish through the tedious delay; for when they had been broken down by almost incessant calamities since the death of Jehoshaphat, it was very hard and distressing to spend seventy years in captivity. Nor was even this the end of their afflictions, and therefore they needed to be carefully admonished, that although God do not immediately send relief, still believers will suffer nothing by the delay, provided that they wait with patience. By these words he also rebukes unbelievers, who, trusting to his forbearance, freely indulged in every kind of wickedness; and therefore God declares that, although he has refrained and been a silent spectator, he is not on that account deprived of his power.

Like a woman in labor. By this metaphor he expresses astonishing warmth of love and tenderness of affection; for he compares himself to a mother who singularly loves her child, though she brought him forth with extreme pain. It may be thought that these things are not applicable to God; but in no other way than by such figures of speech can his ardent love towards us be expressed. He must therefore borrow comparisons from known objects, in order to enable us to understand those which are unknown to us; for God loves very differently from men, that is, more fully and perfectly, and, although he surpasses all human affections, yet nothing that is disorderly belongs to him.

Besides, he intended also to intimate that the redemption of his people would be a kind of birth, that the Jews might know that the grave would serve them for a womb, and that thus, in the midst of corruption, they might entertain the hope of salvation. Although he produced a new Church for himself without pain or effort, yet, in order to exhibit more fully the excellence of his grace in this new birth, he not inappropriately attributes to himself the cry of "a woman in labor."

I will destroy and swallow at once. Because that comparison of a travailing woman might somewhat degrade the majesty and power of God, the Prophet determined to add here a different feeling. So far then as relates to love, he says that God resembles a mother; so far as relates to power, he says that he resembles a lion or a giant.

15. *I will reduce mountains and hills to a wilderness.* The Prophet means that all the defences and military forces on which the wicked plume themselves shall not prevent God from setting his people at liberty. It was necessary that this should be added to the former statements; for when we see enemies exceedingly powerful, and almost invincible, we tremble, and do not look for God's assistance, which would be necessary to keep our faith strong. On this point, therefore, the Prophet dwells, in order to shew that no power or army whatsoever can resist the Lord when he wishes to deliver his people. In short, he shews that there shall be such a revolution, that they who formerly were most powerful shall be crushed, and shall gain nothing

by all their attempts against him.

Such appears to me to be the plain meaning of this passage, and there is no necessity for entering into ingenious speculations, as some have done, who, in an allegorical interpretation of these words, pronounce that by "mountains and hills" are meant cities, and by *herbage* the men who inhabit them. But there is no necessity for pursuing such refinements; for he simply declares that God is sufficiently powerful to fulfill his promises and deliver his Church, because he will easily surmount all the difficulties which present themselves to our eyes. This statement corresponds also to other predictions which we have formerly seen, in which the Prophet taught that as soon as God has determined to assist his people, his power is not limited to natural means, but miraculously breaks through every obstruction that appears to hinder his passage.

16. *And I will lead the blind.* After having shewn that the strength of the enemies cannot prevent God from delivering his people, he proceeds with that consolation to which he had formerly adverted. He describes by the word *blind* those whose affairs are so difficult, and intricate, and disordered, that they know not to what hand to turn, or in what direction to flee, and, in short, who see no means of escape, but deep gulfs on every hand. When our affairs proceed smoothly enough, a plain and easy path is placed before our eyes; and, in like manner, when our affairs are painful and distressing, and especially when they hold out no hope of relief, but threaten destruction to us, and are covered with deep and melancholy darkness, we are blinded. When we have thus no means of escape, the Prophet tells us that at that very time we ought, especially to hope and to look for assistance from the Lord.

It is often advantageous to us also to have no way open to us, to be straitened and hemmed in on every hand, and even to be blinded, that we may learn to depend solely on God's assistance and to rely on him; for, so long as a plank is left on which we think that we can seize, we turn to it with our whole heart. While we are driven about in all directions, the consequence is, that the remembrance of heavenly grace fades from our memory. If, therefore, we desire that God should assist us and relieve our adversity, we must be *blind,* we must turn away our eyes from the present condition of things, and restrain our judgment, that we may entirely rely on his promises. Although this blindness is far from being pleasant, and shews the weakness of our mind, yet, if we judge from the good effects which it produces, we ought not greatly to shun it; for it is better to be "blind" persons guided by the hand of God, than, by excessive sagacity, to form labyrinths for ourselves.

And will turn darkness before them into light. When he promises that he will give "light" instead of "darkness," he confirms what has been already said; and therefore, although we see not even a ray of light in adversity, yet we ought not to despair of God's assistance, but at that very time we

ought especially to embrace his promises; for the Lord will easily change darkness into light, make straight the crooked windings, and lead us into the path, that we may walk with safety. Yet let us perceive that these things are promised to believers alone, who intrust themselves to God, and allow themselves to be governed by him; and, in short, who have known their blindness, and willingly follow him as their leader, and amidst the darkness of afflictions patiently wait for the dawn of grace. To those only who abide by his promises does he stretch out his hand, and not to the wise men [159] who wish to see in spite of him, or who are carried headlong by unlawful schemes.

17. *They shall be driven back.* This enables us to see more clearly to whom the former doctrine relates, for it distinguishes between the worshippers of God and the worshippers of idols. The Lord will be a leader to his own people, but, on the other hand, *they who worship idols shall be ashamed* As if he had said, that here the Lord gives us a choice, either to be saved by his grace, or to perish miserably; for all that place their hope of salvation in idols shall perish, but they who trust in the word of God are certain of salvation; because, though they often are heavily afflicted, yet he will not allow their hope to be put to shame in the end, but by the result will prove that he did not in vain lay down this distinction.

And say to a molten image, Ye are our gods. It is certain that by these two marks are described all idolaters who place their hope in any one else than in God alone; for, although idolaters do not bow down before their idols, yet, by attaching divinity to them, they offer blasphemy to the only and true God; for the chief part of the worship of God consists in faith and calling upon him, both of which the Prophet here describes. It may be asked, Were they so stupid as to say to an image, "Thou art my god?" for all superstitious persons confessed that God is in heaven, and did not openly ascribe divinity to wood or stone. I reply, all idolaters ascribe to images the power of God, though they acknowledge that he is in heaven; for, when they flee to statues and images, when they make and perform vows to them, they undoubtedly ascribe to them what belongs to God. It is in vain for them, therefore, to cloak their ignorance under plausible excuses, for they reckon wood and stone to be gods, and offer the highest insult to God; and consequently, the Prophet did not employ exaggerated language, or falsely accuse them of being idolaters; for it is plainly testified by their words and speeches, when they call their idols and images gods. Even though they did not utter a word, their madness is openly manifested by their imagining that they cannot reach the hand or the ear of God without bowing down before images to utter their prayers. The object of these statements is, that all may understand that no man will be saved but, he who trusts in God alone.

18. *O ye deaf, hear, and ye blind.* He now employs these words, "blind" and "deaf," in a sense different from that in which he formerly employed

[159] "Car il n' empoigne la verge soudainement." "For he does not seize the rod suddenly."

them, (verse 16,) when he metaphorically described those who had no understanding, and who were overwhelmed by such a mass of afflictions that they were blinded by their sorrow; for here he gives the name of *blind* to those who shut their eyes in the midst of light, and do not behold the works of God; and the name of *deaf to* those who refuse to hear him, and sink down into stupidity and slothfulness amidst the dregs of their ignorance. He therefore condemns the Jews for "blindness," or rather, in my own opinion, he condemns all men; for, while he directly reproaches the Jews because "in hearing they do not hear, and in seeing they do not see," (Isaiah 6:9; Matthew 13:13,) yet this applies in some measure to the Gentiles, to whom God revealed himself by his creatures, on whose hearts and consciences also he impressed the knowledge of him, and to whom he had made and would still make known his wonderful works. By demanding attention, he pronounces that there is nothing that hinders them from comprehending the truth and power of God, except that they are "deaf and blind." Nor is this unaccompanied by malice and ingratitude; for he openly instructs them concerning his power, and gives them very striking proofs of it; but no one gives attention to his doctrine or to his wonderful actions, and the consequence is, that they are willingly "blind." Thus the Prophet shews that the fault lies wholly with men in not perceiving the power of God.

19. *Who is blind but my servant?* There are some who interpret this verse as if the Prophet were describing the reproaches which wicked men are accustomed to throw out against the prophets; for they retort on the Lord's servants those reproofs and accusations which they cannot endure. "Whom dost thou accuse of blindness? Whom dost thou call deaf? Take that to thyself. Who is blind but thou?" They think, therefore, that it is as if the Lord expostulated with the Jews in this manner; "I see that you reckon my prophets to be blind and deaf." But we shall immediately see that this interpretation does not agree with the context, for the Prophet afterwards explains (verse 20) why he calls them "blind." It is because, while they see many things, they pay no attention to them. Indeed, this does not at all apply to the prophets, and therefore let us follow the plain and natural meaning.

Isaiah had accused all men of blindness, but especially the Jews, because they ought to have seen more clearly than all the rest; for they had not only some ordinary light and understanding, but enjoyed the word, by which the Lord abundantly revealed himself to them. Although, therefore, all the rest were blind, yet the Jews ought to have seen and known God, seeing that they were illuminated by his Law and doctrine, as by a very bright lamp. Besides, Isaiah afterwards addresses the Jews in this manner,

"Arise, O Jerusalem, and be illuminated; for darkness shall be on all the earth, but the Lord shall shine on thee." (Isaiah 60:1, 2.)

Because the Jews shut their eyes amidst such clear light, that is the reason why he addresses to them this special reproof. As if he had said, "In vain do

I debate with those who are alienated from me, and it is not so wonderful that they are blind; but it is monstrous that this should have happened to my servants (before whose eyes light has been placed) to be deaf to the doctrine which sounds continually in their ears. For these things are so clear that the blind might see them, and so loud that the deaf might hear them; but in vain do I speak to them, for nothing can be more dull or stupid; and, instead of seeing and hearing better than all others, as they ought to have done, none can be found either more deaf or more blind."

My messenger whom I send. From the human race universally the Prophet gradually descends to the Jews, and next to the priests, who were leading persons, and might be regarded as occupying the highest rank. It belonged to their once to interpret the Law, and to set a good example before others, and, in short, to point out the way of salvation. It was from "the priest's mouth" that they were commanded to "seek the Law." (Malachi 2:7.) The Prophet complains, therefore, that they who ought to have led the way to others were themselves blind.

Some view the word *servant* as relating to Isaiah, and others to Christ, and think that he, as well as Isaiah, is accused of blindness; but this has nothing to do with the Prophet's meaning. Thus, he magnifies by comparison the complaint which he lately made about the slothfulness of the Jews; for they were more deeply in fault than others, but the heaviest blame lay on the priests who were their leaders. Let us therefore learn, that the nearer we approach to God, and the higher the rank to which we are elevated, we shall be the less excusable. For the same reason he applies the term *perfect* to those who ought to have been perfect; for he mentions reproachfully that perfection from which they had fallen by wicked revolt, and thus had basely profaned a most excellent gift of God. Having possessed a "perfect" rule of righteousness, it lay with themselves alone to follow it.

20. *Seeing many things.* The Prophet himself explains what is the nature of this blindness of which he spoke, and shews that it is double; and this shews clearly that he spoke of the Jews, who by wicked contempt had quenched God's light. Our guilt will be double when we shall come to the judgment-seat of God, if we shut our eyes when he exhibits the light, and shut our ears when he teaches by his word. The heathen nations will indeed be without excuse; but the Jews and others to whom the Lord revealed himself in so many ways, will deserve double condemnation for having refused to see or hear God. We, therefore, who have so many and so illustrious examples set before us at the present day, ought to dread this judgment; for in many persons there will now be found not less blindness or obduracy than formerly existed among the Jews, and not more excusable.

21. *The Lord is well pleased.* In order to aggravate still more the guilt of the Jews, he now shews that it was not God who prevented them from leading a prosperous and happy life. He had already said that the distresses and afflictions which they endure are the punishment of their blindness, which

they have voluntarily brought upon themselves; and now he brings forward as an addition and crowning point of the accusation, that by their obstinacy they reject all relief.

This passage is interpreted in various ways. Some render it, "The Lord hath so willed it;" others, "He is merciful;" but, for my own part, I have translated it, "The Lord is willing," that is, disposed and inclined to deliver his people, and that for the purpose of magnifying his Law and extolling his righteousness. Thus God assigns the reason why he is ready to aid those who are unworthy, that he wishes to spread his glory in their salvation, that in this manner his righteousness may be illustriously displayed, and that his Law may prevail and flourish. As to the heavy calamities that have come on the Jews, the reason is, that of their own accord they have resolved to be blind, and to bring afflictions on themselves, instead of obeying God; for otherwise the Lord would have wished to enrich and exalt them. Others view it thus, "The Lord wishes to magnify his Law, because he wishes to appear to be faithful in punishing the Jews, as he had threatened them by his Law;" and thus they consider "righteousness" to denote the punishment and vengeance which God inflicts on a wicked people.

Others render it, "For his righteous one," and refer it to Christ; but they mistake the meaning of the word {צדקו}, *(tzidko,)* and unquestionably he speaks of righteousness, and means that the Lord would willingly have displayed the magnificence of his promises, and would have given proofs of his righteousness in preserving his people, if they had not shewn themselves to be ungrateful and unworthy. Some think that the Lord here offers an excuse for himself, because, when the people whom he had adopted were exposed to so many evils, it appeared as if his truth were shaken, and that the Prophet intended to meet this calumny, for they were seized and became a prey, not because the Lord delights in their miseries, but because he prefers his righteousness to everything else.

For my own part, I explain it simply to mean, "The Lord, for the sake of doing honor to his Law, was inclined to do good to his people, in order that his glory and righteousness might shine forth in it; but his people shewed themselves to be unworthy of so great a favor; and, therefore, by their own obduracy they made their wounds incurable." Besides, we ought to learn from this passage the reason why the Lord bestows so many favors on his Church. It is, that he may promote his Law, that is, that he may bring men to honor his majesty, and that his truth may shine more and more. When he says that the Lord is willing and inclined; he shews plainly that he is not induced to it by any one else than by himself; but he expresses it more fully, when he adds, *on account of his righteousness;* for he excludes everything that men could bring. Nor is the Lord prompted by any other consideration to do good, than because he is righteous; for no merit or worth will be found among men. But this reason applied especially to the Jews, whom alone he deigned to adopt.

22. *But this people.* Isaiah now declares that it is through their own fault that the people are miserable and appointed to destruction, because they reject God, who would otherwise have been inclined to do good to them, and because they deliberately set aside all remedies, and wish for death, as is commonly the case with men who are past hope. Thus he excuses God in such a manner as to bring a heavy accusation against the people, because they have rejected him by their ingratitude, and have abused his fatherly kindness. Yet, as I remarked a little before, he mentions these things, not so much for the sake of excusing God, as of bringing a bitter complaint, that his countrymen have leagued to their destruction; because, as if on set purpose, they have precipitated themselves into many calamities. If, then, we see the Church, at the present day, in a ruinous and revolting condition, we ought to ascribe it to our iniquities and transgressions, by which we do not suffer God to do good to us.

The copulative {ו} *(vau)* is rendered by some *therefore;* but I have preferred to translate it *but;* for it states a contrast to that desire by which the Lord declared that he was prompted to defend his people, if they had permitted it. I choose to interpret {הפח} *(hapheach)* as a gerundial participle, *about to be snared;* for he speaks of a nation which was about to be led into captivity. As to {בהורים}, (*bahurim,)* I think that two words, instead of one, are here used to signify *in dens;* for to translate the word *young men,* appears to me to be at variance with the context.

They shall be made a spoil. They who interpret this as relating to the whole human race, who have no Savior but Christ, (John 8:36,) adduce nothing that corresponds to the Prophet's meaning; for he simply declares that the people shall perish without hope of deliverance, because they rejected the grace of God. Let us infer from this what must befall us, if we do not in due time embrace the grace of God offered to us. We shall certainly deserve to be deprived of all aid, to be exposed as a prey and a spoil, and utterly to perish.

23. *Who is there among you?* Isaiah continues the same subject; for he means that the Jews are and will be so stupid, that they will not see, even when they are warned; and he expressly addresses them, because, while they ought to have been better educated and taught than others, yet they understood nothing, and did not observe the judgments of God, even though they were exceedingly manifest.

Who shall hearken for the time to come? That is, who, being at length subdued by afflictions, repents, though it be late. We see, then, how this astonishment aggravates the criminality of their madness, because they will always refuse to be taught. Yet let us learn what is the use of threatenings and punishments; for God does not reprove our crimes, or punish us for them, as if he delighted in taking vengeance, or demanded some recompense, but that we may be on our guard "for the time to come."

24. *Who gave Jacob for a prey?* These are the matters which Isaiah

complains that the Jews did not observe; for they thought either that the sufferings which they endured happened by chance, or that they had not the same strength to resist as their fathers had, and that this was the reason why they were conquered by their enemies. In short, having their minds fully occupied with external causes, they did not at the same time observe the threatenings which had been so frequently denounced by the prophets, nor attend to the judgments of God; and therefore the Prophet drags them before the heavenly throne, by declaring that God is the author of these judgments.

Hath not Jehovah? They could not believe that the calamities which they suffered proceeded from God, as the just punishment of their sins; and we know that there is nothing which men can now be with more difficulty persuaded to believe. Everybody acknowledges that God is the author of all things, but if you ask whether or not all adverse events are God's chastisements, they will be ashamed to confess it; for men are distracted by a variety of thoughts, and, being prejudiced by their opinion of fortune, turn their minds and hearts to this or that cause rather than to God.

Because we have sinned against him. Isaiah next points out the cause of so grievous destruction, the sins of the people, which the Lord justly punished. In like manner, Moses had also shewn,

"How would a thousand flee from the face of one? Doth not the Lord pursue you, and shut you up in the hands of the enemy?" (Deuteronomy 32:30.)

We wonder every day at many things which happen contrary to our expectation, and yet we do not acknowledge that the cause lies with ourselves. It is therefore necessary that we be hard pressed and constrained by violence to confess our fault, and consequently this doctrine must be often stated and repeated.

That men may not accuse God of cruelty, the Prophet adds, that he does it for a just cause; for he does not rush forward [160] to inflict punishment, if he be not constrained by necessity, and he takes no pleasure in our afflictions; and, therefore, we must here observe two separate things. First, no evil happens to us, but from the Lord, so that we must not think that anything happens either by chance or by any external cause. Secondly, we suffer no evil whatever, but for a just cause, because we have sinned against God. In vain, therefore, do men accuse God of cruelty; for we ought to acknowledge his righteous judgments in the chastisements which he deservedly inflicts.

And they would not walk in his ways. Here the Prophet aggravates the guilt of the Jews, but changes the person, because he formerly included himself along with others, as being a member of that body, and confessed his guilt. Not that he resembled the great body of the people, or approved of their crimes; but because, amidst such a huge mass of vices, he could not be

[160] "Pour recognoistre Dieu, qui les chastioit si rudement." "To acknowledge God, who chastise them so severely."

free from being in some degree infected by the contagion, like other parts of the body. Because he was widely different from the great body of the people, he changes the person, and adds, *"They* would not;" by which he declares that such deep-rooted obduracy is offensive to him, so that he cannot in any way either conceal it or express his approbation of it; for the subject now in hand is not ordinary vices, but contempt and rejection of God, manifested by fiercely and haughtily shaking off his yoke. This is the reason why Isaiah excludes himself from their number.

If these things justly befell the Jews, let us know that the same punishment hangs over us and the whole world, if we do not take warning and repent. We see how kindly the Lord invites us to himself, in how many ways he expresses his good-will towards us, how graciously he testifies that he will be reconciled, though he has been offended. Having now been so often and so kindly invited by God, and having experienced his mercy, if we refuse to listen to him, we shall undoubtedly feel that the ruin which they experienced belongs equally to all rebels.

25. *Therefore he hath poured upon him.* Because the chastisements by which the Lord had begun, and would afterwards continue, to punish the Jews, were very severe, the Prophet employs metaphorical language to express their vehemence. He says that the Lord *poureth out his fury,* as if a thunderbolt were discharged with violence, or as if waters burst forth, to spread devastation far and wide on the surrounding country; just as, at the deluge, when

"the flood-gates of the deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened," (Genesis 7:11,)

the waters burst forth with prodigious force and violence.

And the strength of war. He next employs a different figure, that God assembles his forces to make war, that he may attack the people with unrelenting hostility. If this be supposed to mean the enemies whom the Lord raised up against the Jews, I do not greatly object to the interpretation; for it is certain that they were raised up by the judgment of God. What else was Nebuchadnezzar than God's scourge? (Jeremiah 51:20.) But, for my own part, I think that this also ought to be viewed as metaphorical language, meaning that "God rushes forth violently, like an armed enemy, and pours out his fury on the people." He has various ways of making war; for he chastises his people sometimes by famine, sometimes by war, and sometimes by pestilence; and therefore I think that he includes here scourges of every kind by which the Lord strikes his people. If we sometimes think that they are too harsh and severe, let us consider how heinous our sins are; for we shall not find that he is immoderate or excessively severe in inflicting punishment.

And he gave no heed to it. Again the Prophet exclaims against that gross stupidity with which the Jews were struck, so that they did not perceive their affliction, nor raise their eyes to heaven, so as to acknowledge that the

Lord was the avenger and author of it. [161]

And he laid it not to heart. To "lay a thing to heart" is to consider attentively and diligently; for if this thought came into our minds, and were deeply engraven on our hearts, "God is judge, and hath justly punished us," we should immediately repent. At present the whole world is oppressed by so many calamities, that there is scarcely a spot that is free from the wrath of God; yet no person gives heed to it, but all fiercely and rebelliously contend with him; and therefore we need not wonder that he inflicts on men such dreadful punishment, and pours out his wrath on all sides, when the world opposes him with inveterate rebellion.

[161] See Commentary on Isaiah, vol. 2, pages 83 and 264, and page 132 of the present volume.

Chapter 43

CHAPTER 43

Isaiah 43:1-28

1. But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine.

1. Et nunc sic dicit Iehova creator tuus, Iacob; fictor tuus, Israel. Ne timeas, quoniam redemi (to,) vocavi to nomine tuo; meus (es) tu.

2. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.

2. Quum transieris per aquas, ego tecum (ero;) in fluminibus, non inundabunt to. Quum transieris per ignem ipsum, non combureris; nec flamma ardebit in to.

3. For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee.

3. Quoniam ego Iehova Deus tuus, Sanctus Israel, servator tuus; dedi pretium redemptionis true, Aegyptum, Aethiopiam, et Saba in vicem tuam.

4. Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life.

4. Quia pretiosus fuisti in oculis meis, honoratus es, et ego dilexi to. Tradam hominem in vicem tuam, et populos in vicem animae tuae.

5. Fear not: for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west;

5. Ne timeas, quia ego tecum. Ab Oriente adducam semen tuum, et ab Occidente colligam to.

6. I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth;

6. Dicam Aquiloni, Da, et Austro, Ne prohibeas. Adducito filios meos e longinquo, et filias meas ab extremo terrae.

7. Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.

7. Omnes vocati nomine meo, et ad gloriam meam creavi cos; formavi eos, adeoque feel eos.

8. Bring forth the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears.

8. Ut educam populum caecum, cut oculi; et surdos, quibus aures.

9. Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled: who among them can declare this, and shew us former things? let them bring forth their witnesses, that they may be justified: or let them hear, and say, It: is truth.

9. Omnes gentes congregentur simul, et colligantur populi. Quis eat in els qui istud annuntiet: ac priora nos audire faciat? Proferant testes suos, justi pronuntientur; sed audiant, et dicent, Verum est.

10. Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.

10. Vos testes met, dicit Iehova, et servus meus quem elegi. Propterea scietis, et credetis mihi, et intelligetis quod ego sum; ante me non est formatus Deus, nee post me erit.

11. I, even I, am the LORD; and besides me there is no saviour.

11. Ego, ego sum Iehova, et nullus praeter me servator.

12. I have declared, and have saved, and I have shewed, when there was no strange god among you: therefore ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, that I am God.

12. Ego annuntiavi, et servavi, et audire feteram; et non in vobis alienus. Vos ergo testes mei, dicit Iehova, quod ego sim Deus.

13. Yea, before the day was I am he; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand: I will work, and who shall let it?

13. Etiam antequam dies esset, ego eram; et non est qui e manu mea eruat; faciam, et quis avertet illud?

14. Thus saith the LORD, your redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; For your sake I have sent to Babylon, and have brought down all their nobles, and the Chaldeans, whose cry is in the ships.

14. Sic dicit Iehova redemptor rester, Sanctus Israelis: Propter vos misi in Babylonem, et descendere feci. Omnes ipsi fugitivi; et Chaldaeorum clamor in navibus.

15. I am the LORD, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King.

15. Ego Iehova, Sanctus rester, creator israel, Rex rester.

16. Thus saith the LORD, which maketh a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters;

16. Sic dicit Iehova, qui dat in mari viam, et in aquis violentis semitam.

17. Which bringeth forth the chariot and horse, the army, and the power; they shall lie down together, they shall not rise: they are extinct, they are quenched as tow.

17. Quum educit, currus et equus, exercitus et robur simul jacent, ut non surgant. Extincti sunt; sicut linum extincti sunt.

18. Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old.

18. Ne reeordemini priorum, et antiqua ne memoretis.

19. Behold, I will do a new thing: now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert.

19. Ecce ego facio rem novato; jam orietur; an non earn cognoscetis? Hac vice (vel, utique) ponam in deserto viam; flumina in solitudine.

20. The beast of the field shall honour me, the dragons and the owls: because I give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen.

20. Honorabit me bestia agri; dracones, et pulli struthionis; quia dederim in deserto aquas, flumina in solitudine, ad potandum populum meum, electum meum.

21. This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise.

21. Populum hunc creavi mihi; laudem meam narrabit.

22. But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel.

22. Et non me invocasti, Iacob; quin fatigatus es in me, Israel.

23. Thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt offerings; neither hast thou honoured me with thy sacrifices. I have not caused thee to serve with an offering, nor wearied thee with incense.

23. Non adduxisti mihi pecus holocaustorum tuorum, et sacrificiis tuis non honorasti me; non feci to servire in oblatione, nec laborare in suffitu.

24. Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices: but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities.

24. Non emisti mihi pecunia calamum, nec adipe victimarum tuarum inebriasti me; sed me servire fecisti in peccatis tuis, et me laborare fecisti in iniquitatibus tuis.

25. I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.

25. Ego, ego sum qui deleo iniquitates tuas propter me; ideo peccatorum tuorum non recordabor.

26. Put me in remembrance: let us plead together: declare thou, that thou mayest be justified.

26. Reduc mihi in memoriam; judicemur simul; narra tu, ut justificeris.

27. Thy first father hath sinned, and thy teachers have transgressed against me.

27. Pater tuus primus peceavit, et doctores tui in me praevaricati sunt.

28. Therefore I have profaned the princes of the sanctuary, and have given Jacob to the curse, and Israel to reproaches.

28. Ideo poiluam Principes sanctuarii, et ponam in execrationem Iacob, et Israel in opprobrium.

1. *And now thus saith Jehovah.* It is hard to say whether this is a different discourse or the same with the former; for the Prophets, whose writings have come down to us, did not separate their discourses into distinct chapters, so as to enable us to know what they spoke each day. For my own part, I think it is probable that this doctrine is connected with the preceding; for, having formerly spoken severely against the Jews, and threatened destruction to them, he wished to moderate that severity. The Lord always cares for the godly; and wickedness never abounds to such an extent that he does not at the same time preserve his people, and provide for their safety, that they may not be involved in similar destruction. I think, therefore, that the copulative {ו} *(vau)* should be viewed as disjunctive, "*And yet* the Lord will leave some consolation to the godly who shall remain."

This passage ought to be carefully observed; for, although it may appear as if all had leagued for our destruction, although the anger of the Lord burn fiercely, and we think that we are very near destruction; yet, if but two or three godly persons are left, we ought not to despair; for Jehovah addresses them in this manner, *Fear not.* The adverb *Now,* which is here used, has great weight; for it means a present or immediate calamity, and, in short, a time when it appeared as if all were lost and ruined; because at that very time God does not cease to comfort his people, and gently to soothe their sorrows, that amidst the utmost despair they may preserve their hope firm and unshaken.

Such is the purport of the preface, *thy Creator and Maker;* for otherwise the door would have been shut against the execution of these predictions. Besides, from other passages we may conclude, that the Lord does not here speak of universal creation, such as we share with the rest of men, and by which we are born mortal, but of regeneration to the hope of a heavenly life, on account of which we are also called new creatures. This is the sense in which Paul calls us "the workmanship of God," (Ephesians 2:10,) as on former occasions we have fully explained. [162] In this sense also he calls himself the *Maker;* as if he had said, that God did not "make" his Church, in which the brightness of his glory shone conspicuously, in order to undo so excellent a work. Hence we ought to observe, that the Church has nothing that is properly her own, but everything in which she excels ought to be ascribed to the gift of God.

For I have redeemed thee. This is added as the reason of the former statement, and may appropriately be viewed as referring both to the future and to the past; for the first deliverance from Egypt gave hope of another

[162] "Jusqu' ace qu'il nons esleve en haut a soy." "Till he raise us on high to himself."

deliverance to come. Although he describes a future deliverance from the Babylonish captivity, yet the past tense is not inapplicable; for God hath redeemed us to himself before the effect of redemption reaches us; and therefore when he wishes to testify what he has decreed, namely, to redeem his Church, which appeared to have perished, he uses with propriety the past tense.

I have called thee by thy name. To "call by one's name" means here, to admit into close relationship, as when we are adopted by God to be his children. The reason of this mode of expression is, that God rejects the reprobate in such a manner that he appears to have forgotten them. Hence, also, the Scripture says, that "he knoweth them not." (Matthew 7:23; Luke 13:27.) From a contrast of this sort we learn more fully what is meant by being "called by God." It is when he passes by others, and deigns to bestow on us a peculiar honor, and, from being strangers, to make us members of his household, and next takes us under his care and guardianship, so as to direct us and all our affairs. For the same reason he adds, *Thou art mine,* that believers may know that there will always be left a Church among the elect people, because God refuses to be deprived of his rightful possession. In short, he declares that they are his dear inheritance, of which he will never suffer himself to be robbed.

2 *When thou shalt pass through the waters.* This is an anticipation by which he declares that they who rely on God's immediate assistance have no reason for sinking under adversity. That is stated more fully than in the preceding verse, because while he shews that the Church will not be exempt from calamities and afflictions, but must maintain a constant warfare, he encourages to patience and courage; as if he had said, "The Lord hath not redeemed thee that thou mightest enjoy pleasures and luxuries, or that thou mightest abandon thyself to ease and indolence, but rather that thou shouldest be prepared for enduring every kind of evils."

By *fire* and *water* he means every kind of miseries to which we are liable in this life; for we must contend not with calamities of one kind only, but with infinitely diversified calamities. At one time we must "pass through wares" and at another "through fire." (Psalm 66:12.) In like manner the Apostle James exhorts believers not to faint when they "fall into various temptations." (James 1:2.) And, indeed, faith needs to be put to the trial in many ways; for it often happens that he who has been victorious in one combat has been baffled by another kind of temptation. We are therefore tried by afflictions, but are at length delivered; we are baffled by the billows, but are not swallowed up; we are even scorched by the flames, but are not consumed. We have, indeed, the same feeling of pain as other men, but we are supported by the grace of God, and fortified by the spirit of patience, that we may not faint; and at length he will stretch out his hand and lift us up on high. [163]

[163] Commentary on Isaiah, vol. 1, p. 26.

3. *For I am Jehovah thy God.* He confirms the preceding statement by the experience of the past; for the Lord had formerly assisted his people in such a manner that it was reasonable and proper that believers should safely rely on his grace. We must always remember what we had in the former verse, — "Fear not, for I have redeemed thee; I am thy Lord." These ought to be read unitedly and in immediate connection, because they have the same object; for if the Lord is our God, it follows that he is on our side, and therefore we shall find that he is our Savior. But if we wish to know by experience that he is our Savior, we must be a part of Israel, not in name only, but so as to give true evidences of godliness during the whole course of our life. This is therefore the foundation of our confidence, that "Jehovah is our God;" and hence it follows that they who do not acknowledge God to be their Father, and who do not rely on his kindness, are wretched, and tremble continually. Wicked men, indeed, indulge in mirth, and even act disdainfully towards God; but their indifference is intoxication and madness of mind, by which they are the more rapidly carried headlong to their destruction. To believers alone this brings the assurance, that he who hath chosen them wishes to be continually their God, and to preserve them; and therefore hath separated them to be his inheritance.

In this sense he calls himself *The Holy One of Israel,* because while the whole human race is by nature estranged from him, he hath chosen his people that he might set them apart to be his own. Now, though external separation is of little moment, unless God sanctify the elect by the power of his Spirit, yet, because Israel had openly polluted himself, God declares that still his covenant shall not be made void, because he is always like himself. Besides, it is well known that the word *holy* is used in an active sense for "him who sanctifies;" and therefore if we wish to be certain of God's love towards us, let us always remember the testimony of our adoption, by which we are confirmed in our hearts, as by a sure pledge, and let us with all earnestness ask it from God.

I have given the price of thy redemption. I make no remarks on those repetitions which are frequently used by the Prophet, and are customary in the Hebrew language; for the two phrases in this verse, *I have given the price,* and *I have given instead of thee,* are used by him in the same sense. We have said that the Prophet confirms believers by bringing forward earlier proofs of the grace of God; as if he had said, "You have already known by experience that God cares for your salvation; for how could it have happened that Sennacherib turned his forces against Egypt, Ethiopia, and other nations, but because the Lord spared you, and directed the attack of your enemy to another quarter? Since therefore he has hitherto manifested so great anxiety on your behalf, you have no need to be anxious about the future." Thus if at any time doubts arise in our minds about the providence of God, or about his promises, we ought to bring to remembrance the benefits which he has already bestowed upon us; for we shall be chargeable with extreme

ingratitude if, after having received from God so many benefits, we doubt of his kindness for the future.

But a question arises. In what sense does he call "Egypt and Ethiopia the price of the redemption" of the Church? for heathen men are not of so high value as to redeem the children of God. But the Prophet borrowed this mode of expression from the ordinary language of men; as if he had said, "The Egyptians, the Ethiopians, and the Sabeans came in thy room, and, as if an exchange had been made, were constrained to suffer the destruction to which thou wast exposed; for, in order to preserve thee, I destroyed them, and delivered them instead of thee into the hand of the enemy." But we must attend to the history. While Sennacherib was rushing on with his whole might against Judea, the Lord, by throwing over him a bridle, suddenly checked him, and entangled him by other wars, so that he was constrained to withdraw his army; and thus the Egyptians and Ethiopians were signally defeated, while the people of God were allowed to breathe. (2 Kings 19:28; Isaiah 37:8.)

We too may readily acknowledge, if we are not worse than stupid, that the same providence and infinite mercy of God have been manifested toward us, when tyrants who would have wished to destroy us, and who joined in opening their mouths with eagerness to devour us, are made by him to engage in wars against each other, and when the rage with which they burned against us is directed by him to another quarter; for by doing so he preserves us, so as to give them as the price of our redemption. When we see irreligious men, amidst the uproar and confusion of mutual wars, pause in their efforts to destroy us, while it is manifest that they do not pause of their own accord, let us lift up our eyes to heaven, and learn that God, in order to spare us, miraculously substitutes others in our room; for we were "like sheep appointed for slaughter," (Psalm 44:22;) swords were drawn on every hand, if he had not snatched them from the hands of wicked men, or given them a different direction.

Hence we ought to draw a general doctrine, that the Lord takes such care of all believers (1 Peter 5:7) that he values them more highly than the whole world. Although, therefore, we are of no value, yet let us rejoice in this, that the Lord sets so high a value upon us, and prefers us to the whole world, rescues us from dangers, and thus preserves us in the midst of death. If everything were at peace with us, and if we had no troubles, we should not see this grace of God; for when a thousand deaths appear to hang over us, and when there appears no way of escape, and when he suddenly drives back the tyrants, or turns them in another direction, we then know by experience what the Prophet says, and perceive his invaluable kindness toward us.

4. *Because thou wast precious.* Others interpret it "Thou wast honorable, because I raised thee to honor;" but I think that God assigns the reason why he gave up Egypt and Ethiopia to the enemies in their room. It was because he loved them, and because they were dear to him. It ought to be

explained thus, — "Because I loved thee, therefore I gave a man for thee." By these words he excludes all personal worth on the part of the people, that they may not boast of having obtained anything by their own merit; and, indeed, the cause of salvation, and of all the blessings which we receive, is the undeserved love of God; it is also the cause of all our excellence; for, if he judge of us according to our own qualifications, he will not value us a straw. We must therefore set aside every idea of merit, or of personal worth, of which we have none, and must ascribe everything to the grace of God alone. He means that this love is not of an ordinary kind when he says that we are "precious;" and for the same reason he calls us "his first-born," (Exodus 4:22,) and "his friends." (John 15:15.)

I will give a man. Here he adds nothing new, but rather explains the preceding statement, and employs the word "man" collectively for "men;" as if he had said, "There will be no man whom God will not take away and destroy, in order to preserve his people; for he sets a higher value on a single believer than on the whole world." At the same time he reminds believers that they are redeemed at the expense of those who do not at all differ from them in origin or in nature.

5. *Fear not.* When Isaiah frequently repeats this exhortation, we ought not to look upon it as superfluous; for we know and feel how prone we are by nature to distrust. Scarcely any words can express the greatness of the alarm by which the Church was at that time shaken. As soon as we begin to call in question the promises of God, our minds are distracted by various thoughts; we are alarmed and continually tormented by the greatness and diversity of the dangers, till at length we are stupified, and have no perception of the grace of God. Accordingly, before despair seize our hearts, it is not without good reason that he so frequently repeats *I am with thee,* in order that he may either destroy altogether or partially mitigate the fear which is seated in our hearts; for, when it has taken root, there is no method of curing it. This should lead us also to remark, that we ought not to place our safety in anything else than in the presence of God; for if he be absent, we shall either shudder with fear, or become stupid, or run headlong like drunkards. And yet it is not the will of God that we shall be so devoid of fear as to give ourselves up to slothfulness and indifference; but when we are informed that he is at hand and will assist us, cheerful confidence ought to be victorious in the midst of fears.

I will bring thy seed from the east. This passage is evidently taken front the writings of Moses, as we said at the beginning of this commentary, [164] that the prophets are his interpreters, and draw their doctrine from his books; and therefore the Prophet applies this passage to that particular event which he had in view in the present discourse. Moses had thus foretold,

"The Lord thy God will turn thy captivity, and will have compassion on

[164] "Qu'ils seroyent constrains de signer leur condamnation." "That they would be constrained to sign their condemnation."

thee, and will turn and gather thee out of all the nations into which thy God hath scattered thee. Even if thou shalt be driven to the utmost parts of heaven, thence will thy God gather thee, and thence will he take thee." (Deuteronomy 30:3, 4.)

What Moses spoke in general terms the Prophet here confirms in a particular instance, and again declares with a slight change of the words. The amount of what is stated is, that it is as difficult to gather a people that is not only scattered, but driven to the most distant countries of the world, as it is to gather ashes that have been scattered here and there; but that God, by his wonderful power, will cause those dislocated members to unite again in one body.

6. *I will say to the north.* Under these four parts he includes the whole world, which is very customary in all languages. But Isaiah speaks in somewhat loftier language than Moses, because he wished the people to view the event as if it had actually occurred; and, to such a purpose those lively descriptions which may be said to place it before our eyes, are admirably adapted. He might, indeed, have said it in a single word, but this manner of address is far more forcible; for he represents God as commanding, with supreme authority, all the creatures, and every part of the world, to set his people free.

Bring my sons. He means that not all Israel shall be gathered, but only that which is the true Israel; for not all who are the descendants of Abraham according to the flesh are true Israelites, but very many of them are bastards. (Romans 9:6, 7.) These belong to the true and lawful seed; for that vast multitude of people was not saved, but only "a remnant," as we saw in a former chapter. (Isaiah 10:21, 22.) There was a vast number of people who were carried away into captivity, but there were few who were brought back. Among them was preserved a seed; and the Lord would not suffer that seed to perish, or the covenant which he had made with their fathers to be broken. These things were very hard to be believed by the Jews, who were despised by all, and were exposed not only to the hatred but to the curses of almost the whole world, and were scarcely reckoned to belong to the number of men; and therefore they must have depended solely on the promises. They knew that Cyrus (Isaiah 45:1) would come, but who he was they were not yet able to conceive, for he had not yet been born; and therefore they needed to be armed with very excellent and steadfast faith, in order to wait for the Lord with unshaken confidence, while many reckoned these predictions to be fables. Let us learn also flora this example to look to God alone, so as not to doubt that he will assist us and will abide by his promises at the proper time.

7. *All called.* Such is my interpretation of this clause, for the Prophet has made use of the singular number instead of the plural. Interpreters have mistaken the import of this mode of expression; for they explain it thus, "Whosoever have been called by my name, I have formed them to my glory."

But I understand it thus, "All called," that is, "All shall be called by my name;" as he says in other passages, "My name shall be called upon them." (Genesis 48:16; Deuteronomy 28:10; Isaiah 4:1.) Why so? "Because I have created them, I have formed them, I have made them for my glory." He pursues the subject which he formerly handled about gathering the people into one body, though they have been scattered into various and distant parts of the world; as if he had said, "If this work appears to be incredible, you ought not to judge of it by the ordinary course of nature, but you ought to look to his power."

By my name; that is, "under my direction;" as we have also said, in expounding another passage, (Isaiah 41:25,) that God is reconciled to us, because by the right of adoption we are accounted his people. Now, because the Jews were to be brought back under his guidance and command, and not by the power or assistance of men, he declares that his name will be rendered illustrious in this deliverance, in order that men may learn not to form their judgments from the views of the flesh or from natural means.

For my glory. The Prophet adds the reason, which contains strong ground of confirmation; that is, that he wishes his glory to be manifested in them. He therefore testifies that the salvation of his people concerns himself, that he can no more throw away the care of his people than he can expose his name to reproach and disgrace, which he will never do, and, in a word, that his glow, of which he is the continual defender, is intimately connected with the salvation of his people.

I have formed him, yea, I have made him. For the sake of amplification he repeats the same thing in many forms of language, that they may be more fully convinced that he wishes to conduct to the end the work which he has begun. Such is the force of the particle {אף}, *(aph,)* which means "likewise," or "even," and sometimes, as we say, "for this time." Accordingly, the meaning is generally supposed to be, "In like manner, as I have created and formed that people, so I desire to elevate them to a new rank, and to restore them to their ancient freedom." It may also be rendered and so, and, as I have said, I prefer this rendering, so as to mean not only that the people have nothing but from his grace, but that he is deeply concerned about their salvation, because he cannot despise his own work, a work so remarkable and excellent. This passage, therefore, recommends to us the extraordinary grace of God, by which we are not only born to be men, but likewise formed anew after his image.

8. *That I may bring out.* The brevity of the words makes the meaning somewhat obscure. Some translate it thus, "I will bring out the blind, and him who hath eyes," that is, both the blind and them that see, both the deaf and them that hear. Some explain *blind* to mean those who have indeed eyes, but so dim that they cannot perceive the secrets of heavenly wisdom. But when I take a careful survey of the whole, I prefer to interpret those phrases separately. "I will bring out the blind, so as to restore sight to them; I will

bring out the deaf, so that they shall recover their hearing." And thus the meaning of the words is, "To bring out the blind, and they shall have eyes; and to bring out the deaf, and they shall have ears." The people are first delivered, and then eyes and ears are restored to them.

The Lord did this when he brought his people out of Babylon; but undoubtedly the Prophet looks farther, that is, to the kingdom of Christ; for at that time believers were gathered not only out of Babylon, but out of all places of the earth. This was seen openly and singularly at Peter's first sermon, when many persons from various countries united in the same confession of faith. (Acts 2:41.) But afterwards others, who appeared to be altogether strangers, united in the same body, and shewed that they were children of Abraham. If, therefore, we wish to find the full truth of this prophecy, we must come to Christ, by whom alone we are rescued from the bondage of the devil and restored to liberty. (John 8:36.) It is he who restores to us eyes and ears, though formerly we were by nature both blind and deaf. Yet it is proper to remember what I have repeatedly stated on former occasious, that the return of the people is closely connected with the renewal of the Church, which was accomplished by Christ; for what God began by bringing his people out of captivity he continued till Christ, and then brought to perfection; and so it is one and the same redemption. Hence it follows that the blessings which are here mentioned ought not to be limited to a short time.

9. *Let all the nations be gathered together.* Here the Prophet, as on former occasions, speaks in the person of God, and bids defiance to all idols. It is highly necessary, and was at that time especially necessary, to distinguish between the true God and false gods. It is easy indeed to ascribe to God the glory of divinity, but it is very difficult to claim it for him so exclusively, that all false gods shall be reduced to nothing; and at that time the error regarding them had received greater confirmation, for at the ruin of the nation unbelievers applauded the gods as if they had vanquished the true God. The Prophet therefore suggests to believers the reply which they should make to the jeers of their enemies, and, although they should sally forth in crowds to defend their errors, enjoins the small number to stand firm against all their forces.

Who is there among them to declare this? We formerly said that foreknowledge and power belong to God alone; for he has all things under his eye, and governs all things according to his pleasure; and, accordingly, by these two arguments he formerly proved against all the false gods the charge of vanity, lie now repeats the same charge, not to reclaim from this error the Gentiles, who did not read those prophecies, but to confirm the faith of the Jews, who were assured that they alone knew the true God. At present, indeed, this doctrine belongs both to Gentiles and to Jews; and not only so, but when the Jews shewed themselves to be unworthy, (Acts 13:46,) their privileges were extended to the Gentiles; but at that time Isaiah chiefly addressed the

Jews, that, although they saw the Gentiles succeeding in everything to their wish, still they might abhor their idols and superstitions.

Let them produce their witnesses. After haying summoned unbelievers to plead the cause of their gods, or rather, after having held it to be acknowledged that it was to no purpose that they spent their time in the worship of idols, because they had no power of predicting future events, he adds that there will be no *witnesses* to testify with truth that any prediction ever proceeded from false gods, and consequently that their cause is destitute of lawful defense. There never was a time, indeed, when there were not many fables told about idols, as we constantly hear of innumerable fables of that kind which are widely circulated, and the silliness with which unbelievers pour forth their lies is equalled by the obstinacy with which they defend them; but if we come to examine them, we shall find them to be supported by no proof, but to be absolute tricks and foolish inventions. On this account the Prophet willingly yields the victory, if they shall bring forward competent and trustworthy "witnesses." To God alone, therefore, this glory belongs; for he has "witnessess,"

But let them hear. At length, as if the matter had been fully proved, he rises more confidently, and commands the vanquished to keep silence. When he bids them *hear,* he means that the only obstacle to their acknowledgment of the truth is, that they are prejudiced by their error, and refuse to hear God; for this contempt causes them not to repent, but, on the contrary, to defend their error with stubbornness. Now, the Lord was ready to teach if they had only been willing to hear him with candor; and a better teacher could not be desired, but pride and haughtiness will not suffer them to see the truth or to listen to God. They are, therefore, without excuse; for they disdainfully reject his public instructions, and do not assent to his doctrine. Isaiah justly declares that, if they gave due attention, they would be constrained to acknowledge it to be true; [165] and indeed all who shall shew themselves to be obedient will readily acknowledge that the truth of God is founded on a firm and solid judgment, and not on an uncertain and doubtful opinion.

10. *Ye are my witnesses.* After having summoned the Gentiles to a contest, and after having proved that the stories which they circulated concerning their idols were false and unfounded, God now separates himself from the multitude of them, and produces his "witnesses," that he may not be thought to be of the same class with them. He justly boasts, therefore, that they are his witnesses, and that he has true witnesses; for the Jews had been instructed by heavenly oracles, as far as was necessary for attaining perfect certainty. Yet he indirectly reproaches them with ingratitude, if they do not

[165] The translation which Calvin mentions, but rejects, appears to be, "There was no creature of God." — Ed. "Various attempts have been made to explain away the singular expression, there was no god formed before me, as a solecism, or at least an inaccuracy of expression; whereas nothing else could have conveyed the writer's meaning, in a form at once sarcastic, argumentative, and graphic. Instead of saying, in a bald prosaic form, 'All other gods are the work of men's hands, but I am uncreated and exist from all eternity,' he condenses all into the pregnant declaration, 'There was no god manufactured before me,' that is, 'All other gods were made, but none of them was made before I had a being.' " — Alexander.

openly declare that they know everything that is necessary for maintaining the glory of God; and, indeed, he calls them to bear witness, and adjures them not to cover with silence those predictions by which the true religion might be proved, because that would be unjustly to defraud a good cause of their support.

And my servant. By the word "servant" some think that Isaiah is meant, but I prefer to take it collectively, for all the prophets; for there is a change of number. Now, this name was peculiarly bestowed on the prophets, whom the Lord chose for the purpose of maintaining his truth; and yet, in making use of the singular number, there can be no doubt that he looked chiefly to Christ, in whom all the prophecies are contained and accomplished. (John 1:45; Acts 3:24, and 10:43; Romans 1:2, 3; Hebrews 1:1.) It is also certain that by him chiefly, as the highest witness, all men are convinced. Yet we ought to observe God's design, which I formerly mentioned, to call the Jews to be witnesses, that he might accuse them of ingratitude, if they did not freely utter what is demanded by the faith of those who, after having received proofs so numerous and so remarkable, could not be ignorant of the power and goodness of God, or call them in question without the greatest treachery. At the same time, he shows in general that the Lord hath chosen the Church, in order to bear testimony to his truth; and on that ground Paul calls the Church

"the pillar and foundation of truth." (1 Timothy 3:15.)

It is therefore the duty of the Church to defend and publish the truth, that it may be honored by posterity from age to age; not that the Lord needs this assistance, but because in this way he wishes to prove and establish its truth among men. Here Isaiah includes all believers, for this office of bearing testimony is binding on all, but especially on ministers, who ought to be standard-bearers, and to set an example before others. For this reason also they are particularly mentioned; but in general no man ought to be accounted a believer, who conceals the knowledge of God within his own heart, and never makes an open confession of the truth.

Therefore ye shall know. That it may not be thought that the Lord asks them to bear witness about what is unknown, he adds, "Ye shall know, ye shall believe, ye shall understand;" and by this order of the words he shews that faith goes before confession. If, therefore, confession proceed from the top of the lips, and not from the heart, it is vain and useless, and is not such as the Lord demands or approves. Yet there is still some difficulty in the order of those words, "to know, to believe, to understand;" for we do not say that all who know believe, and, in the ordinary manner of speaking, where there is knowledge, there may not be faith. Besides, it is doubtful what is meant by "understanding," which is mentioned after faith, as if it differed from knowledge.

But in this passage the Prophet shows that there is a kind of preparation for faith, by which God procures reverence for his word, when he sees that it

needs such assistance. The beginning of faith, indeed, is humility, by which we yield our senses as captives to God; but because we do not embrace the doctrine offered to us with such certainty as is needful, God confirms us by proofs, that we may fully believe. Thus John relates that he and Peter "believed the Scriptures," (John 20:8,) when they beheld in the grave the tokens of Christ's resurrection; and in another passage he says that "the disciples believed in Christ," when that which they had heard from his mouth was accomplished. (John 2:22.)

We may therefore sum it up in this manner. "The Jews shall actually feel it, when their faith shall have been aided by signs to worship the true God." At the same time, a distinction is made between true faith and that credulity which lightly carries away fickle men; and God always bestows on his elect knowledge and judgment, that they may distinguish truth from falsehood. Next follows faith and firm certainty, so that they embrace without hesitation all that the Lord hath spoken; and afterwards faith kindles in our hearts more and more the light of understanding, and even in proportion to the progress which we make in it, our knowledge grows and becomes brighter. But these things are not done by our own judgment, but by the power of the Holy Spirit, so far as we are enlightened by him.

That I am he. He means here that it is requisite, in order to faith, that we know who is our God, and that it is he whom we worship, and no other; that our minds may not foolishly waver, and go astray, and admit everything that shall be supported by the opinion of men. Thus, faith is not that which frames anything according to its own fancy, or thoughtlessly assents to any assertion, or doubts and hesitates, but that which rests on firm certainty, so that, yielding obedience to the one true God, it surveys as from a lofty position, and despises all false gods, and frees and delivers their minds from the dread of error.

Hence we see what we ought to think of the perplexed faith of Papists; for they think that men who are stupid and void of understanding, who can scarcely utter a syllable about God, whom they know not, or of whom they are uncertain, are believers, provided that they profess that they believe what their holy mother, the Church, believes. But the Lord does not approve of a thing so trivial, but has united faith with understanding, that we may not imagine that the one can be separated from the other. Besides, there is no faith, unless you believe that it is God who is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and who spoke by the prophets and apostles; for it will not be faith, but a vain and wandering imagination, if we do not believe in that God.

Before me there was no God formed. In order to confirm still more what he lately said, that he is the only God, he again adds that "there was no other God before him." Yet {לא} {נוצר} *(lo notzar) may* be taken in a passive sense, so as to convey a different meaning, that of a "creature," or "workmanship,"

or "work" [166] of God; but as that appears to be a forced sense, I willingly concur with the ordinary opinion, that "no other God had been formed before him." This contains a kind of irony, as if it had been said, that there was no other god that had not been made and formed by mortals, and consequently, that none can be compared with the eternal God.

And after me there shalt not be. He adds that "there shall be none afterwards," because God always preserves his dominion entire and unimpaired, and does not fail through old age or length of days. His object is to shew that, until we rely on him, there is no faith in us. They who know that there is some deity, but do not understand what it is, continually hesitate, and entangle themselves in strange labyrinths. Let us, therefore, believe that he alone is God, and for that reason cannot permit any one to be equal to him, or to share with him in his majesty.

11. *I, I* [167] *am Jehovah.* Here the Lord employs lofty language, as having obtained the victory. Already he had sufficiently explained in what manner he must be known, and had shewn that there is no God except himself; and now, in order to confirm this doctrine, he exclaims, "I alone am Jehovah, there is none besides me." This shews how dangerous it is to contrive anything about God out of our own fancy; for when we make any kind of graven image, we produce an idol instead of God. We ought, therefore, to embrace nothing but what has proceeded from God, so as not to allow ourselves any liberty on this subject. After God has revealed himself to us, we ought to make progress in the knowledge of him, and to grow and be strengthened every day; for this is the meaning of the repetition, I, I. [168]

And there is no Savior besides me. That we may not suppose that his eternal essence only is here exhibited, but also his power and goodness, which he constantly exercises towards us, and by which he is fully revealed, he adds an epithet as a distinguishing mark, that "he is the only Savior." The world falls into the mistake of giving a naked and empty name to God, and at the same time conveying his authority to another, as in Popery God is indeed mentioned, but is robbed of his honor, when one part of it is given to St. Peter, and another to St. Paul, and another to St. William, and another to St. George; that is, his offices are distributed into so many parts, that hardly anything is left to him but a naked and empty name. They boast, indeed, of worshipping God alone; but when we come to what it belongs to God to do, they make as many gods as they have creatures, and distribute among them his power and authority. But the Lord has determined that these shall remain entire and uninfringed, and they cannot be conveyed to another without shocking blasphemy; for he alone does good to men, he alone defends and preserves them. The last clause of the verse expresses

166 "Ce suis-je, ce suis-je." "It is I, it is I."

167 "Ce suis-je, ce suis-je." "It is I, it is I."

168 "All their nobles, (Heb., bars.)" — Eng. Ver. "From the earliest times {ברחים (barichim) has received a twofold explanation, namely, that of Fugitives, as in the Septuagint, and that of Bars, as in the Vulgate. The same question arises in the exposition of chap. 15:5." — Alexander.

that knowledge which is derived from experience, that we may not seek salvation in any other than in him who its the only author of it. Hence we learn that the chief part of the worship of God consists in faith, when he is acknowledged to be the beginning and the end of life, when we bestow on him the title of Savior, and do not convey to another what he declares to belong to himself and to reside in him alone.

12. *I have told and have saved.* This verse is a sort of recapitulation ({ἀνακεφαλαίωσις}) of the preceding; for Jehovah again relates that he foretold future events, and that he had actually accomplished what he foretold. To *tell* relates to foreknowledge, and to *save* relates to power and goodness. In a word, he means that he alone is God, who both knows and does all things. Although these things were spoken to the Jews, yet let us know that they belong to us also; for all the predictions that have come down to us ought to be regarded by us as so many proofs both of the knowledge and of the power of God, that we may rely on him alone.

And there is no strange god among you. That superstitions may be banished, and that he may be elevated to the throne of his heavenly doctrine, he again mentions that he displayed his power, and gave tokens of his grace, without being aided by any one; and hence it follows, that they who shall not be satisfied with him alone, will be excessively ungrateful and wicked. "At the time," says he, "when ye worshipped no strange god, I openly and publicly displayed my power; and therefore it is unlawful to bestow on false gods what belongs to me." And yet in these words he does not so much commend the piety or religion of the people, as he excludes all foreign aid; as if he had said, that while the Jews knew no other God, the miracles wrought by him were so numerous and so great, that it was perfectly evident that none but he is God. At the same time Isaiah remarks that our unbelief hinders God from displaying his power amongst us. Away, then, with all errors and all wavering and doubtful opinions about God, if we wish to have experience of his power! for if we turn our minds to superstitions or idols, we shall undoubtedfly render ourselves unworthy of his assistance and kindness.

Ye are therefore my witnesses. At length he again summons them as *witnesses,* accusing them of base and shameful ingratitude, if they conceal what he had abundantly made known to them; for the greater and more numerous the testimonies by which he has manifested to us his power and might, so much the more are we bound to declare them to others.

13. *Even before the day was.* He now speaks of the eternity of God; but we must attend to the Prophet's design; for he who has a beginning and is not from himself, cannot rule by his dominion, or govern according to his pleasure, what he has not created. When, therefore, God declares that he is eternal, he reminds us that the world is his workmanship; for this order of nature did not spring up by chance, but proceeded from the wonderful purpose and wisdom of God. (Genesis 1:1.) In this sense he afterwards adds,

There is none to deliver out of my hand. Hence we shall clearly see that his supreme and infinite power is proved from his eternity; for if he were not eternal, he could neither exercise authority over all things, nor be the defender of his people, nor dispose of the creatures according to his pleasure; but since he is eternal, all things must be subject to his authority. To the same purpose is what he says, that no obstacle can prevent what he hath decreed to do, that the Jews may not be alarmed or dispirited by the forces or number of the enemies.

14. *Thus saith Jehovah.* The Prophet shews that Cyrus will be but a hired soldier, to render his services to the Lord for delivering his people. He does not indeed name Cyrus, but speaks of the army which he has under his command for subduing the Babylonians. 'We know that this was accomplished by Cyrus and Darius, and that under the direction of God, who had foretold it long before. And not only does he speak to those who beheld the accomplishment of these things, but to all others whom the Lord wished to comfort by this hope of deliverance, of which they could not have formed the smallest conception. He addresses captives, who, having been oppressed by the cruel tyranny of the Babylonians, appeared to be beyond all hope of obtaining deliverance, and who might be apt to regard those promises as absurd, because in the opinion of men there was no visible hope of redemption. But we should yield this honor to the word, to believe what is otherwise incredible, that we may be encouraged to "hope against hope." (Romans 4:18.) Such is the power of faith, that it must not be limited to the view of external objects, but rise above the heavens, and reach even to God himself.

For your sake I have sent to Babylon. This is highly emphatic; for, while Cyrus was instigated by ambition and by an insatiable desire of power, and while there were many causes of the war, nothing was further from being generally believed, than that the destruction of that monarchy would shake the world, so that the Jews who were at that time most despicable in the eyes of men, would return to their native land. But God testifies that he will grant easy victories to the Persians, so that they shall subdue the East, because he will be reconciled to his Church.

For the same reason he begins by saying, that he is *the Redeemer of his people,* and *the Holy One,* to shew more clearly that he holds dear and precious those whom he has chosen to be his peculiar people. (Exodus 19:6.) But this appears to be inconsistent with what we have formerly seen,

"We to thee who plunderest, for thou shalt be exposed to plunder," (Isaiah 33:1;)

for the Lord declared that he would punish the cruelty of the Babylonians, and repay to them what they had deserved; but now he affirms that he sends the Persians to deliver his people. But these statements may easily be reconciled. Though the Lord punished the Babylonians, yet he had also a care of his people; for, as the providence of God extends throughout the whole world, so he takes a peculiar care of his Church, and, as the elect are

the object of his special love, so he directs all things for their salvation. It is not without good reason, therefore, that he says that he sent, and that he was induced by undeserved favor to send, because he wished to be the Savior of his people.

And I made them come down. For the same reason as before, he now adds that they shall come down at his command, because, although the Persians and Medes will have another object in view, yet their march shall be guided by heavenly impulse; and in this manner he wished to give an early testimony of his grace to the elect people, that they might not faint under many very distressing calamities. This promise ought therefore to have brought vast consolation to believers, that, although they were despised, and hated, and even abhorred by all, still they were dear to God; because he would at length assist them, and on their account would destroy the kingdom of the Babylonians.

They are all fugitives. [169] By saying that "they shall be fugitives," he shews that he will give to Cyrus such success, that the Babylonians shall tremble at his arrival, and in terror shall throw down their arms, and betake themselves to flight. It often happens that a very powerful prince, abundantly supplied with military preparations, undertakes a war, but conducts it unsuccessfully; and therefore it was not enough that Cyrus should be sent with a powerful army, if he were not also crowned with success.

And a cry of the Babylonians in the ships. To describe more fully the sudden flight, he adds that there shall be "a *cry* or noise in the ships;" for they were unable to escape by land. They had, indeed, a very convenient river, the Euphrates, which united with the river Tigris, by which they might easily have escaped. Yet even in this respect their expectation was disappointed on account of the bed of the river being dried up.

15. *I Jehovah.* This verse contains no statement, and only shews who it is that speaks, how great is his power and majesty, and, in a word, how warmly he loves the elect people, so as to give greater weight to the former promise. In short, it may be viewed as the seal of the preceding statement, more powerfully confirming what was formerly said, that it is God who makes these promises. But what God?

Your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King. He is called *Holy,* because he has chosen and separated a people, that he might consecrate them to himself; for by this title he reminds them of the adoption by which he united them to himself in a peculiar manner, that they may understand that he will be their Father and Savior. And for the same reason we ought now to acknowledge him as our Holy One, because he has set us apart to be members of the Church, of which we are assured by our calling. The name *Creator* must not be viewed as referring to universal creation, by which unbelievers also are created, but to the new creation, on account of which we are also called (Ephesians 2:10) "his workmanship," (`{τὸ} {ποίημα}`) as

[169] "Ce suis-je, ce suis-je." "It is I, it is I."

we have formerly stated, while expounding other passages.

Your King. This might indeed be thought to be absurd; for not even the semblance of a kingdom was visible, and nothing was to be seen among the Jews but what was covered with shame and disgrace, in consequence of their having been deprived of all aid and relief. Yet there was room for the exercise of faith, that they might hope for the restoration of the kingdom, though apparently ruined and almost extinguished, and might acknowledge God to be their King.

16. *Thus saith Jehovah.* He again repeats and confirms what was otherwise incredible; and, in order that this confirmation may have greater weight, he personates God himself.

Who maketh a way in the sea. He reminds them of former benefits, that, having experienced his power and kindness, they may believe that he will not be less gracious for the future, nor less powerful to deliver them. As if he had said, "The Lord who speaks will actually shew how vast is the greatness of his power. Your fathers experienced it, and you will not experience it the less." Now, we are ungrateful to God, if former benefits do not lead us to entertain hope for the future; and especially when he intended to give a sure and striking proof of continual favor towards us. He brought the Jews out of Egypt on the express condition, that the deliverance which was accomplished should never be forgotten. (Exodus 13:9.)

The Prophet therefore represents God as actually present, and declares that he is the same God who surmounted every obstacle by his power, that he might be the Redeemer of his people. At that time he opened up a way through the sea, (Exodus 14:21,) and afterwards *through the mighty waters,* that is, through Jordan, which the Lord dried up, though it was running very rapidly. (Joshua 3:16.) And these prodigious miracles he expressly relates, because they might think that their return to Judea was closed up, and that all that was promised concerning it was fabulous.

17. *When he bringeth out.* He shows that no power or forces shall hinder him from delivering his people, whenever he shall think proper. The sea which lay between them could not prevent God from "bringing out" his people; but he divided its waters in the midst, and drowned the pursuing enemies, with their horses and chariots. (Exodus 14:28.) This is therefore an amplification; as if he had said, "Though the whole world be leagued for your destruction, and attempt, to hinder the deliverance of my Church, yet it will gain nothing; for not only will the Lord find out a way through whirlpools, when he thinks proper, but he will overthrow and scatter all opposing efforts, and will crush them so that they shall never again raise their head."

They are quenched like flax. It is possible that he who was vanquished in one battle may renew his strength in another, and at length be victorious; but here the Lord promises a continual victory, for he declares that the enemies shall be subdued in such a manner that they shall be completely extinguished. By the metaphor of *flax,* he expresses more vividly the sudden

destruction of the enemies; for *flax* may indeed burn and give light, but is immediately consumed.

18. *Remember not former things.* Hitherto the Prophet shewed how great was the power of God in delivering the people. He now declares that all the miracles which God wrought in that first redemption were of little importance as compared with the more remarkable miracle which should soon be wrought; that is, that the glory of this second deliverance shall be so great as to throw the former into the shade. Yet he does not mean that the Jews should forget so great a benefit, which he had commanded them to publish in every age, and to inscribe on permanent records; for in his preface to the Law he begins in this manner,

"I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." (Exodus 20:2.)

He even enjoined parents to repeat it frequently to their children, and from hand to hand to deliver it to their grandchildren and to posterity. This must therefore be understood to be by comparison, like that saying' of Jeremiah,

"Behold the days come," saith the Lord, "that it shall no longer be said, The Lord liveth, who brought the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; but, The Lord liveth, who led and brought out the seed of the house of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the countries into which I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their land." (Jeremiah 23:7, 8.)

In short, he shews that this latter redemption, when compared with the former, shall be far more illustrious. Hence it follows, that it is improper to limit this prediction to a small number of years; for the Prophet does not separate between its commencement and its progress, but extends the blessed consequences of their return till Christ, who, by his coming, actually set up the priesthood and the kingdom.

19. *Behold, I do a new thing.* This shews more clearly what the Prophet meant in the preceding verse, for he declares that there shall be "a new work," that is, a work unheard of and uncommon, and which, on account of its greatness and excellence, shall throw into the shade the reputation of all other works; in the same manner as the brightness of the sun, when it fills heaven and earth, causes the stars to disappear.

Now it shall arise. He means that the time shall not be long. Yet these things were not so speedily accomplished; but, if we look to God, four hundred or even a thousand years are counted as a moment before him; how much less ought a delay of seventy years to wear out and discourage them? When he adds, *Shall ye not know it?* this question is more forcible and impressive than a bare affirmation, and this form of question is more frequently employed by Hebrew writers than in the Greek and Latin languages. When he promises *a way in the wilderness,* he alludes to that wilderness which lay between Judea and Babylon; for he speaks of the return of the people. Accordingly to the *way* he adds *rivers;* for in travelling through a dry country they might have been parched and died of thirst. On this account, the Lord

says that he will supply them with water and everything that is necessary for the journey; as if he had said, "I will furnish you with provisions, so that under my guidance you shall return to your native land."

But it may be thought that the Prophet is excessive, and that his language is altogether hyperbolical, when he extols this deliverance in such lofty terms; for we read that rivers were turned into blood, (Exodus 7:20,) the air was covered with darkness, (Exodus 10:22,) the first-born were slain, (Exodus 12:29,) insects were sent forth to destroy the whole country, (Exodus 10:15,) and that other prodigies of the same kind happened in Egypt, while nothing of this sort was done in Babylon. What then is meant by this new redemption? This consideration has compelled almost all Christian commentators to interpret this passage as referring absolutely to the coming of Christ, in which they are undoubtedly mistaken; and the Jews are also in the wrong, when they limit it to the redemption from Babylon. Accordingly, as I have frequently remarked, we ought here to include the whole period which followed the redemption from Babylon, down to the coming of Christ.

The redemption from Egypt may be regarded as having been the first birth of the Church; because the people were gathered into a body, and the Church was established, of which formerly there was not the semblance; but that deliverance is not limited to the time when the people went out of Egypt, but is continued down to the possession of the land of Canaan, which was delivered to the people, when the kings had been driven out. (Joshua 11:23.) We ought to take the same view of this new birth, ({περὶ} {ταύτης} {παλιγγενεσίας},) by which the people were rescued from Babylon, and brought back to their native land; for that restoration must not be limited to the departure from Babylon, but must be extended to Christ, during the whole of which period great and wonderful events undoubtedly happened. Was it not astonishing that a captive people, whom all despised as some contemptible slave, and who were even held to be accursed, should receive freedom and liberty to return from heathen kings; and not only so, but should be furnished with provisions, and with everything else that was necessary both for the journey and for settling at home, for rearing the city and for rebuilding the Temple? (Ezra 1:2.)

But far greater events followed, when but a few persons were willing to return, and the greater part were so discouraged as to prefer wretched bondage to blessed freedom. When, in comparison of that vast multitude which had been carried away, a few persons returned to Judea, still greater obstacles arose. Conspiracies were formed, the people formerly abhorred became the objects of keener resentments, the work was interrupted, and every method was tried for putting a full stop to the design. (Ezra 4.) Thus it appeared as if in vain the Lord had brought them back, for they were exposed to dangers much greater than before. When the temple had been built, they did not enjoy greater peace; for they were hedged in on all sides by very cruel and deadly enemies, from whom they often sustained great hardships. They

were afterwards afflicted by distresses, and calamities, and various persecutions, so that they were supposed to be struck down and overwhelmed, and utterly ruined. And yet, in the midst of fire and sword, God wonderfully preserved them; and if we consider their wretched and miserable condition, and the grievous persecutions of tyrants, we shall wonder that even a single individual of them could survive.

In order that we may understand how great was the excellence of this latter redemption, and how far it excelled the former, we must: continue and bring it down to the time of Christ, who at length gave an immense addition to the former benefits. Thus, beyond all question, the second redemption leaves the first far behind. There is nothing forced in this interpretation, and it corresponds to the ordinary language of the prophets, who always have the Messiah for their end, and keep him constantly in their eye. But this will appear more clearly from what is related by Haggai; for, when the Temple began to be rebuilt, the old men, who had seen the glory of the ancient temple, mourned, and were not far from thinking that God had forsaken them, and that his promises had failed. But Haggai, in order to comfort them and to prove that the glory of this second would be greater than the glory of the first, though the structure of the building was far inferior, leads them to the Redeemer.

"Thus saith the Lord of hosts," says he, "Yet once, and within a short time, I will shake the heavens, and the earth, the sea, and the continent, and all the nations; and the Desire of all nations shall come; and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts. The silver is mine, the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than the glory of the former." (Haggai 2:6-9.)

Thus, as Haggai brings the restoration of the Temple down to Christ, and refers to him its true glory; so this deliverance (for the two things are connected, or rather they are the same) extended even to Christ. Consequently, we need not wonder if it surpassed the Egyptian deliverance in every respect.

20. *The beast of the field shall honor me.* He adorns the preceding statement; for, amidst such a desperate condition of affairs, it was proper that magnificent language should be employed in extolling the power of God, that words might supply what seemed to be wanting in the reality. The meaning is, that the power of God will be so visible and manifest, that the very beasts, impressed with the feeling of it, shall acknowledge and worship God. This prediction corresponds to the song,

"The sea saw and fled, Jordan was driven back. The mountains leaped like rams, and the hills like lambs. At the face of the Lord the earth trembled." (Psalm 114:3, 4, 7.)

Isaiah here ascribes the same feeling to brute animals, because by a secret impulse they shall be constrained to retire, so as to allow his people to pass safely. And yet the cause assigned is more extensive, that they will stand still, as if in astonishment, when they see the miracles. In a word, God

declares that he will not suffer his people, in their journey homeward, to be destitute of the means of subsistence, but describes in exaggerated language his love toward the Jews, that by the height of their hope they may rise above the world. When we hear these statements, let us also not measure the power of God by the nature of things, but let us be exalted by faith above all that can be seen or known.

My people, my chosen. That these wretched exiles may not be driven from the hope of heavenly grace and assistance, he reminds them of their adoption; as if he had said, that amidst this ruinous and melancholy condition they still continued to be the people of God, because he who once *chose* them does not change his purpose. Accordingly, whenever we need to be excited to cherish favorable hope, let us remember God's calling; for, although we are unworthy, still it ought to be reckoned enough that the Lord has deigned to bestow on us so great an honor.

21. *This people have I created for myself.* The Prophet means that the Lord will necessarily do what he formerly said, because it concerns his glory to preserve the people whom he has chosen for himself; and therefore these words are intended for the consolation of the people. "Do you think that I will suffer my glory to fall to the ground? It is connected with your salvation, and therefore your salvation shall be the object of my care. In a word, know that you shall be saved, because you cannot perish, unless my glory likewise perish. Ye shall therefore survive, because I wish that you may continually proclaim my glory."

When he says that he has *created* the people, let us learn that it proceeds from supernatural grace that we are the people of God; for we must remember that principle of which we have formerly spoken, that he does not now speak of the ordinary nature of men, but of spiritual regeneration, or of the adoption by which he separates the Church from the rest of the world, and that with everything that belongs to it. Let no one therefore ascribe his regeneration to himself or to any human merits; but let us acknowledge that it is entirely to the mercy of God that we owe so great a favor.

They shall declare my praise. Though it is the design of the Prophet to shew what I have said, that his people shall be saved because it concerns the glory of God, yet we also learn from it, that the end of our election is, that we may shew forth the glory of God in every possible way. (Exodus 14:4, 17, 18.) The reprobate are, indeed, the instruments of the glory of God, but it is said to shine in us in a very different manner; for "he hath chosen us," says Paul, "that we might be holy and without blame before him through love, who predestinated us that he might adopt us to be his children through Jesus Christ, in himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace by which he hath made us accepted through the Beloved." (Ephesians 1:4-6.) Such also is the import of the words of Peter when he says, that we were brought out of darkness into the wonderful kingdom of God, that we may declare his perfections, (1

Peter 2:9;) and likewise the words of Zacharias,

"That, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, we may serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness, all the days of our life." (Luke 1:74, 75.)

This, then, is the end of our calling, that, being consecrated to God, we may praise and honor him during our whole life.

22. *And thou hast not called on me.* He confirms by an indirect reproof what he said in the preceding verse, that it was not by any merits of his people that he was induced to act so kindly towards them. This deliverance, therefore, ought to be ascribed to no other cause than to the goodness of God. In order to prove this, he says, "Thou hast not called on me." *Calling on* the name of God includes the whole of the worship of God, the chief part of which is "calling upon him;" and, therefore, following the ordinary manner of Scripture, he has put a part for the whole. But in other passages the Lord plainly shews that calling upon him is the chief part of his worship; for, after having said that he despises sacrifices and outward ceremonies, he adds,

"Call upon me in the day of trouble." (Psalm 50:15.)

Hence also Scripture, when it speaks of the worship of God, chiefly mentions "calling on him;" for when Moses states that the worship of God had been restored, he says, "Then began men to call on the name of the Lord." (Genesis 4:26.)

But thou hast been wearied of me. In this second clause I consider the particle {כי} (*ki*) to be disjunctive, "But rather thou hast been wearied of me." Others render it "Because thou hast wearied;" as if he had said, "Thou hast received with dislike what was enjoined on thee;" which amounts to nearly the same thing. As the Lord demands obedience, so he wishes all that worship him to be ready and cheerful; as Paul testifies, that "the Lord loveth a cheerful giver," (2 Corinthians 9:7,) and they who obey reluctantly cannot be called, and are not reckoned by him, true and sincere worshippers. Thus, in order to show that the Jews have not worshipped him as they ought to have done, he says that they did it reluctantly. If any one choose rather to view it as assigning the reason, and render it thus, — "Thou hast not called on me, *for* thou hast rendered to me no worship without regret, and what may be said to have been extorted from thee by violence," as it makes little difference in the meaning, I do not greatly object; but the translation which I have given appears to convey more clearly what the Prophet intends. Besides, the contrast contains within itself the assigning of a reason; and therefore, if we wish that God should accept of our service, let us obey him with a cheerful disposition.

23. *Theft hast not brought to me.* A question arises, "Why does the Prophet bring this reproach against the Jews, who, it is evident, were very careful to offer sacrifices according to the injunction of the Law?" Some refer this to the time of the captivity, when they could not have offered sacrifices to

God though they had been willing to do so; for it was not lawful for them to offer sacrifices in any other place than Jerusalem, and therefore they could not appease God by sacrifices. (Deuteronomy 12:13.) But I rather think that it is a general reproach; for at the very time when the people were sacrificing, they could not boast of their merits or personal worth, as if they had laid God under obligations in this manner; for they were wanting in the sacrifices which God chiefly approves, that is, faith and obedience, without which nothing can be acceptable to God. There was no integrity of heart, "their hands were full of blood," (Isaiah 1:15;) everything was filled with fraud and robbery, and there was no room for justice or equity. Although, therefore, they daily brought beasts to the temple, and sacrificed them, yet he justly affirms that they offered nothing to him. Sacrifices could not be accepted by God when they were separated kern truth, and were offered to another rather than to God; for he did not demand them in themselves, but so far as the people treated them as exercises of faith and obedience, Hence we infer that the Prophet says nothing new, but continues to exhibit the same doctrine, namely, that God rejects all services that are rendered in a slavish spirit, or in any other respect are defective.

24. *Thou hast not bought cane for me.* He means the *cane* or *calamus* of which the precious ointment was composed, as we are informed, (Exodus 30:23;) for the high priests, the tabernacle of the congregation, and the ark of the testimony, together with its vessels, were anointed with it he says, therefore, "Although thou buy cane for me with money, yet thou oughtest not to reckon that to be expense bestowed on me, as if I approved of it." They lost their pains in all those ceremonies, because they did not look to the proper end, since they did not exercise faith, or worship God with a pure conscience.

And thou hast not made me drunk. This corresponds to a mode of expression employed in the law, in which God testifies that sacrifices are pleasant and delightful feasts to him; not that he took pleasure in the slaughter of animals, but that by these exercises he wished to lead his people to true obedience. He means that here, on the contrary, the people did not offer sacrifices in a proper manner, because they polluted everything with impiety; and, consequently, that he might be said to be hungry and faint, because they offered nothing in a right manner, but everything was corrupted and was without savor.

But thou hast made me to serve with thy sins. The Prophet now aggravates the heinousness of that offense, by saying that the people not only were deficient in their duty, and did not submit to God, but that they even endeavored to make God submit to them, and "to serve" their will, or rather their lust. They who explain this passage as referring to Christ torture the Prophet's meaning, and therefore I consider this interpretation to be more natural. The Lord complains that men compelled him to carry a heavy burden, instead of submitting to him with reverence, as they ought to have done;

for when we rise up against God, we treat him as a slave by our rebellion and insolence. He explains this more fully when he says, *Ye have wearied me;* that is, that God suffered much uneasiness on account of the wickedness of his people; for in some respects we wound and "pierce him," as the Prophet says, (Zechariah 12:10,) when we reject his voice, and do not suffer ourselves to be governed by him. Apparently he alludes to what he had formerly said about the weariness or uneasiness of the people in worshipping God; for God declares, on the contrary, that the people have given him great distress.

25. *I, I am he.* [170] He concludes the former statement by this exclamation, as if he had said, that he may boast of his right, that he blots out the iniquities of his people, and restores them to freedom; for they have no merits by which they could obtain it, since they deserve the severest punishment, and even destruction. The same word is twice repeated by him, that he may more sharply rebuke the ingratitude of men who are wont to rob him of that honor which belongs to him alone, or in some way to throw it into the shade.

He that blotteth out thy iniquities. {הוא} (*hu*) is the demonstrative pronoun *He,* used instead of a noun, as in many other passages. It is but a poor and feeble meaning that is attached to the words of the Prophet by those who think that God claims for himself the privilege and authority of pardoning sins, for he rather contrasts his mercy with all other causes, as if he declared that he is not induced by anything else to pardon sins, but is satisfied with his mere goodness, and, consequently, that it is wrong to ascribe either to merits or to any sacrifices the redemption of which he is the Author by free grace. The meaning may be summed up by saying, that the people ought to hope for their return for no other reason than because God will freely pardon their sins, and, being of his own accord appeased by his mercy, will stretch out his fatherly hand.

The present subject is the pardon of sins; we must see on what occasion it has been introduced. Undoubtedly the Prophet means that there will be a freely bestowed redemption, and therefore he mentions forgiveness rather than redemption, because, since they had received a severe punishment for their sins, they must have been pardoned before they were delivered. The cause of the disease must be taken away, if we wish to cure the disease itself; and so long as the Lord's anger lasts, his chastisements will also last; and consequently his anger must be appeased, and we must be reconciled to God, before we are freed from punishments. And this form of expression ought to be carefully observed in opposition to the childish distinction of the Sophists, who say that God does indeed pardon guilt, but that we must make satisfaction by penances. Hence proceeded satisfactions, indulgences,

[170] Jarchi adopts this view, and paraphrases the clause thus; " 'Thy first father sinned,' that is, when he said, 'How shall I know that I shall inherit it?' " (Genesis 15:8.) This passage was not likely to have occurred to modern readers as the most striking fact in Abraham's history for proving that that eminently holy man was not absolutely perfect; and the selection of it is a curious specimen of Jewish interpretation. — Ed.

purgatory, and innumerable other contrivances.

The Prophet does not only speak of guilt, but speaks expressly of punishment which is remitted, because sins have been freely pardoned. This is still more clearly expressed by the addition of the phrase *for mine own sake.* It is certain that this limitation is contrasted with all merits, that is, that God pays no regard to us, or to anything that is in us, in pardoning our sins, but that he is prompted to it solely by his goodness; for if he had regard to us, he would be in some respects our debtor, and forgiveness would not be of free grace. Accordingly, Ezekiel explains the contrast,

"Not for your sakes will I do this, O house of Jacob, but for mine own sake." (Ezekiel 36:22.)

Hence it follows that God is his own adviser, and is freely inclined to pardon sins, for he does not find any cause in men.

Therefore I will not remember thy sins. The Prophet added this for the consolation of the godly, who, oppressed by the consciousness of their transgressions, might otherwise have fallen into despair. On this account he encourages them to cherish good hope, and confirms them in that confidence by saying, that although they are unworthy, yet he will pardon their sins, and will thus deliver them. Hence we ought to draw a useful doctrine, that no one can be certain of obtaining pardon, unless he rely on the absolute goodness of God. They who look to their works must continually hesitate, and at length despair, because, if they are not deceived by gross hypocrisy, they will always have before their eyes their own unworthiness, which will constrain them to remain in doubt as to the love of God.

When it is said that ministers also forgive sins, (John 20:23,) there is no inconsistency with this passage, for they are witnesses of this freely bestowed forgiveness. The ordinary distinction is that God forgives sins by his power, and ministers by their office; but as this distinction does not explain the Prophet's meaning, we must keep by what I have stated, that God not only forgives sins in the exercise of his authority, but that all the blessings for which we ought to hope flow from the fountain of his absolute bounty. Thus the Lord adorned the preaching of the gospel, and its ministers, in such a manner as to reserve the full authority for himself.

26. *Bring to my remembrance.* Because the pride of men cannot be easily corrected, the Lord pursues this argument, and dwells much upon it, in order to lead the Jews to throw away all confidence in their works, and to make them more humble, he gives them liberty to say and argue whatever they please, in order to support their cause, if they do not acknowledge that they are vanquished. By a sort of admission in their favor, he bids them call to his remembrance; as if he had said, "If thou thinkest me to be forgetful, tell it thyself; remind me, if thou canst allege anything good; speak in thy turn, I shall be silent." By this form of expression he taunts men more than if he had stated in the usual way how the matter stood. He shews that it is exceedingly foolish in men to claim anything for themselves; for, though he

gives them liberty of boasting, they will be found utterly unable to plead, and will have nothing to say in defense of their cause.

That thou mayest be justified, that is, "In order that thou mayest gain thy cause, and carry off the victory, I allow thee to say whatever thou pleasest." This is vehement mockery, which shuts the mouths of men more completely than if he pronounced the sentence in his own person and with the authority of a judge. Yet we must also observe the design of the Prophet; for he found it necessary to strip the Jews of the mask of personal worth, that they might humbly and meekly receive the grace of God.

27. *Thy first father sinned.* This passage is almost universally understood to refer to the "first parent" Adam. (Genesis 3:6.) Some prefer to interpret it as relating to Abraham; as if he had said,

"You have not alone sinned, but your father Abraham himself sinned, though he was a man of eminent holiness." [171] (Joshua 24:2.)

By the *teachers* are understood to be meant Moses and Aaron, who were men of extraordinary holiness, and yet sinned: "how much more you who are far inferior to theme" (Numbers 20:12.) That would be an argument from the greater to the less. But I view the matter differently; for under the word *Father* he includes not one or a few of their ancestors, but many. It is an interchange of the singular and plural number, which is very frequently employed by Hebrew writers. This reproof occurs very frequently in the prophets and in the Psalms; for, knowing that God reckoned them to be "a holy people," (Exodus 19:6,) as if this honor had been due to the excellence or merits of the fathers, they rose fiercely against God himself, and swelled with pride on account of their hereditary privilege. On this account the prophets in every age expose the crimes of the fathers; and Stephen, who followed them, says, that "they always resisted the Holy Spirit;" (Acts 7:51;) as if he had said, "You do not now for the first time begin to be wicked; long ago your fathers were base and infamous. From a bad crow has come a bad egg. But you are far worse, and exceed your fathers in wickedness; so that if I had looked at you alone, you would long ago have been destroyed and completely ruined."

And thy teachers. [172] He now adds the teachers, in order to shew that the blame did not lie with the people alone; for they who ought to have been the guides of others, that is, the priests and the prophets, were the first to stumble, and led others into error. In a word, he shews that no class was free from vices and corruptions. "Let them now go and boast of their virtues, and let them produce the very smallest reason why I ought to protect them, except my own goodness." If it be objected that there is no reason why

[171] "Thy teachers. Hebrews Interpreters." — (Eng. Ver.) "Interpreters, or organs of communication, is a title given elsewhere to ambassadors, (2 Chronicles 32:31,) and to an interceding angel. (Job 33:23.) It here denotes all those who, under the theocracy, acted as organs of communication between God and the people, whether prophets, priests, or rulers." — Alexander.

[172] "Even on the common supposition, that the words of God begin with the second clause, it is better to take 'He will help thee' as a short independent clause, parenthetically thrown in to complete the description, or to connect it with what follows." — Alexander.

the sins of their fathers should be brought as an accusation against them, because it is written,

"The soul that hath sinned shall die, and the children shall not be punished instead of the fathers," (Ezekiel 18:20,)

the answer will be easy. The Lord makes the children to bear the punishment of the sins of the fathers, when they resemble their fathers; and yet they are not punished for other men's sins, for they themselves have sinned; and when the Lord chastises the whole body, he puts the fathers and the children together, so as to involve all in the same condemnation.

28. *Therefore I will pollute.* The copulative {ו} *(vau)* here means *therefore,* and the preterite tense, *I have polluted,* ought to have a future signification, though it may also be rendered in the past tense; but I have preferred the future, in order to apply it to the time of the captivity; for he directly addresses those who were to live under the captivity. If it be thought preferable to extend it to various calamities, by which God had covered his people with disgrace, and at the same time to connect with it their exile in Babylon, there will be no impropriety; and indeed it will be more appropriate to view it as a description of what frequently happened to them in former times, that they may be warned for the future, that they have no privilege which can defend them from receiving again with the deepest disgrace the punishment of their ingratitude, tie shews, therefore, the cause of this destruction. It was because the transgressions of the fathers and of the children must be punished, that is, when there was no end of sinning, but when they daily kindled the wrath of God against them, till he at length punished them.

The Lord is said to "pollute" or "profane" his Church, when he despises and throws it aside as a thing of no value. In this sense the word is used in Psalm 89:39, and in many other passages. Having been set apart and sanctified by him, we dwell under his protection and guardianship, so long as we are holy; and in like manner when we are deprived of it, we are said to be "profaned," because we cease to be sacred, and are rendered unworthy of his protection; and he exposes as a prey to enemies those whom he formerly called "his anointed," and forbade men to "touch." (Psalm 105:15.) But it may be thought strange that the priests, who were Christ's representatives, should be "profaned;" and the reason is, that they transgressed, while they ought to have been "teachers" of others.

And I will make Jacob a curse. The Hebrew word {הרם}, *(herem,)* which we have translated *a curse,* signifies "destruction," but likewise signifies "a curse;" and I have thought that the latter meaning is more appropriate to this passage, for it afterwards follows, *a reproach.* These statements are borrowed by the Prophet from Moses, whose description he follows so closely, that it is easy to perceive the style of Moses in these words, and to see that the prophets bring forward nothing that is new or strange. The words of Moses are:

"And thou shalt be an astonishment, a proverb, and a by-word among all

the nations to which the Lord shall lead thee." (Deuteronomy 28:37.)

He therefore threatens that he will afflict the people in such a manner as to make them "accursed" by all; so that whoever shall wish to pronounce a "curse" may take it for an example, and that it may be a form of "cursing;" that he will expose them to the ridicule of men, so that they shall serve as a proverb in the mouth of all who wish to utter scorn; just as at the present day we see that the name of a Jew, though in itself honorable, is in the highest degree ignominious and disgraceful. The Lord pronounced those dreadful threatenings by Isaiah, that they might know that a punishment sufficiently severe, as compared with the enormity of their transgressions, could not be inflicted; that when the Lord should chastise them, they might not complain that the punishments which they endured were too severe, or think that the Prophet's reproofs were too sharp.

Chapter 44

CHAPTER 44

Isaiah 44:1-28

1. Yet now hear, O Jacob my servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen:

1. Nunc tamen audi, Iacob, serve meus, et Israel quem elegi.

2. Thus saith the LORD that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, which will help thee; Fear not, O Jacob, my servant; and thou, Jesurun, whom I have chosen.

2. Sic dicit Iehova factor tuus, et formator tuus ab utero; tibi auxiliabitur. Ne timeas, serve meus, Iacob, dilecte quem elegi.

3. For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring:

3. Quia effundam aquas super sitientem, et flumina super aridam. Effundam spiritum meum super semen tuum, et benedictionem meam super germina tua.

4. And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses.

4. Et germinabunt quasi inter herbam, quasi salices juxta rivos aquarum.

5. One shall say, I am the LORD'S; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the LORD, and surname himself by the name of Israel.

5. Hic dicet, Ego sum Iehovae; et ille vocabitur nomine Iacob; altus scribet manu sua, Iehovae (sum), et nomine Israel cognominabitur.

6. Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and besides me there is no God.

6. Sic dicit Iehova, rex Israel, et redemptor ejus, Iehova exercituum: Ego primus, et idem novissimus, et praeter me non est Deus.

7. And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I appointed the ancient people? and the things that are coming, and shall come, let them shew unto them.

7. Et quis sicut ego vocabit, annunciabit hoc, et ordinabit hoc mihi, ex quo constitui populum seculi? Et quae pendent, et quae ventura sunt, illis annuncient.

8. Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God besides me? yea, there is no God; I know not any.

8. Ne timeatis et ne terreamini. An non ex tune audire to feci, et annuntiavi? Itaque vos testes mei, quod non sit Deus praeter me, et non sit fortis quem ignorem.

9. They that make a graven image are all of them vanity; and their delectable things shall not profit; and they are their own witnesses; they see not, nor know; that they may be ashamed.

9. Fictores sculptilis omnes vanitas; et desiderabilia eorum nihil prosunt; et testes eorum ipsi, quod non vident, nec cognoscunt; ideoque confundentur.

10. Who hath formed a god, or molten a graven image that is profitable for nothing?

10. Quis formator Dei? et quis sculptilis confiator, quod nullam ad rem usui est?

11. Behold, all his fellows shall be ashamed: and the workmen, they are of men: let them all be gathered together, let them stand up; yet they shall fear, and they shall be ashamed together.

11. Ecce omnes socii ejus pudefient, et artifices ipsi sunt ex hominibus. Ut conveniant omnes, ac stent, pavebunt, et pudefient simul.

12. The smith with the tongs both worketh in the coals, and fashioneth it with hammers, and worketh it with the strength of his arms: yea, he is hungry, and his strength faileth: he drinketh no water, and is faint.

12. Faber ferrarius limam (aut forcipem) sumet; operabitur in prunis, malleis formabit illud; operabitur in eo, brachio virtutis suae; etiam famelicus, ut deficiant rites; non bibat aquam, ut fatiscat.

13. The carpenter stretcheth out his rule; he marketh it out with a line; he fitteth it with planes, and he marketh it out with the compass, and maketh it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man; that it may remain in the house.

13. Faber lignarius extendit regulam, illud delineat filo tincto, aptat planulis, circino figurat; facit illud secundum formam viri, secundum effigiem hominis, ut sedeat in domo.

14. He heweth him down cedars, and taketh the cypress and the oak, which he strengtheneth for himself among the trees of the forest: he planteth an ash, and the rain doth nourish it.

14. Succidet sibi cedros, tollet ilicem et quercum; roborabitur ad ligna silvae; plantabit pinum, quam pluvia enutriet.

15. Then shall it be for a man to burn: for he will take thereof, and warm himself; yea, he kindleth it, and baketh bread; yea, he maketh a god, and worshippeth it: he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto.

15. Tum erit homini in incendium; nam accipiet ex illis, et calefaciet se; praeterea furnum accendet, et coquet panes; Deum quoque efficiet, atque adorabit; finget idolum, et prosternet se coram co.

16. He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied: yea, he warmeth himself, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire:

16. Partem ejus comburet igni; ex parte carnem comedet; assabit assaturam, et saturabitur. Deinde calefaciet se, ac dicet, Ohe calefactus sum, et vidi ignem.

17. And the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou art my god.

17. Reliquias ejus in Deum vertit in sculptile suum; incurvat se coram eo; adorat et precatur illud, dicens, Libera me, quia Deus meus es.

18. They have not known nor understood: for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; and their hearts, that they cannot understand.

18. Nescierunt, nec intellexerunt; quia oblevit oculos eorum, ne videant, et cor eorum, ne intelligant.

19. And none considereth in his heart, neither is there knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire; yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and eaten it: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree?

19. Non redit ad cor suum, non est sensus, nec intelligentia, ut dicat, Partem ejus combussi igni; etiam super prunas ejus coxi panem; assavi carnem, et comedi; residuum ejus in abominationem vertam: coram trunco ligni incurvabo me?

20. He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?

20. Pascit cinerem, cor seductum inclinat eum, ut non liberet animam suam, neque dicat, Annon mendacium in dextera mea?

21. Remember these, O Jacob and Israel; for thou art my servant: I have formed thee; thou art my servant: O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me.

21. Memor esto horum, Iacob, et Israel, quia servus meus es; formavi to; servus meus es; Israel, ne obliviscaris mei.

22. I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee.

22. Delevi, ut nubem, iniquitates tuas; ut nebulam, peccata tua. Revertere ad me, quia redemi to.

23. Sing, O ye heavens; for the LORD hath done it: shout, ye lower parts

of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel.

23. Laudate, coeli, quia fecit Iehova; jubilate, inferiora terrae; erumpite, montes, in laudem; silva et omnis arbor quae in ea st; quoniam redemit Iehova Iacob, et in Israel glorificabitur.

24. Thus saith the LORD, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the LORD that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself;

24. Sic dicit Iehova redemptor tuns, et factor tuus ex utero. Ego Iehova faciens omnia, extendens coelos solus, expandens terrain inca virtute (vel, a meipso.)

25. That frustrateth the tokens of the liars, and maketh diviners mad; that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish;

25. Dissipans signa divinatorum, ariolos dementans, convertens sapientes retrorsum, et scientiam corum infatuans.

26. That confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers; that saith to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited; and to the cities of Judah, Ye shall be built, and I will raise up the decayed places thereof:

26. Suscitans verbum servi sui, et consilium nuntiorum suorum perficiens; dicens Ierosolymae, Habitaberis; et civitatibus Iuda, Extruemini; et ruinas ejus erigam.

27. That saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers:

27. Dicens profundo, Exsiccare, et flumina tua arefaeiam.

28. That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.

28. Dicens Cyro, Pastor meus; et omnem voluntatem meam perficiet; dicendo etiam Ierosolymae, Aedificaberis; et templo, Fundaberis.

1. *Yet now hear.* Having a little before rebuked the transgressions of the people, and declared that all deserved eternal perdition, because both the princes and the people had polluted everything by their crimes, he now mitigates that severity of punishment, and comforts the people. In this passage I consider the particle {ו} *(vau)* to mean *But* or *Yet,* as in many other passages. As if he had said, "Though grievous afflictions are about to overtake thee, *yet now* hear what I will do for thy sake." The verse must be viewed in connection with the former argument, because the Lord declares that he will never permit his people to perish altogether, though they be grievously afflicted. Hence infer, that God is never so angry with his Church as not to leave some room for mercy, as we have already seen on many occasions. The consequence is, that the prophets, whenever they threaten, always add some consolation as an abatement.

But lest we should imagine that men have deserved it by their good con-

duct, he therefore adds, *whom I have chosen;* for we do not serve God, because we are entitled to it, or deserve it, but because he renders us fit by a free election. In this passage, therefore, the words *Servant* and *Elect* are synonymous, yet so that election comes first in order, and therefore David says that he was God's "servant" before he was born, because even from his mother's womb he had been received into God's family. (Psalm 22:10; 71:6; 116:16.)

2. *Thus saith Jehovah thy Maker.* Though he treated the Jews harshly, that they might be stripped of all false confidence, and might humbly betake themselves to the grace of God, he now caresses them pleasantly by a mild and gentle discourse, that they may know that by self-denial they shall sustain no loss. We must therefore supply here the following contrasts. "Thou, Jacob, art indeed nothing in thyself, but God thy Maker will not despise his work; no nobleness of birth would secure thee against perdition, but the adoption which the Heavenly Father has been pleased to bestow upon thee will be abundantly sufficient for redeeming thee." Besides, we should keep in mind what I have often said already, that the Prophet does not speak of the first creation by which we are born to be human beings, but of the regeneration which belongs and is peculiar to the elect, that they may obtain a place in the Church of God.

He that formed thee from the womb. This is added, that men may not claim anything for themselves, as if they had moved him to shew kindness to them. By these words he also exhibits to them a hereditary covenant, by which God separated them to be his inheritance "before they were born." (Romans 9:11.) Some think that this refers to the person of Jacob, because, by taking hold of his brother's foot, (Genesis 25:26,) he gave a remarkable proof of his election; but this is a forced interpretation, and therefore I give a wider signification to these words, namely, that the Lord was kind and bountiful to his people from the commencement, and cut off all merits; because by free grace he "formed him," and then freely bestowed on him all blessings.

He will help thee. Some supply the relative, *"Who* will help thee;" as if he had said, "Thy Helper;" but it is better to read the clause separately.[173] It would be still more clear in the first person, "I will help thee;" but as to the substance of the meaning it makes no difference. The statemen t amounts to this, that he who is the Creator of the people will be ready to give his assistance when the proper time shall arrive. Let every person therefore adopt that reading which he thinks proper; but I have preferred to follow the simple and natural meaning, without supplying any word.

O beloved! The word {ישרון} *(yeshurun)* is explained in various ways. Some think that it is derived from {ישר}, *(yashar,)* which means "to be upright," or "to please;" others from {שור}, *(shur,)* and others from {אשר}, *(ashar.)* But I rather agree with those who translate it *Beloved,* and derive it from

[173] "There is no God. Heb., Rock. — (Eng. Ver.)

the root {ישר}, *(yashar.)* This designation is also bestowed on that nation by Moses in his song; for, although some render it in that passage *Upright,* and in this passage also, the old rendering is more suitable, "My beloved is grown fat." (Deuteronomy 32:15.) The Prophet adorns his nation with these titles, that the Jews may be led by past benefits to entertain hope for the future. This rule ought to be held by all believers as perpetually binding, that, after having experienced the kindness of God toward them, they should likewise expect it for the future; for otherwise they will be excessively ungrateful, and will shew that they do not rely on the promises of God, which, when they are impressed on our hearts, undoubtedly bring peace and safety; not that we should be utterly devoid of fear, but that we should strive against all dread and distrust; and therefore he again repeats, —

Fear thou not, Jacob. Such is also the import of the consolation given by Christ,

"Fear not, little flock, for my Father hath good will towards thee." (Luke 12:32.)

And, indeed, among the dangers which threaten death on all sides, no remedy is better adapted to allay terrors than that God has been pleased to bestow his favor upon us, so that he will save us for ever. By the word "Beloved," therefore, he again repeats that this depends on the favor and protection of God, who ascribes to himself, and entirely claims, all the good that existed among the people.

3. *For I will pour waters.* He continues the same subject, and at the same time explains what will be the nature of that assistance which he has promised. But we ought always to keep in remembrance that these prophecies relate to that sorrowful and afflicted period of which he formerly spoke, that is, when the people, in the extremity to which they were reduced, might think that they were altogether forsaken, and that all the promises of God were vain. Isaiah meets this doubt, and compares the people to a dry and thirsty land, which has no moisture at all. By this metaphor David also describes his wretchedness. (Psalm 143:6.) Although therefore they were worn out by afflictions, and the vital moisture was decayed, yet, that they might not throw away courage in their deepest distresses, they ought to have set before their minds this declaration of the Prophet. We, too, when we are brought into the greatest dangers, and see nothing before us but immediate death, ought in the same manner to betake ourselves to these promises, that we may be supported by them against all temptations. Yet we must feel our drought and poverty, that our thirsty souls may partake of this refreshing influence of the waters.

I will pour my Spirit. Jehovah himself explains what he means by *waters* and *rivers,* that is, *his Spirit.* In another passage the Spirit of God is called "water," but in a different sense. When Ezekiel gives the name "water" to the Holy Spirit, he at the same time calls it "clean water," with a view to cleansing. (Ezekiel 36:25.) Isaiah will afterwards call the Spirit "waters," but

for a different reason, that is, because by the secret moisture of his power he quickens souls. But these words of the Prophet have a wider signification, because he does not speak merely of the Spirit of regeneration, but alludes to the universal grace which is spread over all the creatures, and which is mentioned in Psalm 105:30, "Send forth thy Spirit, and they shall be created, and he will renew the face of the earth." As David declares in that passage that every part of the world is enlivened, so far as God imparts to it secret vigor, and next ascribes to God might and power, by which, whenever he thinks fit, he suddenly revives the ruinous condition of heaven and earth, so now for the same reason Isaiah gives the appellation "water" to the sudden renewal of the Church; as if he had said that the restoration of the Church is at God's disposal, as much as when he fertilizes by dew or rain the barren and almost parched lands.

Thus the Spirit is compared to "water," because without Him all things decay and perish through drought, and because by the secret watering of his power he quickens the whole world, and because the barrenness occasioned by drought and heat is cured in such a manner, that the earth puts on a new face. This is still more fully explained by the word which he afterwards employs, *Blessing.*

4. *And they shall spring up.* These words contain nothing more than what I quoted from Psalm 104:30, that, when the Spirit of God has been sent forth, the whole face of the earth is renewed, and those fields which formerly were burnt up with thirst are green and flourish, just as the herbs grow, after having been watered by the rains. By these metaphors he extends the view of this subject, and more fully shews that it is quite as easy for God to enlarge by additional offspring the Church, which was desolate, and which had been reduced to ruinous and frightful solitude, as to impart to the earth the power of bringing forth. Yet, though he does not speak of regeneration, still we may apply to it this statement; because he speaks of the restoration of the Church, the chief part of which is the new creature by which the Lord restores his image in the elect. This doctrine may indeed be drawn from it and more copiously explained, but we must first explain the Prophet's design, and lay open the plain and natural meaning of his words.

5. *One shall say.* Hitherto the Prophet has spoken metaphorically, but now expresses his meaning plainly without any figure of speech. He shews what is the nature of that vegetation and herbage of which he spoke. It means that out of all nations the Lord will gather his people, and will bring into his Church those who were formerly strangers, and will raise up and enlarge his Church, which formerly appeared to be reduced to nothing; for all shall flock to her from every quarter, and shall wish to be enrolled in the number of believers, as it is also said,

"Behold Philistia, Tyre, and Ethiopia; that man was born there." (Psalm 87:4.)

That passage, though hitherto it seemed to be obscure, through the mis-

takes of interpreters, is exceedingly well adapted to the illustration of this prophecy, that believers, who might have been terrified and ashamed on account of their diminished numbers, (for we know that but a small number returned from captivity,) might cherish hope of that illustrious and magnificent grace of Redemption which had been celebrated by the prophets. To meet these views, that Prophet, whoever he was, that was the author of the psalm, declares that the Babylonians and Egyptians shall be citizens of the Church, and that the Ethiopians and Tyrians, and those who formerly were strangers, shall come for the purpose of being enrolled among the people of God. "Now," says he, "Jerusalem lies waste; but one day God will not only gather those who are scattered, but will also call others from every quarter, and will unite in one body those who are now at the greatest variance, so that they shall boast of being citizens of Jerusalem, and shall belong to the body of the chosen people as much as if they had been natives." The same thing is taught in this passage by the Prophet Isaiah, from whom the author of the psalm undoubtedly borrowed that sentiment.

And another shall be called by the name of Jacob. The general meaning is, that there will be a vast assembly of men, who shall be united in faith and in obedience to the one true God. But as, in a registration, every person either pronounces or writes his own name, the Prophet, keeping his eye on this custom, employs the following modes of expression, — "One shall write with his hand, I am God's, and shall take the surname of Israel; another shall acknowledge that he is God's, and shall be called by the name of Jacob." He describes something new and uncommon, for he who formerly had nothing to do with God shall boast that God hath adopted him. "To be called" is in this place equivalent to the French phrase, *Se reclamer,* that is, "to declare one's self to belong to a person;" just as formerly, when he spoke of women to whom the name of their husbands served for a protection, he introduces them as saying, "Let thy name be called on us," that is, "Let us be named by thy name." (Isaiah 4:1.)

Although Isaiah appears, in this passage, to distinguish between those who in express terms shall declare that they belong to the people of God, and shall wish to be named by the name of Jacob, yet both clauses refer to the same persons, because to be a child of God, and to be an Israelite, are two things closely connected, for God determines that the Church shall be the mother of all his children. Yet it ought to be remarked, that none are the lawful citizens of the Church but those who submit to the government of God. If the Prophet had passed by the name of God and mentioned "Jacob" and "Israel," still we must have begun with the Head, from whom proceeds all relationship both in heaven and in earth; but, that there may be no remaining ambiguity, he has twice described this order, that none are reckoned to belong to the seed of Jacob but they who obey God.

Hence we easily see what is the Prophet's meaning; for he shews that the Church, so long as she is destitute of the blessing of God, withers and

gradually falls into decay; but that, when the Spirit of God has been poured out, she is quickened, and at length gathers strength, not only for recovering her former condition, but so as to grow by wonderful increase beyond expectation. Let us remember, however, that the Prophet does not speak of the order of nature, as if the new children of the Church were born such from the womb, because no person gains such high rank by his own industry; but when they who formerly were aliens have been regenerated by faith, he says that they will eagerly enrol their names, in order to testify that they are the children of God. Thus he describes a change which surpasses nature and all the conceptions of men, when out of the accursed race of Adam is formed a spiritual Israel.

Some think that the Prophet here expresses the small number of believers, when he says, "One shall be called, another shall write;" but that argument has little weight, and even the context furnishes an easy refutation of their error. In my opinion, we should rather understand him to mean that the Church shall be collected in crowds out of various and distant nations; because God will assemble strangers under his authority, and will stir them up to boast sincerely, and not in empty words, that they belong to his people. It ought also to be observed, that true faith cannot stand without breaking forth immediately into confession; for such is the import of these four words, "To be called by the name of Israel, To write, To be known, To say, I am the Lord's;" for they who sincerely worship God ought not to be dumb, but to testify both by actions and by words what they carry inwardly in their hearts. They profess to be the servants of God, and glory in his name during the whole course of his life.

6. *Thus saith Jehovah.* The Prophet now does nothing else than confirm the preceding doctrine, which was highly necessary; for the hearts of men, being prone to distrust, are easily dismayed by adversity, and may be encouraged by one or more exhortations. It was not superfluous, therefore, to employ many words in confirming them; because we never ascribe as much as we ought to ascribe to the power of God, but are distracted by a variety of thoughts, and are too strongly attached to the present state of things.

The King of Israel, and his Redeemer. After having made use of the unutterable name of God, the Prophet calls him also "King" and "Redeemer;" because it is not enough that we perceive the power of God, if we are not convinced of his good-will towards us. In order, therefore, that his promises may produce their proper effect upon us, he mentions not only his glory, but also his goodness, that we may know that it extends to us. It might be thought absurd that he called him "King," while there was scarcely any people; but believers ought to rely on this promise, that they might behold the kingdom by faith, and contemplate it as future, though they did not behold it with their eyes. And indeed this doctrine would never have penetrated their hearts, when they were reduced to the greatest extremity, and were almost overwhelmed with despair, if the way had not been opened by'

this preface. But when God familiarly addresses us, and declares that he is united to us, fairly, allured by so gentle an invitation, rises up out of hell itself.

I am the first. By these words he does not assert God's eternity, but shews that He is always like himself, that they may hope that He will be to them in future what they have found him to be in the past. But why, it may be asked, does he speak in this manner to believers, who knew it well? I reply, though men believe God, yet they do not acknowledge him to be what he is, and sometimes ascribe less to him than to the creature. The Prophet, therefore, wishes that our minds should be pure and free from every false imagination, and that we should raise them to heaven, that they may be altogether fixed on God alone. Besides, it was necessary that the people, who had been so terribly distressed, should be fortified against such violent attacks, that they might firmly keep their ground.

7. *And who as I?* Here the Lord compares himself with idols, as we have already seen in another passage. In the present instance the object is, that, when they were fiercely insulted by the Babylonian conquerors, they might not be discouraged, or think that their hopes were disappointed; for the taunts which were hurled at them by wicked men were exceedingly harsh and insolent. "Where is their God?" (Psalm 79:10.) "Why does he not assist you?" Such blasphemies might shake the minds of believers, and disturb them in such a manner that they would throw away hope and confidence; and therefore the Prophet dwells more earnestly on this matter, in order to confirm believers more and more. That mournful calamity of the nation was like a dark cloud, which prevented believers from seeing the face of God; and in the meantime unbelievers danced for joy, as if the power of their gods had shone forth in full brightness. In order to dispel that darkness of error, the Prophet shows that still undoubted marks and proofs of the glory of God are distinctly visible, so as to distinguish him from idols; that is, because in due time he publicly made known what was future, that the Jews might recognize him to be a righteous Judge in chastisements, and yet might hope that he would be reconciled and gracious.

Shall call. The word *call* may be taken in two senses, so as to refer either to foreknowledge or to action; for, as God governs all things by his providence, so he knows everything that is future, and gives evidence of his foreknowledge. It is unnecessary to give ourselves much trouble about the meaning of this word, for it is very evident that the Prophet ascribes to God both the foreknowledge and the government of all things. But for my own part, I rather think that it refers to action. "Shall there be found among the gods of the nations any one that can *call,* that is, raise up, announce, and appoint deliverers? Does not this plainly shew that I alone am God?" Thus he defies idols, to whom groundlessly men ascribe any power. By the word which he immediately adds, *shall tell it,* he magnifies the special grace of God, in deigning to reveal his purpose to the elect people by the prophets.

Since I appointed the people of the age. By "the people of the age" some understand all nations, the singular number being used instead of the plural, because, as soon as the Lord multiplied the nations, he separated them from each other, and established that order which should last through future ages. Others extend it to all the creatures, viewing the stars as one people, the vegetable tribes as another, and in like manner animals as another, and so forth. But when I examine the matter closely, I am constrained to adopt an opposite opinion, namely, that the Lord speaks of his own people, and calls them: 'the people of the age," because they are preferred to all others. Other nations, indeed, were unquestionably more ancient. The Egyptians boasted of their antiquity, and so did the Arcadians and others. But Abraham was brought out of Mesopotamia, (Genesis 11:31; Acts 7:2,) when the Chaldees were in a highly flourishing condition, and lived at home a solitary individual, as if at his death the remembrance of him should quickly perish, while the neighboring countries were highly populous, and were eminent in other respects.

The antiquity of Israel, therefore, ought not to be estimated from the number of years, or from the outward condition of things, but from the election of God; and hence also the foundations of Jerusalem are called eternal. (Psalm 78:69.) It is therefore as if he had said, "Before idols were framed by men, I determined that I should have a Church, which should last for ever." This "people," therefore, is the most ancient and most excellent of all, though others may come before it either in time or in rank; for, as all things were created for the sake of man, so all men were appointed to be of service to the Church; so that there are none, though occupying a higher eminence, that do not sink to a lower rank; for the Church is the body of Christ, which nothing can exceed in antiquity or excellence. To adopt the fables of the Jews, that Jerusalem was founded from the very beginning, would be absurd, because in this passage there is no reference to dates; but yet we ought to hold by this principle, that the elect people holds a higher rank than the heathen nations, in consequence of approaching more nearly to God, who is the fountain of eternity.

Let them tell. This permission shews that it is vain for men to expect a revelation from idols, which, if they tell anything, delude by tricks, and by words of doubtful meaning, those who consult them, as we have already mentioned.

8. *Fear not.* Isaiah now explains the reason why he formerly spoke of the power of God, that is, in order to confirm the faith of the people. From the preceding statements he draws this conclusion, — "Since the Lord is so powerful, and governs all things at his pleasure, the people whom he hath taken under his protection ought not to fear."

Have I not since then made thee hear? He next repeats what he had already said, that God not only brought assistance secretly to the Jews, and suddenly, as if by legerdemain, made his appearance when he was least

expected, but kept their faith alive by many predictions, and, in short, gave manifest proofs of his fatherly kindness, so that his divinity was clearly perceived. It would be of no advantage to us that God knows and can do all things, if it were not also revealed how great concern he takes in our salvation. Although, therefore, he wishes that many things should be unknown to us, yet he communicates everything that is useful or advantageous for us to know. {מאז}, (meaz,) *from then,* means a long period; or, if it be thought better, it denotes an opportunity; for the Lord reveals his secrets to the elect, when he sees a fit season; but the former interpretation appears to me to be more simple.

Therefore ye are my witnesses. He means what I have already remarked, that the people cannot plead the excuse of ignorance for not being satisfied with one God; for he has abundantly revealed himself to them, so as to give a testimony concerning himself. The object intended to be gained by our knowledge of the glory of God is, that we should profess his truth before men, as has been already said, if we do not wish to extinguish the light which he hath brought to us by his Spirit. Again, we cannot be "witnesses to God" if we are not confirmed by his truth; for a testimony proceeding from a doubtful opinion would be of no avail, and therefore we must be taught by the Word of God, so as to have a fixed and unhesitating hope of salvation.

And there is no strong God. [174] In this passage, as in many others, he applies to God the epithet *strong;* for it is not enough to acknowledge God's eternal essence, if we do not also ascribe strength to him. But for this, we shall leave him nothing but a bare and empty name, as is done by wicked men, who with the mouth confess God, and afterwards ascribe his power to this and to that.

9. *The formers of a graven image.* The Lord now shews, on the contrary, how wretched idolaters are who wander amidst their contrivances, and are not founded on the eternal truth of God; for they have no knowledge or sound understanding. As he justly pronounced the people, a little before, to be guilty of ingratitude, if the proofs of the grace of God did not encourage them to the exercise of faith, so he now arms and fortifies them against all the superstitions of the Gentiles. Unbelievers being both very numerous and very wealthy, he says that all are nothing, [175] and, next, that amidst all their magnificence there is nothing but imposture.

And their desirable things do not profit. Under the term *desirable things,* he includes not only idols, but all their worship, and the ornaments, honor, and obedience which foolish men render to them, and denotes those things by a highly appropriate name; for since the chief object of life is to acknowledge and worship God, (which alone is our principal distinction from the brutes,) we ought to prefer it to all things, even to the most valuable, so as to direct to him all our prayers, and, in a word, all the thoughts of our heart. With

[174] "Que tous sont vanite." "That all are vanity."

[175] Commentary on Isaiah, vol. 1, p. 84.

good reason, therefore, does Scripture employ this word in speaking of the worship of God; but here the Prophet speaks of corrupt worship and the mad *desire* of idols, by which men are hurried along; and therefore he says, that all that they desire or eagerly perform is vain and useless. Frequently, too, this "desire" is compared to the love of a harlot, by which men are bewitched and almost blinded, so as not to perceive their baseness or yield to any reason. But we have explained this under a former passage. (Isaiah 1:29.) [176]

And they are their witnesses. Some explain this to mean that the idols bear testimony against themselves, and plainly shew how vain they are, so that they who do not perceive it must be exceedingly stupid. But I do not at all approve of that exposition, and prefer to follow those who refer it to the worshippers of idols, who themselves are aware of their being so utterly vain; for they know that they neither see nor understand anything. And in this passage there is a contrast between the testimony of the people of God and that of idolaters. The former will give an illustrious testimony of the glory of God from his works and promises and predictions; the latter will be constrained to be dumb, if they do not choose to bring forward contrivances which have no certainty whatever, and therefore are false and vain. Wicked men boast, indeed, of their worship with great haughtiness, and loudly applaud themselves; but their conscience [177] is "a witness" how uncertain and vain is all that they do, for they always tremble, and never find rest, though their obduracy leads them to violent exertions.

They will themselves, therefore, bear testimony against their idols; just as, if a man were to employ an ignorant teacher, he may be a witness of his ignorance. In like manner they will bear witness that their gods neither know nor can do anything; for they see that they are composed of stone or wood or some other material, and that they neither can see nor understand anything. Thus believers alone will render a true testimony to their God, because he knows, directs, and governs all things. The rest must at length be *ashamed,* though now they defend their errors with mad eagerness; for their conscience is a witness that nothing but opinion and a vain imagination holds their minds captive. [178]

10. *Who is the maker of God?* He pours ridicule on the madness of men who dare to frame gods; for it is a shocking and detestable thing that men should take so much upon them as to create God. Every person certainly will greatly abhor such madness; and yet men are blindly impelled by foolish passion to manufacture gods, and no warning restrains them. On the other hand, they will say that this never entered into any man's mind, and that injustice is done to them when they are accused of so great madness; just as

[176] "Ce peu qu'ils ont de conscience." "The little conscience that they have."

[177] "The obscurity of this verse proceeds from too close a translation, which may be cleared up by this paraphrase, 'They that make a graven image are framers of a vain insignificant thing, for their idol can never profit them; they that make them can witness for them, that they see not, and have no knowledge, therefore they may be ashamed to worship them.'" — White.

[178] "The strength of his arms." — Eng. Ver.

the Papists in the present day say that we slander them, when we employ these arguments of the Prophet against them. But in vain do they rely on their sophistical reasonings for avoiding this charge. What the Prophet says is most true, that they are so mad as to think that they "make God;" for as soon as the stone or wood has been carved or polished, they ascribe to it divinity, run to it, make prayers, call upon it, and prostrate themselves before it, and in short, ascribe to it those things which they know to belong to God alone.

Which is profitable for nothing. We ought carefully to observe this clause, which condemns as vain and useless all the images by which God is represented. Hence it follows not only that God is insulted, whenever his glory is changed into dead images, but that all who procure idols for themselves lose their pains and suffer damage. Papists allege that they are the books of the unlearned; but this is a paltry evasion, for the Prophet testifies that they are of no use whatever. Let them, therefore, either erase this proof from the Book of Isaiah, or acknowledge that images are vain and useless. Formerly he expressed something more, when he affirmed that nothing can be learned from them but falsehood. But on this subject we have said enough in the exposition of these passages. (Isaiah 40 and 41.)

11. *Lo, all his companions shall be ashamed.* Not only does he attack the workers and makers of idols, but he likewise attacks generally all their worshippers, because they are so dull and stupid, that as soon as the trunk of a tree has received some new shape, they look upon it as containing the power of God. He means that not only shall the framers of idols be punished for their effrontery, but likewise all who have entangled themselves in the same superstitions; for it is right that they who share the same guilt should be subjected to the same punishment. Nor can they, on the other hand, plead any excuse; for they see that their idols, which proceeded from the hand of men, are dumb and vain, so far is it from being possible that they are gods.

Though they all assemble. Whatever conspiracy may *be* entered into by wicked men, yet, when they shall come to the judgment-seat of God, they must be ashamed. Nor is it without cause that the Prophet threatens against them *trembling* and *shame,* because wicked men usually are haughty and insolent, and look on all other men with scorn. They boast of their vast numbers, as the Papists in the present day despise our small numbers, and swell with insolence, and with amazing presumption attack God and his doctrine. In this passage, therefore, Isaiah appeals to the consciences of wicked men; because, although they are actuated by the most inveterate obstinacy and rebellion, yet sometimes they are constrained to tremble, when they ask themselves, "What are we doing?" and inquire into the reason of their actions; for they have nothing that is firm or solid, on which they can safely rest. They are bold so long as they are hurried on by their rage, but when they come to themselves, and take some leisure for reflection, they are

terrified and dismayed; so that we need not be alarmed at their rage and pride and vast numbers, for they shall quickly pass away. Let us not therefore be moved by the conspiracies and displays and pride and rage and schemes of the Papists, since we know that all those things tend to their shame and destruction; for the more haughtily they swell and exalt themselves against God, the heavier shall be their fall, and the deeper their disgrace.

12. *The worker in iron.* With good reason does the Apostle here draw up a long description, in order to shake off the stupidity and madness of superstitious people, if they can at all be awakened, or, at least, to prevent the Jews from indulging in similar folly who were surrounded on all sides by innumerable worshippers of false gods; for he gives a minute and homely enumeration, which makes it exceedingly evident that they are frantic and outrageous, he might otherwise have condemned this wickedness in a single word or in a few words; but this catalogue points out the fact, as it were, with the finger, and places it before our eyes, he details the tools and labors and industry and care of workmen, so as almost to bring it actually before us. Men who have their errors deeply rooted by nature in their hearts are more deeply affected in this manner than by simple doctrine; for they cannot be roused from their lethargy but by loud and continual cries. Every part must be delivered to them, and broken into small fragments, and even chewed and put into the mouth, as they do with infants, that they may receive the doctrine, which would otherwise appear to them strange and uncommon.

Even hungry. He describes the eagerness by which superstitious persons are impelled to fashion gods; for they burn with such ardor that they cannot observe any limit or measure. Their lust, like a gad-fly, drives them on, and causes them to rush forward with such fury that we may justly compare that zeal to the love of a harlot, as we have formerly said. They apply to it their whole force both of body and of mind. This is what he means by *the arm of his strength;* [179] as if he had said, "All the strength of their arms is applied to it; they work against their natural inclinations, and scarcely take as much as is necessary for the support of life; in a word, they spare no labor or expense to make the gods whom they have desired.

Although he describes the constancy of toil, by saying that they do not slacken their labor when they are hungry, but endure hunger and thirst rather than relinquish their work, [180] yet we may appropriately extend the observation to all the efforts of inconsiderate zeal. We see how the fervent devotion, as they call it, of unbelievers, is their own executioner; but the more laboriously they toil for their own destruction, the more base and shameful is our slothfulness, by which we defraud God of his lawful worship.

13. *That it may abide in the house.* Thus he shews the folly of such intense

[179] The lamented missionary, Mr. Williams, discovered in the Islands of the Pacific a superstitious practice, probably very ancient, which sheds light on this passage. During the manfacture of an idol, the workmen scrupulously abstain from food, and do not even drink water; which accounts for the painful exhaustion and intense thirst described by the Prophet Isaiah as brought on at an advanced stage of the operation. "Their strength faileth," and "they are faint." — Ed.

[180] "Des idolatres mesmes." "To the idolaters themselves."

application; for their toil brings no other reward than to see their idols resting indolently without motion in the position which has been assigned to them, just, as if a sluggard were crouching over a fire or reclining on a couch.

14. *He shall cut down for himself:* The Prophet expresses not only the zeal and furious eagerness of idolaters, but also their rebellion and obstinacy; for when he says that they *cut down cedars* and *plant pine-trees,* he shews that they persevere very long in their madness, and are not prompted by any sudden impulse to manufacture gods. "Not only," says he, "do they choose trees that are already grown, but they even plant and water and cultivate them, and wait till they have come to their full size, so as to be fit material for making an idol."

When we read these things, and are instructed concerning this shocking madness, let us know that God lays his hand upon us, so to speak, in order to draw us back from it, and to keep us in true godliness;. It is necessary, indeed, to meet it early, lest longer delay should make the wound incurable; for as soon as we have been led away by foolish desire to the practice of false worship, there is always reason to fear that we shall be plunged into that whirlpool. We all carry some seed of this madness, which cannot in any way be rooted out, but continually buds and blossoms, if we are not cleansed anew by the Spirit of the Lord.

It ought also to be remarked that, since idolaters are impelled by so great eagerness to worship idols, we ought to be ashamed of our coldness in the true worship of God. Let us be ashamed, I say, that we are so negligent and cold and even freezing, when the worshippers of idols are so ardent; and let us consider that we must render an account. With what rage are the Turks seized, when the question relates to the defense of the reveries of their prophet Mahomet, for whom they gladly both shed their blood and part with their life! By what rage are the Papists impelled to follow their superstitions! Yet we scarcely become warm, and sometimes extinguish the sparks of that zeal which the Lord has kindled in us. To this also applies that expostulation of Jeremiah,

"Is there any nation that hath forsaken its gods? But my people have forsaken me, the fountain of living water, and have digged for themselves cisterns which cannot hold water."
(Jeremiah 2:10-13.)

This comparison, therefore, ought to be carefully observed, that we may not be less steadfast in defending truth than they are obstinate in falsehood.

15., 16., and **17.** *Then shall a man use it for burning.* He censures their ignorance in not being taught by manifest experience that a trunk of wood is not God, and even reproves their ingratitude in defrauding of the honor due to him the true God, whose power is illustriously displayed in the trees themselves; for the wood cannot be applied to various uses without bringing before our *eyes* the bounty of God. Whenever bread is baked in the oven, or flesh is seethed in the pot, or meat is roasted on the coals; whenever we

warm ourselves, or obtain any advantage whatever from wood, our stupidity is inexcusable, if we do not consider how bountifully God hath provided for us, that we should not want anything necessary for us. Such is the meaning of these words —

Aha! I am warm. These words express the gladness of those who, freed from all uneasiness and annoyance, utter what may be called the language of triumph. What can be more base or foolish than that men, while they are pleasantly enjoying God's benefits, should flatter and applaud themselves, and at the same time should not thank the author, and should even abuse his abundant wealth for the purpose of dishonoring him? In cooking their victuals, and in other conveniences, men perceive that the wood is subject to their control and devoted to their use; how comes it then that they bow down before a piece of wood that has the shape of a man? Is not God in this maimer robbed of his right? And when men call upon images, do they not defraud God of that sacrifice which he chiefly demands? Even heathen writers long ago laughed at this folly, that men ventured to form gods according to their own fancy out of corruptible matter which they formerly despised. Hence came that jest of Horace, "Once I was a trunk of a fig-tree, a useless piece of wood, when a carpenter, uncertain whether to make a bench or a Priapus, preferred that I should be a god; and so I became a god." [181] But they did not actually know the fountain of impiety, because they did not apply their minds to consider the goodness and power of One God, which is displayed in all the creatures.

When the Prophet thus attacked the worshippers of idols, and laid open their stupidity and madness, they undoubtedly complained that they were unjustly defamed, and endeavored to cloak their errors under plausible pretexts, that they acknowledged that their gods were in heaven, as even their writings shewed, and did not mean that wood or stone is God, in the same manner as the Papists, in arguing against us, defend the same cause with them, and absolutely refuse to be condemned for such gross blindness. But we have already said that the Prophet does not confine his attention to the mere essence of God; and indeed if this be all that is left to God, it will be an idle phantom. He means that all the attributes which belong to him, his foreknowledge, power, government, righteousness, salvation, and everything else, remains unimpaired. Now, when wicked men set up statues or images, and fly to them for the purpose of imploring assistance, and whenever they place them before their eyes and address them, and think that God hears them, do they not wickedly connect their salvation with them? But this stupidity arises from their ignorance of the nature of God, which is simple and spiritual, but which they imagine to be gross and carnal. Thus their thoughts concerning him are excessively wicked, and they east aside and stain his glory, by making it like earthly and fading things. Nothing is so inconsistent with the majesty of God as images; and he who worships

[181] "Apres des erreurs et superstitions." "After errors and superstitions."

them endeavors to shut up God in them, and to treat him according to his own fancy. Justly, therefore, does the Prophet attack such corruptions, and sharply censure the mad zeal of superstitious persons, since nothing more detestable can be uttered or imagined.

18. *They have not known or understood.* He concludes that it is impossible that men endued with reason should have fallen into this mistake, if they had not been altogether blind and mad; for if any spark of reason had remained in them, they would have seen how absurd and ridiculous it is to adore a part of that wood which they had burned, and which they had seen with their own eyes consumed and reduced to ashes. But when they perceive nothing, and listen to no arguments, they shew that they have actually degenerated into beasts; for the expression which Isaiah uses in reproaching them, "They have not known," amounts to a declaration that they are bereft of reason, and have lost all understanding; and although many of them undoubtedly were very acute and sagacious, yet in this respect there was abundant evidence of their brutish folly.

For he hath smeared their eyes. The reason now assigned is not intended to lessen their guilt, but to shew how monstrous and detestable it is; for men would never be so foolish, if the vengeance of heaven did not drive them to "a reprobate mind." (Romans 1:28.) Here some interpreters supply the word "God," and others supply the words "false prophets," and say that the people were blind, because the false prophets led them astray; for their would never have plunged into such disgraceful errors if they had not been deceived by the impostures of those men, their eyes being dazzled by wicked doctrines. Others do not approve of either of these significations, and it might also refer to the devil. But as a different exposition is more customary in Scripture, I rather adopt it, namely, that God hath blinded them by a righteous judgment; if it be not thought preferable to view it as referring to themselves, [182] because they voluntarily shut both their minds and their eyes; in which case there would be a change of number, which frequently occurs among Hebrew writers. I have stated, however, what I prefer; and it is exceedingly customary among Hebrew writers, when they speak of God, not to mention his name.

In what sense God is said to blind men, and to "give them up to a reprobate mind," (Romans 1:28,) is evident from various passages of Scripture; that is, when he takes away the light of his Spirit, and gives a loose rein to the lust of men, so that no reasoning can restrain them. He likewise arms Satan with the efficiency of error, so that they who have refused to obey the truth do not guard against his snares, and are liable to be deceived by his impostures. What then can be left in us but the thickest darkness and gross ignorance, so that this tyrant, the father of lies and of darkness, ravages at his pleasure both within and without? for there will not be found in us

[182] "The first phrase does not correspond exactly to the English 'Lay to heart,' but comprehends reflection and emotion." — Alexander.

any spark of light to dispel the clouds of error, but, impelled by a spirit of giddiness with which God strikes the reprobate, (2 Thessalonians 2:11,) we shall be driven about in a strange manner at the will of Satan.

And yet we must not throw on God the blame of this blindness, for he has always just cause, though it is not always visible to our eyes; and we ought not to make anxious inquiries respecting it, or search into his secret decree, if we do not choose to be punished for our rashness. But frequently the causes are well known, namely, the ingratitude of men and their rebellion against God, as Paul plainly shews. (Romans 1:28.) The blinding is their just punishment, and therefore men have no excuse, though they pretend ignorance; for they would never have been entangled in such gross errors, if the Lord had not blinded them on account of their sins. A very convincing argument may be drawn from the judgments of God to the sins of men; for God is just, and never punishes any one without a just cause, and does not blind a man, unless he deserves it, and voluntarily shuts his eyes. The blame therefore lies with men alone, who have of their own accord brought blindness on themselves; and the design of the Prophet undoubtedly is to shew, that men who ought to have been governed by God, being naturally endued with some judgment, have been forsaken by "the Father of lights," (James 1:17,) so that they become the slaves of Satan.

19. *It doth not return into their heart.* He confirms the preceding statement, and takes away every ground of excuse, because unbelievers of their own accord cherish their ignorance. That men are naturally careful and provident in worldly matters, but altogether blind in the worship of God, proceeds from no other cause than that they are abundantly attentive to their individual interests, but are not moved by any anxiety about the heavenly kingdom. Hence the Prophet reproves them for disregarding godliness, because, after long windings, unbelievers do not reflect whether they are keeping the right way, or, on the other hand, are uselessly fatiguing themselves with wicked errors, [183] He shews that their slothfulness is without excuse, because they are so much devoted to their superstitions; for if they applied their mind for a short time to consider the matter, nothing would be more easy than to perceive that stupidity; and, since they do not see it, it follows that they wish to be deceived, and that they flatter themselves in their error. They cannot, therefore, bring forward any palliation or excuse for their guilt, and cannot plead ignorance; for they do not design to apply their mind to the labor of investigating truth. To "return into the heart" [184] means "to consider and reflect;" for no child is so ignorant as not to be a competent judge of such extraordinary madness. Superstitious persons therefore give themselves too unlimited indulgence, and do not err merely

[183] The Author's exposition of Psalm 37:3, and the Editor's note, may be consulted with advantage. — Commentary on the Psalms, vol. 2, p. 19. — Ed.

[184] {{שקר (sheker) denotes in general 'anything that deceives, a vain or deceitful thing,' which does not correspond to a man's opinion and expectation, but deceives and imposes upon him. Hence also (in Jeremiah 10:14; 51:17) an idol is called {שקר} (sheker). — Rosenmuller.

through ignorance; and this vice ought not to be ascribed solely to the first corruption of men, but to rebellion.

20. *He feedeth on ashes.* This verse also confirms the preceding statement. To "feed on ashes" is the same thing as "to be fed with ashes," just as "to feed on wind" is the same thing as "to be fed with wind." (Hosea 12:1.) Both expressions are used, as on the other hand, "Thou shalt feed on truth," is put for "Thou shalt be fed with truth," that is, "Thou shalt be satisfied." (Psalm 37:3.) Others interpret that passage, "Thou shalt administer spiritual provision," and others, "Thou shalt feed faithfully;" but I choose rather to adopt the former interpretation. [185] But here he means that men are haughty and puffed up, but yet that they are empty and worthless, because they are merely full of deceptions, which have nothing solid or lasting. With such pride men will rather burst than be satisfied.

A deceived heart disposes him. Next, he again includes both statements, that they are blinded by deceitful lusts, so as to see nothing, and yet that they voluntarily and willingly surrender themselves to vain delusions. The Prophet dwells largely on this, in order to shew that nothing drives men to false and wicked worship but this, that they are led to it of their own accord; and therefore there is no ground for imputing this vice to others, since they find in themselves the fountain which they earnestly nourish and defend. With strange presumption they rise up against God, are puffed up with a false opinion of their superstitions, and, in a word, are swollen and ready to burst with pride But let us feed on the solid food of truth, and not allow ourselves to be led astray by any delusions.

Not to deliver his soul. He heightens the picture by saying that they flatter themselves in a matter so important; for who would forgive negligence in that which relates to salvation? We see how eagerly every person labors for this transitory life; and when the eternal salvation of the soul is in danger, what is more intolerable than that men should indolently slumber, when they might save it by making exertion? A man is said to deliver his own soul, who by repentance rescues himself from the snares of the devil, in the same manner as some men are said to save others, when by holy warnings they bring back wanderers into the right way. (James 5:20.) How comes it then that idolaters rush headlong to their own destruction? It is because they hasten to it at full gallop, harden their hearts, and do not permit themselves to be drawn back.

Is there not a lie [186] *in my right hand?* Thus he briefly points out the method by which men may deliver themselves from destruction. It is by examining their actions and not flattering themselves; for whoever is delighted with his error, and does not inquire if his manner of life be right, will never "deliver his soul." In like manner the Papists refuse to inquire into the reasons for their worship, and disguise that stupidity under the name of

[185] "A la rigueur." "Rigorously."

[186] "Son Eglise composee de toutes les nations de la terre." "His Church composed of all the nations in the world."

simplicity; as if God wished us to be beasts, and did not enjoin us to distinguish between the worship which he approves and that which he rejects, and to inquire diligently what is his will, so as not to approve of everything without distinction. Everything ought to be tried by the standard which he has laid down for us. If that be done, we shall easily avoid danger; but if not, let us lay the blame of our destruction on ourselves, because of our own accord we wish to perish, and do not allow ourselves to receive any warning, or to be brought back into the right path.

21. *Remember these things, O Jacob.* He now applies to the use of the people what he had so often said about the superstitions and falsehoods of the Gentiles, by which men who are not well instructed are deceived in the worship of God. Nor does he write these things solely for the men of his own age, but chiefly for their posterity, who were to be carried away into Babylon, and might have been corrupted by long intercourse with the Babylonians, and drawn aside from the true worship of God, if the Lord had not laid upon them those restraints. The Prophet therefore exhorts them, while they were held captive, to bring those exhortations to remembrance, and by means of them to strengthen their hearts amidst those grievous calamities.

For thou art my servant. I have formed thee. He adds this reason why they ought to remember these promises, and to beware of the general contagion of other men; for it would have been intolerable that the elect people, whom God had surrounded by the barriers of his Law, that they might be separated from others, should freely and indiscriminately mingle with the pollutions of the Gentiles. As if he had said, "It is not wonderful that the Babylonians should wander in their errors, but thou oughtest to be unlike them; for 'I have formed thee,' that thou mightest 'serve me;' I have regenerated and sanctified thee, that thou mightest be an heir of eternal life."

Of this creation we have stated largely, on former occasions, that it relates to the renewal of the soul. Scripture frequently employs this argument, "Ye have been called to sanctification and not to uncleanness," (1 Thessalonians 4:7,) "Walk as the children of light" (Ephesians 5:8) "in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation," (Philippians 2:15,) and in other passages of the same kind. Here we ought to infer that we shall be doubly punished, if it shall be found that we have quenched by neglect or indifference the light by which the Lord hath enlightened us; for our criminality will be far greater than that of others on whom he has not bestowed a similar favor. Heathens shall indeed be punished, and no excuse of ignorance shall be of any avail to them; but far heavier shall be the punishment of those who shall abuse the grace of God.

Do not thou forget me. He means that it is impossible for any who have once entered into the right path to be led aside from it, if they are not chargeable with forgetfulness of God; for error and delusions can never prevail, so long as the remembrance of God is rooted in our hearts. Let every one, therefore, who turns aside from God, and falls into superstition and impiety,

lay the blame on his own wickedness. We ought thus to observe carefully the cause of apostasy, that is, forgetfulness of God, which gradually withdraws us from the right path, till we leave it altogether. Besides, he reminds them that by this remedy they will be secure against revolt, if they be employed in constant meditation; for our minds, through their sluggishness, easily contract rust, so to speak, which infects and corrupts all knowledge of God till it be entirely destroyed.

22. *I have blotted out, as a cloud, thy iniquities.* The Lord promises to his people future deliverance; for our hearts cannot be actually raised towards God, if we do not perceive that he is reconciled to us. In order, therefore, that he may keep the people whom he hath once bound to himself, he adds a promise by which he comforts them, that they may be fully convinced that the banishment shall not be perpetual; for God, being a most indulgent Father, moderates his chastisements in such a manner, that he always forgives his children.

When he says that "he has blotted out their iniquities," this relates literally to the captives who were punished for their transgressions; and the consequence was, that, when God was appeased, they would be delivered. It is a demonstration from the cause to the effect. The guilt has been remitted, and therefore in like manner the punishment has been remitted; for the Jews, as soon as they have been reconciled to God, are freed from the punishment which was inflicted on account of guilt. Yet there is an implied exhortation to repentance, that they may not only groan under the heavy load of chastisement, but may consider that they are justly punished, because they have provoked God's anger; and indeed, whenever God deals severely with us, we ought not merely to wish relief from uneasiness and pain, but we ought to begin with pardon, that God may no longer impute sins to us. Yet this passage overthrows the distinction of the Sophists, who acknowledge that guilt is remitted, but deny that punishment is remitted, as we have already explained fully in other passages.

The metaphor of "a cloud" has the same meaning as if the Lord had said that he will no longer pursue them in his displeasure, [187] or punish them, because, when guilt has been remitted, they are reconciled; in the same manner as when the sky has become calm, the clouds which intercepted from the earth the light of the sun, are "blotted out" and disappear. We must therefore reject the diabolical inventions of men, which overthrow the whole doctrine of the forgiveness of sins, while they openly contradict the doctrine of the prophets.

Return thou to me. This may be taken in two senses, either that the Lord exhorts the people to repentance, or that he encourages them to hope for deliverance; but both senses may agree well. We have said that it is the ordinary practice of Scripture, whenever redemption is mentioned, to exhort

[187] The Latin word Astrologia has a wider signification than the English word Astrology; for it sometimes denotes, as it undoubtedly does in this instance, "Astronomy," which belongs to the lawful domains of calculation and science. — Ed.

to repentance; for the Lord wishes to bring us back to himself in this manner, that he may render us fit for receiving his layouts. Besides, as the people, through their unbelief, were very far from cherishing the hope of salvation, it may likewise be taken for a confirmation, that the people may believe that they will undoubtedly return; as if he had said, "Though thou thinkest that I am estranged from thee, yet know that I will take care of thee." And I approve more this latter sense, and think that it agrees better with the context; for the Prophet labors above all things to confirm the promises of God, and to fix them deeply on their hearts.

For I have redeemed thee. He commands the Jews to "return to him," though their banishment stood in the way of their expecting that he would be a deliverer; as if he had said, "Though I appear to be estranged from you, yet trust; for I have determined to *redeem you."*

23. *Praise, O ye heavens.* He now exhorts the Jews to render thanksgiving, not only that they may testify their gratitude, but that their own expectation of deliverance may be strengthened; and, therefore, he enjoins believers to look upon it as an event already accomplished, as if the Lord had already delivered them. Such modes of address make a deeper impression on our hearts than if the promises had been presented in a naked form. Since, therefore, believers might doubt of their salvation, because they still languished amidst their miseries and were almost dead, the Prophet arouses them, and not only dictates to them a song, that they may fulfill their vows, but shews that the word of God will be so great and uncommon that it shall move heaven and earth and the dumb creatures.

Burst into praise, ye mountains. We might simply have interpreted it, "Heaven above and earth below;" but as he mentions the "mountains," he gives the appellation of the *lower parts of the earth to* places which are level, such as plains and valleys, that all countries, wherever they are situated, may be excited to praise and celebrate the name of God.

For Jehovah hath redeemed Jacob. He now adds, that that work which he had aroused all to admire is the redemption of the Church, and declares that the glory of God shall shine forth in it illustriously. Besides, it is proper to remember what I formerly remarked, that here not only does he celebrate the return of the people to their native country, but the end is also included; for they would be "redeemed" from the captivity in Babylon on this condition, that God should at length collect under one head a Church taken out of the whole world. [188]

24. *Thus saith Jehovah.* The Prophet will immediately describe in his own manner the strength and power of God; because the bare promises would have little authority and weight, if the power of God were not brought forward, in order to remove all doubt from our hearts. By our distrust and obstinacy we are wont to lessen the power and goodness of God, that is, to

[188] "Lequel viendroit avec une merveilleuse vistesse." "Who should come with amazing swiftness."

ascribe to it less than we ought; and, therefore, the Prophet, by remarkable commendations, which we shall soon afterwards see, will encourage believers to learn to hope beyond hope.

Thy Redeemer. He begins by praising the goodness and fatherly kindness with which God has embraced his Church, and which he intends to exercise till the end; for the declaration of his power and strength would have little influence on us, if he did not approach to us and assure us of his kindness. We ought not therefore to begin with his majesty, nor to ascend so high, lest we be thrown down; but we ought to embrace his goodness, by which he gently invites us to himself. The name *Redeemer* in this passage refers to past time, because the Jews, who had once been brought out of Egypt, as from a gulf, by an incredible miracle, ought to have been strengthened by the remembrance of that "redemption" to expect continual advancement. (Exodus 12:51.)

And thy Maker. He calls himself the "Maker," in the same sense which we formerly explained; that is, because he regenerates by his Spirit those whom he adopts, and thus makes them new creatures; and therefore he mentions, in passing, the former benefits which they had received, that they may conclude from them, for the future, that God will abide by his promises. When he added *from the womb,* it was in order that the people might acknowledge that all the benefits which they had received from God were undeserved; for he anticipated them by his compassion, before they could even call upon him. By this consolation David comforted his heart in very severe distresses,

"Thou art he who brought me out of the womb; I trusted in thee while I was hanging on my mother's breast; I was thrown on thee from my birth; thou art my God from my mother's womb." (Psalm 22:9, 10.)

Yet here he does not speak of the favor generally bestowed, by which God brings any human beings into the world, but praises his covenant, by which he adopted the seed of Abraham to a thousand generations; for they were not at liberty to doubt that he would wish to preserve his work even to the end.

Who alone stretcheth out the heavens. Now follow the commendations of his power, because he has measured out at his pleasure the dimensions of heaven, and earth. By the word "stretcheth out" he means that he has in his hands the government of the whole world, and that there is nothing that is not subject to him; for the power of God ought to be united to his word in such a manner as never to be separated.

25. *Frustrating the signs.* The Prophet expressly added this, because Babylon surpassed other nations not only in the force of arms, and in troops and resources, but likewise in some remarkable sagacity, by which she appeared to penetrate even to heaven. What injury could befall those who foresaw at a distance future events, and could easily, as was commonly supposed, ward off imminent dangers? The astrologers, who were celebrated among them, foretold all events; and from them sprung that bastard As-

trology which is called Judicial, by which even now many persons of great abilities are led astray. They assumed the name of Mathematicians, in order to recommend themselves more to the approbation of the people. The Egyptians boasted of being the authors of that science, and of being the first who taught it; but let us leave them to settle their dispute. It is certain that the Babylonians practiced that art from the very commencement, and esteemed it highly, so that both the Greeks and the Romans gave to those astrologers the name of Chaldees. Since, therefore, they placed much confidence in that science, the Lord threatens that he will overthrow all that belongs to it.

By the word *signs* he means the positions, conjunctions, and various aspects of the stars, about which Astrologers speculate; and he afterwards says that he *maketh them mad* Some take the word {בדים} *(baddim)* to mean *lies,* as if he had said that the divinations to which the Astrologers pretend are nothing but absolute delusions; but I choose rather to interpret it *diviners,* as we frequently find it used in that sense.

It is asked, "Does he condemn the astrology of the Chaldeans universally, or only the abuse and corruption of it?" I reply, in this passage he merely condemns those *signs* by means of which the Chaldeans prophesied, and imagined that they knew future events; for the Lord declares that they are absolutely worthless. It was not without good reason that he forbade the people to consult Chaldeans, astrologers, diviners, soothsayers, or any other kind of fortune-tellers, and commanded that no one who practiced that art should be permitted to dwell among the people. (Deuteronomy 18:10.) Now, if any certain information could have been obtained from the position and aspect of the stars, the Lord undoubtedly would not thus have condemned that science. Since, therefore, he forbade it without exception, he shewed that it contains nothing but absolute delusion, which all believers ought to detest.

But the defenders of that absurdity argue that the Lord gave the planets and stars "for signs." (Genesis 1:14.) Granting this principle, I reply, that we ought to inquire of what, things they are the "signs;" for we do not condemn that Astronomy [189] which surveys the courses of the planets, in which we ought to acknowledge the wonderful majesty of God. But we condemn men addicted to curiosity, who wish to learn from them how long any government shall last, and what shall befall this city or that people, or even this or that man; for they go beyond limits, and abuse "signs," which were not given for the purpose of being omens of future events. I do acknowledge that we are sometimes warned by heavenly signs, to see that we have provoked the Lord's anger, or that chastisements are hanging over our heads, but not to venture to give minute explanations or conclusions, or to determine those hidden and secret events which we have no right to search and explore. But above all, we ought to observe the cause and origin of impiety; for, as soon

[189] "Estoit decrete et ordonne desia en son conseil." "Was already decreed and appointed in his counsel."

as that error prevails, that the life of man is governed by the influence of the stars;, the judgment-seat of God is overthrown, so that he is not the judge of the world in inflicting punishments, or in restoring to life by his mercy those who were perishing. They who think that the stars, by their irresistible influence, control the life of men, immediately become hardened to the imagination of destiny, so that they now leave nothing to God. Thus the tribunals of God are buried, and consequently piety is extinguished, and calling on God is altogether at an end.

He calls them *wise men,* and speaks of their *knowledge,* by way of admission, because they boasted greatly of the title of "wisdom," when they uttered those things which they had learned from the stars, as if they had been admitted into the counsel of God; and therefore he means that those empty masks of "wisdom" will not hinder the Lord from overturning their whole estate; for all their contrivances and tricks shall be brought to nothing.

26. *Confirming the word.* The Prophet now applies to his purpose what he had formerly said; for, although he spoke in general terms, still he had a specific object in view, to adapt to the circumstances of the present occasion all that he said, that the people might not be alarmed at that pretended wisdom of the Chaldeans, or doubt that God would one day deliver them. With their unfounded predictions, therefore, he contrasts the promises of God, that they might not imagine that that monarchy was free from all danger.

The promise was this,

"Babylon shall fall, but my people shall be restored to liberty." (Isaiah 21:9.)

The Babylonians laughed at these promises, "As if we could not foresee by means of the stars what shall happen to us!" On this account the Lord says that he will *confirm,* that is, he will actually fulfill what he has promised, and will accomplish those things which could neither be foreseen nor imagined by those wise men. What the prophets foretold, wicked men treated as an empty sound which would quickly pass away. With this opinion he contrasts the word "confirm" or "raise up," by which he means that God will establish the truth of his words.

Of his servant. By the word "servant" he means all the prophets, if it be not thought better to view it as chiefly denoting Isaiah, who announced and testified this deliverance more clearly than all others. But it is unnecessary to limit it to a single individual, for it related to them all, and he likewise calls them by the ordinary name, "ambassadors" or "messengers" of God, because he had sent many, in order to support by their common and universal consent the faith of his people.

The counsel of his messengers. By the word "counsel" he means the decrees of God, but not every kind of decrees; for we have no right to inquire about his secret purposes which he does not manifest by his servants, but, when he reveals to us what he will do, we ought to receive the threatenings

of the prophets with as much reverence as if God admitted us into the most secret recesses of the heavens. Let not men therefore dispute according to their fancy, after God hath spoken by the mouth of the prophets. In a word, he intended to recommend the authority of his word, which is declared to us by the ministry of men, as if it revealed to us the eternal purpose of God.

Saying to Jerusalem. After having spoken in general terms, the Prophet applies more closely to the present subject that certainty of the promises of God; for otherwise the people could not have obtained any advantage from it; and, therefore, he expressly adds the mention of "Jerusalem," that they may know that it shall be restored. Thus, we ought chiefly to behold in this matter the power of God in determining to defend his Church in a wonderful manner, and to raise her from death to life as often as is necessary. If, therefore, we think that God is true and powerful, let us not doubt that there will always be a Church; and when it appears to be in a lamentably ruinous condition, let us entertain good hope of its restoration. What is here said of "Jerusalem" relates to the whole Church; and, therefore, if we see that she is in a ruinous condition, and that her cities are demolished, and if nothing be visible but frightful and hideous desolation, let us rely on this promise, that she shall at length be raised up and perfectly restored.

27. *Saying to the deep.* This is generally considered to be an allegorical description of Babylon, and I certainly do not deny that it is included; but yet I cannot think of limiting it to Babylon, for I prefer to view it simply as denoting any unexpected change. He shews that some great revolution will be necessary, as if the people must be drawn out of the depths of the sea, but declares that God will easily surmount every obstacle, for he can easily "make the deep dry, and dry up the rivers." In my opinion he rather appears to allude to that former redemption, (Exodus 14:29,) when the Lord brought the people out of Egypt through the Red Sea; as if he had said, "I did this for your fathers, and therefore you ought to hope for the same thing from me, and not to imagine that a return to your native land shall be closed against you."

28. *Saying to Cyrus.* This is a remarkable passage, in which we not only may see the wonderful providence of God, but which likewise contains a striking proof of the truth and certainty of the prophecies. Here "Cyrus" was named long before he was born; for between the death of Manasseh, by whom Isaiah was slain, and the birth of "Cyrus," more than a century intervened. Besides, even though he had been born, who would have conjectured that he should come from the most distant mountains of Persia to Babylon? These things ought therefore to be carefully observed, for they shew clearly that it was not by a human spirit that Isaiah spoke. No one would ever have thought that there would be a person named "Cyrus," who should fly from the most distant and barbarous countries to deliver the people of God. [190]

[190] For an explanation of the meaning and use of the term "Messiah," see Harmony of the Evangelists, vol. 1, p. 92, n. 2, and p. 142, n. 2. — Ed.

As to the objection made by infidels, that those things might have been forged by the Jews after they were fulfilled, it is so foolish and absurd that there is no necessity for refuting it. The Jews perused those prophecies, while they were held in captivity, in order that they might cherish in their hearts the hope of deliverance, and would have been entirely discouraged, if the Lord had not comforted them by such promises. These records, therefore, supported the hearts of believers in hope and confidence; and I have no doubt that Cyrus, when he learned that God had appointed him to be the leader and *shepherd* for bringing back Israel, was astonished at those promises, and that they induced him to cherish kind feelings towards the people, so as to supply them with food and with everything that was necessary for their journey. Thus the Lord points out the person by whose hand he has determined to bring back his people, that they may not look around on all sides in perplexity.

Even by saying to Jerusalem. This is the conclusion, by which the former statements are confirmed, that they may rest assured that "Jerusalem" shall infallibly *be built,* and may learn from it how dear and precious they are to God, when they shall see the monarchy of all the east transferred to the Persians. At the same time he points out the end for which Jerusalem was to be rebuilt, namely, that the pure worship of God might be restored; for he does not promise this restoration, that men may seek their own ease or the conveniencies of life, but that the Lord's people may purely and sincerely call upon him without any disturbance. This ought to be carefully observed, for there are many who value more highly their own convenience and external comforts than the honor and worship of God. Hence also Haggai complained bitterly, that all were eager to build their own houses, but almost all gave themselves no concern about the Temple. (Haggai 1:4.) But it was the will of the Lord that men should care most about his house, and that is the import of what the Prophet says, —

And to the temple, Thou shalt be founded. But in the present day he does not thus recommend to us a temple of wood or stone, but living temples of God, which we are; for the Lord hath chosen his habitation in us. (2 Corinthians 6:16.) Such, therefore, are the temples which must be diligently built by the doctrine of the word, that we may lead a holy and righteous life, and may render to God the worship which is due to him; for this is the reason why the Lord wishes that there should be a Church in the world, that the remembrance of his name may not perish.

Chapter 45

CHAPTER 45.

Isaiah 45:1-25

1. Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two-leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut;

1. Sic dicit Iehova Meschiae suo Cyro, eujus apprehendi dexteram ad subigendas coram eo gentes; itaque lumbos regum dissolvam, ad aperienda coram eo ostia; ideo portae non claudentur.

2. I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron:

2. Ego to praecedam, et tortuosa dirigam, ostia aenea confringam, et vectes ferreos comminuam.

3. And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the LORD, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel.

3. Et dabo tibi thesauros tenebrarum, et arcana latebrarum; ut scias quod ego sire Iehova, vocans to nomine tuo, nempe, Deus Israel.

4. For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me.

4. Propter servum meum Iacob, et Israel electum meum, vocabo, inquam, to nomine tuo; cognominabo to, quamvis non noveris me.

5. I am the LORD, and there is none else; there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me:

5. Ego Iehova, et nullus praeter me; non est praeter me Deus; accinxi to, utcunque non noveris me.

6. That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none besides me. I am the LORD, and there is none else.

6. Propterea scient ab ortu solis, et ab occasu, quod non sit printer me. Ego Iehova, et nemo praeter me.

7. I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things.

7. Formans lucem, et creans tenebras, faciens pacem, et creans malum; Ego Iehova faciens omnia haec.

8. Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together; I the LORD have created it.

8. Rorate coeli superne; et nubes stillent justitiam; aperiatur terra; et proveniant salus et justitia; proferat eas simul; Ego Iehova creavi eum.

9. Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?

9. Hei litiganti cum fictore suo! Testa ad testas terrae. An dicet lutum fictori suo, Cur fecisti me? et operi tuo Non sunt manus.

10. Woe unto him that saith unto his father, What begettest thou? or to the woman, What hast thou brought forth?

10. Hei qui dicit patti, Cur genuisti? et mulieri, Cur parturis?

11. Thus saith the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me.

11. Sic dicit Iehova, Sanctus Israel, et fictor ejus; de futuris interrogate me; super filiis meis, et super opere manuum mearum praecipite mihi.

12. I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded.

12. Ego feci terram, et hominem super eam creavi; ego cujus manus extenderunt coelos, et toti militiae eorum praecepi.

13. I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways: he shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives, not for price nor reward, saith the LORD of hosts.

13. Ego exeitavi ilium in justitia, et omnes vias ejus dirigam. Ipse extruet urbem meam, et captivitatem meam dimittet, non pretio nec munere, dicit Iehova exercituum.

14. Thus saith the LORD, The labour of Egypt, and merchandise of Ethiopia, and of the Sabeans, men of stature, shall come over unto thee, and they shall be thine: they shall come after thee; in chains they shall come over, and they shall fall down unto thee, they shall make supplication unto thee, saying, Surely God is in thee; and there is none else; there is no God.

14. Sic dicit Iehova, Labor Aegypti, merces AEthiopiae, et proceri Sabaei ad to transibunt, et tui erunt; ibunt post to, in compedibus transibunt, et adorabunt, (atque) to obsecrabunt. Utique (vel, tantum) in to est Deus, et nullus ultra prater Deum.

15. Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour.

15. Vere tu Deus abscondens to, Deus Israel servator.

16. They shall be ashamed, and also confounded, all of them: they shall go to confusion together that are makers of idols.

16. Pudore afficientur, atque etiam erubescent omnes ipsi; simul cum pudore abibunt omnes fabricatores sculptilium.

17. But Israel shall be saved in the LORD with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end.

17. Israel servatus est in Iehova salute aeterna; non afficiemini pudore, neque erubescetis usque in secula.

18. For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD, and there is none else.

18. Quia sic dicit Iehova creans coelos, ipse Deus fictor terrae, qui fecit eam, paravit earn; non inanem creavit, ad inhabitandum formavit earn; ego Iehova, et nullus praeter me.

19. I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain: I the LORD speak righteousness, I declare things that are right.

19. Non in abscondito loquutus sum, in loco terrae tenebrarum; non frustra dixi semini Iacob, Quaerite me; ego Iehova loquens justitiam, annuncians recta.

20. Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, ye that are escaped of the nations: they have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot save.

20. Congregamini, venite, accedite simul, abjecti (vel, remoti) Gentium. Nihil intelligunt qui efferunt lignum sculptilis sui, et orant Deum qui non servat.

21. Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the LORD? and there is no God else beside me; a just God, and a Saviour; there is none beside me.

21. Annunciate, et adducite, etiam consultent simul. Quis audire fecit hoc ab initio, et jam olim nunciavit? Annon ego Iehova? et non est ultra Deus praeter me, Deus justus, et servator, non est praeter me.

22. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.

22. Respicite ad me, et salvi critis, omnes fines terrae; quia ego Deus, et non est amplius.

23. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.

23. Per me juravi; egressum est ex ore meo in justitia verbum, quod non revertetur, quod mihi flectetur omne genu, jurabit omnis lingua.

24. Surely, shall one say, In the LORD have I righteousness and strength:

even to him shall men come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed.

24. Utique in Iehova milli, dicet, justitiae et robur; ad eum usque veniet; pudefient autem omnes qui provocant eum.

25. In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.

25. In Iehova justificabuntur, et gloriabuntur, totum semen Israel.

1. *Thus saith Jehovah.* He pursues the subject which he had begun to handle. He shews that not in vain did he promise deliverance to his people, since the manner of it was altogether decreed and appointed by him; [191] for when the question relates to our salvation, we always inquire into the way and manner. Although God frequently chooses to hold us in suspense, and thus conceals from us the method which he has ready at hand, yet, in this instance he indulges the weakness of his people, and explains the method in which he will deliver them.

To Cyrus his anointed. He names the person by whose hand he will bring them back; for, since their faith would be sharply tried by other temptations, he wished in this respect to provide against doubt, that the difficulty of the event might not shake them. And in order to impart greater efficacy to this discourse, he turns to Cyrus himself: "I have chosen thee to be a king to me; I will take hold of thy hand, and will subject the nations to thy authority, so that they shall open up a passage for thee, and voluntarily surrender." These words have greater effect than if the Lord spoke to his people.

Yet it might be thought strange that he calls Cyrus *his Anointed;* for this is the designation which was given to the kings of Israel and Judah, because they represented the person of Christ, who alone, strictly speaking, is "the Lord's Anointed." "The Lord went forth with his Anointed," says Habakkuk, "for the salvation of his people." (Habakkuk 3:13.) In the person of David a kingdom had been set up, which professed to be an image and figure of Christ; and hence also the prophets in many passages call him "David," and "the Son of David." (Ezekiel 37:24, 25.) It was indeed a special anointing, intended to distinguish that priestly kingdom from all heathen kingdoms. Since therefore this title belonged to none but the kings of Judea, it might be thought strange that it is here bestowed on a heathen king and a worshipper of idols; for although he was instructed by Daniel, yet we do not read that he changed his religion. True, he regarded with reverence the God of Israel, and considered him to be the Highest; but he was not prompted by a sincere affection of the heart to worship him, and did not advance so far as to forsake superstitions and idolatries.

Thus God deigns to call him his "Anointed," not by a perpetual title, but because he discharged for a time the office of Redeemer; for he both avenged the Church of God and delivered it from the Assyrians, who were its enemies.

[191] Our author has already explained this allusion. See Commentary on Isaiah, vol. 2, p. 135. — Ed.

This office belongs peculiarly to Christ; and this ordinary appellation of kings ought to be limited to this circumstance, that he restored the people of God to the enjoyment of liberty. This should lead us to observe how highly God values the salvation of the Church, because, for the sake of this single benefit, Cyrus, a heathen man, is called "the Messiah," [192] or "the Anointed.

Whose right hand I have taken hold of. By this mode of expression, he means that Cyrus shall prosper in all his undertakings, for he shall carry on war under God's direction; and therefore Isaiah declares that, for the sake of the Church, in order that he may deliver her, God will grant to him prosperity in all things; while he again commends the providence of God, that the Jews may fully believe, amidst changes and troubles, that God on high governs all things in such a manner as to promote the benefit of his elect. Now, since it was not easy for Cyrus to penetrate as far as Babylon, because the whole of Asia had leagued together in order to frustrate his designs, the Prophet testifies that God will dissolve all the strength which men can bring against him.

I will loose the loins of kings. Because the whole strength lies in the reins, the Hebrew writers use the phrase "opening," or "loosing the loins," to denote "being deprived of strength." We might also view it somewhat differently, that is, that the Lord will "make bare," or "loose their loins," according to the customary manner of Scripture, by which kings are said to be ungirded of the belt, namely, of the badge of royalty, when they are deprived of authority. Job (Job 12:18) employs this mode of expression, and Isaiah will afterwards employ it: [193] "I will gird thee." (Ver. 5.) On this account I more readily adopt this sense, that the force of the contrast may be more evident. This shews clearly that kings have just as much strength and power as the Lord bestows on them for the preservation of each nation; for when he determines to convey their authority to others, they cannot defend their condition by any weapons or swords.

To open the gates before him. By this expression he means that no fortresses can resist God, which indeed is acknowledged by all, but yet they do not cease to place foolish confidences in bulwarks and fortresses; for, where cities are well surrounded by walls, and the gates are shut, men think that there they are safe. On the other hand the Prophet shews that all defences are useless, and that it serves no purpose to block up every entrance, when the Lord wishes to open up a way for the enemies. Although it is certain that the gates were shut and securely barred, yet, because Cyrus pushed his way as swiftly as if all the cities had been thrown open, the Prophet justly affirms that nothing shall be closed against him.

2. and **3.** *I will go before thee.* These two verses contain nothing new; but, in general, he shews that Cyrus will gain an easy and rapid victory, because he will have the Lord for the leader of his expedition. Accordingly

[192] "Les profanes et incredules." "Heathens and infidels."

[193] "Ce mot d' eleu est donc adjuste." "This word elect is thus added."

he promises that all *crooked* paths shall be *made straight,* because God will remove every obstruction. Now, since money is the sinews of war, and Cyrus came from the scorched and poor mountains of Persia, Jehovah says that *treasures* which were formerly hidden and concealed shall come into the hands of Cyrus, so that, laden with rich booty, he shall have enough for defraying any expenditure; for by *the treasures of darkness* he means those which lay concealed, and as it were buried in safe and deep places of defense. It is abundantly clear from history, that all these things happened; for by taking Croesus, king of Lydia, who was at that time the richest of all men, he obtained large sums of money. Nor would any one have expected that he would gain victories so easily; and the reason of so great success is now added, because the Lord called and directed him, that he might give in him an illustrious demonstration of his power; for he adds —

That thou mayest know that I am Jehovah. True, Cyrus, as we formerly said, though he acknowledged that the God of Israel is the true God, and was filled with admiration, yet was not converted to him, and never embraced his pure worship according to the standard of the Law. This was therefore special knowledge, that is, so far as he assisted the Church, for whose deliverance he was appointed; and therefore it was necessary that he should be under the influence of this knowledge, in order that he might execute this work of God. Thus he does not speak of that knowledge by which we are enlightened, or about the Spirit of regeneration, but about special knowledge, such as men destitute of religion [194] may possess.

Calling thee by thy name. From some commentators this mode of expression has received a trivial interpretation, that "before Cyrus was born, God called and described him by his name." But we have seen in a former passage, (Isaiah 43:1,) that the Prophet, while he used the same form of expression, meant something different; for God is said to "call by name" those whom he has chosen, and whom he appoints to perform some particular work, that they may be separated from the multitude. This word denotes closer and more familiar intercourse. Thus a shepherd is said to "call his sheep by name," (John 10:3,) because he knows them individually. This applies indeed, in the highest degree, to believers, whom God reckons as belonging to his flock, and to the number of the citizens of his Church. God did not bestow this favor on Cyrus; but because, by appointing him to be the leader of so excellent a deliverance, he engraved on him distinguished marks of his power; with good reason is the commendation of an excellent calling applied to him.

The God of Israel. This ought to be carefully observed; for superstitious men ascribe to their idols the victories which they have obtained, and, as Habakkuk (Habakkuk 1:16) says, "They sacrifice every one to his god;" and therefore they wander in their thoughts, and conceive in their hearts any deity that they fancy, while they ought to acknowledge that Jehovah is the

[194] Joseph. Ant., Book 11, chap. 8.

only and true God. What is said of Cyrus ought to be much more applied to us, that we may not fashion any knowledge of God according to our fancy, but may distinguish him from idols, so as to embrace him alone, and to know him in Christ alone, apart from whom nothing but an idol, or even a devil can be worshipped. In that; respect, therefore, let us surpass Cyrus, to whom the knowledge of God was revealed, so that we may lay aside superstitions and all false worship, and may thus adore him in a holy and upright manner.

4. *For the sake of my servant Jacob.* He shews for what purpose he would grant such happy and illustrious success to this prince. It is, in order that he may preserve his people; as if the Lord had said, "Thou shalt indeed obtain a signal victory, bur I will have regard to my own people rather than to thee; for it is for their sake that I subject kings and nations to thy power." By these predictions, indeed, the Lord intended to encourage the hearts of believers, that they might not despair amidst those distresses; but undoubtedly he intended likewise to excite Cyrus to acknowledge that he owed to that nation all that he should accomplish, that he might he more disposed to treat them with all kindness.

And Israel mine elect. In this second clause there is a repetition which serves still farther to explain that reason; and at the same time he shews on what ground he reckons the Israelites to be "his servants." It is because he condescended to choose them by free grace; for it is not in the power of men to make themselves "servants of God," or to obtain so great honor by their own exertions. This clause is therefore added, [195] as before, for the sake of explanation. But still it denotes also the end of election; for, since we are naturally the slaves of Satan, we are called in order that, being restored to liberty, we may serve God. Yet he shews that no man is worthy of that honor, as we have said, but he whom God hath chosen; for who will boast that he is worthy of so high an honor, or what can we render or offer to God? Thus "we are not sufficient of ourselves, but the Lord hath made us sufficient," as Paul says. (2 Corinthians 3:5.) The beginning of our salvation, therefore, is God's election by free grace; and the end of it is the obedience which we ought to render to him.

But although this is limited to the history of Cyrus, still we may draw from it a general doctrine. When various changes happen in the world, God secures at the same time the salvation of his people, and in the midst of storms wonderfully preserves his Church. We are indeed blind and stupid as to the works of God, yet we ought firmly to believe that, even when everything appears to be driven about at random, and to be tossed up and down, God never forgets his Church, whose salvation, on the contrary, he promotes by hidden methods, so that it is at length seen that he is her

[195] "This is what is usually called 'a prophetic imperative,' which supplies the place of the future tense; for the prophets command those things to be done which they promise, and which they know will certainly happen. Thus Elisha said to Naaman, 'Wash thee seven times in Jordan, and be thou clean;' that is, 'And thou shalt be clean.' (2 Kings 5:10.) See also Isaiah 23:1, and 26:19" — Rosenmuller.

guardian and defender.

Josephus relates a memorable narrative about Alexander, who, while he was besieging Tyre, sent ambassadors to Jerusalem, to demand the tribute which the Jews were paying to Darius. Jaddus, the high-priest, who had sworn that he would pay that tribute, would not become subject to Alexander, and refused to pay him the tribute. Alexander was highly offended, and, swelling with pride and fierceness, determined to destroy Jerusalem, and, after having conquered Darius, marched to Jerusalem, for the purpose of consigning it to utter destruction. Jaddus went out to meet him, accompanied by other priests and Levites, wearing the priestly dress; and Alexander, as soon as he saw him, leapt from his horse, and threw himself down as a suppliant at his feet. Every person was astonished at a thing so strange and so inconsistent with his natural disposition, and thought that he had lost his senses. Parmenio, who alone of all who were present asked the reason, received a reply, that he did not adore this man, but God, whose servant he was; and that, before he left Dion, a city of Macedonia, a man of that appearance and dress, who appeared to have the form of God, presented himself to him in a dream, encouraged him to take Asia, and promised to be the leader of the army, so that he ought to entertain no doubt of victory, and therefore that he could not but be powerfully affected by seeing him. In this manner, therefore, was Jerusalem rescued from the jaws of that savage highwayman who aimed at nothing else than fire and bloodshed, and even obtained from him greater liberty than before, and likewise gifts and privileges. [196]

I have quoted this example in order to shew that the Church of God is preserved in the midst of dangers by strange and unusual methods. Those were troublous times, and scarcely a corner of the earth was at rest; but above all other countries Judea might be said to be devoted to destruction. Yet behold the Church rescued in a wonderful and unusual manner, while other nations are destroyed, and nearly the whole world has changed its face!

And yet thou hast not known me. These words are added for the purpose of giving greater force to the statement, not only that Cyrus may learn that this is not granted on account of any of his own merits, but that he may not despise the God of Israel, though he does not know him. The Lord frequently, indeed, reminds us on this subject, that he anticipates all the industry that exists in men, in order that he may beat down all the pride of the flesh. But there is another reason, as regards Cyrus; for if he had thought that the Lord granted those things for his own sake, he would have disregarded the Jews and treated them as despicable slaves. For this reason the Lord testifies that it does not happen on account of Cyrus's own merit, but only for the sake of the people, whom he determines to rescue out of the hands of enemies. Besides, nothing was more probable than that this man, in his blindness, would appropriate to his idols that which belonged to the

[196] "It seems to be a just observation of Hitzig, that earth is not mentioned as the dwelling of the potsherd, but as its material, which is indeed the predominant usage of {אדמה} (adamah,) as distinguished from {ארץ} (eretz.)" — Alexander.

true God; because, being entirely under the influence of wicked superstitions, he would not willingly have given place to a strange and unknown God, if he had not been instructed by this prediction.

5. *I am Jehovah.* He confirms the preceding statement, and the repetition is not superfluous; for it was proper that it should be often repeated to Cyrus, that there is one God, by whose hands all rulers and nations are governed, that he might be drawn aside from all delusions and be converted to the God of Israel. Besides, it is clearly stated that we ought not to try to find divinity in any other; as if he had said, "Beware of ascribing this victory to idols, or forming any confused idea of a god such as men imagine; know that the God of Israel is the only author of this victory." Although Cyrus did not profit by this admonition to such an extent as to leave his idols and devote himself to the true God, yet it made so deep an impression on his heart that he acknowledged Jehovah to be God and to possess the highest authority. At the same time, it was proper that they who were members of the Church should embrace this doctrine, that they might boldly despise all pretended gods.

I have girded thee. That girding corresponds to the nakedness which he formerly mentioned, (verse 1,) when he said that he "opened" or "ungirded the loins of kings;" for he is said to "gird" those whom he supplies with strength and courage and renders victorious. Hence it ought to be inferred, that men have no courage but when the Lord imparts to them his power and strength, that neither weapons nor any military force can do anything unless he assist, and, in a word, that he presides over all wars, and gives victory to whomsoever he pleases, that none may think that it happens by chance. He again repeats, *Though thou hast not known me,* in order to make it still more certain that these things are granted to Cyrus for the sake of the Church, in order that he may give evidence that he remembers it with gratitude, and may shew kindness to the people of God in return for such a distinguished favor.

6. *Therefore they shall know.* He means that this favor shall be so remarkable as to be acknowledged and admired by all nations. This was not indeed immediately fulfilled; for, although the fame of that victory was spread far and wide, yet few understood that the God of Israel was the author of it; but it was immediately made known to the neighbors, and was communicated by one nation to another, till the report of it was spread throughout the whole world. He does not predict what shall happen immediately, but what shall happen afterwards, though these things were long concealed. God therefore did not permit the remembrance of this transaction to fade away, but determined that it should be handed down in permanent records, that it might be celebrated in all ages, and by the most distant nations, to the very end of the world. We must therefore remember what I formerly remarked, that the Prophet interweaves earlier and later events, because the return of the people was the prelude to a future redemption, and that he thus speaks

of a perfect restoration of the Church. Besides, when it happens that the illustrious works of God are buried by the ingratitude and malice of men, still it does not cease to be true, that they shall be visible to the whole world; for they shine openly and brightly, though the blind do not see them.

7. *Forming light.* As if he had said, that they who formerly were wont to ascribe everything either to fortune or to idols shall acknowledge the true God, so as to ascribe power and the government and glory of all things, to him alone. He does not speak of perfect knowledge, though this intelligence is requisite for the attainment of it. But since the Prophet says that it shall be manifest even to heathens, that everything is directed and governed by the will of God, they who bear the Christian name ought to be ashamed, when they strip him of his power, and bestow it on various governors, whom they have formed according to their fancy, as we see done in Popery; for God is not acknowledged when a bare and empty name is given to him, but when we ascribe to him full authority.

Making peace, and creating evil. By the words "light" and "darkness" he describes metaphorically not only peace and war; but adverse and prosperous events of any kind; and he extends the word peace, according to the custom of Hebrew writers, to all success and prosperity. This is made abundantly clear by the contrast; for he contrasts "peace" not only with war, but with adverse events of every sort. Fanatics torture this word *evil,* as if God were the author of evil, that is, of sin; but it is very obvious how ridiculously they abuse this passage of the Prophet. This is sufficiently explained by the contrast, the parts of which must agree with each other; for he contrasts "peace" with "evil," that is, with afflictions, wars, and other adverse occurrences. If he contrasted "righteousness" with "evil," there would be some plausibility in their reasonings, but this is a manifest contrast of things that are opposite to each other. Consequently, we ought not to reject the ordinary distinction, that God is the author of the "evil" of punishment, but not of the "evil" of guilt.

But the Sophists are wrong in their exposition; for, while they acknowledge that famine, barrenness, war, pestilence, and other scourges, come from God, they deny that God is the author of calamities, when they befall us through the agency of men. This is false and altogether contrary to the present doctrine; for the Lord raises up wicked men to chastise us by their hand, as is evident from various passages of Scripture. (1 Kings 11:14, 23.) The Lord does not indeed inspire them with malice, but he uses it for the purpose of chastising us, and exercises the office of a judge, in the same manner as he made use of the malice of Pharaoh and others, in order to punish his people. (Exodus 1:11 and 2:23.) We ought therefore to hold this doctrine, that God alone is the author of all events; that is, that adverse and prosperous events are sent by him, even though he makes use of the agency of men, that none may attribute it to fortune, or to any other cause.

8 *Drop down dew from above.* Some think that a form of prayer is here

added, which it was the duty of believers to use while they were waiting for the redemption which is here described; and they connect this verse with the preceding in the following manner, "The Lord will not so speedily deliver you, but still it is your duty to be diligently employed in prayer." But I interpret it differently in this manner. The Prophet always speaks in the name of God, who, in the exercise of his authority, calls on heaven and earth to lend their services to the restoration of the Church.

This verse is fitted very powerfully to confirm the godly in the hope of future redemption; for the people, wherever they looked, saw nothing but despair. If they tumed their eyes towards heaven, there they beheld the wrath of God; if towards the earth, there also were beheld afflictions and chastisements; and therefore nothing fitted to lead them to entertain favorable hope was visible. On this account the Prophet confirms them, and enjoins heaven and earth, which held out nothing but threatentings and terrors, to bring forth salvation and "righteousness." This is more emphatic than if he promised that it shall be, when all the elements, which are ready to yield obedience to God, receive orders as to what he wishes them to do. And thus the stream of the discourse will flow on continuously, which otherwise will be abruptly broken off, if we understand this passage to be a prayer. [197]

And let the clouds drop righteousness. This form of expression is frequently employed in Scripture; such as,

"And the mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the hills righteousness."
(Psalm 72:3.)

And again, "Piety and truth met together, righteousness and peace kissed each other; truth shall spring from the earth, and righteousness looked down from heaven;" where David describes the kingdom of Christ and its prosperity, and shews that in it "righteousness, peace, mercy, and truth, shall be joined together." (Psalm 85:10, 11.) This passage treats of the same subject. There is an allusion to the ordinary food of men, who subsist on bread and other productions of the soil; for their life needs such aids. Now, in order that the earth may bring forth fruits, it must obtain its vigor from heaven and draw water from the clouds, that it may be rendered fertile, and then bring forth herbs and fruits both for men and for animals.

By the word *righteousness* he means nothing else than the fidelity with which the Lord defends and preserves his people. The Lord thus "drops down from heaven righteousness," that is, well established order, of which salvation is the fruit; for he speaks of the deliverance of the people from Babylon, in which the Lord shews that he will be their protector. Yet while we understand the natural meaning of the Prophet, we must come down to the kingdom of Christ, to which these words undoubtedly bear a spiritual import; for God does not limit these promises to a few years, but continues his favors down to the coming of Christ, in whom all these things were

[197] "Que Dieu sera plus fort qu' eux." "That God will be stronger than they."

abundantly fulfilled. There can be no doubt, therefore, that he likewise celebrates that eternal righteousness and salvation which is brought to us by Christ; but we ought first to observe that simple interpretation about the return from the captivity in Babylon.

9. and **10.** *Wo to him that striveth with his Maker!* This passage is explained in various ways. Some think that it refers to King Belshazzar, who, as is evident from Daniel, haughtily defied God, when he profaned the vessels of the Temple. (Daniel 5:3.) But that is too forced an exposition. The second might appear to be more probable, that the Lord grants far more to his children than a man would grant to his sons, or an artisan to his work; for they suppose that a comparison of this kind is made. "If the son rise up against the father, and debate with him, he will not be listened to. The father will choose to retain his power, and deservedly will restrain his son; and in like manner, if the clay rise up against the workman. But the Lord permits questions to be put to him, and kindly offers to satisfy the people; nay, even bids them put questions to him." And thus they join together the 10th and 11th verses, and think that God's forbearance is manifested by treating us with greater kindness, and condescending to greater familiarity, than men usually exhibit towards their sons.

The latter exposition is indeed more plausible, but both are at variance with the Prophet's meaning; and therefore a more simple view appears to me to be, to understand that the Prophet restrains the complaints of men, who in adversity murmur and strive with God. This was a seasonable warning, that the Jews, by patiently and calmly bearing the cross, might receive the consolation which was offered to them; for whenever God holds us in suspense, the flesh prompts us to grumble, "Why does he not do more quickly what he intends to do? Of what benefit is it to him to torture us by his delay?" The Prophet, therefore, in order to chastise this insolence, says, "Does the potsherd dispute with the potter? Do sons debate with their fathers? Has not God a right to treat us as he thinks fit? What remains but that we shall bear patiently the punishments which he inflicts on us? We must therefore allow God to do what belongs to him, and must not take anything from his power and authority." I consider {הוי}, *(hoi,) Wo!* to be an interjection expressive of reproof and chastisement.

Potsherd to potsherds. That is, as we say in common language, *(Que chacun se prenne a son pareil,)* "Let each quarrel with his like," "Let potsherds strive with potsherds of the earth." [198] When he sends men to those who are like themselves, he reproves their rashness and presumption, in not considering that it is impossible to maintain a dispute with God without leading to destruction; as if he had said, "With whom do they think that they have to deal? Let them know that they are not able to contend with God, [199] and that at length they must yield. And if, unmindful of their frailty, they attack

[198] "Qu' ils ont eu tort de guerroyer."

[199] "Un esprit humble et modeste." "An humble and modest mind."

heaven after the manner of the giants, they shall at length feel that they did wrong in warring [200] with their Maker, who can without any difficulty break in pieces, and even crush into powder, the vessels which he has made.

Some interpret {חשים} (*charasim*) to mean "workmen" or "potters," and suppose the meaning to be, "Shall the potsherd rise up against the potter?" But those interpreters change the point and read {ש} (*schin*) instead of {ש} (*sin*). I acknowledge that such diversity and change may easily occur, but I prefer to follow the ordinary reading, and to adopt this simple meaning, *"Shall* *the clay say to its maker?* A potter is allowed to make any vessel of what form he pleases, a father is allowed to command his sons; will you not admit that God possesses a higher right?" Thus he reproves those who in adversity remonstrate with God, and cannot patiently endure afflictions.

We ought therefore to listen to the warning given by Peter, when he bids us learn to submit to God, and to "humble ourselves under his mighty hand," (1 Peter 5:6,) so as to yield to his authority, and not to strive with him, if he sometimes tries us by various afflictions; because we ought to acknowledge his just right to govern us according to his pleasure. If we must come to debate, he will have such strong and decisive arguments as shall constrain us, being convicted, to be dumb. And when he restrains the insolence of men, it is not because he is destitute of argument, but because it is right and proper that we should yield and surrender ourselves to be wholly governed according to his pleasure; but at the same time he justly claims this right, that his own creatures should not call him to render an account. What can be more detestable than not to approve of his judgments, if they do not please men?

Paul makes use of the same metaphor, but on a higher subject; for he argues about God's eternal predestination, and rebukes the foolish thoughts of men, who debate with God why he chooses some, and reprobates and condemns others. He shews that we ought, at least, to allow to God as much power as we allow to a potter or workman; and therefore he exclaims,

"O man, who art thou, that repliest against God? Shall the clay say to the potter, Why hast thou made me thus?"
(Romans 9:20.)

"Who is so daring as to venture to oppose God, and to enter into debate with him?" Thus he perfectly agrees with the Prophet, though he makes use of this metaphor on a different and more intricate subject; for both affirm that God has full power over men, so as to permit themselves to be ruled and governed by him, and to endure patiently all adverse events. There is only this difference, that Isaiah reasons about the course of the present life, but Paul ascends to the heavenly and eternal life.

His work hath no hands. The Prophet speaks in ordinary language, as we say that one "puts the last hand," when a thing is completed, and that "hands are wanting," when a work is disorderly, confused, or imperfect. Thus, whenever men murmur against God for not complying with their wishes, they

[200] "Seulement." "Only."

accuse him either of slothfulness or of ignorance.

11. *Thus saith Jehovah.* I have already said, that I do not agree with those who connect this verse with the preceding, as if God, abandoning his just right, gave permission to the Jews to put questions more than is allowed among men. There is another meaning not much different, that the Israelites are miserable, because they know not, and do not even wish to know the will of the Lord; that they do not seek and even do not accept of consolation; and, in short, that the deep sorrow with which they are oppressed arises from the fault of the people, that is, because they do not ask at the mouth of the Lord. If we adopt this exposition, we must arrive at the conclusion that this passage treats of a different kind of inquiry; for as it is unlawful to thrust ourselves into the secret decrees of God, so he graciously condescends to make known to his people, as far as is necessary, what he intends to do; and, when he opens his sacred mouth, he justly commands us to open our ears to him, and to hear attentively whatever he declares. Now, we also know by experience that which Isaiah brings as a reproach against the ancient people.

But it is more reasonable to view this statement as depending on the preceding, so as to be an application of the metaphor in this sense: "A son will not be allowed to enter into a dispute with his father, and the clay will not be permitted to strive with its potter; how much more intolerable is this liberty which men take, when they prescribe to God in what manner he ought to treat his sons?" For otherwise this sentence would be broken and imperfect, but those two clauses agree beautifully with each other. "The potter will make clay of any shape according to his pleasure, the son of a mortal man will not venture to expostulate with his father; and will you refuse to me, who am the supreme Father and Maker of all things, to have equal power over my sons and my creatures?" If the former meaning be preferred, the Prophet reproaches men with their slothfulness, in not deigning to put questions to God, and to learn from his mouth those things which related to their consolation; for they might have learned from the prophecies that God took care of them, and might have known the conclusion of their distresses. And indeed there is no better remedy in adversity than to ask at the mouth of God, so as not to fix our eyes on the present condition of things, but to embrace with the heart that future salvation which the Lord promises.

"The Lord is faithful, who will not suffer us to be tried beyond what we are able to bear; but with the temptation will also grant deliverance, and will increase his grace in us."
(1 Corinthians 10:13.)

Command ye me. This must not be understood as denoting authority; for it does not belong to us to "command" God, or to press upon him unseasonably; and it will not be possible for any person to profit by the word of God, who does not bring an humble heart. [201] But God presents himself to us, that we may ask from him what is of importance to us to know; as if

[201] "N'y en a point d'autre que Dieu." "There is no other than God."

he had said, "Order me; I am ready to reveal those things which are of the highest importance for you to know, that you may derive consolation from them." But as that would be an unnatural mode of expression, I consider that the complaint which I have stated is more simple, that God is robbed of a father's right, if he do not retain the absolute and uncontrolled government of his Church. Thus, in the clause, *Ask me of things to come,* the word ask is taken in a bad sense, when men, forgetting modesty, do not hesitate to summon God to their bar, and to demand a reason for anything that he has done. This is still more evident from the word *command;* as if he had said, "It will belong to you, forsooth, to prescribe what shape I ought to give to my work!"

In a word, the Prophet's design is to exhort men to moderation and patience; for, as soon as they begin to dispute with him, they endeavor to drag him from his heavenly throne. Now, he does not address the Jews alone, for he needed to restrain the blasphemies which even at that time were current among infidels. It is as if God, wishing to maintain his right, thus refuted the slanders of the whole world: "How far shall your insolence carry its excesses, that you will not allow me to be master in my own workshop, or to govern my family as I think fit?"

12. *I made the earth.* He appears merely to maintain the power of God, as be had formerly done; so that there is an indirect contrast between God and idols, which superstitious persons worship. Foolish men ask counsel of idols, as if the world were governed at their pleasure. On the contrary, God calls us back to himself, when he says that he

"made the earth, and placed man upon it, and that his hands stretched out the heavens." (Genesis 1:1, 6,26.)

But it will be more appropriate, in my opinion, to apply the whole of this discourse to the nature of the present subject. "Can anything be more foolish than that men shall uphold their own rank, and shall haughtily interrogate, and treat as a criminal, God, whose majesty is above the heavens?" Thus he indirectly censures the madness of men, who do not scruple to exalt themselves above the very heavens. Yet at the same time he reminds them that, if it must come to a strict examination, God will not want arguments to defend his cause; for, if he governs the whole world, he undoubtedly takes a peculiar care about his own people, and does not care for strangers, so as to allow the members of his family to be scattered and wander. Thus, then, I understand this verse. "Shall I, whose vast and inconceivable wisdom and power shine brightly in heaven and earth, not only be bound by human laws, but be degraded below the ordinary lot of men? And if there be any doubts of my justice, shall not I, who rule and govern all things by my hand, be careful of those whom I have adopted into my family? Shall I not watch over their salvation?"

Thus it is an argument from the less to the greater, and this meaning is agreeable to Scripture. We know that we have been adopted by God,

in such a manner that, having been received under his protection, we are guarded by his hand; and none can hurt us, but by his permission. If "a sparrow," as Christ tells us, "does not fall to the ground without his permission," (Matthew 10:29,) shall we whom he values more than the sparrows be exposed by him at hazard to the rage and cruelty of enemies? And, therefore, since God upholds all the creatures by his providence, he cannot disregard the Church, which he prefers to the whole world. We must, therefore, betake ourselves to this providence, even in the most desperate affairs, and must not give way to any temptations by which Satan attacks us in various ways.

13. *I have raised him up.* He now continues the subject on which he had entered in the beginning of the chapter; for, having undertaken to soothe their affliction, which was exceedingly sharp and severe, Isaiah holds out the hope of deliverance, and stretches out his hand to them, that they may look for an absolutely certain redemption. Though you think that you are ruined, yet the Lord will protect you against destruction. Why the reproof which we have seen was intermingled with it, may be easily gathered from the event itself; for, if Isaiah had not abruptly made this digression, the Jews, in their vehement impatience, would have been hurried into despair.

In righteousness. This means "justly and truly," and must be understood relatively; for it assigns the reason why God determined to raise up Cyrus, that is, because he is a faithful guardian of his Church, and does not disappoint his worshippers. Some explain it, "in justice," that is, in order that he may punish the Babylonians; and others, "that he may reign justly;" but the Prophet meant nothing of this sort. But in the Scriptures, "righteousness" often signifies fidelity, (Psalm 5:8; 22:31), because the Lord manifests his "righteousness" by fulfilling his promises and defending his servants. The "righteousness" of God shines brightly in giving a display of exalted and perfect rectitude by saving his people; for, although there is no work of God on which a mark of righteousness is not engraven, yet a much more clear and striking proof is seen in the salvation of the Church. The meaning therefore is, that he "raised up" Cyrus, in order to manifest his "righteousness" in him, whom he has appointed to lead and conduct in bringing back his people.

He shall build my city. Jerusalem is meant, which he calls "his city," because he wished that there the remembrance of his name should be preserved, and because he had consecrated it in a peculiar manner to himself. In like manner God himself had declared,

"Wherever I shall cause my name to be recorded, I will come to thee, and will bless thee." (Exodus. 20:24.)

Now, there was no other city which he had appointed for sacrifices and vows, and for calling on his name; and, therefore, also it is called (Psalm 46:4, 5) "The city of God, the holy tabernacle of the Most High, for God is in the midst of her;" and in another place it is said, "This is my rest for ever and ever." (Psalm 132:14.) Now, Cyrus did not build this city with his own hand, but by royal edicts forbade any one to hinder the rebuilding of it, and

likewise supplied the people with provisions and money. (2 Chronicles 36:23; Ezra 1:2; 6:3.)

And shall release my captivity, not for a price, that is, "for nothing." This was uncommon; for, if captives are released by a conqueror, either a price is demanded, or harsh conditions are imposed on them; but Cyrus did nothing of that kind. Hence it follows that this deliverance took place by the will of God, and not by the will of man. The word "captivity" is here used as a *collective* noun, denoting "captives."

14. *Thus saith Jehovah.* He still speaks of the restoration which was afterwards effected under the conduct of Cyrus; but we must keep in remembrance what we formerly remarked, that those promises must be extended farther; for it includes the whole time which followed, down to the coming of Christ. Whoever shall duly consider and weigh this Prophet's ordinary style will find in his words nothing extravagant, and will not look upon his language as exaggerated.

The labor of Egypt, the merchandise of Ethiopia. The Prophet alludes to the expenses which Cyrus contributed for building and adorning the temple. (Ezra 6:8) At that time was fulfilled what he says, that "the labor of Egypt" and "the merchandise of Ethiopia" came to the Jews; for "Egypt and Ethiopia" were tributaries and subjects of the king of Persia. From those tributes the temple of Jerusalem was rebuilt. But as that restoration was only the prelude to that which was accomplished by Christ, so likewise the homage which foreign nations rendered to the people of God was only the beginning of that homage which various nations rendered to the Church of God, after Christ had been revealed to the world.

Now, under the name of "Egypt, Ethiopia, and the Sabeans," who flourished at that time, he includes also the rest of the nations. It is as if he had said, "You are now oppressed by the tyranny of foreign nations, but the time shall one day come when they shall be subject to you." This was not immediately fulfilled, but only at the time when Christ, by his coming, subdued their flinty and hitherto untameable hearts, so that they mildly submitted to the yoke that was laid upon them. But the Lord redeemed his people from Babylon, in order that he might preserve some Church till the coming of Christ, to whose authority all nations should be subject; and therefore we need not wonder, if the Prophet, when speaking of the return of the people, directs his discourse at the same time to God's end and design, and makes it to be one redemption.

In chains they shall pass over. When he says that the Israelites shall be victorious over all the nations, this depends on the mutual relation between the Head and the members. Because the Only-begotten Son of God unites to himself those who believe in him, so that they are one with him, it frequently happens that what belongs to him is attributed to

"the Church, which is his body and fullness."
(Ephesians 1:23.)

In this sense also government is ascribed to the Church, not so as to obscure by haughty rule the glory of her Head, or even to claim the authority which belongs to him, or, in a word, so as to have anything separate from her Head; but because the preaching of the gospel, which is committed to her, is the spiritual scepter of Christ, by which he displays his power. In this respect no man can bow down submissively before Christ, without also obeying the Church, so far as the obedience of faith is joined to the ministry of doctrine, yet so that Christ their Head alone reigns, and alone exercises his authority.

Surely [202] *God is in thee.* He relates what will be said by those who shall make respectful entrearies to the Church. They will acknowledge that "God is in her." Some translate {אך} (*ach) only,* which I do not object to, and even acknowledge to be well adapted to express the Prophet's meaning; yet it will not be inappropriate to explain it affirmatively, *Surely God is in thee*

And there is none besides God. [203] He explains the manner in which foreign nations shall be subject to the Jews; that is, by acknowledging that there is no other God than He whom the Jews worshipped. If it be objected, that this has nothing to do with the Jews, who are now alienated from the Church, I reply, The gospel nevertheless proceeded from them, and was diffused throughout the whole world; and thus we acknowledge Jerusalem to be the fountain from which pure doctrine flowed. (Psalm 76:2; Luke 24:47.) In ancient times there undoubtedly were none but the Jews who understood who is God, and what is the proper manner of worshipping him; the rest were devoted to trifles and delusions, and worshipped their own inventions. Hence also Christ, addressing the Samaritan woman, says, "We know what we worship." (John 4:22.) Justly, therefore, is it here said, "God is in thee," because other nations were ignorant of God. Yet as there is an implied contrast, I cheerfully admit the adverb *only,* so as to be a testimony of the repentance of the Gentiles, when they are satisfied with the one God and forsake their idols.

The meaning may be thus summed up, "They who formerly were haughty, and with lofty brow despised the Church, shall submit to her, when it shall be known that she is the sanctuary of the true God," for, as we have said, when God extols his Church, he does not relinquish his own authority. And this is a Sign of true conversion, that we do not worship a God whom we have imagined, but him who is acknowledged in the Church. We ought also to observe this encomium pronounced on the Church, "God is in thee;" for, as we formerly quoted, "God is in the midst of her," because he hath chosen her to be his habitation. (Psalm 46:5.) If we are the people of God, and are subject to his doctrine which bringeth salvation, it follows that he will

[202] By a reference to the human form {ἀνθρωπομορφῶς} God is said, in the ordinary language of Scripture, to hide himself when he refuses assistance, does not answer prayers, and withdraws himself, that is, withdraws his power from the wishes of men. There is, as Hensler has justly observed, a beautiful contrast between (,mistatter),{מסתתר} hiding, and ,{מושיע} (moshiang,) saving." — Doederlein.

[203] "Ce qu' aussi nous devons faire."

assist, us; because he does not wish to forsake his people; for this promise is perpetual, and ought not to be viewed as referring solely to that time.

15. *Truly thou art a God that hidest thyself.* Isaiah now exclaims, that there is need of long exercise of patience, that we may enjoy the promises of God; for the people might have been prompted to despair, when the wicked had everything to their wish, and when everything adverse befell themselves. I am aware that some expound it differently. The Jewish writers commonly interpret it to mean, that the Lord will hide himself from the Gentiles, but will reveal himself to his people. Christian interpreters bring forward a different sense, but too far-fetched. There is ingenuity, indeed, in what they say, that Christ is a hidden God, because his divinity lies concealed under the infirmity of the flesh. But it does not agree with the Prophet's meaning; for he calls himself "a hidden God," because he appears to withdraw, [204] and, in some measure, to conceal himself, when he permits his people to be afflicted and oppressed by various calamities; and, therefore, our hearts ought to be encouraged by hope. Now, as Paul says, (Romans 8:24,) "hope is not directed to those things which are seen;" and in this sense Isaiah calls him "a hidden God," because those things which he promised are not immediately visible to our eyes.

Thus he intended that we should withdraw our minds from present objects, and raise them above the heavens, which we must do, [205] if we wish to receive and accept of his aid. There is "need of patience," (Hebrews 10:36,) therefore, that we may continue to direct our desires towards him, when he delays the execution of his promises. He had said, a little before, that unbelievers, though at that time they were blind and stupid, would feel the presence of God; but, because the time of manifestation was not yet at hand, this exclamation is appropriately introduced, that God, before he displays his glory, conceals his power in order to try our faith.

God the Savior of Israel. That the Prophet does not speak of the essence of God, but of his assistance, may be easily inferred from the epithet which is now added, when he calls God "the Savior." He explains that God "hides himself" in the method which he takes for saving his Church, because he conceals his hand for a time in such a manner as if he had intended totally to abandon them. He wishes that our salvation should remain, as it were, hidden in darkness, that, if we desire to enjoy it, we may know that we must go out of this world, [206] for it will not all at once present itself to us, or become visible to our eyes. We ought, therefore, to look for it with unshaken steadfastness; for it is highly advantageous that in this manner God should try and prove our faith, that, when we shall be oppressed by various afflictions on every hand, we may nevertheless rely on God and on his promises.

[204] "Hors de ce monde."

[205] "En voyant les Gentils avoir toutes choses a souhait." "When they saw the Gentiles have everything to their wish."

[206] "Et semblent estre elevees jusqu' au ciel."

16. and **17.** *They shall all be put to shame.* Here the Prophet compares the Jews with the Gentiles, in order to meet a grievous and dangerous temptation, by which they might be assailed, when they saw the Gentiles enjoying prosperity; [207] for, amidst so great troubles, they might have suspected that God was favorable to the Gentiles, or that he had cast away the care of his people, or that everything was governed by the blind impulse of fortune. The Prophet, therefore, assures them that, although for a time the Gentiles flourish and appear to be exalted to heaven, [208] yet the result must be, that they shall perish and Israel shall be saved. In a word, he exhorts them not to judge of the power of God from the present condition of things, not to have their minds fixed on temporary happiness, but to raise them to eternal salvation, and, when struck by the hand of God, patiently to bear their condition, and, on the other hand, not to envy the prosperity of the wicked, which shall be followed by a moumful reverse, as it is excellently described by the Psalmist. (Psalm 37:1,2.)

This statement is added to the preceding; for whoever shall know that God, when he is a "Savior," is "hidden," will not wonder that wicked men enjoy prosperity, and that good men are poor, and despised, and tried by various afflictions. Thus the Lord makes trial of our faith and patience, and yet no part of our eternal salvation is lost; but they who now appear to be a thousand times safe and happy shall at length perish, and all the wealth which they possess shall plunge them in deeper ruin; because they abuse God's benefits, and, like robbers, seize on what belongs to other men, even though they appear to possess all of them by a just title. Whenever, therefore, this thought arises in our minds, "Wicked men are at ease, and therefore God favors them, and the promises on which we rely are unworthy of credit;" let us betake ourselves to this declaration of the Prophet as the surest anchor, and let us fortify ourselves by it, "The Lord will not disappoint our expectation, but we shall at length be delivered, even though we be now exposed to the reproaches, slanders, mockings, and cruelty of the wicked."

18. *For thus saith Jehovah.* This verse tends to confirm the preceding; for the Prophet means that the Jews are fully convinced that the Lord will at length deliver them, though they are oppressed by wretched bondage.

God the maker of the earth. Some think that by "the earth" is here meant Judea, but I consider it to be an argument from the less to the greater, as we said formerly on the twelfth verse, that, since the providence of God extends universally to the creatures, much more does it relate to those whom he has adopted to be his sons; for of them he has a special care. In short, the

[207] It may be necessary to remind the reader, that, in the passage alluded to, the word commonly rendered "barrenness" literally means "saltness." On this point our author's version and commentary, and the editor's instructive note, may be consulted with advantage. See Com. on the Psalms, vol. 4, p. 260. — Ed.

[208] "Vitringa, Lowth, Ewald, and Umbreit suppose an allusion to the mysterious and doubtful responses of the heathen oracles. The objections of Gesenius are of no more weight than in verses 1, 2, 3, the analogy of which places makes it not improbable that such an allusion to the oracles is couched under the general terms of the verse before us." — Alexander.

Prophet's argument is this. "Since God created the earth, that men might have an abode and habitation in it, much more did he create it, that there might be a residence for his Church; for he takes a deeper concern about his Church than about all the rest." If, therefore, he founded the earth, if he gave to it a shape and a fixed use, that men might be nourished by the fruits which it should produce, he has undoubtedly assigned to his children the first place and the highest rank of honor. This is not always visible to our eyes, and therefore our hearts ought to be encouraged and upheld by hope, that we may stand unmoved against all temptations.

In a word, as long as the earth shall endure, so long shall the Church of God exist; so long as the sun and moon shall last, it shall not fail. Afterwards the Prophet will use a still stronger argument. "If the covenant which God made with Noah, as to the settled order of this world, is stable, much more the covenant which he hath made concerning the Church must be stable. (Isaiah 54:9; Genesis 9:9.) The world is fading and corruptible; but the Church, that is, the kingdom of Christ, shall be eternal; and therefore it is reasonable to believe that the promises which relate to the Church shall undoubtedly be more stable and permanent than all the rest.

He did not create it empty. As it is the principal ornament of the earth that it is the abode of inhabitants, he adds, that it was not created in order that, by being empty, it might be waste and desolate. If it be objected, on the other hand, that the earth was "empty and void" when it was created, as appears from that passage in which Moses employs the same word that is here used by the Prophet, {תהו}, (*tohu,)* which means "shapeless and empty," the answer is easy. The Prophet does not speak of the commencement of the creation, but of God's purpose by which the earth was set apart for the use and habitation of men; and therefore, there is nothing here that is contrary to what is said by Moses, for Isaiah contemplates the end and use.

He formed it to be inhabited. This statement indeed extends to all mankind, because the earth was appointed to all, that they might dwell in it; for how comes it that God nourishes us and supplies us with everything that is necessary, and even supports wicked men, but because he intended that his decree should stand, by which he gave the earth to be inhabited by men? In any other point of view, it is strange that he bears with so many sins and crimes, and does not entirely destroy mankind; but he has regard to his own purpose, and not to our merit. Hence kingdoms and commonwealths are sustained, and hence ranks of society and forms of government are preserved even amidst barbarians and infidels; for, although God often reduces some countries to desolation on account of the sins of men, and sprinkles them, as it were, with "saltness," (Psalm 107:34, [209]) that they may become barren, and may never again be able to support their inhabitants, yet he always adds this alleviation, "that the earth

[209] "C'est leur vraye felicite d'estre conjoints a leur Sauveur." "It is their true happiness to be united to their Savior."

may be inhabited;" for this is his inviolable decree. Yet we must bear in remembrance what I have already said, that, so long as the earth shall be inhabited, it is impossible that God shall not support his worshippers who call upon him. Besides, from this passage all good men ought to derive the highest consolation, that, although they are despised by the world and are few and feeble, and although, on the other hand, wicked men surpass them in numbers, and power, and influence, while they are despised so as to be reckoned of less value than "the offscourings of the world," (1 Corinthians 4:13,) yet they are precious in the sight of God, because he reckons them in the number of his children, and will never suffer them to perish.

I am Jehovah. When he repeats that he is God, this is not intended merely to assert his essence, but to distinguish him from all idols, and to keep the Jews in the pure faith; for even superstitious men acknowledge that there is one God, but conceive of him according to their fancy; and therefore we must acknowledge God, who revealed himself to the fathers, and who spoke by Moses. Thus, he does not speak merely of God's eternal essence, as some think, but of all the offices which belong to him alone, that no part of them may be ascribed to creatures.

19. *Not in secret have I spoken.* He now recalls the people to the doctrine of the Law, because God cannot be comprehended by human faculties; but as he is concealed from carnal reason, so he abundantly reveals himself, and affords the remedy, by his word, which supplies what was wanting, that we may not desire anything more. If this had not been granted, we should have had no hope, and should have lost all courage. Now, he solemnly declares that he does not invite us *in vain,* though he delay his assistance; for what he has promised is most certain, and, as he plainly shewed to whom we ought to betake ourselves, and on whom we ought to rely, so he will give practical demonstration that the hope of those who relied on his word was not *vain,* or without foundation.

This enables us to see clearly how wicked are the speeches of those who say that no certainty can be obtained from the word, and who pretend that it is a nose of wax, in order to deter others from reading it; for thus do wicked men blaspheme, because the mere doctrine of the word exposes and refutes their errors. But we reply with David,

"Thy word, O Lord, is a lamp to our feet, and a light to our paths." (Psalm 119:105.)

We reply with Isaiah and the rest of the prophets, that the Lord has taught nothing that is obscure, or ambiguous, or false. We reply also with Peter, that

"the prophetic word is more sure, and you do well if you take heed to it, as to a lamp buming in a dark place, till the day dawn, and the morning-star arise in our hearts." (2 Peter 1:19.)

If these things were said concerning the Law and the prophets, what shall we say of the Gospel, by which the clearest light has been revealed to us?

Shall we not say with Paul,

"If the Gospel is dark, it is dark to those who are lost, whom Satan, the prince of this world, hath blinded?"

(2 Corinthians 4:3,4.)

Let blind and weak-sighted men therefore accuse themselves, when they cannot endure this brightness of the word; but, whatever may be the darkness by which they shall endeavor to clothe it, let us adhere firmly and steadfastly to this heavenly light.

Besides, the Prophet appears to allude to the predictions which were uttered out of the groves and tripods of the idols. [210] They are uncertain and deceitful, but nothing of this kind can be found in God's answers; for he speaks openly, and utters nothing that is deceitful or ambiguous. But experience tells us that Scripture is somewhat dark and hard to be understood. This is indeed true, but ought to be ascribed to the dulness and slowness of our apprehension, and not to the Scripture; for blind or weak-sighted men have no right to accuse the sun, because they cannot look at him.

I have not said in vain to the seed of Jacob, Seek me. This continues to be a fixed principle, that they who shew themselves to be submissive and obedient, do not spend their labor in vain; because God faithfully performs the office of a teacher towards poor and little ones. Now, though all do not rise in the highest degree, yet the labor of those who shall sincerely seek God will never be unprofitable. By this expression, *Seek me,* Isaiah points out the principal end and use of the Law, to invite men to God; and, indeed, their true happiness lies in being united to God, [211] and the sacred bond of union is faith and sincere piety.

In this second clause he not only asserts that he has spoken clearly and without ambiguity, but declares the certainty and steadfastness of his word; as if he had said, that he does not promise largely with an intention to deceive, or amuse hungry men by words, but actually performs what he has promised. This demonstrates the ingratitude of those who, when they are called, do not answer; since God has no other design than to make us partakers of all blessings, of which we are otherwise empty and destitute.

I Jehovah speaking righteousness. This is added for the sake of explanation; as if he had said that the word by which he draws his elect to himself, is not soiled by any stain of fraud, but contains the most perfect holiness. "The words of the Lord," as David says, "are clean, like silver purified in an earthen fumace, seven times refined." (Psalm 12:6.) Thus, in the word of God we

210 "Qui ne sommes qu'une poignee de gens."

211 "Ye (that are) escaped of the nations." — Eng. Ver. This interpretation, though set aside by our author, is approved by able commentators. "Escaped of the nations has been variously explained to mean the Jews who had escaped from the oppression of the Gentiles, and the Gentiles who had escaped from the dominion of idolatry. But these last would scarcely have been summoned to a contest. On the whole, it seems most natural to understand the nations who survived the judgments sent by God upon them. The Hebrew phrase is in itself ambiguous, the noun added to {פליטי} (pelite) sometimes denoting the whole body, out of which a remnant has escaped, sometimes the power from which they are delivered. Compare Judges 12:4; Ezra 6:9; 7:16; Obadiah 11, with Jeremiah 44:28; Ezra 6:8. The predominant usage and the context here decide in favor of the first interpretation." — Alexander.

have bright righteousness, which instantly shines into our hearts, when the darkness has been removed.

20. *Assemble yourselves,* He challenges all superstitious persons, and, as it were, appoints a day that they may submit to a righteous judgment, as we have formerly seen in expounding other passages, in order to shew that they can plead nothing which shall not be speedily overtumed. Now, indeed, they delight in their superstitions; but all their smoke shall be dispelled, when they come to plead their cause, and without any difficulty they shall be convicted. Let them then "assemble" in crowds, let them conspire and make every effort by fraud, and threatenings, and terrors; the truth shall at length be victorious. This confirmation was highly necessary for the Jews, because in every nation and in every place they beheld the spread of wicked errors which buried the worship of the true God. We also ought to betake ourselves to this refuge, when we see how few and how feeble we are. The Mahometans possess a large portion of the world, the Papists, with elevated crest, triumph far and wide, while we are but a handful of people, [212] and are scarcely reckoned in the number of men. But truth shall at last prevail, and shall cast down all that loftiness which now dazzles the eyes of men.

Ye rejected of the nations [213] {פליטי} *(pelite)* is translated by some "rejected," by others "exiles," or "those who have escaped;" and the address is supposed to be made to the Jews who had retumed from the captivity. But that is too forced a sense. The more generally received interpretation is, "Rejected of the nations," because {פלט} *(palat)* means "to reject." Not that he describes the meaner sort, or the refuse of men; but, on the contrary, he directs his discourse to those who were the highest in rank, and wealth, and power, and learning among the Gentiles. He calls them "rejected," because they are of no value in the sight of God, though they are highly esteemed by men; for

"that which ranks high among men is detestable in the sight of God." (Luke 16:15.)

Yet if it be thought preferable to translate it "distant," I have no objection; as if he had said, "Let them assemble from the farthest parts of the earth."

That carry the wood of their graven image. He shews how great is the madness which seizes idolaters, who worship images, which they bear on their shoulders and carry round on waggons. Or we may take {נשיים} *(nesum)* as denoting "to place on a lofty and elevated spot," as it was a crafty device of Satan to erect statues on pillars and lofty places, in order to excite the admiration of men, and to lead men to pay honor and reverence by merely looking at them. But we may interpret it simply as denoting all worship that is rendered to images, so as to convict them of vanity and madness. Superstitious persons know that idols need the aid and assistance of men, instead of men needing the aid and assistance of idols, which cannot even

[212] "Lesquelles ne pourroyent demeurer debout si les hommes n'y mettoyent la main." "Which could not stand upright, if men did not put their hand to them."

[213] See Commentary on Isaiah, vol. 2, p. 70.

be made to stand upright without the agency of men. [214] And this is the meaning of what next follows, to *pray to a god that cannot save;* for what can be more foolish than to address vows and prayers to wood and stone? and yet infidels run about to dead statues, for the purpose of seeking salvation from them.

21. *Tell ye.* He again challenges all those who might have annoyed the Jews and shaken their faith by their taunts; for he always keeps this object in view, to fortify the faith of the people against all the assaults of the Gentiles. Amidst temptations so numerous and so severe, there was danger lest the Jews should sink under their terrible afflictions, if there had not been powerful arguments on the other side to induce them still to worship and trust the true God; and therefore he permits heathens to produce and bring forward everything that they can find in support of their cause.

Let them also take counsel together. These words are added, in order to inspire greater confidence; for the Prophet means, as we have already said, that they will gain nothing, though they "take counsel" among themselves and enter into a conspiracy. Yet, perhaps, he intended also to make it evident that there is nothing but groundless pretense and falsehood in all that infidels contrive for excusing their errors. Whatever then may be the gaudy ostentation with which they plume themselves on their inventions, the Prophet shews that the word of God will be abundantly strong to support the faith of believers. He challenges them to a strict examination, in order to compare with the Law and the prophets all that infidels boast of as having been foretold by their idols. I cheerfully admit what is generally believed, that the Prophet speaks of the redemption of the people; but as the overthrow of the Babylonian monarchy was likewise connected with it, I think that it is also included.

Who hath proclaimed this from the beginning? Because there is a repetition of the same statement, {מקדם} *(mikkedem*) and {מאז} (*meaz*) mean the same thing; as if he had said, "from the beginning," or, "from of old;" for this prophecy was published long before the event happened. Hence believers might with certainty conclude that God had spoken.

And a savior. To foreknowledge he adds power, as in a former passage. Yet he likewise describes for what purposes he exerts his power, that is, for "saving" his people.

22. *Look unto me.* Hitherto he addressed the Jews alone, as if to them alone salvation belonged, but now he extends his discourse farther. He invites the whole world to the hope of salvation, and at the same time brings a charge of ingratitude against all the nations, who, being devoted to their errors, purposely avoided, as it were, the light of life; for what could be more base than to reject deliberately their own salvation? He therefore commands all "to look to him," and to the precept adds a promise, which gives it greater weight, and confirms it more than if he had made use of a bare command.

[214] "I (am) he." (Eng. Ver.) This is the literal rendering. — Ed.

And ye shall be saved. Thus we have a striking proof of the calling of the Gentiles; because the Lord, after having broken down "the partition-wall" (Ephesians 2:14) which separated the Jews from the Gentiles, invites all without exception to come to him. Besides, we are here reminded also what is the true method of obtaining salvation; that is, when we "look to God," and tum to him with our whole heart. Now, we must "look to him" with the eye of faith, so as to embrace the salvation which is exhibited to all through Christ; for "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him may not perish." (John 3:16.)

For I am God. When he exhorts *all the ends of the earth,* he at the same time shews that all men have hitherto wandered, and have not "looked to" the true God; for where infidelity exists, there cannot be a distinct looking towards God, so as to distinguish him from empty masks. In a word, he declares that the ruin of all has been occasioned by their being driven about by their wicked inventions, and thus revolting from the true God, from the knowledge of whom certain and eternal salvation flows. The Lord therefore stretches out his hand, in order to rescue all and point out the method of obtaining salvation.

This makes it evident that it was not at random that the doctrine of the Gospel was preached to all nations, but by the decree of God, by whom it had been long ago ordained. Yet, as I remarked a little before, he accuses the Gentiles of stupidity, in allowing their senses to be tumed and whirled about in all directions, wherever their fancy led them. Though by nature they could not approach to God, and though they even sucked in with their milk the superstitions by which they were blinded, yet God might have justly reproached them with wicked contempt of his grace; for ignorance always implies hypocrisy, when men choose rather to be deceived by empty flatteries than to go straight to God.

23. *I have sworn by myself.* He adds a clearer confirmation of the preceding statement; for, in consequence of this calling being unusual and marvellous, he adds an oath, as is usually done in what is new and hard to be believed. The Jews might have objected, that they alone were called by the name of the elect people; but, when he confirms it by an oath, this removes all debate. The Prophet still, indeed, aims at the same object, namely, that the glory of God shall be so visible in the restoration of the Church as to arouse the whole world to the admiration of it from the rising to the setting of the sun, or, to express it more briefly, that this demonstration of the power of God shall be so splendid and illustrious as to strike all nations with fear. Yet from these words we may justly infer what I have remarked, that the Gentiles shall be admitted to an equality with the Jews, so that God shall be the common Father of all, and shall be worshipped in every country.

Now, God "swears by himself," because he cannot have another equally competent witness of the truth; for he alone is the truth. "Men," as the Apostle says, "swear by a greater than themselves; but God, because he had

no greater, hath sworn by himself." (Hebrews 6:16.) We ought to observe the reason why he "swears." It is because he intended to aid the weakness of his people, that they might not be tossed about in uncertainty. This certainly is wonderful condescension, that, in order to remedy the fault of our distrust, he does not scruple to bring forward his own name as holding the place of a pledge; and the more base and disgraceful must be our unbelief, if even an oath does not satisfy us. Besides, since God claims for himself all confirmation of the truth, we ought to be exceedingly careful, when we appeal to him by an oath, not to mingle any other names either of saints or of any creature, but, by using his name with all becoming reverence, to preserve the honor due to him entire and unabated.

The word hath gone out of my mouth in righteousness. He means that all that he has commanded to be published by his Prophet is firm and lasting, as if he had said that this commandment did not proceed "out of his mouth" rashly or unadvisedly. And in this sense the word *righteousness* is often used in Scripture, that is, for a word that is not deceitful, which shall clearly appear to be perfectly true; and thus he says that the decree cannot be revoked.

And shall not return. This is another mode of expression conveying the same idea. It means that the word of God shall continue to make progress, till the actual result shall make manifest that it has proceeded from a just and true and almighty God. A person is said to *return,* when some obstacle hinders him from proceeding farther; but, because nothing can prevent God from executing what he has decreed, the Prophet justly infers that nothing can interrupt or retard the course of this word. The particle כי, *(ki,) that,* must be viewed as introducing an explanatory clause; as much as to say, "This is the *word,"*

That to me every knee shall bow. By this mode of expression he means that all the Gentiles shall be suppliants to God, because the astonishing deliverance of the Church shall strike terror upon all. Yet hence also it follows, that his worship shall be spread among all nations; for we cannot truly "bend the knee" before God till he hath been made known to us. To an unknown God, indeed, men may render some kind of worship; but it is false and unprofitable. But here he speaks of a true profession, which proceeds from a knowledge of God deeply seated in our hearts; for, where there is no faith, there can be no worship of God, and faith is not directed to a thing unknown or uncertain. Accordingly, he has made use of the sign to express the thing itself, as is frequently done.

Hence it ought to be observed, that God demands also external worship; for the Prophet does not separate an external profession of religion from the inward feelings of the heart. In vain, therefore, do fanatics boast that in some manner they worship God and do homage to him, while they bow down before idols. In vain, I say, do they pretend that their heart is upright towards God; for the worship of the heart cannot be separated from an external

profession. In like manner the soul cannot be dedicated and consecrated to God, while the body is consecrated to the devil; for both ought to be consecrated to God, and thus the worship of the heart ought also to be accompanied by an external profession.

"With the heart we believe to righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation." (Romans 10:10)

Hence also the Lord, approving of the piety and uprightness of his people, says, "that they have not bowed a knee before Baal." (1 Kings 19:18; Romans 11:4.)

Paul applies this passage of Isaiah to the last judgment, when he says (Romans 14:10, 11) that "we must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ;" although the subject here treated of is, the redemption of the people, the publication of the gospel, and the establishment of the kingdom of Christ. But he takes for granted (what all ought to know) that those statements which relate to the kingdom of Christ must not be limited to any part of it, but extend to the whole of its course, till it arrive at full perfection. The knee is bent to Christ, when his doctrine is obeyed, and when the preaching of the gospel is accepted. But many still oppose and boldly despise him; Satan contrives many schemes and incessantly carries on war with him; and therefore we are at a great distance from the full accomplishment of this prophecy. Then shall every knee be truly bent to Christ, when he shall triumph over vanquished and utterly ruined adversaries, and shall render visible to all men his majesty, which Satan and wicked men now oppose. Thus Paul teaches that, when Christ shall ascend his judgment-seat to judge the world, then shall be fully accomplished that which began to be done at the commencement of the gospel, and which we still see done from day to day.

Every tongue shall swear. By a figure of speech in which a part is taken for the whole, the word *swear* is put for worship, reverence, or subjection. "Swearing" is one department of the honor which is due to God; for by it we confess and acknowledge that he is the Author and Father and lawful defender of the truth, and that "all things are naked and open to him." (Hebrews 4:13.) Whenever therefore this honor is bestowed on idols, the majesty of God is dishonored by abominable sacrilege; and consequently they who worship him purely swear exclusively by his name. But on this subject we have spoken [215] in the exposition of another passage. (Isaiah 19:18.)

24. *Surely in Jehovah.* He shews what is the nature of true faith and of the true worship of God; that is, when we not only acknowledge, or perceive by the understanding, that there is a God, but likewise feel what he wishes

[215] "'When thou shalt be old, and thy strength shall fail, (for thou hast no merits or works of righteousness,) I am the same as to my mercy and kindness, to keep, and carry, and bear, and deliver;' for the Prophet had said of the idol that it is carried about, and cannot rid itself of its own burden, and therefore God says here, 'I am He who carry others and bear my own burden.'" — Jarchi.

to be towards us. Whoever shall be satisfied with a bare knowledge departs very widely from faith, which must invite us to God in such a manner that we shall feel him to be in us. In like manner Paul wishes that

"Christ should dwell in the hearts of believers through faith." (Ephesians 3:17.)

He who imagines that God sits unemployed in heaven either will not humble himself sincerely before him, or will not make an open and sincere profession.

Righteousness and strength. As these are the two principal parts of our salvation, when believers acknowledge that they receive both of them from God, they ascribe to him the undivided praise of a happy life, and testify that by nature they do not possess that which they acknowledge that they owe to his grace. Thus they own that in themselves they have nothing either of "righteousness" or of "strength," but seek them in God alone, that he may not be defrauded of his right.

To him shall he come. Here commentators differ; but, for my own part, I take a simple view of this passage as relating to believers who submit themselves to God, so as to enable us to perceive the nature of the contrast between them and rebels, who do not cease obstinately to resist God. I explain it thus: "They who shall confess that their righteousness is placed in God will approach to him." He means that we obtain access to God through faith, so that they who perceive that their righteousness is placed in him, feel that he is present; and indeed no man, if he be not reconciled to God, will ever approach to him willingly, but, on the contrary, all who dread his majesty will fly to the greatest possible distance from him. Thus the Prophet applauds the very delightful result of grace, because it will unite to God those men who were formerly driven away from him by their wickedness; and to this corresponds what is said by the Psalmist,

"Thou art the God that heareth prayer; to thee shall all flesh come." (Psalm 65:2.)

But all who defy him shall be ashamed. After having testified that God wishes to gather strangers from their dispersion, that he may bring them into a state of intimate friendship with himself, he threatens vengeance against despisers, who, being without God, and despising God, give the reins to their wicked passions, and wallow in the enjoyments of the world. As it is only by faith that we obey God, so it is by unbelief alone that Isaiah declares his anger to be provoked; while he distinguishes all unbelievers by this mark, that they are disobedient to God, and even challenge him to a contest. Although they now use the language of triumph, the Prophet declares that they shall be clothed with shame and disgrace.

25. *In Jehovah shall be justified.* He now makes a brief reply to an objection which might be urged, that it appeared absurd to say, that the Lord called the Gentiles, who had always been alienated from him. "Is it in vain that the Lord hath chosen the seed of Abraham? Is his promise void,

which he so frequently repeated?" (Genesis 15:5, and 17:7.) In order to remove this doubt, he declares that the Lord will nevertheless stand by his promises; that, though he choose the Gentiles, yet the covenant which he made with the fathers shall not fall to the ground, because the elect people shall enjoy the privileges of their rank. Nor does he in this passage, as in many others, speak of the rejection of that nation; but the Prophet simply shews that the grace of God, which shall be diffused throughout the whole world, shall flow from that fountain.

As to the greater number having been rejected by God, still this did not set aside God's covenant; because the remnant of adoption were always the true and lawful Israel; and although they were few in number, yet they were the first-born in the Church. Besides, all those among the Gentiles who had been ingrafted into that body began also, as we have formerly seen, to be accounted children of Abraham.

"One shall say, I belong to Jacob; another shall subscribe with his band, I am a descendant of Israel." (Isaiah 44 5.)

And on this ground we are now reckoned the genuine Israel of God, though we are not the descendants of Israel. The Prophet therefore added this, both that the Jews might not think that the Lord's covenant had failed, and that they might not boast of their birth and despise the Gentiles.

All the seed of Israel. He extends this seed farther, that they may not suppose that it ought to be limited to the family of Abraham; for the Lord gathers his people without distinction from among Jews and Gentiles, and here he speaks universally of the whole human race.

Shall be justified and shall glory. It ought to be observed that the Prophet says that we "are justified and glory in the Lord," for in none else ought we to seek "righteousness" or "glory." He has joined to it "glory," which depends on "righteousness," and is added to it. Hence also Paul says,

"Where is thy glorying? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith." (Romans 3:27.)

And, again,

"If Abraham was justified by works, he hath glory,
but not before God." (Romans 4:2.)

It follows, therefore, that they alone deservedly glory who seek their righteousness in God, and acknowledge that in themselves they have no ground for glorying.

Chapter 46

CHAPTER 46

Isaiah 46:1-13

1. Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth; their idols were upon the beasts, and upon the cattle: your carriages were heavy loaden; they are a burden to the weary beast.

1. Incurvatus est (vel, prostratus est) Bel; depressus est Nebo. Simulachra eorum bestiae et jumento erunt, gestantia vos a vobis onerata, pondus ad lassitudinem.

2. They stoop, they bow down together; they could not deliver the burden, but themselves are gone into captivity.

2. Incurvata sunt, depressa sunt pariter, (et) non potuerunt se subtrahere oneri; et anima eorum in captivitatem abiit.

3. Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which are borne by me from the belly, which are carried from the womb:

3. Audite me, domus Iacob, omnes reliquiae domus Israel, qui gestamini ab utero, qui portamini a vulva.

4. And even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you

4. Et usque ad senium ego idem, et usque ad caniciem ego portabo. Ego feci, et ego feram, ego portabo et servabo.

5. To whom will ye liken me, and make me equal, and compare me, that we may be like?

5. Cui similem me facitis, et aequatis, et comparatis me, ut similis sim?

6. They lavish gold out of the bag, and weigh silver in the balance, and hire a goldsmith; and he maketh it a god: they fall down, yea, they worship.

6. Promentes aurum ex sacculis, argentum in statera ponderantes, condu-

cent aurifabrum, ut ex eo faciant Deum, cui se incurvent, et quem adorent.

7. They bear him upon the shoulder, they carry him, and set him in his place, and he standeth; from his place shall he not remove: yea, one shall cry unto him, yet can he not answer, nor save him out of his trouble.

7. Portabunt super humerum, deferent, ponent in loco suo; illic stabit, loco suo non movebitur. Adhaec, si quis clamet ad eum, non respondebit, neque ex tribulatione ejus liberabit eum.

8. Remember this, and shew yourselves men: bring it again to mind, O ye transgressors.

8. Recordamini hoc, et erubescite (vel, roboramini;) redite, praevaricatores ad cor.

9. Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me;

9. Recordamini priora a seculo; quia ego Deus, et nullus praeterea Deus, et nihil mihi simile.

10. Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:

10. Nuntians ab initio novissimum, et a vetustate quae nondum facta erant; dicens, Consilium meum stabit, et quicquid voluero faciam.

11. Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it.

11. Vocans ab Oriente avem (vel, cogitationem,) e terra longinqua virum consilii mei. Loquutus sum, ideo adducam hoc; cogitavi, idem faciam.

12. Hearken unto me, ye stouthearted, that are far from righteousness:

12. Audite me praefracti corde, qui procul estis a justitia.

13. I bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry: and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory.

13. Appropinquare faciam justitiam meam, nec elongabitur, et salus mea non morabitur. Et ponam in Sion salutem, et in Ierusalem gloriam meam.

1. *Bel hath bowed down.* Isaiah continues the same subject; for we need not trouble ourselves about the division of chapters, which have not always been accurately divided; but we ought to examine the statements themselves, which agree with each other in the manner which I have pointed out. Yet if any prefer to view this as the commencement of a new discourse, because immediately afterwards he prophesies concerning the destruction of Babylon, I shall not greatly quarrel with him.

Nebo is cast down. "Bel" and "Nebo" were idols which were worshipped by the Babylonians, and probably were their chief patrons; as idolaters always have some particular gods, under whose protection, above all others, they consider themselves to be placed. It may be conjectured that this "Nebo" was a sort of inferior god that was added to the chief god "Bel," as Mercury

was to Jupiter. Under their names he includes also the rest of the idols, and declares that all the superstitions and false worship of the Gentiles shall be overthrown, when God shall lay low and triumph over their worshippers; because it shall then be manifest that he is the righteous avenger of his Church.

Their idols shall be on the beasts. The Babylonians having haughtily boasted of the protection of false gods, the Prophet rebukes that vain confidence, because the God of Israel will not only bring utter ruin on that wicked nation, but also will cast down and treat disdainfully their gods. The reason why he says that they shall be burdens of *"beasts"* is, that they shall be laid on waggons and removed from one place to another, and shall even be huddled together without any respect, as the waggoners think proper. This is what is meant by "being cast down," for the robbers shall collect into a large heap those gods which formerly occupied an elevated station.

There can be no doubt, indeed, that this was fulfilled when the Persians and Medes took Babylon by storm; for when the monarchy was removed, these idols were taken away as a part of the booty. But Isaiah, though he predicted this, looked farther, that is, to the coming of Christ, who was to overtum and destroy all false worship; for, when his kingdom has been established, all idols immediately fall to the ground, and it is impossible that false religion and superstition can exist along with the knowledge of him. By his brightness he dispels all darkness, so as to leave no room for false gods or superstitions; for, as Paul says,

"What hath Christ to do with Belial? What hath light to do with darkness?"

(2 Corinthians 6:14,15.)

At the same time it ought to be observed, that the Prophet had his eye on the time when the Jews were held in captivity; for they saw the Babylonians offer incense to idols, and ascribe to them supreme power, as if the government of affairs depended on them; while the God of the Jews was treated with scorn, as if he could not defend his people, or as if he cared nothing about them. For this reason he shews that there will be so great a revolution, that the gods of the Babylonians, which were elevated so high, shall be laid low, and God, who appeared to he low, shall rise up and avenge his people.

2. *They could not withdraw themselves from the burden.* He ridicules the vanity of such gods as these, which have neither strength nor motion, and cannot defend or support themselves, and, in a word, who need the aid of beasts of burden to carry them. There is, therefore, an implied contrast between idols and the true God, who has no need of anything whatever. I interpret these words as applied to beasts, but the Prophet heightens the disgrace by saying that they were a heavy burden to the beasts themselves which would willingly have cast them off, and consequently that the false gods, besides being of no use to their worshippers, also wearied out the beasts.

And their soul hath gone into captivity. This is a Hebrew mode of expression, by which he ridicules those gods which have neither "soul" nor understanding. He speaks ironically, therefore, against useless and dumb idols, when he says that they shall be carried into captivity along with their soul. But we must see if these things cannot be retorted on the true God, whose ark, by which he gave testimony of his presence, was taken by the Philistines; for in this way it appeared as if the Lord were a captive. (1 Samuel 4:11.) This objection may be easily answered; for, although the Lord intended that the ark should be a testimony of his presence, yet he forbade the Jews to fix their whole and exclusive attention upon it, but commanded them to raise their eyes to heaven, and there to seek and adore God. He wished to be always worshipped in a spiritual manner, (John 4:24,) and the ark was not adored instead of God, but was a symbol, by which the people were led upwards, as by the hand, to God. The Gentiles, on the other hand, fixed their attention on their idols, and attributed to them divine power.

It might even have been said that the Philistines were at length punished for their wickedness, and acknowledged that they had to deal with the true God. (1 Samuel 5:6.) But that would not have been a sufficient answer, because the Lord sometimes permitted his ark to be treated with derision, as is evident from other passages of the history. The true solution therefore is, that the Lord, though he holds intercourse with us by symbols and sacraments, yet wishes to be sought in heaven. To this must be added, that he had openly declared, by memorable predictions, that he was not dragged as a captive by conquerors, but that of his own accord he exposed his sanctuary to the sport of enemies, in order to punish the sins of his people. Nor could the Jews, when the Temple had been thrown down and bumt, and when the holy vessels were carried to Babylon, doubt that the same God whom they had worshipped was the author of this punishment, since he had so frequently threatened by his prophets what then happened.

3. *Hear me.* Here the Prophet beautifully points out the vast difference between the true God and idols. Having formerly said that the Babylonian gods must be drawn on waggons and carts, because they consist of dead matter, he now ascribes a widely different office to the God of Israel, namely, that he "carries" his people, like a mother, who carries the child in her womb, and afterwards carries it in her bosom. He addresses the Jews, that they may return an answer from their experience; for this ought to have powerfully affected them, when they actually felt that he bore them and their burdens. He, therefore, makes use of a highly appropriate contrast, and concludes from the preceding statements: "Acknowledge that I am the true God, and that I differ widely from idols, which are useless and dead weights; for you have known and experienced my power by constant benefits, which I have not ceased to confer upon you from the womb." God is not only powerful in himself, but diffuses his power through all the creatures; so that we feel his strength and energy.

Who are carried from the womb. This is a very expressive metaphor, by which God compares himself to a mother who carries a child in her womb. He speaks of the past time, when he began to give them testimonies of his grace. Yet the words might be taken as meaning simply that God kindly nourished that people, like an infant taken from its mother's womb, and carried it in his bosom, as the Psalmist says,

"I was cast upon thee from the womb, thou art my God from my mother's belly."
(Psalm 22:10.)

But as God did not only begin to act as the father and nurse of his people from the time when they were born, but also "begat them" (James 1:18) spiritually, I do not object to extending the words so far as to mean, that they were brought, as it were, out of the bowels of God into a new life and the hope of an eternal inheritance.

If it be objected, that God is everywhere called "a Father," (Jeremiah 31:9; Malachi 1:6,) and that this title is more appropriate to him, I reply, that no figures of speech can describe God's extraordinary affection towards us; for it is infinite and various; so that, if all that can be said or imagined about love were brought together into one, yet it would be surpassed by the greatness of the love of God. By no metaphor, therefore, can his incomparable goodness be described. If you understand it, simply to mean that God, from the time that he begat them, gently carried and nourished them in his bosom, this will agree admirably with what we find in the Song of Moses,

"He bore them, and carried them, as an eagle carrieth her young on her wings." (Deuteronomy 32:11.)

In a word, the intention of the Prophet is to shew, that the Jews, if they do not choose to forget their descent, cannot arrive at any other conclusion than that they were not begotten in vain, and that God, who has manifested himself to be both their Father and their Mother, will always assist them; and likewise, that they have known his power by uninterrupted experience, so that they ought not to pay homage to idols.

All the remnant of the house of Israel. By calling them a "remnant" he means, as we formerly remarked, that the greater part had been alienated from the Church by their revolt, so that the hope of deliverance belonged only to a very small number. On this account he demands from them a hearing; for unbelievers, not less than heathen nations, were utterly deaf to his voice. Now, although the people were so far from being in their unbroken strength, that the dispersion of them had left but a small number behind, yet God bids them consider how wonderfully they have been hitherto preserved, that they may not doubt that he will henceforth act towards them, as he has hitherto acted, the part of both father and mother. And when he demands that they shall listen to him, he shews that the true and indeed the only remedy for our distresses and calamities is, to hang on his mouth, and to be attentive to the promises of grace; for then shall we have sufficient courage

to bear every affliction; but if not, the way is opened for despair, and we ought not to expect anything else than destruction.

4 *And even to old age.* Here I explain the copulative {ו} *(vau)* to mean *therefore;* and the reasoning ought to be carefully observed, for he argues thus, "I have begotten and brought you forth;" and again, "Even when you were little children, I carried you in my arms, and therefore I will be the guardian of your life till the end." Thus also David reasons,

"Thou art he who brought me out of the womb; I trusted in thee while I hung on my mother's breasts; I was cast upon thee from my birth; thou art my God from my mother's womb."
(Psalm 22:10.)

He therefore promises that he will always be a Father to the Jews; and hence we see that we ought to cherish assured confidence of salvation from the time that the Lord hath once begun it in us, for he wishes to continue his work till the end. "The Lord," says David, "will complete what he hath begun;" and again,

"O Lord, thy loving-kindness is eternal, and thou wilt not forsake the works of thy hands." (Psalm 138:8.)

I am the same. The Hebrew word {הוא} (*hu*) is, in my opinion, very emphatic, though some interpreters render it simply by the demonstrative pronoun He; [216] but it means that God is always "the same" and like himself, not only in his essence, but with respect to us, so that we ourselves shall feel that he is the same. When he says, "Even to old age," [217] it might be thought absurd; for we ought to become full-grown men after having been carried by God from infancy. But if any one shall examine it properly, it will be found that we never make so great progress as not to need to be upheld by the strength of God, for otherwise the most perfect man would stumble every moment; as David also testifies,

"Forsake me not in the time of old age, withdraw not from me when my strength faileth." (Psalm 71:9.)

I have made and will carry. He again argues in the same manner. God does not regard what we deserve, but continues his grace toward us; and therefore we ought to draw confidence from it, "Thou didst create us, not only that we might be human beings, but that we might be thy children; and therefore thou wilt continue till the end to exercise continually toward us the care of a father and of a mother."

5. *To whom will ye liken and compare me?* Here the Prophet introduces the Lord as remonstrating with the Jews, because they distrusted and doubted his power, and, in a word, because they put him on a level with idols, and even placed idols above him. When they saw the Babylonians

[216] "Bring (it) again to mind." — Eng. Ver.

[217] "The verb {התאששו (hithshteshu) is a {ἅπαξ} {λεγόμενον}, and admits of several different explanations. Joseph Kimchi derived it from {אש} (esh,) fire, and explained it to mean, 'Be inflamed or reddened,' that is, 'blush.' So the Vulgate, confundamini (be confounded.) The Targum and Jarchi understand it to mean, 'Fortify or strengthen yourselves,' and connect it with ,{אששים} (ashishim,) foundations. (Isaiah 16:7.) Bochart derives it from ,{איש} (ish,) a man, and identifies it with the {ἀνδρίζεσθε}, of 1 Corinthians 16:13." — Alexander.

enjoy prosperity, they thought that their hope was gone, and that the remembrance of the covenant had faded away, and hardly believed that God was in heaven or took any concern about them. On this account the Lord complains that they ascribe some power to idols, and that thus they east his power into the shade. This subject was formerly discussed under the forty-second, forty-third, and following chapters; and therefore it is unnecessary to repeat observations in each word.

In order that they may not estimate the power of God by the present condition of things, he bids them raise their minds higher. In like manner, when we see the Papists enjoy prosperity, if we should entertain doubts whether or not they possessed the true religion, we would need to be dissuaded by the same exhortation; for this would be to compare God with idols. And we ought carefully to observe this circumstance, the forgetfulness or disregard of which has led many commentators absurdly to weaken this statement, by supposing that the Prophet merely attacks superstitious persons who ascribe some divine power to wood or stone, because this degrades the glory of God by comparing him to dead things. But I have no doubt that he reproves that sinful and wicked conclusion by which the people, when they were weighed down by adversity, imagined that God was favorable to the Babylonians; for, if he had been favorable to them, it would follow that he approves of idolatry, and thus his honor would have been conveyed to dumb creatures. We may likewise draw from it a general doctrine that God is robbed of his glory, when he is compared to dumb and senseless things, as Paul also applies the passage appropriately. (Acts 17:29.)

6. *Lavishing gold out of bags.* The Prophet had formerly said this, and he now repeats it, in order to fix this doctrine more and more deeply on the hearts of men; for superstition has struck its roots so deeply in their hearts, that it cannot be torn out, unless the Lord entirely change our nature. Whatever we have heard about this madness quickly passes out of our minds; for we always carry about some seed of superstition, and there is nothing to which we are more prone than to fall into it. He says, therefore, that one person supplies the materials for manufacturing idols, and another gives them a shape; and that in this way it may be said that there are two fathers of such gods, that is, the rich man who lavishes out the gold or silver, and the workman who adds the shape and makes the idol. Thus he makes an open exposure of the madness of these who seek a deity in their purses and in the hand of their workmen; for what means so sudden a change, that they bow down before the metal, as soon as it has assumed a different shape, and a shape, too, which has been regulated by their own will or caprice? for it is exactly such a god as they have been pleased to manufacture at their own expense.

They even adore. The particle {אף}, (*aph,*) *even,* heightens the description of this madness; for there might perhaps be some room for repentance, if one who had been overtaken by a sudden mistake adored some false god; but

these men obstinately persevere in their error. This word therefore draws attention more strongly to that obstinacy, and shews that they are altogether blinded. Excessively foolish, as I have said, is this stupidity, when men adore a god which they have made with their own hands.

7. *They shall carry them on the shoulder.* The picture is still more heightened by the description contained in this verse; for, since the idols have no feeling of any kind, they who fly to them to ask assistance must be not only very stupid but very obstinate.

8. *Remember this.* This verse may be explained in two ways, either that the Lord addresses the Jews, or that he addresses the Gentiles. Men who otherwise are not well instructed in the Law are led into mistakes, because they extinguish that knowledge which God kindles in their hearts; for there is no person who has not some seed of religion implanted in him by nature, but men choke it by their unbelief, or corrupt and debase it by their inventions. On this account we might extend it to the whole human race. But I am more disposed to adopt a different opinion, which is also demanded by the context; for the Prophet will soon afterwards add what does not apply to any but the Jews, whom he calls *transgressors,* because, having been vanquished by a slight temptation, they revolted from the true God, as if captivity ought to have obliterated from their hearts all the benefits which he had bestowed on them. Since, therefore, they had shaken off the true religion, he sharply rebukes their ingratitude in having been so easily led away to sinful inventions.

Return to the heart. [218] By giving them this injunction he means that they are not of sound understanding. Others render it, "Recall." This is feeble and inappropriate, and, a little before, he had bid them remember, and will immediately repeat the same thing. Now, therefore, he rather bids them "return to the heart," because forgetfulness of God's benefits was a sort of madness.

Blush. Others render it, "Act a manly part," and derive the word from {אישׁ}, *(ish.)* Others derive it from {אשׁישׁ}, *(ashish,)* which means "a foundation;" as if he had said, "Take courage, do not despair of my assistance." But I rather agree with Jerome, who derives it from {אשׁ}, (*esh*;) for it is more appropriate, when their disgrace has been exposed, to "be ashamed" than to assume manly courage; though I leave it to every person to form his own judgment. He therefore means that they *blush* for their madness,

[218] "By a bird of prey is here meant the Eagle; for the Greek word {ἀετός} is derived from {עיט} (ait.) There can be no doubt that he means Cyrus, who, in a former passage, (Isaiah 41:25,) is said to have been called by Jehovah 'from the East,' that is, from Persia, which lay to the east of Judea. In other passages also, (as in Jeremiah 49:22; Ezekiel 17:3,) kings and princes are compared to eagles, because, in the opinion of the ancients, the eagle is the king of birds. Thus also Cyrus is represented under the image of a 'bird of prey,' chiefly on account of the astonishing swiftness with which he rode in his expeditions from Persia into very distant countries, and on account of the violence with which he flew upon his enemies and seized them as his prey. There may also be an allusion to the circumstance, that Cyrus ordered a golden eagle, with outstretched wings, laid on a long spear, to be carried before him as his military standard; for so Xenophon describes it. {Ην} {δὲ} {αὐτῷ} {σημεῖον} {ἀετὸς} {χρυσοῦς} {ἐπὶ} {δόρατος} {μακροῦ} {ἀνατεταμένος}, {καὶ} {νῦν} {δὲ} {τοῦτο} {ἔπι} {σημεῖον} {τῳ} {Περσῶν} {βασιλεῖ} {διαμένει} 'And his standard was a golden eagle stretched on a long spear, and even now this continues to be the standard of the king of Persia.' (Xen. Cyrop. 7.)" — Rosenmuller.

ingratitude, and wickedness, so as to return to God. [219]

9. *Remember the former things.* This is an explanation of the preceding statement; for he expresses more fully what he formerly meant, that is, that God hath testified of himself by sufficiently numerous proofs, and hath shewed what is his nature and greatness; and that not merely for two or three days, or for a few years, but *at all times;* for he had continued his benefits, and had incessantly bestowed his grace upon them. Hence he infers that the manifestations of his divinity, being so clear, ought to prevent them from giving their hearts to another.

That I am God. In this passage the particle {כי} (*ki*) does not signify *for*, but *that,* and introduces a clause which explains what goes before. Besides, as we have formerly explained, God wishes not only that he may be acknowledged, but that he alone may be acknowledged; and therefore he wishes to be separated from all the gods which men have made for themselves, that we may fix our whole attention on him; because, if he admitted any companion, his throne would fall or shake; for either there is one God or there is none at all.

10. *Declaring from the beginning.* He now explains more fully in what manner he wishes the Jews to remember the past time, namely, that they were taught by constant predictions, as far as was necessary for their advantage. But from this preface he immediately makes a transition to the hope of deliverance.

My counsel shall stand. We ought not to wonder that he repeats this so frequently, because it is very hard to persuade men of the truth of it. The people were not only slow to believe, but even obstinate; and therefore he reminds them that they had learned long ago, and not on one occasion only, how safe it is to place their confidence in God. Nor is it only his foreknowledge that is here extolled by him, but he says that he has testified by his prophets what he had decreed. Even the prophecies would have no certainty or solidity, if the same God who declares that this or that thing shall happen had not the events themselves in his power. At the same time, he states that he speaks according to truth and brings forward his decrees in all the prophecies, that the Jews may not hesitate to place a firm reliance, as soon as the prophets have spoken. But as I have already explained these subjects more largely, I now give nothing more than a brief view of them.

11. *Calling a bird* or *a thought from the east.* After having spoken of God's foreknowledge and power, the Prophet applies to his own purpose the general statement which he had made. He intended to comfort the Jews, and to shew that they were not led into captivity in such a manner as to leave no hope of deliverance; and therefore he adds a specific instance, and promises that Cyrus shall come, though it appeared to be incredible.

The word {עיט} (ait,) which I have translated *thought,* is translated by the greater part of interpreters *a bird;* and this is the true signification of

[219] "En son conseil."

the word. But as we may learn from Daniel 2:14, that it sometimes denotes *counsel,* (for the insertion of a letter in the noun {עיט} is customary among the Chaldee writers,) I choose rather to follow this interpretation, which is approved by some Hebrew writers. Yet it is possible that he alludes to *a bird,* [220] as if he had said that his purpose would be sudden; and I do not deny that he alludes to the swiftness of the approach of Cyrus.

The man of my counsel. When he again calls Cyrus "the man of his counsel," this is a repetition very frequent among Hebrew writers; and hence also it is evident that, in the former clause, the noun {עית} *(ait)* is put for "thought" or "decree." Now, he calls him "the man of counsel," because he executes the Lord's decree.

Yet if it be thought preferable to translate it *bird,* I do not debate about it. The metaphor is beautiful; for the approach of Cyrus was so sudden and unexpected, that he seemed to fly like "a bird." He suddenly invaded Babylon and took it by storm, even when the Babylonians imagined that every entrance was closed against him. It may also be said, if this interpretation of the word be approved, that Isaiah alludes to auguries, to which the Babylonians were greatly addicted. Accustomed to practice judicial astrology, they observed the flight and chattering of birds, and looked upon this as a certain knowledge of future events; but the Lord threatens that he will send "a bird" which they had not foreseen. But I prefer the former exposition, namely, that he alludes to the swiftness of Cyrus, and declares that no roads shall be shut against him, and that no fortresses shall hinder him from entering immediately into Babylon.

When he says *from the east,* this not only relates to the certainty of the promise, but is intended to inform us that no distance or length of time can retard the work of God; and accordingly, in the second clause, it is added by way of explanation, *from a distant country* Let us learn from this what is the purpose to which we ought to apply all that we read in Scripture concerning the foreknowledge and power of God; for those statements are not made in order to keep us in suspense, but that we may apply them to our own use. Now, he makes an implied contrast between the counsel of God and our thoughts; for he delivers his people in such a manner that the reason of the deliverance cannot be comprehended by men. Thus, although that which God promises appears to be incredible, yet he says that he will easily open up a way, that we may not measure by our capacity his unsearchable counsels.

I have thought. Others render it *I have formed;* but in this passage it appears to be more appropriate to view {יצר} *(yatzar)* as signifying "to think." He confirms what he formerly said, that this hath been determined by him, and therefore shall be steadfast and unalterable.

I have spoken, and will accomplish. These words mean, that he has predicted nothing in vain, and that this prediction, which he has commanded

[220] Commentary on Isaiah, vol. 2, p. 155.

to be published, ought to be regarded as fulfilled. To establish our faith in himself was the object of the one clause, and in the other he connects his thoughts with the preached word. This ought to be carefully observed; for we are distracted by a variety of thoughts, and we doubt if God has spoken sincerely, and suspect that he is like us, that is, that he is a hypocrite or dissembler. But he declares that nothing proceeds from him but what he formerly determined in his counsel. [221] so that the preaching of the word is nothing else than a sure testimony of his hidden counsel, which he commands to be revealed to us. As soon therefore as the Lord hath spoken any word, we ought; to be certain of its accomplishment.

12. *Hear me.* He again rebukes the Israelites, because they could not place confidence in God, or receive any consolation in adversity. That rebuke is indeed sharp and severe, but was well deserved by those whose hearts were not soothed by any promise, or by any invitation, however gracious, which God addressed to them.

We ought to observe the two epithets which he employs here, *Hardened in heart* and *Far from righteousness* By these expressions he means that poor distressed persons shut the door against God's assistance on account of their obstinacy; because by murmuring or fretting they shake off the fear of God, and thus throw themselves into despair, so that they openly rage against God. He addresses the Jews, who, though they were almost overwhelmed, yet were swelled with pride and insolence, and, having thrown off the fear of God, rose to more and more outrageous madness; as frequently happens to many persons in the present day, whom distresses and afflictions render more rebellious. Accordingly, they refused to receive any medicine, any remedy for their distresses. If any one prefer to consider the word *righteousness* to be put for "the assistance of God," as in the following verse, let him enjoy his opinion, which indeed is not inappropriate; because obstinate men, who refuse to believe the promises of God, drive God away from them, and reject his grace; for they do not suffer God to confer benefits upon them, though he offered to them his assistance.

13. *I will bring near my righteousness.* If that interpretation which I mentioned a little before be preferred, that those persons are called "far from righteousness" who are incapable of receiving the grace of God, the meaning will remain unaltered; but if we hold that the Jews were "far from righteousness," because, like desperate men, they were wholly abandoned to crimes, there will be a beautiful contrast between the righteousness of men and the righteousness of God. Although therefore the Jews revolted and were estranged from all practice of godliness, yet God assures them that "his righteousness is near;" as if he had said that unbelief is indeed a very great obstacle, but yet that it is such an obstacle as cannot hinder God from at length manifesting the power of his truth. "For the unbelief of men," as

[221] "Tant s'en faut qu'elle ose tonner si haut que de coustume, que mesmes elle n'osera desserrer les dents." "So far as she is from venturing to sound as loudly as she was wont to do, that she will not even venture to open her teeth."

Paul says, "cannot make void the truth of God; and, though men are liars, God will always be true." (Romans 3:3, 4.) And indeed, if he did not exceed the malice of men by his goodness, we should all perish without exception, for who is there that receives God, and makes use of his grace as he ought?

Accordingly, the only reason why he does not continue to bestow benefits upon us is, that we are estranged from "his righteousness;" and yet, though we are reluctant and make resistance, he approaches to us in order to display "his righteousness," though we do not deserve it. Now, he does this in such a manner that unbelievers obtain no advantage at all from it; for the Prophet did not include wicked apostates, as if they should be partakers of the salvation which he promises, but he only says that God has at hand a method by which "his righteousness" shall be made manifest. But here we must consider what was the condition of the people to whom those things were spoken; for everything had been corrupted by unbelief, and there were very few who relied on the promises of God; and they who belonged to the number of the elect sometimes shewed that they were obstinate, so that they appeared to be infected by the same plague of impiety as the others. He therefore rebukes the whole nation, both to convict the reprobate and, at the same time, to chastise the elect and bring them back into the right path; but especially, as I have said, he attacks unbelievers, who professedly, as it were, rejected all hope of grace.

And my salvation shall not tarry. This makes still more plain what he meant by the word "righteousness," that is, the assistance which the Lord promised to his people. Consequently, he means the same thing by the word "salvation" and the word "righteousness;" for the most remarkable instance of the "righteousness" of God is, when he preserves, guards, and delivers his people. It is not superfluous to say that it is not "retarded" or "delayed;" for he describes the greatness of his mercy by saying, that the Lord opens up a course for his justice, notwithstanding the reluctance and opposition of the people.

And I will place. The copulative {ו} *(vau)* is here used in order to express the cause, *"For* I will place." This is an additional confirmation of the preceding statement, that, since the Lord has once determined to save Jerusalem, she cannot be deprived of that benefit.

And my glory in Jerusalem. He connects his "glory" with the "salvation" of believers, as Paul also uses the word "glory" to denote "mercy." (Ephesians 1:6, and 3:16.) The glory of God is most illustriously displayed, when he rescues his people from destruction and restores them to liberty; for he wished that an indissoluble bond should connect the salvation of the Church with his righteousness.

Chapter 47

CHAPTER 47.

Isaiah 47:1-15

1. Come down, and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon, sit on the ground: there is no throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called tender and delicate.

1. Descende, et sede in pulvere, virgo filia Babel. Sede super terram; non est solium filiae Chaldae-orum; quoniam non fiet amplius ut to vocent teneram et delicatam.

2. Take the millstones, and grind meal: uncover thy locks, make bare the leg, uncover the thigh, pass over the rivers.

2. Tolle molas, et mole farinam, dissolve cincinnos tuos, denuda pedes, discooperi crura, ut transeas flumina.

3. Thy nakedness shall be uncovered, yea, thy shame shall be seen: I will take vengeance, and I will not meet thee as a man.

3. Retegetur turpitudo tua, et videbitur probrum tuum; ultionem sumam, et non occurram homini (vel, homo.)

4. As for our redeemer, the LORD of hosts is his name, the Holy One of Israel.

4. Redemptor noster, Iehova exercituum nomen ejus, sanctus Israelis.

5. Sit thou silent, and get thee into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called, The lady of kingdoms.

5. Sede quieta, ingredere in tenebras, filia Chaldmorum; quoniam non fiet amplius ut to vocent dominam regnorum.

6. I was wroth with my people; I have polluted mine inheritance, and given them into thine hand: thou didst shew them no mercy; upon the ancient hast thou very heavily laid thy yoke.

6. Iratus fui in populum meum, profanavi haerditatem meam, et tra-

didi cos in manum tuam; non praestitisti Illis misericordias; super senem aggravasti jugum tuum valde.

7. And thou saidst, I shall be a lady for ever: so that thou didst not lay these things to thy heart, neither didst remember the latter end of it.

7. Et dixisti, Ero in aeternum domina. Hactenus non applicuisti huc animum, neque recordata es finis ejus.

8. Therefore hear now this, thou that art given to pleasures, that dwellest carelessly, that sayest in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me; I shall not sit as a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children:

8. Nunc vero audi hoc, delicata, sedens confidenter, quae dicit in corde suo, Ego sum, et nihil amplius; non sedebo vidua, nec sciam orbitatem.

9. But these two things shall come to thee in a moment in one day, the loss of children, and widowhood: they shall come upon thee in their perfection for the multitude of thy sorceries, and for the great abundance of thine enchantments.

9. Atqui venient tibi ista duo repente, die uno, orbitas et viduitas; ad perfectionem suam venient super to, ob multitudinem (vel ia multitudine) divinationum tuarum, et copiam augurum tuorum.

10. For thou hast trusted in thy wickedness: thou hast said, None seeth me. Thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it hath perverted thee; and thou hast said in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me.

10. Nam confisa fuisti in malitia tua; dixisti, Nemo me videt. Sapientia tua et scientia tua ipsa seduxit re. Et dixisti in corde tuo, Ego, et non amplius.

11. Therefore shall evil come upon thee; thou shalt not know from whence it riseth: and mischief shall fall upon thee; thou shalt not be able to put it off: and desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, which thou shalt not know.

11. Itaque venient super to malum, cujus diluculum ignoras; cadet super to contritio, quam non poteris avertere. Veniet repentevastatio super to, quam nescis.

12. Stand now with thine enchantments, and with the multitude of thy sorceries, wherein thou hast laboured from thy youth; if so be thou shalt be able to profit, if so be thou mayest prevail.

12. Sta nunc inter divinationes tuas, et in multitudine augurum tuorum, in quibus fatigasti to a pueritia tua; si forte possis proficere, si forte robores to.

13. Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee.

13. Fatigata es in multitudine conciliorum tuorum, stent nunc et servent colligatores coelorum, speculatores astrorum, qui lunationes docent, ab ils qum ventura sunt super to.

14. Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall bum them; they shall

not deliver themselves from the power of the flame: there shall not be a coal to warm at, nor fire to sit before it.

14. Ecce erant quasi stipula; ignis comburet cos; non liberabunt animam suam e manu flammae; non pruna ad calefaciendum, lumen ad quod sedeatur.

15. Thus shall they be unto thee with whom thou hast laboured, even thy merchants, from thy youth: they shall wander every one to his quarter; none shall save thee.

15. Sic tibi erunt cum quibus to fatigasti; negotiatores tui a pueritia tua. Quisque in plagam suam errabit; nemo erit qui to servet.

1. *Come down, and sit in the dust.* Isaiah now explains more fully what he had briefly noticed concerning the counsel of God, and the execution of it. He openly describes the destruction of Babylon; because no hope whatever of the return of the people could be entertained, so long as the Babylonian monarchy flourished. Accordingly, he has connected these two things, namely, the overthrow of that monarchy, and the deliverance of the people which followed it; for the elevated rank of that city was like a deep grave in which the Jews were buried, and, when it had been opened, the Lord brought back his people to their former life.

The use of the imperative mood, "Come down," is more forcible than if he had expressed the same thing in plain words and simple narrative; for he addresses her authoritatively, and as if he were speaking from the judgment-seat; because he proclaims the commands of God, and therefore, with the boldness which his authority entitles him to use, he publishes what shall happen, as we know that God granted this authority to the prophets. "Behold, I have this day set thee over nations and kingdoms, to root out and pull down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant." (Jeremiah 1:10.) There is no power that is not added to the authority of the word. In a word, he intended to place the event immediately before the eye of the Jews; for that change could scarcely be imagined, if God did not thunder from heaven.

Virgin daughter of Babylon. It was a figure of speech frequently employed by Hebrew writers, to call any nation by the title of "Daughter." He calls her "Virgin," not because she was modest or chaste, but because she had been brought up softly and delicately like "virgins," and had never been forced by enemies, as we formerly said when speaking of Sidon. [222] And at the present day the same thing might be said of Venice and some other towns, which have a great abundance of wealth and luxuries, and, in the estimation of men, are accounted very happy; for they have as good reason as the Babylonians had to dread such a revolution of affairs, even when they

[222] "He chastises the pride and exeessive confidence of Babylon, by which she promised to herself an eternal reign. Thus Rome is ealled eternal in the constitutions of the emperors, and in inscriptions and coins, and also 'The mistress of the whole world, the queen and mistress of the world.'" — Rosenmuller.

appear to be far removed from danger.

For it shall no longer be. That is, "Thou shalt no longer be caressed by men who thought that thou wast happy."

2. *Take millstones.* The whole of this description tends to shew that there shall be a great change among the Babylonians, so that this city, which was formerly held in the highest honor, shall be sunk in the lowest disgrace, and subjected to outrages of every kind, and thus shall exhibit a striking display of the wrath of God. These are marks of the most degrading slavery, as the meanest slaves were formerly shut up in a mill. The condition of the captives who were reduced to it must therefore have been very miserable; for, in other cases, captives sometimes received from their conquerors mild and gentle treatment. But here he describes a very wretched condition, that believers may not doubt that they shall be permitted freely to depart, when the Babylonians, who had held them prisoners, shall themselves be imprisoned. Now, though we do not read that the nobles of the kingdom were subjected to such contemptuous treatment, it was enough for the fulfillment of this prophecy, that Cyrus, by assigning to them the operations of slaves, degraded them, and compelled them to abstain from honorable employments.

Unbind thy curled locks. On account of their excessive indulgence in magnificence of dress, he again alludes to the attire of young women, by mentioning "curled locks." We know that girls are more eager than they ought to be about cuffing their hair, and other parts of dress. Here, on the contrary, the Prophet describes a totally different condition and attire; that is, that ignominy, and blackness, and filth shall cover from head to foot those who formerly dazzled all eyes by gaudy finery.

Uncover the limbs. "Virgins" hardly ever are accustomed to walk in public, and, at least, seldom travel on the public roads; but the Prophet says that the Babylonian virgins will be laid under the necessity of crossing the rivers, and with their limbs uncovered.

3. *Thy baseness shall be discovered.* This is the conclusion of the former statement. So long as Babylon was in a flourishing condition, she preserved her reputation, and was highly honored; for wealth and power, like veils, often conceal a great number of sores, which, when the veils have been removed, become visible, and are beheld with the greatest disgrace. And, as Demosthenes says, when, speaking of Philip's condition, — {ὥσπερ} {γὰρ} {τοῖς} {σώμασιν} {ἡμῶν} {ἕως} {μὲν} {ἂν} {ἐρρωμένος} {ᾖ} {τις} {οὐδὲν} {ἐπαισθάνεται} {τῶν} {καθ} {ἕκαστα} {σαθρῶν} {ἐπ᾽} {ἂν} {δὲ} {ἀρρώστημα} {συμβῶ} {πάντα} {κινεῖται} {κἂν} {ῥῆγμα} {κἂν} {στρέμμα} {κἂν} {αλλό} {τι} {τῶν} {ὑπαρχόντων} {σαθρῶν} {ᾖ} {οὕτω} {καὶ} {τῶν} {πόλεων} {καὶ} {τῶν} {τυράννων}. "For as, in our bodies, so long as any person is in full vigor, no malady is perceived in any of the members, but if he fall into debility, produced either by a wound or by a strain, or by any other of the diseases to which the body is subject, the whole is affected; so is it with cities and governments." (Dem., Olynth. 2.) When commotions arise, and when their

wealth and troops are taken from them, disgraceful transactions which lay concealed are exposed to view; for cruelty, and fraud, and extortions, and perjury, and unjust oppressions, and other crimes, which were honored during prosperity, being to fall into disgrace.

I will take vengeance, and will not meet (thee) a man. Some think that {כ} *(caph)* ought here to be supplied, "*As* a man;" as if he had said, "Do not think that ye have to deal with man, whose attack ye may be able to resist." And, indeed, in other passages, when he speaks of the hand of man, it denotes some abatement; but here he means that no remedy is left, because God will reduce them to nothing. Others translate it, "I will not meet a man;" that is, "I will not allow a man to meet me; whoever shall meet me, or intercede in their behalf, I will not spare them, or remit or abate their punishment." This meaning is highly appropriate, but the construction is somewhat forced; for {אפגע} *(ephgang)* must thus be understood to have a passive sense, which could scarcely be admitted. Besides, the Prophet does not absolutely say that no petition shall be presented to God, but that he cannot be appeased. The former exposition, therefore, flows more smoothly, so far as relates to the context; but let every one choose that which he prefers; for, whatever exposition you adopt, the words amount to this, "that the Lord will destroy the Babylonians, and that there will be no room for mercy." Only, I say, that I prefer the former, because it is more agreeable to the original text.

4. *Our Redeemer.* The Prophet shews for what purpose the Lord will inflict punishment on the Babylonians; that is, for the salvation of his people, as he had formerly declared. (Isaiah 45:4.) But this statement is much more forcible, because he speaks in what may be called an abrupt manner, and like a person awakened out of sleep, when he sees Babylon ruined, which formerly was wont to subdue other nations and trample them under her feet; and he shews that this happens for no other reason than that the Lord shews himself to be the "Redeemer" and defender of his people.

The Holy One of Israel. As if he had said, that not in vain hath he chosen this people, and separated it from other nations. In this transaction he intended to give a display of his power, and on that account added to the title descriptive of his power, *Jehovah of Hosts,* the designation "Holy."

5. *Sit silent.* He continues the same subject, and shews that the end of the Babylonian monarchy is at hand. As this appeared to be incredible, he therefore repeats the same thing by a variety of expressions, and repeats what might have been said in a few words; and thus he brings forward those lively descriptions, in order to place the event, as it were, before their eyes. When he bids her "sit" and be "silent," it is an indication of shame or disgrace. Yet this silence may be contrasted with her former condition, while she reigned; for at that time not only did she speak loudly and authoritatively, but she cried with a loud voice, and by her commands terrified the whole of the East. But now, in consequence of the change of her condition, he bids her "sit silent;" because not only will she not venture to utter terrific words, but

she will not even venture to make a gentle sound. [223] But, since he adds, *enter into darkness,* I willingly adopt the former view, that it denotes shame; for they whose condition has been changed for the worse shut their mouth through shame, and scarcely venture to whisper.

For it shall no longer be. We know that the Babylonian monarchy was very widely extended, and exercised dominion over large and numerous countries; for it was the chief of many kingdoms. On this account the captive people needed to be fortified by these promises, and to be forewarned of her fall, that they might entertain assured hope of deliverance

6. *I was angry with my people.* This is an anticipation, by which he forewarns the Jews, as he has often done formerly, that the distressing condition of captivity was a scourge which God had inflicted; because, if it had proceeded from any other, there was no remedy in the hand of God. In order, therefore, that they might be convinced that he who had struck them would heal their wounds, he bids them attribute it to their sins that they were so terribly oppressed. Yet he exhorts them to cherish favorable expectation, because God intends to set a limit to the chastisement; and he even mentions this as the reason why the Babylonians shall be destroyed, that God, who is the just avenger of savageness and cruelty, will much more avenge the injuries done to his people.

Thou didst not shew compassion to them. In the former clause he calls the Jews to repentance, because by their own crimes they drew down upon themselves so many calamities. Next, he accuses the Babylonians of having seized this occasion for exercising cruelty, just as if one were to become the executioner of a child whom a father had put into his hands to be chastised. Hence it follows that the Babylonians have no right to be proud, as if by their own power they had subdued the Jews and carried them into captivity; but, on the contrary, because they have wickedly abused the victory and cruelly treated the captives, he will justly punish them.

I profaned my heritage. When he says that he "was angry," and that this was the reason why he "profaned his heritage," let us not imagine that he had changed his purpose, and was offended so far as to cast away the care of his people and the remembrance of his covenant. This is evident both from the event itself and from his deigning still to call them "his people," though the greater part of them were estranged from him, and though he had the best reasons for "profaning" them. But he has respect to his covenant when he speaks in this manner; for he looks at their source and foundation, that they who were the descendants of Abraham may be accounted the people of God, though very few of them actually belonged to him, and almost all boasted of an empty title.

Thus the word *amger,* in Scripture, must not be supposed to refer to any

[223] "It will not be inelegant to view {{עד (gnad) as meaning until, or so that; and it is so rendered by Jarchi, who explains this verse thus, — "Thou thoughtest with thyself that thou wouldest perpetually be mistress, and that punishment would not be inflicted on thee; and this thought led thee astray until thou didst not recall to mind those afflictions which shall befall thee.'" — Rosenmuller.

emotion in God, who desires the salvation of his people, but to ourselves, who provoke him by our transgressions; for he has just cause to be angry, though he does not cease to love us. Accordingly, while he "profanes" his Church, that is, abandons her, and gives her up as a prey to her enemies, still the elect do not perish, and his eternal covenant is not broken. And yet, in the midst of anger, the Lord remembers his mercy, and mitigates the strokes by which he punishes his people, and at length even inflicts punishment on those by whom his people have been cruelly treated. Consequently, if for a time the Lord "profanes" his Church, if she is cruelly oppressed by tyrants, let us not lose courage, but betake ourselves to this promise, "He who avenged this barbarous cruelty of the Babylonians will not less avenge the savageness of those tyrants."

It ought also to be carefully observed that no one should abuse victory so as to be cruel to captives, which we know is often done; for men, when they see that they are stronger, lay aside all humanity, and are changed into wild beasts, and spare neither age nor sex, and altogether forget their condition. After having abused their power, they shall not at length pass unpunished; for

"judgment without mercy shall be experienced by those who shewed no mercy."*

*(James 2:13.)

But it is asked, "How could the Babylonians go beyond the limit which God had assigned to them, as if their lawless passions were laid under no restraint?" And what will become of that promise,

"Not a hair shall fall from your head without the appointment of your Father?"

(Luke 21:18.)

The answer is easy. Though it was not in their power actually to go beyond the limit, yet he looked at their cruelty, because they endearvored utterly to ruin unhappy persons who had surrendered at discretion. Thus Zechariah complains of the unbridled rage of the Gentiles, because, when "he was angry with his people for a little," they rushed forward with violent fury to destroy them. (Zechariah 1:15.)

On the old man. He states an aggravation of their guilt, that they did not spare even "the old men," for whom age naturally procures reverence; and hence he draws an inference, how savage was their cruelty towards armed foes.

7. *And thou saidst, I shall for ever* [224] *be a mistress.* Here he censures the haughtiness of the Babylonians, in promising to themselves perpetual dominion, and in thinking that they could not fall from their elevation through any adverse event. Thus the children of this world are intoxicated by prosperity,

[224] "The apparent solecism of remembering the future may be solved by observing that the thing forgotten was the knowledge of the future once possessed, just as in common parlance we use the word hope in reference to the past, because we hope to find it so, or hope that something now questionable will prove hereafter to be thus and thus." — Alexander.

and despise all men as compared with themselves; but Isaiah mocks at this confidence, and shews that God regards it with the greatest abhorrence. *To say,* means here to conclude in one's own mind, as will be more clearly evident from what the Prophet says shortly afterwards; for proud men do not publicly speak in this manner, but entertain this conviction, though they pretend the contrary. It is intolerable madness when men, forgetting their frailty, look upon themselves as not sharing in the common lot; for in this way they forget that they are men. Believers, too, have their conviction of being safe, because, under the protecting hand of God, they are prepared boldly to encounter every danger. And yet they do not cease to consider that they are liable to many distresses, because nothing in this world is lasting. Irreligious men, therefore, mock God whenever, through a foolish imagination, they promise to themselves lasting peace amidst the constant changes of the world.

Hitherto thou hast not applied thy mind to it. [225] For the purpose of heightening the description of their madness, he adds that even a long course of time did not render them more moderate. To become elated immediately after having obtained a victory, is not so wonderful; but to become more fierce from day to day, and to throw out taunts against their captives, was altogether savage and intolerable. This arose, as we have said, from pride; because they did not consider that a revolution of affairs would afterwards take place, or that a condition so magnificent could be changed. Consequently, this is the second reason why the Lord overtumed the monarchy of the Babylonians.

And didst not remember her end. [226] Some think that there is a change of the person here, but I consider that to be too forced; and indeed I have no doubt that he speaks of the "end" of Jerusalem, which is the opinion most commonly received. The Lord often speaks of the Church, by way of eminence, {κατ'} {ἐξοχὴν} without mentioning the name, as we do when our feelings are powerfully affected towards any person. Now, wicked men do not know the "end" of the Church, and the reason why the Lord chastises her. They mock at the calamities of good men, because they would wish them to be utterly destroyed and ruined, and do not consider that God takes care of them.

If it be objected that the Babylonians could not know this, that is nothing to the purpose; for they could not be ignorant that he was the God whom the Israelites worshipped. Consequently, when they treated the Jews with

[225] "Ewald agrees with the English Version and the Vulgate in explaining it to mean propter, 'on account of,' and supposing it to be a new specific charge against the Babylonians, by assigning a new cause for their destruction, namely, their cultivation of the occult arts. Gesenius and the other recent writers follow Calvin and Vitringa in making it mean notwithstanding, as in Isaiah 5:25, and Numbers 14:11. There is then no new charge or reason assigned, but a simple declaration of the insufficiency of superstitious arts to save them. But a better course than either is to give the particle in its proper sense of in or in the, midst of, which suggests both the other ideas, but expresses more, namely, that they should perish in the very act of using these unlawful and unprofitable means of preservation." — Alexander.

[226] "Nonobstant la multitude des derins et augures." "Notwithstanding the multitude of divinations and auguries."

haughtiness and cruelty, they insulted God himself, as if he and the covenant which he had made with his people had been intentionally trampled under their feet.

8. *And now hear this, thou delicate woman.* The Prophet again threatens the destruction of Babylon, and employs appropriate words for strengthening the hearts of believers, that the prosperity of the Babylonians may not stupify and lead them to despondency; and yet he does not address Babylon in order to produce an impression upon her, but to comfort believers. He adds, that she was intoxicated with pleasures; for prosperity, being the gift of God, ought not in itself to be condemned, but it is well known how prone the children of the world are, to pass from luxury to insolence.

Who saith in her heart. He now explains what is meant by the word to say, of which we spoke in the exposition of the preceding verse, namely, that one convinces himself and believes that it will be thus and thus, as proud and insolent men commonly do, although they often conceal it through pretended modesty, and do not wish it to be publicly known.

I am, and there is none besides me. This arrogance, by which she prefers herself to the whole world, is intolerable. First, she thinks that *she is;* secondly, she imagines that the rest of the world does not deserve to be compared to her; thirdly, she promises to herself everlasting repose, for she says, *I shall not sit as a widow.* As to the first, there is none of whom it can be said with truth that *he is,* but God alone, who has a right to say, "I am what I am," (Exodus 3:14;) for by this mark he is distinguished from the creatures. Thus, he who thinks that he subsists by his own power robs God of the honor due to him, and so Babylon, by exalting herself, made war with God. Secondly, she treated the whole world with contempt, when she preferred herself to it. In this manner proud men begin with God, by representing him to be their enemy, and they end by making all men, without exception, their enemies, through their haughtiness. The third clause, which may be regarded as the copestone of her pride, is, that she considers her condition to be eternal, and does not take into account the liability of the affairs of men to undergo change; for the higher men have been exalted, they sometimes on that account sink the lower.

9. *But those two things shall suddenly come to thee.* Because Babylon supposed that she was beyond the reach of all danger, the Prophet threatens against her very sore distress. When she said that she would neither be "a widow" nor "childless," he declares on the other hand, that both calamities shall come upon her, so that her miserable destitution shall expose her to the utmost contempt.

In their perfection. That is, "completely," so that in all points, without any exception, she shall be childless. There is also an implied contrast between moderate punishment, some alleviation of which may be expected, and the dreadful vengeance of God, which has no other end than ruin; for, the greater the confidence with which wicked men are elated, the more severely

are they punished.

For the multitude of thy divinations. Some render this term *diviners;* but I think that it denotes the act or the vice rather than the persons. Some explain {ב} *(beth)* to mean "on account of," and understand it to express a cause; and in this sense it frequently occurs in Scripture. Yet it might be suitably interpreted, that the Babylonians shall derive no aid or relief from the deceitful skill in divinations of which they boasted so much; and so it might be translated *notwithstanding;* [227] as if he had said, "The abundance of divinations or auguries shall not prevent these things from happening to Babylon." [228] He ridicules the confidence which they placed in their useless auguries, by which they thought that they foresaw future events; but, as we shall shortly afterwards dwell more largely on this point, I readily admit that it is here reckoned to be one of the causes of the vengeance inflicted on them, that, in consequence of trusting to such delusions, they dreaded nothing. [229]

10. *For thou trustedst.* He explains what he said in the preceding verse, though it may be extended further, so as to be a censure of the fraud and oppression and violence and unjust practices by which the Babylonians raised themselves to so great power. Almost all large kingdoms are, what a distinguished robber pronounced them to be, great robberies; for there is no other way in which they enlarge their dominions than by extorting them from others by violence and oppression, and by driving out the lawful owners from their dwellings, that they alone may reign at large.

In thy malice. He gives the name of "malice" to that which he will afterwards adorn with more plausible names, namely, *wisdom* and *knowledge.* In this manner do tyrants usually disguise their tricks, when they lay aside all regard to justice and equity, and cunningly deceive the people; but the Lord detests and exposes them; so that it becomes manifest that it served no purpose to cover their wickedness by useless veils. Thus Job, after having said that "wise men are taken in their own wisdom," explains this by calling it "craftiness." (Job 5:13.)

Thou saidst, No one seeth me. When he adds that Babylon thought that her iniquities were not seen, this refers to free indulgence in sinning; for while men are kept in the discharge of duty by fear or shame, he who neither dreads God as a witness, nor thinks that men will know what he does, breaks out into every kind of licentiousness. It is true, indeed, that even the worst of men are often tormented by the stings of conscience; but, by shutting their eyes, they plunge themselves in: stupidity as in a lurking-place, and, in short, harden all their senses. Above all, we see that they have the hardihood to mock God, as if by their craftiness they could dazzle his eyes; for whenever they wish to defraud simpletons, they think it enough that they are not

[227] "Ils ont defie tous dangers." "They defied all dangers."

[228] "Jusqu' a ce que quelque oiseau soit apparu." "Till some bird is seen."

[229] In the Latin original the word is "Solomon," and not "David;" but this oversight has been corrected in the French Version. — Ed.

detected, as if they could impose on God. But to no purpose do they flatter themselves in their cunning, for the Lord will speedily take off the mask from them. All men ought therefore to abhor this wisdom, by which men deceive themselves, and accomplish their own ruin.

I, and there is none beside me. He again repeats those blasphemies, that all may plainly understand how greatly God abhors them, and how near to destruction are all who raise themselves higher than they ought.

11. *Therefore shall evil come upon thee.* Continuing the subject which he had formerly introduced, he ridicules the foolish confidence of the Babylonians, who thought that by the position of the stars they foresaw all events. He therefore says that they shall soon be overtaken by that which Scripture threatens generally against all despisers of God, (1 Thessalonians 5:3,) that, "when they shall say, Peace and safety, sudden destruction shall overwhelm them," and that at the dawning of the day they shall not know what shall be accomplished in the evening; and it is very clear from the book of Daniel that this happened. (Daniel 5:30.)

12. *Stand now amidst thy divinations.* The Prophet speaks as we are accustomed to speak to desperate men, on whom no warnings produce any good effect; "Do as thou art wont to do; in the end thou shalt be instructed by the event; thou shalt know what good the augurs and soothsayers do thee." By the word "stand" he alludes to the custom of the augurs, who remain unmoved in one place till some sign is seen. [230] In like manner, the astrologers mark out their divisions in the heavens, even to the minutest points. If it shall be thought preferable to translate {חברים} *(chabarim) diviners* instead of *divinations,* I shall not greatly object; for the meaning of the word is ambiguous.

If perhaps thou shalt prevail. As if he had said, "Thou shalt not be able, by the aid of thy augurs, to mitigate the calamity which is about to overtake thee." He taunts their perverse confidence on this ground, that when they shall have made every attempt, no advantage will follow.

13. *Thou hast wearied thyself.* He now declares still more plainly what he had formerly expressed in somewhat obscure language; that all the schemes which Babylon had previously adopted would lead to her ruin; for she nourished within herself a vain confidence arising from a belief of her power and wisdom, as if nothing could do her injury.

In the multitude of thy counsels. He calls them not only "counsels," but "a multitude of counsels," in order to declare that there is no good reason for being puffed up or exalting themselves, whatever may be the ingenuity or skill of their efforts to deceive; because their crafty counsels, the more

[230] "It becomes a question whether these are called traders in the literal and ordinary sense, or at least in that of national allies and negotiators; or whether the epithet is given in contempt to the astrologers and wise men of the foregoing context, as trafficking or dealing in imposture. J. D. Michaelis supposes them to be described as travelling dealers, that is, pedlars and hawkers, who removed from place to place, lest their frauds should be discovered. He even compares them with the gipsy fortune-tellers of our own day, but admits that the astrologers of Babylonia held a very different position in society." — Alexander.

numerous and the more plausible they are, will give them the greater annoyance. This is a general statement against those who, trusting to their own ability, contrive and form counsels of every sort, and, relying on their prudence, collect all the stratagems and annoyances that can be invented for oppressing others; for God scatters all their contrivances, and overtums their fraudulent designs, as he threatened that all unlawful means would be unsuccessful. "They dare," says he, "to take counsel, but not from me; they weave a web, but not from my Spirit." (Isaiah 30:1.)

Thus do the consultations of many persons altogether fail of success, because they do not ask counsel of God, from whom (James 1:5) all wisdom should be sought; for, the more they toil, the greater annoyance do they suffer, and they can obtain no advantage. Well does David [231] say, (Psalm 127:2,) that "in vain do they toil who rise early in the morning, and go late to rest, and eat the bread of sorrow;" for he speaks of unbelievers, who do not cast their cares on the Lord, but, trusting to their industry, make many daring efforts. The Lord ridicules this confidence, and causes them to be at length disappointed, and to feel how worthless are all their wicked labors and efforts, and how in this way they are punished for their rashness; while at the same time "the beloved of God sleep pleasantly," as is said in that passage. Not that they are freed from all annoyances, but that they do not weary themselves with useless labor, and they commit to God the result of all their affairs.

Let them stand now. Here we perceive what counsellors are chiefly meant by the Prophet, that is, those diviners who boasted to the people of the empty name of science; as if they understood, all future events by looking at the stars. But we have formerly spoken of that judicial astrology, and of its uselessness. If it be objected, that it was not in the power of those men to mitigate the dangers which were hanging over them, I reply, the Babylonians would have done it at their suggestion, if they had foreseen the calamity; and, since they did not foresee it, the conclusion is, that their art had no foundation whatever. It is idle to pretend, as some do, that the Prophet reproves unskilfulness in the art, and not the art itself; for he addresses the Babylonians, who were the authors of this science.

The binders of the heavens. He says wittily that they "bind the heavens;" because they utter their decisions as boldly as if, by binding and tying the stars, they held mankind in chains. Yet, if any one choose to render the term "inchanters," the meaning will not be inapplicable, and both are denoted by the verb {חבר} *(chabar).* Although to observe the position of the stars is not in itself sinful, the Prophet says that it is carried farther than is proper by those who draw from it conclusions as to doubtful events, and appears indirectly to contrast those observers with the prophets, in order to make them more detested, because they extinguish all divine predictions; for, when

[231] "That is, wherever each person can depart, they disperse and wander, so that every person pursues his own road, for rescuing himself from danger, by fleeing to the farthest boundaries of the kingdom of Babylon. — Rosenmuller.

men attach to the stars a fatal necessity, all the judgments of God must fall to the ground.

14. *Behold, they shall be as stubble.* With still greater eagerness he attacks those astrologers who strengthened the pride of Babylon by their empty boasting; for impostors of this sort are wont to take away all fear of God out of the hearts of men, by ascribing everything to the stars, so that nothing is left to the providence of God. Hence arises contempt of God and of all his threatenings; for punishments are not ascribed to the judgment of God, but to some fate and relation of things which they foolishly imagine. For this reason he kindles into such indignation against the Babylonians, and says that they shall be buming "stubble," which is quickly consumed; for he does not compare them to wood, which is of some use for giving heat, but to "stubble," in order to shew that nothing is so light or useless.

15. *So shal they be to thee.* After having threatened destruction to those astronomers, he again retums to the Babylonians, and threatens that they must not look for assistance from that quarter from which they expected it, and that they ought not to rely on those vain counsels, with which they had long and eagerly vexed themselves in vain.

He calls them *dealers,* or, as we commonly say, *traffickers;* a metaphor taken from merchants, who are skilled in innumerable arts of deceiving, and in impostures of every kind; for the princes do not consult in a manner suitable to their rank, but traffic in disgraceful transactions. [232] Though we may extend this to all the allies by whom the Babylonians were aided, yet the Prophet has his eye chiefly on the diviners. When he adds, *from thy youth,* he aggravates the guilt of Babylon, in having been infected with this foolish belief from an ancient date, and in having held this error as if it had been born with her.

Every one to his own quarter. [233] It is supposed that the Prophet here speaks of the flight of the astrologers, that every one shall provide for his own safety; and I fully agree with this, but think that, there is also an allusion to the "quarters" of the heavens, which astrologers divide and measure, so as to deduce their prognostications from them. He therefore ridicules their vain boasting. "They shall withdraw into their quarters, but they shall go astray, and there shall be no means of protection. If any one choose to apply it to the revolt of those whose assistance Babylon thought that at any time she could easily obtain, I have no objection.

232 "De leurs ennemis."

233 "Mais pareillement a mis une priere en la bouche, et un bouclier au bras des fideles pour resister a la tentation." "But at the same time put a prayer into the mouth, and a shield on the arms, of believers, for resisting temptation."

Chapter 48

CHAPTER 48

Isaiah 48:1-22

1. Hear ye this, O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah, which swear by the name of the LORD, and make mention of the God of Israel, but not in truth, nor in righteousness.

1. Audite hoc, domus Iacob, qui vocamini nomine Israelis, qui de aquis Iuda exierunt, qui jurant in nomine Iehovae, et Dei Israel recordantur, non in veritate, neque injustitia.

2. For they call themselves of the holy city, and stay themselves upon the God of Israel; The LORD of hosts is his name.

2. Quoniam ab urbe sancta denominantur, et innituntur Deo Israel, eujus nomen Iehova exercituum.

3. I have declared the former things from the beginning; and they went forth out of my mouth, and I shewed them; I did them suddenly, and they came to pass.

3. Priora jam olim annuntiavi, ex ore meo egressa sunt; publicavi ea, repente feci, et venerunt.

4. Because I knew that thou art obstinate, and thy neck is an iron sinew, and thy brow brass;

4. Quia cognovi qubd durus sis, et nervus ferreus cervix tua, et frons tuae aenea.

5. I have even from the beginning declared it to thee; before it came to pass I shewed it thee: lest thou shouldest say, Mine idol hath done them, and my graven image, and my molten image, hath commanded them.

5. Annuntiavi tibi jam olim; antequam venirent indicavi tibi, ne forte diceres, Idolum meum fecit haec, sculptile meum et conflatile meum prae-

cepit ea.

6. Thou hast heard, see all this; and will not ye declare it? I have shewed thee new things from this time, even hidden things, and thou didst not know them.

6. Audisti, vide omnia; et vos nonne annuntiabitis? Feci to jam nunc audire nova et abscondita, quae nesciebas.

7. They are created now, and not from the beginning; even before the day when thou heardest them not; lest thou shouldest say, Behold, I knew them.

7. Nunc primum creata sunt, non jam olim, neque successu temporis; non audieras ea; ne dicas, Ecce noveram.

8. Yea, thou heardest not; yea, thou knewest not; yea, from that time that thine ear was not opened: for I knew that thou wouldest deal very treacherously, and wast called a transgressor from the womb.

8. Certe non audieras; cert, non noveras; certe non fuit pridem aperta auris tun; quia sciebam quod transgrediendo transgressurus esses. Ideo rebellem ab utero vocavi to.

9. For my name's sake will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off.

9. Propter nomen meum differam furorera meum, et in laudera meam moderabor mihi erga to, ut to non succidam.

10. Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.

10. Ecce examinavi to, et non instar argenti; elegi to in fornace afflictionis.

11. For mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it: for how should my name be polluted? and I will not give my glory unto another.

11. Propter me, propter me faciam; nam quomodo profanabitur nomen meum? Et gloriam meam alteri non dabo.

12. Hearken unto me, O Jacob and Israel, my called; I am he: I am the first, I also am the last.

12. Audi me, Iacob, et Israel, vocate mi. Ego ipse, ego primus; adhuc ego novissimis.

13. Mine hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand hath spanned the heavens: when I call unto them, they stand up together.

13. Utique manus mea fundavit terram, et dextera mea palmo mensa est (vel, sustinuit) coelos. Vocate me eos, adstant (vel, adstabunt) pariter.

14. All ye, assemble yourselves, and hear; which among them hath declared these things? The LORD hath loved him: he will do his pleasure on Babylon, and his arm shall be on the Chaldeans.

14. Congregamini vos omnes, et audite. Quis in eis annuntians ista? Iehova dilexit eum, et voluntatem ejus exequetur in Babylone, et brachium (vel, opus) ejus in Chaldaeis.

15. I, even I, have spoken; yea, I have called him: I have brought him, and he shall make his way prosperous.

15. Ego, ego locutus sum, utique vocavi eum, adduxi eum; ideo prospere habebit in via sua.

16. Come ye near unto me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I: and now the Lord GOD, and his Spirit, hath sent me.

16. Accedite ad me, audite hoc. Non ab initio in abscondito locutus sum. Ex quo res facta est, ibi fui. Et nunc Dominus Iehova misit me, et Spiritus ejus.

17. Thus saith the LORD, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the LORD thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go.

17. Sic dixit Iehova redemptor tuus, Sanctus Israelis. Ego Iehova Deus tuus, docens to utiliter; dirigens to per viam qua incedis.

18. O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea:

18. O si attendisses ad mandata mea! Tunc fuisset uti fluvius pax tua, et justitia tua ut fluctus maris.

19. Thy seed also had been as the sand, and the offspring of thy bowels like the gravel thereof; his name should not have been cut off nor destroyed from before me.

19. Fuisset ut arena semen tuum, et filii uteri ut lapilli ejus. Non succideretur, neque aboleretur nomen ejus a conspectu meo.

20. Go ye forth of Babylon, flee ye from the Chaldeans, with a voice of singing declare ye, tell this, utter it even to the end of the earth; say ye, The LORD hath redeemed his servant Jacob.

20. Exite e Babel, fugite a Chaldaeis. Voce exultationis annuntiate hoc, divulgate, efferte usque ad extremum terrae. Dicite, Redemit Iehova servum suum Iacob.

21. And they thirsted not when he led them through the deserts: he caused the waters to flow out of the rock for them: he clave the rock also, and the waters gushed out.

21. Itaque non sitierunt eum per solitudines duxit eos; aquam fecit illis fluere e petra, scidit petram, et fluxerunt aquae.

22. There is no peace, saith the LORD, unto the wicked.

22. Non est pax, dixit Iehova impiis.

1. *Hear this, O house of Jacob.* He now addresses his discourse to the Jews; whom also he had chiefly in his eye, in the whole of the preceding chapter; for he was not sent to the Babylonians, but addresses them in such a manner as to wish that the Jews, to whom he had been especially appointed, should hear him. Accordingly, he foretold the destruction of the Babylonians, that the Jews might calmly wait for deliverance, and at the same time might not be terrified by the greatness and power of their

enemies, [234] and that, relying on these promises, they might stand unmoved against all temptations. But because the Jews were obstinate, and did not believe those promises, and because Isaiah foresaw how great would be their hard-heartedness and obstinacy during their captivity, for that reason he reproves them with greater severity. Ezekiel shews still more clearly how inveterate was their unbelief, when they murmured against God, and cast away all confidence, and cared no more about the promises of God than about empty fables. It was not without reason, therefore, that Isaiah made use of such vehement language, in order to shew that they offered the highest insult to God by refusing to rely on his grace.

Who are called by the name of Israel. He addresses "Israel," but that which was actually spurious, and which at that time had nothing more than the name of "Israel;" for he does not employ this honorable name for the sake of mentioning them in a respectful manner, but rather in order to put to shame their false boasting, because they had no riglit to glory in this empty title, from the truth of which they were widely estranged. Why did God honor Jacob with this name, but because he proved himself to be courageous and invincible in adversity? This appeared from that wrestling in which he contended with God; for when the Lord tries by various afflictions, he enters, as it were, into debate with us. (Genesis 32:25.) How, then, did this name apply to his posterity, if they were cast down and threw away all hope in adversity?

Who have come out from the.waters of Judah. He next reproaches them with being descended from the holy fathers, and yet being utterly unlike them. By "the waters of Judah," he means metaphorically the source and fountain from which the Jews proceeded; for I do not approve of the childish attempt of the Jewish writers to explain the metaphor, which is borrowed in a highly natural manner from waters which flow from a distant place.

Who swear by the name of Jehovah. Having censured them for being the degenerate and wicked children of holy fathers, he adds that they falsely pretend to the worship of God, and to a semblance of piety from which they are widely distant. Now, as "swearing" is a kind of worship of God, he here puts one department for the whole class, by a figure of speech, in which a part is taken for the whole. As idolaters offer an insult to God, when they swear by their idols, in like manner do the sincere worshippers of God render honor to God, by employing his name in oaths; for they acknowledge that they have one God, in whose name they glory. But here he attacks hypocrites who, with open mouth, loudly boasted of the name of God, and frequently mentioned his name, and yet in their hearts were greatly opposed to him. On this account he *says, not in truth nor in righteousness,* he employs the word "righteousness," to denote integrity and sincerity of heart, without which nothing can be acceptable to God; or rather "righteousness" and "truth" are

[234] That is, his nature is eternal, he depends on none, he is the beginning and end of all things, as in Isaiah 41 4; 44:6." — Rosenmuller.

synonymous terms; as if he had said, that it was mere pretense and hypocrisy to profess that they were the people of the true God, because their treachery openly proclaimed their falsehood.

2. *For from the holy city they are called.* He continues the same subject, and by different words exposes their false boasting; for they falsely boasted that they were the citizens of "the holy city," which they defiled by their vices and crimes. Jerusalem ought to have been "holy," for God had consecrated her to himself; but she had prostrated herself to iniquities, so great and so numerous, that she scarcely retained any holiness. We see in Psalm 15:2, and 24:4, what the true citizens of Jerusalem ought to be; but because the Jews were not ashamed of mocking God, they reckoned it enough to be protected by the shadow of the Temple.

And rely on the God of Israel. When he says that they "rely on Jehovah," he does not speak of sincere belief, but of empty confidence; for, as good men rely on God, and trust him with their whole heart, so hypocrites falsely make pretensions to his name, and are intoxicated by unfounded belief, and fearlessly despise everything, and even boast confidently of these words, "God will assist us, he will not cast off his people;" as if God wished to encourage their wickedness. In a word, by trampling him under their feet, they loudly declare that they rely on themselves for safety; but, lest they should think that they will not be punished for this mockery, the Prophet assures them that God loses nothing of his authority, when he is thus misrepresented by hypocrites; for, when he calls him *Jehovah of hosts,* he adds this by way of threatening, that they might know that God, under whose name they falsely sheltered themselves, was strong enough to punish them, and at length would not permit them to make him the subject of mockery.

3. *Long ago have I declared the former things.* He accuses the Jews of ingratitude, because they distrust God, who has given every possible proof of his goodness, in order to establish them in sincere confidence; and therefore he takes away from them every excuse, by saying, that "he declared the former things." He appears to speak not of their deliverance from Babylon, but of other benefits which the Lord had bestowed on that nation; as if he had said that God began, long before this, to foretell to his people what would happen, and never promised anything which he did not perform, and yet that his people, after having received so many proofs, did not place confidence in his certain and infallible truth.

It may also be said, that the Prophet did not merely address those who lived at that time, but those who should afterwards live during the captivity, in order that, when this certainty arrived, they might consider that it had been already foretold. God intended that this prediction should be widely known, in order that, during their captivity, they might know that these things did not happen by chance, and that they might obtain some consolation. Isaiah therefore rebukes them, because, after having learned the truth of this matter from the event itself, still they cannot acknowledge the work

of God, or place confidence in him.

And justly does he severely reprove and accuse them of obstinacy; for they resisted God, who stretched out his hand to them, and rejected his grace; they did not believe that they would have liberty to return to Judea, and, when the way was opened up, there were very few who had courage to return. Some thought that it would be better to remain in Babylon than to undergo the annoyances and dangers of the joumey. Others suspected that Cyrus had made a crafty proclamation of liberty to return, in order that, having ascertained their dispositions, he might oppress them or treat them with severity; and they did not take into account that God had foretold these things, and that they must unavoidably happen, and that no power of men could prevent them. Accordingly, I understand those predictions of which the Prophet speaks so as to include, indeed, the ancient prophecies by which God foretold to Abraham (Genesis 15:13) that his seed would be held captive, and would afterwards be restored to their former freedom, but that afterwards, in their due order, other predictions are added, which also followed at different times; for this also was frequently fulfilled, partly at one time, and partly at another. He shews, therefore, that the Lord predicted nothing which was not justified by the event.

4. *For I knew that thou art obstinate.* Literally it is, "On account of my knowing," or, "From nay knowing." Here the Lord solemnly declares by the Prophet, that it was on account of the hard-heartedness of the people that he spake of future events; as if he had said that he acted more liberally towards them than he ought to have done. Not that this was the only end which he aimed at; for we know that the chief use of doctrine belongs to believers, who gently submit themselves and cheerfully obey; but Isaiah, who had to deal with obstinate men, justly says that, if their depravity had not been incurable, God made use of an excellent remedy, by uttering many successive predictions for the purpose of ratifying his Law. Thus as he had foretold future events to the fathers, so he shews that he follows the same course, in order to conquer or soften the obstinacy and hard-heartedness of the people.

And thy neck is an iron sinew, and thy forehead is of brass. He calls their neck "an iron sinew," because it cannot be bent. "Sinews" are indeed hard, but still they are capable of being bent; here, he says, there is no bending, because they are untameable. He next mentions "a brazen forehead," to denote their impudence. There are two ways by which we may be kept in the path of duty; first, if we are submissive and obey good instructions or holy commandments; and secondly, if, after having fallen into any sin, we are moved by sincere shame to repent of what we have done. When these are wanting, it is a sign of desperate wickedness. These are two proofs, therefore, which he has brought forward to shew that the nation was abandoned to everything that was sinful; they were refractory, and they were impudent. And yet, when the Lord cannot cure us in any other way, he treats even our

perversity with such forbearance, that he is pleased to give us warning of future events. Thus he assumes, as it were, every possible shape, in order to recall us to himself, and bring us back into the right path.

5. *I foretold to thee long ago.* He again repeats the same statement, that the people, when they had been delivered from Babylon, might acknowledge the kindness of God, and might not ascribe this deliverance to idols or to fortune. If it be asked "Why does the Prophet mention idols, seeing that the Jews professed the worship of one God?" I reply, They had been corrupted by associating with the Gentiles, and had degenerated into superstitions, to such an extent, that they had entirely forgotten God. Ezekiel complains of this, that, in the vision in which he appeared to be carried to Jerusalem, he beheld the sanctuary of God polluted by various idols. (Ezekiel 8:3.) Not without reason, therefore, does he recall them to God as the only author of these events, that they may acknowledge that he has redeemed them.

Lest, perhaps, thou shouldest say. He means that the Jews will be inexcusable, if they do not acknowledge the kindness of God, when they shall have been emancipated from slavery; for what had been long ago foretold would not have happened by chance. God's foreknowledge is therefore connected by the Prophet with his power; and he declares that he not only foresaw, but likewise accomplished these events. Here then, as in a mirror, we behold the wicked exercise of our understanding, which always contrives in what way it shall rob God of the praise which is due to him. Whenever he either assists us, or in any way is kind to us, he may be said to stretch out his hand and invite us to himself.

Yet the world, as if it purposely designed to make resistance, ascribes to others what has proceeded from God; as we see that in Popery all God's benefits are attributed to dead saints, in such a manner as if God were sleeping a deep sleep. It is therefore necessary that the lamp of doctrine should shine, in order to regulate our judgment; for, in considering the works of God, we shall always go astray, if he do not go before and enlighten us by his word. But even now we find in many persons what Isaiah deplores in his nation, that, even after having been warned, they do not cease to make idols for themselves, which they clothe with the spoils taken from God. Peter and John loudly declared (Acts 3:12) that it was not by their own merits or excellence that they performed their miracles; but we see how the Papists load them with miracles against their will, and in spiteof their resistance. Although God does not now foretell the events which shall happen, yet the doctrine of the Law and of the Gospel will tend as powerfully to condemn our ingratitude as if the prophecies had attested those works of which God there declares himself to be the author.

6. *Thou hast heard.* This makes it still more clear that the Prophet speaks of a future captivity, and of the redemption by which it should be followed; thus intending to make provision for the advantage both of the men of his own time and of posterity, that, if they who then lived received no benefit,

at least posterity might take warning and repent. It frequentlyhappens, that the doctrine of the prophets produces little effect on those who see and hear, and sometimes is even treated by them with contempt, while posterity receive it with better dispositions.

See all. When he bids them *see,* some think that the Prophet exhibits the event in such a manner as if he had said, that God had spoken nothing which had not been made evident to be true. But I give a different interpretation of this word {חזה}, *(chazeh,) see,* in this manner: "Seeing that the Lord hath spoken, it is thy duty to examine the words, and to give attention." Hence we ought to observe, that it is owing to our sluggishness or indolence that we immediately lose those things which proceed from the mouth of God, and that in vain do many persons hold out the pretext of ignorance; because the Lord reveals clearly enough all that is necessary to be known, if they who hear would examine it carefully, and with due attention.

And will ye not declare it? The Lord next demands something more from his people than to understand and consider his word; that is, that they may be a herald and witness of the miracles which they have known by experience. And, indeed, he instructs his people on this condition, that they shall afterwards lead others to the same confession of faith. *Even now have I made thee to hear* As if he had said, "Observe this day, on which the Lord foretells to thee, by my mouth, those things which thou didst not know; for these things cannot be perceived or foreseen by human conjecture."

7. *Now for the first time have they been created.* The Prophet shews that he is not reasoning about things that are known, or that have been learned by actual experience; and his object is, not merely to correct that haughtiness which is natural to all men, (for they claim for themselves what belongeth to God alone,) but likewise that no part of this event may be ascribed to fortune or to any other cause. In various ways do men rob God of the glory that is due to him, and direct all their faculties towards distributing among the creatures that which belongs to Him alone, so as to leave Him nothing but a bare and empty name. That the people might not think that they had been vanquished by the power of the Babylonians, or that it was by human strength or by chance that they were afterwards restored to liberty, on this account he so frequently repeats and reiterates, that this is the work of God.

Thou hadst not heard those things. When he affirms that "they had not heard them," some explain this to mean that the people rejected God's warnings, and did not listen to good counsels. But I think that the Prophet's meaning was different, namely, that what could not be known by human sagacity, and what had been unknown to the Jews, has been revealed in such a manner that they cannot defraud the Holy Spirit of the praise which is due to him; and this is very evident from the context.

8. *I knew that by transgressing thou wouldest transgress.* By these words the Lord means that it is not without good reason that he so earnestly persuades and entreats the people to acknowledge that it was by him that

they were chastised and afterwards delivered from so great distresses. The rebelliousness of that people might have prompted them to complain that it was useless to repeat this so often, and to press it on their attention. The Prophet replies, that men need not wonder at it, because he has to deal with obstinate men; and thus he confirms by different words what he said a little before about "the iron sinew of their neck." (Ver. 4.) The meaning amounts to this, that the forwardness of that nation was well known to God, and that consequently he left nothing undone which was fitted to retain those who were attached to his service; and that, having received abundant evidence from undoubted proofs, they were so much the more inexcusable.

Therefore have I called thee a rebel from the womb. After having torn off the mask from this nation, which, as we formerly saw, falsely boasted of the name of Israel, he gives them a new name, and calls them "rebels." By the "womb" I understand to be meant, not their first origin when they began to be reckoned a nation, but the time when they were delivered from the bondage of Egypt; for that deliverance might be regarded as a sort of nativity of the Church. (Exodus 12:51.) But the people, though they had experienced the infinite goodness of God, did not cease to act treacherously towards him, and transgressed more and more, so that he justly calls them "rebels and transgressors."

9. *For my name's sake.* After having reproached the people with that malice which was natural to their fathers from the beginning, and which had passed down to children and grandchildren, he now reminds them that it is owing to his mercy that they survive, but that otherwise they would have deserved a thousand times to perish. This warning served two purposes; first, believers needed to be supported, that during their captivity they might not lose courage; and secondly, when they had received permission to return, it was not of less importance that they should be humbled, that they might acknowledge that they were indebted for their deliverance to nothing else than God's undeserved goodness.

So as not to cut thee off. Hence we see that the object of the preceding remonstrance was, that the people might know that it is not owing to their merit that the Lord stretches out his hand to bring them out of the grave of Babylon; for they deserved to be utterly ruined. Consequently, that the Lord now spares us also, that he mitigates or remits punishment, and, in a word, that he pays any attention to us, all this is entirely the result of his grace; so that we ought not to ascribe it to any merits or satisfactions of men. And thus, as we have formerly explained at other passages, the distinction made by the Sophists falls to the ground, as to the remission of punishment which they refuse to admit to be undeserved, because satisfaction is made to the justice of God. But here Isaiah declares that remission is made by free grace "for God's name's sake;" for he speaks of punishment which he might justly have inflicted on the Jews. He had the justest cause for destroying this nation, if he had not determined to defend his glory

10. *Lo, I have tried thee.* The Lord shews that he exercises such moderation in chastising his people, that he makes provision for their salvation. Formerly he had said that he had spared or would spare them, because he had regard to his glory. He now declares that he does indeed lay stripes upon them, but of such a nature as to be serviceable to them; for it is for the purpose of "proving and trying" that he chastises them, and we "prove" that which we do not wish to be lost. Since therefore he has this end in view, it follows that he makes provision for our salvation. Besides, it is by way of anticipation that he mentions the "trial," lest any one should object that God's forbearance did not, at all appear amidst such severe afflictions. The Prophet therefore comes forward early to meet this objection, and points out that, although God does not permit his people altogether to go free, yet he deals gently with them.

And not like silver. He adds that he does not "try us like silver," because we should be altogether consumed; for "silver" contains something that is pure, but in us nothing will be found but chaff; and even if God did not make us "silver," we should be reduced, like chaff or stubble, to ashes and to nothing. Chastisement itself would undoubtedly bring out nothing that is pure. Accordingly, in the very "trial" the Lord considers what we can endure, so as not to proceed beyond measure; and, at the same time, by the secret influence of his Spirit, he makes those punishments to be profitable to us which would otherwise have been destruction.

I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction. To "choose" means here to "distinguish." We "choose" that which we desire to preserve and defend, as he formerly said in the same sense,

"to choose the good and refuse the bad." (Isaiah 7:15.)

By this word, therefore, he shews how wide is the difference between the punishment which is inflicted on good men and that which wicked men endure, and which ends in their destruction. We, on the other hand, though the Lord bums and pierces us, are accepted by him; and he retains his kindness toward us in the midst of afflictions, and even causes us to come out of them more fully tried, and to be to him a sacrifice of good savor. In a word, he means that God, even when he appears to abandon his people to destruction, is still gracious to them.

11. *For my own sake.* He repeats the same statement which he had formerly made, but adds a question, such as Hebrew writers are wont to employ, when they speak of what is absurd, "Is it possible that my name should be profaned?"

And I will not give my glory to another. This second clause is added for the purpose of exposition; and therefore Isaiah, by multiplying the forms of expression, now adorns that which he had formerly expressed in a few words, and elevates his style. Nor is it a mere explanation of the former statement, but rather an adornment in order to confirm it the more. By these words he means that men do all that lies in their power to "profane

the name of God," and to convey "his glory to another," but that the Lord, by his wonderful providence, meets this evil, and causes his glory to remain unabated. Although, therefore, by our fault we abandon the glory of God, yet he will preserve it, while he shall be our protector. Hence we derive wonderful consolation, that God connects our salvation with his own glory, as we have already pointed out on other passages.

I will not give. That is, "I will not suffer my glory to be taken from me." This would have happened, if the God of Israel had been mocked on account of the ruin and destruction of the people; as wicked men, when the people of God were oppressed, were wont to taunt them with blasphemies of this sort, "Where is their God?" (Psalm 79:10.) Moses also assigned a familar reason why the Lord was unwilling to destroy the whole nation. "Lest perhaps," says he, "their enemies should claim it for themselves, and say, It is our lofty hand, and not the Lord, that hath done all this." (Deuteronomy 32:27.) And indeed, when the Lord, by exhibiting tokens of his anger, strikes terror into believers, there remains no refuge but this, that he will remember his adoption, so as not to expose his sacred name to the curses of wicked men. Nor did the Prophet, by these words, merely exhort his people to gratitude, that they might acknowledge that it was exclusively through the grace of God that they were preserved; but he held out to believers a ground of supplication, and a shield by which they might resist despair. [235]

12. *Hearken to me, O Jacob.* We have formerly explained the reason why the Lord declares his eternity. It is, that we may know that he is always like himself, and that we may not measure him by our capacity. He bids us "hearken to him;" because we are led into errors and are carried away by false opinions, in consequence of refusing to lend our ears to him.

And Israel, my called. When he says that "Israel has been called by him," he indirectly contrasts this statement with the reprobation mentioned by him at the beginning of the chapter; for he shewed that the Jews falsely assumed this name, and idly gloried in it, inasmuch as they did not prove themselves to be true Israelites. Here, on the contrary, he affirms that "Israel is his called." Just as if a father, in rebuking his son, should call him a bastard, and yet should afterwards acknowledge him to be his son, so the Lord shews that the Jews are so greatly degenerated that he might justly reject them, but that, although they do not deserve so high an honor as to belong to his family, still he pays regard to his calling, which no ingratitude or wickedness of men can set aside.

I, even I. In this passage the particle {אף} (*aph,*) *even,* denotes continuance; for he lays down nothing else than that God is always like himself,

235 "'And his arm shall be seen (or shall be visible) in the land of the Babylonians.' Here he speaks of Cyrus." — Jarchi. "Others, without supplying {,בּ (beth,) suppose that this phrase contains an aposiopesis, and read the words thus: 'And his arm the Babylonians,' that is, 'And his arm (shall strike or shall make war upon) the Babylonians.' Koeher, thinking that in the words {וזרועו} {כשדים} (uzerogno kassedim) there is no ellipsis, explains them to mean, 'And the Babylonians his arm,' that is, they shall be his supporters. 'For,' adds he, 'their aid was of no small consequence, if what Xenophon (Cyroped. 4:24; 5:11) has recorded about Gobryas and Gadates, who were Babylonians, be true. Thus, allies, friends, and any one that assists another, are accounted to be his arm.'" — Rosenmuller.

and does not, like men, undergo change or alter his counsel. (Romans 3:3, 4; 11:29.) On this account he says that he is *the first and the last.* [236] But here it ought also to be observed, that Isaiah does not speak of God's eternal essence, but applies this doctrine to our use, that we may know that he will be to us the same that he has always been, and next, that we may remember to distinguish him from idols, lest our understandings, led away by extravagant inventions, should fall off from the fear of him.

13. *Surely my hand hath founded the earth.* Here the Prophet explains more clearly what he meant in the preceding verse. After having spoken of God's constant and unvarying will toward us, he likewise praises God's power as manifested by the works which we daily behold. In these works the Lord may be said to present himself to our view; and, coming forth from his sanctuary, he approaches to us by means of them.

And my right hand hath measured, or, *hath upheld the heavens.* Whether we translate {טפחה} *(tippechah,)* "Hath measured," or, "Hath upheld," the meaning will be the same; and we need not give ourselves much trouble about the interpretation of the word. By the word "measure" is denoted God's amazing wisdom in having adjusted on all sides, with such exact proportion, the vast extent of the heavens, so that it is neither nearer to the earth nor farther from it than is advantageous for preserving order, and that in this prodigious expanse there is nothing jarring or unseemly. If we prefer the word "uphold," this also is an extraordinary commendation of the wisdom and power of God, in "upholding" the huge mass of the heavens in continual motion, so that it neither totters nor leans more to one side than to another.

When I call them, they stand up, or, *shall stand up together.* This latter clause, in which he says that all things are ready at, his command, is attended by some greater difficulty; for it may refer either to the first creation or to the continual government of the world. If we refer it to the first creation, the future {יעמדו} *(yagnamdu,) they shall stand,* will be put for a preterite. "As soon as the Lord commanded them to appear, they instantly obeyed;" as the Psalmist says, "He spake, and they were done." (Psalm 33:9.) But if we adopt this meaning, the word *equally,* which he adds, may appear not to agree well with the history of the creation as related by Moses; for heaven and earth were not created and beautified at one moment, but at first everything was shapeless and confused, and afterwards the Lord reduced them to order. (Genesis 1:2-6.) The answer is easy; for the Prophet means nothing more than that the Lord, by the mere expression of his will, created all things, and gave to heaven and earth their form, so that they immediately obeyed his command.

Yet I willingly extend it to the continual government of the world; as if he

[236] "When God the Redeemer says here that he 'teacheth his people, {להועיל (lehognil) to profit,' and that he provides for their true interests, there can be no doubt that he makes this declaration concerning himself, {κατ' ἀντίθεσιν} by way of contrast with Idols, false gods, the worship of which not only did no good, but even did harm, and brought great hurt and damage to their worshippers. (Compare Isaiah 44:10, and 45:19.) Hence also God says by, Jeremiah 2:11, 'Is there any nation that changeth its gods, though they are not gods? But my people have changed their glory {בלא יועיל} (belo yognil) for that from which they derive no advantage;' or rather, from which they suffer the greatest loss and damage." — Vitringa.

had said, "Heaven and earth yield to the authority of the Lord and obey his voice, and those bodies which are at the greatest distance from each other move of their own accord with astonishing harmony, as if they were carried about by the same motion of a wheel. Though heaven is separated from the earth by a wide space, yet the voice of the Lord is everywhere heard, he needs no messengers to convey his will, but by the slightest expression he executes everything at the very moment." Is there any prince who has his servants everywhere rendering to him instant obedience? Certainly not. Thus, the power of God is infinite, is diffused far and wide, and extends to every part of the world, as Scripture declares, (Psalm 47:2,) and as we learn by the instructions of faith.

14. *Assemble, all of you, and hear.* There can be no doubt that the Prophet addresses the Jews, though here he utters nothing that ought not to be acknowledged by all. But because unbelieving and irreligious men have no ears, on this account he does not invite them to "hear." We know that the Jews enjoyed this privilege above other nations, that God revealed himself to them. (Psalm 147:19, 20; Romans 3:2.) "God is known in Judea," says the Psalmist,: his name is great in Israel." (Psalm 126:1.) So much the less excusable was either their slothfulness or their obstinacy, in paying scarcely any regard to their own prosperity. Whence arose their great levity or proneness to revolt, but from their undervaluing or despising the inestimable treasure of heavenly doctrine? They therefore deserved to be sharply and severely rebuked by the Prophet, who now exclaims against them, indirectly remarking that they wickedly and perversely agree among themselves to cast into the shade the grace of God.

Who among them foretelleth those things? Here God appears to permit the Jews to bring forward publicly any objection which they can make, as those who trust to the goodness of their cause venture to taunt their adversaries: "Produce thy arguments; if thou possessest any acuteness, shew it." Of his own accord, therefore, he makes an attack upon them, and gives them permission to shew, if they can find any argument to that effect, that such things were foretold by the gods of the Gentiles. We may also extend it to the diviners and augurs, who claimed for themselves the knowledge of future events, and who could not at all foresee such things. With the same view he will repeat what follows in the next verse, "It is I, it is I who have spoken." The object of the whole is to shew that the Jews waver, and even fall away, in consequence of not estimating sufficiently how extraordinary a blessing it is to learn from the sacred mouth of God all that is necessary for their salvation.

Jehovah hath loved him, and he shall execute his pleasure on Babylon. He points out a single instance, that God had now deigned to foretell to them the end of their captivity in Babylon. Cyrus is not named by him as the dispenser of this favor, but, as if he were speaking of a man who was known and ascertained, he says, without mentioning the name, that God

has chosen him to take Babylon by force. The word *loved* is not employed in an absolute sense, but {πρὸς} {τὶ}; with reference to a particular object; and therefore it is limited to the successful result of the expedition. In like manner Saul, with reference to a particular object, was dear to God, so that he reigned for a time, and was even endued with the gift of prophecy. (1 Samuel 10:10.) The case is different with believers, whom God has embraced with an unchangeable love, and whom he never permits to fall away from him. He intimates that Cyrus will take Babylon by force, in consequence of having undertaken this work by God's appointment and direction, not indeed intentionally on his part, but in such a manner as God makes even the ignorant and blind to go where he pleases, or compels them against their will to yield obedience; for the Prophet does not applaud Cyrus for voluntary obedience, but rather magnifies the providence of God, by which he leads all men to execute his counsel.

And his arm. [237] Some read the word "arm" in the nominative, and others in the accusative case; but it makes little difference as to the meaning. *Arm* may here be taken for "work," and in a metaphorical sense; and thus the passage will read more smoothly. "He will execute his counsel on Babylon, his work on the Babylonians;" for we know that it is a distinguishing peculiarity in the style of the prophets to join together "the work of the Lord" and his "counsel." Indirectly he reproaches the Jews with their ingratitude in refusing to believe the promises of God, though he points out the event, as it were, with the finger, and speaks in a very different manner from that in which either diviners or false gods are accustomed to speak. In a word, he wishes to convince the Jews that, the taking of Babylon by storm shall be "the work of the Lord," under whose direction Cyrus shall execute it, in order that the Church may at length be delivered.

15. *Therefore he shall prosper in his way.* He again reminds the Jews of the predictions, and claims for God this honor, that, by foretelling the event in due time, he has removed all doubt; and next he adds, that all that had been foretold shall be accomplished. Accordingly, in the repetition of the pronoun, *It is I, it is I who have spoken,* there is a double emphasis; first, tlmt none but the God of Israel hath spoken about future and hidden events, and secondly, that, because he is faithful and never deceives, all the events which he has foretold shall undoubtedly take place. Accordingly, in the last clause of the verse I consider the copulative {ו} *(vau)* to mean *therefore.* Here Isaiah has two objects in view; first, that the captive Jews may expect deliverance, and secondly, that, after having been delivered, they may acknowledge God to be the author of so valuable a blessing, and may not imagine that it took place either by the assistance of men or by chance.

Surely I have called him, I have conducted him. He declares that everything shall go prosperously with Cyrus, because Jehovah "hath called him;"

[237] "Afin de destourner les idiots (qu'ils appellent) de lira dedans." "In order to dissuade idiots (as they call them) from reading it."

not that he deserved so high a favor, or obtained it by his own industry or power, but because the Lord was pleased to employ the agency of Cyrus in delivering his people. As to his calling him *beloved* in the preceding verse, and now saying that he has been "called and conducted," I explained a little before that this cannot refer to the love of God, by which he adopts us to be his children and calls us to himself; for in this sense Cyrus was not "beloved" or "called." Though he was endowed with great virtues, yet he was stained by very great vices, ambition and the lust of power, avarice, cruelty, and other vices; and his lamentable end shewed what kind of person he was. The Prophet therefore means that God was favorable to Cyrus, so as to bestow upon him an external blessing, but not so as to adopt him, and to impart to him that grace which he bestows on the elect. We must consider the reason why he calls him by these names. It is because he makes use of the agency of Cyrus for delivering the Church, as we have already explained.

16. *Draw near to me, hear this.* He again addresses the Jews, and, by bidding them draw near, goes out, as it were, to meet them, and to receive them kindly. Yet at the same time he indirectly glances at their revolt, shewing that they would not be capable of receiving sound doctrine, if they did not withdraw from error. It was no small crime that they were so far removed from God, to whom they ought to have been united in a friendly manner. They were at a great distance from him, not as to space, but as to the agreement of the heart. The "drawing near," therefore, means that we should lay aside our natural dispositions and be ready to hear him. And this must proceed from his grace; for we can never be prepared to do this, if he do not lead us to himself.

Not from the beginning have I spoken in secret. Commentators explain this passage in various ways. Many apply it to Christ, though the Prophet meant no such thing; but we ought to guard against violent and forced interpretations. Others explain it as relating to the Prophet himself, but that is not more suitable; for this discourse would not be applicable to a man. I think, therefore, that Isaiah introduces God as speaking, in order to reproach the people with ingratitude, because "from the beginning," that is, from the time that he began to reveal himself to their fathers, he did not speak obscurely or secretly. Hence it follows, that all the ignorance that was in them ought to be ascribed to their depravity, because of their own accord they forsook the light.

From the time that it was done, I was there. When he says that he was present at the time that the event occurred, the meaning is, that what he had uttered with his mouth was carried into execution by his strength and by his power. Justly, therefore, does he affirm that he gave tokens of his presence, when, by accomplishing all things, he not only proved the truth of the predictions by the event itself, but shewed that those things which are supposed to be accidental are governed by his authority. In a word, he mentions the ancient promises of God and the fulfillment of them, in order

to shew that God will always be like himself. Those who say that Isaiah will be present in spirit, when the Lord shall bring back his people, torture the Prophet's words, and produce nothing that agrees with his meaning.

And now Jehovah hath sent me. Isaiah now begins to speak of himself, and applies this statement to the preceding doctrine, and testifies that that God, who hath spoken from the beginning, now speaketh by him, and consequently that we ought to believe those things which God now speaketh by him, in the same manner as if he were visibly present. Hence we ought to draw a useful doctrine, namely, that all the miracles which the Lord has performed ought to be brought to our remembrance, that we may confirm his truth in our hearts. It is no slight argument, that the Lord had from the beginning a distinct people, whom he taught, to whom he made sure promises, and to whom he performed those promises, and whom he never deceived, even in the smallest matter; for all things were performed and fulfilled in due time. Whenever, therefore, any doubt arises, we ought to betake ourselves to these examples, "God hath always assisted his people; not now, for the first time, hath he spoken to them, and he did not deceive his people by words which were dark or ambiguous, but spoke plainly and clearly." Thus the Prophet declares that he brings forward nothing of his own, but that he was sent by God, who has proved himself to be faithful.

And his Spirit. He mentions "the Spirit," not as if he meant something different from God, because he is of the same essence with him; for in one essence of God we acknowledge Three Persons; but he names "The Spirit," because He is the only teacher and director of all the prophets. Paul says, that "no man can say that Jesus is Christ, but by the Spirit," and a little after he says that "the gifts of God are various, but that it is one and the same Spirit who worketh all things in all." (1 Corinthians 12:3, 6.) This passage is also a clear proof of the divinity of the Spirit, since the prophets are sent by him; for it belongs to God alone to send them, as it is by the authority of the prince alone that ambassadors are sent; and since the Spirit does this, — since he directs them, and gives to them power and efficacy, unquestionably he is God.

From this passage we learn also, that they who have not this direction of the Spirit, though they boast of having been sent by God, ought to be rejected; such as those Popish bands of wolves which glory in the name of pastors and teachers, and impudently boast of their mission, though they are altogether opposed to the Spirit of God, and to his doctrine. In vain do they boast of having been sent or authorized by God, when they are not adorned with the gifts of the Spirit, which are necessary for the execution of such an office. To pretend to having the inspiration of the Spirit, while they are entirely destitute of faith, and have not even the slightest spark of doctrine, is excessively disgusting. Let us suppose an assembly of mitred bishops, the greater part of whom are known to be ignorant, and among three hundred of whom there shall scarcely be found ten who have a moderate share of the

rudiments of piety; what could be more foolish than for such an assembly to boast of being governed by "the Spirit?"

17. *Thus saith Jehovah.* I connect this verse with the four following verses, because they relate to the same subject, and because in them the Lord promises deliverance to his people, but in such a manner as first to shew that it was through their own fault that they were reduced to slavery; that is, that the people might not murmur and object that it would have been better to be kept in their native country, if the Lord wished to assist them, than to be carried away and brought back; for physicians who cure a disease which they might have prevented, are held to be less entitled to thanks. The Prophet therefore meets this, and says that this befell the people through their own fault, and that they might have escaped this destruction, if they had attended to the commandments of the Lord. He shews, therefore, that this was a just reward of the wickedness of the people; for it was not the Lord who had formerly prevented the people from enjoying prosperity, but they had rejected his grace. And yet he declares that the Lord will go beyond this wickedness by his goodness, because he will not suffer his people to perish, though he afflict them for a time.

Teaching thee profitably. He means that God's *"teaching"* is such that it might keep the people safe and sound, if they would only rest upon it. Now, the Lord "teaches," not for his own sake, but in order to promote our salvation; for what profit could we yield to him? It is therefore by "teaching" that he makes provision for the advantage of each of us, that, having been instructed by it, we may enjoy prosperity. But since, through our ingratitude, we reject the benefit that is freely offered to us, what remains but that we shall miserably perish? Justly, therefore, does Isaiah reproach the Jews that, if they had not defrauded themselves of the benefit of teaching, nothing that was profitable for their salvation would have been hidden from them. And if these things were said of the Law, that the Lord, by means of it, "taught his people profitably," what shall we say of the Gospel, in which everything that is profitable for us is very fully explained? [238]

Hence, also, it is manifest, how shocking is the blasphemy of the Papists who say that the reading of the Holy Scripture is dangerous and hurtful, in order to terrify unlearned persons [239] from reading it. Shall they then accuse God of falsehood, who declares, by the mouth of the Prophet, that it is "profitable?" Do they wish us to believe them rather than God? Though they impudently vomit out their blasphemies, we certainly ought not to be dissuaded from the study of it; for we shall learn by actual experience with what truthfulness Isaiah spoke, if we treat the Holy Scriptures with piety and reverence.

Leading thee. These words shew more clearly the profitableness which was mentioned a little before. He means that the way of salvation is pointed

[238] See Commentary on Isaiah, vol. 1, p 312; vol. 2, pp. 214, 227.

[239] "Nulle forme d'Eglise."

out to us, if we hearken to God when he speaks; for he is ready to become our guide during the whole course of our life, if we will only obey him. In this manner Moses testifies that he "set before the people life and death." (Deuteronomy 30:19.) Again, it is said, (Isaiah 30:21,) "This is the way, walk ye in it;" for the rule of a holy life is contained in the Law, which cannot deceive. "I command thee," says Moses, "that thou love the Lord thy God, and walk in his ways, and keep his commandments and statutes and judgments, that thou mayest live and be multiplied, and that the Lord may bless thee in the land which thou goest to possess." (Deuteronomy 30:16.) In a word, they who submissively yield obedience are not destitute either of counsel or of the light of understanding.

18. *O if thou hadst hearkened to my commandments!* As the people might complain of being carried into captivity, the Prophet, intending to meet those murmurs, points out the cause, which was, that they did not submit to the doctrine of salvation, and did not allow themselves to derive any advantage from it. He undoubtedly alludes to the song of Moses, in which very nearly the same form of expression occurs, "O that they were wise, and that they understood!" (Deuteronomy 32:29.) {לוא} *(lu)* denotes a wish, O if! or, *Would that!*

Not only does the Lord expostulate with the Jews for having disregarded the advantage, or "profitableness," (verse 17,) which was offered to them, but like a father, he deplores the wretchedness of his children; for he takes no pleasure in our distresses, and is not severe, unless when we constrain him by our wickedness. This is therefore a figurative appropriation of human affections, by which God compassionates the ruin of those who chose rather to perish of their own accord than to be saved; for he was ready to bestow blessings of every kind, if we did not drive him away by our obstinacy. Yet it would be foolish to attempt to penetrate into his secret counsel, and to inquire why he did not add the efficacy of the Spirit to the external word; for nothing is said here about his power, but there is only a reproof of the hard-heartedness of men, that they may be rendered inexcusable. Certainly, whenever God invites us to himself, there is clearly laid before us, in his word, complete happiness, which we wickedly reject.

Then would thy peace have been as a river. The word *peace,* as we have formerly explained, [240] denotes all prosperous events. It is as if he had said, "The richest plenty of spiritual blessings would have flowed to thee abundantly, and thou wouldst have had no occasion to dread any change; because the blessing of God upon believers is never dried up.

And thy righteousness as the waves of the sea. We might explain *righteousness,* which he connects with *peace,* to mean what is expressed by the familiar phrase *(ton bon droict)* "thy right." But I choose rather to understand by the word "Righteousness" a well regulated commonwealth, in which

[240] Our author means that, instead of reading the words thus, "There is no peace to the wicked, saith Jehovah," he prefers to read them, "Jehovah saith to the wicked, There is no peace." — Ed.

everything is administered in a regular and orderly manner; as if he had said, "Thou wouldest have had everything well conducted at home, and wouldest have had plenty and abundance of all things." And properly does he connect this condition with "peace;" for when government is overtumed, everything goes wrong and is out of order, and it is utterly impossible that we shall enjoy "peace," if there be not "righteousness," that is, a just and equitable administration of affairs. If, therefore, we are desirous of "peace," let us likewise wish to have that blessed condition on which the Lord bestows his blessing. Here some commentators speculate about spiritual "righteousness," and the forgiveness of sins; but they wander far from the Prophet's meaning, which is plain and obvious.

19. *Thy seed would have been as the sand.* This also relates to a happy life, when progeny is multiplied, by whose aid the labors of the old are alleviated, and which "resists the adversaries in the gate." The Psalmist compares such children to "arrows shot by a strong hand," and pronounces him to be "blessed who hath his quiver full of them;" that is, who has a large number of such children. (Psalm 127:4, 5.)

When he mentions *sand,* he appears to allude to the promise which was made to Abraham,

"I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is on the sea-shore." (Genesis 22:17.)

And he repeats the same sentiment in various words; according to the usage of the Hebrew writings, substituting *children* for "seed," and *small stones* for "sand." In a word, he shews that the people prevented God from causing them to enjoy the fruit of that promise.

His name would not have been cut off. Coming down to the interruption of this favor, he next reproaches them in more direct terms with having sought for dispersion, after having been miraculously collected by the hand of God; for by the word *name* he means the lawful condition of the people, which would always have flourished, if the blessing had not been tumed aside front its course. What he says about the people having been "cut off," must be understood to refer to the land of Canaan, from which the people of God had been cast out, and thus appeared to have been thrust out of their Father's house; for the Temple, of which they were deprived, was a symbol of God's presence, and the land itself was a pledge or earnest of a blessed inheritance. Being driven into captivity, therefore, the people appeared to have been cut off and banished from the presence of God, and had no token of the divine assistance, if the Lord had not soothed their affliction by those promises. Now, we ought carefully to observe this distress, that, when they had been banished into a distant country, they had no temple, or sacrifices, or religious assemblies; for they who in the present day have no form of a Church, [241] no use of sacraments, and no administration of the word, ought

[241] "These words relate to those Jews who, being obstinately devoted to idolatry, and having settled down in Babylon, chose to remain there rather than to return to their native country and the religious worship of Jehovah. He declares, therefore, that such persons shall not have

to look upon themselves as being in some measure cast out from the presence of God, and should learn to desire, and continually to ask by earnest prayer, the restoration of the Church.

20. *Go out of Babylon.* This is the second clause of this remonstrance, in which the Lord solemnly declares that he will be the Redeemer of his people, though they have been unworthy and ungrateful. After having declared that he performed the office of a good teacher, but that the people refused to hearken to him, so that by their own fault they drew down on themselves the punishment of captivity, he now declares his unwearied forbearance, by adding that he will still assist them, in order to bring them out of slavery. He therefore commands them to go out of the land of Babylon, in which they were captives. Hence we see that God, in his unspeakable goodness, though he has just cause to remonstrate with us, yet relieves our afflictions, and assists those who had been unworthy, and even who had insolently rejected his grace.

With the voice ofrejoicing. This relates to the confirmation of the deliverance, for he intended to give assurance to a promise which was altogether incredible. In order, therefore, to remove all doubt, he employed lofty language in extolling this blessing.

Tell it. He describes the strength of that confidence by which he wished to encourage the Jews; for we are wont to utter loudly and boldly those things of which we are certain, and, if we have any doubt, we scarcely venture to speak, and are dumb. Isaiah speaks of a future event as if it had actually arrived, that the people might cherish in their hearts greater and stronger confidence He makes use of the imperative mood, which is much more forcible, and produces a more powerful impression on our minds, than if he had expressed his meaning in plain terms.

21. *Therefore they thirsted not.* Because the Jews did not see the way opened up for their return, and because great and dangerous wildernesses intervened, the Prophet asserts the power of God, and brings forward examples of it, that they may not be terrified by any difficulty. He therefore bids them consider whether or not God had sufficient power to rescue their fathers from the slavery of Egypt, and to lead them through desolate wildernesses, in which he supplied them with food and water and everything that was necessary for them. (Exodus 16 and 17; Numbers 20.) Here the Jews, according to their custom, contrive absurd fables, and invent miracles which were never performed; and they do this, not through ignorance, but through presumption, by which anything that is plausible, though there be no ground whatever for it, easily gains their support.

The design of the Prophet was to recall to their remembrance the former departure from Egypt, and the miracles which the Lord performed at that time, which we have already remarked to be customary with the Prophets,

the happiness that is promised to those who shall return to their native habitations." — Rosenmuller.

when they wish to extol in lofty terms the works of God. Thus David, when he was celebrating the victories which he had obtained, says that

"the mountains trembled and flowed down, that the air was cleft asunder, and that the Lord was seen from heaven,"
(Psalm 18:7,)

though nothing of this kind ever happened to him; but he imitates the description of the deliverance from Egypt, in order to shew that God, who was the author of it, had also been his supporter and leader in conquering his enemies, and that the power of God ought not to be less acknowledged in his victory than in those signs and wonders.

In like manner the Prophet wishes that the people should now contemplate those miracles, in order to correct their unbelief, and that they may not be tempted by any distrust. The holy servants of God were always accustomed to cast their eyes on that deliverance, in order that, by the remembrance of so great a benefit, they might strengthen the hearts of all in hope and confidence; as we have formerly said that it was the duty of believers in every age to expect the fruit of this redemption, that the Lord, by uninterrupted progress, might be the guardian of a redeemed people. Thus Isaiah means that the Lord will easily surmount every obstacle, will open up a way which is shut, and will supply them abundantly with water, so that they shall not die of thirst, in the same manner as he formerly brought water out of rock by an extraordinary miracle, when the people thought that their condition was hopeless; and consequently, that there is no reason why they should despair of their return, if they wish to contemplate, and cordially to believe, that power of God which they have already experienced.

22. *There is no peace, saith Jehovah to the wicked.* These words, "saith the Lord," are included by some commentators in a parenthesis; but we view them as having this connection with what goes before, that the Lord denies to wicked men that "peace" of which they are unworthy. [242] And this is expressly added, that hypocrites might not, according to their custom, cherish false confidence in these promises; for he declares that the promises do not belong to them, in order to shut them out altogether from the hope of salvation. But Isaiah appears also to have had his eye on something else; for, since the greater part of the people, under the influence of impiety, rejected this blessing, many weak and feeble persons might hesitate and might be terrified by the opinion of the multitude; [243] as in our own day we see feeble consciences disturbed, when they see the greater part of men despise the doctrine of salvation. Beholding many persons placed in danger, he tums away their minds from such a temptation, that they may not be troubled by the multitude of wicked and unbelieving men, who reject the grace of God and this prosperous condition, but that, without paying any regard to those men, they may embrace and enjoy this benefit.

[242] Or, Burnt lime.
[243] Or, The wicked.

Chapter 49

CHAPTER 49.

Isaiah 49:1-26

1. Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye people, from far; The LORD hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name.

1. Audite me, Insulae, et attendite populi e longinquo. Iehova ex utero vocavit me, e ventre matris meae habuit in memoria nomen meum.

2. And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me;

2. Et posuit os meum quasi gladium acutum; in umbra manus suae protexit me, et posuit me in sagittam tersam, in pharetra sua abscondit me.

3. And said unto me, Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.

3. Et dixit mihi, Servus meus es, Israel, in to gloriabor.

4. Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain; yet surely my judgment is with the LORD, and my work with my God.

4. Ego autem dixi, Frustra laboravi; inaniter et vane fortitudinem meam consumpsi. At judicium meum coram Iehova, et opus meum coram Deo meo.

5. And now, saith the LORD that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, and my God shall be my strength.

5. Et nunc dicit Iehova, qui formavit me ab utero in servum sibi, ut reducam ad se Iacob. Atque ut Israel non colligatur, tamen gloriosus ero in oculis Iehovae, et Deus meus erit fortitudo mea.

6. And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to

raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.

6. Et ait, Leve est ut tu mihi sis servus ad suscitandas tribus Iacob, et desolationes Israel ut restituas. Itaque constitui to in lucem Gentium, ut sis salus mea ad extremum terrae.

7. Thus saith the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the LORD that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee.

7. Sic dicit Iehova redemptor Israel, Sanctus ejus, ad contemptibilem anima, ad gentem abominabilem, ad servum dominantium. Reges videbunt, et consurgent Principes, et adorabunt propter Iehovam, quia fidelis est Sanctus Israel, et qui elegit to.

8. Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages;

8. Sic dicit Iehova: In tempore placiti exaudivi to, in die salutis auxiliatus sum tibi; et servabo to, et dabo to in foedus populi, ut suscites terram, ut haereditate obtineas haereditates desolatas.

9. That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places.

9. Ut dicas vinctis, Exite; iis qui sunt in tenebris, Ostendite vos. Super vias pascentur, in omnibus verticibus pascua eorum.

10. They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them.

10. Non esurient, neque sitient; non percutiet eos aestus et sol; quia miserator eorum diriget eos, et super scaturigines aquarum ducet eos.

11. And I will make all my mountains a way, and my highways shall be exalted.

11. Et ponam omnes montes meos in viare, et semitae meae elevabuntur.

12. Behold, these shall come from far: and, lo, these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim.

12. Ecee, isti e longinquo venient; et ecee, isti ab Aquilone, et a mari; et isti e terra Sinis, (vel, Sinim.)

13. Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the LORD hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted.

13. Laudate, coeli; et exulta, terra; et erumpite, montes, in laudera; quia consolatus est Iehova populum suum, et pauperum suorum miserebitur.

14. But Zion said, The LORD hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath

forgotten me.

14. Atqui dixit Sion, Dereliquit me Iehova, et Dominus meus oblitus est mei.

15. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.

15. An obliviscetur mulier foetus sui, ut non misereatur filii uteri sui? Etiam si istae oblitae fuerint, ego tamen non obliviscar tui.

16. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of, my hands; thy walls are continually before me.

16. Ecce, super palmas sculpsi to; muri tui coram me sunt semper.

17. Thy children shall make haste; thy destroyers and they that made thee waste shall go forth of thee.

17. Festinant structores tui; destructores tui et vastatores tui procul abs to discedent.

18. Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold: all these gather themselves together, and come to thee. As I live, saith the LORD, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them on thee, as a bride doeth.

18. Leva per circuitum oculos tuos, et vide. Omnes congregati sunt. venerunt tibi. Vivo ego, dicit Iehova, quod omnibus quasi ornamento vestieris, et circumligaberis illis tanquam sponsa.

19. For thy waste and thy desolate places, and the land of thy destruction, shall even now be too narrow by reason of the inhabitants, and they that swallowed thee up shall be far away.

19. Quoniam desolationes tuis, et vastitates tuae, et terra tua deserta, nunc tamen angusta erit ob multitudinem habitantium; et procul abscedent consumptores tui.

20. The children which thou shalt have, after thou hast lost the other, shall say again in thine ears, The place is too strait for me: give place to me that I may dwell.

20. Adhuc dicent in auribus tuis filii orbitatis tuae: Angustus mihi locus est; secede alio mihi, ut habitem.

21. Then shalt thou say in thine heart, Who hath begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro? and who hath brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; these, where had they been?

21. Et dices in corde tuo: Quis genuit mihi istos? Nam ego orba (vel, sterilis) et solitaria demigrans, et exul. Quis ergo istos educavit? Ecce, ego relicta eram sola; isti unde sunt?

22. Thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders.

22. Sic dicit Dominus Iehova: Ecce levabo ad Gentes manum meam, et

ad populos extollam vexillum meum; et adducent filios tuos in sinu, et filiae tuae super humeram ferentur.

23. And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers: they shall bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet; and thou shalt know that I am the LORD: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.

23. Et erunt reges nutritii tui, et reginae eorum nutrices tuae; prono in terram vultu adorabunt to, et pulverem pedum tuorum lingent. Et scies quod ego sum Iehova, quia non pudefient qui me expectant.

24. Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered?

24. An anferetur forti praeda? An captivitas justi (vel, justa) liberabitur?

25. But thus saith the LORD, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children.

25. Atqui sic dicit Iehova, Etiam captivitas fortis auferetur, et praeda tyranni liberabitur; quia cum eo qui contendit tecum ego contendam, et filios tuos ego servabo.

26. And I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh; and they shall be drunken with their own blood, as with sweet wine: and all flesh shall know that I the LORD am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob.

26. Et pascam spoliatores tuos carnibus tuis, et quasi musto sanguine suo inebriabuntur; et sciet omnis caro quod ego sum Iehova servator tuus, et redemptor tuus fortis Iacob.

1. *Hear me, O islands!* After having treated of the future deliverance of the people, he comes down to Christ, under whose guidance the people were brought out of Babylon, as they had formerly been brought out of Egypt. The former prophecy must have been confirmed by this doctrine; because they would scarcely have hoped that the Lord would deliver them, if they had not placed Christ before their eyes, by whom alone desponding souls can be comforted and strengthened; for from him they ought not only to expect eternal salvation, but ought equally to expect temporal deliverance. Besides, it is customary with the prophets, when they discourse concerning the restoration of the Church, to bring Christ into view, not only because he would be the minister of the Church, but because on him was founded the adoption of the people. The Jews also, or, at least, such of them as have any soundness of understanding, admit that this passage cannot be understood as relating to any other person than Christ. But still the train of thought which we have pointed out has not been perceived by every interpreter; for the Prophet does not, by a sudden transition, mention Christ, but interweaves this with the former subject, because in no other manner could the people

entertain the hope of deliverance, since on him depended their reconciliation with God. And in order that the style might be more energetic, he introduces Christ as speaking, and addresses not only the Jews but nations that were beyond the sea, and foreign nations who were at a great distance from Judea, to whom, as we have formerly remarked, [244] he gives the name of "Islands."

Jehovah hath called me from the womb. A question arises, What is the nature of this calling? For, seeing that we were

"chosen in Christ before the creation of the world,"
(Ephesians 1:4,)

it follows that election goes before this calling; for it is the commencement and foundation of our election. Accordingly, it might be thought that Isaiah says far less than the occasion demands, when he says that he was "called from the womb;" for he had been called long before. But the answer is easy; for the subject here treated of is not eternal election, by which we are adopted to be his sons, but only the appointment or consecration by which Christ is set apart to that office, that no man may think that he intruded into it without being duly authorized. "For no man," as the Apostle says,

"taketh this honor upon himself, but he who is called by God, as Aaron was. So also Christ glorified not himself to be made a high priest, but he who spake to him, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee." (Hebrews 5:4, 5.)

Moreover, the Prophet does not describe the commencement of the period, as if it were only from the womb that God began to call him; but it is as if he had said, "Before I came out of the womb, God had determined that I should hold this office." In like manner Paul also says that he was "set apart from the womb," (Galatians 1:15,) though he had been "elected before the creation of the world." (Ephesians 1:4.) To Jeremiah also it is said, "Before thou camest out of the womb, I knew thee." (Jeremiah 1:5.) In short, the meaning is, that Christ was clothed with our flesh by the appointment of the Father, in order that he might fulfill the office of Redeemer, to which he had been appointed.

From my mother's belly he hath had my name in remembrance. This has the same import as the former clause; for by "the remembrance of the name" is meant familiar acquaintance. He therefore distinguishes himself from the ordinary rank of men, because he was elected to an uncommon and remarkable office.

2. *And he hath placed my mouth as a sharp sword,* he employs a twofold comparison, that of "a sword" and of "a quiver," in order to denote the power and energy of the doctrine; and he shews why he was called, and why he was honored by a name so excellent and illustrious, namely, that he may teach; for this is what he means by the word "mouth." Christ hath therefore been appointed by the Father, not to rule, after the manner of princes, by the force of arms, and by surrounding himself with other external defences,

[244] Commentary on Isaiah, Vol. 3, p. 244.

to make himself an object of terror to his people; but his whole authority consists in doctrine, in the preaching of which he wishes to be sought and acknowledged; for nowhere else will he be found. He asserts the power of his "mouth," that is, of the doctrine which proceeds from his mouth, by comparing it to "a sword;" for

"the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of the soul and the spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intentions of the heart." (Hebrews 4:12.)

And hath made me as a polished arrow. He now compares his mouth to "an arrow," because it strikes not only close at hand, but likewise at a distance, and reaches even those who appear to be far off.

In his quiver hath he hid me. After having spoken of the efficacy of doctrine, Isaiah adds, that God, by his power, protects Christ and his doctrine, so that nothing can stop his course. And this was very necessary to be added; for, as soon as the mouth of Christ is opened, that is, as soon as his Gospel is preached, adversaries rise up on all sides, and innumerable enemies league together in order to crush it; so that the efficacy which he ascribes to doctrine would not be sufficient, if there were not added his protection, in order to drive away adversaries.

Besides, the present question is not about the person of Christ, but about the whole body of the Church. We must indeed begin with the Head, but we must next come down to the members; and to all the ministers of the Word must be applied what is here affirmed concerning Christ; for to them is given such efficacy of the Word, that they may not idly beat the air with their voices, but may reach the hearts and touch them to the quick. The Lord also causes the voice of the Gospel to resound not; only in one place, but far and wide throughout the whole world. In short, because he faithfully keeps them under his protection, though they are exposed to many attacks, and are assaulted on every side by Satan and the world, yet they do not swerve from their course. We ought to have abundant knowledge of this from experience; for they would all to a man have been long ago ruined by the conspiracies and snares of adversaries, if the Lord had not defended them by his protection. And indeed, amidst so many dangers, it is almost miraculous that a single preacher of the Gospel is permitted to remain. The reason of this is, that the Lord guards them by his shadow, and "hides them as arrows in his quiver," that they may not be laid open to the assaults of enemies and be destroyed.

3. *Thou art my servant, O Israel.* It is of great importance to connect this verse with the preceding, because this shews that the Prophet now speaks not only of a single man, but of the whole nation; which has not been duly considered by commentators. This passage must not be limited to the person of Christ, and ought not to be referred to Israel alone; but on the present occasion we should attend to the customary language of Scripture.

When the whole body of the Church is spoken of, Christ is brought forward conspicuously so as to include all the children of God. We hear what Paul says:

"The promises were given to Abraham and to his seed. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many, but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." (Galatians 3:16.)

He does not include the whole multitude of children who were descended from Abraham himself according to the flesh, seeing that all were not partakers of the blessing. Ishmael was rejected, Esau was a reprobate, and many others were cut off. When the people were rescued from Babylon, but a small renmant came out; for the greater part rejected God's astonishing kindness. Where then was "the seed?" In Christ, who is the Head, and contains in himself the rest of the members; for in him is joined and bound by an indisoluble bond all the seed.

In like manner, under the name *Israel,* by which he means Christ, Isaiah includes the whole body of the people, as members under the Head. Nor ought this to be thought strange; for Paul also, when he speaks of the union, employs the metaphor of the human body, and then adds: "So also is Christ." (1 Corinthians 12:12.) In that passage the name of Christ is given to Israel, that is, to the whole body of believers, who are joined to Christ, as members to the Head. In a word, the Lord honors by this name the Church, which is the spouse of Christ, just as the wife is honored by bearing the name and title of her husband. He calls "Israel his *servant,"* that is, he calls the Church his handmaid, because she is "the pillar and foundation of truth," (1 Timothy 3:15;) for he hath committed his word to the care of the Church, that by her ministrations it may be published throughout the whole world.

In thee I will be glorified. At length, in the conclusion of the verse he shews what is the design of these ministrations, and for what purpose, they who preach the Gospel are called by God; namely, that they may zealously display his glory, and may likewise promote it among others, which Christ also teaches us in the Gospel,

"Father, glorify thy Son, that thy Son may glorify thee." (John 17:1.)

This is a very high honor conferred on poor, feeble men, when the Lord appoints them, though corrupt and depraved, to promote his glory; and therefore we ought to be the more encouraged to render to him our service and obedience. Yet God intends to express something more, that, notwithstanding the efforts of Satan and all wicked men, the power of God will be victorious, so that Christ shall triumph gloriously, and the majesty of God shall shine forth in his Gospel.

4. *And I said, In vain have I toiled.* The Prophet here brings forward a grievous complaint in the name of the Church, yet in such a manner that, as we have formerly remarked, we must begin with the Head. Christ therefore complains along with his members, that it appears as if his labor were thrown away; for, having formerly pronounced a high and striking commendation on

the power and efficacy of the word which proceedeth out of his mouth, while yet it scarcely does any good, and the glory which God demands from the ministration of it does not shine forth, he therefore introduces the Church as complaining that she spends her labor fruitlessly, because men do not repent at the preaching of heavenly doctrine.

It was highly necessary that the Prophet should add this; first, that we may know that the fruit which he mentioned is not always visible to the eyes of men; for otherwise we might call in question the truth of the word, and might entertain doubts if that which is so obstinately rejected by many was the word of God. Secondly, it was necessary, that we may advance with unshaken firmness, and may commit our labor to the Lord, who will not permit it to be ultimately unproductive. The Prophet therefore intended to guard against a dangerous temptation, that we may not, on account of the obstinacy of men, lose courage in the middle of our course. And indeed Christ begins with the complaint, for the purpose of affirming that nothing shall hinder him from executing his office. The meaning of the words might be more clearly brought out in the following manner: "Though my labor be unprofitable, and though I have almost exhausted my strength without doing any good, yet it is enough that God approves of my obedience." Such is also the import of what he adds, —

But my judgement is before Jehovah. Although we do not clearly see the fruit of our labors, yet we are enjoined to be content on this ground, that we serve God, to whom our obedience is acceptable. Christ exhorts and encourages godly teachers to strive earnestly till they rise victorious over this temptation, and, laying aside the malice of the world, to advance cheerfully in the discharge of duty, and not to allow their hearts to languish through weariness. If therefore the Lord be pleased to make trial of our faith and patience to such an extent that it shall seem as if we wearied ourselves to no purpose, yet we ought to rely on this testimony of our conscience And if we do not enjoy this consolation, at least we are not moved by pure affection, and do not serve God, but the world and our own ambition. In such temptations, therefore, we should have recourse to this sentiment.

Yet it ought to be observed, that here Christ and the Church accuse the whole world of ingratitude; for the Church complains to God in such a manner as to remonstrate with the world, because no good effect is produced on it by the doctrine of the Gospel, which in itself is efficacious and powerful. Yet the whole blame rests on the obstinacy and ingratitude of men, who reject the grace of God offered to them, and of their own accord choose to perish. Let those persons now go and accuse Christ, who say that the Gospel yields little fruit, and who defame the doctrine of the word by wicked slanders, and who throw ridicule on our labors as vain and unprofitable, and who allege that, on the contrary, they excite men to sedition, and lead them to sin with less control. Let them consider, I say, with whom they have to do, and what advantage they gain by their impudence, since men alone ought to bear the

blame, who, as far as lies in their power, render the preaching of the Word unprofitable.

Godly ministers, who bitterly lament that men perish so miserably by their own fault, and who sometimes devour and waste themselves through grief, when they experience so great perversity, ought to encourage their hearts by this consolation, and not to be alarmed so as to throw away the shield and spear, though sometimes they imagine that it would be better for them to do so. Let them consider that they share with Christ in this cause; for Christ does not speak of himself alone, as we formerly mentioned, but undertakes the cause of all who faithfully serve him, and, as their advocate, brings forward an accusation in the name of all. Let them therefore rely on his protection, and allow him to defend their cause. Let them appeal, as Paul does, to the day of the Lord, (1 Corinthians 4:4,) and let them not heed the calumnies, reproaches, or slanders of their enemies; for their judgment is with the Lord, and although they be a hundred times slandered by the world, yet a faithful God will approve and vindicate the service which they render to him.

On the other hand, let wicked men, and despisers of the word, and hypocrites, tremble; for when Christ accuses, there will be no room for defense; and when he condenms, there will be none that can acquit. We must therefore beware lest the fruit which ought to proceed from the Gospel should be lost through our fault; for the Lord manifests his glory in order that we may become disciples of Christ, and may bring forth much fruit.

5. *And now saith Jehovah.* By this verse he confirms the former statement, and yields more abundant consolation, by repeating that calling; and the testimony of conscience, which ought to be regarded by us as a fortress; for there is nothing that gives us greater distress and anxiety, than to entertain doubts by whose authority, or by whose direction everything is undertaken by us. For this reason Isaiah reminds us of the certainty of our calling.

Who formed me from the womb to be his servant. In the first place, godly teachers, along with Christ who is their Prince, say that they have been "formed" by a divine hand; because God always enriches and adorns with necessary gifts those whom he calls to the office of teaching, who derive from the one fountain of the Spirit all the gifts in which they excel. Thus "the Father hath sealed" (John 6:27) his Only-begotten Son, and next prepares others, according to their degree, to be fit for discharging their office. At the same time, he points out the end of the calling; for to this end have Apostles and teachers of the Church been appointed, to gather the Lord's scattered flock, that under Christ we may all be united in the same body. (Ephesians 4:11, 13.) In the world there is miserable dispersion, but in Christ there is {ἀνακεφαλαίωσις} "a gathering together" of all, (Ephesians 1:10,) as the Apostle speaks; for there can be no other bond of union. As to the word "create," or "form," it is to no purpose that some men speculate about it as relating to Christ's human existence, which was created; for it is clearer

than noon-day, that the "forming" must be viewed as relating to office.

And though Israel be not gathered. The Jews read these words as a question: "Shall I not bring back Jacob? and shall Israel not be gathered?" and supply the particle {ה} (*ha*). But that reading is excessively unnatural, and the Jews do not consider what was the Prophet's meaning, but, so far as lies in their power, corrupt the text, in order to conceal the disgrace of their nation. Some explain it, "Shall not be lost," or, "Shall not perish;" for the verb {אסף} *(asaph)* sometimes denotes what we commonly call *(trousser) to truss.* Those things which are intended to be preserved are "gathered," and likewise those things which are intended to be consumed; and accordingly, when we mean that any person has been removed out of the world, we frequently use the vulgar phrase, "he is trussed," [245] or, "he is despatched."

Yet I shall be glorious. To suppose the meaning to be, "I have been sent, that Israel may not perish," would not be unsuitable; but I choose rather to follow a different interpretation, namely, "Though Israel be not gathered, yet I shall be glorious;" for it is probable that opposite things are contrasted with each other in this passage. If ministers have been set apart, for the salvation of men, it is glorious to them when many are brought to salvation; and when the contrary happens, it tends to their shame and disgrace. Paul calls those whom he had gained to Christ "his glory and crown." (Philippians 4:1; 1 Thessalonians 2:19.) On the other hand, when men perish, we receive from it nothing but shame and disgrace; for God appears to curse our labors, and not to deign to bestow on us the high honor of advancing his kingdom by our agency. But the Prophet declares that those who have served Christ shall nevertheless be glorious; for he speaks both of the head and of the members, as we have formerly remarked. Although therefore Israel refuse to be "gathered," yet the ministry of Christ shall retain its glory unimpaired; for it will be ascribed to the baseness and wickedness of men, that they have not been "gathered."

In like manner, although the preachers of the Gospel be "the savor of death unto death" to the reprobate, yet Paul declares that they have a sweet and delightful odor before God, who determines that wicked men shall thus be rendered the more inexcusable. God is indeed doubly glorified if success corresponds to their wishes; but when the ministers of the word have left nothing undone, though they have good reason to lament that their labor is unprofitable, still they must not repent of having pleased God, whose approbation is here contrasted with the perverse judgments of the whole world. As if the Prophet had said, "Though men vehemently slander and load them with many reproaches, yet this ought to be calmly and patiently endured by them; because God judges differently, and bestows a crown of honor on their patience, which wicked men insolently slander.

[245] The idiomatic use of "trousser," bears a strong resemblance to the idioms of the Italian and English languages. Thus, "trousser baggage," — "far fagotto," — "to pack up one's baggage." Again, "trousser un homme," — "spacciare per le poste all' altro mondo," — "to despatch him post haste into the other world." — Ed.

And my God shall be my strength. When he says that it is enough that "God is their strength," the meaning corresponds to what goes before, that they ought not to be terrified by the multitude or power of their enemies, seeing that they are persuaded that their "strength" lies in God.

6. *And he said, It is a small matter.* Isaiah proceeds still farther, and shews that the labor of Christ, and of the whole Church, will be glorious not only before God, but likewise before men. Although at first it appears to be vain and useless, yet the Lord will cause some fruit to spring from it contrary to the expectations of men. Already it was enough that our labor should be approved by God; but when he adds that it will not be unprofitable even in the eyes of men, this ought still more abundantly to comfort, and more vehemently to excite us. Hence it follows, that we ought to have good hopes of success, but that we ought to leave it to the disposal of God himself, that the blessing which he promises may be made manifest at the proper time, to whatever extent, and in whatever manner he shall think proper.

Therefore I have appointed thee to be a light of the Gentiles. He now adds, that this labor will be efficacious, not only among the people of Israel, but likewise among the Gentiles; and so it actually happened. Moreover, when the preaching of the Gospel produced hardly any good effect on the Jews, and when Christ was obstinately rejected by them, the Gentiles were substituted in their room. And thus Christ was

"appointed to be a light of the Gentiles, and his salvation was manifested to the very ends of the earth." (Acts 13:47.)

Now this consolation was highly necessary, both for prophets and for apostles, who experienced more and more the obstinacy of the Jews. They might doubt the truth of these promises, since they did not perceive them to yield any fruit; but when they understood that Christ was sent to the Gentiles also, it was not so difficult to animate their hearts to persevere. This was incredible, and even monstrous; but this is the manner in which the Lord commonly works, contrary to the expectation of all. Paul says that this was "a mystery bidden from ages," and that the angels themselves did not understand it until it was actually revealed in the Church of God. (Ephesians 3:5.) Although therefore the Jews alone appeared to have discernment, they are now placed on a level with the Gentiles, and with God "there is no distinction between the Jews and the Greeks." (Romans 10:12.)

The Jews read this verse as a question, "Is it a small thing?" As if he had said, that it is enough, and that nothing more or greater ought to be desired. But they maliciously corrupt the natural meaning of the Prophet, and imagine that they will one day be lords of the Gentiles, and will have wide and extensive dominion. The true meaning of the Prophet is, "This work in itself indeed is magnificent and glorious, to raise up and restore the tribes of Israel, which had fallen very low; for he will add the Gentiles to the Jews, that they may be united as one people, and may be acknowledged to belong to Christ." Nor does this passage relate to the rejection of the

ancient people, but to the increase of the Church, that the Gentiles may be associated with the Jews. It is true, indeed, that when the Jews revolted from the covenant, the Gentiles entered, as it were, into that place which they had left vacant; and thus their revolt was the reason why those who had formerly been aliens were admitted to be sons. But in this, as well as in other passages, Isaiah foretells that the Church will be greatly extended, when the Gentiles shall be received and united to the Jews in the unity of faith.

A light of the Gentiles. Although by the word "light" is meant happiness, or joy, yet the Prophet, I have no doubt, directly refers to the doctrine of the Gospel, which enlightens souls, and draws them out of darkness, He shews that this "light," which Christ shall bring, will give salvation. In the same manner as Christ is called "the way, the truth, and the life," (John 14:6) because through the knowledge of the truth we obtain life, so in this passage he is called the "light" and salvation of the Gentiles, because he enlightens our minds by the doctrine of the Gospel, in order that he may lead us to salvation. Two things, therefore, ought to be remarked; first, that our eyes are opened by the doctrine of Christ; and secondly, that we who had perished are restored to life, or rather life is restored to us.

7. *Thus saith Jehovah.* Isaiah pursues the same subject, that the people, when they were afflicted by that terrible calamity, might cherish the hope of a better condition; and, in order to confirm it the more, he calls God, who promised these things, *the Redeemer and the Holy One of Israel* It will be objected that these statements are contradictory, that is, that God is called the "redeemer" of that people which he permitted to be oppressed; for where is this redemption, and where is this sanctification, if the people could reply that they were miserable and ruined? I reply, the record of ancient history is here exhibited as the ground of confidence and hope; for when the Jews were on the point of despair, the Prophet comes forward and reminds them that God, who had formerly redeemed their fathers, is still as powerful as ever; and therefore, although for a time, in order to exercise the faith of the godly, he concealed their salvation, believers are commanded to stand firm, because in his hand their redemption is certain. Yet it was proper that they should form conceptions of that which lay far beyond human senses. This is a remarkable passage, from which we learn how firmly we ought to believe God when he speaks, though he does not immediately perform what he has promised, but permits us to languish, and to be afflicted for a long time.

To the contemptible in the soul. {בזה} *(bezo)* is rendered by some commentators "contempt," and by others "contemptible," which I prefer. [246] It heightens the wretchedness of that nation, that "in the soul," that is, in their own estimation, they are "contemptible." Many are despised by others, though they either deserve honor on account of their good qualities, or do

[246] {{בזה (bezo) has been variously explained as an infinitive, a passive participle, and an adjective in the construct state, which last is adopted by Gessenius and most later writers." — Alexander.

not cease to swell with pride, and to tread down the arrogance of others by still greater arrogance. But of this people the Prophet says, that they despise themselves as much as others despise them. He therefore describes deep disgrace and a very unhappy condition, and, at the same time, prostration of mind, that they may know that God's time for rendering assistance will be fully come, when they shall be altogether humbled.

To the abhorred nation. [247] I see no reason why the plural "Nations," is here employed by some interpreters; seeing that the singular {גוי}, (*goi*,) "nation," is used by the Prophet, and it is certain that the discourse is specially directed to the posterity of Abraham.

To the servant of rulers. This is added, as if he had said that they are oppressed by strong tyrants; for he gives the appellation {משלים} *(moshelim)* to those whose strength and power are so great that it is not easy to escape out of their hands.

When he says that *kings shall see,* he speaks in lofty terms of the deliverance of his nation; but yet he permits them to be put to the test in the fumace, that he may make trial of their faith and patience; for otherwise there would be no trial of their faith, if he immediately performed what he promised, as we have already said. The word *princes* contains a repetition which is customary among the Hebrews. We would express it thus: "Kings and princes shall see; they shall rise up: and adore." By the word *adore,* he explains what he had said, "They shall rise up;" for we "rise up" for the purpose of shewing respect. The general meaning is, that the most exalted princes of the world shall be aroused to perceive that the restoration of the nation is an illustrious work of God, and worthy of reverence.

For faithful is the Holy One of Israel. This is the reason of the great admiration and honor which the princes shall render to God. It is because they shall perceive the "faithfulness" and constancy of the Lord in his promises. Now, the Lord wishes to be acknowledged to be true, not by a bare and naked imagination, but by actual experience, that is, by preserving the people whom he has adopted. Let us therefore learn from it, that we ougtlt not to judge of the promises of God from our condition, but from his truth; so that, when we shall see nothing before us but destruction and death, we may remember this sentiment, by which the Lord calls to himself the contemptible and abominable.

Hence also it ought to be observed, how splendid and astonishing a work of God is the deliverance of the Church, which compels kings, though proud, and deeming hardly anything so valuable as to be worthy of their notice, to behold, admire, and be amazed, and even in spite of themselves to reverence the Lord. This strange and extraordinary work, therefore, is highly

[247] "'Whom the nation abhorreth, who abhorreth the nation, who excites the abhorrence of the nation, the nation which excites abhorrence,' — all these are passable translations of the Hebrew words, among which interpreters choose according to their different views respecting the whole passage. In any case it is descriptive of deep debasement and general contempt, to be exchanged hereafter for an opposite condition." — Alexander.

commended to us. How great and how excellent it is, we may learn from ourselves; for to say nothing about ancient histories, in what manner have we been redeemed from the wretched tyranny of Antichrist? Truly we shall consider it to be "a dream," as the Psalmist says, (Psalm 126:1,) if we ponder it carefully for a short time; so strange and incredible is the work which God hath performed in us who have possessed the name of Christ.

And who hath chosen thee. He now repeats what he had formerly glanced at, that this nation has been set apart to God. But in election we perceive the beginning of sanctification; for it was in consequence of God having deigned to elect them out of his mere good pleasure, that this nation became his peculiar inheritance. Isaiah therefore points out the secret will of God, from which sanctification proceeds; that Israel might not think that he had been selected on account of his own merits. As if he had said, "The Lord, who hath chosen thee, gives actual proof of his election, and shows it by the effect." In the same manner, therefore, as the truth of God ought to be acknowledged in our salvation, so salvation ought to be ascribed exclusively to his election, which is of free grace. Yet they who wish to become partakers of so great a benefit, must be a part of Israel, that is, of the Church, out of which there can be neither salvation nor truth.

8. *In a time of good pleasure.* From this verse we again learn more clearly what we explained at the beginning of this chapter, that the Prophet, while he addresses the whole body of the Church, begins with Christ, who is the head. I have said that this ought to be carefully observed; for commentators have not attended to it, and yet there is no other way in which this chapter can be consistently expounded. This is clearly shewn by Paul, who applies this statement to the whole Church. (2 Corinthians 6:2.) And yet, what the Prophet adds, *I will give thee to be a covenant,* is applicable to no other than Christ.

How shall we reconcile these statements? By considering that Christ is not so much his own as ours; for he neither came, nor died, nor rose again for himself. He was sent for the salvation of the Church, and seeks nothing as his own; for he has no want of anything. Accordingly, God makes promises to the whole body of the Church. Christ, who occupies the place of Mediator, receives these promises, and does not plead on behalf of himself as an individual, but of the whole Church, for whose salvation he was sent. On this account he does not address Christ separately, but so far as he is joined and continually united to his body. It is an inconceivable honor which our heavenly Father bestows upon us, when he listens to his Son on our account, and when he even directs the discourse to the Son, while the matter relates to our salvation. Hence we see how close is the connection between us and Christ. He stands in our room, and has nothing separate from us; and the Father listens to our cause.

By the word "good pleasure," the Prophet lays a bridle on believers, so to speak, that they may not be too eager in their desires, but may wait patiently

till the time appointed by God has arrived; and in this sense Paul gives to the coming of Christ the appellation of "the time of fullness." (Galatians 4:4.) He means, therefore, that they depend on God's disposal, and ought therefore to endure his wrath with meekness and composure. But although the intention of the Prophet is to exhort the godly to patience, that they may learn to place their feelings in subordination to God, yet at the same time he shows that our salvation proceeds from God's undeserved kindness. {רצון} *(ratzon)* which the Greeks translate {εὐδοκία}, that is, the good-will of God is the foundation of our salvation; and salvation is the effect of that grace. We are saved, because we please God, not through our worthiness or merits, but by his free grace. Secondly, he shows, at the same time, that our salvation is certain, when we have a clear proof of the grace of the Lord. All doubt ought to be removed, when the Lord testified of his "good pleasure." This passage tends to the commendation of the word, beyond which we ought not to inquire about salvation; as Paul declares that the good pleasure of God is clearly manifested in the preaching of the Gospel, and that thus is fulfilled what is contained in this passage about "the day of salvation." (2 Corinthians 6:2.)

Thirdly, the Prophet intended to remind us, that God gives us an undoubted pledge of his favor when he sends the Gospel to us; because it is evident that he has compassion upon us, when he gently invites us to himself, that we may not look around in every direction to seek this light, which ought to be expected only from God's gracious pleasure, or be tortured by doubt, from which God frees us. But let us remember that all this depends on God's free purpose. When therefore the question is put, why the Lord enlightened us at this time rather than at an earlier period, the reason which ought to be assigned is this: because thus it pleased God, thus it seemed good in his sight. Such is the conclusion to which Paul comes in the passage which we quoted,

"Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." (2 Corinthians 6:2.)

This passage may greatly aid us in ascertaining Isaiah's meaning, that we may learn to connect our salvation with God's good pleasure; a proof of which is given to us in the preaching of the Gospel. It ought also to be observed, that these predictions should not be limited to a certain age, since they belong to the whole Church in all ages. For if we begin with the deliverance from Babylon, we must go on to the redemption of Christ, of which it might be regarded as the commencement and the forerunner; and since there are still found among us many remnants of slavery, we must proceed forward to the last day, when everything shall be restored.

I have appointed thee to be a covenant. This makes it still more evident, that all that had formerly been said was promised to Christ, not for the sake of his personal advantage, but on our behalf; for he has been appointed to be the mediator of the covenant, because the Jews by their sins had revolted

from God, who had made an everlasting covenant with them. The renewal of that covenant, therefore, which had been broken or dissolved, is ascribed to Christ. Yet we must likewise keep in view the saying of Paul, that

"Christ is our peace, to reconcile both them that are far off, and them that are near." (Ephesians 2:14, 17.)

But, Isaiah had directly in view that lamentable ruin, the remedy for which could be expected from Christ alone. Besides, it is proper to apply this grace to ourselves, because, as compared to the Jews, before the Gospel was preached, we were enemies and aliens from God, and could not in any other way be reconciled to him. Christ was therefore "given to be a covenant of the people," because there was no other way to God but by him. At that time the Jews were a people; but in consequence of the partition-wall having been broken down, all of us, both Jews and Gentiles, have been united in one body.

That thou mayest raise up the earth, which at that time was waste and desolate; for the return of the people was, as we have elsewhere seen, a kind of new creation. Such is also the design of the words of the Prophet, that we may know that there is nothing in the world but ruin and desolation. Christ is sent in order to restore what was fallen down and decayed. If we had not been in a fallen condition, there would have been no reason why Christ should be sent to us. We ought therefore to weigh well our condition; for we are aliens from God, destitute of life, and shut out from all hope of salvation. But by Christ we are fully restored and reconciled to our Heavenly Father. Isaiah likewise adds the benefits which we obtain through Christ, after having been reconciled to God.

9. *That thou mayest say to them that are bound.* These words describe the change which took place at the coming of Christ. And yet the Prophet unquestionably intends to administer consolation to the Jews in their extremity, that they may not think it incredible that they shall be restored to a better condition, because they see that they are almost devoted to destruction. Still, he shows in general what is the nature of Christ's office, and explains what is meant by *restoring desolate heritages;* for, before the coming of Christ, we are "bound" under a miserable yoke, and plunged in darkness. By these metaphors is meant, that so long as we are without Christ, we are overwhelmed by a load of all evils; for by *darkness* he excludes everything that relates to the kingdom of Christ, faith, righteousness, truth, innocence, and everything of that nature. We are therefore in "darkness," till Christ say, *Shew yourselves* We are "bound," till he say, *Come forth.*

The word {לאמר}, (*lemor,*) "that thou mayest say," is highly emphatic; for it shews that the preaching of the Gospel is the means by which we are delivered. If therefore we desire liberty, if we desire the light of the kingdom of God, let us listen to Christ when he speaks; otherwise we shall be oppressed by the unceasing tyranny of Satan. Where then is the liberty of our will? Whosoever claims for himself light, or reason, or understanding,

can have no share in this deliverance of Christ; for liberty is not promised to any but those who acknowledge that they are captives, and light and salvation are not promised to any but those who acknowledge that they are plunged in darkness.

On the ways they shall feed. When he promises that pastures shall be accessible to the children of God, and shall be on the tops of the mountains, by these metaphors he declares that all who shall be under the protection of Christ shall dwell safely; for he is a careful and attentive Shepherd, who supplies his flock with everything that is necessary, so that they are in want of nothing that is requisite for the highest happiness. (John 10:11.) This instruction was highly necessary at the time when the Jews were about to perform a joumey through dry and barren countries, in their return to a land which lay waste and desolate. The Prophet therefore says that God has abundant resources for supplying their wants, though earthly means should fail; and accordingly, in accordance with the ordinary custom of Scripture, he compares believers to sheep, in order that, being aware of their weakness, they may shrink themselves entirely to the care of the Shepherd.

Yet it is probable that indirectly he warns believers not to desire excessive luxury, because they will never have so great a superfluity as not to be attended by many difficulties; and likewise not to become effeminate, because they will be beset by dangers; for we know that "the ways" are exposed to the attacks of enemies and robbers, and that the tops of mountains are for the most part barren. The Church is governed by Christ in such a manner as not to be free from the attacks and insults of men, and is fed in such a manner as frequently to inhabit barren and frightful regions. But though enemies are at hand, God protects us from their violence and oppression. If we are thirsty or hungry, he is abundantly able to supply everything that is necessary for food and maintenance; and amidst perils and difficulties of this nature we perceive his care and anxiety more dearly than if we were placed beyond the reach of all danger.

10. *They shall not hunger or thirst.* He confirms what was said in the former verse, that there is food in the hand of God, so that the Jews shall not be in want of provisions for their joumey. Nor can it be doubted that he calls to their remembrance, that when their fathers were threatened with death in the wilderness through a scarcity of bread and of every kind of food, God gave them daily, for forty years, manna from heaven. (Exodus 16:35.) In like manner, when he immediately afterwards speaks of a shadow against *the heat of the sun,* he alludes to the history related by Moses about "the pillar of a cloud," by which God protected his people from being scorched by the buming rays of the sun. (Exodus 13:21.) We have said that it is customary with the prophets to mention the departure of the people out of Egypt, whenever they intend to demonstrate the kindness of God, either publicly towards all, or privately towards any individual.

By the fountains of waters. He likewise alludes to those waters which

flowed from the rock, (Exodus 17:6,) when the people had well-nigh perished from thirst; for those occurrences did not take place at the deliverance from Babylon, but, by mentioning former benefits, the Prophet magnifies the power of God in securing the safety of the Church.

11. *And I will place all my mountains.* Here he directly and expressly treats of the return of the people; for in vain would he have promised so great happiness to the Church, if the people were not to be restored to their former liberty. The meaning is, that he will remove every obstacle and hinderance that might prevent the return of the people; and that he will render the "mountains" passable, which appeared to be impassable; and, in short, that he will level both the mountains and the valleys, that their return to Judea may be facilitated. Thus, when the Church is about to be completely restored, no obstructions, however great and formidable, can hinder God from being finally victorious. Besides, when he calls them "my mountains," he not only means that he has an absolute right to command them to afford a passage to his people, but declares that he will be the leader of the expedition, as if he would march along with the Jews, and accompany them in the joumey. In like manner, it is said in another passage, that he passed through Egypt and "rode on the high places of it" at the departure of his people. (Deuteronomy 32:13.) But here he describes the extraordinary love of God towards the Church, when he says that he travels along with her, and undertakes to supply all her wants, as if he were consulting his own interests when he assisted his people.

12. *Behold, those from afar shall come.* The opinion entertained by some, that the four quarters of the earth are here denoted, does not rest on very solid grounds; yet I do not reject it, because it not only is probable, but agrees with many other passages. Undoubtedly, he first says that they shall come from distant parts of the world, and next adds certain subdivisions or parts in order to explain this general statement.

And those from the land of Sinis. Instead of "Sinis," some read "Sinis;" and indeed the Hebrew copies differ. [248] Jerome thinks (and this is the commonly received opinion) that a southern region is so denominated from Mount Sinai, which lay toward the south. Others think that "Syene" is meant, because it lies under the tropic of Cancer. [249] But this diversity has nothing to do with the meaning of the Prophet, which of itself is clear and easy to be understood; for the Prophet unquestionably means those who had been scattered and dispersed in various places, whether they are collected from the north or from the sea. While Isaiah promises a return from Babylon,

[248] The resemblance of {{ס Samech to {ם} final Mem partly accounts for the difference of the readings. — Ed

[249] "Various interpretations have been given of this name, both in ancient and modern times. The Targum and Vulgate understand it of some land in the far south; the Septuagint supposes it to be Persia; Jerome, Jarchi, and Grotius, misled by similarity of sound, refer it to the wilderness of Sin and Mount Sinai. Others refer it to Egypt, as if that country were so named, either from Sin, or Syene. Others, with higher probability, understand 'Sinim' to be China." — Eadie's Cyclopcedia. "From the north — Tartary; west, Europe; Sinim, the Chinese, in whose country a multitude of Jews he hid, if we may believe the curious account of them, published by the Jesuit Brotier, in his supplement to Tacit. Hist. 1. v." — Stock.

he at the same time extends this prediction to the time of Christ, as may be easily learned from what goes before; for we must keep in remembrance what we formerly said, that the second birth of the Church is here described. Not only does he promise that the Jews shall return to Jerusalem to build the temple, but likewise that they who had formerly been aliens from the Church, shall be collected from every corner of the world.

13. *Praise, O heavens; and rejoice, O earth.* Though he exhorts and encourages all the godly to thanksgiving, yet he likewise aims at confirming the promise which might have been regarded as doubtful; for afflictions trouble our consciences, and cause them to waver in such a manner that it is not so easy to rest firmly on the promises of God. In short, men either remain in suspense, or tremble, or utterly fall and even faint. So long as they are oppressed by fear or anxiety, or grief, they scarcely accept of any consolation; and therefore they need to be confirmed in various ways. This is the reason why Isaiah describes the advantages of this deliverance in such lofty terms, in order that believers, though they beheld nothing around them but death and ruin, might sustain their heart by the hope of a better condition. Accordingly, he places the subject almost before their eye, that they may be fully convinced that they shall have the most abundant cause of rejoicing; though at that time they saw nothing but grief and sorrow.

Let us therefore remember, that whenever the Lord promises anything, we ought to add thanksgiving, that we may more powerfully affect our hearts; and next, that we ought to raise our minds to the power of God, who exercises a wide and extensive dominion over all the creatures; for as soon as he lifts his hand, "heaven and earth" are moved. If the tokens of his wonderful power are to be seen everywhere, he intends that there shall be an eminent and remarkable example of it in the salvation of the Church.

And he wilt have compassion on his poor. By this metaphor the Prophet shews that no obedience which is rendered to God by heaven and earth is more acceptable to him than to join together and lend their mutual aid to his Church. Moreover, that believers may not faint under the weight of distresses, before promising to them consolation from God, he exhorts them calmly to bear distresses; for by the word *poor* he means that the Church, in this world, is liable to many calamities. In order, therefore, that we may partake of the compassion of God, let us learn, under the cross and amidst many annoyances, to strive after it with sighs and tears.

14. *But Zion said, Jehovah hath forsaken me.* In order to magnify his grace the more, God complains that the hearts of the Jews were so narrow and close, that the road was almost shut against him, if he had not overcome their wicked thoughts by his great goodness. Yet at the same time he endeavors to correct this fault, that the deliverance which is offered, and, as it were, set before them, may be received by them with open hearts, and that, as he is willing to assist them, so they, on the other hand, may be prepared to cherish favorable hopes. Now, to us also this doctrine belongs; because

almost all of us, when God delays his assistance, are fearfully distressed and tormented; for we think that he has forsaken and rejected us. Thus despair quickly creeps in, which must be opposed, that we may not be deprived of the grace of God. And indeed amidst these doubts our unbelief is manifested and exposed, by our not relying on the promises of God, so as to bear patiently either the chastisements by which God urges us to repentance, or the trials of faith by which he trains us to patience, or any afflictions by which he humbles us. Justly therefore does God remonstrate with the Jews for rejecting by wicked distrust the salvation offered to them, and not permitting themselves to receive assistance. Nor does he limit this accusation to a small number, but includes nearly the whole Church, in order to shew that he will be kind and bountiful toward the Jews beyond the measure of their faith, and that he even strives with them, that by his salvation he may break through all the hinderances by which they opposed him. Let each of us therefore beware of indulging or flattering ourselves in this matter; for the Lord contends with the whole Church, for uttering speeches of this kind, which proceed from the fountain of distrust.

15. *Shall a woman forget her child!* In order to correct that distrust, he adds to the remonstrance an exhortation full of the sweetest consolation. By an appropriate comparison, he shews how strong is his anxiety about his people, comparing himself to a mother, whose love toward her offspring is so strong and ardent, as to leave far behind it a father's love. Thus he did not satisfy himself with proposing the example of a father, (which on other occasions he very frequently employs,) but in order to express his very strong affection, he chose to liken himself to a mother, and calls them not merely "children," but *the fruit of the womb,* towards which there is usually a warmer affection. What amazing affection does a mother feel toward her offspring, which she cherishes in her bosom, suckles on her breast, and watches over with tender care, so that she passes sleepless nights, wears herself out by continued anxiety, and forgets herself! And this carefulness is manifested, not only among men, but even among savage beasts, which, though they are by nature cruel, yet in this respect are gentle.

Even if they shall forget. Since it does sometimes happen that mothers degenerate into such monsters as to exceed in cruelty the wild beasts and forget "the fruit of their womb," the Lord next declares that, even though this should happen, still he will never forget his people. The affection which he bears toward us is far stronger and warmer than the love of all mothers. We ought also to bear in mind the saying of Christ,

"If ye, being evil, know how to give good things to your children, how much more your heavenly Father?" (Matthew 7:11.)

Men, though by nature depraved and addicted to self-love, are anxious about their children. What shall God do, who is goodness itself? Will it be possible for him to lay aside a father's love? Certainly not. Although therefore it should happen that mothers (which is a monstrous thing) should

forsake their own offspring, yet God, whose love toward his people is constant and unremitting, will never forsake them. In a word, the Prophet here describes to us the inconceivable carefulness with which God unceasingly watches over our salvation, that we may be fully convinced that he will never forsake us, though we may be afflicted with great and numerous calamities.

16. *Behold, on the palms of my hands.* By another cormparison he describes that inconceivable carefulness which the Lord exercises toward us. It is a common proverb, that "we have it on our fingers' ends," when we have anything fully and deeply fixed on our memory. And Moses when he recommends constant meditation on the Law, says, "Thou shalt bind them for a sign on thy hand;" that is, that they should always have the commandments of God placed before their eyes. (Deuteronomy 6:8.) He now makes use of the same comparison; as if he had said, "I cannot look at my hands without beholding thee in them; I carry thee engraved on my heart, so that no forgetfulness can efface thee; in a word, I cannot forget thee without forgetting myself." True, indeed, God has neither hands nor bodily shape; but Scripture accommodates itself to our weak capacity so as to express the strength of God's love toward us.

Thy walls are continually before me. As the Church is frequently called the "habitation" or "city of God," (and hence also the metaphor of "building" (Psalm 102:16; Jeremiah 24:6; Matthew 16:18) is frequently employed in Scripture,) so he makes use of the figurative term "walls," by which he denotes the peace and prosperity of the Church; as if he had said that he would take care that Jerusalem should thrive and flourish. Yet it ought to be observed that the term "walls" denotes proper order of policy and discipline, of which God declares that he will be the ceaseless and unwearied guardian. Let us remember that this prophecy was accomplished during that frightful desolation, when the "walls" of Jerusalem, which were a lively image of the Church, had been cast down, the temple overthrown, and government overtumed, and, in a word, when everything had been destroyed and nearly razed to the foundation; for immediately afterwards he promises that they shall all be restored.

17. *Thy builders hasten.* He affirms what had been briefly stated in the former verse; for it might have been thought that there was no ground for what he had now asserted about the unceasing care which God takes of his Church and of her walls, which he permits to be razed to their foundations, and therefore he adds the explanation, that it will indeed be thrown down, but will afterwards be built anew. *Builders.* From this word we may learn what is the true method of restoring the Church, namely, if the Lord send "builders, [250] to rear it, and next if he *drive far away the destroyers* who demolish it. Though God could, by himself, and without the aid of men, rebuild the Church, yet he deigns to employ their hands; and although he alone, by the secret influence of his Spirit, completes this whole building,

[250] "Maistres charpentiers et massons." "Master carpenters and masons."

yet he blesses their labor, that it may not be useless. From him, therefore, we ought to ask and look for builders; for it belongs to him to render them "sufficient," as Paul also informs us, (2 Corinthians 3:5,) and to assign to each his department.

We ought also to pray not only that he may "send forth laborers into his harvest," (Matthew 9:38,) but that he may recruit their strength and efficaciously direct them, so that they may not labor in vain; for, when the doctrine of the Gospel is preached with any advantage, it arises from his extraordinary goodness. But even this would not be enough, if he did not "drive destroyers far away;" for Satan, by innumerable arts, invades and assails the Church, and is in no want of servants and attendants, who direct their whole energy to destroy, or spoil, or hinder the Lord's building. We ought, therefore, constantly to entreat that he would ward off their attacks; and if the result be not entirely according to our expectations, let us blame our own sins and ingratitude; for the Lord was ready to bestow those blessings abundantly upon us.

18. *Lift up thine eyes round about.* He arouses the Church to survey this magnificent work, as if it were actually before her eyes, and to behold the multitudes of men who shall flock into it from every quarter. Now, as this assemblage must have encouraged godly hearts during the dispersion, so they who were eye-witnesses must have been excited to gratitude. This shews clearly that this prediction was useful at both periods, not only while the event was still concealed by hope, but when it had been actually accomplished. Though he speaks to the whole Church at large, yet this discourse relates also to individuals, that all with one accord, and each person separately, may embrace these promises.

When he bids them "lift up their eyes," he means that the reason why we are so much cast down is, that we do not examine the Lord's work with due attention, but have a vail placed, as it were, before our eyes, to hinder us from seeing what lies at our feet. In consequence of this, we do not cherish any confidence, but in adversity are almost overwhelmed by despair. And if these things are said to the whole Church, let every man consider in his own heart how far he is chargeable with this vice, and let him forthwith arouse and awaken himself to behold the works of the Lord, that he may rely with all his heart on his promises.

All are gathered together. When he says that the elect of the Church are "gathered together," he means that, in order to their becoming one body under Christ, and, as it were, "one fold under one shepherd," (John 10:16,) they must be, if we may so express it, "gathered" into one bosom. Christ reckons and treats as his followers none but those who are joined in one body by unity of faith. Whoever then shall choose to be regarded as belonging to the number of the children of God, let him be a son of the Church; for all who are separated from it will be aliens from God.

Thou shalt be clothed as with an ornament. The Prophet shews what is

the true ornament of the Church, namely, to have a great number of children, who are brought to her by faith and guided by the Spirit of God. This is true splendor; this is the glory of the Church, which must be filthy and ugly, ragged and dishevelled, if she have not these ornaments. Hence we see how well the Papists understand what is the true manner in which the Church ought to be adorned; for their whole attention is given to painted tables, to statues, to fine buildings, to gold, precious stones, and costly garments; that is, they give their whole attention to puppets, like children. But the true dignity of the Church is internal, so far as it consists of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and of progressive faith and piety. Hence it follows, that she is richly provided with her ornaments, when the people, joined together by faith, are gathered into her bosom, to worship God in a proper manner.

I live, saith Jehovah. [251] In order that this promise may be more certain, the Lord employs an oath, which is intended to warn us against distrust, and that, when we shall consider that her end is near, we may be certain that she shall be fully restored. And if this doctrine was ever necessary, it is especially necessary at the present time; for, wherever we tum our eyes, we meet with nothing but frightful desolation.

What then must we do, but, relying on this oath of God, struggle against despair, and not be terrified by our being inconsiderable in number, which makes us despised by the world, and not doubt that there are many of the elect, now wandering and scattered, whom God will at length assemble into his Church? And therefore we ought to encourage our hearts, and to lift up our eyes by faith, that we may extend our hope not only to a single age, but to the most distant period.

19. *For thy desolate places,* he confirms by other words what we have already seen, that the change which he promised is in the hand of God, that the Church, which was for a long time waste and desolate, may speedily have many inhabitants; so that the place may be too narrow to contain them all. He employs the metaphor of a ruinous city, whose walls and houses are rebuilt, to which the citizens return in such vast numbers that its circumference must be enlarged, because its former extent cannot contain them all. Thus he means not only the return of the people from Babylon, but the restoration which was effected through Christ; that is, when the Church was spread far and wide, not only throughout Judea, but throughout the whole world.

And thy destroyers shall remove far away. He adds that a garrison will be provided, if any enemies shall molest her; yea, that she shall be secure against their attacks and molestation, because God will "drive them far away." Not that the Church shall ever enjoy perfect peace, and be secured against all the attacks of enemies; but yet God, bearing with the weakness of his people,

[251] {{אני}-{חי} (chai ani) 'I the Living One,' is here, as in many other passages, the form of an oath, employed both by God and by men; and the meaning of it is: 'as truly as I live, so certainly will I perform this or that, and this or that event shall happen.' The particle {כי} (ki) here denotes the object of the oath, and is equivalent to {ὅτι} in Greek after the verbs {εἶπον} {λέγω} etc.." — Rosenmuller.

defended them from wicked men, and restrained or warded off their attacks, so that at least the kingdom of Satan might not grow out of the ruins of the Church.

20. *Shall again say in thine ears.* Isaiah continues the same subject, and, under a different metaphor, promises the restoration of the Church. He compares her to a widowed or rather a barren mother, in order to describe her wretched and distressful condition; for she was overwhelmed by so many distresses, that the remembrance of the nation appeared to have wholly perished. Mingled with the Babylonians, who held her captive, she had almost passed into another body. We need not wonder, therefore, if he compares her to a barren mother; for she brought forth no more children. Formerly the Jews had enjoyed high prosperity; but the kingdom was ruined, and all their strength was decayed, and, in short, their name was almost extinguished, when they were led into captivity. He therefore promises that the Church shall be purified from her filthiness, and that she who is now solitary shall regain that condition which she formerly held. And this is included in the word *Again,* that they may not doubt that it is in the power of God to restore what he formerly gave, though it was withdrawn for a time.

The children of thy bereavement. [252] By "the children of bereavement" some suppose that orphan children are meant; but I cannot agree with this, for "bereavement" and "barrenness" refer rather to the person of the Church, and accordingly it is for the sake of amplification that he describes them to be those who, contrary to expectation, had been given to her who was bereaved and barren.

Make room for me; that is, "withdraw for my benefit." Not that it is proper for the godly to shut out their brethren or drive them from their place; but the Prophet has borrowed from familiar language a mode of expression fitted to declare that no inconvenience shall hinder many from desiring to be admitted and to have room made for them. Now, this happened, when the Lord collected innumerable persons out of the whole world; for suddenly, and contrary to the expectation of men, the Church, which had formerly been empty, was filled; its boundaries were enlarged and extended far and wide.

21. *And thou shalt say in thy heart.* By these words he declares that the restoration of the Church, of which he now speaks, will be wonderful; and therefore he represents her as wondering and amazed on account of having been restored in a strange and unexpected manner. And truly a description of this sort is not superfluous; for, as a new offspring grows up among men every day, by which the human race is propagated, so the children of God and of the Church are born, who, "not from flesh and blood," (John 1:13,) but by the secret power of God, are formed again to be new creatures. By

[252] {{בנים} {שהייתה} {שכולה} {מהם} (banim shedayithah shekula methem,) 'the children of whom thou wast bereft.'" — Jarchi. "A city deprived of its inhabitants is compared to a mother bereft of her children." — Rosenmuller.

nature we have no share in the kingdom of God; [253] and therefore, if any man contemplate this new and uncommon work, and in what manner the Church is increased and maintained, he will be constrained to wonder.

Who hath begotten me these? He shews that this astonishment will not be pretended, like expressions of this kind which frequently proceed from flatterers, but that it will come from "the heart;" for there will be good ground for wondering, that the Lord has preserved the Church amidst so great dangers, and has multiplied it by a new and unexpected offspring. Who would have thought that, at the time when the Jews were held in the greatest contempt, and were overwhelmed by every kind of reproaches and distresses, there would be any of the Gentiles who of their own accord desired to be associated with them? It was also in the highest degree improbable that the dispositions of men should be so suddenly changed as to adopt a religion which they had detested. Besides, the partition-wall which had been erected between them hindered all foreigners and uncircumcised persons from entering.

For I was bereaved (or *barren) and solitary.* She now explains what was the chief ground of that astonishment; namely, that formerly she brought forth no children, and was altogether destitute. Doctrine, which is the seed of spiritual life, by which the children of the Church are begotten, (1 Peter 1:23,) had ceased; even the worship enjoined by the Law had been broken off; and, in short, everything that usually contributes to upholding the order of government had been taken away. Now, the Church is called *bereaved* or *barren,* not because God hath forsaken her, but because his presence is not always visible. We ourselves saw an image of that barrenness, when the Lord, in order to punish the ingratitude of men, took away his doctrine, and allowed them to wander in darkness. The Church might truly be said to be "bereaved" and "barren," when none of her children were seen. Hence we ought to conclude how foolish the Papists are, who wish that Christ would always govern his Church so that it may never be "bereaved" or "barren;" seeing that the Lord, thougit he does not forsake the Church, yet very frequently, on account of the ingratitude of men, withdraws the tokens of his presence.

Who then hath brought up those? It is no easy matter for those who are led into captivity, and who often change their place and habitation, to "bring up" children; and when the law and the doctrine of piety no longer resounded in the temple, spiritual nourishment had almost entirely failed. But the Lord, who has no need of human aid, begets his children in an extraordinary manner, and by the astonishing power of his Spirit, and "brings them up" wherever he thinks proper; and in the fulfillment of this prediction, the Lord supplied them with nurses contrary to the expectation of all, so that it is not without reason that the Church wonders how they were reared. When we read this prophecy we are reminded that we ought not to be distressed

[253] "Nous n'avons aucune part au royaume de Dieu."

beyond measure, if at any time we see the Church resemble a "bereaved" woman, and that we ought not to doubt that he can suddenly, or in a moment, raise up and restore her, though we perceive no means by which she can be restored.

22. *Thus saith the Lord Jehovah.* Isaiah confirms what he had said a little before, that the Lord would cause his Church, though for a very long time she had been "barren" and "bereaved," to have an exceedingly numerous offspring, and to be constrained to wonder at her own fruitfulness; and he does so, in order to remove all doubt which might have found its way into their hearts.

I will lift up my hand to the Gentiles. He declares that he will give children to the Church, not only from among the Jews, as formerly, but likewise from among "the Gentiles." And yet he indirectly asserts that this generation shall be spiritual through the grace of adoption; for the metaphor of a *banner* was intended to lead believers to expect a new kind of generation, and different from that which is seen in the ordinary course of nature. The Lord must therefore set up a sign, and display his secret power through the Gospel, [254] that, out of nations who differed so widely from each other both in customs and in language, he might bring children to the Church, who should be united in the same faith, as brethren meet in their mother's bosom.

Those who think that, by the figurative terms *Hand* and *Banner,* nothing more than the preaching of the Gospel is meant, and who set aside the power of the Spirit, are mistaken; for both ought to be united, and the efficacy of the Spirit ought not to be separated from the preaching of the Gospel, as Paul clearly shews. (2 Corinthians 3:6.) To this "hand" of God, therefore, to this "banner" we must betake ourselves, when we see that the Church is oppressed by the tyranny of wicked men. Though every effort be made to overthrow and destroy it, the "hand" of God is higher, and in vain do men oppose him. He will at length subdue and crush their obstinacy, that the Church may obtain some repose in spite of all their exertions.

When he promises that the sons of the Church *shall be brought in her arms and on her shoulders,* the language is metaphorical, and means that God will find no difficulty, when he shall wish to gather the Church out of her dispersion; for all the Gentiles will assist him. Although this refers, in the first instance, to the Jews who had been banished and scattered, yet it undoubtedly ought to be extended to all the elect of God, who have become partakers of the same grace.

23. *And kings shall be thy nursing fathers.* After having spoken of the obedience of the Gentiles, he shews that this relates not to the common people only, but to "kings" also. He compares "kings" to hired men who bring up the children of others, and "queens" to "nurses," who give out their labor for hire. Why so? Because "kings" and "queens" shall supply everything that is necessary for nourishing the offspring of the Church. Having formerly

[254] "Par la predication de l'Evangile." "By the preaching of the Gospel."

driven out Christ from their dominions, they shall henceforth acknowledge him to be the supreme King: and shall render to him all honor, obedience, and worship. This took place when the Lord revealed himself to the whole world by the Gospel; for mighty kings and princes not only submitted to the yoke of Christ, but likewise contributed their riches to raise up and maintain the Church of Christ, so as to be her guardians and defenders.

Hence it ought to be observed that something remarkable is here demanded from princes, besides an ordinary profession of faith; for the Lord has bestowed on them authority and power to defend the Church and to promote the glory of God. This is indeed the duty of all; but kings, in proportion as their power is greater, ought to devote themselves to it more earnestly, and to labor in it more diligently. And this is the reason why David expressly addresses and exhorts them to "be wise, and serve the Lord, and kiss his Son." (Psalm 2:10-12.)

This shews how mad are the dreams of those who assert that kings cannot be Christians without laying aside that office; for those things were accomplished under Christ, when kings, who had been converted to God by the preaching of the Gospel, obtained this highest pinnacle of rank, which surpasses dominion and principality of every sort, to be "nursing-fathers" and guardians of the Church. The Papists have no other idea of kings being *"nursing-fathers"* of the Church than that they have left to their priests and monks very large revenues, rich possessions and prebends, on which they might fatten, like hogs in a sty. But that "nursing" aims at an object quite different from filling up those insatiable gulls. Nothing is said here about enriching the houses of those who, under false pretences, hold themselves out to be ministers of the Church, (which was nothing else than to corrupt the Church of God and to destroy it by deadly poison,) but about removing superstitions and putting an end to all wicked idolatry, about advancing the kingdom of Christ and maintaining purity of doctrine, about purging scandals and cleansing from the filth that corrupts piety and impairs the lustre of the Divine majesty.

Undoubtedly, while kings bestow careful attention on these things, they at the same time supply the pastors and ministers of the Word with all that is necessary for food and maintenance, provide for the poor and guard the Church against the disgrace of pauperism; erect schools, and appoint salaries for the teachers and board for the students; build poor-houses and hospitals, and make every other arrangement that belongs to the protection and defense of the Church. But those unnecessary and extravagant expenses for Anniversaries and Masses, for golden vessels and costly robes, which swell the pride and insolence of papists, serve only to uphold pomp and ambition, and corrupt the pure and simple "nursing" of the Church, and even choke and extinguish the seed of God, by which alone the Church lives. When we see that matters are now very different, and that "kings" are not the "nursing-fathers," but the executioners of the Church; when, in consequence

of taking away the doctrine of piety and banishing its true ministers, idle bellies, insatiable whirlpools, and messengers of Satan, are fattened, (for such are the persons to whom the princes cheerfully distribute their wealth, that is, the moisture and blood which they have sucked out of the people;) when even princes otherwise godly have less strength and firmness for defending the Word and upholding the Church; let us acknowledge that this is the reward due to our sins, and let us confess that we do not deserve to have good "nursing-fathers." But yet, after this frightfully ruinous condition, we ought to hope for a restoration of the Church, and such a conversion of kings that they shall shew themselves to be "nursing-fathers" and protectors of believers, and shall bravely defend the doctrine of the Word.

And shall lick the dust of thy feet. This passage is also tortured by the Papists in order to uphold the tyranny of their idol, as if kings and princes had no other way of proving themselves to be sincere and lawful worshippers of God than by adoring that masked prince of the Church instead of God. Thus they consider the obedience of piety to consist in kissing the Pope's feet with deep reverence. What they ought to think of such barbarous and idolatrous worship, let them learn, first, from Peter, whose seat they boast of occupying, who would not permit such honor to be rendered to him by the centurion. (Acts 10:6.) Let them, next, learn from Paul, who tore his garments, and rejected such worship with the utmost abhorrence. (Acts 14:14.) What could be more absurd than to imagine that the Son of God appointed, instead of a minister of the Gospel, an object of abhorrence, some king dazzling in Persian luxury and splendor? But let us remember that the Church, so long as she is a pilgrim in this world, is subjected to the cross, that she may be humble and may be conformed to her Head; that if her foes make any cessation of their hostility, still her highest ornament and lustre is modesty. Hence it follows, that she has laid aside her own attire, when she is clothed with irreligious pride.

Here the Prophet means nothing else than the adoration by which princes bow down before God, and the obedience which they render to his Word in the Church. What we have already said must be carefully observed, that, when we speak of rendering honor to the Church, she must never be separated from the Head; for this honor and worship belongs to Christ, and, when it is bestowed on the Church, it still continues to belong undivided to him alone. By the obedience of piety kings do not profess submission, so as to bear the yoke of men, but to yield to the doctrine of Christ. Whosoever therefore rejects the ministry of the Church, and refuses to bear the yoke which God wishes to lay with his own hand on all his people, can neither have any fellowship with Christ nor be a child of God.

For they shall not be ashamed. I consider {אשר} *(asher)* to be a conjunction signifying *For;* [255] and the clause to which it belongs is closely connected

[255] {{אשר} {לא} {יבשו} {קרי} (asher to yeboshu kovai), 'of whom they that wait for me shall not be ashamed,' that is, 'whom Jehovah, they that wait for, they that trust in, shall not be ashamed.' When the Hebrews introduce any person speaking, the provisional affix, which comes after {אשר} (asher) and relates to that person, is commonly expressed by them in none but the

with what goes before, and has been improperly disjoined from it by some commentators. By this argument he proves that it is highly proper for princes to submit cheerfully to the government of God, and not hesitate to humble themselves before the Church; because God will not suffer those who hope in him to "be ashamed." As if he had said, "This is a pleasant and delightful submission."

I am Jehovah. He connects his own truth with our salvation; as if he had said, that he does not wish men to acknowledge him to be true or to be God, unless he actually fulfill what he has promised. And hence we obtain inestimable advantage; for, as it is impossible that God should not continue to be the same, so the stability of our salvation, which the Prophet infers from God's own stability, must remain unshaken.

24. *Shall the prey be taken from the mighty?* Having solved, in the former verse, an objection which might occur to the mind of believers, he now confirms that solution still more; for it might have been thought incredible that the Jews should be rescued out of the hands of so powerful an enemy, by whom they had been taken in fair battle and reduced to slavery, He therefore adds this question as uttered by the whole of the common people, among whom it probably flew universally from mouth to mouth; and he immediately replies, as we shall sec.

Shall the captivity of the righteous (or, *the righteous captivity*) *be delivered?* And we ought, first, to observe this metaphor, that the Church is called "the prey of the mighty" and "the captivity of the righteous," that is, lawful captivity. He is said to be the "righteous" possessor who is the lawful possessor; just as the prey, when the war has been righteous, passes into the hands of a righteous possessor. [256] Such was the condition of the ancient people, after having been driven into captivity; for, along with their native country, they had lost their liberty, and were entirely in the power, and at the disposal, of the conqueror. And yet we ought carefully to observe this metaphor, that the Church is oppressed by the tyranny of princes, and exposed to the jaws of wolves, and nevertheless is supposed to be their "just" prey. This is, indeed, shamefully wicked; but thus were our fathers treated, and we are not more virtuous or more excellent than our fathers.

25. *The prey of the tyrant shall be delivered.* However they may boast of having a right to govern, and glory in an empty title, the Lord declares that they are most wicked robbers, when he threatens that he will be an avenger and will snatch their prey from them. God does not overturn just dominion; and hence it follows that the dominion which they usurped over the people of God is mere robbery and wicked tyranny. Neither their arms, nor their forces, nor their warlike preparations, shall hinder the Lord from taking out of their hands an unjust possession.

first, that is, in the person of the speaker. For example, 'I am Joseph, {אשר} {מכרתם} {אותי} {מצרימה} (asher mekartem othi mitzraimah,) whom ye sold into Egypt.'" — Rosenmuller.

[256] "Quand la guerre est juste, celuy qui prend la prove est juste possesseur d'icelle." "When the war is righteous, he who takes the prey is the righteous possessor of it."

Nor does this promise relate only to outward enemies and tyrants, but also to the tyranny of Satan, from which we are rescued by the wonderful power of God. True indeed, he possesses vast power, but God is far more powerful, takes away his arms and demolishes his fortresses, that he may set us at liberty. (Matthew 12:29; Luke 11:22.) If therefore we have had experience of the power of God in this respect, so much the stronger reason have we for trusting that he will undoubtedly be our deliverer, whenever our enemies shall lay us under their feet and oppress us with cruel bondage.

I will contend with him that contendeth with thee. When he threatens that He will "contend" on our account, first, he reminds us to consider his power, that we may not regard the matter by human reason or by the power of men. We ought not therefore to look at what we can do or what resources we possess, but it is our duty to commit the whole matter to the disposal of God alone, who is graciously pleased to protect and defend us. Secondly, he affirms that he will be a powerful advocate, to reply to the slanders of enemies. We said, a little before, that wicked men not only are hurried along by violence and cruelty against the Church, but load her with false and calumnious charges, as if they had a right to treat her with cruelty; and therefore this consolation is highly necessary, that God will be the defender of our innocence, to scatter by his defense all the idle pretences which strengthen the audacity and fierceness of wicked men. Accordingly he again repeats, —

I will save thy children. We derive great consolation from knowing that we are united with him by so close a bond that he sets himself in opposition to all who contend with us, "blesses those who bless us, and, on the other hand, curses those who curse us," and, in short, declares that he is the enemy of our enemies. (Genesis 12:3.) Hence also it ought to be observed, that, when we are restored to liberty and life, when we are not oppressed by enemies, and, in short, when we are saved, it is not a work of man; that no one may ascribe to his own industry what God commands us to expect as an extraordinary blessing from himself alone.

26. *And I will feed thy oppressors with their own flesh.* First, he declares what is the nature of that end which awaits the enemies of the Church, and threatens that they shall not only be inflamed with mutual hatred, but shall likewise slay each other by mutual slaughter. And indeed it is God who drives them headlong, and rouses them to rage, so that they tum against themselves that strength which they formerly exerted against the Church, fight with each other, as the Midianites did, and bring destruction on themselves. (Judges 7:22.) The meaning amounts to this, that there will be no need of outward aid or of any preparations, when God shall determine to overtum and destroy the reprobate; because, having been struck by him with giddiness, they shall wear themselves out in mutual conflict by the insatiable rage with which they shall attack each other.

And all flesh shall know. He repeats that statement which we have formerly seen, namely, that he will be acknowledged by all to be the God of

Israel and the true and only God, when he shall have delivered his people from destruction; for he intended it to be a demonstration of his Divinity, that he openly manifested himself to be the Redeemer and Savior of his people.

The Mighty One of Jacob. Some read the word *Jacob* in the vocative case: "O mighty Jacob;" but I read it in the genitive case, "of Jacob." The Lord testifies that he is the Savior, Redeemer, and Mighty One of Israel, that they may rely with their whole heart on his defense and protection.

Chapter 50

CHAPTER 50.

Isaiah 50:1-11

1. Thus saith the LORD, Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away? or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away.

1. Sic dicit Iehova, Ubi libellus iste repudii matris vestrae, quam repudiavi? ant quis creditor cui vendidi vos? Ecce propter iniquitates vestras estis venditi, et propter transgressiones vestras repudiata est mater vestra.

2. Wherefore, when I came, was there no man? when I called, was there none to answer? Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? or have I no power to deliver? behold, at my rebuke I dry up the sea; I make the rivers a wilderness: their fish stinketh, because there is no water, and dieth for thirst.

2. Cur veni, et nemo (occurrit?) vocavi, et nemo respondit? An abbreviando abbreviavit se manus mea, ut non redimat? Annon in me virtus ad liberandum? Ecce increpatione mea exsicco mare; pono flumina in desertum, ut putrescant pisces eorum prae defectu aquae, et moriantur siti.

3. I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering.

3. Induo coelos caligine, et quasi saccure pono operimentum eorum.

4. The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning; he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned.

4. Dominus Iehova aperuit mihi linguam eruditorum, ut sciam lasso verbum in tempore. Excitabit mane, mane excitabit mihi aurem, ut audiam, sicut docti.

5. The Lord GOD hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither

tumed away back.

5. Dominus Iehova aperuit mihi aurem, et ego non fui rebellis; retrorsum non reversus sum.

6. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting.

6. Corpus meum exposui percutientibus, et genas meas vellentibus; faciem meam non abscondi ab ignominia et sputo.

7. For the Lord GOD will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed.

7. Nam Dominus Iehova auxiliabitur mihi; propterea non sum pudefactus; ideo posui faciem meam quasi silicem, et scio quod non confundar.

8. He is near that justifieth me; who will contend with me? let us stand together: who is mine adversary? let him come near to me.

8. Prope est qui me justificat, quis contendet mecum? Stemus simul: quis adversarius causae meae? Accedat ad me.

9. Behold, the Lord GOD will help me; who is he that shall condemn me? lo, they all shalt wax old as a garment; the moth shall eat them up.

9. Ecce, Dominns Iehova auxiliabitur mihi, quis est qui me condemnet? Ecce omnes quasi vestimeritran veterascent; tinea comedet eos.

10. Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God.

10. Quis in vobis est timens Iehovam? Audiat vocem servi ejus. Qui ambulavit in tenebris, et qui caruit luce, confidat in nomine Iehovae, et innitatur Deo suo.

11. Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow.

11. Ecce vos omnes succenditis ignem, et circundati estis scintillis. Ite in lumine ignis vestri, et in scintillis quas succendistis. E manu mea fuit hoc vobis; in dolore jacebitis.

1. *Where is that bill of divorcement?* There are various interpretations of this passage, but very few of the commentators have understood the Prophet's meaning. In order to have a general understanding of it, we must observe that union by which the Lord everywhere testifies that his people are bound to him; that is, that he occupies the place of a husband, and that we occupy the place of a wife. It is a spiritual marriage, which has been consecrated by his eternal doctrine and sealed by the blood of Christ. In the same manner, therefore, as he takes us under his protection as a early beloved wife, on condition that we preserve our fidelity to him by chastity; so when we have been false to him, he rejects us; and then he is said to issue a lawful divorce against us, as when a husband banished from his house an

adulterous wife.

Thus, when the Jews were oppressed by calamities so many and so great, that it was easy to conclude that God had rejected and divorced them, the cause of the divorce came to be the subject of inquiry. Now, as men are usually eloquent in apologizing for themselves, and endeavor to throw back the blame on God, the Jews also complained at that time about their condition, as if the Lord had done wrong in divorcing them; because they were far from thinking that the promises had been made void, and the covenant annulled, by their crimes. They even laid the blame on their ancestors, as if they were punished for the sins of others. Hence those taunts and complaints which Ezekiel relates.

"Our fathers ate a sour grape, and our teeth are set on edge." (Ezekiel 18:2.)

Speeches of this kind being universally current among them, the Lord demands that they shall produce the "bill of divorcement," by means of which they may prove that they are free from blame and have been rejected without cause.

Now, a "bill of divorcement" was granted to wives who were unjustly divorced; for by it the husband was constrained to testify that his wife had lived chastely and honorably, so that it was evident that there was no other ground for the divorce than that she did not please the husband. Thus the woman was at liberty to go away, and the blame rested solely on the husband, to whose sullenness and bad temper was ascribed the cause of the divorce. (Deuteronomy 24:1.) This law of divorcement, as Ezekiel shews, (Matthew 19:8,) was given by Moses on account of the hard-heartedness of that nation. By a highly appropriate metaphor, therefore, the Lord shews that he is not the author of the divorce, but that the people went away by their own fault, and followed their lusts, so that they had utterly broken the bond of marriage. This is the reason why he asks where is "that bill" of which they boasted; for there is emphasis in the demonstrative pronoun, {זה} *(zeh), that,* by which he intended to expose their idle excuses; as if he had said, that they throw off the accusation, and lay blame on God, as if they had been provided with a defense, whereas they had violated the bond of marriage, and could produce nothing to make the divorce lawful.

Or who is the creditor to whom I sold you? By another metaphor he demonstrates the same thing. When a man was overwhelmed by debt, so that he could not satisfy his creditors, he was compelled to give his children in payment. The Lord therefore asks, "Has he been constrained to do this? Has he sold them, or given them in payment to another creditor? Is he like spendthrifts or bad managers, who allow themselves to be overwhelmed by debt?" As if he had said, "You cannot bring this reproach against me; and therefore it is evident that, on account of your transgressions, you have been sold and reduced to slavery."

Lo, for your iniquities ye have been sold. Thus the Lord defends his

majesty from all slanders, and refutes them by this second clause, in which he declares that it is by their own fault that the Jews have been divorced and "sold." The same mode of expression is employed by Paul, when he says that we are "sold under sin," (Romans 7:14,) but in a different sense; in the same manner as the Hebrew writers are wont to speak of abandoned men, whose wickedness is desperate. But here the Prophet intended merely to charge the Jews with guilt, because, by their own transgressions, they had brought upon themselves all the evils that they endured.

If it be asked, "Did the Lord divorce his heritage? Did he make void the covenant?" Certainly not; but the Lord is said to "divorce," as he is elsewhere said to profane, his heritage, (Psalm 89:39; Ezekiel 24:21,) because no other conclusion can be drawn from present appearances; for, when he did not bestow upon them his wonted favor, it was a kind of divorce or rejection. In a word, we ought to attend to these two contrasts, that the wife is divorced, either by the husband's fault, or because she is unchaste and adulterous; and likewise that children are sold, either for their father's poverty or by their own fault. And thus the course of argument in this passage will be manifest.

2. *Why did I come?* This might be a reason assigned, that the people have not only brought upon themselves all immense mass of evils by provoking God's anger, but have likewise, by their obstinacy, cut off the hope of obtaining pardon and salvation. But I think that God proceeds still further. After having explained that he had good reason for divorcing the people, because they had of their own accord given themselves up to bondage, when they might have been free, he adds that still it is not he who prevents them from being immediately set at liberty. As he shewed, in the former verse, that the whole blame rests with the Jews, so now he declares that it arises from their own fault that they grow old and rot in their distresses; for the Lord was ready to assist them, if they had not rejected his grace and kindness. In a word, he shows that both the beginning and the progress of the evil arise from the fault of the people, in order that he may free God from all blame, and may shew that the Jews act wickedly in accusing him as the author of evil, or in complaining that he will not assist them.

First, then, the Lord says that he "came;" and why, but that he might stretch out his hand to the Jews? Whence it follows that they are justly deprived; for they would not receive his grace. Now, the Lord is said to "come," when he gives any token of his presence. He approaches by the preaching of the Word, and he approaches also by various benefits which he bestows on us, and by the tokens which he employs for manifesting his fatherly kindness toward us.

"Was there ever any people," as Moses says, "that saw so many signs, and heard the voice of God speaking, like this people?" (Deuteronomy 4:33.)

Constant invitation having been of no advantage to them, when he held out the hope of pardon and exhorted them to repentance, it is with good reason that he speaks of it as a monstrous thing, and asks why there was

no man to meet him. They are therefore held to be convicted of ingratitude, because, while they ought to have sought God, they did not even choose to meet him when he came; for it is an instance of extreme ingratitude to refuse to accept the grace of God which is freely offered.

Why did I call, and no one answered? In the word *call* there is a repetition of the same statement in different words. When God "calls," we ought to be ready and submissive; for this is the "answer" which, he complains, was refused to him; that is, we ought to yield implicitly to his word. But this expression applies strictly to the matter now in hand; because God, when he offered a termination to their distresses, was obstinately despised, as if he had spoken to the deaf and dumb. Hence he infers that on themselves lies the blame of not having been sooner delivered; and he supports this by former proofs, because he had formerly shewn to the fathers that he possessed abundance of power to assist them. Again, that they may not cavil and excuse themselves by saying that they had not obtained salvation, though they heartily desired it, he maintains, on the other hand, that the cause of the change ought to be sought somewhere else than in him, (for his power was not at all diminished,) and therefore that he would not have delayed to stretch out his hand to them in distress, if they had not wickedly refused his aid.

By shortening hath my hand been shortened? By this interrogation he expresses greater boldness, as if he were affirming what could not be called in question; for who would venture to plead against God that his power was diminished? He therefore relates how powerfully he rescued his people out of Egypt, that they may not now imagine that he is less powerful, but may acknowledge that their sins were the hinderance. [257] He says that by his reproof he "dried up the sea," as if he had struck terror by a threatening word; for by his authority, and at his command, the seas were divided, so that a passage was opened up, (Exodus 14:21,) and Jordan was driven back. (Joshua 3:16.) The consequence was, that "the fishes," being deprived of water, died and putrified.

3. *I clothe the heavens with blackness.* He mentions also that thick darkness which was spread over all Egypt during the space of three days. (Exodus 10:22.) At that time the heaven was clothed as with a mouming dress; for, as fine weather has a gladdening influence, so blackness and darkness produce melancholy; and therefore he says, that the heavens were covered as with sackcloth or with a mouming dress, as if they had been tokens and expressions of mouming, [258] If any one prefer to view them as general statements, let him enjoy his opinion; but I think it probable that he glances at the history of the deliverance from Egypt, [259] front which it might easily be inferred

[257] "Ains recognoissent que leurs vices empeschent que ceste puissance ne se monstre;" "But may acknowledge that their sins hinder that power from being manifested."

[258] "This gives a great idea of God's power. Though the sun shines so bright that no mortal eye can steadily behold its lustre, I can at pleasure send a thick cloud and intercept its rays, and make the heavens appear as if they had put on mourning." — White.

[259] "A l'histoire de la deliverance d'Egypte."

that God, who had so miraculously assisted the fathers, was prevented by their ingratitude from granting relief to the miseries which now oppressed them.

4. *The Lord Jehovah.* After having twice convicted them of guilt, he adds a consolation in his usual manner; for when the Lord covers us with shame, he intends immediately to free us from shame. Although, therefore, he shewed that the people had been rejected for the best possible reasons, and had perished by their own fault, because they proved themselves to be even unworthy of deliverance, yet he promises assistance to them. Again, because in a matter so difficult to be believed there needed more than ordinary proof, he begins by saying that God has sent and instructed him to execute his commands. This passage is commonly explained so as to relate to Christ, as if it had not been applicable to the Prophet, because he afterwards says, that he had been beaten with rods, which we nowhere read was done to Isaiah. But there is no great force in this argument; for David complains that his garments were divided, (Psalm 22:18,) which applies literally to Christ, (Matthew 27:35; John 19:24,) and yet it does not follow that this did not happen to David himself. For my own part, I have no doubt, that Isaiah comes forward as one who represents all the servants of God, not only those who were from the beginning, but those who should come afterwards.

Hath given me the tongue of the learned. He says that the Lord hath given him a "tongue," that the promises by which he cheers the people may have greater weight. Our faith wavers, if we suspect that a man speaks from himself; and the condition of that people was so wretched that no human arguments could induce them to entertain the hope of deliverance. It amounts to this, that the message of approaching salvation is brought to them from heaven; and if any person do not receive it, he must prove himself to be rebellious and disobedient. Although these words are literally intended by the Prophet to secure the belief of his statements, yet we may infer from them generally, that no man is fit to teach who has not first been qualified by God. This reminds all godly teachers to ask from the Spirit of God what otherwise they could not at all possess. They must indeed study diligently, so as not to ascend the pulpit till they have been fully prepared; but they must hold by this principle, that all things necessary for discharging their office are gifts of the Holy Spirit. And, indeed, if they were not organs of the Holy Spirit, it would be extreme rashness to come forth publicly in the name of God.

That I may know a word in season to the weary. Some verb must be supplied here, such as, "to administer" or "to utter." The word "know" includes wisdom and skill, which a pastor ought to possess, that the word of God may be faithfully and profitably administered by him; as if he had said that he has been well instructed in the school of God, and thus knows well what is suitable to those who are wretched and who groan under a burden.

[260] The term "weary" is applied to those who are overwhelmed by many afflictions; as we have formerly seen, "who giveth strength to the weary." (Isaiah 40:29.) Thus also Christ speaks, "Come to me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden." (Matthew 11:28.) He therefore means that God has been his teacher and instructor, that he may be able to soothe wretched men by appropriate consolation, that by means of it their dejected hearts may be encouraged by feeling the mercy of God.

Hence we infer that the most important duty of the ministers of the word is, to comfort wretched men, who are oppressed by afflictions, or who bend under their weight, and, in short, to point out what is true rest and serenity of mind, as we have formerly seen. (Isaiah 33:20.) We are likewise taught what each of us ought chiefly to seek in the Scriptures, namely, that we may be fumished with doctrine appropriate and suitable for relieving our distresses, He who, by seasonable consolation, in afflictive or even desperate affairs, can cheer and support his heart, ought to know that he has made good proficiency in the Gospel. I acknowledge that doctrine has indeed various uses; for not only is it useful for comforting the afflicted and feeble, but it likewise contains severe reproofs and threatenings against the obstinate. (2 Timothy 3:16.) But Isaiah shews that the chief duty incumbent on him is, to bring some consolation to the Jews who, in the present distress, are ready to faint.

He will waken in the morning. The Prophet here testifies that the Lord is so careful about wretched and oppressed persons that he aids them "in the morning," that is, seasonably. I do acknowledge that we are often destitute of consolation; but, although God often permits us to languish, yet he knows every moment that is suitable for seasonably meeting the necessity by his aid. Besides, if his assistance be somewhat late, this happens through our own fault; for not only by our indolence, but likewise by rebellion, we withdraw ourselves from his grace. However that may be, he always watches carefully and runs to give aid; and even when we fly and resist, he calls us to him, that we may be refreshed by tasting his grace and kindness.

He twice repeats the phrase, "in the morning," by which he expresses continuance and earnestness, that we may not think that he is liable to sudden impulses like men, to cast off or quickly forget those whom he has once undertaken to guard, whom he continues, on the contrary, to make the objects of his grace till the end, and never leaves destitute of consolation.

That I may hear as the learned. He means that his ear has not only been pulled or twitched, as for sluggish and indolent persons, but has been formed and trained. Yet by his example he shews that God efficaciously teaches all whose ministry he intends to employ for the salvation of his Church; for it would have been a small matter to be instructed after the manner of men, if they had not within them the Spirit of God as their instructor. This

[260] "Qui gemissent sous le fardeau de leurs pechez;" "Who groan under the burden of their sins."

makes still more evident the truth of what we have formerly said, that none are good teachers but those who have been good scholars. He calls them "learned'and "well-instructed;" for they who do not deign to learn, because they think that they are wise enough, are doubly fools; since they alone, in the judgment of God, are reckoned to be "well-instructed" and "learned," who permit themselves to be taught before discharging the office of teachers, that they may have clear knowledge of those things which they communicate to others, and may publicly bring forward nothing but what they can testify to have proceeded from God; and, in a word, they alone are "learned," [261] who, by continually learning, do not refuse to make constant progress. Some read the word in the accusative, meaning, "that I may hear as (hearing) the learned;" but that is harsh and at variance with the true meaning.

5. *The Lord Jehovah hath opened mine ear.* He again repeats what he had formerly said, and here includes everything that belongs to the office of a teacher; for the "opening of the ear" must be understood to refer not only to doctrine, but to the whole calling; that is, when he takes one to be his servant, and intbrms of his duty him whom he has determined to send, when he gives commands, and enjoins him to execute what he commands. But the Lord "opens the ear," not only when he declares what is his will, but when he powerfully affects a man's heart and moves him to render obedience, as it is said,

"Thou hast bored mine ear." (Psalm 40:6.)

And Christ says,

"Whosoever hath heard and learned from the Father cometh to me." (John 6:45.)

Such is also the import of the second clause, *And I was not rebellious,* the meaning of which may be thus summed up: "He undertakes nothing at random, but, being fully convinced of God's calling, he discharges the office of a teacher, though it is laborious and difficult, because he is ready to obey."

6. *I exposed my body to the smiters.* With the reproaches, jeers, and insolence of wicked men, he contrasts the unshaken courage which he possesses; as if he had said that, "whatever resistancemay be attempted by the despisers of God, yet he will baffle all their insults, so that he will never repent of the labors which he has undertaken." Yet this passage plainly shows that the ministers of the word cannot perform their office faithfully without being exposed to a contest with the world, and even without being fiercely assailed on all sides; for as soon as Isaiah says that he has obeyed the command of God, he likewise adds that "He has exposed his body to the smiters." The faithful servants of God, when they administer the doctrine of the word, cannot escape from this condition, but must endure fights, reproaches, hatred, slanders, and various attacks from adversaries, who loathe that liberty of advising and reproving which it is necessary for them to use. Let them, therefore, arm themselves with steadfastness and faith; for a dreadful battle

[261] "Ceux-la sont doctes."

is prepared for them. And not only does he describe the persecutions of wicked men, but the reproach of the world; because wicked men desire to be thought to have good cause for opposing the ministers of the word and persecuting their doctrine, and wish that those ministers should be regarded as criminals and malefactors, and held up to universal hatred and abhorrence. For these reasons they lead them with various slanders, and do not refrain from any kind of reproach, as we know well enough by experience in the present day, when our adversaries call us heretics, deceivers, seditious persons, and assail us with other slanders, which were also directed against Christ and the Apostles. (Matthew 27:63; John 7:12; Acts 16:20.)

My face I did not hide from shame and spitting. He not only says that open and outward foes spat and inflicted blows on him, but glances at the slanders which he is compelled to bear from foes who are within and belong to the household; for out of the very bosom of the Church there always spring up wicked men and despisers of God, who insolently attack the prophets. They who wish to serve God must be prepared to endure all these things calmly, that they may walk through evil report and through good report, (2 Corinthians 6:8,) and may despise not only banishment, stripes, imprisonment, and death, but likewise reproaches and disgrace, though they may sometimes appear harder to endure than death itself. While this doctrine belongs to all believers, it belongs especially to the teachers of the word, who ought to go before others, and to be, as it were, standard-bearers.

7. *For the Lord Jehovah will help me.* The Prophet declares whence comes so great courage, which he and the other servants of God need to possess, in order to withstand courageously the attacks of every one. It comes from God's assistance, by relying on whom he declares that he is fortified against all the attacks of the world. After having, with lofty fortitude, looked down contemptuously on all that was opposed to him, he exhorts others also to maintain the same firmness, and gives what may be called a picture of the condition of all the ministers of the word; that, by tuming aside from the world, they may tum wholly to God and have their eyes entirely fixed upon him. There never will be a contest so arduous that they shall not gain the victory by trusting to such a leader.

Therefore I have set my face as a flint. By the metaphor of "a flint" he shews that, whatever may happen, he will not be afraid; for terror or alarm, like other passions, makes itself visible in the face. The countenance itself speaks, and shews what are our feelings. The servants of God, being so shamefully treated, must inevitably have sunk under such attacks, had they not withstood them with a forehead of stone or of iron. In this sense of the term, Jeremiah also is said to have been "set for a fortified city, an iron pillar, and a brazen wall, against the kings of Judah, and the princes, and the people," (Jeremiah 1:18;) and to Ezekiel is said to have been given "a strong forehead, and even one of adamant, and harder than that, that he might not be dismayed at the obstinacy of the people." (Ezekiel 3:9.)

Therefore I was not ashamed. The word "ashamed" is twice used in this verse, but in different senses; for in the former clause it relates to the feeling, and in the latter to the thing itself or the effect. Accordingly, in the beginning of the verse, where he boasts that he is not confounded with shame, because God is on his side, he means that it is not enough that God is willing to help us, if we do not also feel it; for of what advantage to us will the promises of God be, if we distrust him? Confidence, therefore, is demanded, that we may be supported by it, and may assuredly know that we enjoy God's favor.

I shall not be confounded. In the conclusion of the verse he boldly declares his conviction that the end will be prosperous. Thus "to be confounded" means "to be disappointed;" for they who had entertained a vain and deceitful hope are liable to be mocked. Here we see that some special assistance is promised to godly teachers and ministers of the word; so that the fiercer the attacks of Satan, and the stronger the hostility of the world, so much the more does the Lord defend and guard them by extraordinary protection. And hence we ought to conclude, that all those who, when they come to the contest, tremble and lose courage, have never been duly qualified for discharging their office; for he who knows not how to strive knows not how to serve God and the Church, and is not fitted for administering the doctrine of the word.

8. *He is near that justifieth me.* We ought always to keep in remembrance that the Prophet mentions nothing that is peculiar to himself, but testifies what the Lord chooses to be, and will always be, towards faithful ministers, that whosoever has this testimony, that God has sent him, and knows that he discharges his office faithfully, may boldly despise all adversaries, and may not be moved by their reproaches, for he is "justified" by the Lord; and, in like manner, the Lord always is, and will be, near to defend and maintain his truth. Besides, that any one may be able to make this protestation, it is necessary that his conscience be pure; for, if any man thrust himself rashly into the office, and have no testimony of his calling, or bring forward his dreams publicly, in vain will he boast of this promise, which belongs only to those who have been called by God, and who sincerely and uprightly perform their duty. Now, although either hypocrites or despisers never cease to annoy the servants of God, yet Isaiah advances to meet them, as if none would venture to pick a quarrel or utter a slander; not that he can keep them in check, [262] but because they will gain nothing by all their attempts. He therefore declares, that he looks down with utter contempt on the false accusations which the enemies of sound doctrine pour out against its teachers. There is no crime with which they do not upbraid them; but their efforts are fruitless; for the Judge, by whom their integrity is maintained, is not far off. They may, therefore, as Paul did, boldly appeal from the wicked and unjust judgments of men to "the day of the Lord," by whom their innocence will

[262] "Non pas qu'il puisse tenir les meschans en bride;" "Not that he can keep wicked men in check."

be made manifest. (1 Corinthians 4:4.)

Let us stand together. Godly teachers ought to have so great confidence as not to hesitate to give a bold defiance to adversaries. Satan, with his agents, does not always venture to attack openly, especially when he fights by falsehoods, but by ambuscade, and by burrowing under ground, endeavors to take them by surprise; but the servants of God are not afraid to "stand up" openly, and enter into contest with the enemy, and contend by arguments, provided that adversaries are willing to enter into the lists. So great is the force of truth that it does not dread the light of day, as we say that Isaiah here attacks boldly those whom he perceives to be plotting against him; and therefore he repeats, —

Let him draw near to me. Godly ministers ought to be ready to assign a reason for their doctrine. But where is the man that is willing to hear them patiently, and to consider what is the nature of that doctrine which they publicly declare? True indeed, adversaries will approach, but it is to draw their swords to slay them; to sharpen their tongues, that by every kind of slander they may tear them in pieces. In short, their whole defense consists in arms or deceitful stratagems; for they do not venture to contend by scriptural arguments. Relying, therefore, on the justice of our cause, we may freely defy them to the conflict. Though they condemn us without listening to our vindication, and though they have many that support the sentence which they have pronounced, we have no reason to be afraid; for God, whose cause we plead, is our Judge, and will at length acquit us.

9. *Who is he that condemmeth me?* Paul appears to allude to this passage, in his Epistle to the Romans, when he says, "It is God that justifieth; who shall condemn?" (Romans 8:33, 34.) We may safely have recourse to the judgment-seat of God, when we are well assured that we have obtained his righteousness by free grace through Christ. But here Isaiah handles a different subject; for he does not speak of the universal salvation of men, but of the ministry of the Word, which the Lord will defend against the attacks of wicked men, and will not suffer his people to be overwhelmed by their fraud or violence.

Lo, they shall all wax old as a garment. He now shews more clearly that it is not in the shade or at case that he boasts of his courage, as if none were giving him any disturbance; but he declares that, though he is assailed by deadly foes, still he boldly maintains his position; because all who fight with the Word of God shall fall and vanish away through their own frailty. In order to place the matter before their own eyes, he employs a demonstrative particle, *"Behold,* like garments shall they perish, being consumed by worms." The Psalmist makes use of the same metaphor, when he compares the men of this world to the children of God. (Psalm 49:14, 15.) The former, though they make a show and shine like dazzling garments, shall perish; but believers, who now are covered with filth, shall at length obtain new brightness and shine brilliantly like the stars. Here he speaks literally

of fierce dogs that attack and bark at godly teachers. Though such persons are held in high estimation by men, and possess very high authority among them, yet their lustre shall perish and fade away, like that of garments which are eaten by worms.

10. *Who is among you that feareth the Lord?* After having spoken of God's invincible aid, by which all prophets are protected, he directs his discourse to believers, that they may suffer themselves to be guided by the Word of God, and may become obedient. Hence we may infer how far a holy boasting raised him above his slanderers; for, in consequence of wicked men, through their vast numbers, possessing at that time great influence among the Jews, there was a risk of overwhelming the faith of the small minority.[263] When he asks, "Where are they that fear God?" he points out that their number is small. Yet he addresses them separately, that they may detach themselves from the mixed crowd, and not take part in counsels which are wicked, and which God has condemned. In like manner we have formerly met with these words, "Say ye not, A confederacy." (Isaiah 8:12.) Although therefore the enemies of God are so numerous as to constitute a vast army, yet Isaiah does not hesitate to say that there are some left who shall profit by his doctrine.

He speaks to those who "fear God;" for, wherever there is no religion and no fear of God, there can be also no entrance for doctrine. We see how audaciously doctrine is rejected by those who, in other respects, wish to be reckoned acute and sagacious; for, in consequence of being swelled with pride, they detest modesty and humility, and are exceedingly stupid in this wisdom of God. It is not without good reason, therefore, that he lays this foundation, namely, the fear of God, that his Word may be attentively and diligently heard. Hence also it is evident that true fear of God is nowhere to be found, unless where men listen to his Word; for hypocrites do proudly and haughtily boast of piety and the fear of God, but they manifest rebellious contempt, when they reject the doctrine of the Gospel and all godly exhortations. The clear proof of such persons is, that the mask which they desire to wear is torn off.

Let him hear the voice of his servant. He might have simply said, "the voice of God," but he expressly says, "of his servant;" for God does not wish to be heard but by the voice of his ministers, whom he employs to instruct us. Isaiah speaks first of himself, and next of all others who have been invested with the same office; and there is an implied contrast between that "hearing" which he demands and that wicked eagerness to despise doctrine in which irreligious men indulge, while they also, by their insolence, encourage many idle and foolish persons to practice similar contempt.

He who hath walked in darkness. Believers might have brought it as an objection, that the fruit of their piety was not visible, but that they were

[263] "Le danger estoit qu'ils n' estaignissent la foy d'une petite troupe de fideles;" "The danger was that they would extinguish the faith of a small body of believers."

miserably afflicted, as if they had lived a life of abandoned wickedness; and therefore the Prophet anticipates and sets aside this complaint, by affirming that believers, though hitherto they have been harshly treated, yet do not in vain obey God and his Word; for, if they "have walked in darkness," they shall at length enjoy the light of the Lord. By "darkness" the Prophet here means not the ignorance or blindness of the human understanding, but the afflictions by which the children of God are almost always overwhelmed. And this is the consolation which he formerly mentioned, when he declared that "the tongue of the learned had been given to him, that he might speak a word to one who was faint." (Ver. 4.) Thus he promises that they who have hitherto been discouraged and almost overwhelmed by so many distresses shall receive consolation.

11. *Lo, all of you kindle a fire.* He upbraids the Jews with choosing to kindle for themselves their own light, instead of drawing near to the light of God. This passage has been badly expounded; and if we wish to understand its true meaning, we must attend to the contrast between the light of God and the light of men; that is, between the consolation which is brought to us by the Word of God and the empty words of comfort uttered by men, when by idle and useless things they attempt and toil to alleviate their distresses. Having formerly spoken of "light" and "darkness," and having promised light to believers, who hear the voice of the Lord, he shews that the Jews had rejected this light, in order to kindle another light for themselves, and threatens that ultimately they shall be consumed by this light, as by a conflagration. Thus Christ upbraids the Jews with "rejoicing in John's light," (John 5:35,) because they made a wrong use of his official character, in order to obscure or rather to extinguish the glory of Christ. To bring forward John's official character, in order to cover with darkness the glory of Christ, was nothing else than to extinguish the light of God shining in a mortal man, in order to kindle another light for themselves, not that it might guide them by pointing out the road, but that, by foolishly rejoicing in it, they might be driven about in every direction.

When he says that they are *surrounded by sparks,* he glances at their various thoughts, by which they were agitated and carried about in uncertainty sometimes in one direction and sometimes in another; and in this way he mocks at their folly, because they willingly and eagerly ran wheresoever their foolish pleasures drew them.

Walk in the light of your fire. As if he had said, "You shall know by experience how useless and transitory is your light, when your unwarranted hopes shall have deceived you." The ironical permission denotes disappointment. Others explain it, that wicked men kindle against themselves the fire of God's wrath; but the Prophet looked higher, and that sentiment appears not to agree with this passage.

From my hand. Because wicked men, being intoxicated by false confidence, think that they are placed beyond the reach of all danger, and, viewing the

future with reckless disregard, trust to "their own light," that is, to the means of defense with which they imagine themselves to be very abundantly provided; the Lord declares, that *they shall lie down in sorrow,* and that this shall proceed "from his hand;" and, in a word, that men who have forsaken the light of the Word, and who seek consolation from some other quarter, shall miserably perish.

Chapter 51

CHAPTER 51.

Isaiah 51:1-23

1. Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the LORD: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged.

1. Audite me, qui sequimini justitiam, qui qumritis Iehovam; aspicire ad petram excisionis vestrae, et ad cavernam specus unde eruti estis.

2. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him.

2. Aspicite ad Abraham patrem vestrum, et ad Sarare, qum peperit vos; quoniam unitum vocavi eum, et benedixi, et multiplicavi eum.

3. For the LORD shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.

3. Utique consolabitur Iehova Sion, consolabitur omnes vastitates ejus, ponetque desertum ejus quasi ocum deliciarum, et solitudinem ejus quasi hortum Iehovae. Laetitia et gaudium invenientur in ea; confessio et vox cantici.

4. Hearken unto me, my people; and give ear unto me, O my nation: for a law shall proceed from me, and I will make my judgment to rest for a light of the people.

4. Attendite ad me, populo mi; et plebs men audite me; quoniam Lex a me egredietur, et judietum meum in lucem populorum patifaciam.

5. My righteousness is near; my salvation is gone forth, and mine arms shall judge the people; the isles shall wait upon me, and on mine arm shall they trust.

5. Prope est justitia mea; egressa eat salus mea; et brachia mea populos judicabunt. Me insulae expectabunt, et in brachium meum sperabunt.

6. Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished.

6. Levate in coelum oculos vestros, et aspicite in terram deorsum; quoniam coeli ut fumus peribunt; et terra ut vestis veterascet; et incolae ejus in eundem modum interibunt. Atque salus mea in aeternum manebit, et justitia mea non interibit.

7. Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings.

7. Audite me, qui cognoscitis justitiam, populus in cujus corde est lex mea. Ne timeatis probrum hominis eta contumelia eorum ne frangamini animo.

8. For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation.

8. Quoniam sieur vestimentum comedet eos tinea; sicut lanam comeder eos vermis. At justitia inca perpetuo manebit, et salus mea in seculum seculorum.

9. Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the LORD; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon?

9. Suscita re, suscita to, indue fortitudinem, brachium Iehovae. Excita re, sicut in diebus antiquis, seculis olim praeteritis. Annon tu illud es, proscindens superbam, conficiens draconem?

10. Art thou not it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over?

10. Annon tu illud es, quod exsiccavit mare, aquam voraginis magnae; quod vertit profundum maris in viare, ad transitum redemptotum?

11. Therefore the redeemed of the LORD shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away.

11. Ergo redempti ad Iehovam revertentur; venient in Sion cure cantico, eritque gaudium perpetuum super caput eorum. Laetitiam et gaudium obtinebunt, fugientque dolor et gemitus.

12. I, even I, am he that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass;

12. Ego, ego sum, qui vos consolor. Quaenam es, ut timeas ab homine qui morietur? a filio hominis, qui foenum reputabitur?

13. And forgettest the LORD thy maker, that hath stretched forth the

heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? and where is the fury of the oppressor?

13. Et oblita es Iehovae factoris tui, qui extendit coelos, et fundavit terram; et formidasti jugiter tota die a furore affligentis, dum ad vastandum se parat. Et ubi furor affligentis?

14. The captive exile hasteneth that he may be loosed, and that he should not die in the pit, nor that his bread should fail.

14. Festinat exul ut solvatur, ut non moriatur in specu, nec deficiat eum panis suus.

15. But I am the LORD thy God, that divided the sea, whose waves roared: The LORD of hosts is his name.

15. Et ego Iehova Deus tuus, qui seco mare, et sonabunt fluctus ejus; Iehova exercituum nomen ejus.

16. And I have put my words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art my people.

16. Et posui verba mea in ore tuo; et in umbra manus mere protexi to, ut plantem coelos, et fundem terram. Dieam Sioni, Populus meus tu.

17. Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem, which hast drunk at the hand of the LORD the cup of his fury; thou hast drunken the dregs of the cup of trembling, and wrung them out.

17. Expergiscere, expergiscere, surge, Ierusalem, quae bibisti e manu Iehovae calicem furoris ejus; faeces calicis angustiae (vel, trepidationis) bibisti exprimens.

18. There is none to guide her among all the sons whom she hath brought forth; neither is there any that taketh her by the hand of all the sons that she hath brought up.

18. Non est qui regat eam ex omnibus illils quos genuit; non est qui apprehendat manum ejus ex onmibus illils quos educavit.

19. These two things are come unto thee; who shall be sorry for thee? desolation, and destruction, and the famine, and the sword: by whom shall I comfort thee?

19. Duo haec acciderunt tibi. Quis condolebit tibi? Vastitas et contritio, et fames, et gladius. Quis consolabitur to?

20. Thy sons have fainted, they lie at the head of all the streets, as a wild bull in a net: they are full of the fury of the LORD, the rebuke of thy God.

20. Filii tui exanimati sunt; jacuerunt in capite omnium viarum, sicut bos sylvestris in reti, pleni furore Iehovae, increpatione Dei tui.

21. Therefore hear now this, thou afflicted, and drunken, but not with wine:

21. Itaque nunc audi hoc, misera et ebria, non a vino.

22. Thus saith thy Lord the LORD, and thy God that pleadeth the cause of his people, Behold, I have taken out of thine hand the cup of trembling,

even the dregs of the cup of my fury; thou shalt no more drink it again:

22. Sic dicit Dominus tuus, Iehova, et Deus tuus, vindex populi sui: Ecce abstuli e mae tua calicem angustiae (vel, trepidationis;) faecem calicis furoris mei. Non fiet ut bibas amplius.

23. But I will put it into the hand of them that afflict thee; which have said to thy soul, Bow down, that we may go over: and thou hast laid thy body as the ground, and as the street, to them that went over.

23. Et tradam eum in manus oppressorum tuorum, qui dixerunt animae 'tuae, Incurvate, et transibimus. Et posuisti quasi terram corpus tuum, et quasi viam transeuntibus.

1 *Hearken to me, ye that follow righteousness.* The Prophet now exhorts the Jews not to despair because they are few in number; for they had been cut down and diminished to such a degree that they appeared to be on the eve of being reduced to nothing, while there was little or no hope of any to succeed them. He therefore reminds them of their origin, that they may know that, though they are a small remnant, God can increase and multiply them; and he bids them contemplate their father Abraham, who, though he was a single individual, grew to a vast number, and received from God a numerous posterity. Hence they might infer that God, who, in so short a period, had multiplied their fathers, would in future multiply them also; because his power has not been diminished, and his will has not been changed.

Look to the rock of your hewing. [264] Some are of opinion that Abraham is called a "Rock," because, as Paul declares, "he was strong in faith." (Romans 4:20.) Others assign a totally opposite meaning to this metaphor; for they think that he is called a "Rock," because he was worn out by age, and that Sarah is called a *Pit,* because she was barren. But both, in my opinion, are in the wrong; for it is a simple metaphor, taken from quarries, and declares that they have descended from Abraham and Sarah, as stones are cut out of a "rock" and a "pit." Amidst the ruin of the nation it was highly necessary that the godly should be supported by this doctrine and admonition. God had promised that the seed of Abraham should be "as the stars of heaven," (Genesis 15:5,) and as "the sand of the sea." (Genesis 22:17.) This promise had apparently failed amidst that desolation in which they who were left hardly differed at all from a few clusters when the vintage was ended.

But since they had already known by experience how powerful was the strength of God to create a vast people out of nothing, the Prophet bids them cherish favorable hopes, that they may not be ungrateful to God; and he addresses his discourse directly to believers, to whom this was a sore temptation. He does not speak to all, but to those only who could rely on the promise, that is, to those whom he calls "followers of righteousness;" for

[264] "Regardez a la pierre dont vous avez este coupez." "Look to the stone whence you were hewn."

the country abounded with unbelievers and hypocrites, who had formerly revolted from the practice of piety; and so much the more laudable was the steadfastness of those who did not cease to follow what was right. Wherever "righteousness" is practiced, there God is listened to; and wherever unbelief reigns, reliance cannot be placed on any promise. [265] Although therefore they boasted that they were the children of Abraham, yet all were not capable of receiving this doctrine.

Ye that seek Jehovah. He explains the method of "following righteousness" to consist in "seeking the Lord;" for they who make an outward shew of "righteousness," and do not aim at this end, must have wandered during their whole life. These two things, therefore, must be joined together; namely, the practice of righteousness and seeking God.

2. *For I called him alone.* This application plainly shews what was the design of this exhortation of the Prophet. It was to encourage the hearts of believers to cherish the hope of a better condition. He says that he "called him *one* or *alone,"* not only because he had none along with him, when he was called out of his country, but because the Lord suffered him to dwell in the land of Canaan without children up to a worn out old age, so that he had no hope of having children, especially because Sarah (Genesis 16:2) also was barren; and when at length, as a solace for their childless condition, one son was given to them, not long afterwards he appeared to be led forth to slaughter. Yet the Lord increased and enriched him with a great number of children.

How needful this consolation was to the Jews has been remarked by me a little before, and may be easily learned from their condition, which history plainly declares to have been wretched and unhappy. To us also, in the present day, amidst this distracted condition of the Church, it is highly necessary, that we may not be discouraged because our number is small, and that we may hope that God will increase his Church by unexpected methods. We behold a very clear and striking testimony of this in the blessing by which the Lord increased, even to extreme old age, the posterity of Abraham, who was childless and solitary. That promise relates not to the Jews only, but to other nations; and on this account also he

"was no longer called Abram, but Abraham."
(Genesis 17:5.)

3. *Surely Jehovah will comfort Zion.* The Prophet shews that in the person of Abraham there was exhibited an example which applies to all ages; for, as the Lord suddenly produced from one man so numerous an offspring, so he will also people his Church by wonderful and unknown methods, and not once only, but whenever she shall be thought to be childless and solitary. In like manner, Paul, after having spoken of the faith of Abraham and praised his excellence, applies that doctrine to each of us, that

"he believed in hope against hope, and that his mind was not driven hither

[265] "On ne sauroit recevoir promesse queleonque." "No promise whatever can be believed."

and thither, but that he was fully persuaded that what God had promised he was able also to perform, though it appeared to be incredible and at variance with all reason."
(Romans 4:18-21.)

He will comfort all her desolations. This may be explained to mean, "The Lord will comfort his Church, not only when she shall be in a flourishing condition, but likewise when she shall be desolate and reduced to solitude;" for she must have been laid desolate, and her frightful ruins must have brought her to the verge of destruction, before she felt the aid which is here described.

And will make her desert like a place of delights. The Prophet here alludes to a passage in the writings of Moses, in which he relates that man was at first placed in "the garden of Eden," (Genesis 2:15,) that is, in "a place of delights," from which he was driven out by his own fault. (Genesis 3:24.) Now we, who have been deprived of that blessing which he bestowed on our first parent, are exiles throughout the whole world, and are deprived of that paradise. Accordingly, whenever great calamities happen, and the order of events is overturned, and everything is thrown into wretched desolation and ruin, let us know that we are punished for our unbelief and for our heinous sins; and let us remember that sentence which was pronounced on our first parent, or rather on all mankind; and that in every part of life, but especially when we see the condition of the Church ruined and overturned. The earth, which otherwise would abound in blessings of every kind, has been reduced to solitude through our fault; and the Church, which would flourish everywhere, has been ruined and laid desolate.

Joy and gladness. He means that the change shall be so great that the Church will no longer groan or complain; for, so long as the Church was oppressed by a harsh captivity, nothing could be heard in her but mouming and lamentation. Now restored, she shall rejoice and render thanksgiving to God. Thus we are also exhorted to gratitude, that we may burst out into praise and thanksgiving to God, when we have had experience of his goodness.

4. *Attend to me, my people.* There are good reasons why the Lord so frequently demands that he shall be heard. We know by experience how slow we are to hear him, especially in adversity; and even when we would have great need of consolation, we reject it by our impatience, and faint. Each of us, therefore, the sorer are the afflictions which press upon him, ought to endeavor more earnestly to enlarge his heart, and in this way to arouse himself, and to shake off his slothfulness, that he may receive consolation. What is here demanded is *attention,* to sustain our hearts by patience, till the season of grace be fully come.

For the law shall go forth from me. The meaning is, that the Lord will again reign, and will arouse his Church to call on his name. Though the word *Law* is equivalent to the edict which God shall order to be proclaimed, when he shall be pleased to gather his Church, yet at the same time he

describes his manner of reigning; namely, by his "Law" and byhis doctrine. Hence we see that wherever doctrine is rejected, God's government is not found, that is, is not recognised by men. By *judgment* he means the order and administration of government, by which he shall restore his kingdom.

For a light of the peoples, He says that this will be "for a light of the peoples," because, when God begins to reign, miserable men [266] are rescued from darkness and enlightened by the doctrine of the word.

I will reveal. This vero {ארגיע} *(argiang)* is variously expounded by commentators, because {רגע} (*ragang*) has various significations. Sometimes it signifies to "cut" and "open," and sometimes "to be at rest." Some therefore explain it, "I will cause to rest," that is, "I will establish;" and that meaning is not inappropriate. Most of the Jewish writers explain it differently, but I shall not relate their crooked and harsh interpretations. I rather approve of this translation, "I will manifest judgment," or, "I will cause judgment to break forth," or, which means the same thing, "I will reveal;" because I think that it agrees better with the former clause. Repetitions, we know, are very customary among the Hebrew writers. Although, therefore, he employs different words, still the meaning is the same. Having formerly said that "the law shall go forth from him," he now says that "he will reveal judgment."

5. *My righteousness is near.* He confirms the former doctrine. The "righteousness" of the Lord has relation to men, who know by experience that he is "righteous." While the people were oppressed by cruel bondage, they knew, indeed, that they were justly punished for their sins; but they might wonder that they were so much forsaken, because the worship of God ceased, and his name was blasphemed by wicked men, who pursued their wicked career without punishment. In order, therefore, to bring them some consolation, he promises that God will speedily assist them, so that all shall acknowledge that he is faithful and just. By the word "righteous" the Prophet does not mean that he renders to every one a "righteous" reward, but that he yields the best protection, and dispenses the largest kindness to his people, that he faithfully performs his promises to all believers, when he delivers them and does not suffer them to be finally overwhelmed.

This appears more clearly from the following clause, in which, for the purpose of explanation, he adds, *My salvation hath gone forth; for* the "righteousness" of God shone brightly in the deliverance of the people. Now, the captivity in which the Jews were held in Babylon was a kind of death, in consequence of which that deliverance is here called "Salvation."

My arms shall judge the peoples. By "arms" he means the wide exercise of his power. That figure of speech which describes God under forms of expression drawn from the human frame occurs frequently in Scripture. Because God's government appeared to be confined within narrow limits, or rather was not at all visible, on this account he mentions *arms,* by which he means that he will spread his kingdom far and wide.

[266] "Les hommes miserables de nature." "Men who are by nature miserable."

6. *Lift up your eyes toward heaven.* When we see so great changes in the world, we are apt to think that the Church comes within the influence of the sanhe violent motion; and therefore we need to have our minds elevated above the ordinary course of nature; otherwise, the salvation of the Church will appear to hang on a thread, and to be carried hither and thither by the billows and tempests. Yet, we may see both in heaven and in earth how wisely God regulates all things, with what fatherly kindness he upholds and defends his workmanship and the frame of the world, and with what equity he provides for all his creatures. But in a remarkable manner he deigns to watch over his Church, as he has separated her from the ordinary rank.

And look upon the earth beneath. Both of the views now stated are here embraced by the Prophet; for he bids believers turn their eyes upwards and downwards, so as to perceive both in heaven and in earth the wonderful providence of God, by which he so beautifully preserves the order and harmony which he at first established. But he adds that, though heaven and earth hasten to decay, it is impossible that the Church shall fail, the stability of which is founded on God; as if he had said, "A thousand times rather shall leaven mingle with the earth than the promise on which your salvation rests shall fail of its accomplishment."-

My salvation shall endure for ever. First of all, he mentions "salvation," and next he speaks of "righteousness," on which it rests as on a solid foundation. Whenever, therefore, dangers shall press upon us on every hand, let us learn to betake ourselves to this place of refuge. And with this sentiment agree the words of the Psalmist,

"The heavens shall wax old and vanish away; but thou, Lord, art always the same, and thy years are not changed."
(Psalm 102:26, 27)

Both passages remind us that the grace of God, which he displays in the preservation of his Church, surpasses all his other works. Everything that is contained in heaven and earth is frail and fading; but God's salvation, by which he guards the Church, is eternal, and therefore cannot be liable to these dangers.

7. *Hearken to me.* Because wicked men, when they enjoy prosperity, laugh at our faith, and ridicule our distresses and afflictions, on this account the Prophet exhorts believers to patience, that they may not dread their reproaches or be dismayed by their slanders. The reason assigned is, that their prosperity shall not be of long duration. Whatever may be their insolent boasting, they are already pronounced (verse 8) to be the food of *moths* and *worms;* while God holds in his hand the salvation of believers, from which they appear to be thrown to the greatest possible distance. Here we ought again to observe the repetition of the word *Hearken.* This is now the third time that the Lord demands a "hearing;" because, when we tremble with anxiety on account of our distresses, it is with the greatest difficulty that we rely on his promises, and therefore we need to be often roused and stimulated,

till we have conquered every difficulty.

Ye that know righteousness, Here he does not address unbelievers, but those who "know righteousness;" because, though they do not intentionally reject the word of God, yet they often shut the door against his "righteousness," so that it does not reach them, when, under the influence of adversity, they shut their ears and almost despair. In order therefore that they may receive the promises, and that they may admit consolation, the Prophet stirs up and arouses them.

A people in whose heart is my law. We must attend to the train of thought. First, he describes what kind of people the Lord wishes to have, namely, "those who know righteousness;" and next he explains what is the nature of this knowledge, that is, when the people have "the law" fixed and deeply rooted in their hearts. Without the word of the Lord there call be no "righteousness." No laws of men, however well framed, will lead us to true righteousness, of which they may indeed give us a feeble idea, but which they never can justly describe. At the same time, he shews in what manner we ought to make progress in the law of the Lord; namely, by embracing it with the heart; for the seat of the law is not in the brain, but in the heart, that, being imbued with heavenly doctrine, we may be altogether renewed.

8. *But my righteousness shall continually endure.* Because the believing servants of God must endure many reproaches and slanders from the enemies of the word, the Prophet exhorts and encourages them to bear it courageously. It frequently happens that we are more deeply moved by the contumely and insults of men than by fire and sword; but we ought to reckon it praise and glory to be the object of their contempt and abhorrence. True valor springs from this consideration, that, although the world reject us as "filth and offscourings," (1 Corinthians 4:13,) God holds us in estimation; because we maintain the same cause with himself. Let us with Moses, therefore, "prefer the reproach of Christ to the treasures of the Egyptians." (Hebrews 11:26.) Let us rejoice with the Apostles, who

"departed from the council glad and joyful, because they were accounted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Jesus." (Acts 5:41.)

And my salvation for ever and ever. Because the death of wicked men would yield to us small consolation, if we were not saved, he shews what will be our condition, namely, that we shall never be left destitute of "God's righteousness and salvation." But the comparison may appear to be inappropriate, when he contrasts the destruction of the wicked with his righteousness. Far more clearly and suitably it might have been thus expressed: "though the reprobate indulge in mirth, yet they shall speedily perish; but believers, though they appear to be dead, shall live." Again, because he makes no mention of us, and commends only the eternity of God's righteousness, it may be objected, that to us who are almost overwhelmed this is of no avail. But by these words the Prophet instructs us, that in our afflictions we ought to seek consolation from the thought, that our health and salvation are, as

it were, shut up in God; for, so long as men trust or rely on themselves, they cannot cherish any good hope that does not speedily decay; and therefore we ought to turn our hearts to God, whose "mercy endureth from everlasting to everlasting on them that fear him," as David says, "and his righteousness to children's children." (Psalm 103:17.)

Because salvation is founded on the goodness of God, Isaiah reminds us of it, that men may be reduced to nothing, and that confidence may be placed in God alone. The meaning may be thus summed up, "*Salvation* is in God, that by it he may preserve, not himself, but us; *righteousness* is in God, that he may display it for our defense and preservation." Accordingly, from the eternity of God's "salvation and righteousness" we ought to infer that the servants of God cannot possibly perish; which agrees with the passage quoted a little before from David,

"Thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail. The children of thy servants shall dwell, and their posterity shall be established for ever." (Psalm 102:27, 28.)

Thus we see how he applies this eternity to the children of God, who do not subsist in themselves, but in God, and have the foundation of their salvation in him.

9. *Awake, awake.* Here the Prophet instructs us, that, when God cheers us by his promises, we ought also to pray earnestly that he would perform what he has promised. He does not comfort us in order to render us slothful, but that we may be inflamed with a stronger desire to pray, and may continually exercise our faith. The Prophet speaks according to our feelings; for we think that God is asleep, so long as he does not come to the relief of our wants; and the Lord indulges us so far as to permit us to speak and pray according to the feeling of our weakness. Believers therefore entreat the Lord to "awake," not that they imagine him to be idle or asleep in heaven; [267] but, on the contrary, they confess their own sluggishness and ignorance, in not being able to form any conception of God, so long as they are not awaro of receiving his assistance. But yet, though the flesh imagine that he is asleep, or that he disregards our calamities, faith rises higher and lays hold on his eternal power.

Put on strength, O arm of Jehovah. He is said to "awake" and "put on strength," when he exhibits testimonies of his power, because otherwise we think that he is idle or asleep. Meanwhile, the Prophet, by addressing the arm of God which was concealed, holds it out to the view of believers as actually present, that they may be convinced that there is no other reason why they are so bitterly and painfully afflicted by their enemies than because God has withdrawn his aid. The cause of the delay has been already shewn, that they had estranged themselves from God.

In ancient days. By the term "ancient days" he shews that we ought to bear in remembrance all that the Lord did long ago for the salvation of his

[267] "Non pas qu'ils le pensent oisif ni endormi au ciel."

people. Though he appears to pause and to take no more care about us, still he is the same God who formerly governed his Church; and therefore he can never forsake or abandon those whom he takes under his protection.

In ages long ago past. This repetition tells us still more clearly, that we ought to consider not only those things which have happened lately, but those which happened long ago; for we ought to stretch our minds even to the most remote ages, that they may rise above temptations, which otherwise might easily overwhelm us.

Art thou not it that crushed the proud one? [268] The numerous testimonies of grace which God had displayed in various ages are here collected by the Prophet, so that, if a few are not enough, the vast number of them may altogether confirm the faith of the Church. But, since it would be too tedious to draw up an entire catalogue, he brings forward that singular and most remarkable of all such events, namely, that the people were once delivered from Egypt in a miraculous manner, for I have no doubt that by *Rahab* [269] he means proud and cruel Egypt; as it is also said,

"I will mention Rahab and Babylon among my friends."
(Psalm 87:4.)

In like manner Ezekiel calls the king of Egypt "a Dragon."

"Behold, I am against thee,O Pharaoh, king of Egypt, the great dragon, who dwellest in the midst of thy rivers."
(Ezekiel 29:3.)

It is sufficiently evident, and is universally admitted, that the Prophet here calls to remembrance the miraculous deliverance of the people from Egypt. "If at that time the pride of Egypt was tamed and subdued, if the dragon was put to flight, why should we not hope for the same thing?"

By putting the question, if it be the same arm, he argues from the nature of God; for this could not be affirmed respecting the "arm" of man, whose strength, though it be great, is diminished and fails through time? Milo, who had been very strong, when he became old and looked at his arms, groaned because the strength which he possessed at an earlier period had now left him. But it is not so with God, whose strength no lapse of time can diminish. These words ought to be read {ἐμφατικῶς} emphatically, "Art thou not it?" For he shews that the Lord is the same as he formerly was, because he remains unchangeable.

10. *Which dried up the sea.* Though Isaiah does not relate all the miracles which God performed when he brought out his people from the bondage of Egypt, yet he intended to include in a few words all that are related by Moses,

[268] "Here is a noble mixture of lively figures; the Prophet first addressing himself to the Lord, as if he were fast asleep, tired with fatigue and labor; then painting him in a martial posture, dressing himself in arms, and putting on his accoutrements; then raising his courage by a narration of his former valorous performances, Art not thou that Arm which cut off the Egyptian Rahab, when with all the strength of his kingdom he pursued the naked Israelites to the further banks of the Red Sea? Certainly thou art the same, not at all decayed in strength, but able to do as much for thy people now, as for their fathers then." — White.

[269] "Par Rahab, que nous avons traduit l'orgueilleuse." "By Rahab, which we have translated The proud."

that the Jews, having been briefly addressed, might consider the various ways in which the Lord had demonstrated his power. The drying up of the Red Sea is mentioned, not only on account of the extraordinary excellence of the miracle, but because the numerous miracles which preceeded it were directed to this end, that the people, rescued from unjust violence and tyranny, might pass into the promised land. Accordingly, the Prophet expressly mentions that *a way was opened up for the redeemed.* From this example we ought to consider what God will be to us, so as to draw this conclusion, that in future God will always be like himself, as is evident from the context.

11 *Therefore the redeemed by Jehovah shall return.* He now describes more plainly what he had briefly remarked; for, after having related the magnificent works of God, by which he formerly displayed his power in Egypt, in order to deliver his people, he concludes that neither the sea, nor the lofty rocks, nor the whirlpools, nor even hell itself, can prevent him from leading forth his people out of Babylon. And in order to confirm it more fully, and to apply that example, he calls them "redeemed," that they may know that, when God calls himself the deliverer of his people, this belongs to them, and that they may not doubt that, in delivering them, he will produce such an example as had been already exhibited; for the reason is the same.

Shall come to Zion. Namely, to that place where he wished that men should call on his name, that the temple may be rebuilt and the pure worship of God restored; for, since the Jews, during the Babylonish captivity, ought to expect the same aid as had been obtained by their fathers, because God was in like manner the Redeemer of the children also, they were superior to the fathers in one respect, that God had at that time chosen Mount Zion, in which he had promised that his rest would be eternal. (Psalm 132:14.) But since the work of God, which Isaiah promises, was worthy of admiration, on this account, he exhorts the people to praise and thanksgiving.

With a song. {רנה} *(rinnah)* may indeed be taken simply for "rejoicing;" but, as it frequently denotes the praise which is rendered to God when we acknowledge his benefits, I prefer to take it in that sense in this passage. [270] The meaning is, that there will be a great and unexpected change, so that they shall have very abundant ground of joy and thanksgiving. When he says that *joy shall be on their head,* he alludes to the chaplets of flowers with which they were wont to adorn themselves at banquets. He adds that "they shall obtain joy," which denotes that their enjoyment shall be solid and lasting. Lastly, for the purpose of amplification, he adds that all sorrow shall be banished, that they may not dread what frequently happens, that *joy,* by a sudden change, shall give place to mourning. (Proverbs 14:13.) Yet the Prophet instructs them, though they groan and are sorrowful, to wait patiently for that issue which he promises.

12. *I, I am.* Here the Lord not only promises grace and salvation to

[270] "J'aime mieux le prendre pour cantique en cest endroit-ci." "I prefer to take it for a song in this passage."

the Jews, but remonstrates with them for refusing to believe him, and for valuing his power less than they ought. It is exceedingly base to tremble at the threatenings of men to such a degree as to care nothing about God's assistance; for he displays his power for this purpose, that he may at least fortify; us against every attack. Accordingly, by an excessive fear of men we betray contempt of God.

Hence it is evident how sinful it is to be agitated by the terrors of men, when God calls us to repose. And indeed it is amazing ingratitude in men, who, when they hear that God is on their side, derive no hope from his magnificent promises, so as to venture boldly to exclaim, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31.) The consequence is, that when dangers arise, they are terrified and confounded, and attribute far more to the power of mortal man in attacking than to the power of God in defending. Justly, therefore, does he upbraid the Jews with not fortifying themselves by these promises, and with not rendering themselves invincible against every danger; for God is treated with the highest dishonor when we doubt his truth, that is, when we are so completely overcome by human terrors that we cannot rest on his promises.

The repetition, *I, I,* is highly emphatic. He who promises consolation is the God of truth, against whom neither the strength nor the contrivances of men will be of any avail. When thou distrustest him, it follows that thou dost not consider who he is.

That thou shoudest be afraid of a man. He describes how frail, fading, transitory: and unsubstantial is the condition of men, in order to exhibit more fully their criminal stupidity in preferring a shadow and smoke to God. He shews that men, so long as they are mindful of God, cannot be struck down by fear. Consequently, when we are stunned by dangers that assail us, it follows that we have forgotten God; and therefore he adds, —

13. *And hast forgotten Jehovah thy Maker.* It is not enough to imagine that there is some God, but we ought to acknowledge and embrace him as ours. When he calls him "Maker," this must not be understood to refer to universal creation, but to spiritual regeneration, as we have already explained under other passages. In this sense Paul calls us ({τὸ} {ποίημα}) "the workmanship of God," (Ephesians 2:10,) because he hath created us to every good work. Thus, if we remember our creation and adoption, these beginnings may encourage us to hope for continued progress, that we may not be ungrateful to God, when he has proved his veracity by undoubted experience.

Who hath stretched out the heavens and founded the earth. To the special kindness which God had exercised towards his people he likewise adds his boundless power which he contrasts with the weakness of men, whom he formerly compared to withered grass. (Isaiah 40:7.) He demonstrates that power by his works, so that they who do not perceive it must be exceedingly stupid; for we cannot tum our eyes in any direction without perceiving very

abundant testimonies of divine goodness and power, which, however, are briefly described by a figure of speech in which a part is taken for the whole, when he says that it is "He who stretched out the heavens and founded the earth." It is therefore the greatest folly and indolence to forget him, for so numerous are the signs and testimonies which recall him to the remembrance of men.

And hast dreaded continually. He follows out the same comparison. "What are men," says he, "that thou shouldst dread them, if thou compare them to God, who promises thee his assistance?" Assuredly, God is grievously blasphemed, if we refuse to believe that he is more powerful to preserve than enemies are to destroy us; and therefore the Lord bids us consider who and what he is, how vast and extensive is his power, that we may not dread the fury of a mortal man, who vanishes like a whirlwind or like smoke.

14. *The exile hasteneth to be loosed.* This verse is expounded in various ways; for some think that it refers to Cyrus, and take the word, {צעה} *(tzoeh)* [271] in a transitive sense, and explain it to mean, "Causing to migrate." [272] But it is more customary to interpret it as meaning one who is imprisoned and oppressed, or an exile who wanders about without any settled abode. Now, the Jews were not only exiles but captives, so that they were not at liberty to return to their native land; and therefore I explain it as referring to the Jews.

But still there are two senses in which it may be understood, either that the Prophet reproves their excessive haste, in impatiently desiring to return, or that the Prophet means that their return to their native country is immediately at hand, that they may not sink under the discouragement of long delay; as if he had said, that the time when they must prepare for departure will speedily arrive. The second of these expositions has been more generally approved; and I adopt it the more readily, because it agrees best with the context.

But it may appear strange that he should say that the people will quickly return, since their captivity was of long duration. Yet with good reason does God say that that event will come quickly which he delays till a fit season; for, although to us it may appear to be long, yet, being appropriate and suitable, the time is short. And indeed it was a short time, if we look at the condition of that monarchy, which was so vast and strong that it appeared as if it could never be destroyed. Thus, what appears to be long in the promises of God will appear to be short, provided that we do not refuse to lift up our eyes to heaven. This meaning is confirmed by what immediately follows.

That he may not die in a pit. Such then is God's haste to come early to deliver his people; that they may come forth safely out of the dungeon. The Lord does not promise to his people some sudden assistance, that he may only bring them out of prison, but also that, after having been delivered,

[271] "Que nons avons traduit banni." "Which we have translated banished."

[272] That is, they treat it as the Kal participle of an active verb, signifying "Banishing," and not as the participle of a passive or neuter verb, signifying "Banished," or "Wandering." — Ed.

they may be the objects of his kindness; for he promises everything necessary for their food and support, that they may be convinced that God will always take care of them; and he is wont not only to assist his people for a moment, but to remain with them continually.

15. *And I am Jehovah thy God.* Again the Lord declares his power; for so great is the unbelief and sluggishness of men, that, although it is frequently declared, yet the very smallest temptation shews that they are not fully convinced of it. They quickly fall back upon themselves, when they are hard pressed by afflictions; and when they hear that anything is in the power of God, they do not think that it belongs to them.

Who divide the sea. He does not speak in general terms, but brings forward the instance which he had often mentioned before; for, by once redeeming the fathers, he held out to posterity the hope of eternal salvation. Justly, therefore, does he exclaim that he is the same God who long ago "divided the sea;" and next he magnifies the miracle by saying that its roaring billows were stilled at his command. (Exodus 14:21.) We ought to know, therefore, that there are no raging billows which God cannot allay and calm in order to deliver his Church. "It is he who," by his power, "stills the sea and makes it calm," (Job 26:12,) though it rage furiously; and he likewise drives and swells its waves, when he thinks fit; though literally, as I have remarked, the Prophet alludes to the history of the deliverance from Egypt. [273]

Jehovah of hosts. The Lord is adorned with this title, that we may know how extensive is his power; and he exhibits that power as often as he is pleased to render assistance to his Church.

16. *And I have put my words in thy mouth.* He again retums to the doctrine which he had formerly stated, namely, that the Lord comforts his Church: "I, I am he that comforteth you," (ver. 12.) So he now says that he put into the mouth of the prophets what they should say. Hence we may infer that these words do not proceed from men, who often prove false, but from "God, who cannot lie." (Titus 1:2.) The Lord speaks to all the prophets, first to Isaiah, and then to the rest in their order; but at last we must come to Christ. These things must not be limited either to Isaiah or to Christ, but must be extended to all the prophets. The Lord wishes that believers should hear the consolation from the prophets, as if he were present and addressed them, and even declares that he speaks openly by their mouth.

Hence also we ought to conclude that none ought to come forward to comfort the Church but they who speak from the mouth of the Lord; for they who alter their own dreams, though they take shelter under the name of God, ought to be rejected. But; we must understand the Prophet's meaning; for, seeing that he shows that the consciences of men always tremble, till the Lord confirm them, he instructs us to abide by this principle, that it is God who speaks by the prophets; for otherwise consciences will always remain in doubt and uncertainty. Yet the mode of expression is highly emphatic, when

[273] "A l'histoire de la deliverance d'Egypte."

he repeats the commandments of God, by which he was encouraged to the execution of his office.

And in the shadow of my hand. Though he had already said this, yet the repetition is not superfluous, that we may fully believe that God will always assist his ministers, so that, relying on his immediate aid, they may be raised by him above all obstructions. Now, in order to being covered with that shadow of the Lord, two things are necessary; first, that they are certain that what they utter is the word of God, and secondly, that they do so by God's command. They who rashly put themselves forward may indeed boast of the name of God, but in vain; for when they come to fight in earnest, they will faint. And if we have the testimony of conscience, we have no reason for entertaining doubts as to God's protection and aid, by which he will enable us to gain the victory. Next comes the object of the embassy.

That I may plant the heavens; that is, that I may restore everything to its proper order. There are, indeed, various interpretations of these words; but the true meaning appears to me to be this, that heaven and earth are said to be restored by the doctrine of salvation; because "in Christ," as Paul says, "are collected all things that are either in heaven or in earth." (Ephesians 1:10.) Since the fall of the first man we see nothing but frightful confusion, which troubles even the dumb creatures, and makes them suffer, in some respects, the punishment of our sins; and, consequently, that confusion cannot be repaired but by Christ. Since therefore the whole face of the world is disfigured by frightful desolation, there are good grounds for saying that godly teachers renovate the world, as if God formed heaven and earth anew by their hand. And hence it is evident how great is the heinousness of our guilt, which has been followed by such dreadful confusion in the nature of things. Thus, "the heavens" are said to be "planted and the earth to be founded," when the Lord establishes his Church by the word; and he does this by the agency of ministers, whom he directs by his Spirit, and protects against hidden enemies and various dangers, that they may effectually accomplish what he has enjoined.

That I may say to Zion, Thou art my people. At length he shews that this aims at something higher than the visible form of the world, which shall quickly perish; namely, to excite and nourish in the hearts of believers the hope of a heavenly life. The true stability of the Church, the restoration of the world, consists in this, that the elect be gathered into the unity of faith, so that, with one consent, all may lift their hearts to God, who also invites them sweetly and gently by these words, "I am thy God." And hence we see how highly God values the salvation of the Church, since he not only prefers it to the whole world, but even shews that the stability of the world depends upon it. We must likewise observe what is the word which the Lord enjoins to be proclaimed; for it not only lays down a rule of life, but also gives a testimony of our adoption, in which our salvation chiefly consists.

17. *Awake, awake.* The Church was about to endure grievous calamities,

and therefore he fortifies her by consolation, and meets a doubt which might arise, that the Jews, being now oppressed by tyrants, saw no fulfillment of these promises. The meaning therefore is, that the Church, though afflicted and tossed in various ways, will nevertheless be set up again, so as to regain her full vigor. By the word "Awake" he recalls her, as it were, from death and the grave; as if he had said, that no ruins shall be so dismal, no desolations shall be so horrible, as to be capable of hindering God from effecting this restoration. And this consolation was highly necessary; for when grief seizes our hearts, we think that the promises do not at all belong to us; and therefore we ought frequently to call to remembrance, and to place constantly before our eyes, that it is God who speaks, and who addresses men who are not in a prosperous or flourishing condition, but fallen and dead, and whom notwithstanding he can raise up and uphold by his word; for this doctrine of salvation is intended not for those who retain their original condition, but for those who are dead and ruined.

Who hast drunk from the hand of Jehovah the cup of his wrath. There are two senses in which the term, "cup of wrath," may be understood; for sometimes the Lord is said to put into our hands a "cup of wrath," when he strikes us with some kind of giddiness, or deranges our intellect; as we see that affliction sometimes takes away men's understanding; but sometimes it is used in a simpler sense, to denote the sharp and heavy punishments by which the Lord severely chastises his people. This is evidently the meaning in which it must be taken here, as appears from the addition of the pronoun *His.* Nor is this inconsistent with what he says, that the Church was stupified and drunk; for he shews that this happened in consequence of the Lord having severely chastised her. It is an ordinary metaphor by which the chastisement which God inflicts on his people is called a "potion," [274] or a certain measure which he assigns to each. But whenever it relates to the elect, this term "cup" serves to express the moderation of the divine judgment; that the Lord, though he punish his people severely, still observes a limit. [275]

Pressing out the dregs of the cup of distress (or *of trembling.)* I consider the word {תרעלה} *(targnelah)* to denote "anguish" or "trembling," by which men are nearly struck dead, when they are weighed down by heavy calamities. Such persons may be called "drunk," as having exhausted all that is in the cup, because nothing can be added to their affliction and distress.

This is also denoted by another term, "pressing out." The Church is here reminded that all the evils which befall her proceed from no other source than from the hand of God, that she may not think that they happen to her

[274] "He sets forth God like a physician, mixing a bitter potion for Jerusalem, putting as it were into one cup all the anger he had conceived against her, and standing by to see her take it off, that not a drop should be spilt, or any of the nauseous settlings left behind: a potion so strong that it made her tremble every limb of her, and so giddy that she stood in need of one to lead her: but such were her misfortunes that none of her inhabitants were able to support her; by all which the Prophet means that her afflictions should be so great as to turn her brain, and make her sink under the load of them." — W'hite.

[275] "Pource qu'il retient son bras." "Because he restrains his arm."

by chance, or that she is unjustly afflicted. The object which the Prophet has in view is, that the people may know that they are justly punished for their sins. No one can rise up till he first acknowledge that he has fallen, or be delivered from misery till he perceive that it is by his own fault that he is miserable. In short, there can be no room for consolations till they have been preceded by the doctrine of repentance.

Dregs, therefore, must not here be understood in the same sense as in Jeremiah 25:15, where the reprobate are spoken of, whom the Lord chokes and kills by his cup, but as denoting complete and righteous punishment, to which the Lord has been pleased to assign a limit. Thus, when the Lord has inflicted on us such punishment as he thought fit, and puts an end to our afflictions, he declares that the "dregs" are exhausted; as we have seen before at the fortieth chapter. [276]

18. *There is no one to guide her.* He describes the sorest calamity of the Church; for the heaviest and sorest of all undoubtedly is, that she receives no sympathy or consolation from her own children. This accumulated misery is described by him, in order that, though her condition be desperate, she may still expect consolation from God, who will never disappoint his servants, though they be sunk to the depth of hell. Although the Church has been forsaken by men, and even by those whom she nourished in her bosom and carried in her arms, yet she shall receive assistance from God. No affliction more severe can befall a mother than to be deserted by her children, who ought in their turn to have treated her with kindness. Such ingratitude and want of natural affection is certainly much liarder to bear than the violent and unbridled cruelty of enemies; for why does she give birth to children, and why does she bring them up, but in expectation of being supported by them in return? Since her children do not perform their duty, what remains but that she shall think that to have born and reared them has been of no advantage to her? Although therefore the Church has performed the duty of a mother, and has brought up her children to the age of maturity, yet the Prophet declares that she must not expect any assistance or consolation from ungrateful persons.

Yet his discourse conveys something more, and pronounces those children who have rendered no assistance to their mother to be bastards and reprobates, with the view of inducing her to bear the loss of them more patiently. It was sad and distressing for the Church to be deprived of all her offspring, and to be reduced to childlessness; though this has sometimes happened. But the Prophet reminds the mother that the children do not deserve that she should mourn for them, and that, on the contrary, she ought to desire additional offspring, as it is said by the Psalmist,

"The people that shall be created shall praise the Lord." (Psalm 103:18.)

What is here described by the Prophet is entirely applicable to our own

[276] The allusion appears to be to a different but analogous expression. See Com. on Isaiah, Vol. 3, pp. 201,202. — Ed.

age; for many boast of being the children of the Church; but where is the man that cares about his mother's distresses? Who is grieved for her ruin? Who is moved so deeply as to put his shoulders to her support? How many betray her, and, under presence of this title, persecute her more cruelly than open and avowed enemies? Accordingly, after all her calamities this is added as the copestone of her miseries. Moreover, they who wish to be regarded as holding the first rank in the Church, and who not only boast of being children, but vaunt of being called fathers, treacherously desert her when she implores their aid. We need not wonder, therefore, if God shall drive them out, in order to make way for the increase of his Church by lawful and dutiful children. [277]

19. *These two things have happened to thee.* Nearly the same thing was already asserted concerning Babylon,

"These two things shall befall thee suddenly in one day, childlessness and widowhood." (Isaiah 47:9.)

But here Isaiah promises to the Church that there shall eventually be a different issue; for the Lord will rescue her from the deepest abyss. He threatens extreme wretchedness, that believers may gird themselves for patience, and not cease to send upwards prayers and supplications from the depth of their distresses. The general meaning is, that the Church shall be burdened with afflictions of every kind, so that she shall appear to be on the brink of utter ruin; because from without she shall endure very heavy calamities, and from within shall obtain no aid or sympathy from her own children. These are two very sore evils which the Prophet relates. But it appears as if the division were not quite appropriate; for, after having related one evil, that there is none *to bewail her,* he enumerates four kinds —

Desolation and destruction, and the sword and famine. Some explain it to mean that the Church is visited by famine within, and harassed by enemies without. But I interpret it differently, as I have already hinted; for it is very customary among Hebrew writers to put a question, when they wish absolutely to deny anything; and among them it is elegant, though in Greek or Latin authors it would be ungraceful. Isaiah therefore describes "two evils," one external, for both by the devastations of "war" and by "famine" they will be brought to the verge of "destruction" and "desolation," which he describes by these four classes; and another internal, because she is deprived of consolation, and "there is none to bewail her." By putting the question, "Who shall bewail her?" he affirms that she shall have no consolation; and this verse agrees with the former, in which we have already explained the design which the Prophet has in view, in describing this highly calamitous and wretched condition of the Church.

20. *Thy sons have fainted.* He describes more fully the lamentable and wretched condition of the Church, when he says that her children he pros-

[277] "Afin de donner puis apres a son Eglise des enfans legitimes qui luy assistent." "In order afterwards to give to his Church lawful children to assist her."

trate. A mother cannot be visited with any grief more bitter than to have her children slain before her eyes, and not one or two of them, but so great a number as to fill the roads with the slaughter.

As a wild bull in a net. The metaphor is taken from bears or other savage animals, by which he means that even the strongest of them have, as it were, been caught in snares.

Full of the indignation of Jehovah. By this expression he distinctly states that none of these events are accidental, lest they should suppose that any of them has happened by chance, or lest they should accuse the Lord of cruelty for having punished them severely; because his judgment is just and righteous. This is what he means, when he says that this punishment has proceeded from *the rebuke* of the Lord. Yet we must bear in mind his object which I have already mentioned, that believers ought not to throw away the hope of grace, though innumerable calamities prompt and urge them to despair.

21. *Therefore now hear this.* He now shews more plainly the reason why he spoke of the calamities of the Church. It was, that believers might be fully persuaded that they would obtain consolation from God, though they were reduced to the extremity of distress. But why does he call the Church *wretched,* since nothing is more happy than to be God's people, and that happiness cannot be taken away by any tribulations?; Not without cause is it said,

"Blessed is the people whose God is Jehovah."
(Psalm 144:15.)

I reply, she is apparently "wretched," and not in vain does the Lord address her by that name; for, as we have already said, he helps the wretched, and succors the destitute.

And drunken, not with wine. [278] When he calls her "drunken," it ought to be observed that believers never endure so patiently the chastisements which are inflicted on them as not to be sometimes stupified; but, although stupified, they ought to remember that the Lord punishes them justly, and ought to believe that the Lord will assist them. He does not speak to robust or healthy men, but to those who are feeble, wretched, prostrate, and who resemble drunken persons, and says that he brings to them consolation. Finally, by this word he soothes the grief of the Church, and shews that he preserves a limit, by which he restrains the violence even of the greatest afflictions, and restores her when ruined, as if he were raising from the dead a rotten corpse.

22. *Thus saith Jehovah.* Not at random does the Prophet add to the name Jehovah three epithets, namely, that he is the *Lord* or Defender of his Church, that he is *God,* and lastly, that he is her *Avenger.* We ought always to consider what is the nature of our relation to God; for he addresses us in

[278] {{שכרת} {דבר} {אחד} {שלא} {מיין} (shekurath dabar ehad shello miyain). Drunken with something which is not wine." — Jarchi.

a familiar manner, in consequence of having once chosen us to be his people, by uniting himself to us in an everlasting covenant. This preface encouraged the Jews, in ancient times, not to hesitate to embrace what is here promised; and at the present day the same argument applies to a new people, who have been taken under God's care and protection not less than they. The Lord declares himself to hold the office of an "Avenger," in order that, when we shall be threatened with the most alarming dangers, and when it shall appear as if all were over with us, we may betake ourselves to this anchor, that God is the "Avenger" of his people; and this ought to support us, not only when we are assailed by outward enemies, but also when we are assailed by Satan.

Behold, I have taken from thy hand. He holds out the ground of hope; for it is only by temporary stripes that the Lord chastises his Church. Hence also the Jews ought to learn that all the calamities to which they were subjected were the just reward of their transgressions; for those calamities would never come to an end but by their being reconciled to God. The general meaning is, that the wrath of the Lord will be appeased, so that he will restrain and bring to a close the chastisements which he had formerly inflicted on his Church.

The cup of thy affliction, or, *the cup of thy trembling.* We have already spoken of the metaphor of "the cup;" and the explanation of it which we gave is fully confirmed by this passage, in which God calls it "the cup of his indignation," though it had made the Church to tremble, as if she had been seized with giddiness. Yet it is the same word which he formerly used, {תרעלה} *(targnelah,)* which some translate "anguish," and others "trembling." By *dregs,* as I have said, he means the full measure of vengeance with which God is satisfied on account of his fatherly kindness.

23. *And I will put it into the hand of thy oppressors.* This is another part of the consolation, in which he promises that the Lord will not only deliver the Church from those heavy distresses, but will also lay upon her enemies the calamities with which she is afflicted. If therefore we are afflicted, [279] our condition will be speedily changed, and our enemies will be severely punished. Truly, as Paul says, it is righteous with God to render tribulation to them that trouble you, and to you who are troubled rest along with us, when the Lord shall be revealed from heaven, with the angels of his power, with flame of fire, to take vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Thessalonians 1:6-8.) Thus the temporary punishments which God inflicts on them are the beginnings of that eternal punishment to which they shall be finally condemned.

Who said to thy soul. In order to describe more fully the insolence and haughtiness of their enemies, such as we too experience every day in our adversaries, he quotes their words, by which they slandered and insulted the unhappy children of God. Impiety is always accompanied by pride and

[279] "si nous sommes persecutez." "If we are persecuted."

cruelty; for, as the true knowledge of God renders men gentle, so ignorance makes them ferocious and savage. They who are ignorant of God please themselves, and pour out unmeasured reproaches against God and those who truly worship him. This truly is most wretched and base; but since he frequently permits his name to be exposed to the insults of wicked men, let us not wonder that we are assailed on account of his name; for we are not more excellent than God, and our condition ought not to be better than that of the ancient Church. David employs a different metaphor, (Psalm 129:3,) when he says that the Church resembles a field which is cut and broken up by the plough; for he shews that frequently it is deeply furrowed and trodden upon, that we may not think that our condition is different.

Chapter 52

CHAPTER 52.

Isaiah 52:1-15

1. Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean.

1. Excitare, excitare, indue fortitudinem tuam, Sion, indue vestes decoris tui, Ierusalem, civitas sancta; quia non fiet amplius ut veniat in to incircumcisus et immundus.

2. Shake thyself from the dust; arise, and sit down, O Jerusalem: loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion.

2. Excute to de pulvere, surge, sede, Ierusalem; extricate a vinculis colli tui, captiva filia Sion.

3. For thus saith the LORD, Ye have sold yourselves for nought; and ye shall be redeemed without money.

3. Quia sic dicit Iehova: Gratis venditi estis; ideo sine pecunia redimemini.

4. For thus saith the Lord GOD, My people went down aforetime into Egypt to sojourn there; and the Assyrian oppressed them without cause.

4. Quia sic dicit Dominus Iehova: In AEgyptum olim descenderat populus meus ut peregrinaretur illic; verum Assur absque causa oppressit eum.

5. Now therefore, what have I here, saith the LORD, that my people is taken away for nought? They that rule over them make them to howl, saith the LORD; and my name continually every day is blasphemed.

5. Et nunc, Quid mihi hic, dicit Iehova, ut ablatus sit populus meus gratis, et qui in eum dominantur faciant eum ululare, dicit Iehova, et jugiter tota die nomen meum contumeliae expositum sit?

6. Therefore my people shall know my name: therefore they shall know in that day that I am he that doth speak; behold, it is I

6. Propterea sciet populus meus nomen meum; propterea in die illa, quod ego idem qui loquor; ecee, adero.

7. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!

7. Quam speciosi super montes pedes annuntiantis, publicantis salutere, dicentis Sioni, Regnat Deus tuus.

8. Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the LORD shall bring again Zion.

8. Vox speculatorum tuorum; levaverunt vocem, pariterjubilabunt; quoniam oculo ad oculum videbunt, cum Iehova reducet Sion.

9. Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the LORD hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem.

9. Laudate, exultate pariter, solitudines Ierusalem; qnoniam consolatus est Iehova populum suum, redemit Ierusalem.

10. The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

10. Nudavit Iehova brachium sanctitatis sum coram oculis omnium gentium; et videbunt omnes fines terrae salutem Dei nostri.

11. Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the LORD.

11. Discedite, discedite, exite inde, immundum ne attingite, exite e medio ejus, mundamini qui ferris vusa Iehovae.

12. For ye shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight: for the LORD will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your rereward.

12. Quoniam non in festinatione exibitis, neque in fuga erit iter vobis; quandoquidem praecedet vos Iehova, et congregabit vos Deus Israel.

13. Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high.

13. Ecce prosperum successum habebit servus mens; exaltabitur, elevabitur, et valde sublimis erit.

14. As many were astonied at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men:

14. Quemadmodum obstupuerunt super to multi, adeo deformata fuit ab hominibus species ejus, et forran ejus a filiis hominum:

15. So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider.

15. Sic asperget gentes multas; super eum reges claudent os suum; quia quod non fuerat ipsis narratum videbunt; et qued non audierant intelligent.

1. *Awake, awake.* He confirms the former doctrine, in order still more to arouse the people who had been weighed down by grief and sorrow. These things were necessary to be added as spurs, that the doctrine might more

easily penetrate into their drowsy and stupified hearts; for he addresses the Church, which appeared to be in a benumbed and drowsy condition, and bids her "awake," that she may collect her strength and revive her courage, he repeats it a second time, and with great propriety; for it is difficult to arouse and reanimate those whose hearts have been struck, and even laid prostrate, by a sense of God's anger.

Put on thy strength. As if he had said, "Formerly thou wast dejected, and wallowedst in filth and pollution; now prepare for a happy and prosperous condition, to which the Lord will restore thee." Thus he contrasts *"strength"* with despondency, such as is usually found when affairs are desperate; and he contrasts *garments of beauty* with filth and pollution.

For henceforth there shall not come to thee. The reason assigned by him is, that henceforth God will not permit wicked men to indulge their sinful inclinations for destroying it. Freed from their tyranny, the Church already has cause to rejoice; and security for the future holds out solid ground for joy and gladness. Yet Isaiah exhorts us to mutual congratulation when God is reconciled to his Church; and indeed if we have any piety in us, we ought to be deeply affected by her condition, that we may rejoice in her prosperity, and be grieved in her adversity. [280] In short, it ought to be the height of our gladness, as also the Psalmist says,

"Let my tongue cleave to my jaws, if I remember not thee, and if thou be not the crown of my gladness." (Psalm 137:6.)

By the word *come,* he means what we commonly express by the phrase, *(Avoir e entree,)* "to have access."

By the uncircumcised and unclean, he means all irreligious persons who corrupt the worship of God and oppress consciences by tyranny. It was customary to apply the term "uncircumcised" to all who were estranged from the Church, which had for its symbol "circumcision," by which all believers were distinguished. But as very many persons, though they bore this outward mark of the covenant, were not better than others, in order to remove all doubt, he added the word "unclean;" for the mark of "circumcision is nothing in itself," (Galatians 5:6,) and (unless, as Paul says, there be added purity of heart) "is even reckoned uncircumcision." (Romans 2:25,) Accordingly, he declares that henceforth such persons shall not be admitted into the Church, in order that, by the removal of corruptions, and the restoration of the worship of God, she may possess perfect joy. Yet I do not object to viewing these words as applied to outward foes, whom he calls by hateful names, that even the severity of the punishment may warn the Jews of the heinousness of their offenses.

2. *Shake thyself from the dust; arise.* He explains more fully the deliverance of the Church, and exhibits it prominently by {ὑποτύπωσιν}, "a lively description." When he bids her "shake off the dust and arise," let us not on

[280] "Pour rire et chanter quand elle florit, et pleurer lors qu'elle est persecutee." "To laugh and sing when she is flourishing, and to weep when she is persecuted."

that account think that our liberty is in our power, so that we can obtain it whenever we think fit; for it belongs to God alone to raise us from the dust, to lift us up when we are prostrate, and, by breaking or loosing our chains, to set us at liberty. Why then does the Prophet make use of the imperative mood? for it is unreasonable to demand what we cannot perform. I reply, the imperative form of address has a much more powerful tendency to arouse than if he had employed plain narrative; and therefore he declares that, when God shall have restored her to her former freedom, she shall come out of the mire.

Sit, O Jerusalem,. The word "sit" denotes a flourishing condition, and is contrasted with the word "to lie," which denotes the lowest calamity. Sometimes indeed it means "to be prostrate," as when he formerly said to Babylon, "sit in the dust." (Isaiah 47:1.) But here the meaning is different; for, after ordering her to arise, he likewise adds, "that she may sit;" that is, that she may no longer lie down, but may regain her former condition, and not be in future laid prostrate by enemies.

3. *For thus saith Jehovah.* This verse has been badly expounded by many commentators, who have here chosen to enter into philosophical subtleties; for they have dreamed of many things at variance with the Prophet's meaning. It agrees with what he had formerly stated,

"To which of my creditors have I sold you?" (Isaiah 1:1.)

For here, in the same manner, he says, *"Ye have been sold for nought;"* as if he had said that he has received no price, and is under no obligations to a creditor who can claim them as having been purchased by him. This tends greatly to confirm the promise; because the Jews might entertain doubts of the liberty which was promised to them, in consequence of their having been long held in possession by the Babylonians, who were the most powerful of all nations. The Lord meets this doubt. "I did not sell or make a conveyance of you to them; for nought were ye sold; and therefore I can justly claim you as nay property and sell you. Do not then consider how great are your difficulties, when I promise you liberty, and do not reason on this matter by human arguments; for the Babylonians have no right to detain you, and cannot prevent your being set at liberty.

Therefore shall ye be redeemed without money. Lastly, as he had formerly said, that he is not like a spendthrift, who is compelled to sell his children, or offer them in payment, so in this passage he declares that "for nought he sold" and gave them up to their enemies, for no other reason than because they had provoked him by their sins; and therefore that there will be no greater difficulty in delivering them than in giving them up to their enemies.

Some explain it more ingeniously thus, that Christ has redeemed us by free grace. This doctrine must indeed be maintained, but does not agree with the Prophet's meaning, who intended to correct the distrust of the Jews, that they might have no doubt as to their being set at liberty. Let it suffice to know, that when God shall be pleased to deliver his people, it will

not be necessary to make a pecuniary bargain with the Babylonians, whom, in spite of their opposition, he will have no difficulty in driving out of their unjust possession.

4. *Into Egypt my people went down aforetime.* Here also the commentators touch neither heaven nor earth; for the Jews dream of three captivities, and Christians differ from them by thinking that this denotes a third captivity, which shall be under Antichrist, and from which Christ will deliver them. But the Prophet's meaning, in my opinion, is quite different; for he argues from the less to the greater, by quoting the instance of the Egyptian captivity, from which the people were formerly recalled by the wonderful power of God. (Exodus 14:28.) The argument therefore stands thus: "If the Lord punished the Egyptians because their treatment of his people was harsh and unjust, (Genesis 15:14,) much more will he punish the Babylonians, who have cruelly tyrannized over them."

But the Assyrian has oppressed them without cause. There was much greater plausibility in Pharaoh's claim of dominion over the Jews than in that of the Babylonians; for Jacob, having voluntarily come down to Egypt with his family, (Genesis 46:5,) undoubtedly became subject to the power of Pharaoh, who, in return for the kindness received from Joseph, [281] had assigned to him a large country and abundant pasturage. Pharaoh's successors, ungrateful and forgetful of the benefit conferred on them by Joseph, afflicted all the posterity of Jacob in various ways. This ingratitude and cruelty the Lord severely punished. But far more base and savage was the wickedness of the Babylonians, who drove the Jews out of a lawful possession, and dragged them into bondage. If then the Lord could not bear the Egyptians, who were unthankful and ruled by unjust laws, though in other respects they had a just title to possession, much less will he endure the violent and cruel Babylonians, who have no right to govern his people and oppress them by tyranny.

By "the Assyrian," he means the Babylonians, who were united under the same monarchy with the Assyrians; but he takes special notice of "the Assyrian," because he was the first that grievously distressed the Jews, and that prepared the way for this captivity.

5. *What have I here?* He follows out and confirms what I have already said, that it; is not reasonable that he should silently permit his people to be any longer oppressed. By these words he reproves, in some measure, his own delay; as if he had said, "Shall I not stretch out my hand? Shall I not avenge my people? If Pharaoh did not hinder me, though he was a lawful master, shall the violence of robbers hinder me?" He next enumerates the reasons which ought to move him to bring back the people.

That my people should be carried away for nought. There must be understood an implied contrast to the participle "carried away;" for the Egyptians

[281] "En recognoissance du bien que Joseph avoit fait au royaume." "In gratitude for the benefit which Joseph had conferred on the kingdom."

did not "carry away" Jacob by force; he came down to it of his own accord when he was pressed by famine, yet he was delivered from it; [282] how much more shall he be rescued out of the hand of those who tore him from his native country, and carried him by violence into captivity?

That they should cause them to howl. In order to express more forcibly the baseness of this conduct, he says that they are constrained to howl without ceasing. Some translate the vero as neuter; [283] but I think that it is intended to express the strength of their hatred, and therefore I consider it to be an active verb, expressive of the violence which the Babylonians exercised towards the Jews; for they not only ruled unjustly over them, but also treated them harshly. To "howl" is more than to sigh or weep; for there is reason to believe that the pain which sends forth loud and strong cries is exceedingly severe. The metaphor is taken from wild beasts, and denotes extreme despair.

The third and principal reason why the Lord will deliver his people is, that *his name is continually exposed to the reproach* and blasphemy of wicked men. For the sake of his own honor the Lord preserves the Church, and defends the pure worship of his name. Because wicked men seize on the Church's calamitous state as a reason for blasphemy, and insolently mock God, with good reason does he say, that by delivering his people, he will plead his own cause. I do not here relate the various interpretations, or stay to refute them; for it will be enough for me to have briefly explained the Prophet's real meaning.

6. *Therefore shall my people know.* In this verse he concludes what he had glanced at in the two preceding verses, that at length the people must be redeemed by God, who cannot be unlike himself; for, if he redeemed the fathers, if he always assisted the Church, their posterity, whom he has adopted in the same manner, will never be suffered by him to be overwhelmed. We ought carefully to observe the word "know;" for to "know the name of the Lord" is to lay aside every false opinion, and to know him from his word, which is his true image, and next from his works. We must not imagine God according to the fancy of men, but must comprehend him as he declares himself to us. The Lord, therefore, concludes that he will actually assist them, and will fulfill all that he has promised, that the people may know that their hope has not been without foundation, and that they may be more and more confirmed in the knowledge of his name. We must keep in remembrance what we have elsewhere said about experimental knowledge, which confirms the truth of the word.

That it is I who speak. The verb "to speak" relates to the promises. {הנני} *(hinni,) Behold I,* relates to actual power; as if he had said, "Although now there be nothing more than that there sound in your ears the words by which I promise what is hardly probable, yet you shall speedily obtain it;

[282] "Toutes fois sa posterite en a este delivree." "Yet his posterity was delivered from it."

[283] That is, that the verb means "to howl," instead of "to cause to howl." — Ed.

for I will actually accomplish what I promise." Hence we ought to draw the universal doctrine, that the promises of God and the fulfillment of them are linked together by an indissoluble bond. Whenever, therefore, Satan tempts and urges us to distrust, as if God had forsaken and abandoned us, we must come back to this point, and place our confidence in God, who never promises anything in vain. "If hitherto he does not perform, yet he will assist in due time."

7. *How beautiful upon the mountains.* The Prophet again confirms believers as to the certainty of the word of God, that they may be fully persuaded that they shall be restored to their former liberty, and may comfort their hearts by assured hope during that hard bondage. He pronounces magnificent commendations on this message, that believers may be convinced that God holds out to them, in their calamity, the hope of future salvation; and indeed, when God speaks, they ought to accept the consolation, that, relying on it, they may calmly and patiently wait for the fulfillment of the promise. Thus, in order that believers may bridle their desires by patience, he splendidly adorns the word of God. "Will you be so ungrateful as not to rest satisfied with that incomparable treasure of the word which contains so many benefits? Will you give way to unruly passions? Will you complain of God?" He wishes to guard against distrust the people who were drawn away by various allurements, and did not fully rely on the word of God; and therefore he praises the excellence of the doctrine, and shews that the Lord bestows upon "us more than we can say or think." (Ephesians 3:20.)

He states that he does not now speak of every kind of doctrine, but of that which is adapted to consolation, and therefore shews that "beautiful" and lovely is the approach of those who bring consolation from the mouth of God, which can not only alleviate our grief, but even impart to us abundant joy. Here he speaks of the doctrine of salvation, and consequently says that *peace, happiness, salvation,* is proclaimed. By the word "peace" he denotes a prosperous and happy condition, as we have already in other passages explained fully the signification of this term.

That saith to Zion. Hence we infer what is the beginning of that doctrine which Isaiah preaches, and what we ought chiefly to desire, namely, that the kingdom of God may be erected among us; for until he reign among us, everything must go in with us, and therefore we must be miserable, as, on the other hand, when God is pleased to take care of us, this of itself is the chief part of salvation; and this, too, is the only way of obtaining peace, though the state of affairs be ruinous and desperate. And let us remember that this message is sent to the Church; for it cannot apply to heathens that know not God.

Paul quotes this passage, in order to prove that the preaching of the Gospel proceeds not from men but from God, and that the ministers who bring the message of salvation are sent by him. He employs this chain of reasoning, — "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

But it is impossible for any one to call on God till he know him; for there can be no entrance to calling on him till it is opened up by faith, that, embracing God as our Father, we may familiarly pour our cares into his bosom. Now, the foundation of it is doctrine, by which the Lord has revealed himself to us, and for that purpose employs the agency and ministry of men. Therefore he adds, lastly, that there will be none to preach till he be sent by God." (Romans 10:15.)

But it may be thought that Paul tortures the Prophet's words; for Isaiah does not say that God sends ministers, but that their approach and presence is desirable. I reply, Paul took this principle for granted, that nothing is desirable but what comes from God. But whence comes salvation? From men? No; for none but God can be the author of such a distinguished benefit. Justly, therefore, does he conclude that it proceeds from God, and not from man.

8. *The voice of thy watchmen.* He continues his argument; for he shews that there shall be such a restoration of the people, that the messengers shall venture boldly to proclaim it. To *lift up the voice* has the same meaning with the phrase, "on the mountains," which he formerly employed. (Verse 7.) The matter will not be hidden, but so clear and evident as to draw forth universal admiration. They who speak of what is doubtful matter mutter inaudibly, [284] and do not venture to "lift up the voice;" but here there will be nothing doubtful or uncertain.

The Prophet borrowed the metaphor from sentries which are commonly placed in cities, though the designation of "watchmen" is usually given to all Prophets, because they are placed, as it were, on watch-towers, to keep watch over the safety of the people. When he says that they shall lift up the voice, he means that there will be silence during the captivity, because the voice of the Prophets shall not be heard; for although they warn every one privately, yet there will be no freedom of speech. Hence also Jeremiah says, "I will put my mouth in the dust." (Lamentations 3:29) But when the Lord shall be pleased to lead forth the people, the mouth of watchmen, who were formerly dumb, shall be opened to proclaim that they are at liberty to return; for they will not speak within private walls, or impart moderate consolation, but will openly proclaim that salvation. On this subject I have spoken fully at the beginning of the fortieth chapter. [285]

Eye to eye; that is, openly. This extends, indeed, to spiritual conversion; but let us not on that account depart from the literal sense, so as not to include also the benefit which the Lord conferred on the ancient people; for, when he restored the Jews to liberty, and employed the ministry of Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah, these things were fulfilled. Yet at the same time they ought to be continued down to the coming of Christ, by which the Church was gathered out of all parts of the world. But we ought also to

[284] "Murmurent entre les dents." "Mutter between the teeth."

[285] See Com. on Isaiah, Vol. 3, p. 197.

go forward to Christ's last coming, by which all things shall be perfectly restored.

9. *Praise ye, rejoice together.* He exhorts believers to thanksgiving, but chiefly confirms them in the hope and confidence of this salvation; as if the actual enjoyment of it already called them to thank God for it. [286] We are not sufficiently moved, when the Lord testifies that he will assist us, and think that we are deceived, if he do not actually show it. On this account the Prophets insist much on strengthening the hearts of believers, and placing the fact almost before their eyes. Although it appears to be unreasonable and inappropriate to prescribe a song of joy in the midst of grief, yet we have elsewhere seen that this form of expression is well fitted to arouse those who groan under the burden of sorrow, fear, and cares.

Ye wildernesses of Jerusalem. He calls them "wildernesses" or waste places "of Jerusalem," that, notwithstanding its ruin and destruction, they might still hope that it would be restored. And this appellation is better adapted for shaking off fear than if he had called her prosperous or flourishing; for, in consequence of their condition being very wretched, nothing would have led them to think that these promises related to them except a description of their misery, against which they needed to be fortified, in order that, though they beheld nothing but desolation and hideous ruin, still they might look for restoration with assured confidence.

For Jehovah hath comforted his people. The Lord hath changed the mourning of the people into joy, and out of captivity hath made them free. Yet some person will say [287] that this had not yet happened. But in the promises of God, as in a mirror, we ought to behold those things which are not yet visible to our eyes, even though they appear to us to be contrary to reason.

He hath redeemed Jerusalem. Here we see that to deliver the Church is God's own work. And if we ought to judge thus of the redemption from Babylon, which was but of a shadowy nature, what shall we say of the spiritual redemption? Can it be ascribed to men without grossly insulting God? As it belongs to God alone to deliver the Church, so to him it likewise belongs to defend its liberty.

10. *Jehovah hath made bare the arm of his holiness.* The Prophet has borrowed this comparison from soldiers who stretch out their arms when they make ready for the battle. To "make bare" does not here mean to hold out the naked arm, but to exert it; because, when we sit in idleness, we either have our arms folded or conceal them; and in like manner, we conceive of God according to the grossness of our senses, and think that, like a wearied or indolent man, he does not move a finger till he publicly displays his power.

The Prophet calls it "the arm of holiness," because he intended to display his power for the salvation of the people. This implies a mutual relation between God and the Church which the Lord has consecrated to himself.

[286] "A en remercier Dieu."
[287] "Quelqu'un dira."

True, "he maketh bare his arm" in the government of the whole world; but he does not call it "the arm of holiness," as in this passage, when he renders peculiar assistance to his Church. There are two points of view in which the power of God ought to be regarded; first, universally, in preserving all the creatures; next, specially, in defending the Church; for there is a peculiar care which he exercises about his own people, and which the rest do not share with them.

Before the eyes of all nations. He means that this deliverance shall be worthy of so great admiration that it shall be visible even to the blind. The extension of this magnificent spectacle to the very ends of the earth makes it evident that the Prophet does not speak of the return of the people, which would take place a few years afterwards, but of the restoration of the whole Church. This prophecy is maliciously restricted by the Jews to the deliverance from Babylon, and is improperly restricted by Christians to the spiritual redemption which we obtain through Christ; for we must begin with the deliverance which was wrought under Cyrus, (2 Chronicles 36:22, 23,) and bring it down to our own time. Thus the Lord began to display his power among the Medes and Persians, but afterwards he made it visible to all the nations.

11. *Depart ye, depart ye.* He now exhorts the people to be always ready to set out, and at the same time to bear their misery with patience. As the excessive haste of the people needed to be restrained, so it was also proper to shake off their slothfulness; for, before the time of deliverance arrived, they burned with extravagant eagerness to depart; but when the period of the captivity was fulfilled, they had grown languid through long delay, and had thrown away all hope and wish to return, so that there were few who returned to Judea. [288] They had mingled with the Babylonians, whose customs had captivated and depraved them so much that they disregarded their native country; and therefore they needed to be aroused and admonished, that they might not lose heart through long expectation, and might not suffer themselves to be corrupted by the pollutions of the Babylonians.

Touch not what is unclean. [289] This expresses more clearly what we have already said. He bids them keep themselves pure and free from the defilements with which the Babylonians polluted themselves; for there was a risk of their being corrupted by the pollutions of the Gentiles, as we are all prone to evil, and easily led away by bad examples. Accordingly, he exhorts them, though they are captives, not to do anything for the purpose of pleasing their masters, or of having their condition improved; not to allow themselves to be drawn aside from the pure worship of God; not to be polluted by their idolatries; not to pretend that they worship idols or approve of their religion; for this is detestable "uncleanness," which the Prophet bids them shun. Captives and those who groan under tyranny meet with

[288] "Tellement que le nombre de ceux qui revindrent en Judee fut bien petit." "So that the number of those who returned to Judea was very small."

[289] "Ne touchcz point la souillure." "Touch not defilement."

temptations of this kind, under which they frequently sink so as to allow themselves to do many things that are unlawful and base, under the pretense of wishing to mitigate the rage of tyrants. But how frivolous their excuse is we see in this passage; for the Prophet does not exhort the Jews to be clean when they shall be free, but so long as they shall be held captive, and even when their life shall be in danger. These words undoubtedly relate to us also, whom Paul exhorts to be unpolluted, not only "in spirit," but also "in the flesh." (2 Corinthians 7:1).

Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of Jehovah. This exhortation is especially directed to the priests and Levites, who, being standardbearers, ought to maintain greater integrity; not that others have a right to pollute themselves, but he addresses them chiefly, that they may give an example to others, to whom they have been appointed to be guides. Besides, we must bear in remembrance what we have already seen, and what Isaiah will again repeat at the end of this book, that there will be a new priesthood among a redeemed people. (Isaiah 66:21.)

Yet I approve of the simple meaning, that the Levites and ministers of the temple are put, by way of eminence, ({κατ'} {ἐξοχὴν}) for the whole of the people. This doctrine, therefore, relates in the present day, not only to ministers of the word, but to all Christians, who are also called "a royal priesthood," (1 Peter 2:9,) and not only are appointed to carry the vessels of the temple, but are themselves "temples of God." (1 Corinthians 16, and 6:19.) Thus Ezekiel has predicted that at the restoration of the Church the Levites shall be high priests, and the whole people shall be admitted into the order of the Levites. Seeing, therefore, that the Lord has raised all to so high a rank of dignity, it follows that this "cleanness" is demanded from all without exception; and on this account also Paul has applied this passage to the whole Church.

12. *For not in haste shall ye go out.* The Prophet again magnifies that benefit of redemption, for it appeared to be incredible, so deep was the despair with which almost all of them had been seized; for he chiefly addresses those who would be led into captivity, that they might not lose courage in that wretched condition. He promises that this deliverance shall not resemble a flight such as that of Egypt; for there is an implied contrast between the deliverance from Egypt. and the deliverance from Babylon. They fled "by night" out of Egypt, (Exodus 12:31,) having pretended that they were only performing "a journey of three days to offer sacrifice to God." (Exodus 5:3.) They went out "with haste" (Exodus 12:33) and bustle, as they were told to do, and Pharaoh pursued them in their journey and attempted to destroy them. But the Prophet declares that the present case shall be totally different, and that they shall go away like conquerors, so that none shall venture to give them any annoyance, or, as we commonly say, "They will go out with flying colors," (*Ils s'en iront a enseigne desployee,*) so that this deliverance will be more excellent and wonderful.

Jehovah will go before you; that is, will be the leader of your journey. It will be said that God was also the leader of his ancient people when he led them out of Egypt. This is undoubtedly true; but he did not at that time display his majesty, as now, when, like a general, he brought back his army, after having vanquished his enemies.

And the God of Israel will assemble you. The word "assemble" will confirm the interpretation now given; for there will be no scattering such as usually takes place when men are under the influence of terror, nor will they wander about here and there, but will march, as under banners, in a regular and ordinary manner. As if he had said, "God will bring you out as a band or army drawn up; one shall not follow another, like those who steal away secretly; but ye shall be openly gathered in troops, and shall depart without any fear. None shall molest you; for you will be assembled under God as your leader, that you may return into your native country.

13. *Behold, my servant shall have prosperous success* [290] After having spoken of the restoration of the Church, Isaiah passes on to Christ, in whom all things are gathered together. Some explain {ישכיל} (*yashkil*) to mean shall "deal prudently;" but, as it is immediately added that he shall be exalted, the context appears to demand that we shall rather understand it to denote "prosperous success," for {שכל} (*shakal*) also signifies "to be prosperous." He speaks, therefore, of the prosperity of the Church; and as this was not visible, he draws their attention to the supreme King, by whom all things shall be restored, and bids them wait for him. And here we ought carefully to observe the contrasts which the Prophet lays down; for the mightiness of this king whom the Lord will exalt is contrasted by him with the wretched and debased condition of the people, who were almost in despair. He promises that this king will be the head of the people, so that under him as the leader the people shall flourish, though they be now in a state of the deepest affliction and wretchedness; because he shall have a prosperous course.

He calls Christ "his Servant," on account of the office committed to him. Christ ought not to be regarded as a private individual, but as holding the office to which the Father has appointed him, to be leader of the people and restorer of all things; so that whatever he affirms concerning himself we ought to understand as belonging also to us. Christ has been given to us, and therefore to us also belongs his ministry, for the Prophet might have said, in a single word, that Christ will be exalted and will be highly honored; but, by giving to him the title of "Servant," he means that he will be exalted for our sake.

14. *As many.* He makes use of an anticipation; for the exalted state of Christ was not visible at first sight, and on this pretense it might be

[290] "Here some begin the 53d chapter, and Salmeron says it is so divided in some copies which he had seen; the subject is new, and has nothing 'which smacks of Babylon,' (quod Babylonium olet,) according to the expression of Sanctius, and is to be literally understood of the Messiah, as all expositors that I have met with agree, except Grotius, who thinks the words may in the first lower sense of them be understood of Jeremiah the prophet, considered as a type of Christ." — White.

rejected. On this account, he informs them that Christ must first be rejected and humbled, and anticipates that doubt which might have arisen from his singularly debased and unseemly condition. As if he had said, "There is no reason why men should be shocked at that unseemliness and disgrace which will be speedily followed by eternal happiness."

So marred by men. I have translated {כן} (*ken)* as meaning *so;* for it is a mistake to suppose that it opens the second part of the comparison. [291] I consider {מאיש} (*meish*) to mean "by men;" for I do not consider {מ} (*mem*) to be a particle denoting comparison, as others explain it; that is "more than" men, or "beyond" what is usually found among men; but I adopt a simpler meaning, which is, that Christ was disfigured among men, or that his beauty was defaced by the perverse judgment of men.

Were amazed. [292] This "amazement" is considered by some commentators to denote the astonishment with which men were seized on account of the miracles performed by Christ, and next, that, when he must come to the cross, he was immediately rejected by them. But they have not caught the Prophet's meaning; for he says that Christ will be such that all men will be shocked at him. He came into the world so as to be everywhere despised; his glory lay hid under the humble form of the flesh; for though a majesty worthy of "the onlybegotten Son of God" (John 1:14) shone forth in him, yet the greater part of men did not see it, but, on the contrary, they despised that deep abasement which was the veil or covering of his glory.

The cause of their astonishment was this, that he dwelt among men without any outward show; and the Jews did not think that the Redeemer would come in that condition or attire. When he came to be crucified, their horror was greatly increased. Paul describes this humiliation and subsequent exaltation of Christ, when he says,

"Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to make himself equal to God, but emptied himself, taking upon him the form of a servant, made in the likeness of man, and found in fashion as a man, humbled himself, being made obedient even to death, and the death of the cross. Wherefore also God hath raised him to the highest exaltation, and hath given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus should bow every knee of those that are in heaven and in earth and in hell; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Philippians 2:6-11)

It was therefore necessary that Christ should first be humbled and covered with shame, and that exaltation to which he was about to be raised was not all at once visible; but the shame of the cross was followed by a glorious resurrection attended by the highest honor.

15. *So shall he sprinkle many nations.* Some explain it, "Shall cause to

[291] Our author's meaning is, that he has rendered the clause, "He was so (much) marred," while others render it, "So he was marred;" making the So to correspond to the As in the former clause, which he pronounces to be a mistake. — Ed.

[292] "Comme plusieurs t'ont eu en horreur." "As many were shocked at thee."

drop," which they take to be a metaphorical expression for "to speak." But since {נזה} signifies "to sprinkle," and is commonly found to have this sense in Scripture, I choose rather to adopt this interpretation. He means that the Lord will pour out his Word over "many nations." He next mentions the effect of doctrine, that *kings shall shut their mouth*, that is, in token of astonishment, but a different kind of astonishment from that which he formerly described. Men "shut their mouths," and are struck with bewilderment, when the vast magnitude of the subject is such that it cannot be expressed, and that it exceeds all power of language.

What they have not heard. He means that this astonishment will not arise merely from Christ's outward appearance, but, on the contrary, from the preaching of the Gospel; for, though he had risen from the dead, yet all would have thought that he was still a dead man, if the glory of his resurrection had not been proclaimed. By the preaching of the Gospel, therefore, were revealed those things which formerly had neither been seen nor heard; for this doctrine was conveyed to kings and nations that were very far off, and even to the very ends of the world.

Paul quotes this passage, and shows that it was fulfilled in his ministry, and glories on this ground, that he proclaimed the doctrine of the Gospel to those who had never heard of it at all. (Romans 15:21) This belongs to the office of an Apostle, and not to the office of every minister. He means that the kingdom of Christ is more extensive than merely to embrace Judea, and that it is not now confined within such narrow limits; for it was proper that it should be spread through all nations, and extended even to the ends of the world. The Jews had heard something of Christ from the Law and the Prophets, but to the Gentiles he was altogether unknown; and hence it follows that these words relate strictly to the Gentiles.

They shall understand. By this word he shows that faith consists in certainty and clear understanding. Wherever, therefore, knowledge of this kind is wanting, faith is unquestionably wanting. Hence it is evident how idle is the notion of the Papists about implicit faith, which is nothing else than gross ignorance, or rather a mere creature of imagination.

Chapter 53

CHAPTER 53.

Isaiah 53:1-12

1. Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?

1. Quis credet auditui nostro? et brachium Iehovae cui (ad verbum, super quem)?

2. For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.

2. Ascendet tamen sicut virgultum coram eo, et sicut radix e terra deserta. Non forma ei, neque decor. Videbimus eum; et non aspectus, ut desideremus eum.

3. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

3. Despectus et rejectus inter homines, vir dolorum, peritus infirmitatis; quasi abscondimus faciem ab eo, et nihili reputavimus eum.

4. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

4. Sane langoures nostros ipse tulit, et dolores nostros ipse portavit; et nos existimavimus eum percussum, vulneratum a Deo et humiliatum.

5. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

5. Atqui Apse vulneratus est propter iniquitates nostras, attritus est propter peccata nostra. Castigatio pacis nostrae super eum, et in livore ejus sanatio (vel, medela) nobis.

6. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

6. Omnes nos tanquam oves erravimus, quisque in viam suam declinavit. Et Iehova traduxit in eum nostras omniurn iniquitatcs.

7. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

7. Mulctatus est, et afflictus, (vel, oppressus,) nec aperuit os suum. Quasi pecus ad mactationem ducetur, et tanquam ovis coram tonsoribbus suis obmutescet, nec aperiet os suum.

8. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.

8. E carcere et judicio sublatus est, et generationem ejus quis enarrabit? Quoniam succisus est e terra viventium; propter transgressionem populi mei plaga illi.

9. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

9. Et exposuit impiis sepulchrum ejus, et diviti mortem ejus; quamvis iniquitatem non fecerit, nec fecerit dolos in ore ejus revelatum est?

10. Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.

10. Voluit tamen Iehova conterere eum, infirmitati subjicere. Cum posuerit in sacrificium animam suam, videbit semen, prorogabit dies, et voluntas Iehovae in manu ejus prosperabitur.

11. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.

11. E labore animae suae videbit, et saturabitur; et doctrina sua (vel, cognitione sui) justificabit justus servus meus multos; quia iniquitates eorum ipse portabit.

12. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

12. Propterea distribuam illi partem cum magnis, et eum robustis spolia dividet. Quoniam profudit in mortem animam suam, et cum iniquis reputatus est; ipse peccatum multorum tulit, et pro iniquis oravit.

1. *Who will believe our report?* This division, or rather dismemberment, of the chapter, ought to be disregarded; for it ought to have begun with the thirteenth verse of the former chapter, and these words ought to be

connected with what goes before. [293] Here the Prophet pauses, as it were, in the middle of his discourse; for, having formerly said that the name of Christ would be everywhere proclaimed, and would be revealed to unknown nations, and yet would have so mean an aspect that it might appear as if these things were fabulous, he breaks off his discourse, and exclaims that "Nobody will believe those things." At the same time, he describes his grief, that men are so unbelieving as to reject their salvation.

Thus, it is a holy complaint made by one who wished that Christ should be known by all, and who, notwithstanding of this, sees that there are few who believe the Gospel, and therefore groans and cries out, "Who hath believed our report?" Let us therefore groan and complain along with the Prophet, and let us be distressed with grief when we see that our labor is unprofitable, and let us complain before God; for godly ministers must be deeply affected, if they wish to perform their work faithfully. Isaiah declares that there will be few that submit to the Gospel of Christ; for, when he exclaims, "Who will believe the preaching?" he means that of those who hear the Gospel scarcely a hundredth person will be a believer.

Nor does he merely speak of himself alone, but like one who represents all teachers. Although therefore God gives many ministers, few will hold by their doctrine; and what then will happen when there are no ministers? Do we wonder that the greatest blindness reigns there? If cultivated ground is unfruitful, what shall we look for from a soil that is uncultivated and barren? And yet it does not detract anything from the Gospel of Christ, that there are few disciples who receive it; nor does the small number of believers lessen its authority or obscure its infinite glory; but, on the contrary, the loftiness of the mystery is a reason why it scarcely obtains credit in the world. It is reckoned to be folly, because it exceeds all human capacities.

To whom (literally, *on whom*) *is the arm of Jehovah revealed?* In this second clause he points out the reason why the number of believers will be so small. It is, because no man can come to God but by an extraordinary revelation of the Spirit. To suppose that by the word "Arm" Christ is meant, is, in my opinion, a mistake. It assigns the cause why there are so few that believe; and that is, that they cannot attain it by the sagacity of their own understanding. This is a remarkable passage, and is quoted by John and Paul for that purpose. "Though Jesus," said John, "had performed many miracles in their presence, they believed not in him, that the saying of Isaiah the Prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake,

"Lord, who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?"
(John 12:37, 38)

[293] "While most modern writers detach the three preceding verses and prefix them to this chapter, Hitzig goes to the opposite extreme of saying that the writer here begins afresh, without any visible connection with the previous context. Ewald more reasonably makes this a direct continuation, but observes a change of tone, from that of joyous confidence to that of penitent confession, on the part of the believing Jews, in reference to their former incredulity." — Alexander.

And Paul says, "But they do not all believe the Gospel; for Isaiah saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?" (Romans 10:16) Both of them declare that there will be no reason to wonder, if that which was long ago foretold shall happen; and they do so for the purpose of removing offense which might have arisen from the revolt of that nation, which ought to have acknowledged Christ, but obstinately resisted him.

Isaiah does not include merely the men of his own time, but all posterity to the end of the world; for, so long as the reign of Christ shall endure, this must be fulfilled; and therefore believers ought to be fortified by this passage against such a scandal. These words refute the ignorance of those who think that faith is in the power of every person, because preaching is common to all. Though it is sufficiently evident that all are called to salvation, yet the Prophet expressly states that the external voice is of no avail, if it be not accompanied by a special gift of the Spirit. And whence proceeds the difference, but from the secret election of God, the cause of which is hidden in himself?

2. *Yet he shall grow up before him as a twig.* This verse refers to what was formerly said, that Christ will at first have no magnificence or outward display among men; but that before God he will nevertheless be highly exalted, and will be held in estimation. Hence we see that we must not judge of the glory of Christ by human view, but must discern by faith what is taught us concerning him by the Holy Scriptures; and therefore the phrase "before him," is here contrasted with human senses, which cannot comprehend that lofty greatness. Almost the same metaphor was used by the Prophet, (Isaiah 11:1) when he said, "A branch shall spring out of the stock of Jesse;" for the house of David was like a dry stock, in which no rigor and no comeliness was visible, and on that account is there called not a royal house, but "Jesse," a name which bore no celebrity. Only the Prophet adds here, —

In a desert land; by which he means that Christ's power of springing up will not be derived from the sap of the earth, as in trees, but contrary to the ordinary course of nature. They who in this passage speculate about the virgin Mary, and suppose that she is called a desert land, because she conceived by the Holy Ghost, and not by ordinary generation, speak beside the purpose; for the present subject is not the birth of Christ, but his whole reign. He says that it will resemble a twig springing out of a dry soil, which looks as if it could never become large. If we take into account the whole method of establishing his kingdom, and the agency which he employed, and how feeble were its beginnings, and how many foes it encountered, we shall easily understand that all these things were fulfilled as they had been foretold. What sort of men were the Apostles that they should subdue so many kings and nations by the sword of the word? Are they not justly compared to offshoots? Thus the Prophet shows by what means the kingdom of Christ must be set up and established, that we may not judge of it by human conceptions.

He hath no form nor comeliness. This must be understood to relate not merely to the person of Christ, who was despised by the world, and was at length condemned to a disgraceful death; but to his whole kingdom, which in the eyes of men had no beauty, no comeliness, no splendor, which, in short, had nothing that could direct or captivate the hearts of men to it by its outward show. Although Christ arose from the dead, yet the Jews always regarded him as a person who had been crucified and disgraced, in consequence of which they haughtily disdained him.

3. *Despised and rejected.* This verse conveys the same statement as the preceding, namely, that Christ will be "rejected" by men, in consequence of their beholding in him nothing but grief and infirmity. These things needed to be often repeated to the Jews, that they might not form a false conception of Christ and his kingdom; for, in order to know his glory, we must proceed from his death to his resurrection. Many stumble at his death, as if he had been vanquished and overwhelmed by it; but we ought to contemplate his power and majesty in the resurrection; and if any one choose to begin with the resurrection, he will not follow the order laid down by the Prophet, nor comprehend the Lord's strength and power.

We hid the face from him. Not without reason does he use the first person, *we;* for he declares that there will be a universal judgment; and no man will ever be able to comprehend it by his own understanding till the Lord correct and form him anew by his Spirit. Although he appears chiefly to censure the Jews, who ought not to have so haughtily rejected the Son of God promised and offered to them, and therefore reckons himself as one of the number, because he was an individual belonging to that nation; yet let us learn from this passage that all men are accursed and condemned for ingratitude in despising Christ, because they do not even consider him to be worthy of being looked at, but turn away their eyes as if from something detestable.

4. *Surely he carried our sicknesses.* The particle {אכן} (*aken*) is not only a strong affirmation, but is likewise equivalent to *for,* and assigns a reason of something which went before, and which might have been thought new and strange; for it is a monstrous thing that he to whom God has given supreme authority over all the creatures should be thus trampled on and scorned; and if the reason were not assigned, it would have been universally pronounced to be ridiculous. The reason, therefore, of the weakness, pains, and shame of Christ is, that "he carried our sicknesses."

Matthew quotes this prediction, after having related that Christ cured various diseases; though it is certain that he was appointed not to cure bodies, but rather to cure souls; for it is of spiritual disease that the Prophet intends to speak. But in the miracles which Christ performed in curing bodies, he gave a proof of the salvation which he brings to our souls. That healing had therefore a more extensive reference than to bodies, because he was appointed to be the physician of souls; and accordingly Matthew applies to the outward sign what belonged to the truth and reality.

We thought him to be smitten, wounded by God, and afflicted. In this second clause he shows how great was the ingratitude and wickedness of the people, who did not know why Christ was so severely afflicted, but imagined that God smote him on account of his own sins, though they knew that he was perfectly innocent, and his innocence was attested even by his judge. (Matthew 27:24; Luke 23:4, 14, 22; John 18:38) Since therefore they know that an innocent man is punished for sins which he did not commit, why do they not think that it indicated some extraordinary excellence to exist in him? But because they see him wounded and despised, they do not inquire about the cause, and from the event alone, as fools are wont to do, they pronounce judgment. Accordingly, Isaiah complains of the wicked judgment of men, in not considering the cause of Christ's heavy afflictions; and especially he deplores the dullness of his own nation, because they thought that God was a deadly enemy of Christ, and took no account of their own sins, which were to be expiated in this manner.

5. *And he was wounded for our iniquities.* He again repeats the cause of Christ's great afflictions, in order to meet the scandal which might have arisen from it. The spectacle of the cross alienates many persons from Christ, when they consider what is presented to their eyes, and do not observe the object to be accomplished. But all offense is removed when we know that by his death our sins have been expiated, and salvation has been obtained for us.

The chastisement of our peace. Some think that this is called "the chastisement of peace," on account of men being careless and stupefied amidst their afflictions, and therefore that it was necessary that Christ should suffer. Others view "peace" as relating to the consciences, that is, that Christ suffered, in order that we might have peaceful consciences; as Paul says that, "being justified by faith through Christ, we have peace with God." (Romans 5:1) But I take it to denote simply reconciliation. Christ was the price of "our chastisement," that is, of the chastisement which was due to us. Thus the wrath of God, which had been justly kindled against us, was appeased; and through the Mediator we have obtained "peace," by which we are reconciled.

We ought to draw from this a universal doctrine, namely, that we are reconciled to God by free grace, because Christ hath paid the price of "our peace." This is indeed acknowledged by the Papists; but then they limit this doctrine to original sin, as if after baptism there were no longer any room for reconciliation through free grace, but that we must give satisfaction by our merits and works. But the Prophet does not here treat of a single species of pardon, but extends this blessing to the whole course of life; and therefore it cannot be thus undervalued or limited to a particular time, without most heinous sacrilege. Hence also the frivolous distinction of the Papists, between the remission of punishment and the pardon of sin, is easily refuted. They affirm that punishment is not remitted to us, unless it be washed out by satisfactions. But the Prophet openly declares that the punishment of our

sins was transferred to him. What, then, do the Papists intend but to be Christ's equals and companions, and to lay claim to share with him in his authority?

In his wound (or, *in his medicine) we have healing.* He again directs us to Christ, that we may betake ourselves to his wounds, provided that we wish to regain life. Here the Prophet draws a contrast between us and Christ; for in us nothing call be found but destruction and death; in Christ alone is life and salvation, he alone brought medicine to us, and even procures health by his weakness, and life by his death; for he alone hath pacified the Father, he alone hath reconciled us to him. Here we might bring forward many things about the blessed consequences of Christ's sufferings, if we had not determined to expound rather than to preach; and therefore let us be satisfied with a plain exposition. Let every one, therefore, draw consolation from this passage, and let him apply the blessed result of this doctrine to his own use; for these words are spoken to all in general, and to individuals in particular.

6. *We all, like sheep, have gone astray.* In order to impress more deeply on our hearts the benefit of the death of Christ, he shows how necessary is that healing which he formerly mentioned. If we do not perceive our wretchedness and poverty, we shall never know how desirable is that remedy which Christ has brought to us, or approach him with due ardor of affection. As soon as we know that we are ruined, then, aware of our wretchedness, we eagerly run to avail ourselves of the remedy, which otherwise would be held by us in no estimation. In order, therefore, that Christ may be appreciated by us, let every one consider and examine himself, so as to acknowledge that he is ruined till he is redeemed by Christ.

We see that here none are excepted, for the Prophet includes "all." The whole human race would have perished, if Christ had not brought relief. He does not even except the Jews, whose hearts were puffed up with a false opinion of their own superiority, but condemns them indiscriminately, along with others, to destruction. By comparing them to sheep, he intends not to extenuate their guilt, as if little blame attached to them, but to state plainly that it belongs to Christ to gather from their wanderings those who resembled brute beasts.

Every one hath turned to his own way. By adding the term *every one*, he descends from a universal statement, in which he included all, to a special statement, that every individual may consider in his own mind if it be so; for a general statement produces less effect upon us than to know that it belongs to each of us in particular. Let "every one," therefore, arouse his conscience, and present himself before the judgmentseat of God, that he may confess his wretchedness. Moreover, what is the nature of this "going astray" the Prophet states more plainly. It is, that every one hath followed the way which he had chosen for himself, that is, hath determined to live according to his own fancy; by which he means that there is only one way of living

uprightly, and if any one "turn aside" from it, he can experience nothing but "going astray."

He does not speak of works only, but of nature itself, which always leads us astray; for, if we could by natural instinct or by our own wisdom, bring ourselves back into the path, or guard ourselves against going astray, Christ would not be needed by us. Thus, in ourselves we all are undone unless Christ (John 8:36) sets us free; and the more we rely on our wisdom or industry, the more dreadfully and the more speedily do we draw down destruction on ourselves. And so the Prophet shows what we are before we are regenerated by Christ; for all are involved in the same condemnation. "There is none righteous, none that understandeth, none that seeketh God. All have turned aside, and have become unprofitable. There is none that doeth good; no, not one." (Psalm 14:3) All this is more fully explained by Paul. (Romans 3:10)

And Jehovah hath laid upon him. Here we have a beautiful contrast. In ourselves we are scattered; in Christ we are gathered together. By nature we go astray, and are driven headlong to destruction; in Christ we find the course by which we are conducted to the harbor of salvation. Our sins are a heavy load; but they are laid on Christ, by whom we are freed from the load. Thus, when we were ruined, and, being estranged from God, were hastening to hell, Christ took upon him the filthiness of our iniquities, in order to rescue us from everlasting destruction. This must refer exclusively to guilt and punishment; for he was free from sin. (Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 2:22) Let every one, therefore, diligently consider his own iniquities, that he may have a true relish of that grace, and may obtain the benefit of the death of Christ.

7. *He was punished.* Here the Prophet applauds the obedience of Christ in suffering death; for if his death had not been voluntary, he would not have been regarded as having satisfied for our disobedience. "As by one man's disobedience," says Paul, "all became sinners, so by one man's obedience many were made righteous. (Romans 5:19) And elsewhere, "He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." (Philippians 2:8) This was the reason of his silence at the judgmentseat of Pilate, though he had a just defense to offer; for, having become answerable for our guilt, he wished to submit silently to the sentence, that we might loudly glory in the righteousness of faith obtained through free grace.

As a lamb shall he be led to the slaughter. We are here exhorted to patience and meekness, that, following the example of Christ, we may be ready to endure reproaches and cruel assaults, distress and torture. In this sense Peter quotes this passage, showing that we ought to become like Christ our Head, that we may imitate his patience and submissiveness. (1 Peter 2:23) In the word *lamb* there is probably an allusion to the sacrifices under the Law; and in this sense he is elsewhere called "the Lamb of God." (John 1:29, 36)

8. *From prison and judgment.* There are various ways in which this

passage is expounded. Some think that the Prophet continues the argument which he had already begun to treat, namely, that Christ was smitten by the hand of God, and afflicted, on account of our sins. The Greek translators render it, {ἐν} {τῷ} {ταπεινώσει} {αὐτοῦ} {ἡ} {κρίσις} {αὐτοῦ} {ἦρθη}. "In his humiliation his judgment was taken away." Others, "He was taken away without delay." Others explain it, "He was taken away to the cross;" that is, as soon as Christ was seized, he was dragged to "judgment." I rather agree with those who think that the Prophet, after having spoken of death, passes to the glory of the resurrection. He intended to meet the thoughts by which the minds of many persons might have been troubled and distressed; for when we see nothing but wounds and shame, we are struck with amazement, because human nature shrinks from such a spectacle.

The Prophet therefore declares that he was *taken away;* that is, that he was rescued "from prison and judgment" or condemnation, and afterwards was exalted to the highest rank of honor; that no one might think that he was overwhelmed or swallowed up by that terrible and shameful kind of death. For, undoubtedly, he was victorious even in the midst of death, and triumphed over his enemies; and he was so judged that now he has been appointed to be judge of all, as was publicly manifested by his resurrection. (Acts 10:42) The same order is followed by the Prophet as by Paul, who, after having declared that Christ was abased even to the cross, adds that, on this account, he was exalted to the very highest honor, and that there was given him a: name to which all things both in heaven and in earth must render obedience and bend the knee. (Philippians 2:9)

Who shall relate his generation? This exclamation has been stretched and (I may say) tortured into various meanings. The ancients abused this passage in reasoning against the Arians, when they wished to prove by it Christ's eternal generation. But they ought to have been satisfied with clearer testimonies of Scripture, that they might not expose themselves to the mockery of heretics, who sometimes take occasion from this to become more obstinate; for it might easily have been objected that the Prophet was not thinking about that subject. Chrysostom views it as relating to the human nature of Christ, that he was miraculously, and not by ordinary generation, conceived in the womb of the virgin; but that is a wide departure from the Prophet's meaning. Others think that Isaiah kindles into rage against the men of that age who crucified Christ. Others refer it to the posterity which should be born; namely, that Christ's posterity will be numerous though he die.

But, as {דור} *(dor)* signifies "age" or "duration," I have no doubt that he speaks of the "age" of Christ, and that his meaning is, that Christ, though almost overwhelmed by sicknesses, shall not only be taken from them, but that even his age shall be permanent and eternal; or, in other words, that he shall be unlike those who are indeed rescued from death, but shall afterwards die; for Christ rose from the dead, to live for ever, and, as Paul says, "cannot

now die; death shall no longer have dominion over him." (Romans 6:9) Yet let us remember that the Prophet does not speak of Christ's person alone, but includes the whole body of the Church, which ought never to be separated from him. We have therefore a striking proof of the perpetuity of the Church. As Christ liveth for ever, so he will not permit his kingdom to perish. The same immortality shall at length be bestowed on each of the members.

For he was cut off. This might indeed, at first sight, appear to be absurd, that the death of Christ is the cause and source of our life; but, because he bore the punishment of our sins, we ought therefore to apply to ourselves all the shame that appears in the cross. Yet in Christ the wonderful love of God shines forth, which renders his glory visible to us; so that we ought to be excited to rapturous admiration.

For the transgression of my people. He again repeats that the wound was inflicted on him "for the sins of the people;" and the object is, that we may diligently consider that it was for our sake, and not for his own, that he suffered; for he bore the punishment which we must have endured, if he had not offered this atonement. We ought to perceive in ourselves that guilt of which he bore the accusation and punishment, having offered himself in our name to the Father, [294] that by his condemnation we may be set free.

9. *And he laid open to wicked men his grave.* Jerome renders it, "And he gave wicked men for burial;" as if the Prophet spake of the punishment by which the Lord took vengeance for the sin of wicked men, who crucified Christ. But he rather speaks of the death of Christ, and of the fruit of it, and says nothing about that revenge. Others think that the particle {את} *(eth)* denotes comparison, in the same manner as the particle {כ} *(caph).* "He gave his grave as of wicked men." Others interpret {את} *(eth)* to mean *with,* and explain "the rich man" to be Joseph of Arimathea, in whose sepulcher Christ was buried. (Matthew 27:60; John 19:38) But such an interpretation is too unnatural. I rather think that the real meaning is, that God the Father delivered Christ into the hands of wicked men.

And to the rich man his death. I consider the singular {עשיר} *(gnashir,)* "the rich man," to be put for the plural {עשרים} *(gnashirim)*, as is frequently done by Hebrew writers. I see no reason why Oecolampadius rendered it "high places." [295] By "rich men" he means "violent men;" for men grow haughty and disdainful on account of their riches, and abuse their wealth to savage cruelty. And thus by the terms "wicked men" and "rich men" the same thing, in my opinion, is denoted. He means, therefore, that Christ was exposed to the reproaches, and insolence, and lawless passions of wicked men. For, on the one hand, the Pharisees and priests (Matthew 26:66) rush upon him with unbridled rage and foul slander; on the other hand, Pilate, though well aware of his innocence, (Mark 15:14) condemns him in opposition to

294 "Au pere celeste." "To the heavenly Father."

295 "Je ne voy point de raison pourquoy OEcolampade a traduit, II a expose ses hants lieux au riche." "I see no reason why OEcolampadius translated it, 'He laid open his high places to the rich man.' "

law and justice; and again, on another hand, the Roman soldiers, ready for every kind of barbarity, cruelly and wickedly execute the cruel and wicked sentence. (John 19:16) Who would not conclude that Christ was crushed and "buried" amidst those impious and bloody hands?

I consider the word *grave* to be here used metaphorically, because wicked and violent men might be said to have overwhelmed him. If it be objected that Christ had an honorable burial, I reply, that burial was the commencement of a glorious resurrection; but at present the Prophet speaks of death, which is often denoted by "the grave." I consider this, therefore, to be the real meaning, though I wish to leave every person free to form his own opinion.

Though he did no iniquity. {על} *(gnal)* signifies "because;" but sometimes it is used in the sense of "though," as in this passage. [296] Here the Prophet applauds the innocence of Christ, not only in order to defend him from slander, but to speak highly of the benefit of his death, that we may not think that he suffered by chance. Though innocent, he suffered by the decree of God; and therefore it was for our sake, and not for his own, that he suffered. He bore the punishment which was due to us.

Neither was there deceit in his mouth. In two words he describes the perfect innocence of Christ; namely, that he never offended either in deed or in word. That this cannot be said of any mortal man is universally acknowledged, and hence it follows that it applies to Christ alone.

10. *Yet Jehovah was pleased to bruise him.* This illustrates more fully what I formerly stated in few words, that the Prophet, in asserting Christ's innocence, aims at something more than to defend him from all reproach. The object therefore is, that we should consider the cause, in order to have experience of the effect; for God appoints nothing at random, and hence it follows that the cause of his death is lawful. We must also keep in view the contrast. In Christ there was no fault; why, then, was the Lord pleased that he should suffer? Because he stood in our room, and in no other way than by his death could the justice of God be satisfied.

When he shall have offered his soul as a sacrifice. {אשם} *(asham)* [297] denotes both sin and the sacrifice which is offered for sin, and is often used in the latter sense in the Scriptures. (Exodus 29:14; Ezekiel 45:22) [298] The

[296] "{,(gnal){על for {על} {אשר} (gnal asher), is properly a causative particle, equivalent to 'for that' or 'because;' but most interpreters regard it as equivalent to 'although,' which is more agreeable to our idiom in this connection. Knobel observes, with great naivete, that the reference of this verse to the burial of Christ has found its way into the exposition of the passage in connection with its general application to that subject; to which we may add, that it can only find its way out in connection with a wish to get rid of that unwelcome application. At the same time it must be observed, that even if {עשיר} (gnashir) be taken in the sense of 'wicked,' although we lose the striking allusion to the burial of Christ in the sepulcher of Joseph, the verse is still applicable to his burial, as the last clause then means, like the first, that they appointed him his grave with malefactors." — Alexander

[297] {{אשם (asham) primarily signifies a trespass or offense, and secondarily a trespass—offering. In the law of Moses it is technically used to designate a certain kind of sacrifice, nearly allied to the {הטאת} (hattath) or sin—offering, and yet very carefully distinguished from it, although etymologists have never yet been able to determine the precise distinction, and a learned modern Rabbi, Samuel Luzzatto, expresses his conviction that they differed only in the mode of offering the blood. The word is here used not with spedfie reference to this kind of oblation, but as a generic term for expiatory sacrifice. The use of analogous expressions in the New Testament will be dear, from a comparison of Romans 3:25; 8:3; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 John 2:2; 4:10; Hebrews 9:14 In the case last quoted, as in that before us, Christ is represented as offering himself to God." — Alexander

[298] In both of the passages quoted by our author, the word is not {{אשם (asham) but {הטאת} (hattath),

sacrifice was offered in such a manner as to expiate sin by enduring its punishment and curse. This was expressed by the priests by means of the laying on of hands, as if they threw on the sacrifice the sins of the whole nation. (Exodus 29:15) And if a private individual offered a sacrifice, he also laid his hand upon it, as if he threw upon it his own sin. Our sins were thrown upon Christ in such a manner that he alone bore the curse.

On this account Paul also calls him a "curse" or "execration:" "Christ hath redeemed us from the execration of the law, having been made an execration for us." (Galatians 3:13) He likewise calls him "Sin;" "For him who knew no sin hath he made to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." (2 Corinthians 5:21) And in another passage, "For what was impossible for the law, inasmuch as it was weak on account of the flesh, God did, by sending his own Son in the likeness of flesh liable to sin, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us." (Romans 8:3, 4) What Paul meant by the words "curse" and "sin" in these passages is the same as what the Prophet meant by the word {אשם}, *(asham.)* In short, {אשם} *(asham)* is equivalent to the Latin word *piaculum,* [299] an expiatory sacrifice.

Here we have a description of the benefit of Christ's death, that by his sacrifice sins were expiated, and God was reconciled towards men; for such is the import of this word {אשם}, *(asham.)* Hence it follows that nowhere but in Christ is found expiation and satisfaction for sin. In order to understand this better, we must first know that we are guilty before God, so that we may be accursed and detestable in his presence. Now, if we wish to return to a state of favor with him, sin must be taken away. This cannot be accomplished by sacrifices contrived according to the fancy of men. Consequently, we must come to the death of Christ; for in no other way can satisfaction be given to God. In short, Isaiah teaches that sins cannot be pardoned in any other way than by betaking ourselves to the death of Christ. If any person think that this language is harsh and disrespectful to Christ, let him descend into himself, and, after a close examination, let him ponder how dreadful is the judgment of God, which could not be pacified but by this price; and thus the inestimable grace which shines forth in making Christ accursed will easily remove every ground of offense.

He shall see his seed. Isaiah means that the death of Christ not only can be no hinderance to his having a seed, but will be the cause of his having offspring; that is, because, by quickening the dead, he will procure a people for himself, whom he will afterwards multiply more and more; and there is no absurdity in giving the appellation of Christ's seed to all believers, who

which, as appears from the preceding note, is closely analogous. — Ed

[299] This Latin word, which bore the primary meaning of "an atonement for a transgression," and the secondary meaning of "any wickedness that requires expiation," is strikingly analogous to the Hebrew word in question, though the transference of the senses is exactly opposite. "Distulit in seram commissa piacula mortem, Virg. id est, Piacula commissa propter quae expiatio debetur." — Serv. "Piaculum committere" means literally to "commit a sacrifice," that is, "to commit a crime for which a sacrifice is required." — Ed.

are also brethren, because they are descended from Christ.

He shall prolong his days. To this clause some supply the relative {אשר} *(asher,)* "which:" "A seed which shall be long lived." But I expound it in a more simple manner, "Christ shall not be hindered by his death from prolonging his days, that is, from living eternally." Some persons, when departing from life, leave children, but children who shall survive them, and who shall live so as to obtain a name only when their fathers are dead. But Christ shall ell joy the society of his children; for he shall not die like other men, but shall obtain eternal life in himself and his children. Thus Isaiah declares that in the head and the members there shall be immortal life.

And the will of Jehovah shall prosper in his hand. The word "hand" often denotes "ministry," as the Lord proclaimed the law "by the hand of Moses." (Numbers 36:13) Again, the Lord did this "by the hands of David;" that is, he made use of David as his minister in that matter. (Ezra 3:10) So also "in the hand of Christ shall prosper the will of God;" that is, the Lord will cause the ministry of Christ to yield its fruit, that it may not be thought that he exposed himself fruitlessly to such terrible sufferings.

These few words contain a very rich doctrine, which every reader may draw from them; but we are satisfied with giving a simple exposition of the text. "Will" is taken in the same acceptation as before; for he makes use of the word {חפץ} *(chaphetz)* by which he means a kind and generous disposition. Two views of God's kindness are held up for our admiration in this passage; first, that he spared not his onlybegotten Son, but delivered him for us, that he might deliver us from death; and secondly, that he does not suffer his death to be useless and unprofitable, but causes it to yield very abundant, fruit; for the death of Christ would be of no avail to us, if we did not experience its fruit and efficacy.

11. *From the labor of his soul he shall see.* Isaiah continues the same subject. He declares that Christ, after having suffered, shall obtain the fruit of his death in the salvation of men. When he says, "He shall see," we must supply the words, "Fruit and Efficacy." This is full of the sweetest consolation; for Isaiah could not have better expressed the infinite love of Christ toward us than by declaring that he takes the highest delight in our salvation, and that he rests in it as the fruit of his labors, as he who has obtained his wish rests in that which he most ardently desired; for no person can be said to be satisfied but he who has obtained what he wished so earnestly as to disregard everything else and be satisfied with this alone.

By his doctrine, or by the knowledge of him. He now points out the way and method by which we experience the power and efficacy of the death of Christ, and obtain the benefit of it. That method is "the knowledge of him." I acknowledge that the word {דעת} *(dagnath)* may be taken either in an active or a passive sense, as denoting either "the knowledge of him" or "his knowledge." In whichsoever of these senses it is taken, we shall easily understand the Prophet's meaning; and the Jews will not be able to

practice such impudent sophistry as to prevent us from extorting from them a reluctant acknowledgment of what is here asserted, that Christ. is the only teacher and author of righteousness.

Shall justify many. By the word "justify" he points out the effect of this teaching. Thus, men are not only taught righteousness in the school of Christ, but are actually justified. And this is the difference between the righteousness of faith and the righteousness of the Law; for although the Law shows what it is to be righteous, yet Paul affirms that it is impossible that righteousness should be obtained by it, and experience proves the same thing; for the Law is a mirror in which we behold our own unrighteousness. (Romans 3: 20; Galatians 2:16, 21, and 3:10, 11.) Now, the doctrine which Christ teaches, as to obtaining righteousness, is nothing else than "the knowledge of him;" and this is faith, when we embrace the benefit of his death and fully rely on him.

Philosophers have laid down many excellent precepts, which, as they imagine, contain righteousness; but they never could bestow it on any man; [300] for who ever obtained by their rules the power of living uprightly? And it is of no advantage to know what is true righteousness, if we are destitute of it. To say nothing about philosophers, the Law itself, which contains the most perfect rule of life, could not (as we have said) bestow this; not that there was any defect in it, for Moses testified (Deuteronomy 30:19) that "he had set before them good and evil, life and death;" but that the corruption of our nature is such that the Law could not suffice for procuring righteousness. In like manner Paul teaches (Romans 8:3) that this weakness proceeds "from our flesh," and not from the Law; for nature prompts us in another direction, and our lusts burst forth with greater violence, like wild and furious beasts, against the command of God. The consequence is, that "the law worketh wrath," instead of righteousness. (Romans 4:15) The law therefore holds all men as convicted, and, after having made known their sin, renders men utterly inexcusable.

We must therefore seek another way of righteousness, namely, in Christ, whom the law also pointed out as its end. (Romans 10:3.) "The righteousness of the law was of this nature: He who doeth these things shall live by them." (Leviticus 18:5; Galatians 3:12.) But nobody has done them, and therefore another righteousness is necessary, which Paul also proves (Romans 10:8) by a quotation from Moses himself, "The word is nigh, in thy mouth and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith which we preach." (Deuteronomy 30:14) By this doctrine, therefore, we are justified; not by the bare and simple doctrine, but inasmuch as it exhibits the benefit of the death of Christ, by which atonement is made for our sins, and we are reconciled to God. (Romans 5:10.) For, if we embrace this benefit by faith, we are reckoned righteous before God.

[300] "Mais ils n'ont jamais peu faire un seul hornroe juste." "But they never could make one man righteous."

For he shall bear their iniquities. The Prophet explains his meaning by pointing out what this doctrine contains; for these two clauses agree well: "he shall justify by his doctrine," or "by the knowledge of him," inasmuch as "he shall bear their iniquities." Having been once made a sacrifice for us, he now invites us by the doctrine of the Gospel, to receive the fruit of his death; and thus the death of Christ is the substance of the doctrine, in order that he may justify us. To this saying of the Prophet Paul fully subscribes; for, after having taught that "Christ was an expiatory sacrifice for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him," he at the same time adds, "We are ambassadors for Christ, and beseech you, be ye reconciled to God." (2 Corinthians 5:20, 21)

My righteous servant. He shows that Christ justifies us, not only as he is God, but also as he is man; for in our flesh he procured righteousness for us. He does not say, "The Son," but "My servant," that we may not only view him as God, but may contemplate his human nature, in which he performed that obedience by which we are acquitted before God. The foundation of our salvation is this, that he offered himself as a sacrifice; and, in like manner, he himself declares,

"For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also may be holy." (John 17:19)

12. *Therefore will I divide to him a portion.* Isaiah again declares what will be the result of the death of Christ. It was necessary that he should add this doctrine as to the victory which Christ obtained by his death; for what was formerly stated, that by his death we are reconciled to the Father, would not have sufficiently confirmed our hearts. Here he borrows a comparison from the ordinary form of a triumphal procession held by those who, after having obtained a signal victory, are commonly received and adorned with great pomp and splendor. Thus also Christ, as a valiant and illustrious general, triumphed over the enemies whom he had vanquished.

And he shall divide the spoil with the strong. This statement is the same as the preceding, and it is a customary repetition among Hebrew writers. Those whom he formerly called "great" he now calls mighty or "strong." Those who translate {רבים} *(rabbim)* by the word "many," [301] torture, in my opinion, the Prophet's meaning. In these two clauses there is only this difference, that in the former God testifies what he gave to Christ, and in the latter he adds that Christ enjoys that benefit, he enjoys it not on his own account, but on ours; [302] for the fruit of this victory comes to us. For us Christ subdued death, the world, and the devil. In a word, the Prophet here applauds the victory which followed the death of Christ; for "although he was crucified through the weakness of the flesh, yet by the power of the Spirit" he rose from the dead, and triumphed over his enemies. (2 Corinthians 13:4) Such is the import of the metaphor of "Spoil," which the Prophet used; for "he

[301] "Ceux qui traduisent, Je luy distribueray portion avec plusieurs." "Those who translate, I will divide to him a portion with many."

[302] "Non point pour soy, mais pour nous." "Not for himself, but for us."

ascended on high, that he might lead captivity captive and give gifts to men." (Psalm 68:18; Ephesians 4:8)

For he poured out his soul to death. He now adds that Christ's humiliation was the beginning of this supreme dominion; as Paul also declares that Christ, "after having blotted out the handwriting which was opposed to us, triumphed on the cross." (Colossians 2:14) So far, then, is the shame of the death which Christ died from making any diminution of his glory, that it is the reason why God the Father exalted him to the highest honor.

And was ranked with transgressors. He describes also the kind of death; as Paul, when he magnifies "the obedience" of Christ, and says that "he abased himself even to death," likewise adds, that it was no ordinary death, but the death "of the cross," that is, accursed and shameful. (Philippians 2:8) So in this passage Isaiah, in order to express deeper shame, says that he was ranked among malefactors. But the deeper the shame before men, the greater was the glory of his resurrection by which it was followed.

Mark quotes this passage, when he relates that Christ was crucified between two robbers; for at that time the prediction was most fully accomplished. (Mark 15:28) But the Prophet spoke in general terms, in order to show that Christ did not die an ordinary death. For the purpose of disgracing him the more, those two robbers were added; that Christ, as the most wicked of all, might be placed in the midst of them. This passage is, therefore, most appropriately quoted by Mark as relating to that circumstance.

He bore the sin of many. This is added by way of correction, that, when we hear of the shame of Christ's death, we may not think that it was a blot on the character of Christ, and that our minds may not, by being prejudiced in that manner, be prevented from receiving the victory which he obtained for us, that is, the fruit of his death. He shows, therefore, that this was done in order that he might take our sins upon him; and his object is, that, whenever the death of Christ shall be mentioned, we may at the same time remember the atonement made for us. And this fruit swallows up all the shame of the death of Christ, that his majesty and glory may be more clearly seen than if we only beheld him sitting in heaven; for we have in him a striking and memorable proof of the love of God, when he is so insulted, degraded, and loaded with the utmost disgrace, in order that we, on whom had been pronounced a sentence of everlasting destruction, may enjoy along with him immortal glory.

I have followed the ordinary interpretation, that "he bore the sin of many," though we might without impropriety consider the Hebrew word {רבים} *(rabbim,)* to denote "Great and Noble." And thus the contrast would be more complete, that Christ, while "he was ranked among transgressors," became surety for every one of the most excellent of the earth, and suffered in the room of those who hold the highest rank in the world. I leave this to the judgment of my readers. Yet I approve of the ordinary reading, that he alone bore the punishment of many, because on him was laid the guilt of the

whole world. It is evident from other passages, and especially from the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, [303] that "many" sometimes denotes "all."

And prayed for the transgressors. Because the ratification of the atonement, with which Christ has washed us by his death, implies that he pleaded with the Father on our behalf, it was proper that this should be added. For, as in the ancient Law the priest, who "never entered without blood," at the same time interceded for the people; so what was there shadowed out is fulfilled in Christ. (Exodus 30:10; Hebrews 9:7) First, he offered the sacrifice of his body, and shed his blood, that he might endure the punishment which was due to us; and secondly, in order that the atonement might take effect, he performed the office of an advocate, and interceded for all who embraced this sacrifice by faith; as is evident from that prayer which he left to us, written by the hand of John, "I pray not for these only, but for all who shall believe on me through their word." (John 17:20) If we then belong to their number, let us be fully persuaded that Christ hath suffered for us, that we may now enjoy the benefit of his death.

He expressly mentions "transgressors," that we may know that we ought to betake ourselves with assured confidence to the cross of Christ, when we are horrorstruck by the dread of sin. Yea, for this reason he is held out as our intercessor and advocate; for without his intercession our sins would deter us from approaching to God.

[303] Romans 5:12,18. — fj.

Chapter 54

CHAPTER 54.

Isaiah 54:1-17

1. Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the LORD.

1. Exulta, sterilis, quae non pariebas; exulta et jubila, quae non parturiebas; quoniam plures filii viduae quam filii conjugatae, dicit Iehova.

2. Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes;

2. Dilata locum tabernaculorum tuorum, et cortinas tentoriorum tuorum extendant: ne parcas. Produc funes tuos, et clavos tuos consolida.

3. For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited.

3. Quia ad dextram et sinistram multiplicaberis: et semen tuum Gentes possidebit; et urbes desolatas inhabitabunt.

4. Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed: neither be thou confounded; for thou shalt not be put to shame: for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more.

4. Ne timeas, quia non pudifies; et ne erubescas, quia non afficieris ignominia; imo pudoris adolescentiae tuae oblivisceris; et opprobrii viduitatis tuae non recordaberis amplius.

5. For thy Maker is thine husband; The LORD of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called.

5. Quid maritus tuus, fictor tuus, cui nomen Iehova exercituum; et redemptor tuus Sanctus Israel, Deus universae terrae vocabitur.

6. For the LORD hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in

spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God.

6. Quoniam sicut mulierem relictam et destitutam spiritu vocavit to Iehova; et uxorem adolescentiae, quae repudiata fueras, dicit Deus tuus.

7. For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee.

7. Ad exiguum momentum reliqui to, et in misericordiis magnis colligam to.

8. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer.

8. In momento irae abscondi faciem meam paulisper a to; at clementia sempiterna misertus sum tui, dicit redemptor tuus Iehova.

9. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee.

9. Quoniam aquae (vel, sicut dies) Noe, hoc mihi; quandoquidem juravi non fore ut amplius transirent aquae Noe super terram; ita juravi non fore ut tibi irascar vel increpem to.

10. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee.

10. Nam montes quidem movebuntur, et colles nutabunt; misericordia autem mea non recedet a to, nec foedus pacis meae vacillabit, dicit miserator tuus Iehova.

11. O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires.

11. Paupercula tempestate jactata, consolatione destituta; ecee ego struam super carbunculum lapides tuos, et fundabo to in sapphiris.

12. And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones.

12. Et ponam e margaritis fenestras tuas, et portas tuas ex lapide rutilante, et omnes fines tuos ex lapide pretioso.

13. And all thy children shall be taught of the LORD; and great shall be the peace of thy children.

13. Nam omnes filii tui docti ab Iehova, et multa pax filiis tuis.

14. In righteousness shalt thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression; for thou shalt not fear: and from terror; for it shall not come near thee.

14. In justitia praeparaberis, longe aberis ab oppressione, quia non timebis eam; et a pavore, quia non appropinquabit tibi.

15. Behold, they shall surely gather together, but not by me: whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall for thy sake.

15. Et conveniens conveniet contra to absque me; qui convenerit in to, contra to cadet.

16. Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire,

and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work; and I have created the waster to destroy.

16. Ecce ego creavi fabrum, sufflantem in igne prunas, et proferentem instrumentum ad opus suum. Ego, inquam, creavi vastatorem ad perdendum.

17. No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD.

17. Omne instrumenturn quod formaturn est contra to non habebit successum; et omnem linguam quae in to surrexerit in judicium tu damnabis. Haec haereditas servorum Iehova, et justitia eorum a me, dicit Iehova.

1. *Shout.* After having spoken of the death of Christ, he passes on with good reason to the Church; that we may feel mere deeply in ourselves what is the value and efficacy of his death. We cannot behold it in Christ, if he be viewed by himself; and therefore we must come to his body, which is the Church; because Christ suffered for the Church, and not for himself. And this is the order in our Confession of Faith [304] for, after having professed that we believe in Christ, who suffered and was crucified for us, we add that we believe in the Church, [305] which flowed, as it were, from his side. Accordingly, after having discoursed concerning the death and resurrection and triumph of Christ, he properly comes down to the Church, which ought never to be separated from her Head, that each individual believer may learn by his own experience that Christ has not suffered in vain. And if he had not mentioned this doctrine, believers could not have so well strengthened their hearts by the hope of restoring the Church. This congratulation plainly shows that, when Christ shall come forth as a conqueror over death, he will not merely conquer for himself as an individual, but will, at the same time, breathe life into his body.

Thou barren, that didst not bear. He calls the Church "barren," because no offspring could be expected from her, so long as she groaned under wretched bondage; for if any one had judged of her from her outward condition, he would have concluded that she was very near destruction. And even apart from her external wretchedness, there was nothing pure within; everything was corrupted and defiled by superstitions; for they had degenerated into the idolatrous rites of the Gentiles.

The children of the widow. He calls the Church not merely "Barren," but a "Widow," though either of them might have taken away the hope of having offspring; but when these two are combined, what else can be looked for than wretched destruction? But against such accumulated distress he bids her be of good courage, because she shall have more children than the married woman.

[304] "En nos articles de foy." "In our articles of faith."

[305] Our author evidently speaks of what is usually called "The Apostle's Creed." — Ed.

This passage may be explained in two ways; either as a comparison of the Church with the Gentiles, who flourished like "a married woman," or as a comparison with that condition in which the Church was before the captivity. Both senses will be perfectly admissible, but I prefer to adopt the more simple view; for I do not think that it is a comparison between two conditions of the Church, but that it is an ordinary form of expression which the Prophet employs in order to denote that this extraordinary fertility of the Church will be at variance with what usually takes place, so that men may not judge of her condition by the ordinary course of nature; because the work of God will be extraordinary and wonderful. And yet I acknowledge that she was at that time in widowhood; for God had long before sent to her by his servants a bill of divorcement, and had actually divorced that nation, by driving it into banishment. But the Prophet declares that this punishment will be temporary, as we shall immediately see more clearly.

2. *Widen the place of thy tabernacles.* He continues his argument under other metaphors, and promises that the Lord will not only restore his Church, but will bestow upon her a condition far more excellent. They who think that the Church is compared in this passage to a synagogue are, in my opinion, mistaken, and only succeed in increasing the obstinacy of the Jews, who perceive that the Prophet's meaning is tortured. I do indeed acknowledge that these things relate to the kingdom of Christ, and that they were at length fulfilled as soon as the Gospel began to be preached; but it does not therefore follow that the Prophet did not, at the same time, keep his eye upon that period which preceded the coming of Christ.

This prophecy began to be fulfilled under Cyrus, who gave the people liberty to return, and afterwards extended to Christ, in whom it has its full accomplishment. The Church therefore conceived, when the people returned to their native country; for the body of the people was gathered together from which Christ should proceed, in order that the pure worship of God and true religion might again be revived. Hitherto, indeed, this fertility was not visible; for the conception was concealed, as it were, in the mother's womb, and no outward appearance of it could be seen; but afterwards the people were increased, and after the birth the Church grew from infancy to manhood, till the Gospel was preached. This was the actual youth of the Church; and next follows the age of manhood, down to Christ's last coming, when all things shall be fully accomplished.

All these things must be taken together, if we wish to learn the Prophet's real meaning. In this way Zechariah 2:5 Malachi 4: 2 and Haggai encouraged the people by the hope of their future condition, when they saw that little progress was made in building the temple; for they promised that "the glory of the latter temple should be greater than the glory of the former." (Haggai 2:9) This was not at all visible, and therefore they extended those promises till Christ; and by hope and confidence in him the people must have been encouraged to build the temple. Consequently, this consolation was common

to the Jews who lived under the Law, and to us who see more clearly in Christ this restoration of the Church.

The curtains of thy tents. The metaphor is borrowed from tabernacles, which were extensively used in that country. The Church is compared to them, because it has no solid building in the world; for it appears to be wandering and unsettled, in consequence of being necessarily moved from one place to another on account of various changes. But still I am fully persuaded that the Prophet had in his eye that former deliverance (as we have stated to have been customary with the prophets) when, being led through the wilderness, they dwelt in tents for forty years; for which reason they kept a public festival every year by the command of God. (Leviticus 23:3943)

It will be objected that the building which is erected by the ministers of the Word is so solid that it ought not to be compared to "tabernacles." But I reply, this metaphor of "tabernacles" relates rather to the outward aspect of the Church than to its spiritual and (what, may be called) its internal condition; for the actual building of the Church is nothing else than the kingdom of God, which is not fading or similar to tents. Yet the Church does not cease to be conveyed from one place to another; for it has no stable or permanent habitation. In short, its solid firmness is such that it surpasses the best fortified citadels; for, relying on the invincible power of God, it scorns all danger. On the other hand, it resembles "tents," because earthly wealth, forces, and strength are not its support.

3. *Because thou shalt be multiplied.* Now follows the reason why he commanded the cords to be lengthened for enlarging the tents. It is, that a moderate space would not contain a numerous people, whom the Lord will gather into one from every quarter. Now, because Judea was hideous on account of its ruins and desolation, he says that the forsaken cities shall be inhabited.

4. *Fear not, for thou shalt not be ashamed.* Here, as formerly, he strengthens the hearts of believers, and addresses the whole Church; for the calamity was universal, and the Church appeared to be totally ruined. He bids her be of good cheer, and next assigns the reason; that the issue of her troubles will be such that she "shall not be ashamed;" as if he had said, "Although for a time thou art wretched, yet thy affairs shall be prosperous;" and as it is elsewhere said, "They who hope in the Lord shall not be ashamed." (Psalm 25:3)

Blush not; that is, "cherish good hope, and be confident." Those men "blush" who are ashamed, and who, being disappointed of their hope, suffer their hearts to be cast down. He next assigns the same reason, "for thou shalt not be exposed to shame." I consider that here, as formerly, {כי} *(ki)* signifies *for;* and therefore the same sentence is twice repeated under a variety of expressions, except that the former clause may relate to the disposition of the heart, and the latter to the external cause. But the more simple meaning

of both clauses is, that it is a promise of success and prosperity, as if he had said that the calamity shall be brought to an end.

Yea, thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth. This is a confirmation of the former clause. He means the calamities which befell the Church while she was still young, and the remembrance of which will be wholly obliterated by the prosperity which she shall afterwards enjoy. We mentioned a little before, that *widowhood* is a term used in regard to her, because God had forsaken, and, so to speak, had divorced her.

5. *For thy Maker is thy husband.* He assigns the reason why she will forget all the distresses and calamities which she formerly endured. It is because God will again receive her into favor; for captivity might be said to be a kind of divorce, as we formerly saw. (Isaiah 1:1) He now says, "He who created thee shall be thy husband;" for such is the import of the words. He calls himself the "Maker" of his Church, not only because he created the Church as he created other men, but because he condescended to adopt her as his heritage; and this privilege may be regarded as a new life. Although the Jews fell from their dignity, as men are speedily led to revolt, [306] if they are not renewed by the Spirit of strength, yet their spiritual creation was not wholly extinguished, for the remembrance of the covenant remained, and hence also God created them anew.

Whose name is Jehovah of hosts. This refers to his power, that we may be permitted to glory in it., seeing that we are his children; for the greater the power of God, and the more honorable his name, so much the greater is our boasting, so long as we are his children and do not boast of an empty title. Now, the Prophet magnifies this kindness of God, that he condescends to have us instead of a wife, that we may be able to glory in his power and strength.

Thy Redeemer. He calls himself the "Redeemer," in order that he may more fully confirm the people in that hope; that, although the former deliverance appeared to be cancelled, because the people were again led into captivity, yet they shall be restored in such a manner as to know that the grace of God is not without effect.

Shall be called. The verb, {יקרא} *(yikkare)* "shall be called," may refer either to the name "Redeemer," or to the name "Holy One," or to both I willingly connect both together in this manner, "The Holy One of Israel shall be called thy Redeemer, and the God of the whole earth." [307] He employs the expression, the whole earth, because the name of God had formerly been, in some respects, confined to Judea, but, by the preaching of the Gospel, the Gentiles have been called to the same hope of salvation. (Psalm 76:2) The Lord is "the God of the Gentiles" (Romans 3:29) as well as "of the Jews;" for

[306] "Comme les hommes sont incontinent destournez du droit chemin." "As men are quickly turned aside from the right path."

[307] "Le Sainct d'Israel, qui est ton Redempteur, sera appele le Dieu de toute la terre, ou, Le Sainct d'Israel sera appele ton Redempteur et Dieu de toute la terre." "The Holy One of Israel, who is thy Redeemer, shall be called the God of the whole earth, or, The Holy one of Israel shall be called thy Redeemer, and God of the whole earth."

the Gentiles, though formerly "far off," (Ephesians 2:13,) have been united to the Jews under his government.

6. *For as a woman forsaken.* He meets a doubt which might arise in the minds of believers amidst so distressing a calamity. It seemed as if the Lord had rejected them, so that they had nothing to look for but destruction. The Prophet therefore reminds them that they ought not to despair, because they have been thus forsaken; for God, according to his mercy, is ready to be reconciled, and is even willing to raise them from the dead. [308]

And a wife of youth. He employs this expression in order that, by this metaphor, he may more fully confirm their hearts in that hope; for the hearts of young husbands are more easily reconciled than the hearts of older husbands, being attracted, and, as it were, driven forward by youthful age and tender love. In like manner, he shows that God will be easily reconciled. "True, thou wast divorced; but the divorce shall not be of long duration. The Lord will show himself ready to be reconciled, and will even, of his own accord, be the first to invite thee to reconciliation." [309]

7. *For a little moment I forsook thee.* The Prophet explains more fully the former statement, and shows what will be the nature of this divorce, namely, that she shall be speedily restored to her former condition. He magnifies the mercy of God, and extenuates the sorrow by which the hearts of believers might be oppressed. It was not enough for believers to expect some revival, if they were not convinced that God's wrath would be of short duration. We quickly lose courage and faint, if the Lord be not nigh, and if he do not quickly stretch out his hand to us. For this reason Isaiah, after having spoken of restoring the Church, adds that this divorce shall last but "for a moment," but that *his mercy shall be everlasting*

When he says that he *forsook* his people, it is a sort of admission of the fact. [310] We are adopted by God in such a manner that we cannot be rejected by him on account of the treachery of men; for he is faithful, so that he will not cast off or abandon his people. What the Prophet says in this passage must therefore refer to our feelings and to outward appearance, because we seem to be rejected by God when we do not perceive his presence and protection. And it is necessary that we should thus feel God's wrath, even as a wife divorced by her husband deplores her condition, that we may know that we are justly chastised. But we must also perceive his mercy; and because it is infinite and eternal, we shall find that all afflictions in comparison of it are light and momentary. Whenever, therefore, we are pressed by adversity, we ought to betake ourselves to this consolation. At the same time it ought

[308] "Et mesmes vent redresser celuy qui est au sepulcher." "And even wishes to revive him who is in the grave."

[309] "He compares the Hebrew nation to 'a wife of youth;' that is, to a wife whom he married in youth, (Proverbs 5:18; Malachi 2:14) towards whom he retained his former love. Compare Isaiah 62:4." — Rosenmuller. "A wife of youth, not merely a young wife, but one married early." — Alexander.

[310] "C'est comme s'il accordoit qu'il fust ainsi." "It is as if he admitted that this was actually the case."

to be observed, that what was said was actually true as to the whole body of the people, who had been divorced on account of their wickedness; and although God did not receive all of them indiscriminately into favor with him, but only the elect remnant, yet there is nothing absurd or improper in addressing his discourse as if it had been to the same persons. [311]

8. *In a moment of wrath.* He again repeats and enforces this statement, in order to impress it more deeply on the hearts of believers, that they may not be at all discouraged by adversity, and with good reason; for, amidst that frightful darkness, it was not easy for the captives to behold God's smiling face. And although the literal sense in which the "wrath" is here said to last but for "a moment" [312] be, that God in due time brought back the captives to their native country, yet we draw from it a general doctrine, that the afflictions of the Church are always momentary, when we raise our eyes to its eternal happiness. We ought to remember what Paul has taught us, (2 Corinthians 4:17) that all the afflictions of believers are light and easy to be endured, and are justly considered to be momentary, while they look at the "eternal weight of glory;" for if we do not attend to this comparison, every day will seem to us like a year. There would be no propriety in comparing the seventy years of the captivity of the Jews to "a moment," if it were not contrasted with the uninterrupted progress of the grace of God.

9. *For the waters of Noah,* or, *As the days of Noah.* There are two readings of this passage; for if we read it {מי} {כי} *(ki me),* {כי} *(ki)* must be translated *for;* and if we read it {כימי}, *(kime,)* {כ} *(caph)* must be translated *As,* and {ימי} *(yeme)* must be translated *Days.* [313] As to the general meaning, it makes little difference; and therefore we ought chiefly to consider what the Prophet meant, for commentators do not appear to me to have caught his meaning. They explain it generally, that the Lord promised to: Noah by an oath, that there would never be a deluge, and that this oath would perpetually remain in force. (Genesis 9:10) But for this, the good man might have trembled, and, at the approach of rain, might have dreaded a similar calamity, if the Lord had not sworn that this should never again happen. In like manner, when afflictions are at hand, we might dread that we should be ruined, if the Lord did not promise that the Church would be safe.

But I think that this ought to be limited to the period of the Babylonish

[311] "En ce qu'il addresse sa parole a tous." "In addressing his discourse to all."

[312] In explaining the words {בשצף קצף} (beshetzeph ketzeph,) commentators differ, being uncertain as to the meaning of the word; ,{שצף} (shetzeph.) Most commentators, on no other grounds, as Kimchi himself acknowledges, than the context of this passage, think that it denotes 'something little,' which some, concurring with the Chaldee interpreter, refer to 'a little time;' but as this is afterwards expressed by the word ,{רגע} (regang,) others refer it to 'a small measure,' agreeing with the Septuagint, which translate it {ἐν} {Θυμῷ} {μικρῷ}, 'for a short time,' compared with Zechariah 1:15. But A. Schultens, in his Animadversiones Philologicae on this passage, has justly remarked that there are good grounds for hesitation as to this received interpretation, because in none of the cognate languages can any trace of this meaning of the word; {שצף} (shetzeph) be found, nor even from the context is it very evident. By comparison with an Arabic root, he makes it signify 'In vehemence of wrath I hid,' etc. 'In great wrath' is the sense justly expressed by the Syriac version." — Rosenmuller

[313] {,מי} (me,) "waters of," is the construct form of ,{מים} (maim,) "waters;" and ,{ימי} (yeme,) "days of," is the construct form of ,{ימים} (yamim,) "days." — Ed. "On peut lire ceci en deux sortes, assavoir comme nous l'avons traduit, Car ceci m'est comme les eaux de Noe, ou, Ceci m'est comme les jours de Noe." "This may be read in two ways, namely, as we have translated it, This is to me as the waters of Noah, or, This is to me as the days of Noah."

captivity. He compares that captivity to a deluge, which destroyed the face of the earth; for it appeared as if the Church was utterly ruined. The people had almost entirely passed over to another nation, and had no kingdom and no civil government of their own; they underwent very hard bondage, and thought that their name was wholly extinguished. And at that time was actually fulfilled what the Prophet formerly declared,

"If the Lord had not left to us a seed, we should have been like Sodom and Gomorrah." (Isaiah 1:9)

Justly, therefore, does he compare that calamity to "the waters of Noah," that is, to the deluge; and on this account I rather agree with those who read {מי} {כי} *(ki me)* that is, "For the waters;" for I consider that reading to rest on better evidence than the other, and it is generally adopted by Jewish writers.

This is to me. I think that we ought carefully to inquire into the meaning of these words, which are slightly passed over by commentators. He means that this calamity will resemble the deluge; so that, as he was satisfied with a single deluge, and would never again send another, so he is satisfied with this one destruction, so to speak, of the Church, and will never again permit the face of it to be destroyed. Such is therefore the manner in which I think that we ought to explain this passage and apply the metaphor, that the desolation of Judea will be to God like the deluge which happened in "the days of Noah;" for as he swore at that time that he would never afterwards inflict such punishment on the crimes which stripped the earth of its inhabitants, so he will not again destroy the Church, as he did in the Babylonish captivity. And indeed, whatever might be any confused state of affairs that afterwards followed, still the Church retained some name, and preserved some form, until, at the manifestation of Christ in the flesh, the seed of the Gospel was everywhere scattered, that it might bring sons to God out of all nations. In a word, the Lord promises that henceforth he will restrain his wrath, and will not punish his people with so great severity.

It will be objected, that since that time the Church sustained very grievous calamities; from which it might be concluded, either that this oath failed of its accomplishment, or that this is not the Prophet's meaning. I reply, the Church did not sustain so grievous a calamity as to have its face altogether destroyed, which happened when the people were carried away into Babylon. For although Antiochus and other tyrants brought upon it dreadful calamities, although afterwards there also happened those apostasies which Paul foretold, (2 Thessalonians 2:3; 1 Timothy 4:1,) and everything was defiled by innumerable superstitions, so that the Christian name was nearly buried; yet still there remained some form of a Church, however disfigured, and the building was not in so ruinous a condition that there did not exist some remnants of Christianity above the deluge, so that this oath was in full force.

That I will not be wroth with thee. This must not be taken in an absolute,

but in a comparative sense. He contrasts this clause with the preceding; for he promises that he will never chastise his people so severely as not to mitigate the severity of the punishment. Although therefore tyrants indulge in wanton and unbridled rage, and Satan employ his utmost efforts in attacking the Church, and the Lord give him a loose rein, in order to punish our ingratitude, yet he will never suffer the Church to be ruined.

10. *For the mountains shall indeed be moved.* He confirms the former statement, and declares that sooner shall the whole world be turned upside down, than his mercy shall fail. It would be idle to put the question here, how "the mountains shall be moved, or the hills shall shake;" for the comparison is drawn from those things which appear to be strongest and most deeply rooted, in order to show that the foundation of the Church is far more durable. "Mountains" are very strong, and earthquakes do not so frequently take place in them as in plains; and therefore the Lord declares that, although that vast and huge mass of "mountains be moved," or the heavens fall, yet his covenant shall endure, and his mercy towards the Church shall not fail. In this sense it is said in the Psalm, "The Lord shall reign, the world shall be established." (Psalm 93:1) In another passage it is even said,

"Though the heavens pass away, the Church of God shall remain unshaken."
(Psalm 102:26, 28)

My mercy. In the word "mercy," it ought to be remarked what is the nature of the foundation of the covenant; for we can have no friendship with God: unless he have mercy upon us, and receive us by free grace. [314]

The covenant of my peace. He calls it "the covenant of peace," because the Lord offers to us all that belongs to perfect happiness; as the Hebrew writers also, under the word "peace," include all posterity. Since therefore this covenant contains solid and perfect happiness, it follows that all who are excluded from it are miserable.

Saith Jehovah, who hath compassion on thee. By saying that it is he "who hath compassion" on her, he again confirms what was formerly said, that he will be reconciled in no other way, and for no other reason, than because he is compassionate and ready to pardon.

11. *Thou wretched.* He continues the same subject, and promises not only that the Church shall be restored to her ancient splendor, but that God will cause her to be adorned with attire of greater magnificence, as if it had been wholly composed of precious stones. All this was expressed by Haggai in a single word, when he said,

"The glory of the latter temple shall be greater than the glory of the former."
(Haggai 2:10)

As to the names of the jewels [315] which are here described by the Prophet,

[314] "S'il ne nous recoit gratuitement, en pardonnant nos offenses;" "Unless he receive us through free grace, by pardoning our offenses."

[315] "These seem to be general images to express beauty, magnificence, purity, strength, and

and about which even the Hebrew writers are not agreed, we need not give ourselves much trouble, provided we understand the meaning of the passage.

This earnest address is exceedingly well fitted for soothing the grief of believers; for it represents the Church, which was ready to be drowned, as being now rescued by him from shipwreck. Whenever therefore we shall see her violently shaken by tempests, and weighed down by a load of distresses, and deprived of all consolation, let us remember that these are the very circumstances which induce God to give assistance.

12. *And I will lay thy windows with pearls.* By these metaphors he shows that the condition of the Church, as has been formerly said, will be far better than at any former period. The Church is compared to a building, which is customary in every part of Scripture. (Jeremiah 24:6; Matthew 16:18.) For this reason he now draws a picture of a costly and magnificent structure. But it ought to be remarked, that the Prophet represents God as the architect of this building; for this work ought to be entirely ascribed to him alone.

But it may be asked what the Prophet means by "carbuncles, sapphires, pearls," and other kinds of jewels; for by a similar metaphor Paul meant doctrine. "As a wise architect," says he, "I have laid the foundation." And again,

"If any man build on this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, every man's work shall be made manifest." (1 Corinthians 3:10-13)

Whether or not this be the Prophet's meaning, will appear from the following verse.

13. *For all thy children.* I consider that the copulative {ו} *(vau,)* "and," here, as in many other passages, denotes *for;* and hence we may easily conclude that Isaiah spoke not of doctrine, but of men, of which the spiritual building of the Church is reared. It is by doctrine, indeed, that the Church is built; but, the building of it is effected by assembling men together, and reducing them to a state of obedience to God. The difference then between Paul and Isaiah is this, that Paul makes those "precious stones" relate to doctrine, and Isaiah makes them relate to the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which are bestowed on men, in order that the Church may be built of them. It is proper to observe the diversity of gifts with which the Lord adorns his Church; for all are not "emeralds," and all are not "carbuncles," but the Lord assigns to every one his rank according' to his own pleasure. (Ephesians 4:11)

Taught by Jehovah. It deserves attention, that all that belongs to the ornament of the Church, proceeds from no other source than from the grace of God; for if we are "carbuncles" and "sapphires" in consequence of our being taught by the Lord, it follows that this does not proceed from nature. Now there are two ways in which the Lord teaches us; by external preaching, and by the secret revelation of the Holy Spirit. What kind of teaching the

solidity, agreeably to the ideas of the eastern nations; and to have never been intended to be strictly scrutinized, or minutely and particularly explained, as if they had each of them some precise moral or spiritual meaning." — Lowth.

Prophet means is explained by Christ, when he quotes this passage; and therefore we ought not to seek a better interpreter. "It is written in the prophets," says he, "All shall be taught by God. Every man who hath heard and learned from the Father cometh to me." (John 6:45) If this passage were to be understood as relating to external preaching, the conclusion which Christ draws from it would not be well founded; for it does not follow, "The Gospel is preached, and therefore all believe." Many oppose, others openly scorn, and others are hypocrites. Those only "who have been foreordained to life" (Acts 13:48) are sincerely teachable, and are entitled to be ranked among the disciples. The Gospel is preached indiscriminately to the elect and the reprobate; but the elect alone come to Christ, because they have been "taught by God," and therefore to them the Prophet undoubtedly refers.

This makes it evident in what way we become living and precious stones for building the temple of God. It is when the Lord has formed and polished us by his Spirit, and has added to the external preaching of the word the internal efficacy of the Spirit. Hence we learn how great is the depravity of the human mind, which cannot be bent and formed anew, unless the Lord move it by the power and efficacy of his Spirit. Isaiah has connected both modes of teaching, the internal and the external; for he gives the appellation of "children of the Church" to those who are "taught by the Lord." If they are her children, they must then have been conceived in her womb and nourished by her, first "with milk, and next with solid food," as Paul says, (1 Corinthians 3:2) till they "grow up and arrive at manhood." (Ephesians 4:13)

Thus the external administration of the word is necessary if we wish to be disciples; and this shows the extreme madness of fanatics, who abuse this passage for the purpose of overturning the preaching of the word and the ministry which the Church enjoys; for they cannot be "the children" of the Church, if they do not allow themselves to be educated in her. In vain will they boast of secret revelations; for the Spirit does not teach any but those who submit to the ministry of the Church, and consequently they are the disciples of the devil, and not of God, who reject the order which he has appointed; for we see that these two things, "Children of the Church" and "Taught by God," are united in such a manner that they cannot be God's disciples who refuse to be taught in the Church. They ought likewise to be properly distinguished, as Isaiah also distinguishes them, that we may not apply to men what ought to be ascribed to the efficacy of the Spirit; but at the same time they ought to be joined together, so that we may know that in this matter God chooses to employ the agency of men.

Besides, we are taught by this passage that the calling of God is efficacious in the elect. Augustine examines this passage judiciously, and applies it skillfully against the Pelagians, who extolled man's freewill in opposition to the grace of God. They appeared, indeed, to ascribe something to the grace of God, but in such a manner that, when they brought it forward, they gave

to it an inferior place to man's freewill; just as the Papists do, who assert that any person can either receive or reject it. "But" (says Augustine) "all shall be taught by God. Now, God's disciples are efficaciously taught, and follow his calling." He likewise adds that passage of John's Gospel which we have quoted. This shows clearly that it is not from free choice made by man, and which is capable of being bent in either direction, that it proceeds.

From these words it ought also to be observed how highly the Lord values his doctrine, by means of which he admits us into his building, so that we become "pearls, sapphires, and carbuncles;" for they who wish to build the Church by rejecting the doctrine of the word, build a hog's sty, and not the Church of God. We see also what opinion we ought to form about implicit faith, about which the Papists yelp, who wish men to become fools, that they may suffer themselves to be imposed upon; for, since we must be taught by God, it is not reasonable that we should resemble beasts.

It may be asked, were not the prophets also, and the patriarchs, and other believers under the Law, taught by God? They undoubtedly were; but here the Prophet spoke by comparison, because there is a more abundant revelation in Christ, and the Lord hath spoken so plainly as to give a public manifestation that he is the teacher of the Church, and also to gain many disciples. This passage agrees with one in the Prophet Jeremiah.

"Every one shall not teach his neighbor, nor a man his brother; for all shall know me from the least even to the greatest, saith Jehovah." (Jeremiah 31:34)

Accordingly, if in ancient times it was necessary that all the children of God should be disciples of the Holy Spirit, much more in the present day, seeing that this prediction relates strictly to the kingdom of Christ.

And great peace. By the word "peace" he denotes happiness, that is, all prosperity. And hence we may infer what is the true happiness of men. It is, when God enlightens our understandings, so that we embrace the salvation which has been revealed to us in Christ; for, so long as we are destitute of that knowledge, we are at the greatest possible distance from happiness; because even God's blessings, till they are sanctified by faith, become a curse to us.

14. *In righteousness.* He means that God will be the maker and architect of his Church. I am aware that there are some who explain it differently, and who think that "righteousness" means "goodworks." And indeed that exposition has some plausibility, arising from the Prophet having spoken about doctrine; for we are taught for this very purpose, that we may lead a pious and holy life. But the Prophet's meaning was different, namely, that the Church shall be restored under God's guidance, who wishes to be its guardian and defender, he contrasts "righteousness" with the violence and oppression by which the Church has been thrown down, or, at least, he expresses "stability," as if he had said that it shall not be a frail building, or one that might impose on men for a short time by mere deceitfulness of

appearance; because God will sincerely defend his work, and, being "righteous," will not only restore it completely, but will afterwards preserve it in safety for a long period. Thus, although men are leagued in every way for the destruction of the Church, they will gain nothing; for the Lord guards her by his "righteousness." We have formerly [316] seen this form of expression; and on this account I think that the interpretation which I have given is more simple, though some may think that another interpretation is more plausible.

15. *Behold, he who assembleth shall assemble.* The general import is, that, although many rise up for the purpose of overwhelming the Church, yet all their efforts and attacks shall fail; and he appears to promise God's assistance not only against external foes, but against foes that are domestic and internal. Many "assemble" in the bosom of the Church, as if they wished to join themselves to her, but afterwards carry on internal war. These words are commonly translated, "By gathering he shall gather himself against thee," and are generally understood to relate to all the enemies of the Church of every kind. That interpretation is most generally approved; nor do I object to it, provided that it be acknowledged to include the fraud, and ambush, and treachery by which the Church is attacked. Yet I have no doubt that here the meaning is the same as in Psalm 2:1, namely, the conspiracies and insurrections of the Gentiles against Christ and the Church of God; for not a single nation only, but various nations rise up against, her.

It is probable, however, that here he expressly joins together domestic foes and those who from without had penetrated even into her bosom; for he says, *In thee, Against thee,* that is, "They shall attack thee within, in the midst of thee." In a word, he shows that the Church will not enjoy such peace as not to be attacked by many adversaries. But it may be thought that these statements are contradictory; for he formerly said that she would be far from terror and oppression, and now he says that there shall be conspiracies within her bosom. I reply, the Prophet instantly added this, that believers might not promise to themselves a state of peace in the world, as if they had no annoyance to suffer from wicked men and hypocrites. The defense of the Church against oppression and slander shall be of such a kind as not to preserve her from carrying on uninterrupted war with enemies; for Satan will raise up against her every day new attacks, so that she can never be at rest. These words may therefore be regarded as a correction of the preceding statement, in order that believers may always carry their weapons of war, and may not promise to themselves repose.

Without me. A promise is added, that the Lord will nevertheless preserve them in the midst of dangers. Without God signifies "in vain" or "unsuccessfully;" for he means that the attacks of wicked men, though they do their utmost [317] shall utterly fail. They rush forward with blind fury, but it is the

[316] See Commentary on Isaiah, Vol. 1, p. 488; 3, p. 411.

[317] "Encore qu'ils facent du pis qu'ils pourrent." "Though they do the worst that they can."

Lord's hand alone that gives prosperity. He alludes to what was formerly said, (Isaiah 41:25) that the Babylonians should come, under God's guidance, to destroy Judea. At that time the people were ruined, because they had God for their enemy; but now, because "without God," that is, without his guidance, the enemies shall attack her, they shall be ashamed and turn back. This is more fully expressed by what immediately follows —

He who shall assemble in thee shall fall against thee. That is, "All that he shall attempt against thee shall fall back on his own head. Though the whole world rise up against thee, it shall be crushed by its own weight." The phrase, in thee, deserves notice; for when the Lord drives our enemies to a distance, we are confident, but if they come near us, we fall into despair. Therefore he says, "Although they penetrate even into thy bowels, the Lord will destroy them, and will deliver thee."

16. *Behold, I have created the workmen.* The Lord shows how easily and readily he delivers his Church from the base attacks of wicked men; for they can do nothing but so far as the Lord permits them, though he makes use of them as instruments for chastising his people. Moreover, this may be appropriately viewed as referring both to the Babylonians and to other foes who afterwards distressed the elect people. If the former sense be preferred, God undertakes to prove that he can easily drive away those whom he led against them, and east down those whom he raised up. If it be supposed to refer to Antiochus and others of the same description, the meaning will not be very different; namely, that they too shall not be permitted to hurt them, because they cannot even move a finger but by God's direction.

But it may be thought that the Prophet contradicts himself; for in the former verse he said, that wicked men attack the Church "without the Lord," and now he says that they fight under God as their leader, that under his guidance and direction they may waste and destroy. I reply, we must keep in view the contrast; namely, that the Lord had raised up the Babylonians to destroy the Church. We must observe the metaphor of the deluge, by which he denoted utter extermination; for at that time the Church might be said to have been drowned, and he made use of the Babylonians as his agents for that purpose. But he solemnly declares that henceforth he is resolved to restrain his anger, so as never to permit the Church to be destroyed by her enemies, though he chastise her by his own hand. The object at which the enemies of the Church aim, and which they labor with all their might to accomplish, is to ruin and destroy the Church; but the Lord restrains their attacks; for "without him," that is, without his command, they do nothing. Some explain the meaning to be, that. "the workman has been created for his work," that is, that he may effect his own destruction, and the waster, to destroy himself. But the former sense appears to me more simple.

I have created the waster to destroy. When the Lord says that he "createth the waster," this does not refer merely to the nature with which men are born, but to the very act of "wasting." And yet we must not, on that account, lay

blame on God, as if he were the author of the unjust cruelty which dwells in men alone; for God does not give assent to their wicked inclinations, but regulates their efforts by his secret providence, and employs them as the instruments of his anger. But on this subject we have treated in the exposition of other passages.

17. *Every weapon.* He again infers what has been already said, that wicked men, even though they exert themselves to the utmost, will gain nothing; for their attacks are guided and restrained by the secret, purpose of God. He makes use of the word "every," meaning by it that wicked men will have the means of attempting many and diversified methods for destroying the Church, but that their efforts shall be vain and fruitless, [318] for the Lord will restrain them. Heaven permits them, indeed, to a great extent, in order to try the patience of believers; but, when God thinks proper, he strips them of their strength and armor.

And every tongue. After having spoken of the "weapons" with which wicked men attack the Church, he expressly mentions the "tongue;" because no other "weapon" is so deadly and destructive. Not only do they revile, and slander, and defame the servants of God, but, as far as lies in their power, they extinguish the truth of God, and alienate the hearts of men from it; which ought to distress us more than if life were taken from us a hundred times. Besides, good and upright men find slander to be more distressing, and to inflict more severe pain than any bodily stroke; and, therefore, there was good reason for mentioning this deadly "weapon."

That shall rise up against thee in judgment. When he says that tongues "rise up in judgment," he means that wicked men are so daring and insolent, that they openly attack and annoy the children of God. He adds that this is done "in judgment;" because they hold out plausible pretexts, which give them the appearance of having a just cause. In like manner, the Papists, when they call us heretics, schismatics, and dogs, plead against us, as it were, "in judgment," and wish to be regarded as the defenders of catholic truth, though they maintain falsehood and idolatry. And yet so plausible are the pretexts by which their slanders are covered, that they produce very strong hatred against us among those who are ignorant of our cause. But although they assail us by arms, and by the "tongue," and by "weapons" of every kind, yet, relying on this prediction, let us hope that we shall be victorious; for victory is here promised to us, and, since we are certain of it, we ought to fight valiantly and with unshaken courage.

This is the inheritance. He shows that the Lord has granted this to believers, as it were, by a right of "inheritance," so that they shall never be deprived of it; for, as no title is more certain than that of an heir, so he shows that there is nothing of which the Lord's servants ought to be more certain than of his constant guardianship and preservation, by which he defends them against all dangers.

[318] "Mais tout s'evanouira comme fumee." "But all shall vanish away like smoke."

And their righteousness from me. "Righteousness" here denotes what is conveyed by us in the ordinary expression, (*Leur droit,*) "Their right." In a word, he means that the Lord will defend his people, so as to protect their innocence. Whenever, therefore, we are attacked and injured by men, let us learn to betake ourselves forthwith to the Lord; for, when we seek other assistance, the consequence is, that we are deprived of his guardianship and protection.

Chapter 55

CHAPTER 55.

Isaiah 55:1-13

1. Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

1. Heus sitientes omnes, venite ad aquas; et qui non habetis pecuniam, venite, emite, et comedite. Venite, inquam; emite absque pecunia, et absque ullo pretio vinum et lac.

2. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.

2. Quare expenditis pecuniam, non in panem? et laborem vestrum, non ad saturitatem? Audite audiendo me, et comedite bonum, et oblectet se pinguedine anima vestra.

3. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.

3. Inclinate aurem vestram, et venite ad me; audite, et vivet anima vestra. Et percutiam vobiscum foedus deculi, misericordias Davidis fideles.

4. Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.

4. Ecce testem populis dedi eum, ducem et praeceptorem populis.

5. Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee because of the LORD thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee.

5. Ecce gentem quam ignoras vocabis; et gens quae to non cognovit current ad to; propter Iehovam Deum tuum, et Sanctum Israel; quia glorificavit to.

6. Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near:

6. Quaerite Iehovam, dum invenitur; invocate eum, dum prope est.

7. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

7. Derelinquat impius viam suam, et vir iniquus cogitationes suas; revertatur ad Iehovam, et miserebitur ejus; ad Deum nostrum, quia multus est ad remittendum.

8. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD.

8. Neque enim cogitationes meae cogitationes vestrae, neque viae vestrae viae meae, dicit Iehova.

9. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

9. Nam quanto excelsiores sunt coeli terra, tantum superant viae meae vias vestras, et cogitationes meae cogitationes vestras.

10. For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater:

10. Certe, quemadmodum descendit pluvia et nix e coelis, neque illuc revertitur, sed irrigat terram, et eam facit concipere et germinare, ut det semen seminanti et panem comedenti;

11. So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

11. Sic erit verbum meum quod egredietur ex ore meo; non redibit ad me vacuum, donec faciat quod volo, et successum afferat, quo misi ipsum.

12. For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

12. Itaque cum laetitia egrediemini, et cum pace deducemini; montes et colles erumpent coram vobis in gaudium, et omnia ligna agri plaudent manu.

13. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

13. Pro rubo ascendet abies, et pro urtica (vel, spina) myrtus (vel, ulmus) crescet; et erit Iehovae in nomen, in sugnum perpetuum quod non auferetur.

1. *Ho, all that are thirsty.* Here the Prophet describes in lofty terms of commendation the goodness of God, which was to be poured down more copiously and abundantly than before under the reign of Christ, "in whose hand are hid all the treasures" (Colossians 2:3) of the grace of God; for in him God fully explains his mind to us; so that the saying of John is

actually fulfilled, "We have all drawn from his fullness, and have received grace for grace." (John 1:16) The fathers were, indeed, partakers of that divine goodness and spiritual kindness which is here mentioned. "How great," says David, "is thy goodness, which hath been laid up for them that fear thee!" (Psalm 31:19) But he hath poured it out far more liberally and abundantly in Christ. Thus, it is a remarkable commendation of the grace of God, which is exhibited to us in the kingdom of Christ; for the Prophet does not instruct us what has been done once, but also what is done every day, while the Lord invites us by his doctrine to the enjoyment of all blessings.

Come to the waters. Some view the word "waters" as referring to the doctrine of the Gospel, and others to the Holy Spirit; but neither of these expositions, in my opinion, is correct. They who think that it denotes the doctrine of the Gospel, and who contrast it with the law, (of which the Jewish writers think that the Prophet speaks in this passage,) include only one part of what the Prophet meant. They who expound it as denoting the Holy Spirit have somewhat more plausibility, and quote that passage of John's Gospel,

"If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." (John 4:10)

And a little after, Christ appears to expound this passage when he says,

"Every one that drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but whosoever shall drink of the water which I shall give to him shall never thirst; but the water which I shall give to him shall become in him a fountain of water springing up to everlasting life." (John 4:13, 14)

But I have no doubt that under these words, "waters, milk, wine, bread," Isaiah includes all that is necessary for spiritual life; for the metaphors are borrowed from those kinds of food which are in daily use amongst us. As we are nourished by "bread, wine, milk, and water," so in like manner let us know that our souls are fed and supported by the doctrine of the Gospel, the Holy Spirit, and other gifts of Christ.

The Prophet exclaims, as with a voice above the usual pitch, *HO!* for so great is the sluggishness of men that it is very difficult to arouse them. They do not feel their wants, though they are hungry; nor do they desire food, which they greatly need; and therefore that indifference must be shaken off by loud and incessant cries. So much the more base and shameful is the indolence of those who are deaf to this exhortation, and who, even when they are so sharply urged forward, still indulge in their slothfulness. Besides, the invitation is general; for there is no man who is not in want of those "waters," and to whom Christ is not necessary; and therefore he invites all indiscriminately, without any respect of persons. But men are so miserable that, although they know that they are in need of Christ, they contrive methods by which they may be deprived of this benefit, and rather believe the devil, who offers various obstructions, than this kind invitation.

We must therefore inquire what is the true preparation for receiving this grace. The Prophet describes it by the word "thirsty." Those who are puffed up with vain confidence and are satiated, or who, intoxicated by earthly appetites, do not feel thirst of soul, will not receive Christ; because they have no relish for spiritual grace. They resemble those persons who are in want of nourishments, but who, because they are filled and swollen with wind, loathe food, or who, being carried away by their own vain imaginations, feed on their own stupidity, as if they were in want of nothing. The consequence is, that they who are puffed up with pride or a false opinion of their own righteousness, or whom the allurements of the flesh have seized with lethargy, despise or reject the grace of God. It is therefore necessary that we have "thirst," that is, an ardent desire, in order that it may be possible for us to receive so great blessings.

Buy without money. He does not mean that there are any persons who have money in abundance, but the words ought to be explained thus. "Although they are poor, although they are sunk in the deepest poverty, yet the way is open for them to come to Christ, through whom these blessings are freely bestowed." "But how is it possible," it will be said, "to buy without a price?" I reply, "buying" denotes figuratively the method by which we procure anything; and {שבר} (*shabar*) is here put for "procure," and "price" for labor or industry, or any other method by which men obtain anything, he shows that we are poor and utterly destitute, and that we have nothing by which we can become entitled to God's favor; but that he kindly invites us, in order that he may freely bestow everything without any recompense.

2. *Wherefore do ye spend money?* [319] He complains of the ingratitude and madness of men, in rejecting or disdaining the kindness of God who offers all things freely, and yet harassing themselves greatly about various trifles which cannot yield them any advantage. Men are so enchanted by the devil, that they choose rather to wander through deserts, and to vex themselves in vain, than to rely on the grace which God offers to them. The experience of the present age abundantly shows that the Prophet not only expostulated with his own nation, but exclaimed against all men, to whatever age they might belong; for all the posterity of Adam have been seized with such madness that, in seeking the road to a heavenly life, [320] they altogether go astray, and follow their own vain opinions rather than the voice of God.

The Prophet does not complain of the slothfulness of those who, altogether forgetful of themselves and of God, take no concern about the spiritual life of the soul; (there are many such persons;) but of those who desire life, and yet do not understand the method or way of obtaining it, and wander in uncertainty through deserts and untrodden paths. Here, therefore, are

[319] "Spend. Hebrews Weigh." (Eng. Ver.) "In the first clause there is reference to the primitive custom of weighing instead of counting money, from which have arisen several of the most familiar denominations, such as the Hebrew 'shekel,' the Greek 'talent,' the French 'livre,' and the English 'pound.' The essential idea here is that of paying." — Alexander.

[320] "En cherchant le chemin de vie eternelle." "In seeking the road to eternal life."

condemned all the methods which men contrive, in opposition to the Word of God, for obtaining salvation, and they are pronounced to be useless expenses; for by the word "money" he denotes all the industry, study, or labor which belongs to man. Not that God values a single farthing all our idle attempts to worship him, but because labors foolishly undertaken are reckoned valuable by the judgment of the flesh.

And your labor, not so as to be satisfied. We see that by the word "bread" is here meant the same as was formerly meant by "waters," and that he gives the name "labor" to that which he formerly called "money." As if he had said, "Men toil without any advantage; for, when they follow their own inventions, however eagerly they may vex and weary themselves, they have no right to expect any reward." Thus he affirms that they who labor in an inconsiderate manner cannot "be satisfied;" for they who forsake God, and attempt new methods of salvation, can never "be satisfied." "They feed on wind," as Hosea says. (Hosea 12:1) They may, indeed, imagine that they are full, when they are swelled with vain confidence, but are like persons who, in consequence of being swollen with wind, do not perceive their hunger. Yet it would be better for them to be sore pressed by hunger and thirst, that it might lead them to call on the Lord with earnestness of heart, as it is said in the Psalm, "My soul is as a thirsty land before thee." (Psalm 143:6) But bread alone, or water alone, would not be enough to "satisfy," and by neither of them could life be supported; and that is the reason why the Prophet has made use of a variety of terms, in order to show that the Lord abundantly supplies everything that is necessary for life, that we may not think that we ought to seek aid from any other quarter.

Hear ye by hearing me. [321] Because every person is led into error by his own counsel, and all who neglect God vanish away in wicked imaginations, the Prophet here adds the remedy, which is, that we must depend entirely on the mouth of God. Whoever shall submit to his word will have no reason to fear that he shall spend his strength on things of no value. Here we see the amazing goodness of God, who offers his grace to men, though they are unthankful and unworthy.

But he adds the condition; for there is no way by which we can enter into life but by "hearing" him; and as the cause of our destruction is, that we are deaf to the voice of God, so the road to life is open, if we lend our ears to him. [322] In order to make a deeper impression upon us, he repeats the same admonition, and doubles the same word, "Hear ye by hearing;" and, in order to draw us more gently, he solemnly declares that it depends entirely on ourselves whether or not he will "delight" us even to fullness with all abundance of blessings.

3. *Incline your ear.* This assemblage of words makes still more evident what I slightly mentioned a little before, that God leaves nothing undone

[321] "Hearken diligently unto me." — Eng. Ver.

[322] "Si nons l'escoutons attentivement." "If we listen to him attentively."

which is fitted to correct and arouse our tardiness. Yet there is an implied reproof; for they must be excessively stupid who, when they are so gently called, do not instantly obey. This is a remarkable passage, from which we see that our whole happiness lies in obeying the word of God. When God speaks in this manner, the object which he has in view is to lead us to life; [323] and therefore the blame lies wholly with ourselves, because we disregard this saving and lifegiving word.

And come unto me. If God only commanded what we ought to do, he would indeed lay down the method of obtaining life, but without advantage; for the Law, which proceeded from the mouth of God, is the minister of death; but when he invites us "to himself," when he adopts us as children, when he promises pardon of sin and sanctification, the consequence is, that they who hear obtain life from him. We ought, therefore, to take into view the kind of doctrine which contains life, in order that we may seek our salvation from it; and hence we infer that there is no hope of salvation if we do not obey God and his word. This reproves all mankind, so that they can plead no excuse for their ignorance; for he who refuses to hear can have no solid argument to defend his cause.

These repetitions describe the patience of God in calling us; for he does not merely invite us once, but when he sees that we are sluggish, he gives a second and even a third warning, in order to conquer our hardheartedness. Thus he does not all at once reject those who despise him, but after having frequently invited them.

Besides, this is a description of the nature of faith, when he bids us "come to himself." We ought to hear the Lord in such a manner that faith shall follow; for they who by faith receive the word of God have laid aside their desires and despised the world, and may be said to have broken their chains, so that they readily and cheerfully "draw near to God." But faith cannot be formed without hearing, (Romans 10:17,) that is, without understanding the word of God, and so he bids us "hear" before we "come to him." Thus, whenever faith is mentioned, let us remember that it must be joined to the word, in which it has its foundation.

And I will strike a covenant of eternity with you. It is asked, Did not the Jews formerly enter into an everlasting covenant with God? For he appears to promise something that is new and uncommon. I reply, nothing new is here promised for which the Lord did not formerly enter into an engagement with his people; but it is a renewal and confirmation of the covenant, that the Jews might not think that the covenant of God was made void on account of the longcontinued banishment. For when they were banished from the country that had been promised to them, [324] when they had no temple or sacrifices, or any marks of the "covenant" except circumcision, who would not have concluded that it was all over with them? This mode of expression,

[323] "De nons amener a salut." "To lead us to salvation."

[324] "Hors du pays qui leur avoit este promis et donne." "Out of the country, that had been promised and given to them."

therefore, Isaiah accommodated to the capacity of the people, that they might know that the covenant into which God entered with the fathers was firm, sure, and eternal, and not changeable or temporary.

This is also what he means by *the mercies of David,* but by this phrase he declares that it was a covenant of free grace; for it was founded on nothing else than the absolute goodness of God. Whenever, therefore, the word "covenant" occurs in Scripture, we ought at the same time to call to remembrance the word "grace." By calling them "the *faithful* mercies of David," [325] he declares that he will be faithful in it, and at. the same time states indirectly that he is faithful and steadfast, and cannot be accused of falsehood, as if he had broken his covenant; that the Jews, on the other hand, are covenantbreakers and traitors, (for they have revolted from him,) but that he cannot repent of his covenant or his promise.

He calls them "the mercies *of David*," because this covenant, which has now been solemnly confirmed, was made in the land "of David." The Lord indeed entered into a covenant with Abraham, (Genesis 15:5; 17:7) afterwards confirmed it by Moses, (Exodus 2:24; 33:1) and finally ratified this very covenant in the hand of David, that it might be eternal. (2 Samuel 7:12) Whenever, therefore, the Jews thought of a Redeemer, that is, of their salvation, they ought to have remembered "David" as a mediator who represented Christ; for David must not here be regarded as a private individual, but as bearing this title and character. Yet some regard must be had to the time when this prophecy was uttered; for, since the rank of the kingdom had been obliterated, and the name of the royal family had become mean and contemptible during the captivity in Babylon, it might seem as if, through the ruin of that family, the truth of God had fallen into decay; and therefore he bids them contemplate by faith the throne of David, which had been cast down.

4. *Behold, I have given him a witness to the peoples.* The Prophet now explains more fully the reason why he mentioned "David." It was because into his hand had been committed the promise of a Redeemer that was to come, and this discourse might be expressed with a view to his public character, so far as he was the surety of the covenant; for he did not act for himself individually, but was appointed to be a sort of mediator between God and the people. Yet it is beyond all doubt that the Prophet leads them directly to Christ, to whom the transition from David was easy and natural; as if he had said, "That successor of David shall come forth, by whose hand perfect salvation and happiness hath been promised."

By calling him "a witness," he means that the covenant into which he entered shall be ratified and confirmed in Christ. There is a weighty meaning in the word "witness;" for he clearly shows that this covenant shall be proved in Christ, by whom the truth of God shall be made manifest. He will! testify that God is not false. But this testimony consists in doctrine; and if it were

[325] "The sure mercies of David." — Eng. Ver.

not added, we should receive little benefit from Christ's coming, as it is said, "I will publish the command." (Psalm 2:7) In this sense also Isaiah said in another passage, that Christ will have a mouth like a sword or an arrow. (Isaiah 49:2)

A leader and instructor. This is added, in order to procure attention to his doctrine; for, if we do not hear him when he speaks, and if we do not embrace by assured faith what he makes known to us concerning the Father's good pleasure, his power is set aside. In like manner, the name of Christ is pronounced loudly enough by the Papists; but since they refuse to receive him as a teacher and instructor, and acknowledge him merely by name, their boasting is idle and ridiculous.

To the peoples. This was added for the purpose of amplification, because the Church could not be restored to her ancient dignity, or be enlarged, but by assembling the Gentiles; and therefore it was necessary that the voice of Christ should pierce even to the remotest countries, because he has been appointed a "witness, leader, and instructor" to the whole human race.

5. *Behold, thou shalt call a nation which thou knowest not.* Isaiah explains more largely what he formerly glanced at by a single word; for he declares that Christ shall be the "leader," not of a single people, but of all the peoples. "To call" here denotes possession; for there is a mutual relation between the words "call" and "answer." Christ therefore "calls" in the exercise of authority, as one who is invested with supreme power; and he "calls" the Gentiles, that he may bring them into a state of obedience, and may cause them to submit to his word.

He says that they shall be ready to obey, though hitherto they were unknown; not that the Son of God, by whom they were created, did not know them, but because he paid no regard to them [326] until they began to be reckoned as belonging to the Church. God had in a peculiar manner called the Jews; the Gentiles appeared to be excluded as if they did not at all belong to him. But now, addressing Christ, [327] he promises that Christ shall constrain the Gentiles to obey him, though formerly they were opposed to his authority. He expresses this still more plainly in what immediately follows.

A nation that knew not thee shall run to thee. By putting the verb {ירוצו} (*yarutzu*) *shall run,* in the plural number, he intends to explain more fully that the Church shall be collected out of various peoples, so that they who were formerly scattered shall be gathered into one body; for the word "run" relates to harmony of faith. When he now says that the Gentiles "did not know Christ," he employs the expression in a different sense from that in

[326] "Pource qu'elles ont este mesprisees et rejettees." "Because they were despised and rejected."

[327] "The question which has chiefly divided interpreters, in reference to this verse, is, whether the object of address is the Messiah or the Church. The former opinion is maintained by Calvin, Sanctus, and others; the latter by Grotins and Vitringa. The masculine forms prove nothing either way, because the Church is sometimes presented in the person of Israel, and sometimes personified as a woman. The most natural supposition is, that after speaking of the Messiah, he now turns to him and addresses him directly." — Alexander.

which he said, a little before, that they were unknown to Christ; for all heathens and unbelievers are declared, in a literal sense, to be in a state of ignorance, in consequence of their being destitute of the light of heavenly doctrine, without which they cannot have the knowledge of God. Although by nature the knowledge of God is engraven on the hearts of all men, yet it is so confused and dark, and entangled by many errors, that, if the light of the word be not added to it, by knowing they know not God, but wander miserably in darkness.

Here we have a remarkable testimony of God as to the calling of the Gentiles, for whom, as well as for the Jews, Christ was appointed. Hence also we learn that God takes care of us, if we bow to his authority, and not only such care as he takes of all the creatures, but such care as a father takes of his children.

Yet the word "run" describes more fully the efficacy of this calling, for the object of it is, that we shall obey God, that we shall readily and cheerfully place ourselves before him as teachable, and ready to comply with any expression of his will; in like manner, as Paul shows that obedience is the end of our calling. (Romans 1:5; 16:26) But as the Gentiles were at a great distance from God, it was necessary that they should labor earnestly to surmount every obstacle, that they might draw near to him.

For the sake of Jehovah thy God. He shows what is the source of this readiness and cheerfulness. It is because the Gentiles shall know that they have to do with God; for, if we contemplate Christ merely as man, we shall not be powerfully affected by his doctrine, but when we behold God in him, an astonishing warmth of affection is kindled in our hearts. Now, Christ is here described as a minister appointed by God to perform his work; for he assumes the character of a servant along with our flesh, and in this respect there is no impropriety in his being subjected to the Father, as if he belonged to the rank of other men.

Yet we ought to keep in remembrance what we have frequently seen as to the union of the Head and the members; for what is now said concerning Christ relates to the whole body, and therefore the glorifying is common to the whole Church. Yet Christ always holds the highest rank; for, being raised on high, he is exalted above the whole world, that to him there may be a concourse of all nations. In a word, he shows that men obey Christ and submit to his doctrine, because God hath exalted him, and hath determined to make his pre-eminence known to all men; for otherwise the preaching of the gospel would be of little use, if God did not give power and efficacy to his doctrine by the Spirit.

6. *Seek ye Jehovah.* After having spoken of the good success of the gospel among the Gentiles, who formerly were strangers to the kingdom of God, he urges the Jews to be ashamed of loitering while others run; for since they were the first who were called, it is shameful that they should be last. This exhortation, therefore, relates strictly to the Jews, to whom the example of

the Gentiles is held out in order to excite their jealousy; in the same manner as the Lord hath foretold that "he would provoke the Jews to jealousy by a foolish nation." (Deuteronomy 32:21)

While he is found. "The time of finding" is here used not exactly in the same sense as in Psalm 32:6, [328] but as the time when God offers himself to us, as in other passages he has limited a fixed day for his goodpleasure and our salvation. (Isaiah 49:8) Yet I readily admit that it likewise denotes the time when necessity prompts us to seek God's assistance; but we ought chiefly to remember that God is sought at a seasonable time, when of his own accord he advances to meet us; for in vain shall indolent and sluggish persons lament that they had been deprived of that grace which they rejected. The Lord sometimes endures our sluggishness, and bears with us; but if ultimately he do not succeed, he will withdraw, and will bestow his grace on others. For this reason Christ exhorts us to walk while it is day, for the night cometh when the means of pursuing our journey shall be taken from us. (John 12:35) We ought to draw high consolation from being assured that it is not in vain for us to seek God. "Seek," says Christ, "and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened; ask, and it shall be given to you." (Matthew 7:7)

Call upon him while he is near. The word "call" may here be taken in a general sense; but I think that it denotes one description of" seeking" God, which is of more importance than all the others, as if he commanded us to betake ourselves to him by prayers and supplications. He says that he is "near," when he opens the door and gently invites us to come to him, or when he comes forth publicly, so that we do not need to seek him through long windings. But we must attend to Paul's definition, who tells us that it denotes the preaching of the gospel. (Romans 10:8) "The Lord is nigh," (Philippians 4:5) and exhibits himself to us, when the voice of the gospel cries aloud; and we do not need to seek far, or to make long circuits, as unbelievers do; for he exhibits himself to us in his word, that we, on our part, may draw near to him.

7. *Let the wicked man forsake his way.* He confirms the former statement; for, having formerly called men to receive the grace of God, he now describes more largely the manner of receiving it. We know how hypocrites loudly call on God whenever they desire relief from their distresses, and yet shut up their hearts by wicked obstinacy; [329] and therefore, that the Jews may not be hypocritical in seeking God, he exhorts them to sincere piety. Hence we infer that the doctrine of repentance ought always to accompany the promise of salvation; for in no other way can men taste the goodness of God than by abhorring themselves on account of their sins, and renouncing themselves and the world. And indeed no man will sincerely desire to be reconciled to God and to obtain pardon of sins till he is moved by a true and earnest

[328] "In a time when thou mayest be found. Heb., in a time of finding." (Eng. Ver.) Our author's rendering is, "Therefore shall every one that is meek pray unto thee in the time of finding thee." In his commentary he makes reference to this passage of Isaiah. — Ed.

[329] "Par une obstination mechante."

repentance.

By three forms of expression he describes the nature of repentance, — *first,* "Let the wicked man forsake, his way;" *secondly,* "The unrighteous man his thoughts;" *thirdly,* "Let him return to the Lord." Under the word *way* he includes the whole course of life, and accordingly demands that they bring forth the fruits of righteousness as witnesses of their newness of life. By adding the word thoughts he intimates that we must not only correct outward actions, but must begin with the heart; for although in the opinion of men we appear to change our manner of life for the better, yet we shall have made little proficiency if the heart be not changed.

Thus repentance embraces a change of the whole man; for in man we view inclinations, purposes, and then works. The works of men are visible, but the root within is concealed. This must first be changed, that it may afterwards yield fruitful works. We must first wash away from the mind all uncleanness, and conquer wicked inclinations, that outward testimonies may afterwards be added. And if any man boast that he has been changed, and yet live as he was wont to do, it will be vain-boasting; for both are requisite, conversion of the heart, and change of life.

Besides, God does not command us to return to him before he has applied a remedy to revolt; for hypocrites will willingly endure that we praise what is good and right, provided that they be at liberty to crouch amidst their filth. But we can have nothing to do with God if we do not withdraw from ourselves, especially when we have been alienated by wicked variance; and therefore self-denial goes before, that it may lead us to God.

And he will have mercy on him. We ought carefully to examine this context, for he shows that men cannot be led to repentance in any other way than by holding out assurance of pardon. Whoever, then, inculcates the doctrine of repentance, without mentioning the mercy of God and reconciliation through free grace, labors to no purpose; just as the Popish doctors imagine that they have discharged their duty well when they have dwelt largely on this point, and yet do but chatter and trifle about the doctrine of repentance. But although they taught the true method of repenting, yet it would be of little avail, seeing that they leave out the foundation of freelybestowed pardon, by which alone consciences can be pacified. And indeed, as we have formerly said, a sinner will always shrink from the presence of God so long as he is dragged to his judgment-seat to give an account of his life, and will never be subdued to fear and obedience till his heart is brought into a state of peace.

For he aboundeth in pardoning. Now, because it is difficult to remove terror from trembling minds, Isaiah draws all argument from the nature of God, that he will be ready to pardon and to be reconciled. Thus the Holy Spirit dwells on this part of doctrine, because we always doubt whether or not God is willing to pardon us; for, although we entertain some thoughts of his mercy, yet we do not venture fully to believe that, it belongs to us. It is

not without reason, therefore, that this clause is added, that we may not be hindered by uncertainty or doubt as to his infinite compassion toward us.

8. *For my thoughts are not your thoughts.* This passage is expounded in various ways. Some think that it condemns universally the life of men, that they may not be satisfied with it or flatter their vices; for we cannot approach to God but by taking away a false conviction of our own righteousness. And indeed none call for physicians but those who are driven by the violence of disease to seek both health and remedies. Accordingly, this passage is compared by them to that saying of our Lord,

"What ranks high among men is abomination in the sight of God." (Luke 16:15)

But the Prophet's meaning, I think, is different, and is more correctly explained, according to my judgment, by other commentators, who think that he draws a distinction between God's disposition and man's disposition. Men are wont to judge and measure God from themselves; for their hearts are moved by angry passions, and are very difficult to be appeased; and therefore they think that they cannot be reconciled to God, when they have once offended him. But the Lord shows that he is far from resembling men. As if he had said, "I am not a mortal man, that I should show myself to be harsh and irreconcilable to you. [330] My thoughts are very different from yours. If you are implacable, and can with difficulty be brought back to a state of friendship with those from whom you have received an injury, I am not like you, that I should treat you so cruelly."

9. *For as the heavens are higher than the earth.* This agrees well with that passage in which David, describing the mercy of God, says, (Psalm 103:11) that it is as much more excellent "as the heavens are higher than the earth;" for although the application is different, yet the meaning is the same. In short, God is infinitely compassionate and infinitely ready to forgive; so that it ought to be ascribed exclusively to our unbelief, if we do not obtain pardon from him. [331]

There is nothing that troubles our consciences more than when we think that God is like ourselves; for the consequence is, that we do not venture to approach to him, and flee from him as an enemy, and are never at rest. But they who measure God by themselves as a standard form a false idea and altogether contrary to his nature; and indeed they cannot do him a greater injury than this. Are men, who are corrupted and debased by sinful desires, not ashamed to compare God's lofty and uncorrupted nature with their own,

330 "Pour vous estre rude et ennemi a jamais." "So as to be harsh and an enemy to you for ever."

331 "Do not think," saith God, "that what I promise is difficult, and let it not seem incredible to you, that a wicked and unjust man, or the people of the Jews, or all who among the Gentiles knew not God, can be saved. Consider this, that there is a wide difference between your purposes and mine, and that the difference of will is as great as the difference of nature; for there are many thoughts in the heart of a man, but the purpose of the Lord endureth for ever. You, like men who often repent of what they have promised, have thrown down the ancient will, and have set up in its place a modern will. But the thoughts of his heart are from generation to generation, and whatever he hath decreed cannot be changed." — Jerome.

and to confine what is infinite within those narrow limits by which they feel themselves to be wretchedly restrained? In what prison could any of us be more straightly shut up than in our own unbelief?

This appears to me to be the plain and simple meaning of the Prophet. And yet I do not deny that he alludes, at the same time, to the life of men such as he formerly described it to be. In a word, he means that men must forget themselves, when they wish to be converted to God, and that no obstacle can be greater or more destructive than when we think that God is irreconcilable. We must therefore root out of our minds this false imagination.

Moreover, we learn from it how widely they err who abuse the mercy of God, so as to draw from it greater encouragement to sin. The Prophet reasons thus, "Repent, forsake your ways; for the mercy of God is infinite." When men despair or doubt as to obtaining pardon, they usually become more hardened and obstinate; but when they feel that God is merciful, this draws and converts them. It follows, therefore, that they who do not cease to live wickedly, and who are not changed in heart, have no share in this mercy.

10. *Surely, as the rain cometh down.* After having spoken of God's tender affection and inconceivable forbearance towards us, he again brings forward the promises, that, by relying on them, we may banish all doubt of being free from every danger. It would be of little avail to speak to us about the nature or the secret purpose of God, if we were not reminded of "the word," by which he reveals himself. Now, God speaks openly to us, so that it is unnecessary to make longer inquiry. We must therefore come to the word, in which his will is declared without obscurity, provided that all our senses are confined within those limits; for otherwise we remain in suspense, and doubt what he has determined concerning us, even though the Lord declare a thousand times that he is altogether unlike men; for, although men acknowledge this, yet they wish to be certain about themselves and their salvation. [332] For this reason we ought carefully to observe the order which is followed by the Prophet. Thus also Moses recalled the people to the knowledge of God. "Say not thou, Who shall ascend to heaven? or, Who shall descend into the deep? The word is nigh, in thy mouth and in thy heart." (Deuteronomy 30:12) "That is," saith Paul, "the word of faith which we preach." (Romans 10:8)

He employs a comparison drawn from daily experience and wonderfully appropriate; for, if we see great efficacy in the rain, which waters and fertilizes the earth, much greater efficacy will God display in his word. The rain is transitory and liable to corruption; but the word is eternal, unchangeable, and incorruptible, and cannot, like the rain, vanish away.

That we may more fully understand the Prophet's words, we must keep in view the end at which he aims. Men doubt if God will actually perform what

[332] "Lesquels desirent (s'ils veulent dire la verite) estre certains de leur salut, et que ce qu'ils deviendront." "Who desire (if they are willing to tell the truth) to be certain about their salvation, and what shall become of them."

he promises in his word; for we look upon the word, as if it were suspended in the air and had no effect. How shocking this is, he demonstrates from the very course of nature; for it is in the highest degree unreasonable to ascribe less to the word than to a dumb creature; and therefore he teaches us, that his word never fails of its effect. Some understand this to mean that the preaching of the Gospel is never unprofitable, but always produces some fruit. This is true in itself; for the Lord worketh by his Spirit, and "giveth increase," (1 Corinthians 3:7) so that the labor of his servants is not unproductive. But the Prophet's meaning was different; namely, that God does not speak in vain or scatter his promises into the air, but that we shall actually receive the fruit of them, provided that we do not prevent it by our unbelief.

But watereth the earth, and causeth it to bring forth. He mentions two effects produced by the watering of the rain, which fertilizes the earth; first, that men have abundance of food for their support; and secondly, that they have seed for procuring a crop in the following year. If therefore in things of a transitory nature the power of God is so great, what must we think of the word? [333]

11. *So shall my word be.* The word goeth out of the mouth of God in such a manner that it likewise "goeth out of the mouth" of men; for God does not speak openly from heaven, but employs men as his instruments, that by their agency he may make known his will. But the authority of the promises is more fully confirmed, when we are told that they proceed from the sacred mouth of God. Although, therefore, he brings forward witnesses from the earth, he declares that all that they have promised shall be ratified and sure; and, in order to impress more deeply on the minds of men the power and efficacy of preaching, he declares that he does not cast that precious seed at random, but appoints it for a fixed purpose, and consequently that we ought to entertain no doubt as to the effect; for there is nothing to which mortals are more prone than to judge of God from themselves so as to withhold belief from his voice.

This doctrine must be frequently repeated and inculcated, that we may know that God will do what. he hath once spoken. For this reason, when we hear the promises of God, we ought to consider what is his design in them; so that, when he promises the free pardon of our sins, we may be fully assured that we are reconciled through Christ. But, as the word of God is efficacious for the salvation of believers, so it is abundantly efficacious for condemning the wicked; as Christ also teacheth, "The word which I have spoken, that

[333] "These words depend on what goes before, and their meaning may thus be briefly stated. Let not the people refuse to believe that a wicked man, after having committed great crimes, shall suddenly be saved. For my thoughts are not as the thoughts of men; and as far as heaven is distant from the earth, so are my thoughts separated from the thoughts of men. I am most merciful and ready to forgive. Would you wish to have another metaphor? As the rain and snow come down from heaven, and do not return thither, but water and refresh the earth, and cause it to bring forth various productions, that the corn-fields may produce abundance of bread for the use of men; so the word of my promise, which I have promised once and again, and which hath gone out of my mouth, shall not be void, but all shall be actually fulfilled." — Jerome.

shall judge him at the last day."

12. *Therefore ye shall go out with joy.* The Prophet concludes the subject of this chapter; for, when he spoke of the mercy of God, his object was, to convince the Jews that the Lord would deliver them. He now applies to his purpose what was contained in his discourse concerning the infinite goodness of God, and shows that his thoughts are very unlike the thoughts of men. And the true way of teaching is this, that we should apply general statements for present use. Finally, he treats of the restoration of the people, which depended on the undeserved mercy of God.

The mountains and hills shall break out before you. By "the mountains and hills" he means that everything which they shall meet in the journey, though in other respects it be injurious, shall aid those who shall return to Jerusalem. They are metaphors, by which he shows that all the creatures bow to the will of God, and rejoice and lend their aid to carry on his work. He alludes to the deliverance from Egypt, (Exodus 14:22) as is customary with the Prophets; for thus is it described by the Psalmist, "The mountains leaped like rams, and the hills like lambs. What ailed thee, O sea, that thou fleddest, and Jordan, (Joshua 3:16) that thou wast driven back? (Psalm 114:4, 5) For the restoration of the Church may be regarded as a renovation of the whole world, and in consequence of this, heaven and earth are said to be changed, as if their order were reversed. But all this depended on former predictions, by which they had received a promise of their return.

13. *Instead of the bramble* [334] *shall come up the fir-tree.* He still extols the power of God, which would be visible in the restoration of the people; for he shows that the change will be such that they shall have an easy road to return. Some explain it allegorically, and suppose that by "brambles" are meant men who wish to do injury, and who inflict wounds on others, and that these shall be "firtrees," that is, trees that bear fruit and that are useful to their neighbors; but in expositions of that kind ingenuity is carried to excess. When they say that these things relate to the kingdom of Christ, and on that account ought to be understood in a spiritual sense, I agree with them; for the Prophet begins with the departure from Babylon, and includes the whole condition of the Church, till Christ was manifested to the world. But the propriety of that allegory must not therefore be admitted; for he speaks of the departure from Babylon, and, in order to open it up for his people, he says that he will remove every obstacle, and will supply them with everything necessary, so that they shall suffer no inconvenience. In like manner, when Christ promises the benefit of redemption, he likewise takes away everything that would injure or retard, and even turns those things to a different and totally opposite purpose, that from them also they may receive some benefit. All things (Romans 8:28) tend to the advantage of believers, and those things which would otherwise be injurious and destructive, are employed by God as remedies to purify them, that they may not be devoted

[334] "Instead of the thorn." — Eng. Ver.

to the world, but may become more ready and cheerful in the service of their Master. [335]

And shall be to Jehovah for a name. When he says that it shall be to God "for a name," he shows what is the design of the restoration of the Church. It is, that the name of God may be more illustrious among men, and that the remembrance of him may flourish and be maintained. On this account he adds that it shall be a perpetual sign, that is, a monument, and, as we commonly say, a memorial; and although, amidst these tempests, the Church be tossed and agitated in various ways, yet, because the Lord wishes that the remembrance of his name may be everlasting, he will guard and defend her.

[335] "Au service de leur maistre."

Chapter 56

CHAPTER 56.

Isaiah 56:1-12

1. Thus saith the LORD, Keep ye judgment, and do justice: for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed.

1. Sic dicit Iehova: Custodite judicium, et facite justitiam; quonoiam propinqua est salus mea, ut veniat; et justitia mea, ut reveletur.

2. Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it; that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil.

2. Beatus homo qui fecerit hoc, et filius hominis qui hoc apprehenderit; custodiens sabbatum, ita ut non violet illud; et custodiens manum suam ut ab omni male abstineat.

3. Neither let the son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to the LORD, speak, saying, The LORD hath utterly separated me from his people: neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree.

3. Et ne dicat filius alienus aggregatus ad Iehovam, dicendo, Separando separavit me Iehova a populo suo; et ne dicat eunuchus, Ego sum lignum aridum.

4. For thus saith the LORD unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant;

4. Quoniam sic dicit Iehova, eunuchis qui custodiunt sabbata mea, et eligunt quae mihi placent, atque apprehendunt foedus meum;

5. Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off.

5. Dabo eis in domo mea et intra murosmeos locum, et nomen melius quam filiorum et filiarum; nomen perpetuum dabo eis, qued non delebitur.

6. Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the LORD, to serve him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant;

6. Filios, inquam, alieni, qui aggregati erant ad Iehovam, ut ministrent ei, et diligant nomen Iehovae; ut sint illi in servos, quisquis custodierit sabbatum, ita ut non profanet illud, et amplexus fuerit foedus meum.

7. Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.

7. Hos adducam in montes sanctitatis meae; et laetificabo eos in domo orationis meae. Holocausta eorum et sacrificia grata erunt in altari meo; quoniam domus mea Domus orationis vocabitur cunctis populis.

8. The Lord GOD, which gathereth the outcasts of Israel, saith, Yet will I gather others to him, beside those that are gathered unto him.

8. Dicit Dominus Iehova, qui congregat expulsos Israel: Adhuc congregabo super eum congregatos ejus.

9. All ye beasts of the field, come to devour, yea, all ye beasts in the forest.

9. Omnes bestiae agri, venitead devorandum, omnes bestiae sylvestres.

10. His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber.

10. Speculatores ejus caeci, omnes nescierunt, omnes canes muti, nesciunt latrare, jacentes dormiunt, amant dormitationem.

11. Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter.

11. Et canes illi anima fortes nesciunt saturitatem; pastores ipsi nesciunt, nec intelligunt; universi respiciunt ad vias suas; quisque ad commodum suum a fine ejus (vel, suo).

12. Come ye, say they, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and to morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant.

12. Venite, accipiam vinum, potabimus siceram; et erit sicut hodie, ita crastinus dies, vel major, excellentior multo.

1. *Thus saith Jehovah.* This is a remarkable passage, in which the Prophet shows what God demands from us, as soon as he holds out tokens of his favor, or promises that he will be ready to be reconciled to us, that our reconciliation may be secured. He demands from us such a conversion as shall change our minds and hearts, that they may forsake the world and rise towards heaven; and next he likewise calls for the fruits of repentance.

Keep ye judgment, and do righteousness. Under the names "judgment" and "righteousness," he includes all the duties which men owe to each other, and which consist not only in abstaining from doing wrong, but also in

rendering assistance to our neighbors. And this is the sum of the second table of the Law, in keeping which we give proof of our piety, if we have any. For this reason the prophets always draw our attention to that table; because by means of it our real character is better known, and true uprightness is ascertained; for hypocrites, as we have formerly seen, [336] often practice deceit by ceremonies.

For my salvation is near, and my righteousness. He assigns the reason, and at the same time points out the source and the cause why it is the duty of all to devote themselves to newness of life. It is because "the righteousness of the Lord approaches to us," that we, on our part, ought to draw near to him. The Lord calls himself "righteous," and declares that this is "his righteousness," not because he keeps it shut up in himself, but because he pours it out on men. In like manner he calls it "his salvation," by which he delivers men from destruction.

Although this discourse was addressed to the Jews, that, by sincere affection of heart, and by the practice of integrity, they might show their gratitude to God their Redeemer, yet it refers to every one of us; for the whole world is ruined in itself, if it do not obtain salvation from God alone. We must therefore attend to this exhortation, which instructs us that the nearer we are to God, so much the more powerfully ought we to be excited to the practice of godliness. Hence also Paul admonishes believers, [337] "Cast away the works of darkness; put on the armor of light; for our salvation is nearer than we thought." (Romans 13:11, 12)

2. *Happy is the man that shall do this.* When he calls those persons "happy" who, having embraced this doctrine, devote themselves to walk uprightly, he indirectly leads us to conclude that many will be deaf or disobedient; but, lest their wickedness or indifference should retard the elect, he recommends the exhortation which he has given from the advantage which it yields. Thus, in order that believers may abandon all delay, he exclaims that they are "happy" to whom it hath been given [338] to possess such wisdom.

Keeping the Sabbath. We have said that the words "justice" and "judgment," in the preceding verse, include all the duties of the second table; but here he mentions the Sabbath, which belongs to the first table. I reply, as I have already mentioned briefly, that they who live inoffensively and justly with their neighbors, testify that they serve God; and therefore we need not wonder that the Prophet, after having glanced at the second table, mentions also the first; for both ought to be joined together In a word, Isaiah declares that he who shall obey God by keeping his law perfectly shall be "happy;" for the salvation and the righteousness of God shall belong to him. Since, therefore, men wander at random amidst their contrivances, and adopt various methods of worshipping God, he shows that there is only one way, that

[336] Commentary on Isaiah, Vol. 1, pp. 56, 57

[337] "Admonneste les fideles."

[338] "Ausquels la grace a este faite." "To whom grace hath been given."

is, when men endeavor to frame and regulate their life by the injunction of the Law; for otherwise they will weary themselves in vain by taking other roads. In short, this is a remarkable passage, showing that nothing pleases God but keeping the Law.

If the question be put, "Can men obtain righteousness and salvation by their own works?" the reply will be easy; for the Lord does not offer salvation to us, as if he had been anticipated by our merits, (for, on the contrary, we are anticipated by him,) but offers himself freely to us, and only demands that we, on our part, draw near to him. Since therefore he willingly invites us, since he offers righteousness through free grace, we must make every effort not to be deprived of so great a benefit.

Again, because the Sabbath, as Moses declares, (Exodus 31:13, 17) and as Ezekiel 20:12 repeats, was the most important symbol of the worship of God, so by that figure of speech in which a part is taken for the whole, and which is called a *synecdoche*, the Sabbath includes all the exercises of religion. But we must view the Sabbath in connection with everything that attends it; for God does not rest satisfied with outward ceremony, or delight in our indolence, but demands from us earnest selfdenial, that we may be entirely devoted to his service.

So that he may not profane it. This clause is commonly rendered, "That he may not profane it;" and literally it runs thus, "From profaning it;" and therefore we have thought it proper to prefix the word *"so"* to the clause, "So that he may not profane it," in order to remove all ambiguity.

And keeping his hand, that he may abstain from all that is evil. He now adds another *synecdoche*, to describe the duties which men owe to each other. The amount of it is, that there is no other way of serving God aright but by sincere piety and a blameless life, as he has also included in these two parts the rule of leading a holy life. In a word, it is an exposition of true righteousness which is contained in the Law of the Lord, that we may acquiesce in it; for in vain do men seek any other road to perfection. Here also are thrown down all false worship and superstitions, and, finally, everything that is contrived by men in opposition to the word of God.

3. *And let not the son who is a foreigner* [339] *say.* The Prophet shows that this grace of God shall be such that even they who formerly were estranged from him, and against whom the door might be said to have been shut, may obtain a new condition, or may be perfectly restored. And he meets their complaint, that they may not say that they are rejected, or unworthy, or "foreigners," or excluded by any mark; for the Lord will remove every obstacle. This may refer both to Jews, who had been brought into a condition similar to that of foreign nations by a temporary rejection, and to the heathen nations themselves. For my own part, I willingly extend it to both, that it

339 "The essential meaning of this verse is, that all external disabilities shall be abolished, whether personal or national. To express the latter, he makes use of the phrase {{בן, נכר} (ben nekar,) which strictly means not 'the son of the stranger,' as the common version has it, but 'the son of strangeness,' or 'of a strange country;' {נכר} (nekar) corresponding to the German Fremde, which has no equivalent in English. — Alexander

may agree with the prediction of Hosea,

"I will call them my people who were not my people." (Hosea 1:10)

Joined to Jehovah. When he says that they are "joined to God," he gives warning that this consolation belongs to those only who have followed God when he called them; for there are many "eunuchs" on whom God does not bestow his favor, and many "foreigners" who do not join themselves to the people of God. This promise is therefore limited to those who have been called and have obeyed.

By calling them "foreigners" and "eunuchs," he describes under both classes all who appear to be unworthy of being reckoned by God in the number of his people; for God had separated for himself a peculiar people, and had afterwards driven them out of his inheritance. The Gentiles were entirely shut out from his kingdom, as is sufficiently evident from the whole of Scripture. Paul says,

"Ye were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. But now by Christ Jesus, ye who formerly were far off have been made nigh by the blood of Christ."
(Ephesians 2:12, 13)

The Gentiles, therefore, might at first doubt whether or not the benefit of adoption, which was literally intended for the Jews, belonged to them. We see also how much the Apostles shrunk from it, when the Lord commanded them (Mark 16:15) to "preach the Gospel through the whole world;" for they thought that the doctrine of salvation was profaned if it was communicated indiscriminately to Gentiles as well as to Jews. The same hesitation might harass the elect people, from the time that their banishment from the holy land became a sign of the rejection of them; and therefore the Prophet commands them to dismiss their doubts.

And let not the eunuch say. By the same figure of speech, in which a part is taken for the whole, he includes under this designation all who bore any mark of disgrace which kept them apart~ from the people of God; for "eunuchs," and those who had no children, appeared to be rejected by God and shut out from the promise which the Lord had made to Abraham, that "his seed should be as the stars of heaven, (Genesis 15:5) and as the sand of the sea." (Genesis 22:17) In a word, he warns all men against looking at themselves, that they may fix their minds exclusively on God's calling, and may thus imitate the faith of Abraham, (Genesis 15:6) who did not look at either his own decayed body or the barren womb of Sarah, so as through unbelief to dispute with himself about the power of God, but hoped above all hope. (Romans 4:1820) The Prophet addresses persons who were despised and reproached; for, as Peter says,

"there is no respect of persons with God, but in every nation he who feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted by him." (Acts 10:34, 35)

4. *For thus saith Jehovah.* Now follows a confirmation; for the sincere worshippers of God, who keep the sabbaths and follow the righteousness of the Law, though they be "eunuchs," [340] or labor under any other obstruction, shall nevertheless have a place in the Church. He appears to annihilate in this manner all the external marks [341] in which alone the Jews gloried; for the high rank of the Church is not external, but spiritual; and although believers have no emblems of distinction in the eyes of the world, and are even despised and reproached, yet they rank high in the sight of God.

And choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant. With the "keeping of the Sabbath," he connects obedience and adherence to "the covenant;" and hence we may readily infer that, when he spoke hitherto about the Sabbath, he had in view not an idle ceremony but perfect holiness. At the same time, he again lays a restraint on the children of God, not to make even the smallest departure from the injunction of the Law; for they are permitted to "choose," not whatever they think fit, but that which God declares to be pleasing and acceptable to himself. Wherefore both hypocrisy and inconsiderate zeal are here condemned, when God not only contrasts his own commandments with the inventions of men, but enjoins them earnestly to "take hold of his covenant."

5. *I will give to them in my house.* Here we see that all men, however unworthy, may obtain admission into the kingdom of God: he alludes to Jerusalem, and to the temple in which the Lord placed a memorial of his name. No place was given in it to any but to the Jews alone; and they would have reckoned the temple to be polluted, if any of the Gentiles had entered into it. Hence also a serious insurrection arose against Paul for having brought into the temple uncircumcised persons. The Lord now admits, without distinction, those whom he previously forbade; and indeed he set aside this distinction, when we, who were the children of strangers, were brought by him into the temple, that is, into his Church, which is not confined, as formerly, within those narrow limits of Judea, but is extended through the whole world.

A place and a name. {יד} *(yad)* is here put for place, as in many other passages. It might also be supposed to denote "authority," or "power;" for they shall be elevated to such dignity as to be accounted the children of God.

Better than of sons and of daughters. A question may arise, Does the Lord compare the Jews who were at that time in the Church, with the believers whom he shall afterwards place in their room; or, does he contrast the future condition of the people with their condition at that time? For it is certain that "the name" of the Gentiles is "better" than that of the Jews, who were "cut off on account of their unbelief;" and we have succeeded in their room,

[340] "According to the Law, (Deuteronomy 23:1) eunuchs could not be received into the Hebrew nation; so that their situation, in that respect, was the same as that of the foreigners who were formerly mentioned. Of what use (might such a person say) are those splendid promises to me, who cannot be admitted into the Jewish commonwealth?" — Rosenmuller.

[341] "Toutes les marques exterieures."

"as wild olives ingrafted into a good olive tree," as Paul says. (Romans 11:24) The meaning' might therefore be, that "eunuchs" and "foreigners" shall have "a better name" than children and domestics, who were regarded as God's heritage. But I choose rather to explain it in a different manner, namely, that the dignity of believers shall be higher under Christ than it was under the Law. The patriarchs had a very excellent "name," when they called upon God as their Father, and were joined in covenant with him; but the grace of God has been far more abundantly poured out upon us since the coming of Christ; and therefore we have obtained in him a far more excellent name.

A perpetual name. He calls this name "perpetual," because it is written in heaven, where it shall live and flourish throughout all ages. Wicked men wish to have their name made illustrious in this world, and labor to promote their reputation, that the remembrance of their name may last for ever; but it is fading and of short duration. But far different is this name; for it makes us heirs of the heavenly kingdom, so that in the presence of angels we are reckoned to be the children of God.

We might also interpret {מבנים} (*mibbanim*) to mean, "than the name which is derived from children; [342] for men, by having children, do in some respect perpetuate their own name. He promises that this name shall be far more excellent. But I prefer to follow the former exposition.

6. *The children of the foreigner who shall be joined to Jehovah.* He repeats the same thing which he had formerly said, that God will open the doors of his temple to all men without distinction, so that there shall no longer be a distinction between the Jew and the Greek. He declares that those whom God brings into a state of friendship with himself by the word, which is the bond of our adoption, are "joined to God." This is "the betrothing in mercy and faithfulness" which is mentioned by Hosea. (Hosea 2:19, 20) Not only does he grant to them a temple in which they may adore him as the body of the people were wont to do, but he assigns to them a more honorable rank, that they, nay minister to him; that is, God acknowledges as priests or Levites those who were formerly heathens.

And that they may love the name of Jehovah. We must observe the end of the calling, which is here stated; for he says that they shall be God's ministers on condition that they love his name. Thus hypocrites are here excluded; for the calling joins two things together, that we serve God, and that our service be with a ready and cheerful disposition of mind. There can be no worship of God, if we do not willingly and readily yield obedience. What is said about alms, that "God loveth a cheerful giver," (2 Corinthians 9:7) ought to be applied to every part of life, that we render to God willing service.

Whosoever shall keep my Sabbath. He again mentions the Sabbath; and we have said that under this word is included the whole worship of God. In

[342] "A place and name more excellent than that which comes from children." — Doederlein. "More excellent and longer lived than that name which the fathers of families procure for themselves by the succession of posterity." — Rosenmuller.

observing it the people overlooked that which was of the highest importance; for, by resting satisfied with outward ceremony, they neglected the truth, that is, reformation of life. The Lord enjoined them to rest in such a manner as to keep both their hands and their minds from all crime and wickedness.

And shall embrace my covenant. Here he describes the zeal and steadfastness of those who submit themselves to God and cleave to his word; and therefore, if we are joined to God by a covenant, we ought to hold by it constantly, and adhere firmly to sound doctrine, so that it may not be possible to withdraw or separate us from him in any manner.

7. *These will I bring.* By these modes of expression he describes what he had formerly stated, that foreigners who were formerly excluded from the Church of God, are called to it; so that henceforth the distinction between circumcision and uncircumcision shall be abolished. This cannot refer to proselytes, who were received into the number of God's people by circumcision, for that would have been nothing new or uncommon; but he testifies that the grace of God shall be diffused throughout the whole world; and this cannot be accomplished without uniting the Gentiles to the Jews so as to form one body, which happened when the difference between circumcision and uncircumcision was taken out of the way. There is therefore nothing now to prevent Gentiles from ministering to God, seeing that they have been called into the temple, that is, into the assembly of believers. Not only so, but we saw a little before, that the priesthood is removed from the tribe of Levi, not only to the whole body of the people, but even to foreigners.

How strongly the Jews abhor this sentiment is well known; for, although they read these words of the Prophet, yet they reckon it to be utterly monstrous that the Gentiles should be called to this distinguished benefit of God which was especially intended for them. Yet the Prophet's meaning is so plain, that it cannot without the greatest impudence be called in question. He extols this grace from the fruit which it yields; for true and perfect happiness is, to be reconciled to God and to enjoy his favor. We know, indeed, that wicked men indulge excessively in mirth; but that mirth is turned into gnashing of teeth, because the curse of God rests upon it. But God fills the hearts of believers with the most delightful joy, not only by showing that he is reconciled to them, but by the manifestation of his favor and kindness in their prosperity. Yet their highest joy is that which springs from "peace" of conscience, which Paul ascribes to "the kingdom of God," (Romans 14:1-7) and which we enjoy when we are reconciled to God by Christ. (Romans 5:1)

Their burnt-offerings and sacrifices shall be acceptable. He promises that their sacrifices shall be acceptable to him, because all have been called on this condition, that they shall offer themselves and all that they have to God. By the word "sacrifices," he means such spiritual worship of God as is enjoined in the Gospel; for the Prophet spoke in accordance with what was customary in his time, when the worship of God was wrapped up in a variety of ceremonies. But now, instead of sacrifices, we offer to God praises,

thanksgivings, good works, and finally ourselves. When he declares that they shall be acceptable, let us not imagine that; this arises from their own value or excellence, but from God's undeserved kindness; for he might justly reject them, if he looked at them in themselves. This ought to be a spur to excite in us a strong desire to worship God, when we see that our works, which are of no value, are accepted by God as if they had been pure sacrifices.

He adds, *On my altar;* because in no other manner could the sacrifices be acceptable to God than "on the altar," by which "they were sanctified." (Matthew 23:19) Thus all that we offer will be polluted, if it be not "sanctified" by Christ, who is our altar.

For my house shall be called a house of prayer. Formerly the temple was appointed for the Jews alone, whom in an especial manner the Lord desired to call upon him; for, when Paul shows that the Jews have a superiority over the Gentiles, he says that {λατρεία}, that is, "the worship of God," is theirs. (Romans 9:4) Thus by an extraordinary privilege, such as the rest of the nations were not permitted to enjoy, a temple was built among them. But now the distinction has been removed, and all men, to whatsoever nation or place they belong, are freely admitted into the temple, that is, into the house of God. This temple has been enlarged to such a degree, that it extends to every part of the whole world; for all nations have been called to the worship of God.

Here we have the manifest difference between the Law and the Gospel; for under the Law the true worship of God was observed by one nation only, for whose sake the temple was especially dedicated to him; but now all are freely admitted without distinction into the temple of God, that they may worship him purely in it, that is, everywhere. We must attend to the form of expression, which is customary and familiar to the Prophets, who employ, as we have already said, figures that correspond to their own age, and, under the name of "Sacrifices" and of "the Temple," describe the pure worship of God. He paints the spiritual kingdom of Christ, under which we may everywhere "lift up pure hands," (1 Timothy 2:8) and call upon God; and, as Christ saith, God is not now to be adored in that temple, but "the true worshippers worship him in spirit and in truth." (John 4:24)

For this reason we see a fulfillment of this plain prophecy, namely, that "to all peoples the house of God hath become the house of prayer," that all may "call upon him, Abba, Father," (Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6) that is, in every language; that henceforth the Jews may not boast that they alone have God. Thus the prophets were under a necessity of accommodating their discourse to their own time, and to the ordinary services of religion, that they might be understood by all; for the time of full revelation was not yet come, but the worship of God was clothed with various figures. Yet undoubtedly the temple, which had been consecrated to the name of God, was actually his house; for he testified by Moses that he would be in all places where he made mention of his name, (Exodus 20:24) and Solomon, at the dedication of the

temple, said, "When they shall come to pray in this house, thou wilt hear in heaven, in thy habitation." (1 Kings 8:30) And accordingly Christ reproves the Jews for "turning his Father's house into a den of robbers," (Matthew 21:13; Mark 11:17) and connects this passage with a passage in the book of the Prophet Jeremiah 7:11

Christ calls the temple "the house of prayer," with reference to that time when the Gospel had not yet been published; for although he was come, he was not yet known, and the ceremonies of the Law were not abolished. But when "the vail of the temple was rent," (Matthew 27:51) and pardon of sins was proclaimed, these applauses of the temple ceased along with other ceremonies; for God began to be everywhere called upon by "all peoples."

Yet it must here be observed that we are called into the Church, in order that we may call on God; for in vain do they boast who neglect prayer and true calling upon God, and yet hold a place in the Church. In whatever place we are, therefore, let us not neglect this exercise of faith; for we learn from the words of Isaiah, as it is also said, (Psalm 50:14) that this is the highest and most excellent sacrifice which God demands; so that the holiness of the temple consists in prayers being there offered continually.

8. *The Lord Jehovah saith.* Isaiah again confirms what he formerly testified as to the restoration of the people; for although he extolled in lofty terms the grace of God, by which he would deliver his people, yet the condition of the Church was such that promises of this kind appeared to be ridiculous. Such repetitions, therefore, are not superfluous, but were necessarily added in order to strengthen feeble minds, that they might be fully convinced of that which was otherwise incredible.

Who gathereth the outcasts of Israel. It is with reference to the subject in hand that he bestows on God this title; for it belongs to him to gather a scattered church, and the same words, "he gathereth the outcasts of Israel," are used here in the same sense. (Psalm 147:2) Thus he promises that he will assemble them, and not them only, but that he will add to them various "peoples," that the Church may be very numerously increased and multiplied. Whenever therefore we are drawn by various calamities of the Church to doubt as to his gathering them together, we ought to interpose this shield: "It belongeth to the Lord to gather the dispersed of Israel; and, though they are widely dispersed and scattered, yet he will easily and perfectly restore them."

Still more will I gather upon him his gathered. I willingly keep by the literal meaning of the words of the Prophet. {על} *(gnal)* that is, "To,' or "Upon;" for he appears to me to have in view what he had said in the former verse, that the temple would be opened to all peoples; and he means that he will yet add many others to the Jews who have been gathered. This actually happened; for not only did he gather the dispersed in Babylon, but he also gathered other dispersions, which were frequent and almost of daily occurrence. Nor has he ever ceased to gather; so that he has added a large

mass to those who have been gathered.

9. *All ye beasts of the field.* This prediction appears to be at variance with what goes before; for what the Prophet has hitherto said was full of the most delightful consolation, but now he appears to threaten fiercely, and to predict frightful ruin. These statements might indeed appear to be contradictory; but, after having comforted believers, it ought not to be thought inconsistent if he forewarn them of a future calamity that they might not lose courage when they saw everything near destruction, and that necessity might likewise prompt them to betake themselves more warmly and earnestly to the grace of God. There is also another reason, that hypocrites abuse the promises of God and hold them out under false pretenses, cherish unfounded hope, and insolently boast of those things which do not at all belong to them; and therefore Isaiah intended to take from them the ground of false boasting.

And thus his design was twofold; first, that the hearts of believers might not be discouraged by various calamities, which should bring them almost, to utter destruction, and that even when, amidst prosperity and peace, they beheld by faith at a distance a future calamity, they might rest satisfied with this single consolation; and secondly, that he might strike hypocrites with dread and horror, so that they might not exalt themselves by vain confidence, or freely indulge their sinful inclinations under the pretense of these promises. For this reason God calls not men, but savage "beasts," that they might devour the people. He therefore forbids believers to be alarmed and tempted to unbelief, when these wild beasts shall be sent. And yet he intended also to strike terror into them, that he might arouse them to repentance, and to exhort them to seek the mercy of God, that the promises might not lose their value.

When he calls them "beasts *of the field*," he means beasts of every kind, and includes not only the Babylonians and Assyrians, but Antiochus, the Romans, and other enemies of the people, who brought various calamities upon them. But he has chiefly in view the defeat which they received from the Babylonians, who carried them away into wretched bondage.

10. *Her watchmen are blind.* He now assigns the reason why the people must be destroyed. It is because they are governed by wicked princes and pastors; not that he wishes to throw the blame on them alone, and thinks that the people are innocent, but because this was the beginning of the evil. We are not exempted from blame, if we follow blind guides, but, on the contrary, are justly punished for our transgressions; for the Lord takes away good guides from those whom he intends to punish for their ingratitude.

By the word "Watchmen" [343] he means not only the prophets, to whom was committed the office of teaching, but likewise judges, princes, and kings,

[343] "The prophets are called 'Watchmen,' (Jeremiah 6:17; Ezekiel 3:17; 33:2, 6, 7; Isaiah 52:8) because it is their duty to see far, and to look out, and carefully to observe the evils, and the causes of the evils which may be pernicious to the people. The metaphor is drawn from guards or military sentinels, who, being placed on the watch-towers of fortified cities, carefully attend to everything that may bring mischief on the city." — Rosenmuller.

who ought to have governed everything in a proper manner. He includes both kinds of government, that of princes, and that of the ministers of the word, whom the Lord has placed, as the two eyes in the body, to govern the Church. Consequently, if they are wicked or unfaithful, there cannot arise a more destructive plague to a commonwealth.

All are ignorant. First, he reproaches them with want of knowledge; for, as it is the chief excellence of a good shepherd to know his duty, that he may judge what is profitable and what is pernicious to the flock, and to watch laboriously, and to stand, as it were, on a watchtower, that he may promote their safety in every respect, so nothing is more inconsistent with that office than ignorance and blindness. No man, therefore, will be a good shepherd, unless he understands the right method of governing the people. And hence we see what we ought to think of the idols of our time, who haughtily and insolently boast of the name of shepherds or pastors; for they are untaught and ignorant beasts.

All are dumb dogs. By calling them, secondly, "dumb dogs," he charges them with slothfulness and indifference; for, since it is the duty of a good shepherd to be industrious and careful, when he calls them slothful and indifferent, he shows that they had nothing about them that ought to belong to a shepherd. Thus, when we are deprived of good shepherds, and when lazy or even savage beasts come in their room, let us acknowledge God's wrath, and let us know that destruction is not far off; for the Prophet threatens and foretells the ruin of the people, when shepherds are "dumb."

Hence also it follows, that God appoints them to discharge the office of "dogs," that is, to keep watch, to drive away robbers and thieves, and not to permit them to enter into the fold. And if dogs are so faithful guardians and so warmly attached to their masters, that they continually watch for their safety, and do not cease to drive away, by barking, those from whom danger is apprehended, shepherds, when they give themselves up to sloth and drowsiness, ought to be ashamed of being surpassed by a brute beast.

11. *And those dogs strong of appetite.* The third vice which he remarks in wicked pastors is insatiable avarice. Though they are lazy in all that relates to good government, yet they have a strong and ravenous appetite for food. Some view the Prophet's words as still more extensive, and as meaning that they rule tyrannically. Ezekiel expressly reproves them for this vice; for false prophets are commonly fierce, and act cruelly and barbarously towards the people of God. (Ezekiel 34:4) But if any person examine the matter carefully, he will perceive that the Prophet speaks of their insatiable avarice, which he afterwards describes by a variety of expressions.

They look to their ways. That is, "They attend eagerly to their own affairs; every person consults his own advantage." In short, he means that there is no man who does not wish to be preferred to others, as if every man had been born for himself.

Every one to his gain from his end. [344] {מקצהו} (*mikkatzehu*) has received various expositions. Some render it, "In his end," that is, "In his affairs;" as if the reading had been, {בקצהו}, (*bekatzehu*) But this does not agree with the Prophet's meaning. Others render it, "From the end of his avarice." I think that a more simple interpretation is, "From his end," that is, "On his part;" or as we commonly say, (*Chacun en son endroict,*) "Every one in his place." Thus every one is bent on avarice, and draws and appropriates everything to himself, and consults his own advantage, without attending to the duties of his office.

Hence we learn, that no man can serve God who is given up to wicked desires; and he who shall labor to amass wealth, will not apply his mind to build up the Church of the Lord. No kind of blindness can be more dangerous than avarice; and so much the more ought it to be avoided by pastors, if they wish to be faithful servants of God. When we see the Prophet complaining of the bad pastors of his time, let us not be alarmed if we meet with the same thing in the present day, and let us not look upon it as an unusual occurrence that so few are earnestly employed in the work of the Lord.

12. *Come ye, I will fetch wine.* After having spoken of the avarice and carelessness of pastors, he points out their desperate wickedness and obstinacy; for he represents them as speaking, [345] and brings forward their hardhearted speeches, from which it is evident that they could not be brought back to the right path by any admonitions or threatenings, but fearlessly despised them all. In another passage the Prophet quoted the words of scorners, who, when the servants of God exhorted them to sackcloth and ashes, invited each other to feasting and drinking. "Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we shall die." (Isaiah 22:13) Why do those prophets annoy us? It will never fare well with us, if we give ear to them. (Isaiah 28:15) A similar complaint is here repeated by Isaiah, that the pastors held out obstinately and seared themselves against the judgments of God.

Nor does he merely reprove them for drinking *wine and strong drink*, which in itself is not sinful, but for that mental drunkenness and brutality by which men haughtily and insolently despise the word of God. In other passages drunkenness and the abuse of wine are condemned; but here the Prophet exclaims against the madness and insolence with which pastors exalted themselves against God, and trampled under foot all threatenings, warnings, reproofs, and, in short, all religion. Yet there can be no doubt that he reproves the gross and shameful wickedness of burying reflection, as if on purpose, by excess of wine and feasting, that no shame or fear, no reverence for God or men, might disturb their repose; as ungodly persons do all they can to stupefy themselves by unlawful pleasures, that they may

[344] "From his quarter." (Eng. Ver.) "Heb. 'this extremity,' his quarter, be it ever so remote; that is, universally." — Stock. "Literally, 'From his extremity.' Jerome correctly renders it, 'From first to last,' that is, without any exception; and that is the meaning which the word bears in Genesis 19:4; 47:2; Ezekiel 33:2." — Rosenmuller. "All to a man." — Doederlein.

[345] "Thus they spoke one to another." — Jarchi.

more daringly, and with less reserve, abandon themselves to wickedness.

It is a shocking and monstrous sight to behold such contempt of God and of religion, not in foreigners, not in the common people, but in governors and princes themselves, who ought to have instructed others by their example, in that sacred order which bore the image of Christ; for both kings and priests bore his likeness and image. How intolerable this pride is, by which men furiously oppose the word, is well known. We are ruined and undone, when this medicine, which is the last, is rejected by us; for we do not permit the Lord to lead us back into the right path. [346] For this reason he has threatened in another passage that "this wickedness shall not be expiated." (Isaiah 22:14) Thus he rebukes the height of impiety; and it is of great importance for us to weigh carefully the words which follow —

As today, so tomorrow. That is, "If it is well with us today, it shall be well tomorrow. Let us not be miserable before the time." [347] He describes their aggravated guilt, in treating with mockery God's gentleness and forbearance, and assuring themselves that they would escape punishment, as if God were asleep or enjoyed luxurious ease in heaven, whenever he suspended his judgments. By such diabolical proverbs, do men, even in the present day, labor to soothe and even to fascinate their consciences, that they may more fully wallow in every kind of pleasures, and indulge in their iniquities and crimes. That we may not fall, therefore, under this terrible judgment of the Lord, let every one examine himself, and perceive at a distance the wrath of God, that it may not attack us suddenly and unprepared.

346 "Au bon chemin."

347 "Thus, in all probability, these drunken guardians of the people said, in derision of the prophets, who were continually threatening them with destruction. They tell us of imminent danger and strange calamities which hang over our heads. But mind them not. Let us cheer our hearts with wine, and drown the thoughts of such improbable chimeras. Let us take our pleasure today, and never doubt but tomorrow we shall be full as merry, and so on for many years." — White.

Chapter 57

CHAPTER 57.

Isaiah 57:1-21

1. The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart: and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come

1. Justus periit, et nemo est qui cor adjiciat. Viri misericordiae colliguntur, nec est qui animadvertat, quod a facie mali colligatur justus.

2. He shall enter into peace: they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness.

2. Veniet pax, quiescent in cubilibus suis, quisquis ambulat coram eo.

3. But draw near hither, ye sons of the sorceress, the seed of the adulterer and the whore.

3. Et vos accedite huc, filii veneficae, semen adulteri et meretricis.

4. Against whom do ye sport yourselves? against whom make ye a wide mouth, and draw out the tongue? are ye not children of transgression, a seed of falsehood,

4. Super quem oblectati estis? Super quo aperuistis os? Exeruistis linguam? Annon vos filii praevaricatores? Semen mendax?

5. Enflaming yourselves with idols under every green tree, slaying the children in the valleys under the clifts of the rocks?

5. Incalescentes in quercubus (vel, cum diis) sub omni arbore frondosa, immolantes pueros in convallibus, sub prominentiis riparum.

6. Among the smooth stones of the stream is thy portion; they, they are thy lot: even to them hast thou poured a drink offering, thou hast offered a meat offering. Should I receive comfort in these?

6. In politis lapidibus (vel, in partibus torrentis) vallis pars tua; ipsi, ipsi sors tua. Etiam ipsis fudisti libamen, obtulisti sacrificium; an super his

oblectationem capiam (vel, poenitentia ducar)?

7. Upon a lofty and high mountain hast thou set thy bed: even thither wentest thou up to offer sacrifice.

7. Super montem excelsum et elevatum posuisti stratum tuum. Etiam illuc ascendisti ad immolandum victimam.

8. Behind the doors also and the posts hast thou set up thy remembrance: for thou hast discovered thyself to another than me, and art gone up; thou hast enlarged thy bed, and made thee a covenant with them; thou lovedst their bed where thou sawest it.

8. Post ostium et postem posuisti memoriale tuum; discooperta es a me; ascendisti, dilatasti lectum tuum, fecisti cum iis foedus, dilexisti lectum eorum, loco quem vidisti.

9. And thou wentest to the king with ointment, and didst increase thy perfumes, and didst send thy messengers far off, and didst debase thyself even unto hell.

9. Et profecta es ad regem cum oleo, multiplicasti pigmenta tua; misisti legatos tuos ad locum remontum humiliata es usque ad inferos.

10. Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way; yet saidst thou not, There is no hope: thou hast found the life of thine hand; therefore thou wast not grieved.

10. Fatigata es in multiplici itinere tuo; nec dixisti, Desperatum est. Invenisti vitam manus tuae, ideo non doluisti.

11. And of whom hast thou been afraid or feared, that thou hast lied, and hast not remembered me, nor laid it to thy heart? have not I held my peace even of old, and thou fearest me not?

11. Et quem reverita es, et timuisti, quod mentita es, et mei non es recordata, nec posuisti super cor tuum? Annon quia ego dissimulavi, et a seculo ideo me non times?

12. I will declare thy righteousness, and thy works; for they shall not profit thee.

12. Ego annuntiabo justitiam tuam et opera tua, nec proderunt tibi.

13. When thou criest, let thy companies deliver thee; but the wind shall carry them all away; vanity shall take them: but he that putteth his trust in me shall possess the land, and shall inherit my holy mountain;

13. Dum clamaveris, liberent to collectitii tui. Atqui omnes tollet ventus, rapiet vanitas. Qui autem in me sperat haereditate obtinebit terram, et possidebit montem sanctitatis meae.

14. And shall say, Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, take up the stumblingblock out of the way of my people.

14. Et dicet, Sternite, sternite, complanate vaim, tollite offendiculum e via populi mei.

15. For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive

the heart of the contrite ones.

15. Quoniam sic dixit excelsus et sublimis, habitans in perpetuitate, cui nomen Sanctus: Excelsum et sanctum incolo, et cum afflicto et qui humilis est spiritu, ut vivificem spiritum humilium, ut vivificem cot afflictorum.

16. For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made.

16. Quia non in perpetuum litigabo, neque semper irascar. Nam spiritus a facie mea induetur (vel latebit, aut deficiet;) et flatus ego feci.

17. For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart.

17. Propter iniquitatem cupiditatis ejus iratus fui, et percussi eum; abscondi me, et irascar; ipse autem aversus abiit in via cordis sui.

18. I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners.

18. Vias ejus vidi, et sanabo eum, et ducam eum, reddens ei consolationes et lugentibus ejus.

19. I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the LORD; and I will heal him.

19. Creo fructum labiorum. Pax, pax, longinquis et propinquis, dicit Iehova, et sano eum.

20. But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.

20. Impii autem quasi mare dispulsum, quod quiescere non poterit; et projicient aquae ejus coenum et lutum.

21. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.

21. Non est pax, dixit Deus meus, impiis.

1. *The righteous man hath perished.* Isaiah continues his subject; for, after having shown how fearlessly hypocrites indulge in their luxuries, and with what impudence they despise the word of God, he likewise complains that they do not consider the works of God. We have been placed here, as in a spacious theater, to behold the works of God; and there is no work of God so small that we ought to pass by it; lightly, but all ought to be carefully and diligently observed.

And no man layeth it to heart. The Lord holds out as a mirror this event of his providence, more remarkable than all others, that he takes away good and worthy men out of this life, when he determines to chastise his people severely. But no man considers it, or reflects that it is a token of approaching destruction, that God gathers them, and places them in safety from being distressed by prevailing afflictions. The general meaning is, that wicked men grievously deceive themselves by supposing that there is no greater happiness than to have life continued to a great age, and by thus pluming themselves on their superiority to the servants of God, who die early. Being attached to the world, they likewise harden themselves by this pretense, that, by nothing

else than a manifestation of God's favor towards them, while others die, they continue to be safe and sound.

Men of mercy are gathered. If by "men of mercy" be meant kind or tender-hearted men, this description ought to be carefully studied, by which the Prophet shows what is the true righteousness of the children of God; for hypocrites reckon this to be of no value. But nothing is more acceptable to God than kindness, by which we give evidence of our righteousness, and manifest that our heart is free from all hypocrisy. Yet we may with equal propriety take the phrase "men of mercy" in a passive sense, as meaning those whom the Lord has embraced by his mercy; for it is a phrase of frequent occurrence in Hebrew writings. Nor will it be inappropriate to suppose that there is an implied contrast between the grace of God and the wicked and unfavorable judgments of men; for they are wont to look on those persons as condemned who are taken away in the flower of their age. But, since God, in many passages of Scripture, represents gentleness and kindness as a distinguishing mark of his children, this may be, as I have said, a definition of true righteousness.

Hence we see that the Lord, at that time, gathered many good men, whose death portended some dreadful calamity, and yet that the Jews paid no regard to such forewarnings, and even proceeded to more daring lengths of wickedness; for they thought that all went well with them, when they were the survivors of many excellent men. This doctrine is highly appropriate to every age. It frequently happens that God takes good men out of this world, when he intends to punish severely the iniquities of the ungodly; for the Lord, having a peculiar regard to his own people, takes compassion upon them, and, as it were, snatches them from the burning, that even survivors may perceive in it the wrath of God. And yet this is not an invariable rule; for righteous men are frequently involved, along with the reprobate, in temporal punishments; but it is so frequent that it rarely happens otherwise.[348]

In our own times a remarkable instance of this was given in the death of Luther, who was snatched from the world a short time before that terrible calamity befell Germany, which he had foretold many years before, when he exclaimed loudly against that contempt of the Gospel, and that wickedness and licentiousness which everywhere prevailed. Frequently had he entreated the Lord to call him out of this life before he beheld that dreadful punishment, the anticipation of which filled him with trembling and horror. And he obtained it from the Lord. Soon after his death, lo, a sudden and unforeseen war sprang up, by which Germany was terribly afflicted, when nothing was

[348] "This is a beautiful sentiment, that God removes righteous and good men from a world unworthy of them, and takes them to himself, so that they are not stained by the offenses of their time, or mingled with the prevailing corruption that universally devours, and do not consent to it, or connive at it, and thus expose themselves to similar judgments of God, which have been decreed and appointed for the ungodly. It has undoubtedly been remarked by the wise in every age, that the sudden death of good and judicious men is a clear indication of the approaching ruin of a state." — Vitringa.

farther from her thoughts than the dread of such a calamity.

Instances of this kind occur every day; and if men observed them, they would not so heedlessly flatter themselves and their vices. But I thought it right to take special notice of this event, both because it happened lately, [349] and because in so distinguished a preacher of the Gospel and prophet of God it must be more clearly seen. We ought, therefore, to consider diligently the worlds of the Lord, both in the life and in the death of "the righteous," but especially in their death, by which the Lord calls them away to a better life, that they may be rescued from those afflictions in which the wicked must be plunged.

2. *Peace shall come.* The Prophet describes what shall be the condition of believers in death; for the wicked, who think that there is no life but the present, imagine that good men have perished; because in death they see nothing but ruin. For this reason he says that "Peace shall come," which is more desirable than a thousand lives full of trouble; as if he compared them to discharged soldiers, who are and allowed to enjoy case and quietness.

They shall rest in their beds. He adds the metaphor of sleep, in order to show that they shall be absolutely free from all the uneasiness of cares, just as if they were safely pleasantly asleep "on their beds."

Whosoever walketh before him. [350] I do not think that the verb "walketh" is connected with {שלום}, (*shalom*,) "peace," as some do, who suppose the meaning to be this, that peace shall go before believers, so as to be, as it were, the guide of their life. But I am of opinion that believers, on the contrary, are described by it; as if he had said, "Whosoever walketh before God shall enjoy peace." Thus, when righteous men die, and their various labors are finished, and their course is ended, they are called to peace and repose. They "rest in their beds," because they do not yet enjoy perfect blessedness and glory; but they wail; for the last day of the resurrection, when everything shall be perfectly restored; and that, I think, is what Isaiah meant.

It will be said, "Do not righteous men enjoy this peace while they live?" for the fruit of faith is, that; "in patience we may possess our souls." (Luke 21:19) Although faith produces peace in our hearts, (Romans 5:3) yet we are tossed about by various storms and tempests; and never in life are we so calm and peaceful as when the Lord takes us to himself. Peaceful and calm, therefore, is the death of the righteous, (Psalm 116:15) for it is "precious in the sight of God;" but stormy is the death of the wicked. [351] Hence also we may learn that souls are immortal; for if souls had no feeling, (as some fanatics have dreamed,) they could not enjoy "peace." Thus they enjoy peace

[349] "Pource que c'est une chose avenue depuis peu d'annees." "Because it is an event that happened but a few years ago."

[350] "Walking in his uprightness, or, before him." (Eng. Ver.) "The phrase denotes, 'One who walks straight before him,' so as to follow constantly the rule, not turning aside from it to the right hand or the left, and observing and keeping the straight line and road towards the end or mark which the Lord has held out to them, according to the example of the Apostle. (Philippians 3:14)" — Vitringa.

[351] "Mais celle des meschans est effroyable." "But that of the wicked is frightful."

and repose, because they live in Christ.

3. And draw near, ye sons of the sorceress. After having spoken of the happy and peaceful death of good men, he breaks out with very great vehemence against the wicked, who did not cease to lead a base and shameful life, and were not moved by the death of believers. As he had said that good men enjoy peace, so he threatens that the wicked shall have ceaseless war. He taught that to the holy servants of God death shall even be like a hiding-place, to shelter them from the whirlwind, and storm, and other tempests, that he might threaten the worst of evils against the obstinate despisers of God. Here we ought to observe the contrast, between good men who walk before God, and the wicked, who cease not rebelliously to resist God. The former shall enjoy peace when they die; the latter shall have no peace during life, and shall feel dreadful torments in death.

He orders them to come forth to the judgmentseat of God, which they hope that they will be able to escape by their disguises; and therefore he affirms that they gain nothing by their refusal, for they shall be dragged against their will. The more hardened they were, the sharper were the excitements that must be applied to them; and therefore the harshness of the Prophet could not be excessive, either in arousing their stupidity, or in casting down their pride. And indeed it is well known how insolent was the vanity of the Jews on account of their genealogy; for which reason the prophets frequently beat down their haughtiness and pride, and affirmed that they were not the children of Abraham, because they were bastards and traitors.

On this account Isaiah calls them "the seed of the adulterous and the whore." In like manner Ezekiel reproaches them, "Thy father is an Amorite; thy mother a Hittite." (Ezekiel 16:3) Similar forms of expression are found ill many parts of Scripture. Thus he beats down their intolerable hardihood, and drags them forward unwillingly and reluctantly, that they might not think that they could escape the judgmentseat of God.

4. *On whom have ye made sport?* The Prophet shows that there is no reason why the Jews should boast so proudly on the pretense of their birth, seeing that they mocked at God and the prophets. They thought that they had to deal with men, when they rejected the word; as we see that wicked men in the present day, while they fearlessly despise the doctrine of God and laugh at ministers, nevertheless shelter themselves, and falsely glory in the name of God. This is the reason why the Prophet bears hard upon them and censures with severity.

On whom have ye opened the mouth? The meaning of the words is, "When ye put forth the tongue against God, and mock his word, do ye think that ye have to deal with a mortal man?" The question ("On whom?") means that they resorted to disguises and concealments, in order to conceal their impiety; for wicked men do not confess that they are rebels against God, and even complain that they are very unjustly treated. But they must be dragged to the light and convicted of their wickedness; for if there be a God

in heaven, they carry on war with him, by attacking and rejecting his word and treating it as a fable.

To "open the mouth" and to "put forth the tongue" mean the same thing, except that by these expressions he has more fully described their wickedness, in not only rejecting God, but also mocking him. The inward contempt of the heart had driven them to open jeers and blasphemies, so that they were not moved by any fear of disgrace.

Seed of the adulterer and the whore. At length he concludes that they are treacherous children, a lying seed, and that he has justly reproached them with being "the children of the whore;" for such contempt of God could not be found in the children of Abraham. Hence we learn in what manner wicked men ought to be treated, and with what severity they ought to be reproved, that they may not flatter themselves; and the more they despise everything that is held out in the name of God, the more ought their sacrilegious wickedness to be exposed and dragged forth to public view.

5. *Inflaming yourselves.* Others render it, "Taking delight" or "consolation;" but the Prophet makes use of a metaphor which is often found in Scripture, and which is exceedingly adapted to the present subject; for the Lord compares the ardor by which idolaters are hurried along to the love of a harlot, by which poor wretched men are inflamed so as to be transported with blind eagerness. (Jeremiah 3:1; Hosea 2:2; 4:5) Idolaters have no moderation, and do not permit themselves to be reclaimed from their madness by any arguments. In the sight of God idolatry is a very base kind of fornication.

Under the oaks, or, *with the gods.* Some translate {אלים} (*elim*) "gods," and others "oaks." [352] I leave every one at liberty to adopt either reading; for the meaning will always be the same, and commentators are agreed that the Prophet condemns idolatry. I do not dispute, therefore, about the reading; though it is probable that the same thing is twice repeated, in accordance with the practice of Hebrew writers, in a particular and in a general form, and yet that the Prophet, by means of an ambiguous word, alludes to "the gods."

Sacrificing children. Here he bears still harder on the Jews, and shows that they are not the true seed of Abraham; seeing that they pollute themselves with superstitions of every kind. In consequence of the delight which the Jews took in such practices, he exposes their vileness. "You shelter yourselves, indeed, under the name of religion, but I declare that you commit fornication with idols." In this manner it was proper to expose and freely to point out that wickedness which base and malicious men endeavor to cloak under various pretenses; and thus the Prophet boldly discharges his duty by summoning men to the judgmentseat of God, and holding them to be guilty, though they wish to take every method of excusing themselves. He shows that they are treacherous, and have departed from the law of God by

[352] See Commentary on Isaiah, Vol. 1, p. 84, n. 1.

abominable idolatry, and mentions one kind of shocking and even accursed and monstrous worship; namely, the "sacrificing of children," from which it is very evident how powerful is the spirit of error, when men have once turned aside from God. Satan seizes their minds (2 Thessalonians 2:9) in such a manner that he drives them altogether to madness and rage. They who do not hesitate to slay their children, as if on the ground of its being a righteous sacrifice, must be in a state of furious madness.

And yet those cruel murderers of their children did not want some pretense; for they cloaked their crime under the example of Abraham, who did. not spare (Genesis 22:16) his onlybegotten son; and the ancient Hebrew writers pronounce it to have been ({κακοζηλία}) a wicked imitation "If we are Abraham's descendants, we ought not to spare our children." But Abraham did this (Genesis 22:2) by the command of God; while they did it of their own accord, and without God's command. It was an extraordinary example, by which the Lord intended to try and attest Abraham's faith. Besides, Isaac was not sacrificed; for the Lord was satisfied with Abraham's cheerful and ready will. (Genesis 22:12) They slew their children. It was, therefore, a perverse and damnable imitation, for they differed widely from their father This should be carefully observed; for a large portion of superstitions has proceeded from this source of ({κακοζηλία}) wicked imitation. Men have rashly and without discrimination seized on everything that was done by the fathers.

6. *Amidst polished stones,* or, *in parts of the valley.* He continues the same subject, and reproves in various ways the superstitions which abounded in Judea; for no place was altogether free from idolatry. There were no rocks, no rivers, no valleys, no corner whatever, in which they had not erected a monument of their superstition. They had their groves and mountains, in which they sacrificed after the manner of the Gentiles.

Whether we here adopt the reading, "Polished stones," or "Parts of the river," the meaning will be the same. The Prophet means that the Jews chose their own method of worshipping God, and turned aside from the rule which he had laid down in his Law; and consequently that every kind of worship which they followed by their own choice was abominable and wicked; for in religion and in the worship of God it is only to the voice of God that we ought to listen. If it be thought preferable to render it "polished stones," then Isaiah rebukes the contempt of the Law by which God forbade the use of hammers, (Exodus 20:25) in hewing or chiselling the stones to be employed in building the altar; for he did not wish that sacrifices should be offered on any but one altar. But as it was customary with the Gentiles to dedicate temples near fountains and rivers, the other meaning will be equally appropriate.

They, they are thy lot. The repetition of "they, they" is highly emphatic. A word may be supplied by way of permission, as if the Lord permitted the Jews to abide by their practices, since they had forsaken him and preferred

idols and false worship; as it is said, "Go, sacrifice to idols." (Ezekiel 20:39) I am disposed to favor this reading; as if he had said, "I leave to you your inventions, and willingly permit you to be entirely devoted to them, and relinquish my right; for I have nothing to do with traitors and apostates." And yet he undoubtedly alludes to that passage in the writings of Moses, by whose mouth God said that he would be the inheritance of his people, so that they ought to be satisfied with having him alone. (Numbers 18:20) This was also followed by David, who says, "The Lord is my portion, my inheritance." (Psalm 16:5) Since, therefore, the Jews had revolted from God, and had followed idols, the Lord justly commanded them to keep the idols to themselves, and intimated that he would have nothing in common with them.

Even to them hast thou poured a drink-offering. He proceeds in enumerating superstitions, and confirms the statement that he has been rejected and cast off by them; for they alienated to false gods what he wished to belong to himself alone. The Jews might have replied to every word of the Prophet, that they had no other intention than to worship God. But the Prophet pays no regard to such idle and frivolous pretenses; for the wrath of God is provoked by false worship, and is the more inflamed by it in proportion as it is more constant and longer continued. Hence we learn what sobriety we ought to observe in the worship of God, that we may depend on his word alone; for whosoever shall swerve from it in the smallest degree, will not only lose his labor, but will kindle the wrath of God, whose majesty he wickedly insults and does all that is in his power to lessen.

Shall I take pleasure in these things? It might also be translated, "Shall I repent?" This interpretation has been most generally adopted, because he wishes to assign a reason why he punishes the people. As if he had said, "When I take vengeance for these transgressions, is it possible that I shall repent?" Yet the interpretation which I have followed appears to me preferable, "Shall I take delight, or consolation, from those sacrifices which thou hast offered to me?" For idolaters commonly take delight in their own inventions, and imagine that God also is delighted with everything that they pursue with mad and furious eagerness. Nor is such a question superfluous; for men think that God is like themselves, and will approve of everything that is agreeable to them. On the contrary, he declares that nothing is approved by him, or is acceptable to him, but what agrees with his word. [353]

7. *Upon a lofty and high mountain.* He again repeats that metaphor at which we have formerly glanced. Superstitious persons commit fornication with their idols, because, by forsaking the simplicity of the word, they violate the bond of that holy marriage into which God has entered with them, and

[353] "Jehovah adds a question, 'Should I take consolation in these things?' Should I shake off from my mind, and bury in oblivion, my indignation which arises from your heinous crimes, so as to allow them to pass unpunished? The meaning has been accurately expressed by the Septuagint, {ἐπὶ} {τούτοις} {οὖς} {οὐκ} {ὀργισθήσομαι}; 'Shall I not be enraged on account of these things?' which has been followed by Jerome, 'Nunquid super his non indignabor?'" — Rosenmuller

prostitute themselves to Satan. But now Isaiah intended to express something more; for, when he says that they set up their bed on a lofty place, he means that they are not at all ashamed of their shameful conduct. As a harlot, who has lost all shame, dreads not the sight of men, and cares not about her reputation, so they openly and shamefully committed fornication in a lofty and conspicuous place. He compares altars and groves to "beds" on which that accursed crime is committed, and he compares men who sacrifice on them to impudent and abandoned harlots. As to the opinion entertained by some, that this relates to the couches on which they reclined at their sacrificial feasts, there is no good foundation for it.

To offer a sacrifice. Here he describes without a figure that kind of fornication which he rebukes, namely, that they offered sacrifices to idols. They imagined, indeed, that in doing so they were rendering obedience to God; but the Lord rejects all that men contrive according to their own pleasure, and abhors that licentiousness.

8. *Behind the door.* He dwells largely on the crime of which we have already spoken, that the people may no longer flatter themselves in their inventions. It is probable that Isaiah alludes to the words of Moses, by which God commanded them to have the Law continually placed before them, to attach it to the posts of their houses, and to keep it written and wrapped around their arms and the fringes of their garments, that they might be constantly reminded of their duty. (Deuteronomy 6:9; 11:20) But the Jews, on the contrary, polluted the doors and posts of their houses by tokens of idolatry, and left no corner free or pure from such pollutions. Thus they came to forget everywhere God and the Law, and substituted in their room the excitements of their own lust.

Thou hast enlarged thy bed. He again repeats what he formerly said, and returns to that clause, that the Jews most basely commit fornication with idols when they think that they are worshipping God; because they do not follow the rule of the word. It is the same as if a woman, having forsaken her husband, should prostitute herself in a brothel, and freely receive all that came, as if the bed had been a large plain, and capable of containing a vast multitude.

For this reason he says that she was detected by him, because, having laid aside the modesty of the married state, she allowed herself to be dishonored and ravished by others; for God holds the place of a husband, to whom she ought to have been subject, but she sought new husbands, and broke the bond of marriage, he describes their aggravated guilt, by saying that the Jews of their own accord devoted themselves to idols, as if a base woman ran after a man with blind eagerness.

Thou lovedst their bed in the place which thou sawest. By a different figure he accuses them of that hasty love, because, as if by a single glance, they were suddenly and eagerly hurried on to any place whatever. Yet he blames the rashness of men, who think that they are sagacious in worshipping God, and

select places according to their own pleasure. But this sagacity is diabolical; for God commands us to keep our eyes fixed on himself and his word, so as to be closed against everything else.

9. *And thou wentest to the king with ointment.* Here the Prophet censures another vice closely allied to the former; for ungodliness begets various errors, and leads into grievous and intricate distresses those minds which are frivolous and destitute of the fear of God; for it is proper that they who refuse to rest on God should be tossed about, or rather driven up and down. He therefore reproaches the Jews with having labored much and long in seeking the assistance of the wicked; that is, with having attempted to bring the Egyptians against the Assyrians, and next, when they had been disappointed of their hope, with having begun to betake themselves to the Babylonians. When their hearts have been estranged from God, they seek assistance from another quarter, and by great labor and expense bring upon themselves severer distresses. Yet while the Lord grants repose to his people, that they may perform their work in peace, wicked men "vex themselves in vain, rise early, go late to rest, eat the bread of sorrow," as it is said, (Psalm 127:2) and yet do not gain a farthing, because all that they do is without God's authority or guidance. But the Spirit inflicts on them this punishment, so that they incessantly wander and are tossed about in doubt and uncertainty, and never can find rest in their minds.

10. *Thou art wearied.* He means that men undertake superfluous and useless labors, when they do not follow God. They vex themselves in vain, as has been already said; for nothing that is attempted in opposition to God can ever be successful. Besides, he wittily ridicules the wicked practices of those who choose rather to waste themselves by incessant toil than to advance calmly wherever God calls them.

And hast not said, There is no hope; that is, "Although thou seest that thy labors are fruitless, yet thou obstinately perseverest and pursuest thy designs; whereas even fools, when they are unsuccessful, commonly repent." Men must therefore be obstinate and desperate, when an unhappy and unsuccessful issue of their schemes does not sometimes lead them to ask themselves, What are you doing? Jeremiah glances at this obstinacy, hut in different words; for he says that the Jews were so foolhardy as to say,

"We are undone, yet we will follow our own thoughts. This has been determined by us, and our opinion cannot be changed." (Jeremiah 18:12)

But here he censures that stupidity which bewildered them so much that they could not acknowledge their folly and repent, and turn again to the right road.

Thou hast found the life of thine hand. "Life" is here supposed by some to mean "food; "as if the Prophet had said, "Thy labor was as delightful to thee as if thou wert gaining food for thyself by thy hand." [354] Others take

[354] "Comme si tu eusses gaigne ta vie en travaillant de tes mains." "As if thou hadst gained thy life by labouring with thy hands."

"the life of the hand" to mean delight, or the highest pleasure; and both interpretations amount to the same thing.

But there is somewhat greater difficulty in the question, "Does he speak sincerely or ironically?" If the words be taken in the literal sense, the meaning will be, "Thou didst not grieve, because fortune appeared to favor thee for a time." When unbelievers succeed to their wish, they encourage themselves the more in their unbelief, and, as the common saying is, "Men are blinded by prosperity." But especially this happens when men have forsaken God, and abide by their own ways and schemes; for then they fearlessly despise God. But they may also be viewed as ironical, "How comes it that thou dost not retrace thy steps and repent? Why dost thou not acknowledge thy folly? Is it because thou hast life in thy hand, and because everything goes prosperously with thee? [355]

I prefer the latter interpretation, though I do not reject the former. It is plain enough from history that the Jews had no good reason for being proud of their prosperity or success; for the treaty into which they entered, first with the Egyptians, next with the Assyrians, and lastly with the Babylonians, was destructive and fatal to them; and they found by experience how rash they had been in calling allies to their aid; so that the Prophet justly taunts them with having found "the life of their hand." Thus he heightens his description of the foolishness of this people, who willingly rush forward to their own destruction, and obstinately bring down ruin on themselves, when they ought, at least, like fools, to have gained wisdom by the misery which they had experienced.

11. *And whom hast thou worshipped and feared?* Here he breaks out more vehemently against the Jews, because they were destitute of the fear of God, though they boasted of their holiness and sheltered themselves under an empty title of religion. Not only do hypocrites flatter themselves in their superstitions, but they are likewise regarded by the common people as holy and pious; and, therefore, they act haughtily and insolently towards God and men. But the Prophet declares that true fear of God cannot exist, where the worship is not pure and agreeable to his word. All the opinions entertained by men, as to the plausible forms of worship observed by superstitious persons, are absolute wickedness and folly, he declares, therefore, that there is no fear of him and no religion among them, although they are greatly delighted with their masks.

What is more, by their religious ceremonies, as manifest proofs, they show that they have no reverence or fear of God; for God testifies, by Moses, that he makes trial whether or not they love him with all their heart, when he

[355] "Dathius thus translates the Hebrew text, 'Thou hast found thy life, therefore thou dost not feel thy disease,' and adds in a note, 'The phrase, (thy life,) is used ironically by the Prophet to denote idols, which brought destruction instead of life to the people. He calls them the life of the hand for this reason, that they employed all their industry in making them.' The simplest meaning appears to me to be, to take 'the life of the hand' as denoting either their strength or the supports of life procured by the hand; so that the meaning is, Still thou thinkest that by these thy labors thou wilt procure strength and assistance." — Rosenmuller.

permits superstition and idolatry to be introduced by the false prophets. (Deuteronomy 13:3) All that fly to them, therefore, show that they are altogether destitute of the fear of God; for, if they considered that they must one day give an account to him, they would not so daringly trample under foot his commandments.

And hast not remembered me. When he complains of having been forgotten, he shows that it was through obstinate wickedness that they fought against God, and not through ignorance that they wandered from him; because, having a sure rule of leading a holy life, they willingly revolted from him, and broke the promise which they had made to him. We ought to consider diligently how dreadful is the thunder launched against hypocrites, who mock at all threatenings, and cover themselves by vain disguises, when he declares that they are destitute of the fear of God, and that they are liars and have forgotten him.

Is it not because I held my peace? [356] Here I have thought it right to insert the word "because," which needs to be supplied, in order to bring out more fully the Prophet's meaning; for those who do not supply some word subject themselves to a vast amount of trouble in bringing out an exposition; and we know how frequently this mode of expression is employed by the Hebrew writers. He reproaches the Jews with having abused God's forbearance and patience, by which their hearts ought rather to have been softened. But such is the wickedness of men, that it renders them bolder in transgression, and leads them to think that they may do what they please without being punished.

Accordingly, in the last clause of the verse I consider the particle {ו} (*vau*) to mean *therefore.* "And *therefore* thou dost not fear me, because I held my peace, whereas thou oughtest rather to have been melted by my goodness." Hence we infer that the Jews could not complain of God's excessive severity, since he bore patiently with them for a long time, and they grew worse and worse in consequence of having been exempted from punishment. It was therefore necessary that he should assume a totally different character, and punish them more severely for their iniquities.

12. *I will declare thy righteousness.* The Prophet affirms that the Lord will no longer endure what he formerly endured, and that henceforth he must follow a different method. He calls it ironically "their righteousness;" for he means by it all the wickedness and all the errors by which they were stained and corrupted; as if he had said, "I will show what is the nature of your righteousness." So long as God "holds his peace," they who are most unrighteous and most unholy appear to be "righteous" persons; but when the Lord ascends his judgment-seat, men are brought out of their lurkingplaces, and their baseness is dragged forth to public view. And so the Prophet means that the greatest wickedness passes in the world for "righteousness," so long as God holds his peace, but that it shall at length be scattered, when

[356] "Have I not held my peace?" — (Eng. Ver.)

he ascends his judgmentseat; for men, after having much and long flattered themselves, shall at length feel that he is their judge.

And they shall not profit thee. This relates to the effect, by which men almost always judge; for they do not inquire whether a thing be righteous or unrighteous, but think that whatever is profitable to them ought to be approved. The Prophet therefore threatens that all the works from which they hoped to derive some profit shall be destructive to them.

13. *When thou shalt cry, let thy troops deliver thee.* He states more fully what he had slightly touched in the former verse, that, when they shall come to close quarters, they shall be ashamed; for the potential mood, "Let them deliver," amounts to saying, "They will not do it." He alludes to what he had formerly said, (verse 9) "Thou wentest to the king with ointments." And accordingly he gives the name of "troops" to all the means of defense by which the Jews thought that they would be safe; for, by trusting to them, they abandoned themselves to every kind of vices, as if they should be certain of escaping punishment, because they were guarded and fortified on every side. But the Lord shows how unavailing are all the troops which are assembled without his authority.

"Cry" denotes here that calamity by which they were to be afflicted; for, relying on their treaties and on the aid of allies, they thought that they would enjoy profound peace, as if they had never at any former period been deceived. But he declares that all the military defenses which they have collected for themselves shall be of no advantage to them whatever. Detestable and accursed is that confidence which men, having forsaken God, place in things of this world or in human defenses. (Jeremiah 17:5) Formerly he brought it as a reproach against the people, that they were not satisfied with the gentle waters of Shiloah, and desired to have the rapid and impetuous rivers which would at length overflow them. (Isaiah 8:6) This actually happened; for the Assyrians and Egyptians, and lastly the Babylonians, were not only unprofitable, but even ruinous, to the Jews whose allies they were.

But he who hopeth in me. Next follows a contrast, in which he invites them to confidence in God, which is the remedy that ought to be employed against all evils; as, on the other hand, all evils arise from unbelief and distrust. As to the promise of an inheritance to those who hope in God, it amounts to this, — "What else do you seek than to remain safe and sound, and to have your inheritance uninjured? It is I who can do this. For who brought you into this country? Who gave you possession of it? And yet you run after Egypt, and seek from men assistance which will be of little avail, and disregard my help."

Shall have the land by inheritance. I have no doubt that by the word "inheritance" he means Judea, in which the Jews were desirous to remain in safety; for he afterwards mentions the *"mountain* of his holiness," that is, the mountain on which the temple was built. So, then, the Jews did not ascribe to the Lord that which belonged to him, when they fled, not to

him, but to the Assyrians or Egyptians, for help. Hence we ought to draw a universal doctrine, namely, that our affairs will succeed admirably, if we hope in the Lord; and if we throw away confidence in him, we certainly need not wonder if we waver and are tossed about in various ways.

When he calls the mountain to which the Jews were to be brought back "the mountain of *holiness,"* he means that life and all its comforts are not in themselves desirable, except that we may worship God; for the end of human life is this, that God may have a people who shall render to him purity of worship. Let our eyes, therefore, be always fixed on the worship and service of God, if we desire life, or deliverance, or any of the comforts of life.

14. *And he shall say, Prepare, prepare.* Because this promise, that they who hoped in the Lord should possess the land, might be thought ridiculous, (for soon afterwards they were to be driven out of it,) for the sake of believers that still remained, there is added this second promise, by which he pledges himself that, although they have been driven out of the land of Canaan, and banished to a distant country, yet they shall be brought back to it. He therefore meets a doubt which might arise, that good men might not despair during that painful and longcontinued banishment, or imagine that the promise of God had failed of accomplishment. Some explain it to mean, that the Lord will send true and faithful prophets, to cleanse from its scandals the Church which had been corrupted by false prophets and wicked rulers; as he formerly showed that from them arose the cause of her ruin; and so they think that this is a promise of a better and happier condition. But such an interpretation is excessively forced, and therefore I choose rather to adopt the former interpretation, that, although for a time the Jews shall be deprived of that land, yet they shall be restored to it by the Lord, who will order the roads to be levelled, in order to bring them back.

This passage agrees with that which we formerly examined, (Isaiah 40:1-4) in which the Lord commanded to bring comfort to his people, to proclaim and publish the return to Judea, and to clear the roads; for, in consequence of their having been shut up in Babylon as in a grave, and of the length and difficulty of the journey, and of the vast wilderness that lay between, they could scarcely have any hope of returning to their native country. It was therefore proper that Isaiah should not pass by this matter lightly, that they might not dread the mountains or the sea that lay between, or any other obstructions.

Level the road. He addresses Cyrus and Darius, whose minds the Lord inspired to open up the path, and grant protection to the Jews; as if he had said, that the Lord will send ministers, who are now unknown to them, by whose agency he will "prepare the way" and bring out the people. The apostrophe, also, by which he directly addresses them, carries greater force than if he had spoken in the third person. By ordering them to *remove the stumbling blocks,* he shows that there is no reason why they should be terrified by the difficulties and obstructions of the roads, which the Lord will

easily "take away," whenever he thinks fit.

Out of the way of my people. The hope of return is contained in this, that the Lord determines to bring back his people, and place them again in the land of Canaan. Wherefore, though there were no other road, yet there must be one, and every bar and obstacle must be removed; because the Lord hath promised their return, and consequently is their leader in the journey.

15. *For thus hath spoken the High and Lofty One.* He confirms the former statement about the restoration of the people from captivity. But this verse may be explained in two ways; either that the Prophet meets the doubt which might spring up in the hearts of good men, and thus compares things which are contrasted with each other; or, that he draws an argument from the nature of God, in order to strengthen weak minds. To explain these things more clearly, we know, first, that our hearts are often distracted by these thoughts, that God is actually in heaven, but that there is a great distance between him and us, and that, he overlooks or despises human affairs, and, in a word, that he takes no care at all about us. In order to correct this imagination, the Prophet says that God does indeed dwell in a lofty place, but does not the less on that account look at this world and govern it by his providence; for he is anxious about the salvation of men, and dwells with the afflicted, and with them that are of a broken and humble heart; as it is said, "Jehovah is high, and hath respect to the lowly," (Psalm 138:6) and in other passages.

The other meaning is, that the Prophet shows that God is very unlike us; for we tremble in adversity, because we measure him by our standard, and say, "How shall the Lord render assistance to us, who are oppressed?" Besides, men who are in distress are commonly overlooked and despised. Thus we think that God holds us in no estimation, because we form our ideas of him from our own nature. But we ought to entertain very different views of him; and therefore he says, that he "dwelleth in heaven," in order to intimate that he is not liable to human passions; for he is like himself at all times, and never changes his purpose; and therefore as he has once promised restoration to his people, so he will perform it. I do not dislike this interpretation, nor do I reject the former, which is fuller and more abundant, and agrees with other passages of Scripture, that commonly join together those two things; that the Lord dwelleth in heaven, and taketh care of human affairs, and especially of his children, as I stated briefly a little before.

Who dwelleth in eternity. We are fickle, and apply our minds sometimes to one subject, and sometimes to another; and our hearts do not continue to be fixed on that which we have once embraced. On this account he distinguishes between God and men, for on him no shadow of change falls; but we have not such steadfastness as to exercise constant care about those who need our assistance.

I inhabit the high and holy. {קדוש} (*kadosh*) sometimes denotes the temple, but here it denotes heaven itself. We see the reason why he calls him "the

Holy One," and "the inhabitant of the holy and lofty place." It is in order to inform us how much he differs from us, and how unlike he is to our nature. Besides, we ought to draw from it a singular consolation, that the Lord wishes to assist the wretched, and even chooses for himself a habitation amongst them, that is, provided that they acknowledge their wretchedness.

And with him who is lowly in spirit. Wicked men are oppressed by various calamities, but do not cease to be fierce and haughty. It will be vain for them to hope that God will draw near to them; [357] for their hearts must be lowly and utterly cast down, if they expect to obtain any assistance from God. Accordingly, he descends even to the lifeless, that he may breathe new life into them and form them anew. Twice he expressly mentions the "lowly spirit," and the "afflicted heart," that we may know that these promises belong to those who, in their afflictions, shall not be hardhearted and rebellious, and who, in short, shall lay aside all haughtiness and be meek and lowly.

16. *Because not for ever will I strive.* He continues the same doctrine; for it was difficult to persuade them of this, seeing that during that painful captivity they perceived that God was their enemy, and could scarcely obtain any taste of the grace of God, by which their hearts might be encouraged or relieved. The Prophet therefore meets this doubt, and shows that the punishments which they shall endure will be for a short time, and that God will not always be angry with them; that God has indeed very good reason to be angry, but yet that he will relinquish his right, and will make abatement of that which he might have demanded. Thus he connects the wrath of God with that moderation by which he soothes believers, that they may not be discouraged; for, although he draws an argument from the nature of God, yet this promise is especially directed to the Church.

This sentence, therefore, ought always to be remembered by us amidst our sorest afflictions, lest we should think that God is our enemy, or that he will always contend with us. When he says that God is angry, he speaks as if he made an admission, and in accordance with the feelings of our flesh; for we cannot form any other conception of God during our afflictions, than that he is angry with us. It is even profitable to be moved by this feeling, that it may instruct us to repentance; and therefore this form of expression must be viewed as referring exclusively to our capacity, and not to God.

For the spirit shall be clothed, (or, *shall be concealed*, or, *shall fail.)* He assigns the reason why he will not always strive. There are various interpretations of this passage. Among others this appears to me to be the more appropriate; that "the spirit is clothed" with the body, as with a garment. Hence also the body is called the tabernacle, and, as it were, the habitation of the spirit. If we adopt this signification of the word, there will be two modes of interpreting this clause. Some explain it as referring to the last resurrection: "the spirit shall be clothed;" that is, after having gone out of

[357] "Que telles gens n'esperent point que Dieu s'approche d'eux." "Let not such persons hope that God will draw near to them."

the body, will again return to it as to its habitation. Thus there will be an argument from the greater to the less: "I will raise up dead bodies; why then shall I not restore you, though halfdead, to a better life?" Another meaning, which is also adopted by some, will be simpler and better; for the interpretation of the clause, as referring to the last resurrection, is too remote from the context. "I surrounded the spirit with a body;" as if he had said, "I created men, and therefore will take care of them."

But for my own part, I think that the Prophet rises higher; for he shows that the Lord deals so gently and kindly with us, because he perceives how weak and feeble we are; as is also pointed out in other passages of Scripture, such as Psalm 103:13, 14. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. He knoweth our condition, remembering that we are dust. The age of man is like grass, and flourisheth as a flower in the field." The same thing is said in Psalm 78:38, 39. "Yet being inclined to mercy, he was gracious to their iniquity, and did not destroy them, and often recalled his anger, and did not stir up all his indignation, remembering that they were flesh, and a wind that passeth away and returneth not again." Here the Prophet appears to me to mean the same thing; as if the Lord had said, "I am unwilling to try my strength with breath or wind, which would be as if with grass or a leaf, that shall suddenly vanish away when they have felt the heat of the sun." {יעטוף} (*yagnatoph*) is explained by some to mean "Shall fail;" which agrees very well with this passage; for our spirit shall fail, when the Lord puts forth his power against us. Leaving the signification of the words as somewhat doubtful, we sufficiently understand the Prophet's design. He shows that God deals gently with us, and acts with little severity in correcting our sins, because he takes into account our weakness, and wishes to support and relieve it.

17. *For the iniquity of his lust.* Here he complains of the obstinate wickedness of the people, and shows that the Lord had very good reason for punishing him in this manner; so that there can be no complaint of his immoderate cruelty. {בצעו} (*betzagno*) is translated by some "lust," and by others "covetousness." If it be "covetousness," it will then be a figurative mode of expression, in which a part is taken for the whole; for this is the source from which all evils arise. (1 Timothy 6:10) But we may take it generally for every kind of sinful desire; for it was on account of the various and numerous vices by which the Jews were polluted, that the Lord was angry, and inflicted on them severe punishments. But he expressly mentions "lust," in order to intimate that they were punished, not because they were openly wicked, but because they were sinful in the sight of God; for it is enough to condemn them, that God is Judge of the hearts, and punishes not only for outward crimes, but likewise for wicked dispositions and "lusts." At the same time he reminds them that their punishment is just, in order that, being conscious of guilt, they may humbly pray for pardon.

I struck him, I hid myself. He means that his favor was, in some respects,

withdrawn and "hidden" for a time. Now, he speaks according to the opinion of men, because, as we have already said, we imagine that God is an enemy, and is angry with us, when he punishes for our transgressions. And it is necessary that we should have those views and conceptions of him, that we may arrive at a true acknowledgment of our sins; for we should never acknowledge them sincerely, or be distressed on account of them, if we did not reflect with ourselves, and know that we had provoked God's wrath. But, while it is desirable that we should be led to repentance in this manner, we must beware, on the other hand, lest in consequence of imagining that God is hostile and unwilling to be reconciled to us, we should be swallowed up by sorrow. The Prophet therefore restrains these immoderate terrors, and forbids us to judge of God according to our natural disposition; for although he chastises us, he does not cease to cherish a father's love and affection towards those whom he has once embraced.

But he went away. This is the rebelliousness which the Prophet blames and rebukes, that the people were in no degree made better, but persevered in their wickedness. He shows that they were desperate, because the violent remedies which the Lord had tried could not bring them back into the right way.

18. *I have seen his ways.* [358] Here the Lord, on the contrary, magnifies his mercy, because he is gracious to that people, though obstinate and rebellious, and anticipates them by his grace and mercy. As if he had said, "I labored to bring back this people to repentance by my chastisements, because they violently pursued their lusts; but they were obstinate and untameable; all that I did was of no avail. I might justly, indeed, have ruined him, but I choose rather to heal and preserve. This cannot be done but by distinguished and incomparable mercy. I will therefore cease to punish them." For these reasons Isaiah gradually magnifies the mercy of God, whom he represents as a physician considering what remedies are best adapted for healing this people. Now, our diseases are incurable, if the Lord do not anticipate us by his mercy.

And will guide him. No chastisements, however severe, will drive us to repentance, if the Lord do not quicken us by his Spirit; for the consequence will be, to render us more rebellious and hardhearted. And so we may behold, in the example of this people, an image of mankind; that we may clearly see what is our rebellion and obstinacy against God, and what remedies are necessary for curing our diseases; and that, when we are diseased and almost beyond hope, we are healed, are brought back to the right path, and afterwards continue in it. Hence follows consolation:

Restoring comforts to him. If piety be wanting, there can be no faith and no consolation; for they who are not dissatisfied with themselves on account of their vices can look for nothing but the wrath of God, terrors

[358] "When he (the people of Israel) humbled himself during the affliction which came upon him." — Jarchi.

and despair. It is proper, therefore, to observe the context, in which the Prophet, after mentioning "healing," next mentions "consolation;" for they whose diseases have been cured obtain, at the same time, that joy of heart and that consolation of which they had been deprived.

When he adds, *To his mourners*, he appears especially to denote good men, [359] who were few in number; as appears clearly from the complaints of the prophets, who exclaim loudly against the stupidity which had seized the people on every side. Thus he describes those who, amidst the universal guilt, were constrained by sincere grief to mourn, and who not only bewailed the miseries of the people, but deeply groaned under the burden of God's wrath, while others indulged freely in their pleasures.

19. *I create the fruit of the lips.* This is an explanation of the former statement, or of the manner in which the Lord will give consolation to this people. It is, because he will promise and offer *peace* to them; for by "the fruit of the lips" he means that he will cause them to hear the glad tidings of peace, by which they shall be filled with joy.

Peace, peace. I think that he speaks of the publication of "peace," the ministry of which was committed to the prophets, and was afterwards enjoined on the apostles and the other ministers of the Gospel; as Paul teaches that they "are ambassadors for Christ, to reconcile men to God." (2 Corinthians 5:20) The repetition of the word "Peace" is intended to express not only certainty, but also uninterrupted continuance. As if he had said, "You now hear nothing but dreadful threatenings. The doctrine of grace and salvation is silent, because you are incapable of it. Such is your obstinacy that I must deal with you by threatenings and terrors. But I will one day restore the doctrine of 'peace,' and open the lips of the prophets, that they may proclaim it to you."

To them that are far off. This is added, because the people who had been carried into captivity did not think that these things belonged to them, (because they were "far off,") but perhaps to those who were at home; for captivity was a sort of casting off. But the Prophet foretells that, though they are at a great distance, yet they shall be partakers of this grace.

And I heal him. At length he adds the end or effect, that the Lord determines to heal the people; that is, to make them safe and sound. Hence we infer what I remarked a little before, that all that relates to the full and perfect happiness of the Church is absolutely the gift of God.

Paul appears to have glanced at this passage, when he says that Christ

"brought peace to them that are near, and to them that are far off." (Ephesians 2:17)

He speaks of Gentiles and Jews; for the Jews were "near," because God had entered into a covenant with them; but the Gentiles were "far off," because they were strangers to that covenant. But the Prophet appears to speak of Jews only.

[359] "Fideles." "Believers."

I reply, Paul adheres to the true meaning of the Prophet, if the whole be but carefully examined; for the Jews are said, in this passage, to be "far off," because the Lord appeared to have driven them out of his house; and in that respect they resembled the Gentiles. Since, therefore, at the time of that casting off, there was no difference between them and the Gentiles, Paul, by putting both, as it were, in the same rank, justly placed them on a level with the Jews, and thus applied to them what the Prophet had spoken about the Jews; as, in a manner not unlike, he elsewhere applies to the Gentiles a passage in Hosea. (Romans 9:25; Hosea 1:10)

20. *But the wicked.* Having formerly spoken of the "peace" which good men shall enjoy, he threatens that the wicked, on the contrary, shall have continual war and incessant uneasiness and distress of heart; in order that good men may value more highly the excellent blessing of "peace," and next, that the reprobate may know that their condition shall in no degree be improved in consequence of that peace which is promised to the children of God. But because the reprobate make false pretensions to the name of God, and vainly glory in it, the Prophet shows that there is no reason why they should flatter themselves, or advance any claim, on the ground of this promise, since they can have no share in this peace. Nor will it avail them anything, that God, having compassion upon his people, receives them into favor, and commands peace to be proclaimed to them.

As the troubled sea. That metaphor of "the sea" is elegant and very well fitted to describe the uneasiness of the wicked; for of itself "the sea is troubled." Though it be not beaten by the wind or agitated by frightful tempests, its billows carry on mutual war, and dash against each other with terrible violence. In the same manner wicked men are "troubled" by inward distress, which is deeply seated in their hearts. They are terrified and alarmed by conscience, which is the most agonizing of all torments and the most cruel of all executioners. The furies agitate and pursue the wicked, not with burning torches, (as the fables run,)but with anguish of conscience and the torment of wickedness; for every one is distressed by his own wickedness and his own alarm; [360] every one is agonized and driven to madness by his own guilt; they are terrified by their own evil thoughts and by the pangs of conscience. Most appropriately, therefore, has the Prophet compared them to a stormy and troubled sea. Whoever then wishes to avoid these alarms and this frightful agony of heart, let him not reject that peace which the Lord offers to him. There can be no middle course between them; for, if you do not lay aside sinful desires and accept of this peace, you must unavoidably be miserably distressed and tormented.

21. *There is no peace to the wicked.* He confirms the preceding statement, namely, that in vain shall the reprobate endeavor to seek peace, for everywhere they will meet with war. It is God who threatens war, and therefore there can be no hope of "peace." Wicked men would indeed wish to enjoy

[360] "Et gehenne." "And by the hell within him."

peace, and ardently long for it; for there is nothing which they more eagerly desire than to be at ease, and to lull their consciences, that they may freely take their pleasures and indulge in their vices. They drive away all thoughts about the judgment of God, and endeavor to stupify themselves and to repose in indolence, and think that these are the best ways and methods of obtaining peace. But they never shall enjoy it; for, until men have been reconciled to God, conscience will never cease to annoy and carry on war with them.

Saith my God. Thus he represents God as the only author of peace, that he may, by this dreadful threatening, tear from the Jews their dearest pleasures; and calls him "his God," in opposition to the vain boasting of those who falsely boasted of his name; for they cannot acknowledge God, so long as they reject his Prophet and his doctrine. For this reason the Prophet boldly declares that he has received a command from God to declare perpetual war against them.

Chapter 58

CHAPTER 58.

Isaiah 58:1-14

1. Cry aloud, spare not; lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.

1. Clama in gutture, ne cohibeas; quasi tuba exalta vocem tuam, et annuntia populo meo peccatum suum, et domui Iacob iniquitatem snare.

2. Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God.

2. Me tamen quotidie quaerunt, et scire vias meas nolunt; quasi gens quae justitiam fecerit, et judicium Dei sui non intermiserit; sciscitandur ex me judicia justitiae, appropinquare Deo volunt.

3. Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? Wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours.

3. Quare jejunavimus, et non aspexisti? humiliavimus animas nostras, et nesciisti? Ecce quo die jejunatis, invenitis voluntatem, et omnes facultates vestras exigitis.

4. Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high.

4. Ecce, ad litem et contentionem jejunatis; atque ut percutiatis pugno impio. Ne jejunetis sicut hodie, ut audiri faciatis in excelso vocem vestram.

5. Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the LORD?

5. An tale est jejunium quod elegi? ut die affligat homo animam suam,

et quasi juncus demittat caput suum, sternat saccum et cinerem? An hoc vocabis jejunium, et diem gratum Iehovae?

6. Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?

6. Annon hoc est jejunium quod elegi? solvere colligationes impias, dissolvere fasciculos graves, oppressos dimittere liberos, atque ut omne jugum abrumpatis?

7. Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?

7. Annon ut partiaris esurienti panem tuam, et pauperes vagos inducas domum? Si videris nudum, operias eum, et a carne tua ne to abscondas?

8. Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the LORD shall be thy rereward.

8. Tunc proferetur ut aurora lux tua; et sanitas tua protinus germinabit; justitia anteibit faciem tuam, et gloria Iehovae colliget to.

9. Then shalt thou call, and the LORD shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity;

9. Tunc invocabis, et Iehova exaudiet; clamabis, et dicet, Ecce adsum; si abstuleris e medio tui onus, et emissionem digiti, et sermonem vanitatis, (vel, inutilem.)

10. And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noonday:

10. Si effuderis famelico animam tuam, et animam afflictam satiaveris, orietur in tenebris lux tua, et caligo tua erit sicut meridies.

11. And the LORD shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.

11. Et deducet to Iehova semper, et saturabit in siccitatibus animam tuam, et ossa tua saginabit. Et eris quasi hortus irriguus, et scaturigo aquarum, cujus aquae non deficiunt.

12. And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in.

12. Et erunt ex to qui instaurent deserta seculi; fundamenta generationis et generationis excitabis. Et voeaberis rupturae reparator, director semitarum ad inhabitandum.

13. If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding

thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words:

13. Si averteris a sabbato pedem tuum, nec facies voluntatem tuam, in die sancto meo, et vocaveris sabbatum delicias ad consecrandum Iehovae, eo quod sit honorabile, et honorem illi tribueris, ut non exequaris vias tuas, nec inveniatur voluntas tua, nec loquutus faeris verbum;

14. Then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

14. Tunc delectaberis in Iehova, et equitare to faciam super excelsa terrae, et pascam to haereditatis Iacob patris tui; quia os Iehovae loquutum est.

1. *Cry with the throat.* This chapter has been badly divided; for these words are connected with what goes before; and therefore, if we wish to understand the Prophet's meaning, we ought to read them as if there had been no separation. The Prophet has testified that the people shall be punished in such a manner as to leave some hope of peace, and next has threatened that the wicked, who by indolent pride endeavor to escape from God, shall have continual war. He now confirms that doctrine, and informs them that God has given him this command, to "cry with the throat," that is, to use a common expression, (*a plein gosier*) "at the full stretch of the voice."

Why is this? It is to *make known to the people their sins* He does not speak merely of the stretch of the voice, but means by it that keenness and severity of language which hypocrites especially need, as if God were throwing thunderbolts against them from heaven; for they are delighted with their vices, if they be not severely reproved and dragged forth to the light, or rather if they be not violently thrown down.

When he adds, *Spare not,* it is a mode of expression very frequently employed by Hebrew writers, such as, "I cry, and am not silent." (Psalm 22:2) It is equivalent to a common expression, (*Crie sans espargner,*) "Cry without sparing." We have said that the Prophet does not speak of the mere sound of the voice, but means a severe and harsh reproof, which is very necessary to be sharply used towards hypocrites. For instance, if the prophets merely spoke of the Law of the Lord, and showed what is the rule of a good and holy life, and recommended the worship of God, and likewise reproved vices, but. without employing any vehemence of language, what impression would they produce on hypocrites, whose conscience is lulled in such a manner that they cannot be aroused but by applying spurs? And so a simple manner of teaching would not be enough, unless they were sharply attacked, and the thunderbolts of words were launched against them.

Paul also, imitating the prophets, after having condemned all mankind, breaks out with greater vehemence against those who made some profession of holiness and abused God's patience. "Behold, thou art called a Jew, and restest in the Law, and boastest in God, and knowest his will, and approvest what is excellent, being instructed out of the Law; and trustest that thou

thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of those who are in darkness, an instructor of fools, a teacher of the ignorant, having the form of knowledge and of truth by the Law. Thou therefore that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou who preachest that men ought not to steal, dost thou steal? (Romans 2:17-21) Against such persons he threatens the judgment of God and terrible vengeance, because they have abused his goodness, and vainly boast of his name.

Thus the Prophet, in this passage, sharpens his pen expressly against the Jews, who gloried in the name of God, and yet proudly rose up against him. This is the method, therefore, that ought to be followed against hypocrites, who hold out an empty show of holiness; at least, if we wish to discharge our duty in a proper and useful manner. As the Lord exercised the prophets in this kind of combat, so we must be exercised in it at the present day; so that we must not hold our peace, or give them a slight reproof, but must exclaim against them with all our might.

It might be objected, "If the Lord commands his servants to reprove the sins of the people, to whom he promises peace, he undoubtedly intended to leave to them the hope of salvation. And yet it is certain that those words are addressed to the reprobate, against whom he had formerly declared war." I reply, believers were at that time reduced to a small number; for there were few who embraced the peace that was offered to them. Accordingly, when Isaiah holds out the hope of approaching peace, he has his eye on that little flock; when he threatens war, his aim is to terrify the multitude, who were estranged from God and despised his warnings; for the state of the people was such, as we have formerly seen, (Isaiah 1:21) that scarcely any pure or sound morality remained.

And to the house of Jacob their iniquity. With good reason does he call them "the house of Jacob," when the greater part of the people were corrupted. And we ought carefully to observe this distinction: that the prophets sometimes address the multitude at large, and sometimes limit their discourse to a few believers. Nor is it without witty and bitter mockery that he gives the designations of "his people" and "children of Jacob" to those who had degenerated from their stock and had basely revolted from the faith of the fathers. The concession made is therefore ironical; as if he had said that there is no privilege which hinders them from hearing what they deserve.

2. *Yet they seek me daily.* Here he intended to take away every ground of objection from hypocrites, who had their answers ready. "We fear, serve, and love God, and seek him with the whole heart. Why do you rebuke us as if we were irreligious persons; for we wish to regulate our life according to the injunctions of the Law." To meet this objection, he affirms that they do nothing in a pure or sincere manner, that everything is pretended and hypocritical, and consequently is of no value before God, who demands the whole heart. (Genesis 17:1)

It is proper to observe this order which the Prophet has followed. After having threatened war against wicked men and hypocrites, he now rebukes them severely, and takes away the pretenses and disguises under which they shrouded themselves. This is the manner in which hypocrites should be treated, and dragged, as it were, out of their lurkingplaces; for otherwise doctrine could produce no good effect upon them. And not only should godly teachers observe this order, but every person ought to apply this manner of teaching for his own use, that he may not be satisfied with himself or flatter his vices; that he may not practice hypocrisy on himself, or suffer himself to be deceived by the tricks of Satan. Let him therefore bring a pure and upright heart, if he wish to profit by the doctrine of the word, and to be acceptable to God.

And wish to know my ways. Although Isaiah admits that traitors and liars have some show of holiness, yet, on the other hand, by a bitter figure of speech, he censures them, as if he had said that in their shameful boasting there was excessive wickedness. Thus it is not simple irony, but there is likewise added a complaint, that, while they apparently labor to serve God, still, if any person examine them more closely, and inquire into their whole manner of life, he will perceive that their hearts are altogether estranged from God.

They ask of me the judgments of righteousness. [361] Those who think that in these words hypocrites blame God, and rise up against him, as if they would enter into controversy with him, have not understood the Prophet's meaning. I acknowledge that he does this soon afterwards; but before coming down to it, he tears off their mask of pretended godliness. After having said that they "seek God daily," as if there were nothing that occupied their thoughts more earnestly than religion, he proceeds in the same strain, and says, that they "ask judgments," that they may serve God, and observe the rule of a holy life, that is, by pretending to burn with zeal for religion. And indeed the Prophet here enumerates the most important exercises of believers, which sometimes are ostentatiously imitated by the wicked. Now, the chief point of religion is, to inquire into the will of God, that we may regulate our life by the rule which he has laid down for us, and to depend on his mouth. But the children of God, in this respect, are falsely copied by hypocrites, so that they appear to practice all that relates to the true worship of God, and sometimes to exceed the very best of men.

3. *Wherefore have we fasted?* He proceeds farther with the same subject, and says that feigned and perverse worshippers of God are not only blinded by their hypocrisy, but likewise swell with pride, so that they venture openly to murmur at God, and to complain when he presses hard upon them, as if he had done them a grievous injury. "Dost thou reject our services, fastings, and prayers? Why are they not acceptable to thee? Do we not vex ourselves

[361] "They consult the priests and prophets as to those laws and statutes about which there is any uncertainty, as if they were afraid of breaking the commandments of God through ignorance. — Rosenmuller.

in vain?“

He has admitted, as we have already said, that hypocrites have some outward show of holiness, by which they deceive men; but now he declares that inwardly they are also puffed up and intoxicated by pride, while they have pretended good works, by which they think that they satisfy God, and, on this pretense, they carry themselves high against the prophets, and indulge in the worst vices, such as unbelief, rebellion, and obstinacy against God, distrust, cruelty, fraud, and pillage. These are light matters in themselves, and are easily washed away by other external exercises; for the former are their preeminent merits, in which they think that the worship of God consists, and from which they hope to obtain the pardon of all their sins. Thus they “strain out a gnat, [362] and do not scruple to swallow a whole camel.” (Matthew 23:24) If such characters had been found among the Jews only, and if the world had changed its disposition, we should have needed to seek far for examples; but since we have experience of the same thing every day, there is no necessity for giving ourselves much trouble about the exposition of this passage.

This complaint may be viewed as referring both to the word and to the hand of God. In both ways God judges hypocrites; for he rebukes by the word, and punishes for their obstinate malice; and therefore those words may be viewed as referring both to the chastisements and to the preceding reproof. For my own part, I interpret it as relating to the word, and as a rebuke to hypocrites, who boasted of their fastings, and contrasted them with the censures of the prophets; as if they were the true worshippers of God, and were unjustly rebuked. I differ from those who think that the people blame God for treating them harshly during their captivity. On the contrary, it appears to me that they complain of the prophets for rebuking them with great sharpness and severity; for the Jews wished to be regarded as devout and religious persons, and could not patiently endure to be condemned for impiety and wickedness. For this reason the Prophet exposes their dispositions, and shows that they make war with God, that they may not suppose that they have to deal with him as a private individual.

Ye find pleasure and exact all your labors. In the second part of the verse he refutes, in the name of God, those virtues which hypocrites proclaim with the sound of a trumpet. It is, because they do not nevertheless lay aside the sinful dispositions of the flesh, or begin to deny themselves; for he condemns them chiefly on the ground of having been devoted to their desires, and next he enumerates particular kinds of vices. Hence we may easily infer that their heart is not moved by any anxiety to repent.

4. *Behold, for strife and contention ye fast.* This verse ought to be connected with the end of the preceding verse; for, having in the former clause introduced hypocrites as complaining of the violence and harshness

[362] For the meaning of this phrase, see our author’s Commentary on the harmony of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Vol. 3, p. 93. — Ed.

of the prophets, he assigns, in the latter clause, the reason why the Lord loathes their fasts and their other performances. It is because they do not proceed from pure affection of heart. What the inclination of their heart is, he shows from its fruits; for he sends them back to the duties of the second table, from which it is easily seen what we are. Purity of heart is manifested by our living innocently, and abstaining from all deceit and injustice. These are the marks of pure affection, in the absence of which the Lord rejects, and even abhors, all external worship. Wherever, on the other hand, cheating, and plunder, and extortion prevail, it is very certain that there is no fear of God.

Thus he reproaches hypocrites with making their fasts to give greater encouragement to sin, and with giving a looser rein to their lusts. We have experience of this every day. Not only do many people fast in order to atone for their cheating and robberies, and to plunder more freely, but even that, during the time of the fast, they may have greater leisure for examining their accounts, perusing documents, and calculating usury, and contriving methods by which they may lay hold on the property of their debtors. On that account they frequently throw this labor on Lent and on the stated times of fasts; and, in like manner, other notable hypocrites hear many Masses every day, that they may more freely, and with less interruption, and under the pretense of religion, contrive their cheating and treachery.

Fast not, as ye do this day. At length he rejects their fasts, however highly they may value them; because in this manner the wrath of God is still more provoked. Immediately afterwards he rejects also their prayers.

That ye may make your voice to be heard on high. [363] Hence it is evident, (as we have explained fully in our exposition of Isaiah 1:11,) that God approves of no duties which are not accompanied by sincere uprightness of heart. Certainly no sacrifice is more excellent than calling upon God; and yet we see how all prayers are stained and polluted by impurity of heart. Besides, in consequence of fasting being usually joined to prayer, the Prophet takes this for granted; for it is an appendage to prayer, he therefore forbids such men to offer up solemn prayer accompanied by fasting; because they will gain nothing, except that the Lord will punish them more severely. And hence we infer (as has been already said) that the Lord pays no regard to external works, if they be not preceded by sincere fear of God.

Such fasting as was customary among the Jews is not here blamed in itself, as if it were a superstitious ceremony, but abuse of fasting, and false confidence. This ought to be carefully observed; for we would need to deal very differently with the Papists, if we blamed their fasts. They contain nothing but superstition, being tied to this or that day, or to fixed seasons,

[363] "Luther and other early writers understand the last clause as a prohibition of noisy quarrels, 'to make the voice heard on high,' being taken as equivalent to letting it be heard in the street. (Isaiah 42:3) Vitringa and the later writers give it a meaning altogether different, by taking {{מרום (marom) in the sense of heaven, (Isaiah 57:15,) and the whole clause as a declaration that such fasting would not have the desired effect of gaining audience and acceptance for their prayers. (See Joel 1:14; 2:12)" — Alexander.

as if during the rest of the time they were at liberty to gormandize; while they think that the flesh is unclean, and yet allow every kind of indulgence to it; provided only that they do not once gormandize on a fastday, they think that they have discharged their duty admirably well. Since therefore there is nothing in them that can be approved, we may absolutely condemn them.

But the dispute on this occasion was different. That fasting which the Jews observed was laudable in itself, because God had appointed it; but a false opinion respecting it was censurable. Among the Papists, on the other hand, we must condemn both the false opinion and the institution itself; because it is wicked. The Papists have this in common with the Jews, that they think that they serve God by it, and that it is a meritorious work. Yet fasting is not the worship of God, and is not in itself commanded by him, in the same manner as those works which he enjoins in the Law; but it is an external exercise, which is auxiliary to prayer, or is useful for subduing the flesh, or testifying our humiliation, when, as guilty persons, we implore that the wrath of God may be turned away in adversity. But the reader will find the use and design of fasting more fully discussed in our Institutes. (Book 4, chapter 12:1521)

5. *Is it such a fast as I have chosen?* He confirms the preceding statement, and shows that fasting is neither desired nor approved by God in itself, but so far as it is directed to its true end. He did not wish that it should be altogether abolished, but the improper use of it; that is, because they believed the worship of God to consist in it, and by neglecting or even despising true godliness, thought that bodily exercise was enough; just as hypocrites always put forward external ceremonies, as if they were satisfactions to appease God.

Again, because men, through their rashness, define what is the worship of God, he expressly refers us to his own will, that we may not suppose that he approves of everything which our own judgment pronounces to be right. Although men are well pleased with themselves, and swell with astonishing haughtiness, and indulge in insolent boasting, the Lord rejects and abhors them, because he claims for himself alone the right to "choose." Now, "to choose" a thing is of the same import as "to take pleasure in it."

And hanging his head like a bulrush. He says that he is not delighted if a man passes a day in hunger, and then walks with a sad and downcast look. The Prophet employs all appropriate metaphor; because the bulrush, though it is straight, is easily bent. So hypocrites bend themselves, and bow down the head, as if under the influence of oppressive leanness, or display some empty appearance of humility. The Prophet therefore intended to censure superstitious attitudes, in which hypocrites imagine that there is some holiness.

And spread sackcloth and ashes. These things also were added to fasting, especially when they made solemn professions of repentance; for they clothed

themselves with "sackcloth," and threw "ashes" on their head. (Joel 1:13) Now, such an exercise was holy and approved by God; and we see that the prophets, while they exhort the people to repentance, cry aloud for "sackcloth and ashes." But as we have said that fasting is not here condemned on its own account, so Isaiah does not condemn those outward ceremonies, but reproves hypocrites for separating them from reality.

If it be asked, Are "sackcloth" and "ashes" suitable to our time? I reply, they are indifferent matters, which may be used for edification; but in the light of the Gospel, which has brought liberty to us, we have no need of such figures. At the same time, we should attend to the difference between Eastern nations, which make use of a great abundance and variety of ceremonies, and Western nations, whose habits are far more simple. If we wished to imitate the former, it would be nothing else than to enact the part of apes, or of stageplayers. Yet there is nothing to hinder those who intend to confess their guilt, from wearing soiled and faltered garments, after the manner used by suppliants. [364]

A day acceptable to Jehovah. Hence it is evident that to solemn prayer, when a holy assembly was held, there was added fasting; for fasting, as we have already said, is an appendage to prayer; as we see that it was added to prayer by Christ himself. (Matthew 17:21) It is not appointed, therefore, for its own sake, but is directed to a different end.

6. *Is not this the fast which I have chosen?* The Prophet shows what are the real duties of piety, and what God chiefly recommends to us; namely, to relieve those who are wretched and pressed with a heavy burden. But the Prophet appears to abolish fasting universally, when, in place of it, he enumerates those works which are most highly acceptable to God. I reply, fasting is approved when it is accompanied by that love which we owe to our fellowmen; and therefore the Prophet directs that we shall be tried by this principle, that our consciences be entire and pure, that we exercise mutual kindness towards each other; for if this order prevail, then fasting, which shall be added to it, will be pleasing and acceptable to God. But here he does not at all mention purity of heart. I reply, it is described by works, as by its fruits, from which it is easily seen what kind of heart we have. Next, he enumerates the duties of the Second Table, under which, as we have elsewhere seen, by a figure of speech in which a part is taken for the whole, he includes the whole observation of the Law; for it would not be enough to assist our neighbor by kind offices, if at the same time we despised God. But we must observe the Prophet's design; because the love which we owe to our neighbors cannot be sincerely cultivated, unless when we love them in God. In order to make trial of our fear of God, he demands these as more immediate signs, if we live justly, inoffensively, and kindly with each other. Besides, he was not satisfied with outward appearance; and indeed

[364] "Selon la coustume des criminels qui demandent misericorde." "According to the custom of criminals who implore mercy."

the love of our neighbor does not thrive where the Spirit of God does not reign; and therefore Paul includes it in the enumeration of "the works of the Spirit." (Galatians 5:22) Thus when the observation of the Law is spoken of, not only outward works, but likewise the dispositions of the heart, must be taken into the account.

To loose wicked bindings. Some explain it to mean "sinful thoughts," by which the hearts of men are entangled. But Isaiah appears to me to have had another object in view, namely, that hypocrites are exceedingly cruel in distressing the poor, and lay heavy burdens upon them. He therefore calls them "bonds," or "bindings," or, as we commonly say, "oppressions." Of the same import is what he adds, *to undo the heavy burdens,* under the weight of which the poor groan and are overwhelmed. he again adds, "to let the oppressed go free," and expresses the same thing in a variety of words. Thus the Prophet does not define what is meant by "fasting," but shows what the Lord requires in the first place and chiefly, and in what manner our obedience can be approved by him, and what ought to be the dispositions of those who endeavor to fast in a right manner.

7. *Is it not to break thy bread to the hungry?* He goes on to describe the duties of love of our neighbor, which he had described briefly in the preceding verse; for, having formerly said that we must abstain from every act of injustice, he now shows that we ought to exercise kindness towards the wretched, and those who need our assistance. Uprightness and righteousness are divided into two parts; first, that we should injure nobody; and secondly, that we should bestow our wealth and abundance on the poor and needy. And these two ought to be joined together; for it is not enough to abstain from acts of injustice, if thou refuse thy assistance to the needy; nor will it be of much avail to render thine aid to the needy, if at the same time thou rob some of that which thou bestowest on others. Thou must not relieve thy neighbors by plunder or theft.; and if thou hast committed any act of injustice, or cruelty, or extortion, thou must not, by a pretended compensation, call on God to receive a share of the plunder. These two parts, therefore, must be held together, provided only that we have our love of our neighbor approved and accepted by God.

By commanding them to "break bread to the hungry, [365] he intended to take away every excuse from covetous and greedy men, who allege that they have a right to keep possession of that which is their own. "This is mine, and therefore I may keep it for myself. Why should I make common property of that which God has given me?" He replies, "It is indeed thine, but on this condition, that thou share it with the hungry and thirsty, not that thou eat it thyself alone." And indeed this is the dictate of common sense, that the hungry are deprived of their just right, if their hunger is

[365] Grotius says that "the bread in those countries was such as could be easily 'broken,' [like the thin cakes which are still common in the East]; and that to 'break,' consequently, meant to 'impart,' or to distribute. The phraseology is borrowed from the breaking of the bread which is distributed by the head of a family to the domestics at his table." — Rosenmuller.

not relieved. That sad spectacle extorts compassion even from the cruel and barbarous. He next enumerates various kinds, which commonly bend hearts of iron to {συμπάθειαν} fellowfeeling or compassion; that the savage disposition of those who are not moved by feeling for a brother's poverty and necessity may be the less excusable. At length he concludes —

And that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh. Here we ought to observe the term flesh, by which he means all men universally, not one of whom we can behold, without seeing, as in a mirror, "our own flesh." It is therefore a proof of the greatest inhumanity, to despise those in whom we are constrained to recognize our own likeness.

8. *Then shall break forth as the dawn* [366] *thy light.* The Prophet shows that God is not too rigorous, and does not demand from us more than what is proper; and that hypocrites complain of him without cause, when they accuse him of excessive severity. When their works are condemned, they murmur, and reply that God can never be satisfied, that they do not know what they should do, or what course they should follow. He replies that he demands nothing else than a pure and honest heart, that is, an upright conscience; that if they have this, God will graciously receive them, and will bear testimony to their holiness, and will bestow every kind of blessing on those whose faults he justly chastises; and lastly, that there is no reason why they should murmur at him as excessively stern and harsh, because they will find him to be kind and bountiful when they shall lay down all hypocrisy, and devote themselves sincerely to his service.

We should observe the particle *then;* for it means that hypocrites, on the contrary, are very far from the true worship of God, though they wish to be reckoned very holy persons. But he holds them to be fully convicted, when he shows from their works that they neither worship nor fear God. By the word light he means prosperity, as by the word "darkness" is meant a wretched and afflicted life; and this mode of expression occurs frequently in Scripture.

And thy health. By "health" he means prosperity and safety, as we shall afterwards see in another passage, because the wounds inflicted by the hand of God on account of their sins had brought the people so low that they wasted away like a sick man under terrible disease. No kind of disease is more severe than to be pursued by God's righteous vengeance, or consumed under his curse.

Righteousness shall go before thy face. "Righteousness" may be taken in two senses, either for the testimony of "righteousness," or for good order; because God will put an end to the confusion, and will restore everything to its proper place. Thus the former meaning amounts to this, "When God shall be pacified towards thee, the testimony of thy righteousness shall be visible before God and men, as if some herald went before thee." There are some who prefer to expound the word "righteousness" as meaning just government,

[366] "As the pillar of the dawn bursts through the clouds." — Jarchi.

which is the gift of God, and a token of his kindness as a Father; and we have seen that this word is sometimes used in that sense by Hebrew writers. But the latter clause which follows, *And the glory of Jehovah will gather thee,* leads me to prefer the former exposition, "Thy righteousness shall go forth;" that is, "All shall acknowledge thee to be holy and righteous, though formerly thou wast guilty and convicted. So shalt thou also be adorned with the glory of the Lord, though formerly thou wast loaded with reproaches." For we are reproached and disgraced, while we suffer the punishment of our sins.

9. *Then shalt thou call.* Isaiah follows out what he had formerly begun, that everything shall prosper well with the Jews, if they shall be just and inoffensive and free from doing wrong to any one, so that it shall manifest their piety and religion. He pronounces what is said by Hosea, (Hosea 6:6) and repeated by Christ, that "mercy shall be preferred to sacrifice." (Matthew 9:13; 12:7) Thus after having spoken of the duties which men owe to one another, and testified that it shall be well with those who shall perform those duties, he adds, "Then shalt thou call, and the Lord will listen to thee." The chief part of our happiness is, if God listen to us; and, on the other hand, nothing could be more miserable than to have him for an enemy. In order to try our faith, he attributes to our prayers what he bestows willingly and by free grace; for if he always bestowed his blessings while we were asleep, the desire to pray would become utterly cold, and indeed would cease altogether; and so the kindness of God would be an encouragement to slothfulness. Although he anticipates us by his free grace, yet he wishes that our prayers for his blessings should be offered, and therefore he adds, *Thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Behold, here I am.* This promise likewise contains an exhortation, that we may not lie idle. When he says that he is present, this indeed is not visible to our eyes; but he gives a practical declaration that he is near and reconciled to us.

If thou shalt take away from the midst of thee the yoke. In the latter part of the verse he again repeats that God will be reconciled to the Jews if they repent. Under the word "yoke" he includes all the annoyances that are offered to the poor; as if he had said, "If thou shalt cease to annoy thy brethren, and shalt abstain from all violence and deceit, the Lord will bestow upon thee every kind of blessing."

And the pointing of the finger. [367] This includes every kind of attack; for we are said to "point the finger," when we threaten our neighbors, or treat them cruelly, or offer any violence.

And speech of vanity, or unprofitable speech. This is the third class of acts of injustice, by which we injure our neighbor when we impose upon him by cunning and deceitful words or flatteries; for every iniquity consists either of concealed malice and deceit, or of open violence.

[367] "Grotius thus explains this clause, 'If thou shalt cease to point at good men with "the disreputable finger," (as Persius calls it,)and to mock at their simplicity.' In like manner Juvenal says, (Sat. 10:52)

10. *If thou shalt pour out thy soul to the hungry.* He goes on to recommend the duties of that love which we owe to one another. The sum of the whole discourse is this, that in vain do men serve God, if they only offer to him trivial and bare ceremonies; and that this is not the right and proper worship of God, who rigidly commands and enjoins us to lead an upright and innocent life with our neighbors, willingly to give ourselves and our labors to them, and to be ready to assist, them readily and cheerfully, whenever it is necessary. We should observe the two parts of this duty which the Prophet has expressly described; for in the first place, he recommends to us the feeling of mercy and kindness; and, in the second place, he exhorts us to the work itself and the effect. It would not be enough to perform acts of kindness towards men, if our disposition towards them were not warm and affectionate. "If I give all my goods to the poor," says Paul, "and have not love, I am nothing." (1 Corinthians 13:3) To "pour out the soul," therefore, is nothing else than to bewail their distresses, and to be as much affected by their own poverty as if we ourselves endured it; as, on the other hand, all who are limited and devoted to themselves are said to have a hard and seared heart, to "shut up their bowels," (1 John 3:17) and to restrain their feelings. [368] Another translation given by some commentators, "If thou shalt offer thy soul," is unworthy of notice.

Thy light shall arise in darkness. Again, there follows the same promise, and under the same figure or metaphor. By "darkness" he denotes adversity, and by "light" prosperity; as if he had said to the people, "The Lord will cause all the miseries by which thou art now oppressed to cease, and sudden prosperity shall spring up." He shows, therefore, that there is no reason why they should blame God for punishing them so severely; for they would immediately be delivered and enjoy prosperity if they sincerely worshipped and obeyed God.

11. *And Jehovah will always conduct thee.* He now describes more clearly what he had spoken briefly and figuratively, that God will be their guide, so that they shall be in want of nothing for a full abundance of blessings. God is said to "conduct" us, when we actually feel that he goes before us, as if he were placed before our eyes.

And will satisfy thy soul in drought. The Prophet adds that the aid promised shall not be of short duration, because God never forsakes his people in the middle of the journey, but continues his kindness towards them with unwearied regularity, and for this reason promises that they shall be satisfied amidst the deepest poverty; because God never is in want of any benefits for relieving their poverty, and his act of blessing is of more value than the most abundant rains of the whole year. And yet he does not promise to believers a rich and abundant produce of fruits, or a plentiful harvest, but that God will nourish them, though the earth yield no food.

[368] "Qui ferment les entrailles, et sont sans affection." "Who shut up their bowels, and are without affection."

In this way he bids them depend on God's assistance and be satisfied with it, though they be not altogether free from the distresses of famine. In this sense he adds, —

And will make fat thy bones. He does not say that they shall be fully and highly fattened, but that they shall be so lean that the "bones" shall protrude even through the skin. Thus he gives the appellation of" bones" to those who have been worn bare by hunger or famine, men who have hardly anything remaining but dry skin and "bones;" and he means that the Jews will have to contend with want of all things and with leanness, till God shall restore them.

Of the same import are the metaphors which he adds, *a watered garden*, and *a spring of waters.* Isaiah cannot satisfy himself in describing the kindness of God, which he displays towards his sincere worshippers, that men may not seek anywhere else than in themselves the causes of barrenness. It amounts to this, that this fountain of God's kindness never dries up, but always flows, if we do not stop its course by our own fault.

12. *And from thee shall be those who shall restore the deserts of the age.* By "deserts" Isaiah means frightful desolation, which befell the Jews, when they were carried into captivity; for the country was reduced to a wilderness, the city was sacked, the temple was razed, and the people were brought into bondage and scattered. He calls them "deserts of the age," (or of perpetuity,) because the temple could not be immediately repaired, and there was no hope of rebuilding it or of delivering the people. If any city has been ruined or destroyed, while its inhabitants remain, it may be speedily restored; but if none of the inhabitants survive, and if they have been carried away into a distant country, and are very far off, there can be no hope of rebuilding that city; and it will be reckoned monstrous if, after it has lain for a long time in ruins, some person shall say that the people who appear to have perished shall restore and rebuild it.

Since therefore the promise appeared to be incredible, the Prophet intended to meet the doubt; for they might have objected, "If God wishes to restore us, why does he suffer us to languish so long?" He replies that no continuance of delay prevents God from raising again to a lofty situation those who had been sunk low for a long period. Nor must this be limited to the rebuilding of the temple, which was begun by Zerubbabel, (Ezekiel 3:8) and continued by Nehemiah; but it includes the restoration of the Church, which followed after the lapse of several centuries.

The phrase "From thee," means that from that people, though seemingly half dead, there shall arise those who shall repair the melancholy ruins, and shall be architects or workmen to rebuild Jerusalem. The verb {בנו} (*banu*) "shall build," is translated by some in a passive sense; but as that way renders the meaning doubtful, the active signification ought to be retained. [369] A

[369] "Ewald reads {{בנו (bunnu,) [in the Puhal form,] 'They shall be built by thee;' but this passive form does not occur elsewhere, and is here sustained by no external evidence." — Alexander

little afterwards, he appears to ascribe to the whole people what he had said of a few individuals; but the meaning is the same; for, if the question be put, "Who rebuilt Jerusalem?" undoubtedly it was that people; but out of that vast multitude the Lord selected a small number and cut off the rest. Some suppose the meaning to be, that the cities will be insufficient for the number of inhabitants, so that they shall be constrained to rebuild other cities which had been formerly destroyed; but this appears to be too unnatural.

Thou wilt raise up the foundations of generation and generation. Some think that this clause conveys what the Prophet had formerly said, and that by "the foundations of generation and generation" are meant those which lay long in a ruinous state; because out of them must the building be immediately raised and set up; for various hinderances had arisen, by which that work was interrupted. But we may view it as referring to the time to come: "Thou wilt raise up buildings, which shall last for a very long period;" for he seems to promise that the condition of the Church shall be of long duration; as if he had said, "Other buildings do not last long, but this shall last for many ages." Yet if any one prefer to view it as referring to the past, I am not much disposed to dispute with him.

And thou shalt be called. Here the Prophet includes both statements; namely, that the people would resemble a ruined building, and next, that they would be perfectly restored. He ascribes this to the Jews, that they shall be repairers and directors of the ways; that is, that the Lord will make use of their labors; for we ought to ascribe everything to the power of God, who is pleased to bestow upon us so high an honor as to permit our hands to be applied to his work. We have here a remarkable promise about gathering and raising up the ruins of the Church; and since the Lord is pleased to make use of our labor, let us not hesitate to be entirely devoted to it; and although the world oppose and mock at us, and account us fools, let us take courage and conquer every difficulty. Our hearts ought to cherish assured confidence, when we know that it is the work of the Lord, and that he has commanded us to execute it.

13. *If thou shalt turn away thy foot from the sabbath.* Some think that the Prophet alludes to the external observation of the Sabbath, because it was not lawful to perform a journey on that day. (Exodus 20:8) Though I do not reject that opinion, yet I think that the meaning is far more extensive; for by a figure of speech, ill which a part is taken for the whole, he denotes the whole course of human life; as it is very customary to employ the word "going" or "walking" to denote our life. He says, therefore, "If thou cease to advance in thy course, if thou shut up thy path, walk not according to thine own will,"' etc. For this is to "turn away the foot from the Sabbath," when we lay ourselves under the necessity of wandering freely and without restraint in our own sinful desires. As he formerly included under the class of fasting all ceremonies and outward masks, in which they made their holiness to consist, and showed that they were vain and unprofitable; so in this passage

he points out the true observation of the Sabbath, that they may not think that it consists in external idleness but in true selfdenial, so as to abstain from every act of injustice and wickedness, and from all lusts and wicked thoughts. First, by the word "foot" he denotes actions; because the Jews, though they did not venture to perform a journey, or to cook flesh on a Sabbathday, yet did not scruple to harass their neighbors and to mock at the afflicted. Yet he immediately passes on to the will and to speeches, so as to include every part of the obedience which we owe to God.

And shalt call the Sabbath a delight This word, "delight," must be viewed as referring to God, and not to men; because nothing can be more pleasing or acceptable to God, titan the observation of the Sabbath, and sincere worship. He carefully inculcates this, that men do wrong, if, laying aside the commandments of God, they esteem highly those things which are of no value; and he warns them that they ought to form their judgment from his will alone. Certain classes of duties are again enumerated by him, by which he shows clearly that the true observation of the Sabbath consists in selfdenial and thorough conversion. And thus he pronounces the foundation to be the will, from which proceed speeches, and next actions; for we speak what we have conceived in our heart, and by speech we make known our will, and afterwards carry it into effect. Whoever then wishes to serve God in a proper manner, must altogether renounce his flesh and his will. And hence we see the reason why God so highly recommends, in the whole Scripture, the observation of the Sabbath; for he contemplated something higher than the outward ceremony, that is, indolence and repose, in which the Jews thought that the greatest holiness consisted. On the contrary, he commanded the Jews to renounce the desires of the flesh, to give up their sinful inclinations, and to yield obedience to him; as no man can meditate on the heavenly life, unless he be dead to the world and to himself. Now, although that ceremony has been abolished, nevertheless the truth remains; because Christ died and rose again, so that we have a continual sabbath; that is, we are released from our works, that the Spirit of God may work mightily in us.

14. *Then wilt thou delight in Jehovah.* He appears to allude to the word *delight* in the preceding verse; for the verb {תתענג} (*tithgnanneg*) which the Prophet employs, is derived from the same root as {ענג} (*gnoneg*) which he formerly used, when he said that the Lord takes the highest delight in the true observation of the Sabbath. In a word, he means that the people take no delight in God, because they provoke him, and do not obey his will; for if we framed our life in obedience to God, we should be his delight, and, on the other hand, he would be our delight. Thus he affirms that it is owing entirely to the Jews themselves that they do not, by relying on a reconciled God, lead a cheerful and joyful life. By these words he indirectly reproaches them with bringing upon themselves, by their own fault, many calamities.

And I will cause thee to ride on the high places of the earth. By these words he promises a return to their native country, and a safe habitation in

it. We know that Judea was situated on a lofty place above the neighboring countries; while the situation of Babylon was much lower, so that the people trembled as if they had been shut up in a cave. He next tells more plainly what he meant by the word *ride* [370] for he promises the possession of that country which had been promised and given to the fathers, [371] and which they at that time enjoyed, and of which they were afterwards deprived for a time.

For the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it. He added this, that they might know, beyond all controversy, that all these things were true; and this must be viewed as referring not only to those promises, but likewise to the beginning of the chapter. For he rebuked hypocrites, who thought that they were defending themselves in a just cause, and showed that they were suffering the just punishment of their sins; and that it was in vain to contend with God, and to bring forward in opposition to him their own works, which were altogether empty and worthless. On that account he brings them back to the true observation of the Sabbath, and shows that it will be well with them, if they shall worship God in a right manner. At length he concludes that they have not to deal with a mortal man, but that he who pronounces these things is God the Judge.

[370] "The word ride is borrowed from a powerful conqueror, who, riding on a horse or in a chariot, while carrying on battle, seizes mountains, hills, citadels, castles, fortifications, and subjects them to his donfinion. By 'high places of the earth,' he means what I have just now enumerated, lofty places difficult of ascent, on which citadels and fortresses are commonly situated, and the storming and seizing of which brings applause to the conqueror. See Deuteronomy 32:13." — Vitringa. "The whole phrase is descriptive, not of a mere return to Palestine, the highest of all lands (Kimchi), nor of more security from enenfies by being placed beyond their reach (Vitringa), but of conquest and triumphant possession, as in Deuteronomy 32:13, from which the expression is derived by all the later writers who employ it." — Alexander.

[371] "To eat the heritage is to enjoy it, and derive subsistence from it. Kimchi correctly says that it is called the heritage of Jacob, as distinct from that of Ishmael and Esau, although equally descended from the father of the faithful." — Alexander.

Chapter 59

CHAPTER 59.

Isaiah 59:1-21

1. Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear:

1. Ecce non est mutilata manus Iehovae, quin servet; neque aggravata auris ejus, quin audiat.

2. But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.

2. Sed iniquitates vestrae dissidium fecerunt inter vos et Deum vestrum; et peccata vestra operuerunt faciem ejus a vobis, ne audiat.

3. For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness.

3. Nam manus vestrae pollutae sunt sanguine, et digiti vestri iniquitate; labia vestra protulerunt mendacium; lingua vestra iniquitatem loquuta est.

4. None calleth for justice, nor any pleadeth for truth: they trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity.

4. Nemo est qui clamet pro justitia, nemo qui disceptet pro veritate; confidunt rebus vanis; loquuntur inania, concipiunt molestiam, pariunt iniquitatem.

5. They hatch cockatrice' eggs, and weave the spider's web: he that eateth of their eggs dieth, and that which is crushed breaketh out into a viper.

5. Ova reguli excludunt, et telas aranearum texunt; qui comederit ex ovis eorum morietur; si comprimantur, exibit ripera.

6. Their webs shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works: their works are works of iniquity, and the act of violence is in their hands.

6. Telae eorum non erunt in vestimentum; neque se tegent eorum operibus.

Nam opera eorum sunt opera iniquitatis (aut, vanitatis); et opus violentiae in manibus eorum.

7. Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood: their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; wasting and destruction are in their paths.

7. Pedes eorum ad malum currunt, et properant ad fundendum sanguinem innoxium; cogitationes eorum cogitationes vanae (vel iniquitatis); vastitas et contritio in viis eorum.

8. The way of peace they know not; and there is no judgment in their goings: they have made them crooked paths: whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace.

8. Viam pacis non noverunt; nec judicium est in gressibus eorum; semitas suas perverterunt sibi; quisquis graditur per eas nesciet pacere.

9. Therefore is judgment far from us, neither doth justice overtake us: we wait for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, but we walk in darkness.

9. Propterea longe recessit a nobis judicium; nec apprehendit nos justitia. Expectavimus lucem, et ecce tenebrae; splendorem, et ecce in caligine versamur.

10. We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes: we stumble at noonday as in the night; we are in desolate places as dead men.

10. Palpamus sicut caeci parietem: sicuti qui oculis capti sunt, palpamus. Impingimus in meridie tanquam noctu; in locis solitariis tanquam mortui.

11. We roar all like bears, and mourn sore like doves: we look for judgment, but there is none; for salvation, but it is far off from us.

11. Nos onmes quasi ursi vociferamur; et quasi columbrae susurrando susurramus. Expectavimus judicium, et non apparet; salutem, et longe stetit a nobis.

12. For our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us: for our transgressions are with us; and as for our iniquities, we know them;

12. Quoniam multiplicatae sunt iniquitates nostrae coram to, et peccata nostra testata sunt contra nos, (vel, respondent nobis.) Quoniam iniquitates nostrae nobiscum sunt, et peccata nostra cognoscimus.

13. In transgressing and lying against the LORD, and departing away from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood.

13. Inique egimuss, et mentiti sumus Iehovae, et abducti sumns a tergo Dei nostri, loquentes calumniam et defectionem; concipientes et proferentes ex eorde verba mendacii.

14. And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter.

14. Et actum est retrorsum judicium; et justitia procul stetit. Quoniam corruit in platea veritas, et aequitas non potuit prodire.

15. Yea, truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey: and the LORD saw it, and it displeased him that there was no judgment.

15. Defecit, inquam, veritas: et qui recessit a malo praedae fuit expositus. Et vidit Iehova, ac displicuit oculis ejus, quod non esset judicium.

16. And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him.

16. Vidit, inquam, quod non esset vir; et admiratus est quod nemo intercederet (vel, occurreret). Itaque salutem ei attulit (vel, salutem illi fecit) brachium suum; et justitia ejus, ipsa stabilivit eum.

17. For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloke.

17. Et induit justitiam, sicut loricam; et galeam salutis capiti suo. Induit, inquam, ultionem quasi vestem, et indignatione amictus fuit vice pallii.

18. According to their deeds, accordingly he will repay, fury to his adversaries, recompense to his enemies; to the islands he will repay recompense.

18. Quasi propter retributiones, quasi ad reddendam vindictam, hostibus suis indignationem, vicem inimicis suis, insulis vicem reddet.

19. So shall they fear the name of the LORD from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him.

19. Proinde timebunt ab occidente nomen Iehovae, et ab ortu solis gloriam ejus; quia veniet quasi flumen hostis, et Spiritus Iehovae impellet (vel, fugabit eum).

20. And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD.

20. Et veniet Sioni redemptor, et iis qui redierint ab iniquitate in Iacob, dicit Iehova.

21. As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the LORD; My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever.

21. Et ego cum ipsis hoc foedus meum (sancio), dicit Iehova. Spiritus meus, qui super to est, et verba mea, qae posui in ore tuo, non recedent ex ore tuo, neque ex ore seminis tui, neque ex ore seminis seminis tui, dicit Iehova, ab hoc tempore usque in aeternum.

1. *Behold, the hand of Jehovah is not shortened.* This discourse closely resembles the preceding one; for, after having torn off the mask from hypocrites, who vainly boasted of themselves, and after having shown that the punishment inflicted on them was just, he now replies to other objections. Hypocrites are wont to accuse God either of weakness or of excessive severity.

He shows, therefore, that he does not want either power or will to save his people, but that he is prevented by their wickedness from exercising his kindness towards them; and therefore that they do wrong in blaming God, and in uttering those slanders against him, when they ought, on the contrary, to accuse themselves.

The word {הן} (*hen*) "behold," is emphatic, as if the Prophet spoke of something actually present, and pointed it out with the finger, for the sake of expressing certainty, in order to cut off a handle from hypocrites, that they might no longer practice evasion. We must also supply the contrasts to the words "shortened" and "benumbed;" as if he had said, that formerly there were abundant resources in the hand of God to render assistance to his people, and that he always was ready to be reconciled and lent a willing car to prayers, and that now he is not unlike himself, [372] as if either his hand were broken or his ears grown dull, so that he did not hear distinctly.

2. *But your iniquities have made a separation.* The amount of what is said is, that they cannot say that God has changed, as if he had swerved from his natural disposition, but that the whole blame lies with themselves; because by their own sins they, in some measure, prevent his kindness, and refuse to receive his assistance. Hence we infer that our sins alone deprive us of the grace of God, and cause separation between us and him; for what the Prophet testifies as to the men of his time is applicable to all ages; since he pleads the cause of God, against the slanders of wicked men. Thus God is always like himself, and is not wearied in doing good; and his power is not diminished, but we hinder the entrance of his grace.

It will be objected, that men cannot anticipate God by deserving well of him, and that consequently he must do good to those who are unworthy. I reply, this is undoubtedly true; but sometimes the frowardness of men grows to such an extent as to shut the door against God's benefits, as if they purposely intended to drive him far away from them. And although he listens to no man without pardoning him, as we always bring before him supplication for the removal of guilt, yet he does not listen to the prayers of the wicked. We need not wonder, therefore, if the Prophet accuse the people of rejecting God's benefits by their iniquities, and rendering him irreconcilable by their obstinacy, and, in a word, of making a divorce, which drives away or turns aside the ordinary course of grace.

3. *For your hands.* He now brings forward their actions, that they may not practice evasion, or call in question what are those sins which have "caused the separation." He therefore takes away from them every excuse, by bringing forward particular instances, as if their shameful life were exhibited on an open stage. Now, he speaks in the second person, because, like an advocate, he argues and pleads the cause of God, and therefore speaks of himself as not belonging to the rank of the wicked, with whom he did not wish to be classed, though he was not entirely free from sin, but feared and served God,

[372] "Il n'a point change de nature." "He has not changed his nature."

and enjoyed liberty of conscience. No man could be at liberty to condemn others, who was involved in the guilt of the same vices; and no man could be qualified for pleading the cause of God, who deprived himself of his right by living wickedly. We must be unlike those whom we reprove, if we do not wish to expose our doctrine to ridicule, and to be reckoned impudent; and, on the other band, when we serve God with a pure conscience, our doctrine obtains weight and authority, and holds even adversaries to be more fully convicted.

Are polluted with blood. The picture which he gives of the wicked life of the people is not superfluous; for men seek various subterfuges, and cannot be reduced to a state of obedience, unless they have previously acknowledged their sins. By mentioning *blood,* he does not mean that murders have been everywhere committed; but by this word he describes the cruelty, extortions, violence, and enormities, which were perpetrated by hypocrites against the poor and defenseless; for they had not to deal with robbers and assassins, but with the king and the nobles, who were highly respected and honored. He calls them manslayers, because they cruelly harassed the innocent, and seized by force and violence the property of others; and so, immediately afterwards he uses the word "iniquity" instead of "blood."

And your fingers with iniquity. Though he appears to extend the discourse farther, yet it is a repetition, or rather, a reduplication, such as is frequently employed by Hebrew writers, accompanied by amplification; for he expresses more by "fingers" than by "hands;" as if he had said that not even the smallest part was free from unjust violence. [373]

Your lips have uttered falsehood. Next, he takes notice of one kind of wickedness, that is, when men deceive each other by tricks, or falsehood, or perjury; for that iniquity by which we wound our neighbors is most frequently defended either by cruelty as a bodyguard, or by cheating and falsehood. Here the Prophet takes a rapid view of the second table, and, from the crimes which they commit against it, he shows that they are wicked and destitute of all fear of God; for cruelty and treachery, by which human society is infringed, proceed from contempt of God. Thus from "the hands," that is, from extortion and violence, he descends to falsehoods and deceitful practices, to perjuries and crafty devices, by which we take advantage of our neighbors.

4. *There is none that crieth for justice.* He means that there is not among them any study of what is right or proper, that no man opposes the acts of injustice which are committed by the strong on the weak; and that this leads to growing licentiousness, because all wink at it, and there is none who cares about undertaking the defense of justice. It is not enough that we abstain from violence, if we do not, as far as lies in our power, hinder it from being committed by others. And, indeed, whoever permits what he is able

[373] "Que la moindre partie de leur corps est souillee d'extorsion." "That the smallest part of their body is tainted with extortion."

to hinder does in some sense command it; so that silence is a sort of consent.

None that contendeth for truth. This clause is of the same import as the preceding one. Some take {נשפט} (*nishpat*) in a passive sense, and suppose the Prophet's meaning to be, "None is rightly judged; for everything is full of corruptions, and yet nobody makes opposition." But the active signification is more appropriate; for these two statements are closely connected with each other, that "None crieth for justice" and "None defendeth truth or uprightness." The rendering given by some, "No man judgeth himself truly," is rather too harsh. But because this verb in Niphal is taken, in many passages, for "to contend," [374] the whole passage appeared to run more freely thus: that "none comes forward to protect what is right, openly and loudly to defend justice, and to plead against the wicked." Yet it will perhaps be thought preferable to view the words "cry for justice" as referring to wretched persons who are unjustly harassed; as if he had said that they are dumb, because they would gain nothing by crying. But this would also be harsh.

If God condemns so severely those who pay no attention to the righteous causes of men, and do not aid such as are in difficulties, what shall become of us, if no zeal for defending the glory of God prompt us to rebuke iniquities? If we wink at the mockeries by which wicked men jeer at God's sacred doctrine and profane his name; if we pay no attention to the efforts which they make to destroy the Church of God, shall not our silence be justly condemned for treachery? [375] In a word, Isaiah says that good order falls into decay through our fault, if we do not, as far as we can, resist the wicked.

They trust in vain things. He next points out that this is extreme confusion, when no one rises up in defense of justice. When he says that they "trust in vain things," he means that they heap up perverse reliances, by means of which they bring upon themselves insensibility. This is the utmost verge of iniquity, when, by seeking flatteries on every hand, they willingly harden themselves to despise God; and by such allurements Satan caresses the reprobate, till he altogether enchants them, so that, shaking off all fear of God, they not only despise sound counsels, but become haughty and fearless mockers. Since therefore foolhardiness drives us headlong, when we place false hopes in opposition to the judgment of God, the Prophet has good reason for representing, as a mark of desperate malice, this confidence under which cunning men shelter themselves; because the disease is manifestly incurable, when men who are openly wicked do not hesitate to flatter themselves, and, relying on their obstinate wickedness, think that they are at liberty to do whatever they please.

They talk idly. He adds that their conversation tells plainly what is the nature of their dispositions and morals; as the proverb says, that "the tongue is the image of the mind." Yet this clause may be explained in two ways;

[374] "Pour debatre." "To debate."

[375] "De desloyaute et traison." "For disloyalty and treason"

either that they speak nothing sincerely, but, by constant practice, their tongues are formed to deceive, or, that their wickedness breaks out into open boasting. For my own part, I prefer the latter of these expositions.

They conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity. These are elegant metaphors, by which he compares wicked men to women, who support the child in the womb, and afterwards give birth to it. Thus he says that the wicked, while they inwardly contrive their crimes, may be said to be pregnant till they bring forth in due time; that is, when they have found occasions and opportunities. "They conceive," he says, "purposes of mischief, that afterwards they may unjustly harass simple persons;" as if he had said, that they make preparation for their crimes by long meditation, and are always ready for any mischief; because they do not cease to search in every quarter for indirect methods of annoying those who are giving them no disturbance.

5. *They hatch the eggs of the basilisk.* The Prophet proceeds farther, comparing the Jews not only to women, but to venomous beasts; so as to make it more evident that everything that proceeds from them is destructive and deadly. First, then, he says, that "they hatch the eggs of the basilisk;" because, as a viper cannot lay an egg that is not venomous, so they are so inured to wickedness, and so full of it, that they can throw out nothing but poison. [376]

And weave the webs of spiders. By "the webs of spiders" he means that they are so barren and destitute of anything good, that even by the appearance of virtues they deceive. By two marks he describes wicked men; first, that the works which they perform manifest their corrupt nature; secondly, that they are of no value whatever, and. contribute nothing towards making them kind, amiable, charitable, and faithful to those with whom they have intercourse. I am aware that it is explained ill a different manner by other commentators; namely, that the wicked, while they are contriving the destruction of others, ruin themselves, and, while they think that they are industrious, labor fruitlessly and to no purpose; that "they are snared in their own nets," (Psalm 9:15) and "fall into the pit which they had digged." (Psalm 7:15) But I am of opinion that the Prophet meant what I have now said; namely, that the wicked do mischief in all places, at all times, and in all transactions, and that they never do anything good; and that every person who has anything to do with them will find them to be venomous and destructive. Such is the import of what he says, that in their eggs there lurks a deadly venom, and that, if they are broken, a serpent will come out of them.

6. *Their webs shall not be for clothing.* He repeats and confirms the same statement, that everything that they attempt or undertake is always useless to mankind; because they purposely shrink from all acts of kindness. Now,

[376] "These are ({παροιμιώδη}) proverbial expressions, and mean that bad men have taken destructive counsels, as if the eggs of serpents, which ought to be crushed by those who meet with them, were purposely hatched by some person, in order that poisonous animals might, in due time, be produced by them for the destruction of men." — Rosenmuller

it is an indication of a mind utterly abandoned, to devote themselves to evil deeds in such a manner, that no advantage of any kind can be expected from the life of him who desires to be barren and destitute of all justice. Others explain it, that they will toil unsuccessfully to acquire wealth and to rise to honor. But I consider the meaning to be more simple, that no man will "cover himself with their works," because in their texture there is nothing solid or durable. [377]

By various modes of expression he inculcates the same thing, in order to demonstrate that their works yield no advantage whatever. But we were born for this end, that we should yield assistance to our neighbors, and, in our turn, contribute something to the general good. Thus they are savage beasts, and ought not to be called men, who are only skillful to do mischief, and labor with all their might to avoid doing good. he immediately adds, without a figure, that they are given up, and, as it were, devoted to iniquity.

7. *Their feet run to evil.* In various ways he paints to us the picture of what may be called extreme wickedness; that is, when men, having shaken off and cast away from them the fear of God, throw themselves into every kind of wickedness, and break out into all cruelty, extortion, and outrage. He says that they *run,* because they are eager and hasten with excessive keenness to evil actions. Having formerly spoken of the "hands" and the "tongues," he likewise adds the feet, in order to show that they are proficients [378] in every kind of villainy, and that there is no part of their body that is entirely free from crime. Some are violent, but restrain their tongues. [379] Others resemble harpies, but are satisfied with the first prey that they meet with. But the Prophet says that his countrymen are swift of foot for committing robberies. [380]

Wasting and destruction are in their paths. He means that, wherever they go, they will resemble wild beasts, which seize and devour whatever they meet with, and leave nothing behind, so that, by their terrific onset, they drive away every kind of animals from venturing to approach to them. Pliny makes use of the same comparison, when speaking of Domitian, whose arrival was like that of a savage beast. The same thing happens with other violent men, whom all avoid as wild beasts. And in this manner their ways are rendered desolate and solitary, when none have any intercourse with them.

8. *The way of peace they know not.* Some give an ingenious interpretation of the word "peace" as meaning a "peaceful" conscience; because the wicked must endure continual agony. But the Prophet summons wicked

[377] "Having introduced the spider's web, in connection with the serpent's egg, as an emblem of malignant and treacherous designs, he here repeats the first, but for another purpose, namely, to suggest the idea of futility and worthlessness. This application may have been suggested by the frequent reference to webs and weaving as conducive to the comfort and emolument of men; but spiders' webs can answer no such purpose. The idea that it is not fit or cannot be applied to this end, although not exclusively expressed, is really included in the general declaration that they shall not be so used — Alexander.

[378] "Maistres passez." "Acknowledged masters."

[379] "Mais c'est sans parler." "But it is without speaking.

[380] "Pour piller et brigander." "For thieving and higbway—robbery."

men to judgment, in order to show, by the transgression of the Second Table, that they have no sincerity and no kindness, and, in a word, that they are {ἀστόργους} without natural affection. He says that "they know not the way of peace;" because their cruelty deprives them of justice and equity, by which human society is maintained, the very food of which is mutual peace and kindness; for justice and integrity are nourished by peace. And if every person, with unbridled rage, rush on his neighbors and attack them, there is then open war; for harmony cannot be preserved among us, unless equity be observed by every individual. [381]

And judgment is not in their steps. What he had just before said is expressed more clearly by the word "Judgment;" as if he had said, that they excite terror wherever they go, because they lay aside all integrity.

Whosoever walketh by them. The last clause may be taken in various senses; either, "Whosoever walketh in them shall also be a stranger to peace," or, "He who falleth into the hands of the wicked shall find them to be savage and barbarous." Either of those meanings is admissible, and I do not think it worth while to dispute much about them. Thus, after having spoken in general terms, and after having shown that it is not God who prevents the Jews from being prosperous, the Prophet descends to particulars, by which he explains more fully the manner in which they have become estranged from God, and have rendered themselves unworthy of his favor.

Here arises a difficulty; for Paul (Romans 3:17) quotes this passage for the purpose of condemning all mankind as being sinful and corrupted, and as having nothing good; while the Prophet appears to apply it especially to the men of his own time. But the answer is easy; for, while he expressly addresses the Jews, who thought that they were holier than other men, the Gentiles must also be included along with them. If it be objected that the Gentiles, while they live uprightly, "are a law to themselves," (Romans 2:14) and that "uncircumcision is counted as circumcision," (Romans 2:26) I reply that the Prophet represents God as complaining of all who have not been renewed by the Spirit of God. In this manner no man can be excepted, if he be viewed in his own nature; but the Prophet speaks of himself as not belonging to their number, because he had been regenerated and was guided by the Spirit of God.

Paul's quotation of this passage was therefore appropriate; because he intended to show what sort of men they are whom God hath forsaken, and who are under the influence of their own nature. Although the depravity of men does not always break out into gross vice, and the Prophet's design is to rebuke a very corrupt age; yet whenever crimes become so prevalent, we may behold, as in a mirror, what a pool and how deep a pool of every evil thing is the nature of man. And yet this discourse was undoubtedly very

[381] "J. D. Michaelis and Umbreit go to opposite extremes in their interpretation of the first clause. The former makes the way of peace denote the way to happiness; the latter understands the clause to mean that they refuse all overtures of reconciliation. The obvious and simple meaning is, that their lives are not pacific but contentious." — Alexander.

distasteful to the Jews, who were puffed up with vain glorying of the family from which they were descended; but since even they were not spared by the Spirit of God, there is no reason why other nations, who are not less sinful by nature, should wallow in their pleasures.

9. *Therefore is judgment far from us.* After having described how corrupt and depraved was the condition of that people, he likewise shows that the severe chastisements inflicted on them are richly deserved, that they may not complain of being treated with greater harshness and severity than was proper. Thus he has painted, as in a picture, those vices which were publicly known, that they might more fully perceive in how many and how various ways they were guilty before God; and now he again repeats that we need not wonder if God treat such obstinate dispositions with greater severity, and render to them a just reward. He says that "Judgment is far off, because they were the most wretched of all men, and had not God for their protector as formerly."

And justice doth not overtake us. He employs the words "judgment" and "justice" as denoting God's guardianship, when he defends us, and shows that he takes care of us. He calls it "justice" when he defends us, and "judgment" when he revenges the injuries done to us. Here he declares that God had cast away the care of his people, and had deprived them of his countenance and aid, because they were unworthy of it; and hence we ought to observe the particle {כן} {על} (*gnal ken*) "therefore;" for he draws the conclusion that we ought not to blame God, as if he acted unjustly towards his people, since in so many ways they had insulted his majesty.

Of the same import is what he adds, that while *they look for light*, continual darkness sits down upon them; for the metaphor shows that they were almost consumed by their calamities, and that, when they promised to themselves any alleviation, they were disappointed of their hope. *Light* is a word very frequently employed to denote prosperity, and *darkness* to denote adversity. He means, therefore, that it will be vain to expect that their condition shall be changed for the better; and his object is, that the people may learn to ascribe their calamities to themselves, and may not imagine that those calamities happen by chance, or that the Lord is excessively severe; for he always endeavors to bring his people to the doctrine of repentance.

10. *We grope for the wall like the blind.* He explains the same thing by different forms of expression; for, in consequence of the grievous complaints which were heard among the people, he determined to omit nothing that was fitted to describe their calamities. It is perhaps by way of concession [382] that he mentions those things; as if he had said, "Our affairs are reduced to the deepest misery, but we ought chiefly to consider the cause, for we have deserved all this and far worse." But it is not a probable interpretation, that stupid persons are aroused to think of their evil actions; for, although they are abundantly disposed to complain, yet the devil stupifies them, so that

[382] "Comme s'il accordoit qu'elles fassent vrayes." "As if he admitted that they were true."

the tokens of God's anger do not awaken them to repentance, he alludes to that metaphor which he employed in the preceding verse, when he said that the people were in darkness and obscurity, and found no escape; and. his meaning is, that they are destitute of counsel, and overwhelmed by so deep anguish that they have no solace or refuge. When a lighter evil presses upon us, we look around and hope to find some means of escape; but when we are overpowered by heavier distresses, despair takes from us all ability to see or to judge. For this reason the Prophet says that they have been thrown into a labyrinth, and are "groping."

We stumble. The same thing is expressed, and even in a still more aggravated form, by this mode of expression, that, if they stir a foot, various stumbling blocks meet them on every hand, and, indeed, that there is no alleviation to their distresses, as if day had been changed into night.

In solitary places as dead men. By "solitary places" I understand either gulfs or ruinous and barren regions; for in this passage I willingly follow the version of Jerome, who derives the word {אשמנים} (*ashmannim*) from {אשם} (*asham,*)"to be desolate." The Jews, who choose to derive it from {שמן} (*shaman,*) to be fat, appear to me to argue idly, and to have no solid ground for their opinion. They think that it denotes men, because {שמן} (*shemen*) denotes "ointment," and say that this word is used for describing the Gentiles. But the true meaning of the Prophet is, that the Jews have been reduced to a wilderness, so that, shut out from the society of men, they resemble the dead, and have no hope of escape.

11. *We all roar like bears.* He describes two classes of those who cannot silently endure their afflictions without making them known by external signs; for some howl fiercely, and others *moan like doves.* This latter metaphor was employed by him in describing the groans of Hezekiah, (Isaiah 38:14;) and this happens when we endeavor to restrain our grief, and yet cannot prevent the outward signs of grief from breaking out in spite of us. The meaning is, that sometimes the violence of their grief constrained them to utter loud cries, and sometimes they complained in low and murmuring sounds, but in both cases without avail, because their condition was not changed for the better.

We looked for judgment. He again repeats that in vain they "looked for judgment and salvation," meaning that the people were deprived of the assistance of God, which he desired above all things; and he makes use of the word *salvation,* in order to describe more fully and completely what he formerly denoted by the word "justice," and now again by the word "judgment." Thence infer that it is by our own fault that we are wretched, and grow old and waste away in our wretchedness, till we are converted to God. We may indeed moan and howl, but can obtain no alleviation of our grief without repentance. There can be no end of our afflictions, so long as we provoke the Lord's wrath, and do not desire with the whole heart to be reconciled to him.

12. *For our iniquities are multiplied before thee.* He confirms what he formerly said, namely, that the people act unjustly in accusing God of cruelty, and in not understanding that they are justly punished for their iniquities, the huge mass of which towers up to heaven; and in this sense the Prophet says that they "are multiplied." There is also much weight in the phrase "before thee;" for the Prophet descends into himself, and acknowledges the righteous judgment of God, which was hidden from men. Thus he intended to point out an implied contrast between the judgment of God and the judgment of men, who flatter themselves, and do not consider their sins; but God, who is a just judge, does not the less on that account reprove them, or pay any attention to the frivolous excuses under which they endeavor to shelter themselves. For this reason he does not reckon it enough simply to condemn the people, but says that they have "multiplied" their sins, that is, in many respects they are guilty before God. He acknowledges, therefore, that the Lord is righteous, and performs the part of an excellent judge; since nothing good or right is found among men; and therefore he adds, —

Our sins have testified against us, (*or, answer* [383] *to us.*) Witnesses are not summoned, or brought from heaven; but the Jews are rebuked and condemned by the testimony of conscience. That mode of expression ought to be carefully observed; for it shows that God does not need many proofs, since our sins hold us to be sufficiently convicted. We must not, therefore, strive with God, as if he punished us unjustly, or chastised us too severely; for our sins openly proclaim what we are, and God does not need additional proofs.

For our iniquities are with us. Instead of "with us," some render {אתנו} (*ittanu*) "upon us;" but I choose rather to adhere to the strict meaning of the word. [384] Men practice evasions, and assume various shapes, in order to appear righteous; but in vain, for they carry with them their iniquities, from which they cannot extricate themselves; as God, in condemning Cain, (Genesis 4:7) declares that "sin keepeth watch before the door;" so that any one who despises the judgment of God shall in vain attempt to escape by his rebellion.

And we know our sins. When he says that the Jews "know their sins," he does not mean that their hearts are truly affected by them, for in that case repentance follows; but he declares that, although they desire to escape the judgment of God, the testimony of their own conscience binds and holds them fast, so that it is vain for them to cavil or seek an excuse. He speaks in the first person, as if he were one of the great body of the people. This is very customary; but at the same time he shows that this evil prevails through the whole body to such an extent that not one member is whole or

[383] "A witness interrogated by a judge, or even speaking of his own accord, is said, {,{ענה (gnanah,) 'to answer.' The same forln of expression occurs in Isaiah 3:9; Jeremiah 14:7; Hosea 7:10." — Rosenmuller

[384] "Lowth translates {,{אתנו (ittanu,) 'cleave fast unto us; 'but interpreters generally prefer the sense expressed in the English Version, (they are with us, that is, in our sight, or present to our memory.)" — Alexander. "Our sins are well known to us." — Doederlein

sound; and, although he may plead his own cause before God, yet, because iniquity is diffused through every part of the body, he acknowledges that he is one of the diseased members and is infected by the general contagion. Nor is there any contradiction in having formerly spoken of himself as not sharing the general guilt, and now laying aside all distinction, and including himself along with others.

13. *We have done wickedly.* Here he enumerates certain classes of sins, in order to arouse the people more keenly to an acknowledgment of their sin. It must be regarded as monstrous, that men, who have been chastised and almost crushed by the hand of God, are still proud, and so obstinate that they cannot bend or be humbled by a conviction of their sin. The Lord endeavors to soften our obduracy by stripes and wounds; but when chastisements do us no good, our case must be given up as hopeless. Isaiah therefore labors to show how wretched is the condition of the people, who, while they endured severe hardships, yet murmured against God, and did not suffer themselves to be brought into a state of obedience. And therefore he frequently repeats this warning, and reproves sharply, in order to subdue this obstinacy of the people.

And we have lied to Jehovah. By a variety of terms he rebukes their vices, and enumerates classes of them, after having pointed out in a general manner that corruption which everywhere prevailed.: Nor does he mention only slight faults, or those of a small number of persons, but a universal revolt. By these words he pronounces them to have been so deeply corrupted, that no sincerity, uprightness, fear, or conscience remained in them. For what is meant by "lying to God," but to revolt treacherously from him, as if all obedience were refused? Thus he does not reproach them with one or a few transgressions of the Law, but says that, like fugitives, they have forsaken God, so that they do not follow him when he calls.

Conceiving and uttering from the heart. He now adds that they were devoted to the invention of mischief, and thoroughly imbued with falsehood; for "to utter a lie from the heart," is far worse than to tell lies thoughtlessly, or even to deceive when an occasion presents itself. [385] Nor is there any room to doubt that those reproofs grievously offended the Jews, who, puffed up with pride, imagined that they were exceedingly holy. But it was proper to treat their hypocrisy in this manner, because mere doctrine produced little effect upon them. Taught by this example, pastors, when they see the Church of God corrupt, and men pleasing themselves and flattering their vices, ought to make strenuous opposition, accompanied by loud and sharp reproof.

14. *And judgment is driven back.* It is a mistake to suppose that the Prophet returns to his earliest subject, (Isaiah 1:5) and speaks of the punishments which the people had suffered at the hand of God; for he still proceeds

[385] "What they think in their heart, and utter from the thought to speech and to action, that is, their thoughts, and words, and actions, are falsehoods." — Kimchi.

with the preceding narrative, and explains the diseases under which the people labored, that they may see clearly that they are justly punished. But we must distinguish this verse from the ninth, in which he said that "judgment had gone back;" for there he declared that they were deprived of God's assistance, because they did not deserve to have him as the defender of their cause; but here he says that "judgment is driven back" in a different sense, that is, because they have overthrown all justice and equity among themselves. They have therefore received a just reward, because no justice of God has shone forth to render assistance, when they have banished far from them justice and equity; for in vain do we expect from God what we have refused to others and cast away from ourselves.

In the street. That is, in a public place. He describes those places in which judicial sentences were pronounced. When he says that "truth is fallen in the street," he means that not only some private individuals have been corrupted, but the whole condition of the people is so thoroughly depraved as to leave no part sound; for, if some vices reign among the common people, some remedy may be obtained, so long as there is room for judgment; but if judgments are overthrown or corrupted, it follows that all things are infected by a universal contagion. He describes also their unbridled licentiousness, in not being ashamed of conduct openly wicked, and in not shrinking from the light and from the eyes of men.

15. *Truth faileth.* Hence it clearly appears that Isaiah, in the preceding verse, did not speak of punishments; for, without interrupting the stream of his discourse, he proceeds to show that the people ought not to complain of the severity of chastisements, since they have so grievously offended and provoked God. He therefore confirms what he formerly said, that "truth hath fallen, that there is no place for equity;" and he enlarges this statement the more, by adding that *he who hath withdrawn from evil hath become a prey.* [386] Almost all the Jewish expositors, reading the two clauses consecutively, explain them thus: — "Truth hath failed, and, by departing from evil, hath been made a prey." Why they adopt that meaning, I do not see.

Jerome's exposition, which I follow, is much more correct; and appropriate; and a similar mode of expression is frequently employed in the Scriptures. Job is said to have been

"an upright and perfect man, fearing
God, and departing from evil." (Job 1:1)

Solomon also says,

"The fool is confident, but the righteous man looketh well to himself, and departeth from evil." (Proverbs 14:16)

The Prophet means that all uprightness was so greatly abhorred, that the true worshippers of God, if any remained, were not permitted to be safe. As if he had said, "Whoever wishes to live among men must vie with them in

[386] "If you render the Hebrew words thus, 'Withdrawing from evil, he maketh himself a prey,' that is, 'Whosoever shuns vices, exposes himself as a prey to the wicked,' you will have a meaning which leaves nothing to desire." — Rosenmuller.

wickedness," [387] according to the common proverb, "Among wolves we must howl; but he who wishes to live innocently shall be torn in pieces, as a sheep is torn by wolves." Finally, he describes the utmost pitch of wickedness; for he shows that "truth hath failed," so that no good man is allowed to remain among them; because every one that abstains front acts of injustice "lays himself open to be a prey."

And Jehovah saw. This relates to the consolation of the people; for he declares that, although they have grievously offended, so that it may appear as if there were no room for pardon, still the Lord will have regard to his people, and, although he has inflicted very severe chastisements, will at length remember his covenant, so as to bring incredible relief by healing their wounds. He speaks here of a future period, and promises that one day, after calamities so numerous and diversified, the Lord will aid the people that are left; for the Jews would have lost heart, and would have been altogether discouraged, if the Lord had not brought that consolation.

Thus men commonly rush forward, and throw themselves headlong into opposite vices; for, when they are reproved, they either grow obstinate and harden themselves, or are terrified and fall into despair. We must therefore observe carefully this order which the Prophet followed. First, it was necessary to reprove the Jews, that, being affected and laid low by repentance, they might cease to find fault with God; and, secondly, a mitigation of punishments, accompanied by salvation, is promised, that they might not be discouraged, but expect assistance from the Lord, who is unwilling that his Church should perish, and punishes his people for a time, in order that he may not suffer them to be ruined and destroyed.

Yet if any one prefer to limit this dislike or displeasure of God to the "judgment," because he had good reason for abhorring a wicked people, I have no objection; as if he had said that God saw nothing in that people but what was ground of hatred. Hence it follows, that there was no other motive that prompted him to yield assistance, than because their affairs were utterly desperate.

16. *He saw that there was no man.* Isaiah continues the same subject, but expresses more, and relates more fully what he had briefly noticed; for what he said in the preceding verse, that "it displeased the Lord that there was no judgment," might have been obscure. In this passage he repeats that the Lord saw that "there was no man" [388] to render assistance to the Church, and that he *wondered.* He makes use of the verb {ישתומם} (*yishtomem*) in

[387] "Doit neeessairement estre aussi mechant qu'eux." "Must unavoidably be as wicked as they are."

[388] "And now, when God repents on account of the evil which he has brought on the people, he sees that there is not a righteous man to stand in the gap. (Ezekiel 22:30)" — Jarchi. "Rosenmuller, Umbrett, and others, follow Jarchi in supposing {{אישׁ (ish) to be emphatic and to signify a man of the right sort, a man equal to the occasion. This explanation derives some color from the analogy of Jeremiah 5:1; but even there, and still more here, the strength of the expression is increased rather than diminished by taking this phrase in the simple sense of nobody. What was wanted was not merely a qualified man, but any man whatever, to maintain the cause of Israel and Jehovah." — Alexander

the Hithpahel conjugation, [389] for the purpose of denoting that the Lord was the cause of his own astonishment; as if he had said, "He made himself astonished."

He wondered that none came forward. Some think that {מפגיע} (*maphgiang*) means an intercessor; but I think that the meaning is this, that there was none who endeavored to relieve their affliction, that there was no physician who applied his hand to this wound, and that for this reason God "wondered." The reason why he attributes to God this astonishment may be easily understood. By this rebuke he intended to put the Jews to shame, that they might not, according to their custom, resort to hypocritical pretenses for concealing their sins; and, because it was incredible and monstrous that there was not found in a holy and elect people any one that opposed injustice, he represents God as astonished at such a novelty, that the Jews may at length be ashamed and repent. Was it possible that there could be greater obstinacy of which they ought to be ashamed, since by their wickedness they moved God to astonishment?

At the same time he rebukes their hypocrisy, if they pretend to have eminent piety and holiness, when God, after a diligent search, did not find even one upright man. He likewise praises and magnifies the unspeakable mercy of God, in condescending to rescue, as if from the depths of hell, a people whose condition was so desperate; for the Jews were undoubtedly reminded by these words in what manner they ought to hope for redemption; namely, because God is pleased to rise up miraculously to save what was lost. Besides, by the word "wonder" he describes also God's fatherly care. It is certain that God is not liable to those passions, so as to wonder at anything as new or uncommon; but he accommodates himself to us, in order that, being deeply moved by a conviction of our evils, we may view our condition with horror. Thus, when he says that "the Lord saw," he means that there is no help in our own industry; when he says that the Lord "wonders," he means that we are excessively dull and stupid, because we neither perceive nor care for the evils of our condition; and yet that our indifference does not prevent the Lord from rendering assistance to his Church.

Therefore his arm brought (or, *made) salvation to him.* By these words he means that we ought not to despair, although we receive no assistance from men. Yet, reducing to nothing every other assistance, he pronounces the salvation of his own nation, and consequently of all mankind, to be owing, from first to last, to God's undeserved goodness and absolute power. Thus, in like manner as, by asserting that God is abundantly sufficient for himself, and has power and strength sufficient to redeem the Jews, he stretches out his hand to the feeble; so, by saying that men can do nothing to promote their salvation, he abases all pride, that, being stripped of confidence in their works, they may approach to God. And we must observe this design of the

[389] The verb {אשתומם} (yishtomem) denotes a man who stands, and wonders, and remains silent through his wonder." — Jarchi

Prophet; for, in reading the Prophets and Apostles, we must not merely consider what they say, but for what purpose, and with what design. Here, therefore, we ought chiefly to observe the design of the Prophet, that in God alone is there sufficient power for accomplishing our salvation, that we may not look hither and thither; for we are too much disposed to lean on external aids; but that we ought to place the hope of salvation nowhere else than on the arm of God, and that the true foundation of the Church is in his righteousness, and that they do wrong who depend on anything else; since God has borrowed nothing from any but himself.

The usefulness of this doctrine is still more extensive; for, although all remedies often fail us, yet the Lord will find sufficient assistance in his own arm. Whenever, therefore, we are destitute of men's assistance, and are overwhelmed by calamities of every kind, and see nothing before us but ruin, let us betake ourselves to this doctrine, and let us rest assured that God is sufficiently powerful to defend us; and, since he has no need of the assistance of others, let us learn to rely firmly and confidently on his aid.

Yet we must keep in remembrance the universal doctrine, namely, that the redemption of the Church is a wonderful blessing bestowed by God alone, that we may not ascribe anything to the strength or industry of men. With abhorrence we ought to regard the pride of those who claim for themselves any part of that praise which belongs to God, since in him alone is found both the cause and the effect of our salvation.

And his righteousness, it upheld him. Here *arm* denotes power and strength, and righteousness denotes the integrity which he displays in procuring the salvation of his people, when he is their protector, and delivers them from destruction. [390] When he says that "the arm of God brought to him salvation," this must not be limited to God, and ought not to be taken passively, as if God saved himself, but, actively; so that this salvation refers to the Church, which he has delivered from the bands of enemies.

17. *And he put on righteousness as a coat of mail.* Here he equips God with his armor, for the purpose both of confirming more and more the confidence of believers, and of stripping all men of all confidence in their own strength. The meaning of the verse amounts to this, that God is in want of nothing for discomfiting his enemies and gaining the victory; because from his righteousness, power, and grace, and from his ardent love of his people, he will make for himself {πανοπλίαν} complete armor. And this is again worthy of remark; for, although we acknowledge that God is sufficiently powerful, yet we are not satisfied with it, but at. the same time seek other help. Thus our minds are always inclined to unbelief, so that they fasten on inferior means, and are greatly entangled by them.

In order to correct this vice, Isaiah presents this lively description; as if he had said, "Know ye that God has in his hand all the safeguards of your salvation, and will be in want of nothing to deliver you in spite of enemies

[390] "De mort." "From death."

and bring you back to your native country; and therefore there is no reason why you should tremble." Besides, there is nothing to which we are more prone than to imagine that we bestow something on God, and thus to claim for ourselves some part of the praise which ought to remain undivided with him.

When he clothes God *with vengeance, and with indignation as a cloak*, this relates to enemies, against whom God is said to be enraged for the sake of his people; and thus, the more that Satan labors and makes every effort against us, so much the more does God kindle with zeal, and so much the more powerfully does he rise up, to render assistance to us. Although, therefore, Satan and all the reprobate do not rest, but raise up obstacles of every kind to prevent our salvation, and even exert themselves furiously to destroy us, yet, by his power alone, God will defeat all their efforts.

18. *As if on account of recompenses.* He confirms the statement of the preceding verse; for he shows what will be the nature of that vengeance with which he had clothed the Lord; namely, that he is prepared to render recompense to his enemies. We must attend to the reason why the Prophet describes the Lord as thus armed, indignant, and ready for vengeance. It is, because the salvation of the Church is connected with the destruction of the wicked; and therefore God must be armed against the enemies who wish to destroy us.

Hence we see God's infinite love toward us, who loves us so ardently that he bears hostility to our enemies, and declares that he will render recompense to them. So strong is his affection to his little flock, that he sets a higher value on them than on the whole world. This is the reason why he says that *he will render recompense to the islands*, that is, to countries beyond the sea and far off; for, in order to deliver his people, he overthrew monarchies that were powerful, and that appeared to be invincible. But, although here he mentions none but mortal men, still we must begin with Satan, who is their head.

19. *Therefore they shall fear the name of Jehovah.* He now testifies that this work of redemption shall be so splendid and illustrious, that the whole world shall wonder, behold, praise, and celebrate, and, struck with fear, shall render glory to God. It is uncertain whether he means the conversion of the Gentiles, or the terror with which God dismays his enemies. For my own part, I am more inclined to the former opinion, that, even to the utmost boundaries of the earth, the name of God shall be revered and honored, so that the Gentiles shall not only tremble, but shall serve and adore him with true repentance.

For [391] *the enemy shall come as a river.* As to the reason now assigned, commentators differ. But the true meaning, in my opinion, is, that the attack of the enemy shall be so furious that, like a rapid and impetuous torrent,

[391] "Whether {כי (ki) be rendered when or for, the sense remains essentially the same, because the one implies the other. The only weighty reasons for preferring the latter are, first, its natural priority as being the usual and proper sense, and then the simplicity of structure which results from it as being more accordant with the genius and usage of the language." — Alexander

it shall appear to sweep away and destroy everything, but that the Lord shall cause it instantly to subside and disappear. It is therefore intended to heighten the description of the divine power, by which the vast strength and dreadful fury of the enemies are repelled, receive a different direction, and fall to pieces.

A question now arises, "What redemption does the Prophet mean?" I reply, as I have already suggested on another passage, that these promises ought not to be limited, as is commonly done, to a single redemption; for the Jews refer it, exclusively to the deliverance from Babylon, while Christians refer it to Christ alone. For my part, I join both, so as to include the whole period after the return of the people along with that which followed down to the coming of Christ; for this prophecy was not fulfilled but in Christ, and what is said here cannot apply to any other. Never was the glory of God revealed to the whole world, nor were his enemies put to flight so as not to recover their strength, till Christ achieved a conquest and illustrious triumph over Satan, sin, and death.

20. *And a Redeemer shall come to Zion.* He again confirms what he formerly said, that the people shall be delivered, and that God will be the author of this blessing. He bids the people, therefore, be of good cheer in their captivity, which shall not be perpetual; and next, he exhorts them to place the hope of redemption in God alone, that they may fix their minds solely on his promises. By the name Zion he denotes here, as in other passages, captives and exiles; for however far they had been banished from their country, still they must have carried the temple in their hearts.

And to them who have turned away from iniquity. That the bastard children of Abraham may not apply indiscriminately to themselves what he has just now said, he proceeds to show to whom the redemption shall come, namely, to those only who have been truly consecrated to the Lord. It is certain that many returned from Babylon, who were not moved by any feeling of repentance, and yet who became partakers of the same blessing. But the Prophet speaks of the complete redemption which the elect alone enjoy; for, although the fruit of external redemption extends also to hypocrites, yet they have not embraced the blessing of God for salvation. The design of the Prophet is, to show that the punishment; of banishment will be advantageous, that God may gather his Church, after having purified it from filth and pollution; for we must always bear in remembrance what we saw elsewhere as to the diminution of the people.

In this way the Prophet exhorts the elect to the fear of God, that they may profit by his chastisements. Hence infer, that we cannot be reconciled to God through the blood of Christ, unless we first repent of our sins; not that salvation, which is founded on the pardon of sins, depends on our repentance; but repentance is joined to it in such a manner that it cannot be separated. They whom the Lord receives into favor are renewed by his Spirit in such a manner as to abhor their vices and change their manner of life.

Papists overturn the whole doctrine of salvation, by mingling and confounding pardon of sin with repentance; and not only they, but others also who wish to be thought more acute. [392] They acknowledge that a man is justified by free grace through Christ, but add, that it is because we are renewed by him. Thus they make our justification to depend partly on the pardon of sins and partly on repentance. But in this way our consciences will never be pacified; for we are very far from being perfectly renewed. These things must, therefore, be distinguished, so as to be neither separated nor confounded; and thus our salvation will rest; on a solid foundation.

Paul quotes this passage, (Romans 11:26) in order to show that there is still some remaining hope among the Jews; although from their unconquerable obstinacy it might be inferred that they were altogether cast off and doomed to eternal death. But because God is continually mindful of his covenant, and "his gifts and calling are without repentance," (Romans 11:29) Paul justly concludes that it is impossible that there shall not at length be some remnant that come to Christ, and obtain that salvation which he has procured. Thus the Jews must at length be collected along with the Gentiles, that out of both "there may be one fold" under Christ. (John 10:16) It is of the deliverance from Babylon, however, that the Prophet treats. This is undoubtedly true; but we have said that he likewise includes the kingdom of Christ, and spiritual redemption, to which this prediction relates. Hence we have said that Paul infers that he could not be the redeemer of the world, without belonging to some Jews, whose fathers he had chosen, and to whom this promise was directly addressed.

Saith Jehovah. By these words, in the conclusion of the verse, he sets a seal to the excellent sentiment which he has expressed.

21. *And I make this my covenant with them.* Because it was difficult to believe what the Prophet has hitherto declared, therefore he endeavors, in various ways, to confirm the Jews, that they may rely with unshaken confidence on this promise of salvation, and may ascribe to God so much honor as to trust in his word. And we ought carefully to observe the word *covenant,* by which the Prophet points out the greatness and excellence of this promise; for the promises are more extensive, and may be regarded as the stones of the building, while the foundation of it is the covenant, which upholds the whole mass. He makes use of this word, therefore, that they might not think that it contained some matter of ordinary occurrence, and adds these confirmations, that, although the Lord did not immediately perform this, they might nevertheless expect it with firm and unshaken hope; and there appears to be an implied contrast, that believers may cheerfully look forward to the new covenant, which was to be established in the hand of Christ.

My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words. What is now added may be

[392] "Et ce ne sont pas les ignorans seulement qui font cela, ains ceux qui veulent estre estimez les plus subtils entre eux." "And it is not ignorant persons only who do this, but those who wish to be reckoned the most ingenious among them."

thought to be feeble and trivial, when he enjoins the Church to be satisfied with the "word" and "Spirit;" as if this were a great happiness, to hang in suspense on nothing but God's promises. Yet although the Prophet commends the value and excellence of doctrine, I have no doubt that still it is not separated from its effect. But because God regulates and dispenses his grace in such a manner, that, as long as believers remain in this world, he always trains them to patience, and does not in every instance answer their prayers, therefore he brings them back to doctrine; as if he had said, "Thou wilt indeed find that I am kind to thee in various ways; but. there is no happiness which will be of greater importance to thee, or which thou oughtest to desire more earnestly, than to feel that I am present by 'the word' and 'the Spirit.' " Hence we infer that this is a most valuable treasure of the Church, that he has chosen for himself a habitation in it, to dwell in the hearts of believers by his Spirit, and next to preserve among them the doctrine of his gospel.

Shall not depart out of thy mouth. Finally, he foretells that the Lord will never forsake his people, but will always be present with them by "his Spirit" and by "the word." The "Spirit" is joined with the word, because, without the efficacy of the Spirit, the preaching of the gospel would avail nothing, but would remain unfruitful. In like manner, "the word" must not be separated from "the Spirit," as fanatics imagine, who, despising the word, glory in the name of the Spirit, and swell with vain confidence in their own imaginations. It is the spirit of Satan that is separated from the word, to which the Spirit of God is continually joined. Now, when he quickens outward doctrine, so that it strikes root in our hearts, our condition is happy even amidst many afflictions; and I have no doubt that the Prophet expressly declares that, although God deals kindly with his Church, still its life and salvation shall be laid up in faith. Thus the new people is distinguished from the ancient people; for, as the kingdom of Christ is spiritual, so, since he has risen from the dead, believing souls must be raised up along with him. But now he promises that the Church will never be deprived of this invaluable blessing, but will be guided by the Holy Spirit and sustained by heavenly doctrine; for it would be of little avail that the gospel should once be offered to us, and that the Spirit should be given to us, if he did not dwell with us.

Which I have put in thy mouth. The Prophet shows that God addresses us in such a manner that he chooses to employ the ministry and agency of men. He might indeed speak from heaven or send angels; but he has consulted our advantage the more by addressing and exhorting us through men like ourselves, that, by their voice and word, he may more gently draw us to himself. This order has therefore been established by him in the Church, that it is vain for those who reject his ministers to boast that they are willing to obey God; and therefore he commands us to seek the word and doctrine from the mouth of prophets and teachers, who teach in his name and by his authority, that we may not foolishly hunt after new revelations.

My words shall not depart. The phrase, "shall not depart," is rendered by some in the imperative mood, for which it is well known that the future tense is sometimes used. But here a command or exhortation is not appropriate; for the Prophet promises that which God intends to fulfill. An exhortation may indeed be drawn from it, but the priority is due to the promise, which is to this effect, that the Lord will assist his Church, and will take care of it, so as never to allow it to be deprived of doctrine. To this, therefore, we ought always to look, when we are tempted by adversity, and when everything does not succeed according to our wish; for we must be supported and upheld by the word and the Spirit, of which the Lord declares that we shall never be left destitute.

Chapter 60

CHAPTER 60.

Isaiah 60:1-22

1. Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee.

1. Surge, splendida esto; quia venit splendor tuus, et gloria Iehovae super to orta est.

2. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.

2. Quia ecce tenebrae operient terrain, et caligo populos; super to autem orietur Iehova, et gloria ejus super to videbitur.

3. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.

3. Et ambulabunt gentes ad splendorem tuum, et reges ad fulgorem ortus tui.

4. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side.

4. Leva in circuitu oculos tuos, et vide. Omnes isti congregati sunt ut veniant ad to; filii tui longe venient, filiae tuae ad latus nutrientur.

5. Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee.

5. Tunc videbis, st splendesces, (vel, difflues,) expavesces ac dilatabitur cor tuum; quia ad to conversa fuerit copia maris, (vel, multitudo maris) opes gentium (vel, robur gentium) ad to venerint.

6. The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Midian

and Ephah; all they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall shew forth the praises of the LORD.

6. Copia camelorum operiet to, pullorum Midian et Epha. Omnes e Saba venient, aurum et thus afferent, et laudes Iehovae annuntiabunt.

7. All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto thee, the rams of Nebaioth shall minister unto thee: they shall come up with acceptance on mine altar, and I will glorify the house of my glory.

7. Omnes oyes Cedar congregabuntur tibi; arietes Nabaioth ministrabunt tibi; ascendent ad beneplacitum altaris mei; et domum gloriae meae glorificabo.

8. Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?

8. Qui sunt isti qui instar nubis volant, et quasi columbae ad fenestras suas?

9. Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the LORD thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because he hath glorified thee.

9. Me certe insulae expectabunt, et naves Tharsis, ut filios tuos abducant a longe; argentum eorum et aurum cum ipsis, nomini Iehovae Dei tui, et sancto Israel; quia glorificavit to.

10. And the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee: for in my wrath I smote thee, but in my favour have I had mercy on thee.

10. Et extruent filii alienigenae muros tuos, et reges eorum ministrabunt tibi; quoniam in ira mea percussi to, et in clementia mea misertus sum tui.

11. Therefore thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night; that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought.

11. Et aperientur portae tuae jugiter; die et nocte non claudentur, ut advehantur tibi opes (vel, robur) gentium, et reges eorum ducti.

12. For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted.

12. Quoniam gens et regnum quod non servierit tibi peribunt; gentes, inquam, penitus abolebuntur.

13. The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious.

13. Gloria Libani ad to veniet, abies, pinus, et buxus pariter, ad decus loci sanctitatis meae; nam locum pedum meorum glorificabo.

14. The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee, The city of the LORD, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel.

14. Et venient ad to humiles filii affligentium to, et incurvabunt se ad

plantas pedum tuorum omnes qui to spernebant; et vocabunt to Civitatem Iehovae, Sion Sancti Israel.

15. Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through thee, I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations.

15. Pro eo quod fuisti derelicta ct exosa, ut nemo per to transiret, ponam to in magnificentiam perpetuam, gaudium generationis et generationis.

16. Thou shalt also suck the milk of the Gentiles, and shalt suck the breast of kings: and thou shalt know that I the LORD am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob.

16. Et suges lac Gentium, mammillam regum suges; et cognosces quod ego Iehova, servator tuus, et redemptor tuus fortis Iacob.

17. For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron: I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness.

17. Pro aere adducam aurum, et pro ferro adducam argentum, et pro ligno ae, et pro lapidibus ferrum; et ponam praefecturam tuam, pacem; et exactores tuos, justitiam.

18. Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise.

18. Non audietur amplius oppressio in terra tua, vastitas et contritio in terminis tuis; et vocabis Salutem muros tuos, et portas tuas Laudem.

19. The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory.

19. Nec erit tibi amplius sol in lucem dierum, nec splendor lunae lucebit tibi; quia erit tibi Iehova in lucem perpetuam, et Deus tuus in gloriam tuam.

20. Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the LORD shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.

20. Non occidet amplius sol tuus, nec luna tua occultabitur; quoniam Iehova erit tibi in lucem perpetuam, et finientur dies luctus tui.

21. Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified.

21. Populus quoque tuus omnes justi, perpetuo haereditabunt terram, germen plantationis ejus, opus manuum mearum, ut glorificer.

22. A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the LORD will hasten it in his time.

22. Parvus erit in mille, exiguus in gentem robustam. Ego Iehova tempore ejus accelerabo hoc.

1. *Arise, be bright.* He now shows what is the efficacy of that word

of which he formerly [393] spoke; for he raises up a prostrate and afflicted Church, and restores her to her brightness; and, because he represents the person of God, he now declares his authority. For this reason he employs the form of command, that the word spoken might be more efficacious; as if, in the exercise of absolute power, he put the Church in possession of that happier condition which he had promised. The amount of what is said is, that believers may know that he does not scatter his words in the air, but speaks with effect.

He bids her "arise," because he formerly told her to "lie down;" and these two words stand in contrast with each other. Of Babylon he formerly said, "Come down, sit in the dust." (Isaiah 47:1) Of the Jews themselves he said, "My people shall sit in the dust." On the other hand, he says, "Arise, arise, put on the garments of thy beauty." (Isaiah 52:1) Thus, by what may be called the stretching out of his hand, he lifts up the Church again, that she who had formerly been prostrated, and covered all over with filth and pollution, may regain her seat of honor.

For thy brightness is come. That the darkness of afflictions may not overwhelm the Jews with despair, he says that the light which had been hidden would soon afterwards arise, alluding to the alternation of day and night. As if he had said, "The Lord, having compassion upon thee, will rescue thee out of this darkness in which thou liest; thou hast been sufficiently punished; it is time that thy condition should begin to be improved." By the word *brightness,* therefore, he metaphorically denotes salvation and prosperity, as by "darkness" he formerly denoted a calamitous state of the Church.

The glory of Jehovah. He mentions at the same that this light will arise from no other quarter than from God's smiling countenance, when he shall be pleased to display his grace; for everything goes well when the Lord shines upon us by his light; and, when he turns away from us, nothing that can befall us is more wretched and unhappy.

2. *For, behold, darkness shall cover the earth.* He now exhibits in a stronger light, by means of comparison, that grace which he formerly mentioned; that we may form some idea how much God loves his elect, and how extraordinary is the privilege which he bestows upon them. The amount of what he says is, that, while we are weighed down by innumerable afflictions, and while the whole world, as it were, sinks under them, God will take care of his people., in order to enrich them with various benefits. He shows, therefore, that the light of grace and favor, which he mentioned, will not be indiscriminately enjoyed by all, but will be peculiar to the people of God.

We have said that the word "brightness" denotes a prosperous condition of the Church; but let us not judge of this condition from outward appearance; for the Prophet rises higher, and I have no doubt that his discourse relates to spiritual light and brightness. Otherwise that mode of expression which he afterwards employs, "The Gentiles shall walk to thy brightness," (verse

[393] "Au chapitre precedent." "In the preceding chapter."

3) would not be appropriate. Besides, this is clearly demonstrated by the connection between this chapter and the preceding; for he says that this covenant is continued in the word and Spirit. Finally, from the contrast it may easily be inferred that the happiness promised to the Church is different from that which consists in meat and drink, or tranquillity and peace, and other conveniences; and indeed never afterwards was there any period in which the darkness of afflictions overwhelmed all the Gentiles, while the Jews enjoyed peace and prosperity. Since, therefore, the condition of the Church is separated from the whole world, that benefit which Isaiah puts into the possession of the Church is spiritual, and the brightness which he promises is spiritual; and consequently, these things relate to the spiritual kingdom of Christ, when the light of the Gospel shone in every part of the world, and foreign nations were enlightened by it. To this also relates what follows, —

The Lord will arise upon thee; for although he shows that the favor of God will be visible by manifest tokens and effects, yet he does not leave out that which is of the greatest importance, that believers will truly feel that he is their Father, so as to expect salvation from him. Hence infer that we are overwhelmed by darkness till God shine upon us with the testimony of adoption by free grace. I speak of all mankind; for Isaiah informs us that this life-giving light proceeds from God alone, in order to declare that it is a special gift of God.

Secondly, it ought to be observed that the Church alone, that is, the elect of God, are partakers of this brightness. Hence it follows, that it is not a common or natural gift, but a gift by which the Lord relieves us from an ordinary defect of human nature. Thus also we perceive that there is no light or brightness but in the Church; for the rest of men, though they think that they enjoy light and brightness, are overwhelmed by darkness, from which they cannot be extricated in any other way than by the light of the Gospel.

And his glory shall be seen upon thee. He adds the word "glory," because, after having embraced us by his favor, the Lord continues more and more to increase his acts of kindness toward us.

3. *And the Gentiles shall walk.* He confirms what we have already said, that there is no other light of men but when the Lord shines on them by his word. All indeed acknowledge this; but they do not set so high a value as they ought on this benefit, and imagine it to be something of an ordinary kind, which naturally belongs to all men. But he shows that this grace is supernatural, and therefore it ought to be distinguished from nature; which is clearly shown by the repetition of the words upon thee, in the preceding verse.

First, then, we ought to believe that this benefit comes from God alone; and secondly, that all are not indiscriminately partakers of it, but only the elect, on whom the Lord shines by undeserved favor, so as to take them out of the ordinary rank of men. This is done by Christ, who is called "the Sun

of Righteousness," because we are enlightened as if by his rays. (Malachi 4:2) Besides, the Prophet declares that this favor shall be spread far and wide by the Jews; which is also intimated by the words of the covenant,

"In thy seed shall all nations be blessed." (Genesis 22:18)

To thy brightness. If one nation only had enjoyed the light, it would have been of no advantage to the rest; but, so far as the doctrine of the Gospel has been spread throughout the whole world, Judea has held out the light to the Gentiles formerly blinded, in order to point out the way. By making the brightness peculiar to a single nation, he shows that in no other way could the world be enlightened, or come to share in this benefit, than by seeking light from that word which proceeded from the Jews, and was heard at Jerusalem, where the lamp of the Lord was kindled, and where the Sun of Righteousness arose, that from it he might diffuse his light to all the ends of the earth, as we have formerly seen, "Out of Zion shall go forth the Law." (Isaiah 2:3) There is, therefore, no light but from the doctrine of the prophets; so that they who withdraw from it falsely boast of walking in the light.

And kings to the brightness of thy rising. He alludes to the dawn; for, as the morningstar begins the day in one quarter only of heaven, and immediately the sun enlightens the whole world, so the daybreak was first in Judea, from which the light arose and was afterwards diffused throughout the whole world; for there is no corner of the earth which the Lord has not enlightened by this light. He mentions "kings," that they might not imagine that none but the common people would come to this light, but princes and nobles, who in other respects are greatly delighted with their high rank. But now he confers on the Church the very highest honor, that she shines with such brightness as to attract to herself nations and princes. He calls it "the light" of the Church; not that she has any light from herself, but borrows it from Christ, as the moon borrows from the sun.

4. *Lift up thine eyes round about.* By a variety of expressions he confirms that promise of the restoration of the Church which appeared to be altogether incredible. Nor was it easy to convince the Jews of this, while the state of their affairs was so wretched and confused. At that time the kingdom of Judah alone remained, and grew less every day, till it was utterly ruined; but when the people were led into captivity amidst that frightful dispersion and melancholy ruin, everything was so desperate that it appeared as if the Church were entirely ruined. It was therefore proper to confirm this doctrine by a variety of expressions, that hearts naturally prone to distrust might no longer doubt. For this reason he leads the Jews to look at the event as actually at hand, though it was at a great distance; that they might not hesitate any more than if it were already placed before their eyes.

He bids believers lift, up their eyes on high, that is, above human thought; for, so long as we fix them on the outward condition, we cannot obtain the fruit of these promises. He adds, "round about," that they may fully believe that the nations will come, not from one quarter only, but from

every direction, that they may be united in one body. And not only does he promise a remedy and an end of the dispersion which was yet to take place, as it is said elsewhere, "He will gather the dispersed of Israel," (Psalm 147:2; Isaiah 56:8) but this gathering is more extensive; for it means that there will be a wonderful revolution in the world, so that they who formerly were strangers and dispersed shall be united in one body. Finally, it denotes the extension of the Church to the farthest boundaries of the earth. There is also an implied contrast, by which he points out the wretched and afflicted condition in which the world was, before it was gathered together under the direction of Christ.

Thy sons shall come from far. Some think that by "sons" are meant those who are stronger and more steadfast in faith, and by daughters those who are weaker. But I do not think that the Prophet intended to convey such ingenious distinctions; [394] and therefore I consider the plain meaning to be, that both sons and daughters shall run together to the Church; that is, that the Church shall have sons and daughters, not only at home but abroad, and in the most distant parts of the world; that the womb of the Church shall not be limited to any corner of the world, but shall be extended as far and wide as there shall be space throughout the whole world.

5. *Then shalt thou see.* These things appear, at first sight, to be somewhat inconsistent with each other, that formerly he spoke of the fact as present, and now foretells it as future. But formerly he spoke of the eyes of faith, which beholds those things which do not fall under the senses of men, and now he speaks of the actual event; or, at least, he intended by the present tense to point out the certainty; but now, in order that believers may continue to exercise patience, he limits the same statement. Besides, although those things which the Lord promises are concealed, for a time, from the eyes of men, yet believers perceive them by faith; so that they have a firm belief and expectation of the accomplishment of them, however incredible they may appear to others.

Thou shalt shine, or, *thou shalt overflow.* As the verb {נהר} (*nahar*) signifies both "to shine" and "to overflow," so it may be rendered either way. [395] We may refer it to that joy with which the Church is filled and overflows, when it is enlarged in this manner, or to the ornament with which it shines and dazzles. [396]

Thou shalt tremble. He now mentions "trembling," and connects it with splendor or joy; and this may appear to be inconsistent with the meaning assigned to the former clause. But I have no doubt that he intended, by

[394] "There is more probability in Knobel's suggestion, that the Prophet made his picture true to nature by describing the sons as walking, and the daughters as being carried." — Alexander.

[395] "As to {,נהר (nahar,) the difficulty is in choosing between its two admitted senses of 'flowing,' (Isaiah 2:2) and of 'shining,' (Psalm 34:5) The former is preferred by Jerome, who translates it afflues; by Junius and Tremellius, who have conflues; and by the English and Dutch versions, the latter of which refers it to the confluence of crowds produced by any strange occurrence. Vitringa makes it mean to flow out, and Lowth to overflow with joy. But all the latest writers of authority give the word the same sense as in Psalm 34:5, which is well expressed by Henderson in strong though homely English, thou shalt look and brighten up." — Alexander

[396] "Qui la fait reluire." "Which causes it to shine."

this word, to express the astonishment and even amazement with which the Church shall be seized, when she shall perceive that this strange and unexpected honor has been obtained by her, and that she has been elevated to so high a rank of honor. As if he had said, "The extent of the work will be so great as to exceed thy expectation." It is not, therefore, the "trembling"' which is produced by some danger or some melancholy event, but such as commonly arises in matters of great importance, which exceed the capacity of our understanding, when we are struck with amazement, and almost think that we dream, and this "trembling" agrees very well with joy.

6. *A multitude of camels shall cover thee.* The Prophet describes figuratively the glory of the Church, and accommodates his discourse to the time, and to the persons with whom he had to do. We must keep in remembrance what we have often said, that the prophets took into account the people whom they taught, and therefore mentioned customary transactions and wellknown ceremonies, that, under the figures of them, they might describe the spiritual worship of God. The Jews must be first instructed, and afterwards the Gentiles, to whom the truth of those things has come; as if he had said, that nations far distant shall come, with their wealth, into the power of God; for, when he foretells that the Church shall be enriched, this must not be understood as referring to the persons of men; but, on account of the unity of the Head and the members, what belongs to God and to Christ is transferred to the Church. Foolishly, therefore, do the Jews, under the pretense of this prophecy, devour with their insatiable avarice all the riches of the earth; and not less absurdly do the Papists torture these words to support their luxuries, wealth, and magnificence.

He mentions "camels, frankincense, gold., and sheep," because he has in his eye what each country produces, in order to show that all will consecrate to God whatever they shall have in their power, and will offer themselves and all that they have as a sacrifice. Hence it ought to be inferred, that we cannot be truly converted to the Lord, without offering to him all our faculties; for these are "spiritual sacrifices," (1 Peter 2:5) which he demands, and which cannot be refused to him, if our hearts be dedicated and consecrated to him in sincerity. (Romans 12:1) Wicked men abuse the gifts of God for luxury and intemperance, and corrupt them, as far as lies in their power, by unworthy profanation; but good men, by using them with a pure conscience, dedicate them to the Lord. No one, therefore, can belong to God without dedicating and devoting to him all that he has.

7. *Kedar, Nebaioth.* So far as relates to the countries which the Prophet here enumerates, it is unnecessary to explain in what place each of them is situated; but it ought to be observed, in passing, that he mentions here those countries which lay toward the East, and chiefly Arabia and neighboring places, which he describes under the names of "Kedar" and "Nebaioth." The Papists have also abused this passage, in order to prove that kings came from the East to offer gifts to Christ; and, in so doing, they make themselves

exceedingly ridiculous, seeing that the Prophet speaks of all ranks of men. But they heap up, without judgment, all passages of this kind, in which mention is made of "gold" or "frankincense," as if the prophets meant those gifts which the magi offered. (Matthew 2:11) But in this passage there is no obscurity; for it means that everywhere men shall call upon God, and all foreigners shall assemble to worship him.

They shall ascend to the good pleasure of my altar. Others render the words, "They shall ascend with good pleasure on my altar," and think (not altogether without reason, in my opinion) that it is a figure of speech by which words interchange their cases with each other, and that. the Prophet means that those sacrifices which shall be offered by the Gentiles will be acceptable to God. Others interpret {רצון} (*ratzon*) as if it were an adjective, which does not agree with the correct use of the language; for {רצון} (*ratzon*) signifies benevolence or favor. For this reason I consider the rendering which I have given to be preferable; namely, that "sacrifices shall ascend to the good pleasure of the altar;" and the meaning may be brought out in this manner, "They shall ascend to appease God; as it is for this purpose that an altar has been appointed, and sacrifices are offered, that God may be reconciled and favorable to men; and God also, according to his promise, accepts the sacrifices that have been offered on his altar;" for at that time the "altar" was the approach to obtain God's favor.

Here the Prophet plainly expresses three things. First, when he says that "the sacrifices ascend," he alludes to the ancient ceremony, which was formerly observed by them in sacrifices; for they lifted up the slain beasts; by which they meant that all men ought to raise their hearts on high, that they might not keep their eyes fixed on the earth or look only at the sacrifice which was offered. Secondly, the Prophet says that those sacrifices are acceptable to God, that they may be distinguished from the profane offerings of the Gentiles, which were unaccompanied by faith. Thirdly, he says, "On the altar," which alone can "sanctify the offerings," (Matthew 23:19;) for all that was offered anywhere else was unholy and detestable. Besides, this figure ought to lead us to the truth; for Christ is the altar of God, and on him we must offer, if we wish that God should accept our sacrifices.

And I will glorify the house of my glory. Under the glorification of the temple he declares the true restoration of the people; for the chief part of their happiness was, that the temple should stand, in which men called on God in a right manner; and we must begin with this, that God reigns amongst us, by which we are made truly happy. For this reason, when the Lord declares that the Church shall be restored, he mentions the temple, the glory of which he will restore; as if he had said, "My house is now exposed to the mockery of the Gentiles, but I will at length restore to it that glory of which it has now been deprived." It is evident from Zechariah, Haggai, and Malachi, that this was not completed immediately after the return of the people. We must not imagine that its true dignity consisted in that

splendid building by which Herod cunningly endeavored to gain favor; and therefore the dignity or honor, which is here mentioned, was not manifested till God opened the gate of heaven to Jerusalem, and then openly called all the Gentiles to the hope of eternal salvation.

8. *Who are those?* As the Prophet cannot satisfy himself in describing this gift of God, he breaks out into admiration, and exclaims, "Who are those?" This is far more forcible than if he had simply said that an inconceivable multitude was flying, and had even made use of the same metaphors. He intended, therefore, to describe how splendid this multiplication would be, when he could not find words sufficient to express it.

That fly as a cloud. [397] It is generally thought that this denotes the Apostles, who, with incredible swiftness, made their way to the farthest boundaries of the world; and there is some plausibility in that interpretation. (Mark 16:15) But the Prophet speaks of a universal assemblage of the Church; for from every quarter men shall run to it readily and cheerfully.

And as doves to their windows [398] The metaphor of "doves," which he employs, is highly appropriate to this subject; for, when they are dispersed through the fields, they appear not to differ at all from untamed birds; and yet they are domesticated, and have their pigeonhouse, to which they betake themselves, and in which they build their nests. Thus believers, enlightened by faith, begin to perceive their assembly, to which they fly from frightful dispersion. How necessary this warning was, will be readily perceived by all who shall take into account their wretched and alarming condition at that time; for, if the prophets, after having carefully instructed the Jews for many years, could gain very little or hardly any success, what was to be expected from the Gentiles, who were altogether alienated from God? Was it not {παράδοξον} beyond all reasonable expectation, that the Gentiles would one day come into the Church? Yet the Prophet does not speak extravagantly, but is filled with such amazement that he leads us to admire it in the same manner.

9. *Surely the islands shall wait for me.* After having employed every eulogium that he could find for extolling that wonderful benefit of restoration, Isaiah introduces God himself as speaking, that the discourse may carry greater weight. This "waiting" is supposed by some to denote desire; as if

[397] "It is a fine conception of Vitringa, that the ships expressly mentioned in the next verse are here described, on their first appearance at a distance, resembling with their outspread sails and rapid course a fleecy cloud driven by the wind, and a flight of doves returning to their young." — Alexander.

[398] "The ideas conveyed by the images here employed are those of number and velocity. The reference to the doves is beautifully illustrated by a passage in Morier's Second Journey in Persia. Speaking of the pigeon—houses near Ispahan, he says: 'They are large round towers, rather broader at the bottom than the top, crowned by conical spiracles, through which the pigeons descend. Their interior resembles a honey-comb, pierced with a thousand holes, each of which forms a snug retreat for a nest. The extraordinary flights of pigeons which I have seen upon one of these buildings, afford perhaps a good illustration of Isaiah 60:8. Their great numbers, and the compactness of their mass, literally looked like a cloud at a distance, and obscured the sun in their passage.' The persons referred to are the Jews, who now flock in immense numbers from all quarters to the land of their fathers, and Jerusalem, the summit of their earthly joy." — Henderson.

he had said that this is done, because nations beyond the seas shall, as it were, hunger after him; because they shall feel that they are destitute of life and salvation. Others view it as simply denoting hope. But sometimes it likewise means "to observe," in which sense David employs it. "Wicked men wait for my soul;" that is, "they lay snares for my life." (Psalm 56:6) In that sense it may be understood in this passage. "They shall wait for," that is, they shall observe my will; as servants are wont to comply with the will of their masters. Do not wonder, therefore, that so many shall flow into the Church; for "the islands," which at present sometimes despise and sometimes fight against me, shall be so attentive to me as to execute whatever I shall command. And indeed from the remainder of the verse it is manifest that he now speaks of that kind of obedience.

And the ships of Tarshish. If it be thought preferable, the particle {כ} (*caph*,) *as,* may be here supplied in this manner: "As the ships of Tarshish formerly traded with Judea, and brought what was necessary for building the temple and for the use of men, so they shall again renew their traffic, and that navigation which had been broken off shall bring them back to their former course. By "Tarshish," that is, Cilicia, he means, {συνεκδοχικῶς} by a figure of speech in which a part is taken for the whole, all the naval intercourse and all the traffic which they carried on with foreign nations. It may also be supposed simply to mean, "The ships of Tarshish, which now proudly despise my Church, shall be subjected to my authority, and shall bring sons to her from distant countries."

Their silver and gold with them. He again repeats what he had formerly said, that the Gentiles shall yield obedience to God in such a manner as to offer themselves and all that they have. The Popish doctors, as I remarked a little before, display consummate impudence in abusing these proofs for defending that tyrannical and theatrical [399] display by which Roman antichrist, and his attendants, wish to attain fame and distinction. Abounding in luxury, adorning themselves with gold and jewels, and indeed with the attire of a harlot, they are not ashamed of representing the Holy Spirit as the author of this wickedness; so that, whenever gold and silver are mentioned in Scripture, they apply it to their luxury. In. this respect they certainly are very like the Jews, who rise to ecstatic delight at the mention of gold and silver, and hope to wallow in them, when Messiah comes. Thus the Papists think of nothing else than gold and silver, and their understandings are so much dazzled by that empty display that they cannot raise them to heaven. But such stupidity does not need a lengthened refutation.

To the name of Jehovah thy God. The general meaning is, that God intends to elevate his Church to the highest honor, and to adorn her with necessary ornaments. And that believers may not have their minds disturbed by any doubt of so illustrious a promise, or ascribe anything to their own

[399] "Et Persiques." "And Persian." The reference is to that love of display which has always prevailed in Asiatic countrics. — Ed.

merits, God himself promises that he will be the author of this event, *for he will glorify thee.* Besides, the Prophet declares that the riches of the Gentiles, which he appeared to represent, a little before, as the prey of the Church or the prize of victory, shall be a sacred offering to God; and thus he states more clearly what I have said, that there is nothing which we ought to desire more earnestly than that the whole world should bow to the authority of God.

10. *And the sons of the stranger shall build thy walls.* He continues the same subject. As he formerly said that foreigners shall submit to his authority, in order to build the temple; so he now says that "the sons of the stranger" shall bestow their labor in building the walls. Various are the comparisons by which he promises the restoration of the Church. It is customary in Scripture, when the Church is spoken of, to exhibit sometimes the temple, and sometimes Jerusalem. He promises that foreigners and strangers shall assist in rearing this building, that the Jews may not be terrified by their poverty or their small number, and consequently lose heart; for they might be tempted to distrust during the captivity, so that, though they hoped to return to their native country, still they might think that this could not be accomplished by them.

Now, Cyrus accomplished it, when he supplied them with a large amount of gold and silver. But in him these things were merely shadowed out. They were actually fulfilled in Christ, to whose reign they must entirely relate; for, first, Christ employed a few apostles, (Matthew 10:1) who could not be sufficient for so great a work; but afterwards he raised up strangers, from among whom he chose pastors, and wished that their foreign princes should be nursingfathers of the Church.

With aggravated wickedness do the Papists pervert and corrupt this passage, by torturing it to uphold the tyranny of the Pope, whom they wish to possess supreme power over kings and princes. They speak impudent falsehood when they say that he is Christ's deputy; for Christ's "kingdom" is not of this world. (John 18:36) The Pope rules barbarously and tyrannically, and claims the power of changing and disposing of kingdoms. But kings submit to Christ in such a manner that they do not cease to be kings, but exercise all their power for preserving the worship of God and administering righteous government.

Hence we see how much those persons are opposed to the kingdom of Christ who wish to snatch authority and power from kings, that they themselves may possess it. Hence also the Anabaptists may be refuted, who overturn political order so far as to imagine that kings cannot be Christians in any other way than by renouncing their own authority, since even in the royal rank God shows that he wishes to hold the highest place.

For in my wrath I smote thee. Lest any one should object that it would have been easier to preserve the Church uninjured than to raise her from hell, God anticipates the objection, and shows that the Jews were justly

afflicted in this manner, because he had been exceedingly provoked by their offenses; but he gives them good ground of hope, because he does not choose to demand the punishment which they had deserved, but will be satisfied, provided that a temporary chastisement shall humble them.

In my kindness have I had compassion on thee. He reminds the Jews what is the cause of this change, that they may not judge of it according to their own apprehension. When kingdoms are changed, and frequently rise and fall, men think that these events happen by chance, and that it is the common lot of the world. The Jews might think the same thing, when, in consequence of the kingdom of the Babylonians having been overturned, they were restored to liberty. For this reason the Lord testifies that all these things are governed by his providence; that is, that they may not shut their eyes after the manner of heathens. It is as if he had said, "If thou inquire why thou hast endured so many afflictions, the reason is this, that I was angry with thee and punished thy transgressions. But if thou ask the cause of thy deliverance, my undeserved kindness, and not thy worthiness, or an accidental occurrence, was the cause." Accordingly, calamities do not happen by chance, nor is God angry without cause; and he is not angry to such a degree as not to leave room for his compassion. (Habakkuk 3:2)

11. *And thy gates shall be open continually.* The ordinary exposition of this verse is incorrect. The Prophet is generally supposed to mean that the Church will be perfectly safe under the Lord's protection and guardianship; for "open gates" indicate that danger is far off. But I think that the Prophet himself explains it; namely, that the gates shall be open, that riches may be brought into the city from every quarter. And as burdens are usually carried in the daytime, "The day," he says, "will not be enough, so vast shall be the crowd of those who bring into it precious treasures, and therefore the carrying will be so constant that it will be necessary to keep the gates open night and day." [400]

When he says that *the riches of the Gentiles* shall belong to the Church, let us not view this as referring to carnal luxury, but to obedience, which the whole world shall render to God in the Church; for he says that what is offered to God belongs to the Church, because here God has nothing separate from it.

That their kings may be led. I prefer retaining the participial form which the Prophet employs, instead of following those who change it into a verb. Such commentators corrupt the Prophet's meaning, who expressly added this, because so great is the haughtiness of kings that they can scarcely endure to be led, but. rather, relying on their power, give free scope to their inclinations, and not only are driven along so as to be the sport of their

[400] "The idea conveyed by the gates never being shut is that of the continual arrival of the multitudes referred to. Modern travelers greatly complain of the inconvenience to which they are put, when they do not reach Jerusalem before the gates are closed. The Apostle John borrows the language in his description of the New Jerusalem. (Revelation 21:25) The ideas of security and peace are implied." — Henderson.

passions, but., like violent torrents, drag others along with them. He shows, therefore, that these kings, though naturally haughty and ungovernable, shall submit to the authority of God and of the Church.

12. *For the nation and kingdom.* The Prophet dwells largely on confirming the hearts of believers, that they may not doubt that the restoration shall be such as he has described. Those events were altogether incredible; and we ourselves, though we have obtained abundant confirmation of them from the actual event, (for they have been made manifest to the eyes of all,) yet, unless we are guided by the Spirit of the Lord, could hardly conceive of them in our mind. He shows, therefore, that there is no reason why the Jews should doubt as to the restoration of the temple, because the Gentiles will aid them to the utmost of their power But here Isaiah looks at something higher than the building of the visible temple; for he intends to speak of that obedience which kings and nobles and the common people render to the Church when they promote, as far as they are able, pure doctrine.

Shall perish. He goes still farther, and confirms his statement the more by declaring that "the kingdoms and nations which will not serve the Church shall be destroyed." And if so dreadful a punishment was pronounced against those who did not aid the Church, what shall we say of the tyrants who rush upon her with furious attack, and labor with all their might to destroy her? If careless and slothful men do not pass unpunished, does not a fearful vengeance await the ungodly, who disturb and overturn the work of the Lord?

The nations, I say, shall be utterly destroyed. What he had said in the singular number he immediately repeats in the plural, in order to show that even the whole world, if it be involved in the same guilt, shall likewise perish; for their multitude will not be able to prevent all who are estranged from God from perishing, and ungodly men will have no excuse for throwing obstacles in each other's way, or for encouraging each other to impiety and wickedness. Kings and nations are said, as we have already seen, to "serve the Church;" not that she exercises any dominion over them, but because God has committed to her the scepter of his word by which he rules.

13. *The glory of Lebanon.* Isaiah again employs the metaphor which he formerly used, when he compared the Church of God to a building or a city. He enumerates those things which were necessary for building, such as "the fir-tree, the pine, and the box-tree," which grew in Lebanon, a forest abounding, as we know, in excellent trees.

For the beauty of the place of my holiness. He means that all that is excellent and beautiful in Lebanon shall be carried into the Church. But it must be believed that these figures contain an emblematical reference to the spiritual worship of God; for the Lord adorns his Church with the title of a sanctuary, because he dwells in the midst of it. Yet he always alludes to the temple, so as to accommodate himself to the time and to ordinary custom. Thus he holds out to us the pattern of the temple which stood at

Jerusalem, that under the image of it we may contemplate the "spiritual temple," (Ephesians 2:21) of which we are the "living stones" and the living substance. (1 Peter 2:5)

For I will glorify the place of my feet. By "the place of his feet," he means that he dwells in the temple in such a manner that his majesty is not confined within it, (for he is not limited to so narrow a place;) and therefore his feet only, what may be called the smallest part, is there, that we may ascend to heaven, and not fix our whole attention on those outward signs by which we are instructed according to our capacity. Thus also in the Psalm,

"Worship the footstool of his feet, for it is holy."
(Psalm 99:5)

And again,

"We will worship in the place where his feet stood."
(Psalm 132:7)

Not that God's essence is divided into parts above and below, [401] but because by such means he lifts up his servants, as it were, from the feet to the head.

14. *And the sons of them that afflict thee shall come.* He continues the same subject, for he shows how splendid will be this work of redemption; that is, that they who persecuted or despised the Church "shall come," so as to bow down humbly before her, and submit to her with their whole heart. By "the sons of them that afflict her," he means the persecutors and enemies who oppressed her. This was indeed partly fulfilled, when the Jews returned to their native country; but that return was nothing more than a dark shadow of the deliverance which we have obtained through Christ. These things were actually accomplished under the reign of Christ, yet so that the full accomplishment of them may be expected at; his second coming, as we have already said under a different passage.

Some one will ask, "Is not this honor, of which the Prophet speaks, excessive and greater than ought to be given to the Church? for to bow down and prostrate ourselves are tokens of honor which no human being ought to receive." I reply, this honor is rendered, not to the members, but to the Head; that is, to Christ, who is worshipped in the Church; and this worship is rendered by those who formerly hated and persecuted him. Now we say that Christ is worshipped in the Church, not as the Papists do, who think that the honor which they bestow on that Roman idol is rendered to Christ. [402] They for whose sake these things are said reject and despise doctrine; for Christ is honored by those who obey his doctrine. And this is what the Prophet means, that they who were formerly alienated from it shall heartily submit, so as to obey Christ; for if Christ; has any majesty, it shines forth in the doctrine which he administers by the agency of men.

401 "L'une au ciel, l'autre en terre." "One in heaven, another on earth."

402 "Qui pensent bien honnorer Christ en s'agenouillant derant cette idole de Rome pour baiser sa pantoufle." "Who think that they greatly honor Christ by kneeling before that idol of Rome to kiss his slipper."

They shall call thee the city of Jehovah. The Church had formerly been adorned with that title; but it was nearly obliterated when the city was destroyed, the temple thrown down, and the people carried into captivity. Jerusalem was no more, and nothing was to be seen in it but frightful desolation; and therefore he means that it shall be restored in such a manner that all shall acknowledge it to be the city of God.

The Zion of the Holy One of Israel. He next speaks of the temple, that all may know that this high rank is ascribed to Jerusalem on account of the temple; that is, on account of the worship of God which the Lord established there.

15. *Instead of* [403] *thy having been forsaken and hated.* The Prophet has in his eye that intermediate period which was already at hand; for, soon after his death, the people were deprived of their heritage and led into captivity, so that all thought that there was no remaining hope of their safety. Lest this thought should come into the minds of believers, by which they might be reduced to despair, "We are undone, there can be no remedy for affairs so desperate, and we ought not to hope for a better condition," he shows that those grievous calamities cannot prevent God from restoring them; for, although for a time, when the Lord chastised them, they appeared to be forsaken, yet it was easy for him to raise them again to prosperity and to a better condition than before.

If any one object that this splendor of the Church was not of long duration, the reply is short. Although the people were afflicted in various ways after their return, and although even the Christian Church did not long retain its glory, yet those things which the Prophet foretold were fulfilled; for under the cross the glory of Christ shines forth, so that the name of God remains, and there is a people that calls upon him by faith. It ought also to be observed, that in consequence of our ingratitude, we do not obtain the fruit of those promises; for we interrupt the course of God's works, and deprive ourselves of the fruit of them by our malice. Besides, we ought always to keep in remembrance what I have so often said, that the Prophet does not speak of a few years or a short period, but embraces the whole course of redemption, from the end of the captivity to the preaching of the Gospel, and, finally, down to the end of the reign of Christ.

16. *And thou shalt suck the milk of the Gentiles.* He speaks of the extension of the Church which he had formerly mentioned; but it was of great importance that the same things should be frequently repeated, because it appeared to be incredible that the Church, which had been reduced to calamities so great and so numerous, would be restored and spread throughout the whole world. Her condition was desperate; but at length, out of that slender remnant which had been, as it were, snatched from the burning, to the great astonishment of all she was restored, and her seed was spread far

[403] {{ננח (tachath) merely expresses 'in exchange for:' though, from the circumstances of the case, the idea of compensation is necessarily implied." — Henderson. "The {ננח} (tachath) may express either simply a change of condition, (whereas,) or the reason of the change, (because,) or the further idea of equitable compensation." — Alexander

and wide through every part of the world. And therefore it is as if he had said, "Although thou art confined within narrow limits, and thou hast had no intercourse with the Gentiles, yet thou wilt obtain very abundant fruit from them."

Thou shalt suck the breast of kings. [404] By "milk" and "breasts" he means nothing else than service and obedience, which the Gentiles shall render to the Church for supporting her offspring; for, having formerly said that at one birth she would bring forth innumerable children, he now gives them milk for nourishment till they grow up. And he speaks expressly of "kings," because it was more difficult to be believed. Here, too, in passing, "kings" are reminded of their duty; and if they wish to discharge it in a proper manner, they must be the servants of the Church; otherwise the Lord will call them to account. We see also what David says of them,

"And now, O ye kings, be wise; and ye judges of the earth, be instructed. Serve Jehovah with fear, and rejoice with trembling." (Psalm 2:10,11)

But we ought carefully to observe in what manner the Church sucks "the milk" and "the breasts" of the Gentiles; for she is not at liberty to exhaust the wealth of the whole world, but to preserve her own condition safe and sound. What is more inconsistent with the nature of a Church than to be an insatiable gulf, and to draw the wealth of all to herself? Those things, therefore, must relate to her spiritual condition, that God may be purely worshipped in her, that the ministry of the word may prosper and flourish, and that some discipline may be maintained, which shall serve as a bridle to restrain all. Yet let believers remember that (Acts 20:35) "it is more blessed to give than to receive," and that they ought to bear poverty so patiently as to enrich others abundantly with spiritual benefits.

And thou shalt know that I Jehovah am thy Redeemer. At length he adds that what had been concealed for a time shall be made manifest, that the Jews were not elected in vain, because they shall know by undoubted experience that God takes care of their salvation. It may be asked, Did they not know this even before they were led into captivity? I answer, that captivity was like the thick darkness to which also the Prophet compared it in the beginning of this chapter. Since, therefore, during that harsh tyranny, they could not behold God's majesty and power, the Lord led them out into open day, not that faith gives way amidst afflictions, but that the feeling of faith is different from that of experience. When we appear to be ruined, faith raises itself above the present condition and the thick darkness in which we are involved; and if God restore us perfectly, then we see it, not by the eyes of faith, but by actual experience. And this is the clear knowledge of which he speaks; as if he had said, "When I shall have acted so kindly towards you, then you shall actually know that I am your Redeemer."

[404] "Sucking the breast of kings is unusual, and by fastidious critics may be deemed unnatural: but the phrase is merely employed for the purpose of carrying out more efficiently the idea taught in the preceding clause; namely, that abundant contributions would be made by the inhabitants of the different nations to the sustenance of Zion." — Henderson

The mighty one of Jacob. He expressly claims the title of "the mighty one of Jacob," because he had often shown that he was so; and not only had Jacob experience in various ways of the power of God, but Jacob's posterity had also known that in the power of God there was abundant protection. He therefore calls himself the "mighty one," that they may know that God will henceforth be to them what he formerly was to their fathers.

17. For brass I will bring gold. He alludes to the building of the ancient temple, and compares it with the heavenly and spiritual temple; as if he had said, "When you shall be led into captivity, you will deplore the ruin of the temple, but I will cause you to build one far more excellent." Thus, "for brass I will bring gold, for iron silver, for wood brass, for stones iron;" that is, everything shall be full of magnificence and splendor in that temple which shall come in place of the former.

We know that this prediction was never accomplished ill that external restoration of the people, or during the commencement of it, and even that the temple which was afterwards erected was far inferior to the former. It follows, therefore, that the Prophet, to whom a full redemption was exhibited in spirit, not only relates what shall happen immediately after the return of the people, but discourses concerning the excellence of the spiritual temple; that is, of the Church of Christ. We must, therefore, come down in uninterrupted succession to Christ, if we wish to understand this prophecy. In his reign these things were abundantly fulfilled, and the glory of the former temple was greatly surpassed; for the Lord poured out gifts of the Holy Spirit, which are more excellent than gold, silver, and jewels. We may therefore see the temple now built with precious stones, as was formerly said. (Isaiah 54:11, 12)

I will make thy magistracy peace. [405] Instead of "magistracy" some render the word "tribute." I have no doubt that the Prophet intended indirectly to compare the wretched bondage of the people under which they were to be kept, with that preeminently high rank which they afterwards obtained. With "peace" and "righteousness" he contrasts the "magistrates" who exercised unjust rule, while they were harassed by the avarice and cruelty of the Babylonians.

And thy exactors righteousness. He now shows that when their "exactors" shall have been exterminated, there will be no "magistracy" but that of "peace" and "righteousness." "They who shall have power over thee will observe righteousness and peace." This was more fully accomplished when, through Christ, we were delivered from the tyranny of the devil; for by the Gospel he set up a kingdom of righteousness which he has not yet completed; but we must look for his last coming so as to have our eyes eagerly fixed on it, and, in the meantime, must; be satisfied with those firstfruits.

405 "'And I will make thy magistracy peace;' that is, 'I will make thy rulers peaceful. {,פקדה} (pekudah,) which evidently corresponds to the Greek word {ἐπισκοπή}, is here used by metonymy for, {אנשי ,פקדה} (anshe pekudah,) or {בעלי ,פקדה} (begnale pekudah,) those who discharge the office of magistracy, as in 2 Kings 11:18, Ezekiel 44:11. The Septuagint renders it {ἄρχοντάς}, 'thy rulers,' and the Chaldee {פרנסך,} (parnasach,) 'thy governors.'" — Rosenmuller

18. *Oppression shall no longer be heard in thy land.* Here he states more clearly what we have already said, namely, that, while the Prophet discourses concerning the prosperous condition of the Church, he indirectly contrasts the miseries and calamities by which they had been afflicted in various ways. He promises, therefore, that they shall never afterwards be subjected to such afflictions. Yet nevertheless various afflictions afterwards befell them. This is undoubtedly true; but the people were never scattered in such a manner as not to have some remaining form of the Church, and thus to enjoy peace, and to feel that they were protected and kept by the hand of God. These words did not contain a promise of exemption from every annoyance and distress; but by comparison they held out this solace for future evils, that God spares his Church, and consequently the Church shall be safe under his protection; and during the very course of the deliverance there was exhibited a striking proof of this peace, which the Prophet extols. Finally, we must always keep in remembrance what we have so often said, that; it is only in part that all these things are experienced by us; for the kingdom of Christ has not yet been completed.

And thy gates Praise. He alludes, as we have often said already, to the building of the temple or the city, and shows that the Church shall be safe, not by means of walls, or towers, or any enclosures, but that, although there are no earthly defenses, there shall be abundance of safety and peaceful joy in God alone. Now he connects the safety of the Church with "peace" or "joy;" because she rejoices at being safe and sound, whereas formerly she lay silently in affliction and despair.

19. and **20.** *And thou shalt no longer have the sun for the light of days.* He teaches that the prosperity of the Church shall not be temporary, but permanent; for he distinguishes it from the ordinary condition of men, among whom there is nothing steadfast or permanent; because there is nothing under the sun, however well regulated, that is not subject to various changes. But we ought not to judge of the Church from the dangers of the present life; for she is preserved in the midst of the billows; as if he had said, "Do not judge of thy safety from the present appearance of things, but know that it is laid up in God. God will be thy sun, so that thou hast no need of borrowing light from the sun or the moon. Do not, therefore, dread any change or revolution of affairs; for thou shalt have a perpetual and unchangeable light."

By these words the Prophet does not mean that the children of God shall be deprived of the ordinary advantages of life; for, since the Lord bestows them indiscriminately on all men, he certainly has appointed them also for his children, for whose sake, indeed, God created all things, since he exercises a peculiar care over them. But the Prophet intended to express a still greater blessing, which the children of God alone enjoy, namely, the heavenly Light, which ungodly men hate, and therefore cannot receive; for, although they enjoy the sun and other blessings, yet their happiness cannot be firm and enduring; because, being void of taste, they do not relish that which was of

the greatest importance, that they have God for their Father.

Thus he distinguishes the condition of the Church and of believers from the ordinary lot of men, that we may not judge of it from the revolution and change of events, and next that we may know that, amidst the thickest darkness, the fatherly kindness of God shines on believers, in order to cheer them. And, indeed, although all the elements either cease to discharge their duty, or threaten us with a melancholy aspect, yet it ought to be enough that God is reconciled to us. By a figure of speech, in which a part is taken for the whole, he includes, under the terms "Sun" and "Moon," the whole condition of man, which is continually undergoing change.

21. *Thy people also are all righteous.* Here he shows what is the true establishment of the Church; namely, when she is purged of the ungodly, and none but righteous men have a place in her. Yet we know that, in the Church, hypocrites have always been mingled with the true children of God. We have said that this is a description of the whole reign of Christ, not such as it shall be at any one moment, but in its perfection. Christ began to do this at his coming, when he purged the Church. Hence also he calls the Church "a sieve," (Matthew 3:12) because by means of it the chaff is separated from the wheat; but he goes on from day to day in purifying it, and will go on till the day of harvest. Yet there must be much rubbish mixed with the wheat, which shall at length be removed on that day. Besides, there is an implied contrast between this people and that irreligious and unholy multitude which, by its defilement, had polluted the sanctuary of God. The use of the plural number appears to denote an assemblage of nations, when he says that all the peoples shall be righteous.

They shall inherit the land for ever. I have no doubt that, in these words, the Prophet had his eye on Judea, and indirectly contrasted the time of restoration with the time of the captivity which was immediately at hand; as if he had said, "Though I drive out my people from their inheritance, yet after seventy years I will restore them, that they may possess it for ever." Besides, it ought to be observed that, when he limits to the "righteous" that promise which related to the people of Zion, there is implied a sort of correction, in order to exclude hypocrites, who falsely and unwarrantably are wont to appropriate to themselves what is said about the true children of God.

This sentiment, therefore, agrees with these words, "How good is God to Israel, to those who are of an upright heart!" in which the Psalmist claims the name of "Israel," which all without exception had in their mouth, as belonging to none but God's sincere worshippers. (Psalm 73:1) Such is the import, in this passage, of the phrase, "Thy people," that is, the remaining portion which shall have been purged from its defilement. This was not, in every respect, fulfilled in the Jews; but a beginning was made with them, when they were restored to their native country, that, by their agency, the possession of the whole earth might afterwards be given to them, that is, to

the children of God. For as he formerly spoke of the restoration of the temple, which was not complete at Jerusalem, but must be extended throughout the whole world, so the possession of this land must not be limited to Judea, since it is more extensive, and all men are called to it, that by faith they may be children of Abraham, and may thus become heirs of it. (Galatians 4:28)

We must therefore observe carefully those modes of expression which are customary among the prophets, that we, nay understand their meaning, and not break off sentences, or torture them to meanings different from what was intended. Exceedingly unnatural and inconsistent with the style of the prophets is the interpretation of those who explain "the land" to mean heaven and the blessed life; for the land of Canaan was given to the children of God with this intention, that, being separated from the whole world, and having become God's heritage, they might worship him there in a right manner; and consequently, to dwell in the land by right of inheritance means nothing else than to remain in the family of God.

The branch of his planting. When God declares that a new "branch," which shall come forth, shall be the work of his hands, this tends to confirm the hope; [406] for it was impossible, to human view, that the Church should spring up again, which all perceived to be dead, especially while the root was hidden. Thus, in order that it may spring up, he says that God will be like a husbandman, who plants anew that which had been torn up and was withered. In a word, he declares that it will be a wonderful work of God, and not of men, that the Church shall be rescued from a wretched and harsh captivity; for she shall be raised up as from the dead. And indeed all that relates to the heavenly life was neither produced in us by nature nor obtained by our own strength, but flows and proceeds from God alone. What is here said universally concerning the whole body every person ought to apply to himself in particular; for we are God's "planting" before the world was made, (Ephesians 1:4,) and were afterwards ingrafted into Christ, and called, that we might have the testimony of our election and planting. Wicked men are not God's planting; and therefore Christ declares that "they whom his heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up." (Matthew 15:13)

That I may be glorified. At length he adds the end of the "planting," that we may celebrate the perfections of God, (1 Peter 2:9) and may show forth his glory, as Paul beautifully explains. (Ephesians 1:12)

22. *A little one shall become a thousand.* He again confirms what he formerly said, that, although they were few in number, yet the Church of God would be populous. When the Prophet foretold these things, there was still a vast multitude of people; but afterwards it was so greatly diminished that not more than a feeble remnant was left, as we have formerly seen. (Isaiah 1:9; 10:22) he declares that the small number shall be so much enlarged,

[406] "Pour conformer l'esperance des fideles." "To confirm the hope of believers."

that it shall afterwards be a vast body of people, and shall possess great strength. Let us consider that what was said to the Jews is now said also to us; that is, though we are few in number and inconsiderable, and appear to be very near destruction, still the Church cannot perish, but will be enlarged and multiplied till it become very numerous; for it is God's planting, and therefore we must not judge of it from the multitude or strength of men.

I Jehovah. He now shows the reason why he said all those things which we have formerly seen; namely, that we may not suppose him to be like men, whose labors and efforts quickly pass away. Although they wish to change the condition of any kingdom or of the world, they will accomplish nothing; but the Lord changes everything in an instant. He does not speak, therefore, of an ordinary government, but of a wonderful work by which the Lord delivers and multiplies his Church.

Will hasten it in her time. He says that "he will hasten this," so as to complete it. But he employs a little word which deserves notice as to the time of the Church; for the relative is in the feminine gender, and is improperly interpreted by some as relating to God. [407] The Prophet means that there is a fixed time when the Church shall be delivered; and in this way he exhorts believers to patience, that they may not plunge headlong, but depend on God's eternal purpose, who knows how to arrange every moment in an appropriate manner.

First, then, he describes the seasonableness and the time when it is advantageous that. the Church shall be delivered. We do not indeed perceive this, for we would wish to obtain instantly God's promises, and are impatient of delay; but the Lord delays for our benefit, and because the time is not yet come. Next, he speaks of haste; for the Lord appears to us to be idle and inactive, when he prolongs the time; although he hastens to accomplish everything at the proper season, which he knows.

[407] Our author adds that he prefers "ejus tempore" to "suo tempore," for the sake of avoiding ambiguity; but unfortunately neither the Latin language nor his own vernacular could distinguish between the English pronouns his, her, and its. — Ed. "The pronouns in the last clause are correctly explained by Knobel as neuters, referring to the whole preceding series of prophecies. (Compare Isaiah 43:13; 46:11) The his in the common version is equivalent to its in modern English, a possessive form apparently unknown to the translators of the Bible." — Alexander.

Chapter 61

CHAPTER 61.

Isaiah 61:1-11

1. The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;

1. Spiritus Domini Iehovae super me; ob id unxit me Iehova; ad praedicandum afflictis misit me; ad obligandum contritos corde, ad publicandam captivis libertatem, vinctis apertionem careeris.

2. To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn;

2. Ad publicandum annum beneplaciti Iehovae, et diem ultionis Deo nostro, ad consolandum onmes lugentes.

3. To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.

3. Ad constituendum lugentibus in Sion, ut dem illis decorem pro cinere, oleum gaudii pro luctu, pallium laetitiae pro spiritu angusto, ad vocandum eos arbores justitiae, plantationem Iehovae ad glorificandum.

4. And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations.

4. Et aedificabunt deserta seculi, priscas solitudines erigent; et instaurabunt urbes vastitatis, solitudines multarum aetatum.

5. And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your ploughmen and your vinedressers.

5. Et stabunt alieni, et pascent oves vestras; et filii alieni erunt agricolae et vinitores vestri.

6. But ye shall be named the Priests of the LORD: men shall call you the Ministers of our God: ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves.

6. Vos autem sacerdotes Iehovae vocabimini; ministri Dei nostri dicetur vobis; substantiam Gentium comedetis, et in gloria eorum vos elevabitis.

7. For your shame ye shall have double, and for confusion they shall rejoice in their portion: therefore in their land they shall possess the double: everlasting joy shall be unto them.

7. Pro pudore vestro erit duplex praemium, et pro ignominia exultabunt de portione eorum; quia in terra eorum duplicia possidebunt, et gaudium perpetuum illis erit.

8. For I the LORD love judgment, I hate robbery for burnt offering; and I will direct their work in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.

8. Quia ego Iehova diligens judicium, odio habens rapinam in holocausto, et constituam opus eorum in veritate, et foedus perpetuum feriam eum ipsis.

9. And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people: all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the LORD hath blessed.

9. Et cognoscetur in Gentibus semen eorum, et germina eorum in medio populorum. Omnes qui viderint eos cognoscent eos quod semen sint benedictum Iehovae..

10. I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.

10. Gaudens gaudebo in Iehova; exultabit anima mea in Deo meo; quoniam induit me vestibus salutis, indumento justitiae circumdedit me: quasi sponsum ornavit me, et quasi sponsam ornatam monilibus suis.

11. For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.

11. Quoniam sicut terra profert germen suum, et sicut hortus germinare facit semen suum; ita Dominus Iehova germinare faciet justitiam et laudem coram omnibus gentibus.

1. *The Spirit of the Lord Jehovah.* As Christ explains this passage with reference to himself, (Luke 4:18) so commentators limit it to him without hesitation, and lay down this principle, that Christ is introduced as speaking, as if the whole passage related to him alone. The Jews laugh at this, as an illadvised application to Christ of that which is equally applicable to other prophets. My opinion is, that this chapter is added as a seal to the former,

to confirm what had hitherto been said about restoring the Church of Christ; and that for this purpose Christ testifies that he has been anointed by God, in consequence of which he justly applies this prophecy to himself; for he has exhibited clearly and openly what others have laid down ill an obscure manner.

But this is not inconsistent with the application of this statement to other prophets, whom the Lord has anointed; for they did not speak in their own name as individuals, or claim this authority for themselves, but were chiefly employed in pointing out the office of Christ, to whom belongs not only the publication of these things, but likewise the accomplishment of them. This chapter ought, therefore, to be understood in such a sense, that Christ, who is the Head of the prophets, holds the chief place, and alone makes all those revelations; but that Isaiah, and the other prophets, and the apostles, contribute their services to Christ, and each performs his part in making known Christ's benefits. And thus we see that those things which Isaiah said would be accomplished by Christ, have now been actually accomplished.

On that account Jehovah hath anointed me. This second clause is added in the room of exposition; for the first would have been somewhat obscure, if he had said nothing as to the purpose for which he was endued with the Spirit of God; but now it is made far more clear by pointing out the use, when he declares that. he discharges a public office, that he may not be regarded as a private individual. Whenever Scripture mentions the Spirit, and says that he "dwelleth in us," (Romans 8:11; 1 Corinthians 3:16) let us not look upon it as something empty or unmeaning, but let us contemplate his power and efficacy. Thus, after having spoken of the Spirit of God, the Prophet next mentions the "anointing," by which he means the faculties which flow from him, as Paul teaches that the gifts are indeed various, but the Spirit is one. (1 Corinthians 12:4)

This passage ought to be carefully observed, for no man can claim right or authority to teach unless he show that he has been prompted to it by the Spirit of God, as Paul also affirms that "no man can call Jesus Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." (1 Corinthians 12:3) But, it will be said, we see that almost all men boast of having the Spirit of God; for the Pope, and the Anabaptists, and other heretics and fanatics, have his name continually in their mouth, as if they were governed by him. How, then, shall we judge that any man has been sent by God, and is guided by his Spirit? By "anointing;" that is, if he is endued with the gifts which are necessary for that orate. If therefore, having been appointed by the Lord, he abound in the graces of the Spirit and the ability which the calling demands, he actually has the Spirit. And if he wish to make profession of enjoying that teacher, and if he have no doctrine, [408] let him be held as an impostor.

He hath sent me to preach. The Prophet does not claim for himself right

[408] "S'il veut contrefaire le docteur, et n'a doctrine ni savoir." "If he wishes to counterfeit the teacher, and has not any doctrine or knowledge."

and authority to teach, before he has shown that the Lord "hath sent him" The authority is founded on his having been "anointed," that is, furnished by God with necessary gifts. We ought not to hear him, therefore, as a private individual, but as a public minister who has come from heaven.

To the afflicted. Some render it, "To the meek;" and both ideas are conveyed by the word {ענוים} (*gnanavim*). But I preferred to adhere to the former signification, because the Prophet is speaking of captives and prisoners. Yet I think that he includes both; for he means those who, while they are altogether forsaken and abandoned, are also wretched in themselves. Christ is promised to none but those who have been humbled and overwhelmed by a conviction of their distresses, who have no lofty pretensions, but keep themselves in humility and modesty. And hence we infer that Isaiah speaks literally of the Gospel; for the Law was given for the purpose of abasing proud hearts which swelled with vain confidence, but the Gospel is intended for "the afflicted," that is, for those who know that they are destitute of everything good, that they may gather courage and support. For what purpose were prophets, and apostles, and other ministers, anointed and sent, but to cheer and comfort the afflicted by the doctrine of grace?

To bind up the broken in heart. Numerous are the metaphors which the Prophet employs for explaining more clearly the same thing. By "binding up," he means nothing else than "healing," but now he expresses something more than in the preceding clause; for he shows that. the preaching of the word is not an empty sound, but a powerful medicine, the effect of which is felt, not by obdurate and hardhearted men, but by wounded consciences.

To proclaim liberty to the captives. This also is the end of the Gospel, that they who are captives may be set at liberty. We are prisoners and captives, therefore, till we are set free (John 8:36) through the grace of Christ; and when Christ wishes to break asunder our chains, let us not refuse the grace that is offered to us. It ought to be observed in general, that the blessings which are here enumerated are bestowed upon us by heavenly doctrine, and that none are fit for the enjoyment of them but those who, conscious of their poverty, eagerly desire the assistance of Christ, as he himself says,

"Come to me all ye that labor and are heavy laden,
and I will relieve you." (Matthew 11:28)

2. *To proclaim the year of the good-pleasure of Jehovah.* Here he expressly mentions the time of bestowing such distinguished grace, in order to remove the doubts which might arise. We know by daily experience how numerous and diversified are the anxious cares which distract the heart,. He affirms that he is the herald of future grace, the time of which he fixes from the "goodpleasure" of God; for, as he was to be the Redeemer of the Church by free grace, so it was in his power, and justly, to select the time.

Perhaps he alludes to the Jubilee, (Leviticus 25:10) but undoubtedly he affirms that we must wait calmly and gently till it please God to stretch out his hand. Paul calls this year "the time of fullness." (Galatians 4:4)

We have likewise seen that the Prophet says, "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." (Isaiah 49:8) Paul applies this to his own preaching; for, while the Lord addresses us by the Gospel, the door of heaven is thrown open to us, that we may now, as it were, enter into the possession of God's benefits. (2 Corinthians 6:2) We must not delay, therefore, but must eagerly avail ourselves of the time and the occasion when such distinguished blessings are offered to us.

And the day of vengeance to our God. But those expressions appear to be inconsistent with each other, namely, "The day of goodpleasure," and "The day of vengeance." Why did Isaiah join together things so opposite? Because God cannot deliver his Church without showing that he is a just judge, and without taking vengeance on the wicked. He therefore employs the term "goodpleasure," with reference to the elect, and the term "day of vengeance," with reference to the wicked, who cease not to persecute the Church, and consequently must be punished when the Church is delivered. In like manner Paul also says, that "It is righteous with God to grant relief to the afflicted, (2 Thessalonians 1:6) and to reward the enemies of believers who unjustly afflict them;" and the Jews could not expect a termination of their distresses till their enemies had been destroyed.

Yet we ought to observe the cause of our deliverance; for to his mercy alone, and not to our merits, or excellence, or industry, must it be ascribed, he appears, indeed, as I briefly remarked a little before, to allude to the Jubilee; but above all things we should attend to this, that our salvation lies entirely in the gracious will of God.

To comfort all that mourn. We ought to keep in remembrance what we formerly remarked, that the end of the Gospel is, that we may be rescued from all evils, and that, having been restored to our former freedom, and all tears having been wiped from our eyes, we may partake of spiritual joy. And if we are not partakers of so great a benefit, it must be ascribed to our unbelief and ingratitude, by which we refuse and drive away God, who freely offers himself to us.

3. *To appoint to the mourners in Zion.* He proceeds with the same subject; for he means that the punishment which was to be inflicted on the people shall be such as still to leave room for forgiveness. And, in order more fully to convince them of it, he says that the Lord has charged him with this office, that he may proclaim this deliverance; and not to himself only, but also to others, till the chief messenger arrive, namely, Christ, who actually bestows and exhibits what God at that time commanded to be made known for a future period. Yet he means that the "mourning" shall not hinder God from giving ground of joy, when he shall think proper; for "to appoint" has the same meaning as "to fix the time," that the tediousness of delay may not discourage them.

That I may give to them beauty for ashes. By the word, *give* he speaks with commendation of the efficacy of the prediction, that they may be fully

convinced of the event. The allusion is to the ancient customs of the Jews, who, when any calamity pressed hard upon them, sprinkled ashes on their heads, and wore sackcloth. (Esther 4:3) By these he denotes the filth and mourning which necessarily attend the wretched condition of the people, and contrasts them with the joy and gladness which they shall have when they are restored to liberty. I think that we ought not to pass by the allusion contained in the words {פאר} (*peer*) and {אפר} (*epher;*) for, by the mere transposition of letters, he intended to denote very different things, and, by an elegant inversion, a change of condition.

Trees of righteousness. By these words he points out the restoration of the people; as if he had said, "Whereas they had formerly been rooted out and resembled a dry stock, they shall be planted and settled." Thus he reminds them that they ought to contemplate the divine power, so that, though they are slain and dead, still they may confidently hope that they shall be restored so as to take root and to receive strength and increase. From this ought to be drawn a universal doctrine, namely, that there is no other way in which we are restored to life than when we are planted by the Lord. We are indeed called his "planting," because he elected us from the beginning. (Ephesians 1:4) But there is also another kind of "planting" which follows the former, namely, the Calling, by which we are ingrafted through faith into Christ's body. The Lord does this by the agency and ministry of the Gospel; but it must be wholly ascribed to him, for "it is he alone that giveth the increase." (1 Corinthians 3:7) We must always bear in mind the emblematical meaning of the first deliverance as illustrating the spiritual kingdom of Christ,.

He gives the appellation of "trees of righteousness" to those in whom the justice of God or good order shines forth. Yet let us know that the Lord adopts us on this condition, that we shall become new creatures, and that true righteousness shall reign in us. And hence it follows that we are by nature depraved and corrupted, and cannot yield fruit in any other way than by being changed and planted by the Lord. This sets aside the vain and haughty opinion of the Papists, who, by contriving either preparations or the aids of free will, claim what belongs to God alone; for if we are planted by the Lord, it follows that we are by nature dry and unfruitful.

To glorify him. This is the design of our "planting;" but we have already spoken of these things in expounding the twenty-first verse of the preceding chapter.

4. *And they shall build the deserts of the age.* He goes on to describe more largely that restoration of the Church; and chiefly with this view, that the Jews may entertain confident hope of deliverance, because those promises appeared to be altogether incredible. And this is the reason why he adorns with extensive and magnificent terms that benefit of redemption. It is a mistake to suppose that these words, "the age" and "many ages, relate to a future period; as if he had said that the building of which he speaks shall be firm and permanent. The Prophet's meaning was widely different; for he

shows (as I have explained at another passage) that the longcontinued ruins of the city shall not prevent it from rising anew. When the inhabitants of any city, scattered in all directions, have been absent for a very long time, there can be no hope of rebuilding it; just as no person in the present day takes any concern about rebuilding Athens. Thus, when the Jews had been banished into a distant country, and Jerusalem had been forsaken for seventy years, who would have hoped that it would be built by the citizens themselves?

For this reason Isaiah employs the designations of "deserts of the age, ancient wildernesses, cities of desolation, wildernesses of many ages," in order to show that all this cannot prevent the Lord from restoring the city to be inhabited by his elect at the proper time. Yet these statements ought also to be accommodated to our time, so that, although the Lord permits his Church, when it has fallen down, to lie long in ruins, and though there is no remaining hope of rebuilding it, yet we may strengthen our heart by these promises; for it is God's peculiar office to raise up and renew what had formerly been destroyed, and devoted as it were to eternal rottenness. But we have formerly treated of these matters at the fiftyeighth chapter.

5. *And strangers shall stand.* He means that foreigners and strangers shall be ready to yield obedience to them; for, in consequence of their being at that time separated from the rest of the nations, none was willing to assist them, and therefore he says that "strangers stand;" that is, are ready to meet and assist them. As to what follows, about "feeding sheep" and "cultivating fields and vines," these are metaphorical expressions; for the Prophet treats of the kingdom of Christ, which is spiritual, but by means of these figures describes its perfect happiness, that we may understand it better from examples drawn from those things which are known to us. Let us therefore understand that we shall be truly happy when Christ shall exercise his dominion over us; for in this way shall we likewise obtain, beyond expectation, many advantages of which the children of Adam are justly deprived.

6. *But ye shall be called the priests of Jehovah.* This verse sheds somewhat more light on the preceding; for in the second part of it the Prophet foretells that believers shall enjoy the riches of the Gentiles, and shall be raised to glory as their successors. The Jews, indeed, seize eagerly on such declarations, and already devour by covetousness the wealth of all the nations, as if they would one day possess it, and vaunt as if the glory of the whole world would become their own.

But there are chiefly two things that ought to be observed in these words, that we may more fully understand them. First, the prophets, when they wish to describe the glory and happiness of the Kingdom of Christ, borrow comparisons from human affairs. Secondly, when they speak of the Church, they connect the Head with the members in such a manner that sometimes they look more at the Head than at the members. We must not understand the enjoyment of the wealth of others to mean that they who are converted to Christ shall seize on the wealth, or glory, or rank of others, which is most

inconsistent with true religion; but because all things shall be brought under the dominion of Christ, so that he alone shall hold authority and rule. And that is what I have already said, that he looks both at the members and the Head. But when they come into the power of Christ, they are called ours, because Christ possesses nothing separate from his Church.

In the same manner it is said elsewhere, (Isaiah 45:14) that the enemies of Christ "shall kiss his feet and supplicate pardon," although this is done in the Church, in which they acknowledge Christ and yield to his doctrine. Thus Isaiah shows what the Father will give to the Son, who has lawful authority over the whole world, (Matthew 28:18) and to whom

"all things must be made subject." (Hebrews 2:8)

Yet we must not omit what I mentioned a little before, that God gives large and kind support to his elect in the world, in order that they may feel that their condition is far better than that of unbelievers; for, though they are in want of many things, yet, being content with a little, they cheerfully give thanks to God, so that their hunger is better than all the abundance of unbelievers.

Priests of Jehovah. By this term he shows that the condition of the people shall be far more excellent than formerly; as if he had said, "Hitherto the Lord had chosen you to be his heritage; but he will adorn you with gifts much more excellent, for he will elevate you to the honor of the priesthood." Although the whole people was "a kingdom of priests," (Exodus 19:6; Deuteronomy 33:10) yet we know that the tribe of Levi only discharged this office; but the Prophet declares that in future it shall be common to all. This was not manifested but under the reign of Christ. The restoration of the Church, indeed, began at the time when the people returned from Babylon; but at the coming of Christ believers were at length adorned and honored by this dignity; for all the saints have been consecrated to Christ, and discharge that office. To this belong the words of Peter,

"Ye are a holy nation, a royal priesthood." (1 Peter 2:9)

What is the nature of this kind of priesthood ought to be carefully observed; for we must no longer offer to God earthly sacrifices, [409] but men must be offered and slain in obedience to Christ, as Paul declares that he slew the Gentiles by the sword of the Gospel, that thenceforth they might obey the Lord. [410] (Romans 15:16)

Hence infer how childish is the folly of the Papists, who abuse this passage to prove their priesthood; for the Pope and his lackeys ordain priests to sacrifice Christ, not to teach the people. But Christ offered himself "by eternal redemption," (Hebrews 9:12) and he alone has once exercised this priesthood, and commands that the priest of the sacrifice shall be offered to us by the doctrine of the Gospel. Those persons, therefore, who usurp this office, and wish to repeat what he has completed, are guilty of sacrilege.

[409] "Il ne faut plus offrir a Dieu des bestes brutes." "We must no longer offer to God brute beasts."

[410] See our author's exposition of that remarkable passage. — Ed.

But every person ought to offer himself, (Romans 12:1) and all that he has, in sacrifice to God, that he may exercise this lawful priesthood; and next, ministers, who have been specially called to this office of teaching, ought to make use of the sword of the word to slay men and consecrate them to God. Lastly, those are lawful ministers who do not of themselves attempt or undertake anything, but faithfully and diligently execute the commands which they have received from God.

7. *Instead of your shame.* He confirms the former statement, in which he said that believers who, clothed with sackcloth and covered with ashes, mourned, shall be sprinkled with the oil of gladness. This change of mourning into joy is again promised.

There shall be a double reward. Some interpret the word double as meaning that they who have been redeemed by God shall be happy both before God and before men. But I do not know that there are solid grounds for that interpretation. I choose rather to adopt a more simple view; as if the Prophet had said, "The prosperity of the Church shall be so great as togo far beyond all the calamities and afflictions by which she is now oppressed." If, therefore, she is now weary of her condition, she ought to look to that day when she shall be most happy, as Paul contrasts "an eternal weight of glory" with "the momentary lightness of afflictions." (2 Corinthians 4:17)

And instead of disgrace they shall rejoice in their portion. Wicked men vaunt over us and indulge in wantonness, because they think that they have the superiority; but the Lord promises that ere long he will cause good men, rescued from their tyranny, to obtain their portion. This began to be done, indeed, when the people returned from captivity; but a clearer proof has been exhibited in Christ, and is exhibited every day, and will at length be completed at his last coming, when all things shall be fully renewed, and the wicked shall be thrown down, that we may obtain the inheritance of the world. This is the reason why he says, by way of acknowledgment, that the earth is the portion of those wicked men; for they now boast that they are the lords of the world, but they shall at length feel that it belongs peculiarly and specially to the children of God.

And they shall have everlasting joy. This may relate to the outward condition of the Church; ibr he daily supplies his people with ground of thanksgiving; but as they must also devour many griefs, and are surrounded by manifold sorrow, this prediction is not fulfilled but when joy of spirit reigns and holds the pre-eminence in our hearts, accompanied by that "peace which (as Paul says) surpasses all understanding," (Philippians 4:7,) which the children of God alone enjoy when they have the testimony of adoption, He calls it everlasting, in order to shew how greatly it differs from the joy of wicked men, which is momentary and quickly passes away, and is even changed into "gnashing of teeth." (Matthew 8:12.)

8. *For I Jehovah love judgment.* He not only confirms what he promised in the name of the Lord, but likewise exhorts the Jews to repent, and shews

whence they ought to expect salvation, and what and how great is the Judge with whom we have to do; for lie reasons from the nature of God in what manner they ought to regulate their life, that they may not by their wickedness reject the grace that is offered to them.

Under the word *judgment* he includes all that is just and equitable; for he contrasts this word with the useless inventions of the Jews, by which they thought that they satisfied God, and at the same time concealed their malice. The Lord cares not, as we have often seen, for such masks and vain pretences, but demands true cleanness of heart and hands pure from all unrighteousness. He who wishes to obtain the approbation of God for himself and for all that he does must have an upright heart and an unblemished life.

And hate robbery in the burnt-offering. By a single part he figuratively denotes all hypocritical worship of God; and under "burnt-offering" is included every kind of sacrifice. Nothing is more abominable than when men, from cheating and robbery, sacrifice to God, or when they mingle their lies, hypocrisy, and impurity of heart, with their sacrifices, or corrupt the worship of God by basely defrauding him. This vice abounds not only in a single age, but at all times; for all men pretend to worship God, and even the wicked are ashamed of not having an appearance of religion, the impression of a Divine Ruler being so deeply engraven on the hearts of all that it cannot be erased. Yet the greater park of men sport with God, and endeavor to satisfy him by childish trifles.

Isaiah therefore condemns and abhors this hypocrisy, and teaches that the Lord demands from us "mercy rather than sacrifice." (Hosea 6:6; Matthew 9:13; 12:7.) We cannot worship God in a right manner, if we do not observe the Second Table, and abstain from all dishonesty and violence; for he who defrauds or injures his neighbors does violence also to God. In a word, the design of the Prophet is to teach what is the true character of repentance; namely, when, laying aside hypocrisy, and dismissing all inventions, the worshippers of God cherish natural kindness to one another.

And I will establish their work in truth. Some explain it to mean the "reward." of work. But I rather think that it denotes all the undertakings of life, to which the Lord promises a prosperous issue. The undertakings of men succeed very ill; because they do not choose to ask counsel of God, or attempt anything under his guidance. Thus they are justly punished for their rashness; because they trust in their own counsels, or depend on a blind stroke of fortune, in which there is no reality whatever, but only a deceitful shadow. But that they who are guided by the Spirit of God, and who commit themselves wholly to his protection, should succeed prosperously and to their wish, is not at all wonderful; for all prosperity flows from his blessing alone.

By the word *truth* is meant a uniform course; for even unbelievers are often puffed up with transitory joy, but it speedily vanishes away.

And will make an everlasting covenant with them. In the conclusion of the verse he assigns the cause of the stability. It is because God is pleased

not once only to stretch out his hand to them, but to be the continual guide of the journey. And the true support of our perseverance is, that he deigns to enter into an everlasting covenant with us, in which he voluntarily makes himself our debtor, and freely bestows upon us all things, though he owes us nothing whatever.

9. *And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles.* Here the Prophet treats more clearly of the extension of the Church, which at that time might be said to be confined within a narrow corner of the earth, and afterwards, as we have already seen, was exceedingly diminished and impaired. (Isaiah 1:9; 10:22.) Isaiah therefore discourses concerning the Church, which, after having suffered so great a diminution, would be spread throughout the whole world, so as to be visible to all the nations. And yet this did not happen even in the reign of Solomon, when the Jews flourished most in wealth and splendor. (1 Kings 10:21, 27.) Now this appeared to be altogether incredible; and that is the reason why the prophets take such pains to convince men of it, and repeat it very frequently, that the Jews may not measure this restoration by their own understanding or by the present appearance of things.

A question now arises, When did these things happen? I reply (as I have often done before) that they began when the people returned to their native country; for at that time, and in uninterrupted succession, they experienced the manifold kindness of God towards them. But as nothing more than feeble sparks appeared, the full brightness shone forth in Christ, in whose reign those things are entirely accomplished; for where there was the utmost barrenness of godliness, the offspring of Abraham sprouted, because foreigners were ingrafted by faith into the elect people. Thus foreign and barbarous nations acknowledged that the Jews were the blessed seed of God, (Genesis 22:18,) when they united with them in the same confession of faith; nor was this fulfilled but once only, but is in course of being fulfilled every day.

As to the Jews going before, and holding the first rank in God's covenant, this ought to be ascribed to the mercy of God, and not to their own excellence, as Paul (Romans 3:2) teaches; for, after having shown that by nature they differ nothing at all from the Gentiles, and after having subjected them to the same condemnation, he likewise teaches that they hold this privilege of pre-eminence, because they were the very first that received the word of God and the promises. But this proceeded from God's undeserved kindness, and not from their merits or excellence.

10. *Rejoicing I shall rejoice in Jehovah.* He represents the Church as giving thanks to God, in order to convince them more fully of the truth of what he formerly said. It may be regarded as ({ὑποτύτωσις}) a lively description, by which the thing is, as it were, painted and laid before the eyes of men, so as to remove all doubt; for by nature we are prone to distrust, and so fickle, that we place confidence rather in the inventions of men than in the word of God. As to this form of confirmation, we have spoken at chapter 12:1; 26:1, and at other passages.

For he hath clothed me. These things were still, indeed, at a great distance, but must have been seen and understood by the eyes of faith; as the eyes should undoubtedly be raised to heaven, when the Prophet discourses concerning salvation and righteousness. Nothing is visible here, and much less could so great happiness have been perceived by the senses, while everything tended to destruction. But because even now we do not see any such beauty of the Church, which is even contemptible in the eyes of the world under the revolting dress of the cross, we need faith, which comprehends heavenly and invisible things.

With the garments of salvation. He connects "righteousness" with "salvation," because the one cannot be separated from the other. "Garments" and "mantles" are well-known metaphors. It is as if he had said, that righteousness and salvation had been bestowed upon them. Since the Lord bestows these benefits, it follows that from him alone we should seek and expect them.

He hath adorned me. The metaphor is supposed to be drawn from priestly ornament; and accordingly there are some who speculate here about the priesthood of Christ. But I do not think that the Prophet spoke so ingeniously; for he brings forward the comparison of the bridegroom and the bride [411] Formerly the Church lay in filth and rags, and was universally despised, as a forsaken woman; but now, having been received into favor with her husband, she shines with amazing lustre. A parallel passage occurs in Hosea 2:20. This was accomplished at the coming of Christ; but it is also bestowed upon us daily, when the Lord adorns his people with righteousness and salvation. But all these things, as we have often said already, shall be accomplished at Christ's last coming.

11. *For as the earth putteth forth.* By a beautiful comparison the Prophet confirms the former promises; for he reminds the Jews of the ordinary power of God, which shines brightly in the creatures themselves. The earth every year puts forth her bud, the gardens grow green after the sowing time, and, in short, herbs and plants, which appear to be dead during the winter, revive in the spring and resume their vigor. Now these are proofs and very clear illustrations of the divine power and kindness toward us; and since it is so, ought men to doubt of it? Will not he who gave this power and strength to the earth display it still more in delivering his people? And will he not cause to bud the elect seed, of which he promised that it should remain in the world for ever?

Before all the nations. He again shews that the boundaries of the Church shall no longer be as narrow as they formerly were, for the Lord will cause her to fill the whole world.

Will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth, He mentions "righ-

411 "'As a bridegroom halloweth himself with ornament,' that is, maketh himself respectable, as a priest in his secret vestments." — Stock. "The reference is, no doubt, to the sacerdotal mitre, which was probably regarded as a model of ornamental head-dress, and to which {פאר} (peer) is explicitly applied." — Alexander.

teousness," which was fully displayed when the Lord redeemed his people; but the righteousness of God was chiefly seen, when Christ was manifested to the world; not that God kept his righteousness concealed till that time, but that men did not know it. It is, as if he had said, "God will deliver and restore his people in such a manner that all shall acknowledge him to be righteous." For redemption is a striking proof of the justice of God.

He next mentions *praise*; because such a benefit ought to be accompanied by thanksgiving. The end of "righteousness" is, that glory may be given to God; and therefore he exhorts us to gratitude; for it is exceedingly base to be dumb after having received God's benefits.

Chapter 62

CHAPTER 62.

Isaiah 62:1-12

1. For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.

1. Propter Sion non tacebo, et propter Ierusalem non quiescam, donec egrediatur ut splendor justitia ejus, et salus ejus sicat lampas ardeat.

2. And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD shall name.

2. Et videbunt gentes justitiam tuam, et omnes reges terrae gloriam tuam; et vocabitur tibi nomen novum, quod os Iehovae nuncupabit.

3. Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God.

3. Et eris corona gloriae in manu Iehovae, et diadema regni in manu Dei tui.

4. Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: for the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married.

4. Non dicetur tibi amplius Derelicta; nec terra tua dicetur amplius Desolata; quia vocabunt to Beneplacitum meum in ea, et terram tuam Maritatam. Quia beneplacitum Iehovae in to, et terra tua maritabitur.

5. For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.

5. Quoniam sicut adoleseens maritat sibi virginem, ita maritabunt to sibi filii tui; et gaudio sponsi super sponsa gaudebit super to Deus tuus.

6. I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the LORD, keep not silence,

6. Super muros tuos, Ierusalem, ordinavi custodes, qui tota die et tota nocte jugiter non tacebunt. Qui memores estis (vel, memoriam celebrabitis) Iehovae, ne silentium sit vobis.

7. And give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.

7. Et ne detis silentlum illi donec reparet, et donec ponat Ierusalem laudem in terra.

8. The LORD hath sworn by his right hand, and by the arm of his strength, Surely I will no more give thy corn to be meat for thine enemies; and the sons of the stranger shall not drink thy wine, for the which thou hast laboured:

8. Juravit Iehova per dexteram suam, et per brachium roboris sui: Si dedero frumentum tuum amplius cibum inimicis tuis, et si biberint filii alienigenae vinum tuum pro quo laborasti.

9. But they that have gathered it shall eat it, and praise the LORD; and they that have brought it together shall drink it in the courts of my holiness.

9. Nam qui congregaverunt illud comedent, et laudabunt Iehovam; et collectores ejus bibent vinum in atriis meis sanctis.

10. Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people.

10. Transite, transite per portas; repurgate viam populo; complanate, complanate iter; sternite lapidibus, levate signum ad populos.

11. Behold, the LORD hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him.

11. Ecce Iehova publicavit usque ad extremum terrae; dicite filiae Sion, Ecce servator tuus venit, Ecce merces ejus cum eo, et effectus ejus coram ipso.

12. And they shall call them, The holy people, The redeemed of the LORD: and thou shalt be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken.

12. Et vocabunt vos Populum sanctum, redemptos Iehovae; et to vocabunt Quaesitam urbem, non relictam.

1. *On account of Zion I will not be silent.* That sad captivity being at hand, which was almost to blot out the name of the whole nation, it was necessary to confirm and encourage believers by many words, that with strong and assured confidence they might rely on these promises under the burden of the cross. Here, therefore, the Prophet, discharging that office which had been entrusted to him, openly declares that he will not be slack in the performance of his duty, and will not cease to speak, till he encourage

the hearts of believers by the hope of future salvation, that they may know and be fully convinced that God will be the deliverer of his Church. He too might have been dismayed by the unbelief of that people, and might have lost courage when he saw that matters were every day growing worse, and when he foresaw that terrible vengeance. But, notwithstanding so great difficulties, he will still persist in his duty, that all may know that neither the massacre of the people nor their unbelief can prevent God from executing his promises at the proper time.

And on account of Jerusalem I will not rest. It was necessary that these things should be frequently repeated, because such is the depravity of our mind that we speedily forget God's promises. When he says that he will not cease to speak, he likewise reminds others of their duty, that they may take courage, and expect with assured confidence their restoration, though it be long delayed, and even that their unwearied attention may answer to the voice of God which constantly addresses them. We know by experience every day how necessary this is, while Satan endeavors by every method to turn us aside from the right course.

At the same time he shews what ought to be the aim of godly teachers, namely, to spend and devote themselves entirely for the advantage of the Church; for when he says "on account of Zion," he means that our chief care ought to be that the Church may be preserved, and that none are good and faithful teachers but they who hold the salvation of the Church so dear as to spare no labors. Some explain this as relating to prayer, but I choose rather to refer it to doctrine; and it is more natural to view it as meaning' that no inconvenience or annoyance shall wear out his patience, and no opposition shall retard him from proceeding in the office of teaching which God has enjoined on him concerning the redemption of the Church. For if he had survived that very sad calamity, the unbelieving multitude would undoubtedly have persecuted him, as well as the other Prophets, by many reproaches; but whatever may happen, he says that he is fortified by unshaken firmness, never to be dumb through shame, but to proceed with unremitting eagerness in his course. Besides, by this form of expression he procures credit to his predictions, and maintains their authority, so that, even when he is dead, they do not cease to resound in the ears of believers.

Till her righteousness go forth as brightness. By "righteousness" he means the rights of the Church; for during the period of calamity, she appeared to be condemned. Her "righteousness," therefore, "goes forth" when she is perfectly restored, and regains her former condition; for that righteousness lay concealed during the captivity.

And her salvation. To "righteousness" he adds "salvation," because they whom God justifies, or to whom he re-restores their rights, do likewise re-gain their "salvation." Hence we infer that we are wretched and without assistance, so long as God withholds his grace from us on account of our sins; and therefore in other passages he frequently gave the appellation of

"the righteousness of God" to that which he here affirms to be the righteousness of the Church. Thus we are undone while we are destitute of the righteousness of God; that is, while we slumber in our sins, and God shews himself to be a severe judge by punishing us for them.

The phrase "go forth" means that the righteousness of the Church was hidden and, as it were, buried for a time: she deserved in the sight of God no favor; but, on the contrary, her unspeakable iniquities prevailed to such an extent that there remained nothing but God's righteous vengeance. But here the Prophet has his eye on men who already looked upon the afflicted Church as lost, and by their pride and reproaches almost cast her down to hell.

May burn like a lamp. Finally, he compares her to the world, and says, that with respect to the world she shall be righteous, when God shall have purged away her sins and undertaken her cause. By these words the Prophet teaches that we ought always to entertain favorable hopes of the restoration of the Church, though she be plunged under thick darkness and in the grave; for although for a time she is overwhelmed and hidden, yet she has God for her avenger in heaven, who, after having chastised her moderately, will at length shew that she was the object of his care. And indeed his righteousness must be illustrious and manifest, and that for the salvation of those whom he hath chosen to be his people and heritage.

2. *And the Gentiles shall see.* He now states more plainly the reason why he formerly said that he would not be silent, namely, that believers may be fully convinced that salvation is not promised to them in vain.

And all the kings of the earth thy glory. Here he employs the word "glory" as meaning "salvation." We see here the argument by which prophets must fortify themselves for perseverance, namely, that the Lord is faithful, and will at length fulfill what he has once promised, though he delay for a time. The word kings serves for amplification; as if he had said that not only mean persons and those of the lowest rank shall behold and admire the glory of God, but even "kings" themselves, who commonly look down with contempt on all that was worthy in other respects of being esteemed and honored; for they are blinded by their splendor, and maddened by their high rank, so that they do not willingly behold any rank but their own.

And thou shalt be called by a new name. By a "new name" he means "a crowded assemblage;" for the people were so completely scattered, that there was no visible body, and they appeared to be altogether ruined. Although a vast multitude of persons were led into captivity, yet, having been scattered among the Babylonians, they were driven about like the members of a body broken in pieces, and scarcely retained the name of a people; which had also been foretold to them. After having been brought back from captivity, they began again to be united in one body, and thus regained the "name" of which they had been deprived. Yet "new" denotes what is uncommon; as if the Prophet had said that the glory of the people shall be extraordinary and such

as was never before heard of. We know that this took place in the progress of time; for that small band of people, while they dwelt by sufferance in their native country, could not by any extraordinary distinction arrive at so great renown; but at length, when the doctrine of the Gospel had been preached, the Jewish name became known and renowned.

Which the mouth of Jehovah shall name. He confirms what would otherwise have been hard to be believed, by promising that God will be the author of this glory; for it was not in the power of men thus to raise a Church which had sunk low and was covered with dishonor, but to God, who "lifteth up the poor from the dunghill," (Psalm 113:7,) it was not difficult to adorn his Church by new celebrity. As there was no face of a Church for forty years, and, although the Lord had some seed, yet it was in a state so disordered and so ruinous that there was no visible people of God, he now restores to the Church its name, when he has assembled it by the word of the Gospel. This majestic work of God, therefore, ought to confirm us on this point, that we may know that he will never forsake his Church; and although wicked men tear us by their slanders, and beat and spit upon us, and in every way endeavor to make us universally loathed, let us remember that God is not deprived of his right to vindicate us in the world, whose names he has deigned to write in heaven.

Others expound the passage in a more ingenious manner, namely, that instead of Israelites they shall be called Christians. But I think that the former meaning is more agreeable to the context and to the Prophet's ordinary language; and we ought carefully to observe those forms of expression which are peculiar to the prophets, that we may become familiar with their style. In a word, the people shall be restored, though it appears to be exterminated, and shall obtain, not from men but from God, a new name.

3. *And thou shalt be a crown of glory.* Isaiah proceeds with the same subject, and we need not wonder at this; for no man, by judging from the flesh, could have formed such vast conceptions and expectations. Besides, he intended to fix the hearts of believers on the kingdom of Christ, which it was the more necessary to adorn and magnify by these illustrious titles, because hitherto it was not only obscure but at a great distance. It was needful to provide against a twofold danger, that the Jews, when they saw that they were still at a very great distance from their former honor, might not, on the one hand, despise the grace of God, or, on the other hand, rest satisfied with the mere beginnings, and thus, by disregarding Christ, devote their whole attention to earthly advantages. The Prophet therefore reminds them, that the return to their native country was but the forerunner of that exalted rank which was to be expected at the manifestation of Christ.

So far as relates to the former clause, exiles and slaves could perceive nothing but ground for despair, when they beheld the outward condition of things, since, after having returned and been restored to their country, they made very little progress in building the temple. Accordingly, he bids them

look to God, that they may expect from him the glory which is concealed from the eyes of flesh, and, knowing that they are dear and precious in his sight, may be fully satisfied with this, till he adorn them more bountifully by the hand of Christ.

And the diadem of the kingdom. He calls the Church God's crown, because God wishes that his glory should shine in us; and in this it is proper that we should behold and admire the inconceivable goodness of God, since, notwithstanding that we are by nature filthy and corrupted, and more abominable than the mire of the streets, yet he adorns us in such a manner that he wishes us to be "the diadem of his kingdom." Let us therefore be aroused by this goodness of God to the desire of leading a holy life, that his image may more and more be formed anew in us.

4. *Thou shalt no more be called forsaken.* He meets a difficulty which might occur to the minds of believers, seeing that they were forsaken and abandoned, while at the same time they were called a "diadem" and a "crown." Seeing that they were hated and abhorred by all nations, and sometimes even lay prostrate at the feet of their enemies, and no assistance of any kind was seen, it might appear ridiculous that they should receive these names, and thus be elevated to heaven and placed in the hand of God. He therefore means that the people, though for a time they resemble a divorced and forsaken woman, shall yet be restored so as to change their condition and name; as if he had said, "This divorce shall not be perpetual; God will at length receive thee to himself." Thus, although the Church seems to be "forsaken," and has the appearance of a divorced woman, yet the Lord will put an end to her afflictions and miseries.

For they shall call thee, My good-pleasure in her. He teaches that this proceeds from the "good-pleasure of God;" that is, from his undeserved favor, that nothing may be ascribed to the merits or excellence of men; as he says in Hosea,

"I will espouse thee to me in mercy and compassions."
(Hosea 2:19.)

And thus he shews that they shall be prosperous for no other reason than because God, out of his infinite goodness, will graciously condescend to receive into favor those whom he had abandoned. Although this relates strictly to the Church, yet let us learn in general that it is by the favor and bounty of God that cities and kingdoms are restored to their former condition, which, while he was angry and offended, appeared to be ruined. The Prophet, therefore, holds out to the consideration of the Jews the source of all the calamities which they had suffered, when he testifies that when God is reconciled to them, they will be happy; for we may gather from it that formerly God was angry with them, when their condition was wretched and miserable.

And thy land shall be married. This metaphor, by which he denotes the restoration of the people, is highly beautiful, and conveys twofold instruc-

tion. He shews that the state of variance between God and the Church shall be terminated; first, because she shall be received as a wife by her appeased husband; and secondly, because the multitude of people will take away the reproach of widowhood. The earth is, in some sense, married to its inhabitants, as trees to vines; and, on the other hand, when it is stripped of its inhabitants, it is said to be a widow.

For the good-pleasure of Jehovah is in thee. He again repeats and confirms what has been already said, that it is owing to the undeserved kindness of God that the Church is restored, that she remains in her condition, that the earth receives its inhabitants; for when God turns away his face and is angry with us, nothing can be looked for but destruction, and nothing can be expected from the aid or strength of men.

5. *For as a young man marrieth a virgin.* This verse contains nothing more than an explanation and confirmation of the preceding verse. Now there appears to be a sort of contradiction in this respect, that in the latter clause he makes God the only Husband of the Church, while in the former clause he assigns to her many husbands. But the solution is easy; for, when this marriage of the Church is spoken of, there is but one Husband, that is, God, who always claims for himself that title; and that is fulfilled in Christ, to whom, as Paul says, the pastors "espouse the Church as a chaste virgin." (2 Corinthians 11:2.) Yet this does not prevent the metaphor of marriage from being employed to describe that unity of faith which all the children of God have with their mother, the Church. Nay more, it is consistent with God being the Husband of his Church, that he marries to his Church all the nations that are assembled to her; for, when she is without children, she may be said to be widowed and solitary. This is said, therefore, even with respect to God, who, by ratifying with his guidance the sacred amity between the members of his Church, extends the effect of marriage to the whole body.

And hence it ought to be inferred, that the Church of God shall be truly populous, that is, shall have many children, when she is united to God her Husband; for we must begin with God, that he may preside over his Church, and that under his guidance we may be gathered into her bosom; for then shall the marriage be truly sacred. But for this a vast multitude of people will not constitute a church, but rather an abominable brothel; as we see that in Popery there is boasting of the name of God, and yet the majesty of God is dishonored in it by frightful sacrilege.

6. *On thy walls.* As the Prophet intended to describe the perfect happiness of the kingdom of Christ, so he makes an assemblage of all that belongs to the prosperous condition of any country or city. To other advantages he adds guards and a garrison; because the greatest abundance of all good things would be of little avail, if we were not safe from enemies; and therefore he declares that the Lord will not only supply the Church with all that is necessary, but will also appoint faithful guards to ward off enemies and robbers, that he may thus be recognised, both within and without, as the

author of a happy life.

Who shall not be, silent. By "being silent," he means "being at rest;" as if he had said, "They will be continually on the watch, so as to foresee at a great distance the dangers that threaten them."

Ye who are mindful of Jehovah. He next explains who these guards are, namely, those who "shall be mindful of the Lord," that is, shall celebrate the memory of his name. Although among the guards we might, without impropriety, reckon the angels, (Psalm 91:11; Hebrews 1:14,) to whom we know that this office is assigned, yet because they willingly and cheerfully watch over the safety of the Church, and do not need to be spurred on by exhortations, the Prophet addresses his discourse to other watchmen.

The word which he employs is of doubtful meaning. [412] Sometimes it signifies "to remember," and sometimes "to bring to remembrance;" and neither of those significations will be inappropriate. But I think that he simply means that these guards will be God's ministers to celebrate his name. Some render it "Making known the Lord;" but that is unnatural, and suddenly breaks off the Prophet's meaning; and such commentators do not attend to the comparison of the guards of a city, which the Prophet employs.

Although the Prophet intends simply to teach that the Church will be safe from all dangers, because she has God to watch over her safety, yet we ought always to consider what is the nature of Christ's kingdom; for it is not defended by the weapons of war or by arms, but, being spiritual, is protected by spiritual arms and guards. The Lord will therefore have his ministers, whose agency he will employ for defending the Church by the sword of the word, that she may be kept safe; not by earthly guards, but by God's secret and spiritual power; and the Prophet explains himself by saying, "Ye who are mindful of the Lord." Although this statement relates to all the godly, who are commanded to celebrate the name of God in all places, as far as lies in their power, yet it is chiefly addressed to the priests, who, discharging a public office, should hold out an example to others, and devote themselves with all their heart to the praises of God.

During the whole day and the whole night. Here pastors are reminded of their duty; for it is not enough to feed the Lord's flock, if they do not likewise defend it from the attacks of robbers and wolves. "Night and day," therefore, they must guard and keep watch, if they wish to perform their duty in a proper manner.

Keep not silence. The Lord forbids them to be silent; for he wishes them to be diligent and attentive; and in this he shews how great is the care which he takes about the safety of the Church. This passage testifies that it is a remarkable kindness of God, when we have faithful pastors who take care of

412 "{המזכירים (hammazkirim) admits of three interpretations, all consistent with Isaiah's usage. In chapter 36:3, 22, it seems to mean an official recorder or historiographer. In chapter 66:3, it means one burning incense as a memorial oblation. Hence ,{אזכרה} (uzkarah,) the name used in the Law of Moses to denote such an offering. (See Leviticus 2:2; 5:12; 24:7; Numbers 5:26.) In chapter 43:26, the verb means to remind God of something which he seems to have forgotten; and as this is an appropriate description of importunate intercession, it is here entitled to the preference." — Alexander.

us; for we are exposed to dangers of every kind, and lie open to the snares of Satan, if the Lord do not protect us by his guards; and therefore we ought always to pray that he would surround us with those guards which he sees that we need.

7. *And do not give him silence.* Hitherto the Prophet has spoken of the office and duty of teaching; but as this would not be enough if prayer were not likewise added, he exhorts the ministers of the word to prayer; for I think that {לו}, (*lo*,) "to him," refers to God. We ought, therefore, to plead with God, and to entreat by earnest prayer, that he will give some success to our labors, which would otherwise be unprofitable. And since we devote ourselves entirely to preaching doctrine, and vigorously oppose all the machinations of Satan, let us learn, at the same time, to turn our minds to God, that he may not permit our labors to be unsuccessful. In the same manner as he applied the word "silence" to doctrine in the beginning of the chapter, when he said, "I will not be silent," so in this passage he applies it to prayer, by which we obtain from God some fruit of doctrine. Even the angels move us by their example to this earnestness of prayer, as we read in Zechariah that the angel prays ardently for the restoration of the Church. (Zechariah 1:12.)

Till he restore. Hence infer that there are two distinct benefits: first, to have faithful pastors who shall watch over the safety of the Church; secondly, that the Church be upheld and preserved in her condition by their agency. But God, who speaks here, claims these benefits as his own; which he also does in many other passages. "How shall they preach," says Paul, "unless they be sent?" (Romans 10:15.) It belongs to God alone, therefore, to appoint pastors; for no man could otherwise have been "sufficient" (2 Corinthians 2:16) for an office so important and so difficult; and it is he alone who promotes by their agency the restoration of the Church; for their efforts would be altogether vain and fruitless, if the Lord did not grant them prosperous success. And here we see that the external agency of men is joined with the efficacy of the Holy Spirit; for, although the Lord alone is the author and finisher of the work, yet he brings forward instruments which he employs for rearing the building of the Church. This reminds us that we ought not to lose courage, even when we see nothing but ruin and wretchedness and desolation; but it is our duty to pray that the Lord will restore her, which he also promises that he will do.

And till he place Jerusalem a praise. This means to render the Church glorious, that ground of joy may shine forth from it; for when we feel nothing but God's severity, we become dumb, and are overwhelmed with shame; but when he frees us from our afflictions, and causes us to recover, he at the same time opens our mouth; for he supplies us with ground of praise and thanksgiving.

8. *Jehovah hath sworn.* He proceeds with the metaphors which he formerly used; for since, owing to the corruption of our nature, the kingdom

of Christ cannot be described so as to be level to our capacity; it was necessary to represent it under figures. In the same manner as he promised, first, an abundance of all things, and next, faithful guardianship, that the condition of believers may be safe; so here he promises tranquillity and repose, that they may peacefully enjoy their blessings, and may not in future be defrauded of them. As if he had said, "Whatever thou hadst formerly in thy hands was exposed to plunder and robbery; but now thou shalt have everything well secured, and shall freely partake of thy corn and thy wine; and, in a word, thou shalt enjoy thy prosperity in peace."

But since the depravity of our nature is such that we do not place trust in God, though he promise largely and bountifully, for this reason the Prophet represents him as swearing; for the Lord condescends to us so far as to make use of an oath, in order to correct still more our unbelief and obstinacy. Now, the Lord "sweareth by himself, because" (as an Apostle says) "he hath none greater than himself." (Hebrews 6:13.)

By his right hand and by the arm of his strength. He mentions his "right arm," that is, the power of God; because that was appropriate to the present discourse. As if he had said, "If I have any power, I will display it in your salvation; and lest, in an arduous affair, your minds should slumber, I swear by my hand, which is invincible and victorious over all, that, whatever difficulties may arise, you shall be safe under my protection." Whenever therefore he promises salvation, let us think of his strength and power.

If I shall give. This is an elliptical form of expression; and we are taught by it the sacredness and solemnity of an oath. The import of this declaration is, as if he had said, that he wishes that henceforth he may not be believed, if these promises be not justified by the event. When he promises the peaceful enjoyment of wheat and wine, he means that it proceeded from his righteous judgment, and did not happen by chance, that the Church was deprived of corn and wine; for whenever enemies ravage and plunder, this is unquestionably done by God's permission; as he threatens in the Law. (Deuteronomy 28:33.) On the other hand, it is his special blessing, that every one eats in safety

"under his vine, and under his fig-tree." (1 Kings 4:25.)

9. *For they who have gathered it shall eat it.* This is an explanation and confirmation of the preceding statement; for, after having testified that he will no longer permit that which the Church possesses to be laid open as a prey, he adds that she shall enjoy her possessions. Yet he shews that "corn and wine" are justly called our own, when we have obtained them by honest industry; for they who violently seize the bread of others, or obtain it by unlawful means, have it not from the Lord, and cannot attribute it to his blessing, as if they possessed it lawfully; and to this corresponds what is said in the Psalm,

"Thou shalt eat the labor of thy hands, thou shalt be happy, and it shall be well with thee." (Psalm 128:2.)

And shall praise Jehovah. But when he promises that they who cultivate the soil shall have food, why does he say that they will give thanks to God? And why do men praise God, if by their own labor they gather the corn and procure the wine? It appears to be but a pretended thanksgiving, if those things are ascribed to the toil and industry of men; and God deserves no praise, if men procure food by their own labor. But it ought to be observed, that the Prophet, after having shewn what is the lawful method of seeking food, at the same time adds that our labor will be fruitless, if the Lord do not supply us with food; for all that we have belongs to God, and to him alone all that we obtain ought to be ascribed.

Shall drink wine in my holy courts. He alludes to the solemn act of offering sacrifices; for they might drink in other places, and every one might eat in his own dwelling. But the allusion is to that ceremony which was observed in consecration, when the law required that the first-fruits should be an oblation, (Leviticus 2:12; 23:10,) in order that the produce of the year might be dedicated to God; and in the writings of Moses we frequently meet with these words,

"Thou shalt feast, and rejoice in presence of thy God." (Deuteronomy 12:18.)

10. *Pass through, pass through the gates.* From the preceding statement he draws the conclusion, that there shall be a free passage through the gates of the city, which formerly were shut or in a ruinous state; shut when it was besieged by enemies; in a ruinous state, when the city was thrown down and levelled with the ground. He means that there shall be such a restoration of the city, that its inhabitants shall be numerous, and there shall be frequent passing to and from it.

Some think that these words are addressed to the pastors, that they may enter in at the gates, and go before others as their conductors. But it is a general and figurative statement, by which he compares the Church to a populous city, though for a time it was ruinous and desolate, as Jerusalem had been. Others pursue more ingenious speculations, and say that the gates of a Church are opened, when pardon of sins is proclaimed in it, and by that message God invites all to come to him. But if we wish to get at the Prophet's meaning, we must believe that all these things are spoken figuratively, as we have already mentioned.

Clear the way for the people. This is, strictly speaking, the duty of teachers; but the Prophet speaks in general terms, and addresses all whose agency the Lord employed for preparing the way for the people. At that time, indeed, he spoke to Medes and Persians, by means of whom he opened up the way for the Jews, that they might return to their native country; but next he includes all others by whom the Lord restored his Church.

Level, level the road. He authoritatively commands all men to "clear and level the roads;" that the Jews might know that every obstacle shall easily be removed, and that all men, however inveterate their hostility, shall

immediately obey the command of God. In this way he enjoins believers to gird themselves manfully for the work, as if many workmen were ready to give assistance, and the emphatic repetition of the word ("Level, level") deserves notice as intended to express certainty.

Pave it with stones. {סקל} (*sikkel*) sometimes means to remove stones, and sometimes to pave with stones; and I think that it ought rather to be understood here in this latter signification, though commentators are generally of a different opinion. [413]

Lift up a standard to the peoples. This is of the same import with the former clause; for the Prophet means that the peoples shall obey the command of God, in the same manner as subjects are wont to obey princes; for they shall assemble and run together when "the standard is lifted up," and shall lend their aid to bring back the people; and thus he extols in lofty terms the power of God, that the Jews might be fully persuaded that they would one day be restored. [414]

11. *Behold, Jehovah hath, proclaimed.* He means that the Lord, by acting miraculously and beyond the judgment or expectation of the flesh, will cause all the nations to know that this is done by his command. It might be objected, How shall it be brought about that the peoples, who now make fierce resistance to God, shall become obedient to him? He assigns the reason, "Because the Lord will proclaim your return, so that they shall acknowledge that at his command you are restored."

Say ye to the daughter of Zion. Undoubtedly this refers literally to the ministers of the word and to the prophets, whom the Lord invests with this office of promising deliverance and salvation to the Church. And hence we conclude that these promises are not merely limited to a single age, but must be extended to the end of the world; for, beginning at the return from Babylon into Judea, we must advance as far as the coming of Christ, by which this prophecy was at length accomplished, and redemption was brought to a conclusion; for the Savior came, when the grace of God was proclaimed by the Gospel. In a word, he foretells that the voice of God shall one day resound from the rising to the setting of the sun, and shall be heard, not by a single nation only, but by all nations.

Behold, the Savior cometh. This is a word which, we know, belongs peculiarly to the Gospel; and therefore he bids the teachers of the Church

[413] "The words {{סקלו {מאבן} (sakkelu meeben) are used elliptically for {סקלו {הדרך} ,{מאבן} (sakkelu hadderek meeben,) 'remove the stones from the road;' for ,{סקל} (sikkel,) which.in general means 'to stone, or to throw stones,' as {ויסקל} {באבנים} {את} ,{דוד} (vayesakkel baabanim eth David,) (2 Samuel 16:6, 13,) here means to take away many stones, as in Isaiah 5:2; and {מאבן} (meeben,) as Jarchi remarks, is equivalent to {מהיות} {שם} ,{אבן} (mihyoth sham eben,) 'that there may be no stones there,' at which travellers might stumble. Thus, 'I will make them ,{מאדם} (meadam) from a man;' that is, that not a man shall be left. (Hosea 9:12.)" — Rosenmuller.

[414] "Here the style of the Prophet is very Pindarical. First, he speaks to the captives, as if he saw them near the gates of Babylon, and bids them go through them, that is, pass out of the place of their captivity; then, as if he saw workmen in the road, he bids them level the ground, and make it plain, that they may not be tired by ascending and descending steep precipices, nor hurt their feet with sharp stones; then, as if they had not yet received notice of their deliverance, or were not informed of the place where they were to rendezvous, in order to return altogether, he commands a standard to be erected for the people, that is, over their heads, so high that it might he seen by those at the greatest distance." — White.

encourage the hearts of believers, by confirmed expectation of the coming of the Lord, though he appeared to be at a great distance from his people. But this promise relates chiefly to the reign of Christ, by which these things were fully and perfectly accomplished; for he actually exhibited himself as the "Savior" of his Church, as we have seen before in the fortieth chapter.

Behold, his reward is with him, and the effect of his work is before him. That they may no longer be distressed by any doubt, when God the Savior shall appear, he invests him with power, as in Isaiah 40:10; for he repeats the same words which we found in that passage. As if he had said, "As soon as it shall please God to display his hand, the effect will be rapid and sudden; for so long as he stops or delays, the judgment of the flesh pronounces him to be idle;" and we see how very many fanatics imagine some deity that has no existence, as if they were painting a dead image. Justly, therefore, does the Prophet declare that God's "work and reward are before him," that he may make it evident, whenever it shall be necessary, that he is the righteous Judge of the world.

12. *And they shall call you a holy people.* He describes the benefit of the coming of the Lord; that is, because, by shewing that he takes care of his elect as his heritage, he will make it evident to the whole world that the covenant of adoption, which he made with Abraham, was not deceptive. He therefore calls them "a holy people," because the Lord hath separated and consecrated them to himself; for, although he governs all nations, he has deigned to choose the seed of Abraham, that he might make them the object of his peculiar care. (Exodus 19:6.)

The redeemed of Jehovah. In the sense now stated, God declares that they shall be a holy people, when he shall appear as their Savior and Redeemer; for, as the people are said to be "profaned" when they lie amidst filth, being afflicted and distressed by the reproaches of the wicked, so they are said to be "sanctified," when the Lord actually shews that he presides over their salvation. This was accomplished by a wonderful redemption; and at that time God also testified that he remembered his heritage, which, in the eyes of men, he appeared to have forsaken and disregarded; for in these words, Sought out, [415] not forsaken, is denoted a contrast between the time when God made a divorce from his people, and the time when he again reconciled to himself those whom he had cast off.

[415] "The word {.{דרושה (derushah,) the name that shall be given to Jerusalem, is rendered by some sought after, that is, a city to which, as being very highly celebrated and visited by crowds of strangers, all shall resort and shall desire to be enrolled among her citizens. Others render it cared for, that is, by Jehovah, who appeared to have abandoned and given her up to forgetfulness, as her citizens complained. (Isaiah 49:14.) Both agree with what is here added, 'A city not forsaken.' (See Jeremiah 30:14-17.)" — Rosenmuller.

Chapter 63

CHAPTER 63.

Isaiah 63:1-19

1. Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.

1. Quis est iste qui venit ab Edom, rubicundus in vestibus, a Bosra; iste decorus in vestitu suo, gradiens in multitudine virtutis suae? Ego qui loquor in justitia (vel, validus), multus ad servandum.

2. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat?

2. Quare ruber est vestitus tuns, et indumenta tun sicut prementis in torculari?

3. I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment.

3. Torcular pressi solus; neque ex populis quisquam fuit mecum. Calcabo enim cos in ira mea, et conculcabo cos in furore meo; et spargetur sanguis eorum super vestes mens, et omnia indumenta mea inquinabo.

4. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come.

4. Quia dies ultionis in corde meo, et annus redemptorum meorum venit.

5. And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury, it upheld me.

5. Itaque aspexi, nec erat auxiliator; et admiratus sum, nec erat qui fulciret; itaque salutem mihi fecit brachium meum, et ira mea fulsit me.

6. And I will tread down the people in mine anger, and make them drunk in my fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth.

6. Et conculcabo populos in ira mea, et inebriabo cos furore meo, et prosternam fortitudinem eorum in terram.

7. I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the LORD, and the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his lovingkindnesses.

7. Misericordias Iehovae memoria repetam; laudes Iehovae tanquam super omnibus quae contulit nobis Iehova, et multitudine beneficentiae erga domum Israel, quam contulit illis secundum misericordias suas, et secundum multitudinem miserationum suarum.

8. For he said, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie: so he was their Saviour.

8. Nam dixit, Certe populus meus sunt, filii qui non mentiuntur; itaque factus est illis servator.

9. In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old.

9. In omni angustia eorum illi fuit (vel, Non fuit); et Angelus faciei ejus servavit eos; in dilectione sua et clementia sua ipse redemit eos; portavit eos et extulit, omnibus diebus seculi.

10. But they rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them.

10. Verum illi rebelles fuerunt, et irritaverunt Spiritum Sanctum ejus. Ideo conversus illis in hostem pugnavit ipse contra eos.

11. Then he remembered the days of old, Moses and his people, saying, Where is he that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of his flock? where is he that put his Holy Spirit within him?

11. Et recordatus est dierum priscorum, quibus Moses fuit cum populo ejus. Ubi est qui ascendere fecit eos e mari, cure pastore gregis sui? Ubi est qui posuit in medio ejus Spiritum suum Sanctum?

12. That led them by the right hand of Moses with his glorious arm, dividing the water before them, to make himself an everlasting name?

12. Qui duxit ad dexteram Mosis brachio magnificentiae suae, qui divisit aquas coram ipsis, ad comparandum sibi nomen perpetuum?

13. That led them through the deep, as an horse in the wilderness, that they should not stumble?

13. Qui fecit eos ingredi per abyssos, tanquam equum in deserto, ut non impegerint.

14. As a beast goeth down into the valley, the Spirit of the LORD caused him to rest: so didst thou lead thy people, to make, thyself a glorious name.

14. Tanquam jumentum in planitiem descendit, Spiritus Iehovae requiem

illi praestitit; sic duxisti populum tuum, ut faceres tibi nomen gloriosum.

15. Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of thy holiness and of thy glory: where is thy zeal and thy strength, the sounding of thy bowels and of thy mercies toward me? are they restrained?

15. Aspice e coelo; vide ex habitaculo sanctitatis et gloriae tuae. Ubi zelus tuus, et fortitudo tua? Multitudo viscerum tuorum et misericordiarum tuarum erga me cohibuerunt se.

16. Doubtless thou art our father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O LORD, art our Father, our Redeemer; thy name is from everlasting.

16. Certe tu pater noster es, etiam si Abraham nesciat nos, et Israel nos non agnoscat; tu tamen pater noster es, redemptor noster; a seculo nomen tuum.

17. O LORD, why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, and hardened our heart from thy fear? Return for thy servants' sake, the tribes of thine inheritance.

17. Quare fecisti nos errare, Iehova, a viis tuis? Recedere fecisti cor nostrum a timore tuo? Convertere propter servos tuos, ad tribus haereditatis tuae.

18. The people of thy holiness have possessed it but a little while: our adversaries have trodden down thy sanctuary.

18. Ad exiguum tempus possederunt populus sanctitatis tuae; adversarii nostri conculcarunt sanctuarium tuum.

19. We are thine: thou never barest rule over them; they were not called by thy name.

19. Fuimus a seculo, quibus tu non dominatus es, super quos non est invocatum nomen tuum.

1. *Who is this that cometh from Edom?* This chapter has been violently distorted by Christians, as if what is said here related to Christ, whereas the Prophet speaks simply of God himself; and they have imagined that here Christ is red, because he was wet with his own blood which he shed on the cross. But the Prophet meant nothing of that sort. The obvious meaning is, that the Lord comes forth with red garments in the view of his people, that all may know that he is their protector and avenger; for when the people were weighed down by innumerable evils, and at the same time the Edomites and other enemies, as if they had been placed beyond the reach of all danger, freely indulged in wickedness, which remained unpunished, a dangerous temptation might arise, as if these things happened by chance, or as if God did not care for his people, or chastised them too severely. If the Jews were punished for despising God, much more the Edomites, and other avowed enemies of the name of God, ought to have been punished.

The Prophet meets this very serious temptation by representing God the avenger as returning from the slaughter of the Edomites, as if he were

drenched with their blood. There is great liveliness and energy in a description of this sort, Who is this? for that question raises the hearts of the hearers into a state of astonishment, and strikes them more forcibly than a plain narrative. On this account the Prophet employed it, in order to arouse the hearts of the Jews from their slumbering and stupefaction.

We know that the Edomites were somewhat related to the Jews by blood; for they were descended from the same ancestors, and derived their name from Esau, who was also called Edom. (Genesis 36:1, 8, 9.) Having corrupted the pure worship of God, though they bore the same mark of circumcision, they persecuted the Jews with deadly hatred. They likewise inflamed the rage of other enemies against the Jews, and shewed that they took great pleasure in the ruin of that people, as is evident; from the encouraging words addressed by them to its destroyers.

"Remember, O Lord, (says the Psalmist,) the children of Edom, who, in the day of the destruction of Jerusalem, said, Raze, raze it even to the foundations." (Psalm 137:7.)

The Prophet, therefore, threatens that judgment shall be passed on the Edomites, that none may imagine that they shall escape punishment for that savage cruelty with which they burned towards their brethren; for God will punish all wicked men and enemies of the Church in such a manner as to shew that the Church is the object of his care.

Beautiful in his raiment. Because spots of blood pollute and stain the conquerors, Isaiah affirms that God will nevertheless be "beautiful in his raiment," after having taken vengeance on the enemies. In like manner, we have seen in other passages (Isaiah 34:6) that the slaughter of the wicked is compared to sacrifices, because the glory of God shines brightly in them; for can we conceive of any ornament more lovely than judgment? Thus, in order to impress men with reverence for God's righteous vengeance, he pronounces the blood with which he was sprinkled, by slaying and destroying the wicked, to be highly beautiful and ornamental. As if he had said, "Think not that God will resemble a person of mean rank. Though he be drenched with blood, yet this will not prevent his glory and majesty from shining brightly."

Marching in the greatness of his strength. Various expositions of the word {צעה} (*tzogneh*) are given by the Jews. Some view it in a transitive sense, as referring to the people whom the Lord brought back from captivity. Others refer it to the nations whom the Lord will remove to another country, though they appear to have a settled habitation. But I consider it to he more agreeable to the context to give to it an absolute sense as a noun. The Prophet, therefore, describes God's majestic march and heroic firmness, by which he displays vast power.

I who speak. The Lord himself replies; and this carries much more authority than if the Prophet spoke in his own person. Believers are reminded by him of former predictions, that they may know that in the judgments of God not only his justice and goodness, but likewise his faithfulness is mani-

fested. As if he had said, "Behold, ye now see fulfilled what I have already and frequently testified to you by my servants. This effect of my promises clearly shews that I am true, and that I speak justly and sincerely, and not for the purpose of deceiving you." The vision would have been little fitted to strike their minds, if the Jews had not remembered those promises which they formerly heard; but since the design of it was, that they should rely on God's salvation, he at the same time claims for himself no ordinary power to save.

2. *Wherefore is thy raiment red?* He proceeds with the same subject; but, as it would have impaired the force of the narrative, he does not immediately explain whence came the red color of God's garments, but continues to put questions, that he may arouse their minds to the consideration of what is strange and uncommon. He means that this sprinkling of blood is something remarkable and extraordinary. The comparison drawn from a "wine-press" is highly appropriate; for the town Bozrah, which he mentioned a little before, lay in a vine-bearing district. As if he had said, "There will be other vintages than those which are customary; for blood shall be shed instead of the juice of the grapes."

3. *Alone have I pressed the wine-press.* The Prophet now explains the vision, and the reason why the Lord was stained with blood. It is because he will take vengeance on the Edomites and other enemies who treated his people cruelly. It would be absurd to say that these things relate to Christ, because he alone and without human aid redeemed us; for it means that God will punish the Edomites in such a manner that he will have no need of the assistance of men, because he will be sufficiently able to destroy them. The Jews might have objected that the Edomites are powerful, and are not harassed by any wars, but are in a flourishing and tranquil condition. The Prophet shews that this does not prevent the Lord from inflicting punishment on them whenever he shall think proper. Human means were, indeed, employed by him when he took vengeance on the Edomites, but in such a manner that it was made evident to all that it was entirely directed by his hand, and that no part of it could be ascribed to human forces or counsels. They were overwhelmed by sudden and unlooked-for destruction, of which the people ought not to have doubted that God, who had so often warned them of it, was the author.

And of the peoples there was none with me. [416] This is added in order to intimate that, although "peoples" will arise out of the earth in order to destroy the nation of Edom, yet the work of God shall be separate from them, because nothing was farther from the design of heathen nations than

[416] "Yet he punished the Moabites by means of the Assyrians. How, then, was there none with him? I reply, — 1. God distinguishes his work from the work of instruments. He says that he had quite a different end in view from what the instruments had, and therefore that he alone righteously executed this chastisement. 2. He means that this chastisement was of such a nature, so sudden and distressing, that all might see that it did not proceed merely from human counsels and secondary causes, but chiefly from God himself; and consequently that he is the first cause, and the Assyrians are the instrumental cause of the chastisement." — Pareus.

to inflict punishment on the Edomites for their unjust cruelty. For this reason the Lord wishes his judgment to be known and to be illustriously displayed amidst the din of arms and tempestuous commotions.

For I will tread them. I willingly retain the future tense; for the Prophet speaks of events that are future and not yet accomplished; and although the Edomites were living in prosperity and at their ease, yet God would severely punish them on account of their cruelty. Why the Prophet makes use of the metaphor of a bloody wine-press, which is a shocking and melancholy sight, we have already in part explained; but it ought likewise to be added, that the punishments and vengeance which God inflicts on enemies are appropriately called his vintage, as if he gathered them when he ruins or destroys them. In like manner, such punishment is called in another passage (Isaiah 34:6) a solemn sacrifice; that we may learn that glory ought to be ascribed to God, not less when he executes his judgments than when he exhibits tokens of compassion. [417]

And I will stain all my raiment. He nevertheless describes his amazing love toward the Jews, in deigning to sprinkle himself with the blood of enemies on their account; and that is the reason why he makes use of the word stain.

In my wrath. He shews that this is of itself sufficient for destroying the Edomites, that the Lord is angry with them; as if he had said that there will be none to rescue them, when the Lord shall be pleased to chastise, Hence we may infer that the destruction of men proceeds from nothing else than the wrath of God; as, on the other hand, on his graco alone depends our salvation. In a word, God intended here to testify that the Edomites shall not remain unpunished for having persecuted the Church of God.

4. *For the day of vengeance is in my heart.* In the former clause of this verse Isaiah intimates that God does not cease to discharge his office, though he does not instantly execute his judgments, but, on the contrary, delays till a seasonable time, which he knows well; and that it does not belong to us to prescribe to him when or how he ought to do this or that, but we ought to bow submissively to his decree, that he may administer all things according to his pleasure. Let us not, therefore, imagine that he is asleep, or that he is idle, when he delays.

And the year of my redeemed is come. In this latter clause he shews that all these things are done for the sake of believers. "Day" and "year" are here used by him in the same sense; but by the word "year" is denoted the long duration of the captivity, that the Jews may not despair or grow faint and

[417] "The treading of the wine-press alone is an expression often applied in sermons, and in religious books and conversation, to our Savior's sufferings. This application is described as customary in his own time by Vitringa, who considers it as having led to the forced exposition of the whole passage by the fathers and Cocceius as a description of Christ's passion. While the impossibility of such a sense in the original passage cannot be too strongly stated, there is no need of denying that the figure may be happily accommodated in the way suggested; as many expressions of the Old Testament may be applied to different objects with good effect, provided we are careful to avoid confounding such accommodations with the strict and primary import of the passage." — Alexander. It may be proper to add that "the exposition of the whole passage" is still the subject of much controversy, and that a full and candid discussion of it by some person of competent learning and ability would do incalculable good. — Ed.

weary, if the redemption be long delayed. The Lord therefore punishes and destroys wicked men for the purpose of delivering the godly and of redeeming his Church, for which he has a special regard.

Finally, by the slaughter and destruction of them he opens up a way for his grace. And this tends to our consolation, that whenever we see tokens of God's wrath toward the wicked, we may know that the fruit of the punishment which they endure will come to us; for in this way it is clearly seen that our groans are heard, and that God, when he wishes to relieve the afflicted, is armed with strength to put to flight all the enemies of his Church. Wherefore, although the cross be heavy to us, yet by hearing patiently let us learn to lift up our minds by hope to that "year" which God hath appointed for executing his vengeance.

5. *I looked, and there was none to help.* Although the Jews were destitute of all assistance, and no one aided them by word or deed, yet he shews that the arm of the Lord is alone sufficient to punish enemies, and to set his people at liberty. He shews, therefore, that from God alone they ought to expect salvation, that they may not gaze around in every direction, but may have their eyes wholly fixed on God, who has no need of the assistance of others.

And I wondered. He represents God as amazed that there is none to stretch out a hand to him, when he wishes to execute his judgments, that he may impress more deeply on the minds of believers this doctrine, that God has no need of human aid, and that he is sufficient of himself for procuring salvation to his people. By this circumstance he magnifies still more the assistance which he had determined to render to his people, partly to correct their distrust, and partly to exhort them to gratitude in future; for God assumes a different character, when he says that he stood like one astonished; because this stupidity belonged literally to the Jews, who scarcely believed what could not be done by the power of men. With every assistance, therefore, he contrasts his own arm, with the invincible power of which he says that he will be satisfied, both that he may be seen to be their Savior, and that he may scatter and lay low all the wicked.

6. *And I will tread down the peoples.* From the preceding statement he draws the conclusion, that God's wrath is sufficiently powerful to destroy the wicked, without calling for the assistance of others; and he does so in order that the Jews may not be deterred from cherishing favorable hopes by the strength that is arrayed against them.

And will make them drunk. The expression, "make drunk," must here be taken in a different sense from what it formerly had in some passages. We have seen that sometimes we are made drunk, when God strikes us with fury or madness, (Isaiah 29:9,) or with a spirit of giddiness, (Isaiah 19:14,) or, in a word, "gives us up to a reprobate mind." (Romans 1:28.) But here it means nothing else than "to fill," and to strike even to satiety, or, as we commonly say, (*tout leur saoul*,) "to their heart's content;" a metaphor

which the prophets frequently employ.

And will cast down their strength to the earth. That is, though they think that they are invincible, yet I will cast down and destroy them. The meaning may be thus summed up. "The Jews, when they are afflicted, must not call in question their salvation, as if God hated them, and must not be amazed at the chastisements which they endure, as if they happened by chance; for other nations, by whom they are now oppressed, shall be punished, there shall be a revolution of affairs, and they shall not escape who chant a triumph before the time. He produces as an example the Edomites, because they were nearer and better known than others, and were also the most injurious.

7. *I will keep in remembrance the compassions of Jehovah.* Isaiah brings consolation to his people in distressed and calamitous circumstances, and by his example bids the Jews, when they were oppressed by afflictions, call to remembrance God's ancient benefits, and betake themselves to prayer; that they may not be like hypocrites, who only in prosperity feel the goodness of God, and are so much cast down by adversity as to remember no benefit. But when the Lord chastises us, we ought to mention and celebrate his benefits, and to cherish better hopes for the future; for the Lord is always the same, and does not change his purpose or his inclination; and therefore if we leave room for his compassion, we shall never be left destitute.

Such appears to me to be the scope of the context, though others view it in a different light, namely, that the Prophet, having hitherto spoken of the destruction of the people, comforts himself by this confident hope of compassion, that God wishes to save some of them. But they are mistaken in supposing that Isaiah has hitherto spoken of the Jews, as if God punished them only, whereas he testified that he would likewise punish other nations, that they might not think that they alone were hated by God; and accordingly, he now exhorts them to celebrate the remembrance of those benefits which God had formerly bestowed on the fathers, that by their example they may know better the love of God toward them. From the context it will also appear clearly, that the Jews are joined with their fathers, that the covenant which belongs to them in common with their fathers, may encourage them to hope well.

As upon all that Jehovah hath bestowed on us. He employs the particle of comparison, As, in order to shew that in adversity we ought instantly to remember those benefits which the Lord bestowed on his people, as if they were placed before our eyes, though they appear to be buried by extreme old age; for if they do not belong to us, the remembrance of them would be idle and unprofitable.

He confirms this also by saying *on us.* Because the Jews were members of the same body, he justly reckons them the descendants of their grandfathers and other ancestors. Isaiah did not, indeed, experience those benefits which he mentions; but because they had been bestowed on the Church, the fruit of them came partly to himself, because he was a member of the Church. And

undoubtedly that communion of saints which we profess to believe, ought to be so highly valued by us, as to lead us to think that what the Church has received from the hand of God has been given to us; for the Church of God is one, and that which now is has nothing separate from that which formerly was. [418]

In the multitude of kindness toward the house of Israel. By these words Isaiah more fully explains his meaning. Since therefore the Lord shewed himself to be kind and bountiful toward his people, we ought to hope for the same thing in the present day, because we are "fellow-citizens," and members of the very same Church. (Ephesians 2:19.) Although we feel that God is angry with us on account of our sins, yet our hearts ought to be encouraged by hope and armed by confidence; because he cannot forsake his Church. Yet it ought to be carefully observed, that the Prophet extols and magnifies in lofty terms the mercy of God, that we may know that the foundation of our salvation and of all blessings is laid on it; for this excludes the merits of men, that nothing may in any way be ascribed to them.

That this doctrine may be better understood, we must take into account the time of which Isaiah speaks. At that time righteousness and godliness chiefly flourished; for although the people were exceedingly corrupted, yet Moses, Aaron, and other good men, gave illustrious examples of unblamable and holy lives. Yet the Prophet shews that all the blessings which the Lord. bestowed on Moses and others ought to be ascribed, not to their merits, but to the mercy of God. But what are we in comparison of Moses, that we should deserve anything from God? This repetition, therefore, of kindness, mercies, and compassions, as it raises feeble minds on high, that they may rise above stupendous and formidable temptations, ought also to remove and swallow up all thought of human merits.

8. *For he said, Surely they are my people.* He mentions the election of the people, and represents God as speaking of it, that we may keep in view the end of our calling., that he wished to have a peculiar people, who should call upon him. And yet he accuses the people of ingratitude, in having disappointed God of his expectation; not that the Lord can be deceived, for he dearly foresaw what they would become, and also declared it (Deuteronomy 32:15) by Moses; but Scripture speaks in this manner, when it is altogether owing to the ingratitude of men that they, disappoint God, as we formerly saw,

"I looked that it should yield grapes, and it hath yielded wild grapes." (Isaiah 5:4.)

Nor does he treat of God's secret decree, but speaks after the manner of men about the mutual consent between God and believers, that all to whom he deigns to offer himself as their Father, may answer to God when he calls;

[418] "Here the Prophet, in the person of a captive Jew, makes a grateful acknowledgment of the manifold mercies bestowed on their nation from the time that he first took them into favor, the thoughts of which served to keep up their spirits, and made them hope that some time or other he would be mindful of them, and redeem them, as he did their forefathers." — White.

"for the foundation standeth sure, that none of the elect shall perish, because the Lord knoweth who are truly his. (2 Timothy 2:19.)

Children that do not lie. We know that the end of our calling is, that we may lead a holy and blameless life, as the whole of Scripture testifies, and as we have often stated at former passages. (Isaiah 43:21; 55:5.) Justly, therefore, does the Lord say that he elected the people, that they might be holy and true, that he might have children who were averse to falsehood and vanity. But the people did not keep their promise, and were far removed from that simplicity which they ought to have followed; for everything was full of deceit and hypocrisy. Yet nevertheless he holds out the hope of pardon, provided that they fly to God and humble themselves by sincere repentance.

Therefore he became their Savior. The Prophet shews what is the chief part of the service of God; namely, to have a pure and upright heart. Hence it follows that God forsakes us, because we are treacherous and are covenant-breakers. Seeing therefore that this people took pleasure in their vices, it was proper first to convict them of their unbelief, that being afterwards converted to God, they might find him to be their Savior.

9. *In all their affliction he was afflicted.* He enlarges on the goodness of God toward his people, and shews that he was kind to the fathers, so long as they permitted themselves to be governed by him, and was so careful about them that he himself bore their distresses and afflictions. By speaking in this mainner, he declares the incomparable love which God bears toward his people. In order to move us more powerfully and draw us to himself, the Lord accommodates himself to the manner of men, by attributing to himself all the affection, love, and ({συμπαθεία}) compassion which a father can have. And yet in human affairs it is impossible to conceive of any sort of kindness or benevolence which he does not immeasurably surpass.

I acknowledge that {לא} (*lo*) with {א} (*aleph*) literally signifies not; and therefore I do not altogether reject a different interpretation, that the people in their afflictions were not afflicted, because God always applied some remedy to alleviate their sorrows. But since {א}, (*aleph*,)in many passages, is manifestly changed into {ו}, (*vau*,) learned commentators justly, in my opinion, view it as equivalent to the pronoun {לו}, (*lo*,) to him. In this sense the Prophet testifies that God, in order to alleviate the distresses and afflictions of his people, himself bore their burdens; not that he can in any way endure anguish, but, by a very customary figure of speech, he assumes and applies to himself human passions. [419]

[419] "In all their distress there was distress to him, or, as the English Version renders it, 'In all their affliction he was afflicted.' This explanation, with the text on which it is founded, and which is exhibited by a number of manuscripts and editions, is approved by Luther, Vitringa, Clericus, Hitzig, Ewald, Umbreit, Hendewerk, and Knobel. It is favored, not only by the strong and affecting sense which it yields but by the analogy of Judges 10:16; 11:7, in one of which places the same phrase is used to denote human suffering, and in the other God is represented as sympathizing with it. The objections to it are, that it gratuitously renders necessary another anthropopathic explanation; that the natural collocation of the words, if this were the meaning, would be {צר לו}, (tzar lo) as in 2 Samuel 1:26; that the negative is expressed by all the ancient versions; and that the critical presumption: is in favor of the Kethib, or textual reading, as the more ancient, which the Massorites merely corrected in

And the angel of his face saved them. Of the care which he took of them he next explains the effect, by saying that he always delivered them by the hand of his angel, whom he calls "the angel of his face," because he was the witness of the presence of God, and, as it were, his herald to execute his commands; that we may not think that angels come forth of their own accord, or move at their own suggestion, to render assistance to us; for the Lord makes use of their agency, and makes known to us his presence by means of them. Angels can do nothing of themselves, and give no assistance, except so far as the Lord commissions them

"to be ministers of our salvation." (Hebrews 1:14.)

Let us not, therefore, fix our whole attention on them, for they lead us straight to God.

If it be thought preferable to interpret this phrase as describing the lively image of God, because that angel, being the leader and guardian of the people, shewed the face of God as in a mirror, that meaning will be highly appropriate. And indeed I have no doubt that the office of Savior is ascribed to Christ, as we know that he was the angel of highest rank, by whose guidance, safeguard, and protection, the Church has been preserved and upheld.

In his love. He shews what was the cause of so great benefits; namely, his love and undeserved kindness, as Moses also teaches. "How came it that God adopted thy fathers, but because he loved them, and because his heart clave to them?" (Deuteronomy 4:37; 7:7, 8.) Moses wishes to set aside entirely the lofty opinion which they might entertain of themselves, because they were proud and haughty, and claimed more for themselves than they had a right to claim; and therefore he shews that there was no other cause for so great benefits than the absolute and undeserved goodness of God.

He bore them and carried them. He next makes use of the same metaphor which Moses employs in his song, when he says that God

"carried his people in the same manner as an eagle bears her young on her wings." (Deuteronomy 32:11.)

Or perhaps some may choose to refer it to sheep, as we have seen elsewhere, "He will lead those that are with young." (Isaiah 40:11.) Yet it is more natural to view this as a comparison to a mother, who not only carries the child in the womb, but rears it till it arrive at full strength. The meaning may be thus summed up. "The people experienced the grace of God, not only once, when they were redeemed, but during the whole course of their life, so that to him alone ought to be ascribed all the benefits which they have received." And therefore he adds —

All the days of the age; that is, in an uninterrupted succession of many years; for God is not wearied in doing good, nor is it only to a single age that he shews his kindness; for he has never ceased to adorn and enrich his Church with various gifts.

the margin, without venturing to change it, and which ought not to be now abandoned, if a coherent sense can be put on it, as it can in this case." — Alexander.

10. *But they were rebellious.* The Prophet now comes down to the second clause, in which he states that the Lord ceased to shew kindness to his people, because they revolted, and turned aside from him. The question turns on this point: "God exercised his kindness towards our fathers for a long time; why do not we experience the same kindness? Is he unlike himself?" By no means; but we ourselves, by our rebellion, refuse and even drive away his goodness. Yet the Prophet not only accuses the men of his own age, but likewise condemns former ages. We see how, even when they had Moses for their leader, they murmured against God and rebelled. (Exodus 17:5; Numbers 11:1; 20:3.)

Therefore he became an enemy to them. He shews that the effect of their rebellion was, that God, who had loved them tenderly, yet, in consequence of their obstinacy, "became an enemy to them." Let them accuse themselves, therefore, for suffering the punishment of their transgressions; for God is by nature disposed to shew kindness, and nothing is more agreeable to him than to bestow his favors.

And they provoked his Holy Spirit. We are said to irritate "the Holy Spirit" by our wickedness; and this form of expression, after the manner of men, is intended to produce in us stronger abhorrence against sin, which provokes God's wrath and hatred. Now, since it is the same Spirit that performs the work of our salvation, the Prophet suggests that God is alienated from us by our sins, which break asunder the bond of union. To this belongs the exhortation of Paul,

"Grieve not; the Spirit of God, by whom ye have been sealed to the day of redemption." (Ephesians 4:30.)

It ought also to be observed here, that we have no reason for blaming men, who hate and persecute us, seeing that the Lord makes war with us, and punishes our transgressions by their hand. We ought therefore to accuse and condemn our transgressions; for they are the cause of all the evils which we endure.

11. *And he remembered the days of old.* This is the design of the chastisement, that the people may be roused from their lethargy, and may call to remembrance those things which they had formerly forgotten; for we are so intoxicated by prosperity that we altogether forget God. And therefore chastisements bring back this thought, which had been defaced in us, "Where is God who bestowed so many benefits on our fathers?" For I refer these things to the past time; and therefore I have translated {עולם} (*gnolam*) "of old." and not "of the age," which would be unsuitable to this passage, seeing that he mentions those times in which Moses governed the people of God. Wherefore, the true meaning is, that the Jews, being wretchedly oppressed, thought of "the times of old," in which the Lord displayed his power for defending his people. As to the opinion of some commentators, who refer it to God, as if he contended with the wickedness of the people, because he chose rather to bestow his favors improperly on ungrateful persons, than not to

complete what he had begun, it appears to be too harsh and unnatural; and therefore the Prophet rather utters the groans and complaints of a wretched people, when they have learned from chastisements how miserable it is to lose God's protection.

With the shepherd of his flock. By "the shepherd" he means Moses, and I see no good reason for translating it in the plural rather than the singular number. [420]

That put his Holy Spirit in the midst of him. He describes also the manner; namely, that he endowed him with a remarkable grace of the Holy Spirit; for "to put the Spirit in the midst of him" means nothing else than to display the power of his Spirit. Others prefer to view it as referring to the people; and I do not object to that opinion. But when the Lord chose Moses, and appointed him to be the leader of the whole people, in him especially the Lord is said to have "put his Spirit." Now, he gave his Spirit to him for the benefit of the whole people, that he might be a distinguished minister of his grace, and might restore them to liberty. At the same time, the power of the Spirit of God was seen in the midst of the whole people.

12. *Who led them.* Here he goes on to describe the miraculous deliverance of the people, who were led out of Egypt under the guidance of Moses; and he goes on to relate the complaints which might occur to the minds of the afflicted Jews. Here we see two things connected; namely, the right hand of Moses and the arm of God's majesty. The Lord employs the labors and ministry of men in such a manner that his praise and glory must not be in any degree diminished or obscured; for, while these things are transacted under Moses as the leader, everything is ascribed to God. Just as, when the ministers of the Gospel are said to "forgive sins," (John 20:23,) which nevertheless belongs to God alone, does this detract from his authority and majesty? Not at all; for they are only his instruments, and lend their labor to God, to whom the undivided praise ought to be rendered. And indeed, what could the hand of a single man have accomplished, if it had not been wielded by the arm of God?

Accordingly, he expressly adds the design, that God performed miracles at that time, in order that he might gain for himself an everlasting name; and if we are not at liberty to deprive him of this, it will not be lawful to transfer to man even the smallest portion of praise.

13. *Who made them walk through the depths.* These things are added for the purpose of setting that benefit in a stronger light. He likewise brings forward comparisons, in order to describe that extraordinary power of God: "As a horse in the desert, As a beast into a plain;" that is, he led out his people as gently as if one were leading a horse into a plain. By the word

[420] Our author refers to a different reading, {,{רעי (rogne,) the construct plural, instead of ,{רעה} (rogneh,) the construct singular of ,{רעה} (rogneh.) — Ed. "Nearly sixty manuscripts and forty editions read, {רעי} (rogne) in the plural, which may then be understood as including Aaron, (Psalm 77:20,) and, as Vitringa thinks, Miriam, (Micah 6:4,) or perhaps the seventy elders, who are probably referred to in the last clause as under a special divine influence. (See Numbers 11:17. Compare Exodus 31:3; 35:31" — Alexander.

"desert" is not meant the wilderness of Paran in which the people dwelt forty years; but, in accordance with the ordinary usage of the Hebrew tongue, it denotes pasture, in which herds and flocks wander at large. This is still more evident from the following verse, —

14. *As a beast into a plain.* Here, instead of "desert," he makes use of the word "plain;" and the same meaning is drawn from what he says, that "the people walked through the depths without stumbling, as horses are wont to do in the desert." In a word, he informs them that the Red Sea was no obstacle to the people marching through the midst of the depths, as if they were walking on level ground. [421]

A glorious name. This is in the same sense that he called it a little before "an everlasting name." The people now argue with God, that if he once wished to obtain "a glorious name," he must not now throw away all care about it; otherwise the remembrance of the benefits which he formerly bestowed on the fathers will be entirely blotted out.

15. *Look down from heaven.* After having, in the name of the whole people, related the benefits of former times, he now applies this to the present subject, and entreats the Lord to pay regard to his people.

Behold from the habitation of thy holiness. By these words he means that the power of God is not diminished, though this does not always appear; for we must supply a contrast, that God at that time might be said to be concealed, and did not shew himself to them as he had shewn himself to the fathers. "Although, therefore, we do not see thee, O Lord, and although thou hast withdrawn from us as if thou wert shut up in heaven, so that thou mayest seem to have altogether ceased to care about us, yet 'look down from heaven, and from thy habitation' behold our distresses." Believers must differ from unbelievers in acknowledging a powerful and kind God, even when they perceive no tokens of his power or kindness; and thus, even when he is at a great distance, they nevertheless call on him; for God never ceases to care about his people, (1 Peter 5:7,) since he governs unceasingly every part of the world.

Where is thy zeal? By these questions believers appear in some measure to reproach God, as if he were not now moved by any affection toward them, or as if his power were diminished; but the Prophet's meaning is different; for in thus extolling those benefits, his object is, as I have already remarked, to confirm the hope of believers for the future, that they may know that God is always like himself, and will never lay aside his care about his people. This will appear more clearly from what follows.

The multitude of bowels and of compassions denotes God's vast goodness;

[421] "In these three verses the Prophet sets forth the care he had of his people, leading them as it were by his hand, that they might not fall and hurt themselves, dividing the Red Sea before them, and conducting them as safely through the dangerous passage, as a horse which treads on plain even ground is in no danger of falling, or as a beast heavy laden goes down a steep precipice warily, with a great deal of caution every step it takes; so the Lord led his people gently through the wilderness, and caused them at last to rest in the pleasant valleys of Canaan." — White.

for God displays and opens up his bowels, so to speak, when he exercises toward us bounty and kindness, which truly is so great that we cannot praise it in adequate language. Nor is it a new thing that believers, when oppressed by grief, expostulated familiarly with God for shutting up his bowels. They do indeed hold by this principle, that God is always compassionate, because he does not change his nature; and though they impute it to their sins that they do not experience him to be compassionate, yet, that they may not sink into despair, they ask how it is possible that God should treat them with severity, and, as if he had forgotten his natural disposition, should shew nothing but tokens of absolute displeasure? [422]

16. *Surely thou art our Father.* God permits us to reveal our hearts familiarly before him; for prayer is nothing else than the opening up of our heart before God; as the greatest alleviation is, to pour our cares, distresses, and anxieties into his bosom. "Roll thy cares on the Lord," says David. (Psalm 37:5.) After having enumerated God's benefits, from which his goodness and power are clearly seen, so that it is evident that it is nothing else than the sins of men that hinder them from feeling it as formerly, he returns to this consideration, that the goodness of God is nevertheless so great as to exceed the wickedness of men. He calls God a Father in the name of the Church; for all cannot call him thus, but it is the peculiar privilege of the Church to address him by a father's name. Hence it ought to be inferred that Christ, as the first-born, or rather the only-begotten Son of God, always governed his Church; for in no other way than through him can God be called Father. And here we again see that believers do not contend with God, but draw an argument from his nature, that, by conquering temptation, they may strive to cherish good hope.

Though Abraham do not know us. Here a question arises, Why does he say that the patriarch does not know the people? Jerome thinks that this is done because they were degenerated, and therefore were unworthy of so high an honor; but that interpretation appears to me to be exceedingly unnatural. The true meaning is, "Though our fathers deny us, yet God will reckon us as children, and will act toward us as a Father."

They who say that Abraham and other believers care no more about the affairs of men, torture by excessive ingenuity the words of the Prophet. I do not speak of the fact itself, but I say that those words do not prove that the saints have no care about us. The natural and true meaning is, "O Lord, that thou art our Father will be so sure and so firmly established, that even though all parentage and all relationship should cease among men, yet thou wilt not fail to be our Father. Sooner shall the rights of nature perish than thou shalt not act toward us as a Father, or the sacred adoption shall be infringed, which was founded on thy unchangeable decree, and ratified by the death of thine only-begotten Son." [423]

[422] Luther's version runs thus, Deine grofe herliche Barmherzigfeit halt eich hart gegen mich. "Thy great compassionate loving-kindness deals hardly with me." — Ed.

[423] "The meaning cannot be that Abraham and Israel are ashamed of us as unworthy and

Yet we may infer from this that holy men present themselves before God, and pray to him, in such a manner as not to look at any intercessions of others; for they are commanded to pray so as to rely on God's fatherly kindness, and to lay aside every other confidence. And if the Prophet did not instruct the Jews, in order that God might listen to them, to turn their mind to Abraham and Jacob, to whom promises so numerous and so great had been given, assuredly much less ought we to resort, to Peter, and Paul, and others; for this is not a private prayer offered by a single individual or by a few persons, but the public and universal prayer of the whole Church, as if the Prophet laid down a general form. Besides, our confidence ought to be founded on God's favor and kindness as a Father, so as to shut our eyes on all the intercessions of men, whether living or dead. In a word, believers profess that they do not gaze around in all directions, but rely on God alone.

It comes now to a question, Why did he pass by Isaac and mention in a special manner Abraham and Jacob? The reason is, that with those two persons the covenant was more solemnly ratified. Isaac was, indeed, a partaker of the covenant, but did not receive promises so large and so numerous.

Our Redeemer. Redemption is here described as a testimony of that adoption; for by this proof God manifested himself to be the Father of the people; and therefore boldly and confidently do believers call on God as their Father, because he gave a remarkable testimony of his fatherly kindness toward them, which encouraged them to confidence. But redemption alone would, not have been enough, if a promise had not likewise been added; and therefore, as he once redeemed them, he promised that he would always be their Father.

From everlasting is thy name. By the word "everlasting" [424] is pointed out the stability and continuance of his fatherly name, for we did not deserve the name of children; but his will, by which he once adopted us to be children, is unchangeable. Since, therefore, the Lord has an eternal name, it follows that the title and favor which are connected with that eternity and flow from it, shall be durable and eternal. [425]

17. *Why didst thou cause as to wander, O Jehovah, from thy ways?* Because these modes of expression appear to be rough and harsh, some think that unbelievers are here introduced as murmuring against God and uttering blasphemies, with the rage and obstinacy of men who are in a state of despair. But the connection in which these words occur does not at all admit of that interpretation; for the Prophet points out the fruit that would

degenerate descendants, as Piscator understands it; or that Abraham and Israel cannot save us by their merits, as Cocceius understands it; or that Abraham and Israel did not deliver us from Egypt, as the Targum understands it; or that Abraham and Israel, being now dead, can do nothing for us, as Vitringa and the later writers understand it. The true sense of the verse, as it appears to me, is that the Church or chosen people, although once, for temporary reasons, co-extensive and coincident with a single race, is not essentially a national organization but a spiritual body. Its father is not Abraham or Israel, but Jehovah, who is and always has been its Redeemer, who has borne that name from everlasting." — Alexander.

[424] "De tout temps." "Of all time."

[425] "Dureront a jamais." "Shall endure for ever."

result from the calamities and afflictions of the Jews, because, having been subdued and tamed, they no longer are fierce or indulge in their vices. They are therefore ashamed that in time past they departed so far from the right way, and they acknowledge their own fault.

And indeed when they trace their sins to the wrath of God, they do not intend to free themselves from blame, or to set aside their guilt. But the Prophet employs a mode of expression which is of frequent occurrence; for in the Scriptures it is frequently said that God drives men into error, (2 Thessalonians 2:11;) "gives them up to a reprobate mind," (Romans 1:28;) and "hardens them." (Romans 9:18.) When believers speak in this manner, they do not intend to make God the author of error or of sin, as if they were innocent, or to free themselves from blame; but they look higher, and rather acknowledge that it is by their own fault that they are estranged from God and deprived of his Spirit, and that this is the reason why they are plunged into every kind of evils.

Those who say that God leads us into error by privation, that is, by depriving us of his Spirit, do not perceive the actual design; for God himself is said to harden and to blind, when he gives up men to be blinded by Satan, who is the minister and executioner of his wrath. Without this we would be exposed to the rage of Satan; but, since he can do nothing without the command of God, to whose dominion he is subject, there will be no impropriety in saying that God is the author of blinding and hardening, as Scripture also affirms in many passages. (Romans 9:18.) And yet it cannot be said or declared that God is the author of sin, because he punishes the ingratitude of men by blinding them in this manner.

Thus believers here acknowledge that God has forsaken them, but that it is by their own fault; [426] and they acknowledge God's righteous vengeance against them. In like manner, when Moses says that "God hath not hitherto given to the people eyes to see and a heart to understand," (Deuteronomy 29:4,) he does not lay the blame on God, but reminds the Jews whence they should seek to obtain a remedy for that stupidity of which they had been convicted. Yet it may appear as if here they aimed at something else, by inquiring into the cause and remonstrating with God, that he ought to have acted differently towards them and treated them less harshly. But I reply, that believers always look at the goodness of God, even when they acknowledge that they suffer justly on account of their sins.

Some refer these words to the captivity; as if believers complained that God permitted them to languish so long in captivity. As if he had said, "The chief cause of their obstinacy is, that the Lord does not permit them to partake of his grace." Believers are troubled by a dangerous temptation, when they see wicked men pursuing their career without being punished, and are almost driven by it to despair; as it is beautifiully expressed by David. (Psalm 115:3.) But I think that the Prophet's meaning is more general; for

[426] "Mais leur peche en est cause." "But their sin is the cause of it."

believers acknowledge that they "wandered," because they were not governed by the Spirit of God; and they do not; expostulate with God, but desire to have that Spirit, by whom their fathers were guided, and from whom they obtained all prosperity.

And hast caused our heart to depart from thy fear. {תקשיח}, (*takshiach*,) is rendered by some, hast hardened; but as that would not agree with the words, "in thy fear," I have preferred to translate it, "Hast caused to depart;" for {קשח}, (*kashach*,) also signifies "to remove and place at a distance."

Return on account of thy servants. Some think that these words relate to the whole people, as Scripture frequently gives the appellation of "servants of God" to all the citizens of the Church. But I think that they relate literally to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and that is much more probable; not that the people relied on their intercession, but because the Lord had made a covenant with them, which they should transmit from hand to hand to their posterity. Thus they do not hold out these patriarchs as men, but as ministers and depositaries or messengers of the covenant which was the foundation of their confidence. In the same manner, in that psalm,

"Lord, remember David," (Psalm 132:1,)

the name of the dead patriarch is mentioned to God, not because the saints thought that he would be their intercessor, but that the promise given to a single individual, as to establishing the kingdom in his family for ever, belongs to the body of the people.

The Papists eagerly seize on these words, as if they were a proof of the intercessions of the saints. But how easy it is to reply may be easily seen from the true interpretation; for the fathers are mentioned, not because they had a right to obtain anything for them, or because they now intercede, but because with them was formed a gracious covenant, which belongs not only to themselves, but to all their posterity.

To the tribes of thine inheritance. I have added the preposition *To*, which was understood, in order that the meaning might be more easy and obvious. It is a customary form of expression among the Hebrews, "Return the tribes," instead of "Return to the tribes;" as if he had said, "Return to a state of friendship with thy people." Hence it is evident that what was formerly said had no other object than that the people urged God to the exercise of mercy by representing to God their distresses and calamities. And in this manner we must come to God; that is, by recounting former benefits and laying before him our afflictions, if we desire to be delivered from them.

He employs the word *Inheritance,* because God hath chosen that people to be his heritage; as if he had said, "Where shall thy people be, if we perish?" Not that the Lord was bound to that people, but that he had given his promise to them. [427] Accordingly, the people venture to remind God of his promise and to offer earnest prayer, because he had laid himself

[427] "Mais d'autant qu'il leur avoit jure fidelite." "But because he had sworn to be faithful to them."

under a voluntary obligation both to the fathers and to posterity. Now, since all the promises are ratified and confirmed in Christ, (2 Corinthians 1:20,) and since we possess the reality of all things, we ought to be fortified by stronger confidence; for not only was the covenant made in his hand, but it was ratified and sealed by his blood. To the ancient fathers also he was indeed the Mediator, but we have everything clearer and plainer; because they were still kept amidst the darker shadows.

18. *For a little time.* It is wonderful that the people should call it "a little time;" for fourteen hundred years had elapsed since the people began to possess that land. But we must take into account the promise by which he said that the seed of Abraham should have it as an everlasting inheritance; and therefore that was a short time, when compared with eternity. (Genesis 17:8; 48:4.) Believers, therefore, represent to God the shortness of that time; not that they accuse him of insincerity, but that he may remember the promise and covenant, and may have more regard to his own goodness than to the chastisements which they justly deserved. Thus the ancient Church complains that

"her strength was weakened in the journey, that her days were shortened, and prays that she may not be cut off in the middle of her course," (Psalm 102:23, 24,)

that is, because the fullness of age depended on the coming of Christ.

Our adversaries have trodden down thy sanctuary. This was a much heavier complaint, that wicked men had profaned the land which the Lord had consecrated to himself. Undoubtedly this was far more distressing to the people than the rest of their calamities, and justly; for we ought not to care so much about ourselves as about religion and the worship of God. And this is also the end of redemption, that there may be a people that praises the name of the Lord and worships him in a right manner.

19. *We have been of old.* The words of the Prophet admit of two meanings. Some view this passage in such a light as if the people argued with God on this ground, that they were elected at that time when the rest of the nations were rejected, and that this covenant was ratified "from of old," that is, for a long period. Another meaning, which I prefer, is this, that the people argue with God, and complain that they seem as if they did not differ at all from unbelievers; that is, because they receive from him no assistance or relief in adversity, which is unreasonable and improper. This statement is remarkable and worthy of notice; for, whenever we are oppressed beyond measure with adversity, we are permitted to complain to God, and to represent to him our calling, that he may render assistance, and shew how wide a difference there is between us and strangers.

On whom thy name hath not been called. This is of the same import with what goes before; for it means that the calling of God must not be made void. And indeed the Lord does not wish that we should call upon him in vain; for prayers would be unprofitable and useless, if the Lord took no care

of us. Now, the Church is distinguished by this mark, that "his name is called upon her." Unbelievers cannot call upon him; for there is no access to him but through the word, of which they have no knowledge; and therefore, wherever there is faith, there is also calling on him; and if there be no faith, it is certain that there is no hope or confidence.

Chapter 64

CHAPTER 64.

Isaiah 64:1-12

1. Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence,

1. O si (vel, Si forte) disrumpas coelos; descendas, et a facie tua montes diffluant!

2. As when the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil; to make thy name known to thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at thy presence!

2. Tanquam incendio ignis liquefactionum, ignis aquas ebullire fecit, ad manifestandum nomen tuum hostibus tuis; a fade tua gentes tremebant.

3. When thou didst terrible things which we looked not for, thou camest down, the mountains flowed down at thy presence.

3. Cum faceres terribilia, quae non expectavimus, descendisti; a fade tua montes defluxerunt.

4. For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, besides thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him.

4. A seculo non audirerunt, neque auribus perceperunt; oculus non vidit Deum praeter to, qui faciat (vel, Dens quae facit) expectanti se.

5. Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness; those that remember thee in thy ways: behold, thou art wroth; for we have sinned: in those is continuance, and we shall be saved.

5. Occurristi laetanti et facienti justitiam. In viis tuis recordabantur tui.; ecce tu iratus es, et nos peecavimus; in ipsis seculum, et salvabimur (vel, saluti sumus).

6. But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as

filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

6. Et fuimus quasi immundus nos omnes, et tanquam vestimentum inquinatum omnes justitiae nostrae. Et decidimus instar folii onmes nos; et iniquitates nostrae, quasi ventus, abstulerunt nos.

7. And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee: for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities.

7. Non est qui invocet nomen tuum, nee qui se excitet ut to apprehendat; quia abscondisti faciem tuam a nobis, et tabescere nos fecisti in manu iniquitatis nostrum.

8. But now, O LORD, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand.

8. Et nune, Iehova, tu es pater noster; nos lutum, et tu figulus noster; opus, inquam, manuum tuarum sumus omnes.

9. Be not wroth very sore, O LORD, neither remember iniquity for ever: behold, see, we beseech thee, we are all thy people.

9. Ne irascaris, Iehova, ultra modum; ne in seculum memineris iniquitatis. Ecce respice, quaeso; nos omnes populus tuus sumus.

10. Thy holy cities are a wilderness, Zion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation.

10. Urbes sanctitatis tuae fuerunt desertum; Sion desertum fuit, Ierusalem solitudo.

11. Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, is burned up with fire: and all our pleasant things are laid waste.

11. Doritos sanctuarii nostri, et gloriae nostrae, in qua to celebrarunt patres nostri, fuit in combustionem ignis; et omnia nostra desiderabilia in vastationem.

12. Wilt thou refrain thyself for these things, O LORD? wilt thou hold thy peace, and afflict us very sore?

12. An super his to continebis, Iehova? Tacebis, et affliges nos ultra modum?

1. *O that thou wouldest rend the heavens!* The particle {לוא} (*lu*) appears to me, in this passage, to denote a wish; for, although it has many significations, yet the context shews that this signification is more appropriate to this passage than any other. Here believers burst forth into earnest prayer, as usually happens, when in sore adversity we do not find plain terms to be sufficiently forcible for our purpose.

God is said to "rend the heavens," when he unexpectedly gives some uncommon and striking proof of his power; and the reason of this mode of expression is, not only that men, when they are hard pressed, commonly look up to heaven, from which they expect assistance, but that miracles, by interrupting the order of nature, open up for themselves an unusual path.

Now, when God renders no assistance, he appears to be shut up in heaven, and to disregard what is taking place on earth. For this reason he is said to open and "rend the heavens," when he holds out to us some testimony of his presence; because otherwise we think that he is at a great distance from us.

That thou wouldest come down. This expression, like the former, is adapted to the estimation of our flesh; for God does not need to move from one place to another, but accommodates himself to us, that we may understand those subjects better. [428] (Genesis 11:5; 18:21.)

Let the mountains flow down. That is,

"Let thy majesty be openly displayed, and let the elements, struck by the perception of it, yield and obey." (Psalm 18:11.)

This will appear more plainly from what immediately follows.

2. *As by the burning of a melting fire,* [429] the fire hath made the water to boil. All this might be read either in the future or in the subjunctive; as if he had said, "O Lord, if thou camest down, the nations would tremble at thy presence; thine enemies would instantly be melted away." But I think that the translation which I have given is more simple; for it is very certain that the Prophet here alludes to Mount Sinai, where the Lord openly revealed himself to the people. Hence we see also the gross absurdity of the division of this chapter; [430] since those events are related in support of that prayer which ought rather to have been placed at the beginning of the chapter. [431]

We have formerly seen that the prophets, when they relate that God assisted his people, bring forward an instance in the history of redemption. [432] Whenever therefore the prophets mention this history, they include all the benefits that were ever bestowed by God on his people; not only when he delivered them from the tyranny of Pharaoh, when he appeared to them in Mount Sinai, but also when, during forty years, he supplied them with all that was necessary in the wilderness, when he drove out their enemies, and led them into the possession of the land of Canaan. In a word, they include all the testimonies by which he formerly proved himself to be gracious to his people and formidable to his enemies.

He says that "the melting fire made the waters boil," because, contrary to custom, fire and lightning were mingled with violent showers; as if he had said that the fire of God melted the hardest bodies, and that the waters were consumed by its heat. To the same purpose is what he adds, that "the mountains flowed at his presence;" for he opened up a passage for his people through the most dreadful obstacles.

[428] "Afin que nous comprenions mieux ce qui nons est dit de luy." "That we may understand better what is said to us about him."

[429] "Comme par feu ardent qui fait fondre." "As by a burning fire that melteth."

[430] Calvin alludes to the fact, that, in the Hebrew Bible, the last verse of chapter 63 corresponds to what usually is the first verse of chapter 64. For the convenience of the reader, I have exchanged the author's arrangement for that which is followed in the English version. — Ed.

[431] "I have followed our common version, the LXX., Vulgate, and Syriac, in departing from the Masoretic division of the chapters, according to which the words ('O that thou wouldst,' etc.) are very improperly made to conclude chapter 63." — Henderson.

[432] "En l'histoire de la deliverance d'Egypte." "In the history of the deliverance from Egypt."

3. *Terrible things which we did not look for.* He says that the Israelites saw what they did not at all expect; for, although God had forewarned them, and had given them experience of his power in many ways, yet that alarming spectacle of which he speaks goes far beyond our senses and the capacity of the human mind.

4. *From of old they have not heard.* This verse confirms what has been already said, that believers do not here ask anything strange or uncommon, but only that God may shew himself to be to them what he formerly shewed himself to be to the fathers, and that he may continue to exercise his kindness, and that, since he has been wont to assist his people, and to give them undoubted tokens of his presence, he may not cease in future to cause his strength and power to shine forth more and more brightly. He represents believers as praying to God in such a manner that they strengthen themselves by the remembrance of the past, and betake themselves; with greater courage to God's assistance.

Eye hath not seen a God besides thee. The Prophet's design unquestionably is, to celebrate God's immense goodness, by relating the numerous benefits which he bestowed upon his people in ancient times; and this kind of praise is highly magnificent, when, rising to rapturous admiration, of them, he exclaims that there is no God besides him, and that those things which the Lord has carried into effect for the sake of his people are unheard-of and uncommon. But there are two ways in which these words may be read, for {אלהים} (*elohim*) may either be in the accusative or in the vocative case. "O Lord, no one hath seen besides thee what thou doest for them that wait for thee." But another reading is more generally approved, "No one hath ever seen or ever heard of such a God." Yet in this reading we must supply the particle of comparison, as; for otherwise the sentence would be incomplete. The verb {יעשה} (*yagnaseh*) is put absolutely, "No ear hath heard, and no eye hath seen, such a God as doeth such things." And thus God is distinguished from idols, from which superstitious men imagine that they obtain all good things; for they are the mere inventions of men, and can do neither good nor harm, seeing that God bestows on his worshippers benefits of every kind.

Paul appears to explain this passage differently, and to torture it to a different purpose, and even quotes it in different words, that is, because he followed the Greek version. (1 Corinthians 2:9.) In this respect the Apostles were not squeamish; for they paid more attention to the matter than to the words, and reckoned it enough to draw the attention of the reader to a passage of Scripture, from which might be obtained what they taught. As to the addition which Paul appears to have made of his own accord, "Nor hath entered into the heart of man what God hath prepared for them that love him," he did so for the purpose of explanation; for he added nothing that does not fully agree with the Prophet's doctrine.

That we may understand better how thoroughly he agrees with the Prophet, we must understand his design. In that passage he treats of the

doctrine of the Gospel, which he demonstrates to surpass the capacity of the human understanding; for it contains knowledge that is widely different and far removed from the perception of our flesh, and, in short, is "hidden wisdom," so that Paul is justly led to view it with astonishment. And as the Prophet, when he takes into consideration the wonderful acts of God's kindness, exclaims, like one who is lost in amazement, that nothing like this was ever heard of; so, in the most excellent of all benefits, namely, that in which Christ is offered to us by the Gospel, we may exclaim in the same manner, "O Lord, what thou bestowest on thy people exceeds all the capacity of the human mind: no eye, no ear, no senses, no mind can reach such loftiness." Thus Paul applies this passage admirably to his reasoning, and does not make an improper use of the statement made by the Prophet when he elevates above the world that peculiar grace which God bestows on his Church.

There remains but one difficulty, namely, that Paul applies to spiritual blessings what the Prophet here says about blessings of a temporal nature. But we may say that Isaiah here looks merely at the cause of God's benefits, though he has in his eye the condition of the present life; for all the benefits that we receive from God, for the sake of food and nourishment, are proofs of his fatherly kindness toward us; and it is the peculiar excellence of faith, to rise from visible favors to those which are invisible. Although therefore the Prophet appears to speak of external deliverance and other benefits of this life, yet he rises higher, and looks chiefly at those things which belonged especially to the people of God. What stupidity would it be, if, while we enjoy God's benefits, we did not consider the fountain itself, that is, his fatherly kindness! Ordinary favors are enjoyed indiscriminately by the good and the bad; but that favor with which he embraces us belongs especially to citizens. The consequence is, that we do not merely observe those things which fall under the senses of men, but contemplate the cause itself. Although therefore neither eyes nor ears reach so far as to comprehend the grace of adoption, by which the Lord testifies that he is our Father, yet he reveals it by the testimony of his Spirit.

It is even probable that the Prophet, when he spoke of a particular instance of God's kindness, was elevated, by means of it, to a general reflection; for, in considering God's works, it was frequent and customary for good men to pass from a single instance to the whole class. In that way might this single but remarkable instance of the divine goodness raise the mind of the Prophet to so high a pitch as to meditate on that infinite abundance of blessings which is laid up for believers in heaven. We even see clearly that this commendation includes the gracious covenant by which God adopted the children of Abraham into the hope of eternal life. (Genesis 17:7.) What has been said amounts to this: "Seeing that the goodness and power of God are so great, we have no reason to distrust him; but we ought to place our confidence in him, so as to hope that he will assuredly assist us." And such

is the design of those excellent benefits which are here mentioned by the Prophet.

5. *Thou hast met.* He proceeds with the same subject; for the people deplore their hard lot, that they feel no alleviation in their adversity, although formerly God was wont to stretch out the hand to the fathers. Believers, therefore, speak in this manner: "Thou wast wont to meet our fathers; now thy face is turned away from us; and thou appearest to be irreconcilable:, because we gain nothing by calling on thee. Whence comes this diversity, as if thy nature had been changed, and thou wert now different from what thou hast been?" They next add, and make an acknowledgment, that they are punished justly, because "they have sinned." I have formerly stated that nothing is better in adversity than to remember God's benefits, and not only those which we have ourselves experienced, but likewise those which are related in Scripture; for we cannot be armed by a stronger shield against temptations of every kind.

This verse, in my opinion, is inaccurately explained by those who think that we ought to read those words as closely connected, *Him that rejoiceth and doeth righteousness,* as if he had said, "Thou hast met them that willingly serve thee, and whose highest pleasure is to do what is right." I think that rejoicing denotes here those who were glad in prosperity; for at that time the people were in sadness and mourning. There is an implied contrast. "Formerly thou wast wont to meet the fathers, before they were distressed by any affliction, and to cheer them by thy approach; now thou art far distant, and permittest us to languish in mourning and grief."

In thy ways they remembered thee. In accordance with what he has now said, he adds that they "remembered God," because they enjoyed his present grace, and felt that he was the author and director of their salvation; and so by "the ways of God," he means prosperity; either that in this way he was near to them, when he treated them softly and gently as his children, or because God is by nature inclined to acts of kindness. But since he said that God was wont to "meet him that doeth righteousness," the "remembrance" may relate to the practice of piety, that is, that they devoted themselves earnestly to the worship of God; and so it will be an explanation of the former clause, for the prophets frequently confirm by a variety of expressions what they have formerly said. To "remember" God, is to be captivated by the pleasant remembrance of him, so that we shall desire nothing more, and to place all our happiness in him. There is nothing that delights us more than the remembrance of the mercy of God; and, on the other hand, if we feel that God is angry, the mention of him fills us with alarm.

And we have sinned. The reason is assigned; for, when they find that God is so unlike what he formerly was, they do not murmur against him, but throw all the blame on themselves. Let us learn from this, that we ought never to think of the chastisements which the Lord inflicts, without at the same time calling to mind our sins, that we may confess that we are justly

punished, and may acknowledge our guilt.

In them is perpetuity. In this passage {עולם} (*gnolam*) denotes nothing else than "long duration;" but it may refer either to "sins" or to "the ways of the Lord." To sins it may refer in this way, "Though we obstinately persisted in our sins, and deserved that thou shouldst destroy us a thousand times, yet hitherto we have been saved by thy mercy." If we understand it to relate to "the ways of the Lord," it will assign the reason why the people did not perish, because "the ways of the Lord" are steadfast and perpetual, and his mercy never comes to an end; and that meaning appears to me to agree best with this passage. Some supply the words, that "the age," or "perpetuity," is founded on the ways of the Lord. But I prefer to take the words in their literal acceptation, as when David says that the Lord "is not angry but for a moment," (Psalm 30:5,) that he is easy to be reconciled, and always compassionate; for his anger is not suddenly kindled, or with immoderate rage, after the manner of men, but he is unchangeable in benevolence and favor.

And we shall be saved, or, *we have been saved* We have not yet got at the whole of the Prophet's statement; for he says that the people "are saved," although they had been led into captivity, as into a grave, and deplored their calamity. On that account I consider the preterite to be put for the future, for it is rather a wish or a prayer than an affirmation. Nor do the saints boast that they have obtained salvation, but, deploring their misery, they betake themselves to God's everlasting mercy; and consequently, they praise that which they wish, and not that which they have already obtained.

6. *We have all been as the unclean.* The believers go on in their complaint; for they deplore their condition, because God appears to take no account of them. Hebrew writers are not agreed as to the meaning of the words {בגד} {עדים} (*beged gniddim.*) [433] Yet it is certain that it denotes something which is vile and worthless, and which, on account of its filthiness, stinks in the noses of men. But here two things ought to be observed; first, that believers confess their guilt, and are justly punished for it; and, secondly, that they nevertheless complain of the severity of the punishments which they endure, not to blame God, but to move him to compassion; just as a culprit, when he endeavors to mitigate the severity of a judge, lays before him his own distresses and calamities. Some commentators torture this passage, by alleging that the Prophet, when he speaks of the pollutions of sins, describes all Jews without exception, though there still remained some of them who were sincere worshippers of God. But there are no good grounds for this; for the Prophet does not speak of individuals, but of the whole body, which, being trodden under foot by all men, and subjected to the utmost

[433] "Vitringa and Gessenius dwell with great zest and fullness on the strict sense of {{בגר {עדים} (beged gniddim.) Some understand the comparison with withered leaves as a part of the description of their sin, while others apply it to their punishment. The first hypothesis is favored by the difference of the tenses; the last by the parallelism of the clauses. It is probable, however, that here, as in chap. 1:4, the two things run together in the writer's mind, and that no refined distinction as to this point was intended." — Alexander.

indignity, he compares to a filthy garment.

There are some who frequently quote this passage, in order to prove that so far are our works from having any merit in them, that they are rotten and loathsome in the sight of God. But this appears to me to be at variance with the Prophet's meaning, who does not speak of the whole human race, but describes the complaint of those who, having been led into captivity, experienced the wrath of the Lord against them, and therefore, acknowledged that they and their righteousnesses were like a filthy garment. And first, he exhorts them to a confession of their sin, that they may acknowledge their guilt; and next, that they should nevertheless ask pardon from God, the manner of obtaining which is, that, while we complain that we are wretched and distressed, we at the same time acknowledge that we are justly punished for our sins.

And we all fade as a leaf. This is a very beautiful comparison, which shews that men utterly fade and decay when they feel that God is angry with them; as is admirably described in Psalm 90:6; 103:16 [434] Justly, therefore, are we compared to leaves; for "our iniquities, like the wind, carry us away."

7. *There is none that calleth on thy name.* He confirms what was formerly said; for he exhorts believers, even though God's punishment of them appears to be severe, still to believe that they deserve such a punishment. Heinous sins are mentioned by him; and though it would be tedious to go over all of them in detail, he points out the fountain itself, and says that the worship of God is neglected. Under the word "calleth on," he includes, as is customary in Scripture, the whole worship of God; for the most important part of God's worship is to "call upon" him, and to testify our confidence in him. Prayers and supplications, undoubtedly, were always practiced among them; but, because the heart was far removed, he reckons all pretended ceremonies as of no value.

Or that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee. He now explains more clearly the former clause, by saying that no one earnestly applies his mind, or gives his endeavor to seek God, but that all are consumed and wasted away through their own slothfulness. And first, he shews that nothing is more desirable than to be perfectly joined to God; for, when we are alienated from him, everything must go ill with us. We are indolent and sluggish by nature; and therefore we need to have spurs applied to us. Seeing that by nature we indulge our slothfulness, we must listen to the advice of the Prophet so as not to become utterly stupid; for, otherwise he in his turn will reject us, or contemptuously drive us away. The Prophet describes the miserable condition of the people, in which there was no desire to seek God, and no means were used to stir up the heart to godliness.

Thou hast made us to languish. They again complain that they are overwhelmed by the severity of distress, and obtain from God no alleviation; for Isaiah asserts these things in the name of the whole people, and prays to

[434] Commentary on Isaiah, vol. 3, p. 210.

God not to permit them any longer to languish amidst so great miseries.

8. *And now, O Jehovah.* After having complained of their miseries, by which they were almost overwhelmed, they now more openly ask pardon from God and a mitigation of their distresses, and with greater boldness plead with God that still they are his children. Adoption alone could encourage them to cherish favorable hopes, that they might not cease to rely on their Father, though overwhelmed by the load of afflictions. And this order should be carefully observed; for, in order that we may be truly humbled in our hearts, we need to be cast down, and laid low, and almost crushed. But when despair seizes us, we must lay hold on this altar of consolation, that, "since God has been pleased to elect us to be his children, we ought to expect salvation from him, even when matters are at the worst." Thus, with a view to the gracious covenant, the Israelites affirm that they are the children of God, in order that they may experience his fatherly kindness, and that his promise may not be made void.

We are the clay, and thou our potter. By means of a comparison they magnify the grace of God, and acknowledge that they were formed of despicable clay; for they do not seek the ground of superiority in themselves, but in their origin celebrate the mercy of God, who out of mean and filthy clay determined to create children to himself.

We all are the work of thy hands. Of the same import as the former is this second clause, in which God is called the Creator, and his people are called the work of his hands; because to God alone they ascribe all that they are and all that they have. This is true gratitude; for, so long as men advance the smallest claim to anything as their own, God is defrauded of his right. Now, Isaiah speaks not of the ordinary creation of men, but of regeneration, on account of which believers are especially called "the work of God;" as we have frequently stated in the exposition of other passages: [435] Here they acknowledge a remarkable act of God's kindness, in having elected them to be his people, and adorned them with benefits so numerous and so great.

9. *Be not angry, O Jehovah, beyond measure.* [436] The people pray that the severity of punishment and the fierceness of the wrath of God may be abated; not that God goes beyond measure, but because they would be altogether overwhelmed, if he should choose to act toward them with the utmost strictness of justice. They therefore ask a mitigation of punishment; as Jeremiah also says, "Chasten me, O Lord, but in judgment," (Jeremiah 10:24,) that is, moderately; for he draws a contrast between "judgment" and "wrath;" as it is elsewhere said that God chastises us "by the hand of man," (2 Samuel 7:14,) because he does not put forth the power of his hand to punish us, lest we should be utterly destroyed.

[435] Commentary on Isaiah, vol. 2, pp. 26, 83, 121, 264; vol. 3, pp. 132, 318, 338.

[436] "'Be not angry, oh Jehovah, to extremity.' The common version of {{עד {מאד}} (gnad meod) (very sore) fails to reproduce the form of the original expression, as consisting of a preposition and a noun. This is faithfully conveyed in Lowth's version, (to the uttermost,) and still more in Henderson's, (to excess;) although the latter is objectionable as suggesting the idea of injustice or moral wrong, which is avoided in the version above given." — Alexander.

Neither remember iniquity for ever. It deserves notice that they do not absolutely shrink from the judgment of God, or pray that they may wholly escape from it, but present themselves to be corrected, so as not to faint under the strokes. And this is the reason why they desire to have the remembrance of their iniquities blotted out; for, if God do not mercifully pardon them, there will be no end of the chastisements.

We all are thy people. The Prophet repeats what he said a little before, that God elected the family of Abraham; because the best ground for the confident expectation of obtaining pardon was, that God, who is true to his promises, cannot east away those whom he had once elected. By employing the word all, he does not speak of each individual, as I formerly remarked, but includes the whole body of the Church. Although the greater part had withdrawn through wicked revolt, yet still it was true that the Jews were God's peculiar people; and this prayer was offered, not for every one of them without distinction, but only for the children of God who were still left. [437] The people do not plead their own merits before God, but betake themselves to the covenant of free grace, by which they had been adopted. This is the sure and only refuge of believers, this is the remedy for all evils; and that is the reason why Moses and the other prophets repeat it so frequently. (Exodus 32:13.)

10. *The cities of thy holiness.* The Church again recounts her miseries, that she may move God to mercy and obtain pardon. She says that the cities have been reduced to "a wilderness;" and, for the sake of amplification, adds that "Zion is a desert;" because it was the royal residence, in which God wished that men should call upon him. She adds also Jerusalem, in which Zion was; for it appeared to be shameful that a city, which God had consecrated to himself, should be ruined and destroyed by enemies.

She calls them "cities of holiness," because, as the Lord had sanctified a people, so he also wished that the cities, and even the whole country, should be consecrated to himself. Seeing, therefore, that the cities were dedicated to God, they are justly called "cities of his holiness;" for in them God reigned, and men called upon him. In the same manner we may at the present day give the appellation of "cities of God's holiness" to those which, laying aside superstitions, worship him in a sincere and right manner.

11. *The house of our sanctuary and of our glory.* [438] It is called "the sanctuary of the people" in a different sense from that in which it is called "the sanctuary of God;" for, being the testimony of a sacred union between God and the people, it is often called "God's holy house;" that is, because it corresponds to his holiness. But now, in a passive sense, believers call it "their sanctuary," because from it they must seek their sanctification.

This is more plainly confirmed by the words, "of our glory." They ac-

[437] "Mais seulement pour la petite troupe des fideles." "But only for the small company of believers."

[438] "Our holy and our beautiful house." — (Eng. Ver.) "Our house of holiness and beauty." — Alexander.

knowledge that they have nothing in which they ought to glory, except the temple, in which God wished to be adored and worshipped. And yet we see that this glorying was often without foundation, and for that reason was reproved by Jeremiah,

"Trust not in words of falsehood, saying, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, are we." (Jeremiah 7:4.)

But while the glorying of those who were proud and insolent on account of empty titles was without foundation, yet true and well-grounded was the glorying of those who embraced with the heart the Lord's ordinance, and, relying on the testimony of his word, knew that they dwelt under the shadow of him who had reared for himself a constant dwelling-place in the midst of them; for the temple was built by the command of the Lord, so that the Jews might justly glory in having God for the protector of their salvation.

In which our fathers praised thee. Because the worship of God was at that time corrupted and adulterated, and almost all had revolted to superstition and ungodliness, for this reason he mentions not the present but the former age. As if he had said, "Though we have not rendered to thee such worship as we ought to have rendered, yet this is the temple in which our fathers worshipped thee in purity; wilt thou permit it to be profaned and destroyed? Will not this disgrace recoil on thyself, since it relates to the worship of thy name?" Here the Jews say nothing about their life, and bring forward no excuses, and rather confess their guilt, but offer their worship to God, that he may be mindful of his covenant, and not allow his promises to be made void. This example ought to be imitated by all believers. The word "praise" denotes thanksgiving; as if he had said, "In that temple, the melancholy ruins of which draw forth mourning and tears from all believers, the praises of God at one time resounded, when he treated his people with kindness and gentleness. [439]

12. *Wilt thou restrain thyself for these things, O Jehovah?* The people strengthen themselves by assured confidence, that God will not permit his glory to be trampled under foot, though men provoke him by innumerable transgressions. This can yield no consolation of any kind to hypocrites, but relates solely to those who are moved by a true sense of the mercy of God. Such persons believe and are fully persuaded, though death threaten them, that God will nevertheless have regard to his own glow, and will at least be gracious to the remnant, that the seed may not perish.

And wilt thou afflict us beyond measure? [440] He shews that it is impossible for God not to be mindful of his mercy; for "he cannot deny himself." (2 Timothy 2:13.) But our salvation is connected with his glory. This ought

[439] "They press him closer still, and make use of an argument which was most likely to affect him. The temple wherein our pious fathers praised thee, the beautiful sanctuary in which thy honor used to dwell, is burnt with fire; the precious materials it was made of are nothing but rubbish and dust." — White.

[440] "That is, Canst thou hold out against so many moving considerations? Is it possible that thou canst behold thy children in chains, thy city in ruins, thy temple a heap of stones, and not be prevailed on to pity and put an end to our great afflictions?" — White.

to be carefully observed; for, after having spoken of the glory of God, he adds, "Thou wilt not afflict us beyond measure." The Lord will therefore restrain his chastisements; for his glory, which he cannot disregard, is deeply involved in our deliverance from death. To this prayer, therefore, let us betake ourselves whenever we are attacked by our enemies; not in the manner of hypocrites, (who haughtily boast of the glory of God, of which they have no experience whatever,) but with repentance and faith, that we may actually obtain the fruit of that glory.

Chapter 65

CHAPTER 65.

Isaiah 65:1-25

1. I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name.

1. Patefeci me iis qui non interrogabant, inventus sum ab ils qui non quaerebant me; dixi, Ecce ego, ecce ego, ad gentem quae non invocabat nomen meum.

2. I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts;

2. Expandi quotidie manus meas ad populum rebellem, gradientes via non bona post cogitationes suas.

3. A people that provoketh me to anger continually to my face; that sacrificeth in gardens, and burneth incense upon altars of brick;

3. Populus qui me irritat semper in faciem meam, qui sacrificat in hortis, et suffitum facit super lateres.

4. Which remain among the graves, and lodge in the monuments, which eat swine's flesh, and broth of abominable things is in their vessels;

4. Qui manent in sepulchris, in desertis pernoctant, qui comedunt carnem suillam, et jus pollutorum in vasis eorum.

5. Which say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou. These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day.

5. Qui dicunt, Mane apud to, ne accedas ad me, quia sanctificarem to, (vel, sanctior sum quam tu;) isti fumus in furore meo, ignis ardens tota die.

6. Behold, it is written before me: I will not keep silence, but will recompense, even recompense into their bosom,

6. Ecce scriptum est coram me; non tacebo, quin reddam et rependam in

sinum eorum.

7. Your iniquities, and the iniquities of your fathers together, saith the LORD, which have burned incense upon the mountains, and blasphemed me upon the hills: therefore will I measure their former work into their bosom.

7. Iniquitates vestrae et iniquitates patrum vestrorum simul, dicit Iehova. Quia suffitum fecerunt in montibus, et super comes probro me affecerunt, ideo remetiar opus eorum vetustum in sinum eorum.

8. Thus saith the LORD, As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, Destroy it not; for a blessing is in it: so will I do for my servants' sakes, that I may not destroy them all.

8. Sic dicit Iehova, Quemadmodum si quis inveniat mustum in botro, et dieat, Ne perdas illud, quoniam est benedictio in eo; ita faciam propter servos meos, ut non perdam totum.

9. And I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of my mountains: and mine elect shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there.

9. Et educam ex Iaeob semen, et ex Iuda haeredem montium meorum; et haereditate obtinebunt eam eleeti mei, et servi mei illic habitabunt.

10. And Sharon shall be a fold of flocks, and the valley of Achor a place for the herds to lie down in, for my people that have sought me.

10. Et erit Saron habitaeulum pecudum, et vallis Achor ad accubitum armenti, populo meo qui quaesiverunt me.

11. But ye are they that forsake the LORD, that forget my holy mountain, that prepare a table for that troop, and that furnish the drink offering unto that number.

11. At vos desertores Iehovae, qui obliviseimini montes sanctitatis meae; qui paratis exereitui mensam, et impletis numero libamen.

12. Therefore will I number you to the sword, and ye shall all bow down to the slaughter: because when I called, ye did not answer; when I spake, ye did not hear; but did evil before mine eyes, and did choose that wherein I delighted not.

12. Itaque numerabo vos ad gladium, et omnes in caedem corruetis; eo quod vocavi, nec respondistis; loquutus sum, nec audivistis; fecistisque malum in oculis meis; et in quibus voluptatem non cepi, elegistis.

13. Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty: behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed:

13. Propterea sic dicit Dominus Iehova, Ecce servi mei comedent, et vos esurietis. Ecce servi mei bibent, et vos sitietis. Ecce servi mei laetabuntur, et vos erubeseetis.

14. Behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shalt cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit.

14. Ecce servi mei jubilabunt prae hilaritate cordis, et vos clamabitis prae dolore cordis, et prae angustia spiritus ululabitis.

15. And ye shall leave your name for a curse unto my chosen: for the Lord GOD shall slay thee, and call his servants by another name:

15. Et relinquetis nomen vesstrum in execrationem electis meis; interficiet to Dominus Iehova, et servos suos vocabit nomine alio.

16. That he who blesseth himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God of truth; and he that sweareth in the earth shall swear by the God of truth; because the former troubles are forgotten, and because they are hid from mine eyes.

16. Qui benedixerit sibi in terra, benedicet se in Deo veraci; et qui juraverit in terra, jurabit in Deo veraei; quia oblivioni traditae sunt afflictiones priores, et absconditae ab oculis meis.

17. For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.

17. Quia ecce ego creabo eralos novos, et terrain novato; prior um non erit memoria, neque in cor ascendent.

18. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy.

18. Sed gaudete et exultate in perpetuum iis quae ego creo. Nam ecce ego creo Ierusalem exultationem, et populum ejus gaudium.

19. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying.

19. Et exultabo in Ierusalem, et gaudebo in populo meo; nec audietur in ea amplius vox fletus et vox clamoris.

20. There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed.

20. Non erit illic amplius infans dierum nec senex qui non impleat dies suos. Quoniam filius centum annorum morietur adolescens, et qui peccat filius centum annorum maledicetur.

21. And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them.

21. Ædificabunt domos, et inhabitabunt; plantabunt vites, et comedent fructum earum.

22. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands.

22. Non ædificabunt ut alius inhabitet; non plantabunt ut alius comedat; quoniam secundum dies arboris, dies populi mei; et opus manuum suarum perpetuabunt electi mei.

23. They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the LORD, and their offspring with them.

23. Non laborabunt frustra, nec parient in terrore; quoniam semen benedictorum Iehovae erunt et soboles eorum cure ipsis.

24. And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and

while they are yet speaking, I will hear.

24. Et erit, antequam clament ego exaudiam; adhuc illis loquentibus ego audiam.

25. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the LORD.

25. Lupus et agnus pascentur simul; et leo sicut bos comedet paleam; et serpenti pulvis erit panis suus. Non affligent, neque nocebunt in universo monte sancto meo, dicit Iehova.

1. *I have manifested myself.* The Prophet now passes on to another doctrine; for he shews that God has good reason for rejecting and casting off the Jews. It is because they have profited nothing by either warnings or threatenings to be brought back from their errors into the right way. But that they might not think that the Lord's covenant would on that account be made void, he adds that he will have another people which formerly was no people, and that where he was formerly unknown, his name Shall be well known and highly celebrated. The Jews looked on this as monstrous, and reckoned it to be altogether inconsistent with the covenant which the Lord made with Abraham, (Genesis 17:7,) if such a benefit were extended to any others than his posterity. But the Prophet intended to strip them of the foolish confidence of imagining that God was bound to the posterity of Abraham; for the Lord had not restricted himself to them but on an absolute condition, and if this were violated by them, they would be deprived, like covenant-breakers and traitors, of all the advantage derived from the covenant. Nor was this promise made to Abraham alone, and to those who were descended from him, but to all who should be ingrafted by faith into his family. But it will be more convenient to begin with the second verse, in which he explains the cause of the rejection, that we may more fully understand the Prophet's design. [441]

2. *I have stretched out my hands.* He accuses the Jews, and complains of their ingratitude and rebellion; and in this manner he proves that there is no reason why they should say that the Lord does them wrong if he bestow his grace on others. The Jews conducted themselves proudly and insolently toward God, as if they had been elected through their own merit. On account of their ingratitude and insolence the Lord rejects them as unworthy, and complains that to no purpose did he "stretch out his hands" to draw and bring them back to him.

By "the stretching out of the hands" he means the daily invitation. There are various ways in which the Lord "stretches out his hands to us;" for he draws us to him, either effectually or by the word. In this passage it must relate chiefly to the word. The Lord never speaks to us without at the same

[441] The remainder of our author's exposition of the first verse will be found at commentary on verse 1. — Ed.

time "stretching out his hand" to join us to himself, or without causing us to feel, on the other hand, that he is near to us. He even embraces us, and shews the anxiety of a father, so that, if we do not comply with his invitation, it must be owing entirely to our own fault. The heinousness of the guilt is greatly aggravated by long continuance, that, during a long succession of ages, God did not cease to send one Prophet after another, and even, as he says elsewhere, to rise early in the morning and continue the same care till the evening. (Jeremiah 7:13; 11:7; 35:14.)

To a rebellious people. First, he calls them "rebellious" or disobedient, but immediately afterwards he declares what is the nature of that rebellion, namely, that the people *walk after their own thoughts.* Nothing is more displeasing to God than for men to be {αὐθάδεις} "self-willed," (2 Peter 2:10;) that is, devoted to their own inclinations; for he commands us to surrender our own judgment, that we may be capable of receiving the true doctrine. The Lord therefore testifies that it was not owing to him that he did not retain and continue to exercise towards them his wonted favor, but that they alienated themselves through their own madness, because they chose to abide by their own natural inclinations rather than to follow God as their leader.

Having pointed out the cause of this rejection, we must come to the calling of the Gentiles, who succeeded in the room of the Jews; for that is undoubtedly the subject treated in the first verse. The Lord had long ago foretold it by Moses, so that they ought not to have thought that there was anything new in this prediction.

"They have provoked me by that which is not God; they have moved me to anger by their vanities; and I also will provoke them by that which is not a people, by a foolish nation I will enrage them." (Deuteronomy 32:21.)

Finally, the Prophet now threatens the same thing which was afterwards foretold by Christ when that blinding was at hand.

"The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and shall be given to a nation which shall bring forth fruit." (Matthew 21:43.)

1. *To them that asked not.* [442] When he says that God manifested himself "to them that asked not," he shews that the Gentiles were anticipated by the grace of God, and that they brought no merit or excellence as an inducement to God to give it to them. This obviously agrees with that passage which we quoted, in which Moses calls them "a foolish nation." (Deuteronomy 32:21.) Thus, under a universal type, he describes what is the nature of men before the Lord anticipates them by his mercy; for they neither call on the Lord, nor seek him, nor think about him. And this passage ought to be carefully observed, in order to establish the certainty of our calling, which may be said to be the key that opens to us the kingdom of heaven; for by means of it peace and repose are given to our consciences, which would always be

[442] Calvin, having found it "convenient to begin with the second verse," now returns to the exposition of the first verse. — Ed.

in doubt and uncertainty if they did not rest on such testimonies. We see, therefore, that it did not happen accidentally or suddenly that we were called by God and reckoned to be his people; for it had been predicted long before in many passages. From this passage Paul earnestly contends for the calling of the Gentiles, and says that Isaiah boldly exclaims and affirms that the Gentiles have been called by God, because he spoke more clearly and loudly than the circumstances of Ms own time required. Here we see, therefore, that we were called by an eternal purpose of God long before the event happened.

Behold I, behold I. By repeating these words twice, he confirms still more the declaration that God hath manifested himself in so friendly a manner to foreign and heathen nations, that they do not doubt that he dwells in the midst of them. And, indeed, that sudden change needed to be confirmed, because it was difficult to be believed; although by that very novelty the Prophet intended to magnify the unexpected grace of God. The meaning may be thus summed up: "When the Lord shall have offered himself to the Gentiles, and they shall have been joined to the holy family of Abraham, there will be some Church in the world, after the Jews have been driven out." Now we see that all that is here predicted by the Prophet was fulfilled by the Gospel, by which the Lord actually offered and manifested himself to foreign nations. Whenever, therefore, this voice of the Gospel is sounded in our ears, or when we record the word of the Lord, let us know that the Lord is present, and offers himself, that we may know him familiarly, and may call on him boldly and with assured confidence.

3. *A people that provoketh me.* Here he describes and illustrates more largely in what respects the Jews were rebellious against God. It was because they had forsaken the command of God, and had polluted themselves by various superstitions. He had said a little before, (Isaiah 63:17,) that the Jews had estranged themselves from God, because they wandered after their inventions; and now he points out the fruit of that licentiousness, that, by giving a loose rein to their thoughts, they overturned the pure worship of God. And undoubtedly this is the origin of all superstitions, that men are delighted with their own inventions, and choose to be wise in their own eyes rather than restrain their senses in obedience to God. In vain do men bring forward their devotions, as they call them, and their good intentions, which God holds in such abhorrence and detestation that they who have followed them are guilty of breaking the covenant and deserting from their allegiance; for there is nothing which we ought to undertake of our own accord, but we ought to obey God when he commands. In a word, the beginning and perfection of lawful worship is a readiness to obey.

By the word "provoke" he describes the impudence of the people, who deliberately, as it were, provoked God, and had no reverence for his majesty so as to submit to his authority. And he heightens the description by saying, *To my face;* for since God may be said to be present and actually beheld by those whom he warns by his word, they sin more heinously, and are guilty

of greater impudence and rebellion, than those who never heard the word.

That sacrificeth in gardens, and offereth incense on bricks. He mentions the "gardens" which they had consecrated to their idols, and says that they provoked him by them. Some think that "bricks" are mentioned by way of contempt, and are indirectly contrasted with the altar on which alone God wished that they should sacrifice; and accordingly they think that here he mentions the roofs on which superstitious persons were wont to offer sacrifices; for they were made of "bricks." But I think that it means simply the altars which they had built for idols; for, although they were not without the plausible pretense of wishing to imitate that form of altar which God had prescribed, yet God abhorred it, because it was contrary to his word.

4. *Who dwell in the graves.* He enumerates other kinds of superstitions; and although, in consequence of its brevity, the description is obscure, yet we may easily learn from other passages what was the nature of them. For as necromancy was generally practiced among heathen nations, the Jews also consulted demons "in graves and deserts," instead of consulting God alone, which they ought to have done; and, as if they were seeking answers from the dead, they took pleasure in being deceived by the illusions of demons. [443] How solemnly the Lord had forbidden it, appears very clearly from Deuteronomy 18:10, 11, and other passages; and we have seen something of this kind in a former part of this book, (Isaiah 8:19.) In general we are taught that God demands nothing more than obedience, which he prefers to slain beasts and sacrifices. (1 Samuel 15:22.)

Who eat swine's flesh. Formerly he complained that the worship of God was polluted by strange inventions; and now he adds that they set aside every distinction, so that they do not distinguish between the clean and the unclean; and he brings forward a single instance, that they do not abstain from "swine's flesh." But it may be thought that this was a small matter. Very far from it; for we ought not to judge from our own opinion, but from that of the legislator, how heinous a sin it is; and nothing which the Lord has forbidden ought to be reckoned trivial. (Leviticus 11:7; Deuteronomy 14:8.) This related to the external profession of. faith, by which the Jews were in duty bound to testify how widely they differed from the pollution of the Gentiles. From that rule, therefore, which the Lord enjoins upon us, we must not swerve even a hair's breadth. [444]

5. *Remain by thyself.* [445] He points out extreme impiety in the Jews, who obstinately and rebelliously opposed God's worshippers, and refused to listen to any warnings. There is some hope of repentance, so long as we

[443] "Des esprits malins." "Of wicked spirits."

[444] "Non pas mesmes de l'espesseur d'une ongle." "Not even the thickness of a nail."

[445] "The literal translation is Approach to thyself;' and as this implies removal from the speaker, the essential meaning is correctly expressed, though in a very different form from the original, both by the Septuagint ({πόρ᾽ρω} {ἀπ} {᾽} {ἐμοῦ}) and by the Vulgate (Recede a me). The common English Version (Stand by thyself), and Henderson's improvement of it (Keep by thyself), both suggest an idea not contained in the original, namely, that of standing alone; whereas all that is expressed by the Hebrew phrase is the act of standing away from the speaker, for which Lowth has found the idiomatic equivalent (Keep to thyself.)" — Alexander.

lend an ear to warnings and reproofs; but if we reject them, our case is undoubtedly hopeless.

Though the words are apparently obscure, their meaning amounts to this, that hypocrites disdainfully and fiercely repel faithful advisers, because they either make false claims to holiness, or, on account of pride, do not suffer themselves to be reproved; for hypocrisy is never free from supercilious disdain and haughtiness. Let us not wonder, therefore, that those who are infected by this vice swell with insolent pretensions, and boast of their virtue and holiness, and value themselves more highly than all others; for Satan has blinded them to make an idle and ostentatious boast of what they call their devotions, and to despise the word of God.

Commentators think that this is a general statement; which reproves the Jews for refusing to submit to the prophets. But it appears to me that we ought to take into account a circumstance to which they do not attach sufficient weight, that this verse is in close and immediate connection with the preceding verses, and contains a sharp reproof of the Jews, for not only revolting from the true worship, but likewise following obstinately their own inventions, so as to turn with disdain from every one that did not flatter them; for that phrase, "Remain with thyself," means nothing else than "Away with thee!" as if they declared that they would have nothing to do with honest instructors. [446]

6. *Lo, it is written before me.* He alludes to the ordinary custom of judges, who keep before them in writing the processes of investigation regarding any matter, together with the testimonies, acts, and everything of that nature, in order that, when it shall be found necessary to make use of them, the guilt of the culprit may be easily proved; for we write those things which we wish to be remembered by posterity The Lord therefore testifies that these things can never fade into oblivion, because they have been written; for, although for a time he pass them over in silence, yet the wicked shall not escape unpunished, but shall at length feel that he is a righteous judge.

Hence we ought to learn that we must not abuse God's patience, because he bears with us long, and does not all at once stretch out his hand to punish us; for all our faults are nevertheless written before him, for which we must at length suffer punishment, if we do not repent. [447] True, indeed, the Lord has no need of writing as an aid to memory; but he makes use of this form of expression, that we may not think that he has forgotten anything, when he is slow in executing his judgments. Jeremiah even says expressly, that

"the sin of Judah is written with an iron pen and with the nail of a diamond."
(Jeremiah 17:1.)

To *recompense into the bosom* is a phrase frequently employed in Scripture; for men think either that their sins are concealed, or that they will not be

[446] "Avec ceux qui leur remonstrent choses pour leur salut." "With those whose serious warnings are intended for their salvation."

[447] "Si nous ne changeons de vie." "If we do not change our life."

called to account for them; but, hurried along by unbridled lust, or laying the blame on some other person, they drive fear to a distance from them. (Psalm 79:12; Jeremiah 32:18.) On this account the Lord threatens that he will "recompense into their bosom," that they may consider who is the judge with whom they have to do.

7. *Your iniquities and the iniquities of your fathers together.* Isaiah enlarges on that, which he had expressed briefly in the preceding verse; for he shews that the Jews are not now, for the first time, guilty of this treason, but that there is the ancient example of the fathers, in whose footsteps they closely follow. In like manner the Lord formerly complained that he had borne long with that people, and was at length wearied with them. He therefore describes the aggravated heinousness of the offense, by saying that the Jews follow the example of their fathers; as if he had said, "They are very bad eggs of bad crows;" for the more frequently and the more earnestly that men have been warned, so much the more must they be condemned for obstinacy, if they do not repent. Thus he shews that they disregarded warnings and threatenings, and persevered for many years in their baseness and impiety; that they may no longer bring forward any excuse or pretense, but, on the contrary, may know that they deserve severe punishment.

Here we see that the corruption which has flowed from the fathers is so far from being an excuse to the children, (as is alleged by ignorant persons, who commonly make use of this shield,) that, on the contrary, they draw down on themselves severer judgment. He adds {יחדו}, (*yachdcav*,) together. As if the Lord had said, that he gathers together, and, as it were, forms into a bundle, the crimes of the fathers and of the children, that he may at length punish them. Not that

"the son bears the iniquity of the father," (Ezekiel 18:20,)

and endures the punishment which the father deserved, but that, since they carry on the crimes of their fathers, they must be included and condemned in the same judgment, while obstinacy shews that their diseases are incurable.

Because they have offered incense on the mountains. He glances at one kind of sin, under which, by a figure of speech in which a part is taken for the whole, he describes also the rest of their sins; for he means by it the whole of the revolt by which the people withdrew from the true worship, and devoted and gave themselves up to strange gods. This is the utmost verge of iniquities; for, when the fear of God has been taken away, we can have nothing sound or healthy in us. Thus he points out the source of all evils, which ought to be the more diligently observed, because men are highly pleased with themselves, and think that they deserve great praise, when they worship God according to their own fancy, and do not understand that nothing is more abominable in the sight of God than pretended worship, which proceeds from human contrivance. Beyond all doubt, the people desired to be acceptable to God by "offering incense on the mountains;" but it is not from the purpose of

their mind, and from their intention, as they call it, that we must judge of their work. In preference to all men, we must listen to the voice of the Lord, who testifies that he is greatly dishonored, that we may not endeavor to defend ourselves by pleading our intention, which will render us doubly guilty before God.

Therefore I will measure back their ancient work. The word {ראשנה} (*rishonah*) may be explained in various ways, either "I will measure back with their antiquity," or, "in the first place," or "formerly," or, "from the beginning." But we must take into account the connection of the passage, from which the Prophet's meaning will be clearly seen. Having spoken a little before about the works of the fathers, he undoubtedly ridicules those who made them a bulwark. It is a slight and useless defense, and indeed it is idle to plead before God the practices of the fathers, that is, their long-continued corruption; for in this way we bring down on ourselves a heavier judgment. And yet many men are so intoxicated by this pretense, that they think that no objection can be brought against it, and even refuse to listen to anything else. [448] Antiquity, indeed, is highly venerable; but no man ought to value it so highly as to make the smallest diminution of the honor of God. This is a remarkable passage for convincing those who uphold superstitions by length of years, as if old established error ought to be accounted a law.

8. *Thus saith Jehovah.* Here the Prophet softens the preceding statement; for otherwise it would have been very hard to say that the iniquities of the fathers would be brought to remembrance in such a manner, that the Lord would destroy the fathers and the children along with them; and these things might strike believers with such horror as to lead them to think that their salvation was past all hope. We must therefore be carefully on our guard, and observe the reason why the Lord is angry with us; for he wishes to terrify us, so as to lead us to himself, and not so as to throw us into despair. For this reason he holds out hope to believers, that they may not lose courage; and, by exhibiting consolation, he encourages them to repentance. He confirms it by a comparison.

As if one found a grape in a cluster. As if a person who has determined to root out a vine that is inconvenient or injurious to him, and finds a fruit-bearing branch, shall spare it; so the Lord will refrain from tearing up those in which he shall find no strength or flavor. Formerly he complained that the people were useless, and even that they yielded bitter fruits. (Isaiah 5:2, 4, 7.) Isaiah retains the same comparison, but applies it in a different manner. "Though the people may be said to be an unfruitful and degenerate vine, yet there are still left some fruit-bearing branches which the Lord will not suffer to perish.

But this may be understood in two ways; either that the Lord will preserve his people for the sake of the elect, or that, when the reprobate are destroyed, he will rescue believers from destruction. There is a wide difference between

[448] "Et ne veulent ouir autre chanson." "And do not wish to hear any other song."

these two interpretations. As to the first, we know that the wicked are sometimes spared on account of good men, whom God does not wish to destroy or to involve in the same judgment, as various examples of Scripture sufficiently shew. The Lord would have spared Sodom, if he had found but ten good men in it. (Genesis 18:32.) All who sailed along with Paul, to the number of "two hundred and seventy-six," (Acts 27:37,) were "given to him" and rescued from shipwreck, that the power which He manifested in his servant might be more illustriously displayed. (Acts 27:24.) The Lord blessed the house of Potiphar, and made it to prosper in all things, for the sake of Joseph who was in his family. (Genesis 39:5.) There are other examples of the same kind, which every one will easily collect for himself.

But I approve more highly of the other interpretation, that the Lord will punish the sins of his people in such a manner as to have regard nevertheless to his own, and not to involve all universally in the same destruction. Nor does he mean only that believers shall be saved, but that a people shall be left amongst whom men shall call on his name. And the comparison ought to be carefully observed; for he shews that the remnant will be small, as compared with the multitude which was at that time, as has been already explained. (Isaiah 1:9.)

Now, as to believers being often punished along with the reprobate, let us not think that it is wrong; for the Lord will often find in each of us enough of blame to afflict and punish us. Besides, he wishes to instruct and arouse us by his chastisements; and seeing that we have been joined to a certain people, and, as it were, ingrafted into their body, we undoubtedly ought not to think it strange if we, who may be said to be diseased members, shall share in the same strokes and pains. Yet the Lord moderates the punishment, so as not to tear up by the roots the elect plants.

9. *And I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob.* He explains the preceding verse by other words, and shews that the Lord wishes to reserve for himself some "seed" that shall call upon him; for the Lord is wont to chastise his people in such a manner as to determine that the Church shall exist, in which his truth and the pure religion may be preserved, and which Paul for that very reason calls "the pillar and foundation of truth." (1 Timothy 3:15.) We must not, therefore, judge of the Church from the present condition of things, (for nothing in this world can be permanent,) but from the purpose of God, which will not suffer it to be overturned or destroyed. This ought to be carefully remembered by us, that we may not be terrified by any calamities or ruins, or by any hideous desolation of the Church.

And out of Judah the heir of my mountains. He gives the appellation of "heirs of the mountains" to those who, having returned from captivity, shall again inhabit their native land. Judea, as is well known, was a mountainous country. He again explains what might have appeared to be somewhat obscure.

And my elect shall possess it by inheritance. He means that the Jews

shall return to their original condition, that they may enjoy that country as their own inheritance, from which they had been driven out. Judea was soon afterwards reduced to the utmost desolation. The Lord testifies that this shall not be of long duration; and, in order to confirm it the more, he mentions in a compendious manner the covenant by which that land was destined for them, that they might possess it by the right of inheritance. Thus, although they were long in captivity, yet this word "inheritance" ought to arouse them to cherish the confident hope that they would at length regain the possession of it. But it ought to be observed that this grace is confined to the elect and true worshippers of God, that every one may not apply it to himself without distinction. [449]

10. *And Sharon shall be an abode of flocks.* By these figures he means nothing else than that the land, which was a desert, shall be again inhabited; for there is an implied comparison. "Although, in consequence of the banishment of her inhabitants into a distant country, she shall be forsaken and desolate, yet she shall at length be inhabited, so as to abound in flocks and herds, and have lands that are fertile and that are fit for pasture, and supply abundantly everything that is necessary for the food and support of men." Sharon was a place adapted to pasture, and so was Achor; but the former was adapted to flocks, and the latter to herds.

Here we see that the promises of God contain blessings not only of the future but also of the present life, that we may taste more and more his bounty and kindness; for by the latter [450] we are invited to the greater and more excellent blessings of the heavenly life. When the Lord extends his bounty to flocks and herds, this ought to confirm us the more and make us more certain of his fatherly care and anxiety about us; for if he pays attention to flocks which were created for our sake, much more will he supply us with all that is necessary

"for the life that now is, and for that which is to come."
(1 Timothy 4:8.)

Yet we must likewise keep in view the spiritual meaning (of which we have spoken formerly) that leads us from God's earthly blessing to Christ's spiritual kingdom, which the prophets shadow out under that image.

For my people. Here also he excludes the reprobate, who were not ashamed of glorying vainly and falsely of the name of God. Although they confidently boast of promises and sacraments, yet they have nothing in common with the children, and, having been shut out from all hope of God's favors, they receive the reward of their iniquity. By adding, *Who have sought me*, he

[449] "If it should please God to call the natural descendants of the patriarch in that land, and convert them in a body to the true faith, there would be an additional coincidence between the prophecy and the event, even in minor circumstances, such as we often find in the history of Christ. But if no such national restoration of the Jews to Palestine should ever happen, the extension of the true religion over that benighted region, which both prophecy and Providence encourage us to look for, would abundantly redeem the pledge which God has given to his people in this and other parts of Scripture." — Alexander.

[450] "Par les biens terriens." "By earthly blessings."

describes more plainly who are they that shall be partakers of these benefits, in order that, as has been already said, he may entirely cut off reprobates and hypocrites. The sure mark by which lambs are distinguished from kids, and lawful children from bastards, is to "seek" the Lord; for it is not enough to shelter ourselves under a name and title, but we must seek the Lord with a pure conscience, that we may cleave to him with the whole heart. (Deuteronomy 6:5.)

11. *But ye forsakers of Jehovah, who forget the mountain of my holiness.* That hypocrites may not abuse these promises, or think that what is said about the restoration of the people relates to them, he again addresses them by these words, and calls them "forsakers," [451] because they "have forgotten" Mount Zion; that is, have revolted from the true worship of God. By "the mountain of holiness" he denotes figuratively the rule of a holy life which had been laid down in the word of the Lord; for the temple had been built by the command of the Lord, that these men might call upon him; and likewise the altar on which the Lord wished that sacrifices should be offered. Thus those sacrifices and oblations were impure which were offered in other places, or to other gods, or in any way different from the strict observance of the ceremonies of the Law. It is not lawful for men to undertake anything at their own suggestion; for the Lord demands nothing but obedience, (1 Samuel 15:22,) and there is no obedience without faith; and there is no faith without the word, (Romans 10:17,) by which alone we are at liberty to inquire or think concerning God.

Who prepare a table for the army [452] He enumerates their superstitions. The word {גד} (*Gad*) is variously explained. Some think that it denotes Jupiter, or the star of Jupiter; and others that it denotes Fortune. Jerome translates the words, "Ye who spread a table for fortune;" for he thinks that it means prosperity. But I think it more probable that {גד} (*Gad*) means "a band," or "a troop," or even "an army;" and this agrees well with the etymology of the word and the context. One passage is especially worthy of notice, (Genesis 30:11,) in which Leah rejoices on account of the addition of children; for I think that the word which he employs, {בגד} (*begad*), ought to be understood as if she had said, "Now, I have plenty of children;" for she had many children before that time, and hence she gave the name {גד} (*Gad*) to her fifth son. Accordingly, I think that {גד} (*Gad*) ought to be interpreted, in this passage, as meaning "a troop," or "an army;" because their false gods were so numerous, that they could scarcely be numbered for multitude.

And fill an oblation to the number. To fill may here be taken in two

[451] "Et les appelle apostats." "And calls them apostates."

[452] "That prepare a table for that troop, (or, Gad.)" — Eng. Ver. "A table. A lectisternium the Romans called it. Gad and Meni were heathen deities, or perhaps two appellations of the same idol, according to the scriptural manner of expressing the same thing, in the same sentence, by its different names; so in Jeremiah 32:35, Baal and Moloch mean one false god. Gad, in Arabic, is Goodness. Meni denoted the Moon, from {מנה (manah), to number; whence {μὴν}, a month, and {μηνὴ}, the ancient Greek name for the moon." — Stock, who quotes Rosenmuller as his authority.

senses; either that they supplied everything largely and bountifully for the worship of idols; (for superstition has no limit or measure, and they who are niggardly in the worship of God very cheerfully spend all that they have for the sake of idols;) or that they passed by no idol to which they did not render their worship. I prefer the latter meaning; for idolaters do not think that they have done enough, if they do not give honor to each of the saints; and the more numerous the saints whom they have honored, they think that they will have better success. We have too great experience of this every day in the Papists.

By "number" he means the same thing as he formerly meant by "army;" for it is a repetition which is very customary among Hebrew writers. He means, therefore, that "a table is prepared," that is, sacrifice is offered, not to a single idol, but to a great number of idols; in order to shew clearly how grievous are the punishments which they have deserved.

12. *Therefore I will number you to the sword.* He alludes to the number of the gods; and the Lord declares that he will easily ascertain how numerous they are, for he "will number them to the sword." And hence we see that the Prophet, in the preceding verse, does not speak of the two planets, Jupiter and Mercury, as some think, but means that they were not satisfied with one God, and collected for themselves various idols. It is an idle conjecture that the word {מני} (*meni*) denotes Mercury, because {מנה} (*manah*) signifies "to number," and Mercury presided over numbers and merchants. [453] The design of the Prophet is manifest, who declares that the people "shall be numbered to the sword," because they delighted in a vast number of gods, and did not choose to rely on one God.

Because I called, and ye did not answer. He heightens the extent and heinousness of that treason, by saying that the Jews sinned through deliberate malice, and on purpose, rather than through ignorance. They had been often instructed and warned, but had disdainfully rejected all warnings, and consequently were far less excusable than others, to whom no prophets were sent; for although ignorance cannot be pleaded as an excuse by any man, yet much less can it be pleaded by the Jews and those to whom the word of God is proclaimed, and who, on that account, will be condemned and punished more severely than others.

I spake, and ye did not hear. He describes the manner of calling, namely, that he exhorted the people by the prophets; for by the word "speak" he twice repeats the same thing, as we have already stated to be the custom of Hebrew writers. To "hear" the Lord is to obey his word; for it would be a trivial matter to lend our ears, if we did not submit to the word; and it would then be with us as the proverb says, "They listen with the ears of an ass." [454] God wishes to be heard sincerely, and does not approve of a

[453] "Et que Mercure estoit le dieu des marchans qui out leurs livres de contes." "And because Mercury was the god of merchants, who have their account-books."

[454] "Comme aux asnes qui font signe d'oreilles." "As with asses that make a show of ears." Greek proverbs of the same kind are still more abundant. {Ὄνῳ} {τὶς} {ἔλεγε} {μῦθον·} {ὁ} {δὲ} {τὰ}

pretended hearing; and he shews how it came that they rejected the calling. It was because they shut their ears to the doctrine of the prophets; for the beginning of obedience is to bring a desire to learn.

And ye did evil before mine eyes. The phrase, "before mine eyes," is of the same import as "to my face;" a mode of expression which he made use of a little before. (Verse 3.) All men, indeed, sin "before the eyes" of the Lord, and none can withdraw from his presence. But in a peculiar sense we are said to sin "before his eyes," when, having been called by him, we do not dread his presence; for he approaches nearer to those whom he calls by the prophets, and, so to speak, exhibits himself as present to them. Far more detestable, therefore, and worthy of severe chastisements, is the impiety of those who, laying aside all shame, despise and scorn God when he draws near to call and invite them.

And chose the things in which I took no pleasure. From this concluding clause of the verse it is evident that they are condemned, not for gross crimes, but for foolish devotions, by which they corrupted the worship of God. Although they zealously devoted themselves to sacrifices contrived by themselves, because they thought that in this way they would become entitled to the favor of God; yet he declares that he abhors their wicked practices. It is not permitted that any person shall have a free choice to follow whatever he thinks fit, but all must observe what God approves, and must not turn aside from it in any way whatever. Now we see that it was not a fault peculiar to a single age that men should follow their own caprice in the worship of God, and should adore their own inventions instead of God; but whatever "pleasure" men "take in these things," the Lord solemnly declares that he condemns and abhors them.

13. and **14.** *Behold, my servants shall eat.* Here also the Prophet more deafly distinguishes between hypocrites, who held a place in the Church, and the true and lawful children; for, although all without distinction were called children, yet he skews that many shall be disowned as not belonging to the family, and that they who proudly and haughtily exalted themselves, under the name of the people of God, shall be disappointed of their hope, which is vain and false. We must carefully observe the highly emphatic contrast between "the servants of God," and those who falsely pretend to his name; for he shews that empty titles, and false boasting, or vain confidence, shall avail them nothing.

Shall eat, shall drink. By these words he denotes happiness and a prosperous condition of life; as if he had said, that he will take care that believers shall not be in want of anything. But the Lord promises to his servants something different from what he actually bestows; for they often "are hungry and thirsty," (1 Corinthians 4:11,) while the wicked abound in enjoyments of every kind, and abuse them for luxury and intemperance. But it ought

{ὦτα} {ἐκίνει} "One told a story to an ass, and he pricked up his ears." {Ονος} {λύρας} {ἀκοῦων} {κίνει} {τὰ} {ὦτα} "An ass, listening to a lyre, pricks up his ears." — Ed.

to be observed, that the kingdom of Christ is here described under figures; for otherwise we could not understand it. Accordingly, the Prophet draws comparisons from earthly kingdoms, in which, when the people abound in wealth and enjoy comforts of every kind, there is a visible display of the blessing of God from which we may judge of his fatherly love.

But since it is not proper that good men should have their minds engrossed by earthly advantages, it is enough that some taste of those advantages should support their faith. And if they are sometimes oppressed by hunger, yet, being satisfied with a moderate portion of good, they nevertheless acknowledge that God is their Father, and that he is kind to them, and in their poverty have greater riches than kings and nobles. On the other hand, the wicked, whatever may be their abundance of good things, cannot enjoy them with a good conscience, and therefore are the most wretched of all men. The Prophet, therefore, has in his eye the right use of the gifts of God; for they who serve God in a right manner receive, as children from the hand of a father, all that is necessary for this life, while others, like thieves and profane persons, take violent possession of it. Wicked men are never satisfied with any amount of wealth, however great; they have continual fear and trembling, and their conscience can never be at ease.

The Lord, therefore, does not promise here what he does not actually bestow; and this happiness must not be estimated by the outward condition of things. This is still more evident from what follows, where he speaks of joy and thanksgiving. The Prophet undoubtedly intends to state in a few words, that contentment does not lie in abundance of earthly enjoyments, but in calm peace of mind and spiritual joy; for unbelievers have no relish for such things, but to believers a persuasion of God's fatherly love is more delightful than all earthly enjoyments. Yet let us observe that we ought to look for all prosperity from God alone, who will not permit his people to be in want of anything that belongs to a happy life.

15. *And ye shall leave your name for a curse* [455] *to my elect.* He continues the same doctrine, and teaches that God will at length separate hypocrites from the true servants. And indeed we need not wonder that the Prophet dwells so much on this point; for there is nothing of which it is harder to convince hypocrites, who, puffed up with pride, deceive and blind themselves. He affirms that "their name" shall be "accursed," because they thought that they were the holy seed, and that nothing else under heaven was worthy of being remembered. Such is also the import of the word "Leave;" as if he had said that false boasting, to which they were so strongly attached, shall be shaken off by violence; and therefore, that they may not flatter themselves

[455] "Oath is here put for curse, as it is added to it in Daniel 9:11, and the two are combined in Numbers 5:21, where the oath of cursing may be regarded as the complete expression, of which oath is here an ellipsis. To leave one's name for a curse, according to Old Testament usage, is something more than to leave it to be cursed. The sense is, that the name shall be used as a formula of cursing, so that men shall be able to wish nothing worse to others, than a like character and fate. This is clear from Jeremiah 29:22, compared with Zechariah 3:2, as well as from the converse or correlative promise to the patriarchs and their children, that a like use should be made of their names as a formula of blessing. (Genesis 22:18; 48:20.)" — Alexander.

with a glory that is temporal, and that shall speedily pass away, the Lord rebukes that haughtiness, and declares that he will have other servants, to whom they shall be a curse, so that even in solemn cursing this shall be taken as an example, "May God curse thee as he has cursed the Jews!"

And shall call his servants by another name. He shews how ill-founded is the confidence of that nation, which thought that God would have no people, if he had not the posterity of Abraham; for he solemnly declares that he will adopt a new people, and that he is not confined to the Jews, so as not easily to find others whom he shall adorn with the "name" of his people. The opinion entertained by some, that by "another name" is meant the Christian name, is exceedingly unnatural; and even from the context it is evident that the Prophet had quite a different object in view; for, in consequence of the Jews boasting proudly of the antiquity of their name, and growing insolent at having been elected by God long ago, as if God could not do without them, he shews that he will elect and adopt another people, and yet that he cannot be accused of capriciousness or fickleness, as if he had changed his mind. He will execute his purpose and his righteous judgments against those who, under a false pretense of his name, obscure his glory and corrupt all godliness.

16. *He who blesseth himself in the earth.* Here the whole world is contrasted with a corner of Judea, in which the worship of God might be said to be shut up. Since the time when God has been manifested everywhere, he is not now worshipped in one particular district, but in all places without distinction; as Christ also teacheth, (John 4:21,) "The hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father;" and Paul also saith,

"I wish that men in every place may lift up clean hands, without wrath and disputing."
(1 Timothy 2:8.)

Thus the word "earth," by which he denotes, in this passage, the whole world, is employed by him in an indirect contrast with Judea.

Shall bless himself in the true God. Shall swear by the true God. By "blessing" and "swearing" he denotes the whole of the worship of God. "Swearing," as we have formerly seen, [456] is a kind of worship of God; for by it we declare that all judgment belongs to God, and acknowledge that he is perfectly acquainted with all that we do. We "bless," when we wish to obtain from him all prosperity, and render thanksgiving to him alone; and, in short, when we acknowledge that our prosperity comes from no other source than from his undeserved kindness. By "the true God" is meant that he is faithful to his promises and steadfast to his purpose; though perhaps there is an implied and indirect contrast between "the true God" and the false gods of the Gentiles.

For the former afflictions are surrendered to forgetfulness. This promise

[456] Commentary on Isaiah, Vol. 2, p. 70; Vol. 3, p. 467.

relates to believers only. God declares that he will put an end to their afflictions and distresses, that the calamity of the Church may not be perpetual. This began to be accomplished when the people were brought out of Babylon; for, although they were afflicted in various ways both during the journey and at home, yet the severity of the punishments was mitigated; because the return to their native country, the rebuilding of the temple, the restoration of regular government, soothed their griefs, and supported their hearts by good hope till the coming of Christ.

17. *For, lo, I will create new heavens and a new earth.* By these metaphors he promises a remarkable change of affairs; as if God had said that he has both the inclination and the power not only to restore his Church, but to restore it in such a manner that it shall appear to gain new life and to dwell in a new world. These are exaggerated modes of expression; but the greatness of such a blessing, which was to be manifested at the coming of Christ, could not be described in any other way. Nor does he mean only the first coming, but the whole reign, which must be extended as far as to the last coming, as we have already said in expounding other passages.

Thus the world is (so to speak) renewed by Christ; and hence also the Apostle (Hebrews 2:5) calls it "a new age," and undoubtedly alludes to this statement of the Prophet. Yet the Prophet speaks of the restoration of the Church after the return from Babylon. This is undoubtedly true; but that restoration is imperfect, if it be not extended as far as to Christ; and even now we are in the progress and accomplishment of it, and those things will not be fulfilled till the last resurrection, which has been prescribed to be our limit.

The former things shall not be remembered. Some refer these words to heaven and earth; as if he had said that henceforth they shall have no celebrity and no name. But I choose rather to refer them to the former times; for he means that the joy at being restored shall be so great that they shall no longer remember their miseries. Or perhaps it will be thought preferable to view them as relating to benefits which, though they were worthy of being recorded, lost their name when God's amazing- grace shone forth. In this sense the Prophet said elsewhere, "Remember ye not the former things." (Isaiah 43:18.) Not that God wished the first deliverance to be set aside or blotted out of the hearts of believers; but because by comparison the one brought a kind of forgetfulness over the other, just as the sun, when he rises, deprives the stars of their brightness.

Let us remember that these things take place in us so far as we are renewed. But we are only in part renewed, and therefore we do not yet see a new heaven and a new earth. We need not wonder, therefore, that we continue to mourn and weep, since we have not entirely laid aside the old man, but many remains are still left. It is with us also that the renovation ought to begin; because we hold the first rank, and it is through our sin that "the creatures groan, and are subject to vanity," as Paul shews. (Romans 8:20.)

But when we shall be perfectly renewed, heaven and earth shall also be fully renewed, and shall regain their former state. And hence it ought to be inferred, as we have frequently remarked, that the Prophet has in his eye the whole reign of Christ, down to its final close, which is also called

"the day of renovation and restoration." (Acts 3:21.)

18. But rejoice ye and be glad for ever. He exhorts believers to rejoice, in such a manner as they ought, on account of such a benefit bestowed by God. And this was added for the sake of amplification; because men do not adequately consider God's other benefits, and especially that which is the highest and most excellent of all; for either they disregard them altogether, or value them less than they ought to do. On this account believers must be aroused and urged by such exhortations as these, that they may not chew themselves to be unthankful or unmindful, or think that it ought to be lightly passed by, that, having been redeemed by the hand of Christ, they carry in their hearts the pledge of eternal and heavenly life. That is the reason why Isaiah chews that believers do not give due praise for redemption in any other way than by continuing their joy through the whole course of their life, and employing themselves in celebrating the praises of God.

For, lo, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. At first sight this might be thought harsh; but an excellent meaning is obtained, that the ground of joy in the deliverance of the Church shall be so great as to remove every cloud of sadness. And, indeed, since even afflictions aid our salvation, (Romans 8:28,) we have good reason for rejoicing in them.

19. *And I will be glad in Jerusalem.* He expresses more than in the preceding verse; for by these words he means that he not only will give to men ground for rejoicing, but even will be a partaker with them in that joy. So great is his love toward us, that he delights in our prosperity not less than if he enjoyed it along with us. And hence we obtain no small confirmation of our faith, when we learn that God is moved, and so powerfully moved, by such an affection toward us. If we are in painful and distressed circumstances, he says that he is affected by grief and sorrow; and, on the other hand, if our condition is pleasant and comfortable, he says that he takes great pleasure in our prosperity. Hence also we have formerly seen that "the Spirit of the Lord is sad and vexed," (Isaiah 63:10,) when that order which he demands and approves is overturned and confounded; and in another passage he takes upon himself the character of a husband who is satisfied with the love of his wife. (Isaiah 62:5.)

20. *There shall be no more thence an infant of days.* Some think that this points out the difference between the Law and the Gospel; because "the Law, as a schoolmaster," (Galatians 3:24,) kept scholars in the first elements, but the Gospel leads us on to mature age. Others suppose it to mean that there will no longer be any distinction of age; because, where life is eternal, no line is drawn between the child and the old man. But I interpret the words of the Prophet in this manner, "Whether they are children or old men, they shall

arrive at mature age so as to be always vigorous, like persons in the prime of life; and, in short, they shall always be healthful and robust;" for it is on account of our sins that we grow old and lose our strength. "All our days," saith Moses, "pass away when thou art angry: we close our years quicker than a word. The days of our years in which we live are seventy years, or, at the utmost, eighty: what goeth beyond this in the strongest is toil and vexation; our strength passeth swiftly, and we fly away." (Psalm 90:9, 10.) But Christ comes to repair our strength, and to restore and preserve our original condition.

For the son of a hundred years shall die young. It is proper to distinguish between the two clauses; for, after having said that the citizens of the Church shall be long-lived, so that no one shall be taken out of the world till he has reached mature age and fully completed his course, he likewise adds that, even in old age, they shall be robust. Although the greater part of believers hardly support themselves through weakness, and the strength of others decays even before the time, yet that promise is not made void; for, if Christ reigned truly and perfectly in us, his strength would undoubtedly flourish in us, and would invigorate both body and soul. To our sins, therefore, it ought to be imputed, that we are liable to diseases, pains, old age, and other inconveniences; for we do not permit Christ to possess us fully, and have not advanced so far in newness of life as to lay aside all that is old. [457]

Here it ought also to be observed, that blessings either of soul or body are found only in the kingdom of Christ, that is, in the Church, apart from which there is nothing but cursing. Hence it follows that all who have no share in that kingdom are wretched and unhappy; and, however fresh and vigorous they may appear to be, they are, nevertheless, in the sight of God, rotten and stinking corpses.

21 and **22.** *They shall build houses and inhabit them.* In these verses he mentions what is written in the Law; for these are the blessings of the Law, that they who have obeyed God shall dwell in the houses which they have built, and shall gather fruit from the trees which they have planted. (Leviticus 26:10.) On the other hand, the disobedient shall be expelled from the houses which they built, and shall give place to foreigners, and shall be deprived of the fruits of the trees which they planted. "The Lord," saith Isaiah, "shall protect you from that curse, so as to enjoy your property." Now the Prophets hold out those things which relate to the present life, and borrow metaphors from them; but it is in order that they may teach us to rise higher and to embrace eternal and blessed life. We must not fix our whole attention on these transitory blessings, but must make use of them as ladders, that, being raised to heaven, we may enjoy eternal and immortal blessings. To the Church, which has been renewed, and which rests on nothing but God's good pleasure and undeserved favor, is justly promised the enjoyment of those blessings of which unbelievers had deprived themselves.

[457] "Tout le vieil homme." "All the old man."

According to the days of a tree. Some think that this is a promise of eternal life; as if men had the tree of life; but that is forged ingenuity, and far removed from the Prophet's meaning. And I do wonder that commentators give themselves so much trouble in explaining this passage; for the Prophet speaks, not only of life, but of a peaceful condition of life; as if he had said, "Ye shall plant vineyards, and shall eat the fruit of them; and ye shall not be removed from this life before receiving the fruit, which shall be enjoyed, not only by yourselves, but by your children and posterity. He employs the metaphor of a tree, because he had formerly spoken of planting vineyards; and accordingly he promises that the people shall peacefully enjoy both their houses and their vineyards, and shall not be molested by enemies or robbers, and this peaceful condition shall last as long as the life of a tree.

And my elect shall perpetually enjoy [458] *the work of their hands.* A work is said to be continued or perpetuated when the result of it is prosperous; for otherwise men would subject themselves to long and severe toil, and all to no purpose, if God did not grant success. Enemies will either take away or destroy what we have begun, and the completion of it will be out of our power; and therefore it is strictly said to be continued, not when merely some progress is made, but when it is brought to a close. Here it ought to be observed, that we cannot possess our wealth and have the peaceful and lawful enjoyment of it in any other way than by dwelling in the kingdom of Christ, who is the only heir of the world, and without being ingrafted into his body. Wicked men may indeed enjoy, for many years, the good things of this life; but they will continually be uneasy, and will wretchedly devour themselves, so that even possession shall be destructive and deadly; for it is only by faith that we obtain all that belongs to a blessed life, and they who have not faith cannot be members of Christ.

23. *They shall not toil in vain.* He enumerates other kinds of blessings which God promises to the kingdom of Christ; for, although God always blessed his people, yet the blessings were in some measure suspended till the coming of Christ, in whom was displayed full and complete happiness. In a word, both Jews and Gentiles shall be happy, in all respects, under the reign of Christ. Now, as it is a token of God's wrath and curse when we obtain no advantage front our labor, so, on the other hand, it is a token of blessing when we clearly see the fruit of our labor. For this reason he says that they who shall have returned from captivity, in order that they may obtain a true and complete deliverance, shall not spend their labor in vain or lose their pains. The Law threatens the death of relatives, destructive wars, losses of property, and terror in their hearts. (Leviticus 26:22; Deuteronomy 28:48.) Here, on the contrary, are promised fertility, peace, the fruit of labor, and repose. And blessings of this kind ought to be carefully observed; for there are few who, amidst their labors, think of the blessing of God, so as to

[458] "Ou, jouiront en vieil aage de l'oeuvre de leurs mains." "Or, shall enjoy in old age the work of their hands."

ascribe everything to him alone, and to be fully convinced that they will accomplish nothing whatever unless the Lord grant to them a prosperous result. Wherefore, as every blessing should be sought from God, so, when it has been received, thanksgiving should be rendered for it to God alone.

And they shall not bring forth in terror. When it is said that women "shall not bring forth in terror," some explain it to mean, that they shall have no uneasiness or dread of childbirth, because they shall be free from pain. We know that this punishment was inflicted on the woman on account of sin, to bring forth with difficulty, and to be in danger of death. Children are brought into the world with fear and trembling, when there is any expectation of war; and it is probable that the Prophet rather looks to this, that there shall be such settled peace that neither women nor men shall have any reason to fear; for this must be viewed as relating to both parents, who will have no dread about their children, as commonly happens when any danger is threatened.

For they shall be the seed of the blessed of Jehovah. This reason is highly appropriate; for whence come fears and terrors, whence come alarms, but from the curse of God? When the curse has been removed, the Prophet therefore says justly that parents, together with their offspring, shall be free from dread and anxious solicitude; because they shall be convinced that they shall always be safe and sound through the favor of God.

And their offspring with them. This is contrasted with childlessness, which is reckoned in the number of the curses of God; and therefore it is the same as if he had said, "I will no longer deprive them of their children, but will cause them to enjoy them, along with the rest of the blessings which I shall bestow upon them."

24. *Before they cry, I will listen.* A remarkable promise; for nothing is more desirable than to have God reconciled to us, and to have it in our power to draw near to him with freedom and boldness; for, although we are surrounded by innumerable distresses and calamities, yet we cannot be miserable so long as we are at liberty to betake ourselves to the Lord. Here therefore the Lord promises that we shall not pray in vain. Yet this was also promised to the fathers under the Law. It is certain that, since the beginning of the world, God listened to the fathers, to all that called upon him; for this is the most valuable fruit of faith. But he confirms this more and more. Because the Jews would be exiles for a long time, the Lord solemnly declares that he will not permit them any longer to languish in banishment, and will no longer delay his assistance, but will "listen to them even before they cry."

This relates chiefly to the kingdom of Christ, through whom we are heard and have access to God the Father, as Paul admirably explains. (Ephesians 2:18; 3:12.) The fathers indeed enjoyed the same access, and there was no other way in which they could be heard but through Christ; but the door was still narrow and might be said to be shut, whereas now it has been most widely and perfectly thrown open. Under the law the people were wont to stand at a distance in the porch; but now nothing hinders us from entering

into the sanctuary itself, because

"the veil of the temple hath been rent." (Matthew 27:51.)

Thus we have admission into heaven through Christ,

"that we may approach with freedom and boldness to the throne of grace, to obtain mercy and find needful assistance."
(Hebrews 4:16.)

A question will be put. "Are there no believers in the world, and is there no kingdom of Christ, in the present day? For it does not appear that God is so ready to render assistance, and there is no visible fruit of our prayers." I reply. Though it becomes fully evident that we have been heard when the event actually proves it, yet God does not in the meantime overlook us; for he does not permit us to faint, but supports us by the power of his Spirit, that we may wait for him patiently. Nor does he delay, as men do, because he has need of time, but because he wishes to exercise and try our patience. In a word, there are two ways in which God listens to us; first, when he renders assistance openly; and secondly, when he aids us by the power of his Spirit, that we may not sink under the weight of afflictions. And if this doctrine were deeply fixed in the hearts of men, they would fly to God more readily and boldly, and would not dispute so eagerly about calling on saints. For how comes it that men contrive for themselves such a variety of intercessors, to whom they betake themselves rather than to Christ, but because they do not receive that doctrine, and because they reject such large and bountiful promises?

25. *The wolf and the lamb shall feed together.* He means that everything shall be fully restored, when Christ shall reign. And here it appears as if there were an implied comparison between Adam and Christ. We know that all the afflictions of the present life flowed from the sin of the first man; for at that time we were deprived of the dominion and sovereignty which God had given to man (Genesis 1:28) over animals of every kind, all of which at first undoubtedly bowed cheerfully to the dominion of man, and were obedient to his will; but now the most of them rise up against man, and even carly on mutual war against each other. Thus, when wolves, bears, lions, and other savage animals of that kind, are hurtful to man and to other beasts from which we obtain some advantage, and when even animals which ought to have been useful to man are hostile to him, this ought to be imputed to his sin, because his disobedience overthrew the order of things. But since it is the office of Christ to bring back everything to its condition and order, that is the reason why he declares that the confusion or ruin that now exists in human affairs shall be removed by the coming of Christ; because at that time, corruptions having been taken away, the world shall return to its first origin.

And the lion shall eat straw like the ox. "The lion" shall eat harmlessly, and shall no longer seek his prey. The serpent, satisfied with his dust, shall wrap himself in it, and shall no longer hurt by his envenomed bite. In a word,

all that is disordered or confused shall be restored to its proper order. Yet beyond all controversy the Prophet speaks allegorically of bloody and violent men, whose cruel and savage nature shall be subdued, when they submit to the yoke of Christ. But first we must carefully consider that confusion which befell all the creatures in consequence of the fall of man; for if this were not taken into view, it would be impossible for us to have sufficiently just and correct views of this blessing of restoration. At the same time, we must keep in remembrance what we said in expounding a similar allegory in the eleventh chapter. [459] Here we are taught what is the nature of men before the Lord convert them and receive them into his fold; for they are cruel and untamed beasts, and only begin to abstain from doing any injury, when the Lord subdues their wicked inclination and their furious desire to do harm.

In all my holy mountain. This is added because, when rubbish and filth have been taken out of the way, the Lord will gather to himself a Church without spot. By the word all he means cleansing. Yet we ought not to think it strange that still so many are ferocious; for there are few that are the true inhabitants of God's mountain, few that are upright and faithful, even among those who profess to be Christians. Seeing that the old man still reigns and is vigorous in them, contentions and wars must also exist and prevail amongst them.

[459] Commentary on Isaiah, vol. 1, p. 383.

Chapter 66

CHAPTER 66.

Isaiah 66:1-24

1. Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?

1. Sic dicit Iehova, Coelum sedes mea, et terra scabellum pedum meorum. Ubi ista domus quam aedificabitis mihi? et ubi hic locus quietis meae?

2. For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.

2. Atqui manus mea haec omnia fecit, et coeperunt ease haec omnia, dicit Iehova. Et ad hunc respicio qui humilis eat ac contritus spiritu, tremitque ad sermonem meum.

3. He that killeth an ox, is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol. Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations.

3. Qui mactat bovem, acsi hominem occidat; qui sacrificat pecudem, acsi canem jugulet. Qui offert Minha, acsi offeret sanguinem suillum; qui recordatur thuris, acsi benedicat idolo (Hebrews iniquitati). Et sane elegerunt vias suas, et abominationes eorum anima ipsorum desideravit.

4. I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them; because when I called, none did answer; when I spake, they did not hear: but they did evil before mine eyes, and chose that in which I delighted not.

4. Ego quoque eligam illusiones eorum, et terrorem ipsorum inducam illis; quia vocavi, et nemo respondit; loquutus sum, et non audierunt; et fecerunt malum in oculis meis, et ea in quibus non oblector elegerunt.

5. Hear the word of the LORD, ye that tremble at his word; Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let the LORD be glorified: but he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed.

5. Audite verbum Iehovae, qui tremitis ad verbum ejus. Dixerunt fratres vestri odio vos habentes, rejicientes vos propter nomen meum. Glorificetur (vel, gravis eat; vel, onerosus; vel, glorificabitur) Iehova. Atqui videbitur cum laetitia vestra; illi autem pudefient.

6. A voice of noise from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of the LORD that rendereth recompence to his enemies.

6. Vox tumultus ex urbe, vox e templo; vox Iehovae reddentis mercedem hostibus suis.

7. Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man-child.

7. Antequam parturiret, peperit; antequam veniret illi dolor, enixa est masculum.

8. Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children.

8. Quis audivit huic simile? Quis simile huic vidit? An parietur terra die uno? An nascetur gens vice una? Quoniam simul doluit ad partum, simul peperit Sion illlos suos.

9. Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth? saith the LORD: shall I cause to bring forth, and shut the womb? saith thy God.

9. An ego foetus emitto, et non pariam? dicit Iehova. An ego parere facio, et cohibebor? dicit Deus tuns.

10. Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her: rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her:

10. Laetamini cum Ierusalem, et exultate in ea, omnes qui diligitis eam; gaudete cum ea gaudio, omnes qui lugetis super eam.

11. That ye may suck, and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations; that ye may milk out, and be delighted with the abundance of her glory.

11. Ut sugatis et saturemini ab ubere consolationum ejus, ut mulgeatis et delectemini splendore gloria ejus.

12. For thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream: then shall ye suck, ye shall be borne upon her sides, and be dandled upon her knees.

12. Quoniam sic dicit Iehova, Ecce ego derivo super earn, quasi fluvium, pacem; et quasi torrentera inundantem gloriam Gentium. Sugetis itaque, super latus portabimini, et super genua delectabimini.

13. As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem.

13. Sicuti virum quem consolatur mater sua, ita ego consolabor vos, et super Ierusalem erit vobis consolatio.

14. And when ye see this, your heart shall reioice, and your bones shall

flourish like an herb: and the hand of the LORD shall be known toward his servants, and his indignation toward his enemies.

14. Et videbitis, et hetabitur cot vestrum, et ossa vestra quasi herba florebunt; et cognoscetur manus Iehovae erga servos suos, et indignabitur hostibus suis.

15. For, behold, the LORD will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire.

15. Quoniam ecce Iehova in igne veniet, et quasi turbo quadrigae ejus, ut reddat in furore iram suam, et increpationem suam in flamma ignis.

16. For by fire, and by his sword, will the LORD plead with all flesh: and the slain of the LORD shall be many.

16. Quoniam in igne lehova judicabit, et in gladio suo omnem carnem; et multi erunt interfecti Iehovae.

17. They that sanctify themselves, and purify themselves in the gardens behind one tree in the midst, eating swine's flesh, and the abomination, and the mouse, shall be consumed together, saith the LORD.

17. Qui sanctificant se, et qui se purificant in hortis post unam in medio; qui comednut carnem suillam, et abominationem et murem, simul tollentur, dicit Iehova.

18. For I know their works and their thoughts: it shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come, and see my glory.

18. Nam ego opera eorum et cogitationes eorum. Quia venit tempus ut congregem omnes gentes et linguas; et venient, et videbunt gloriam meam.

19. And I will set a sign among them, and I will send those that escape of them unto the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, that draw the bow, to Tubal, and Javan, to the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles.

19. Et ponam in illis signum, et mittam quosdam ex illis servatos ad gentes Tharsis, Pul, et Lud, qui trahunt arcu, Thubal et Javan, insulas remotas; quae non audierunt nomen meum, et non viderunt gloriam meam; et annuntiabunt gloriam meam in Gentibus.

20. And they shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the LORD out of all nations upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the LORD, as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the LORD.

20. Et adducent omnes fratres vestros ex omnibus gentibus oblationem Iehovae in equis et quadrigis, in vehiculis, et mulis, et celeribus animalibus, ad montem sanctum meum Ierusalem, dicit Iehova; quemadmodum adferunt filii Israel in vase mundo in domum Iehovae.

21. And I will also take of them for priests and for Levites, saith the LORD.

21. Adeoque assurmam ex illis aliquos in sacerdotes et Levitas, dicit

Iehova.

22. For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain.

22. Nam sicut coeli novi, et terra nova, quae ego facio, stant coram me, dicit Iehova; ira stabunt semen vestrum et nomen vestrum.

23. And it shall come to pass, that from one new-moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD.

23. Et accidet, ut e mense in mensem ejus, et ex Sabbatho in Sabbathum ejus, veniat omnis caro, ut adoret coram me, dicit Jehova.

24. And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcases of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.

24. Et egredientur, et videbunt cadavera hominum qui praevarieati sunt in me; quia vermis eorum non morietur, et ignis eorum non extinguetur, et erunt nausea onmi carni.

1. *This saith Jehovah.* This discourse is different from the preceding one; for here the Prophet exclaims against the Jews, who, puffed up with vain confidence in the sacrifices and the temple, indulged freely in their pleasures, and flattered themselves in their sins under this pretense. He shews that this confidence is not only foolish and groundless, but diabolical and accursed; for they grossly mock God who endeavor to serve and appease him by outward ceremonies. Accordingly, he reproaches them with endeavoring to frame an idol in place of God, when they shut him up in the temple. Next, he speaks of the renovation of the Church, and of the extension of it throughout the whole world.

Heaven is my throne. His aim being to shake off the self-complancency of the pretended or hypocritical worshippers of God, he begins with his nature. By assigning "heaven" for his habitation, he means that the majesty of God fills all things, and is everywhere diffused; and that he is so far from being shut up in the temple, that he is not shut up or confined within any place whatever. The Scripture often teaches that God is in heaven; not that he is shut up in it, but in order that we may raise our minds above the world, and may not entertain any low, or carnal, or earthly conceptions of him; for the mere sight of heaven ought to carry us higher, and transport us into admiration. And yet, in innumerable passages, he protests that he is with us, that his power is everywhere diffused, in order that we may not imagine that he is shut up in heaven.

It may be thought that this is beyond all controversy, and was at that time acknowledged by all; for who did not know that heaven and earth are filled by the majesty of God? They might therefore object that there is no man who wishes to thrust God out of heaven, and that the Prophet has no good reason for waxing wroth and breaking out into such violent invective.

And undoubtedly they rejected with great haughtiness this doctrine of the Prophet, and were highly irritated and enraged, as if great injury had been done to them. But it is easy to reply that, when men endeavor to appease God according to their own fancy, they frame an idol that is altogether contrary to his majesty, Relying on their useless ceremonies, they thought that they had performed their duty well when they went frequently to the temple, and offered in it prayers and sacrifices. The Prophet shews that the majesty of God must not be measured by this standard, and that all that they bring forward, unaccompanied by purity of heart, are absolute trifles; for since it is evident from his dwelling-place being in heaven that the nature of God is spiritual, if the worship do not correspond to that nature, it is undoubtedly wicked and corrupted.

Where is that house which ye will build for me? Under the word house or temple he includes all the ceremonies in which they thought that the worship of God consisted; and because they measured God and his worship by the temple as a standard, the Prophet shews that it is unworthy of God's majesty to view his presence as confined to a visible and frail building. He does not argue merely about God's essence, but at the same time discourses concerning his true worship, which he shews to be spiritual, in order that it may correspond to the nature of God, who "is a Spirit." (John 4:24.) And if men diligently considered what is the nature of God, they would not contrive foreign and new modes of worship for him, or measure him by themselves. [460] This common and often expressed sentiment is more weighty and energetic than if the Prophet had brought forward something new; for he shews that they are so stupid and dull as to be ignorant of that which was well known to the merest idiot, and that they resemble dumb beasts in imagining that God dwells and reposes in the temple. He therefore asks contemptuously, "Where is that house?" For it was absurd to think either that God dwells on the earth, or that he is concealed and shut up in a prison. Besides, the temple was built on a small mountain, and could not contain the glory of God within its limited dimensions.

And where is this place of my rest? And yet the Lord had said of the temple, "This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell, for I have chosen it,." (Psalm 132:14.) In another passage it was said, "Enter, O Lord, into thy rest." (2 Chronicles 6:41.) Besides, we have seen, in a former part of this book, that "the Lord's rest shall be glorious in it." (Isaiah 11:10.) Finally, this was the ordinary designation of the temple, and yet the Prophet now finds fault with it. I reply, the temple is called God's rest, because he gave the token of his presence in the temple; for he had chosen it as the place where men should call upon him, and from which he would give a display of his strength and power. But he did not command it to be built in order that men might conceive of his majesty according to their own fancy, [461] but rather

[460] "Et ne mesureroyent sa grandeur infinie a leur petitesse." "And would not measure his infinite greatness by their littleness."

[461] "Afin que les hommes creussent de sa majeste tout ce que bon leur sembleroit." "In order

that, reminded by the outward signs of God's presence, they might raise their minds higher and rise to heaven, and acknowledge that God is greater and more excellent than the whole world. Yet, as the minds of men are prone to superstition, the Jews converted into obstacles to themselves those things which were intended to be aids; and when they ought to have risen by faith to heaven, they believed that God was bound to them, and worshipped him only in a careless, manner, or rather made sport of worshipping him at their own pleasure.

This passage is very appropriately quoted by Stephen, (Acts 7:49,) and is indirectly accommodated by Paul to the sense which we have now stated; for they shew that those persons are grievously deceived and far astray who bring to God carnal ceremonies, as if pure worship and religion consisted of them, or who wickedly and profanely disfigure his worship by statues and images. Stephen addresses the Jews, who, being attached to the figures of the Law, disregarded true godliness; while Paul, speaking to the Gentiles, affirms that "God dwelleth not in temples made with hands." (Acts 17:24.)

2. *Yet my hand hath made all these things.* The Prophet refutes the false opinion which men form about the worship of God, by thinking that sacrifices and outward ceremonies are of great value in themselves; for the state of the question is this. God cares nothing about ceremonies, but they are empty and useless masks, when men think that they satisfy God by means of them. When he says that he made all these things, this must not be understood as referring solely to the temple, but to all that was there offered to God. Now he says that he "made all these things," in order that men may know that God has no need of this external worship, as he declares (Psalm 50:10) that all the animals were created by him, and are his own, though by sacrifices of them the Jews hoped to obtain his favor. But foolish mortals have this disease deeply seated in them, that they transform God according to their inclination, though he appointed external worship not for his sake, but for our advantage; that is, that we may be trained by it according to the capacity of our flesh.

And all these things began to be. It is the same as if he had said that he must not be compared to these things, which at one time began to be; for he is eternal and had no beginning. "I could dispense with your sacrifices," saith the Lord, "for, before they began to be, I was, and therefore they can be of no service to me." In short, he maintains that ceremonies are of no avail in themselves, but aim at a different object. Isaiah takes for granted that it is impossible that God could receive any addition; and hence it follows that he is satisfied with himself alone; for he could do without the world from all eternity.

And I look to him who is humble and contrite in spirit. Next, a definition of lawful worship is added; for, when he says that God "looketh to the humble," I have no doubt that he who is "humble and contrite in spirit" is indirectly

that men might believe concerning his majesty whatever they thought fit."

contrasted by him with the array, and splendor, and elegance of ceremonies, by which the eyes of men are commonly dazzled, so as to be carried away in admiration. On the other hand, the Lord testifies that he demands humble and downcast minds, and that tremble at his commandments. By these words he describes inward purity of heart and sincere desire of godliness, and at the same time shews in what way we ought to be prepared to please God.

And trembleth at my word. So far as relates to "trembling," it might be thought strange at first sight that he demands it in believers, since nothing is more sweet or gentle than the word of the Lord, and nothing is more opposite to it than to excite terror. I reply, there are two kinds of trembling; one by which they are terrified who hate and flee from God, and another which affects the heart, and promotes the obedience, of those who reverence and fear God. This clause, I am aware, is viewed by others as relating to the Law, which threatens and terrifies, and proclaims the dreadful judgment of God. But I take it in a more general acceptation; for even believers tremble at the promises when they embrace them with reverence. Hence infer that true godliness consists in having our senses brought into a state of obedience to God, and in making no boastful or wicked claims for ourselves. The nature of faith is to yield obedience to God, and to listen to him attentively and patiently when he speaks. But when we are puffed up and carried away by a vain confidence in ourselves, we have no piety or fear of God; for we cannot make even the smallest claim for ourselves without despising God.

We ought carefully to mark the expression which he employs, "Trembling at the word of God." Many boast that they reverence and fear God; but, by disregarding his word, they at the same time shew that they are despisers of God. All the reverence that we owe to God must be paid to his word, in which he wishes to be fully recognised as in a lively image. The amount of what is said is, that God prefers this sacrifice to all others, when believers, by true self-denial, lie low in such abasement as to have no lofty opinion about themselves, but to permit themselves to be reduced to nothing. Thus also the Psalmist says, "The sacrifice acceptable to God is a contrite spirit; an afflicted heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." (Psalm 51:17.) Because this modesty of faith produces obedience, this pious feeling is likewise added, that, laying aside all obstinacy, they tremble at the word of God.

From these words we ought to draw a remarkable consolation, "Though we appear to be wretched in our abasement and humility, and though we appear to be unworthy of being beheld by men, yet we are truly happy; because the Lord looks upon us, and bestows on us his favor." When we are tempted to despair, let us think that in this way the Lord exalts his servants to heaven, though they have been cast down to hell, and almost sink under the burden.

3. *He that killeth an ox, as if he slew a man.* There are two clauses in this verse. In the former, Isaiah plainly declares that all the sacrifices

of his nation are of no value in the sight of God, but are held by him in abomination; in the latter, he describes the dreadful corruption by which they mingled the ceremonies of the Gentiles with the sacrifices of the Law, and in this way corrupted and perverted everything. The greater part of commentators think that these words repeal the sacrifices of the Law, but this is a mistake; for Isaiah, in this passage, treats of the same subject of which he had formerly treated in the first and fifty-eighth chapters, and does not absolutely condemn sacrifices, but rather the blemishes and corruptions of them, because the Jews thought that God was satisfied with a deceitful and empty appearance, and at the same time cared not about the true fear of God and a pure conscience. He does not speak, therefore, of the thing itself, but censures men who abused sacrifices; because this was as much as to offer to God the shell of an empty nut. In a word, no sacrifices are acceptable to God but those which proceed from a pure heart and an upright will.

Yet it is probable that the Prophet alludes to the sacrifices of the Gentiles, which were shocking and monstrous; for they killed men, or buried them alive. Neither the Romans, (who reckoned themselves to be more religious than other nations,) nor even the Jews, abstained from this crime. Nay more, ({κακόζηλοι}) wicked imitators polluted themselves by many child-murders, thinking that they followed their father Abraham. Isaiah says that, "when they kill an ox, they do the same thing as if they slew a man;" [462] and thus he shews that the Jews, though they had a religion which was peculiar and which God had appointed, yet were in no respect better than the Gentiles, among whom everything was polluted and profane, and were not more highly approved by God; because the name of God is profaned by hypocrisy of religion not less than by corrupted and false worship. How necessary this admonition was, we have formerly seen; for, while the Jews were convicted of all crimes, yet, so long as they concealed themselves under this shadow, they thought that they were safe. Justly therefore does the Prophet meet them by saying, that they gain nothing more by their attempts to appease God than if they sought to offer sacrifices from the abominable sacrileges of the Gentiles.

And truly they have chosen their own ways. There are two interpretations of this passage; for the antecedent to the pronoun may either be the Gentiles or the Jews; that is, either that the Jews mingled and entangled themselves with the wicked ceremonies of the Gentiles, or that they followed their own inventions. The former exposition would not be inappropriate, were it not that it is unnatural, because the word "Gentiles" has not been formerly expressed. It was the most aggravated part of the wickedness of the Jews, that they not only abused the pure worship of God, but likewise, through their contempt of the Law, defiled the temple and every other place by wicked and abominable superstitions. They built altars on high places, planted

[462] "Qu' en sacrifiant un boeuf, e'est autant que s'ils coupoyent la gorge a un homme." "That, in sacrificing an ox, it is the same as if they were cutting a man's throat."

and reared groves, took delight in games and public entertainments, and copied everything else that was appointed by public authority for the purpose of corrupting the hearts of men. Thus there was produced among them a confused medley of superstitions, such as we now behold in Popery, in which we see various patches sewed together, taken out of every kind of superstitions, not only heathen and Jewish, but likewise such as have been recently contrived by Satan, that he might more easily, and with greater plausibility, impose on the world. These and similar practices the Prophet would justly pronounce to be doubly worthy of condemnation, because, while they boast of the name of God, and make profession of his worship, still they are not ashamed to stain and pollute that worship by the sacrileges of idolatrous nations.

The other interpretation is not obscure, and is equally appropriate, that the Jews were devoted to their own inventions, and followed their own abominations, He affirms that they do not worship God sincerely, who despise him according to their own caprice, not only because they are full of avarice, hatred, ambition, dishonesty, cruelty, and extortion, but because they corrupt the worship of God by their own contrivances. Although the pronoun refers to the Jews, yet the Prophet condemns all superstitions which they had borrowed from the heathen nations. Consequently, there is little difference between the two interpretations; for he merely teaches that, because they have insolently and rebelliously shaken off the yoke of God, because wickedness openly prevails among them, everything that proceeds from them is polluted and detestable. Streams that bring down dirty and offensive matter from a muddy and polluted fountain cannot be clean or pure. Choice and desire reveal their obstinacy more clearly; that is, because, knowingly and willingly, they despised God's commandments, and devoted their heart to everything that was opposed to them, as if they wished intentionally to disdain everything that proceeded from God, that they might obey their depraved lust.

4. *I also will choose their delusions.* [463] The Prophet means that the Jews gain nothing by holding out various and plausible pretences and by searching for excuses; because God does not care for the cunning or fine speeches of men. And indeed it is not proper to measure God by our own capacity, and we ought not to depend on human judgment; but it is our duty to judge of the works of God from his word. I will choose; that is, "I will scatter the clouds which they endeavor to spread over themselves, so that their delusions shall be manifest and visible to all; for now they appear to be hidden, but one day they shall be dragged forth to public view." The meaning may be thus summed up. "Because the Jews have indulged so freely in sinning that everything which they chose was preferred by them to the command ments of God, so also, in his turn, God will lay open their

[463] "'That I may mock them.' Here the word {תעלוליהם (tagnalulehem) means {להתעולל}, {בם} (lehithgnolel bam,), that I may mock them,' in the same sense as the words used in another passage, {כי} {התעללת}, {בי} (ki hith-gnallalt bi) 'because thou hast mocked me.' (Numbers 22:29.)" — Jarchi.

delusions at his pleasure."

And will bring upon them their terror. [464] Under the word "terror" he repeats the same thing, according to the custom of Hebrew writers. "I will cause them to know that they have fallen into a mistake, and that the terrors which they indulged shall fall on their own heads. [465] Thus their excuses or hypocritical pretences will be of no avail for confounding truth and falsehood and veiling superstitions; because the Lord will clearly distinguish between them.

Because I called. The Prophet again condemns the Jews for obstinacy, in not having suffered the Lord to correct them. This is the only remedy that remains for correcting our vices, that we hear the Lord speaking, when he endeavors to bring us back into the right way; but when we sear and harden our hearts, it is the worst of all evils. Whenever therefore men prefer their own inventions to the ordinances and commandments of God, they openly despise God, to whose will they ought to have yielded. This is especially the case when there is added such obstinate hardness of heart as shuts the door against holy warnings, and it is vain for them to allege that they cannot displease God by doing that which they undertake for the purpose of worshipping him; for all that men, by neglecting the word, choose and follow, the Lord rejects and abhors.

Before mine eyes. He repeats what he had formerly said, that the Jews sinned in the sight of God, as if they had resolved to provoke him to anger. At length he adds their manner of doing so, that, with perverse desire, they sought what God had forbidden; nor is it without good reason that he so frequently censures the wicked insolence of men, in defrauding God of his right, by treating contemptuously what he approves.

5. *Hear the word of Jehovah.* He directs his discourse to the true worshippers of God, and promises to them what they could scarcely have expected during those terrible calamities; and he expressly addresses them, because at that time there were many who falsely boasted of the name of God. Nay more, leaving the undistinguished multitude, he directs his discourse separately to a small number, as he formerly said,

"Seal the law, bind the testimony among my disciples."
(Isaiah 8:16.)

Ye who tremble at my word. He points out the true and sincere children of God, by this mark, that they "tremble at the word of the Lord." This indeed is an uncommon virtue; and therefore he contrasts it with the false profession of those who, by bearing the outward mark of circumcision, wished to be reckoned among the people of God, and made a great profession and show of holiness; that we may know that they alone reverence and fear God

[464] "Et leur feray venir les choses qu'ils craignoyent." "And will bring (or cause to come) upon them the things which they dreaded."

[465] "Je feray qu ils cognoistront avoir failli, tellement que ce qu ils craignoyent leur tombera dessus la teste." "I will cause them to know that they have been mistaken, and that what they dreaded has fallen on their own head."

who reverence and fear his holy word; that is, who, in consequence of being powerfully impressed by hearing the voice of God, constrain all their senses to obey; for this is a remarkable proof of godliness.

Your brethren said. Because it is customary with hypocritical worshippers of God to make loud boasting of their pompous ritual, the design of the Prophet is, to arm and fortify believers for enduring their attacks, that they may not give way when they are mocked and insulted. As if he had said, "You have to contend not only with foreign nations, but with domestic foes, who hold a place in the Church, and who are bound by the tie of brotherhood on account of the covenant of God which is common to you all. If they mock at your simplicity in the same manner as they haughtily despise God himself, you must boldly and fearlessly resist that temptation." He therefore calls them "brethren," although they were enemies of believers and of the word of God, for it is by way of concession that he gives to them that name which they falsely usurped. Hence we infer that this is not a new evil, that enemies, who bear the name of brethren, are nourished in the bosom of the Church. This internal war must be incessantly carried on with hypocrites, who cannot patiently endure that we shall worship God with an honest and upright conscience.

Casting you out for the sake of my name. Literally, "bidding you begone." As we see the Pope thundering dreadfully against us, as if we had been base and worthless persons; so hypocrites were casting out the small number of believers; for, being superior in number, authority, and wealth, they likewise exercise that tyranny in such a manner that they approve or disapprove of everything according to their own caprice, and cause that believers may be reckoned as of no value, whom they not only overwhelm by their vast numbers, as the chaff does the wheat, but also trample proudly under their feet.

Let Jehovah be glorified. Or, in the future tense, "Jehovah will be glorified." Others translate it, "Jehovah is severe;" but let us see which is the preferable meaning. They who translate it, "Jehovah is severe," think that wicked men complain of God's excessive severity, in not sparing his people and in acting severely toward them; and they think that by this word the people were tempted to despair; for, when wicked men endeavor to turn us aside from God, they take away all hope and confidence of salvation. But I give the preference to either of the other two expositions. That which is most generally approved is the following. Wicked men laughed at the prophecies and promises, because that glory which the Prophets had so frequently mentioned was nowhere to be seen; as if they had said, "Let the Lord display some testimony of his glory, that we may safely rely on it;" and therefore the Prophet wishes to arm believers against such blasphemy, that they may not allow their faith to be overturned by the sneers of wicked men. But this passage might be appropriately and perhaps more correctly interpreted to mean, that wicked men have promised very great things for themselves, as

if by their good deeds they had deserved God's favor, as Amos 5:18 also reproaches them, that, while they fearlessly provoke God, they confidently trust that he will be gracious to them. Since, therefore, relying on their sacrifices, they scorned all threatenings, and boasted that God would assist them, he replies that they shall see the glory of God in a very different manner.[466]

But he will be seen to your joy. As if he had said, "God, by his coming, will cause believers to know that they have not hoped in vain; for he will appear for the advantage of believers, and for the destruction of those who maintain that he will appear as the defender of wickedness, of which he will be the severe avenger. The former shall enjoy gladness and consolation, while the latter shall be ashamed and shall blush, for they shall quickly feel that the judgment of God, which they now laugh at, is at hand."

6. *A voice of tumult from the city, a voice from the temple.* He confirms the preceding statement; namely, that God hath not threatened in vain, that he will speedily come to take vengeance on hypocrites, in order that what has been promised concerning gladness may be more eagerly expected by believers. It is uncertain what are the enemies whom he describes; for this passage may be explained as relating to the Babylonians, whose destruction was the deliverance of his Church. It may also be explained as relating to other enemies, who were nourished in the bosom of the Church; and I am more favorable to this opinion, though I do not deny that it may be viewed in reference to any kind of enemies. But he has in his eye domestic foes, of whom he had formerly spoken, who disdained the voice of God continually addressing them by the mouth of the prophets. He therefore threatens that they shall speedily hear another and more terrible voice; but there is immediately added a mitigation, that the same terror may not discourage the believing servants of God.

The meaning may be thus summed up. "In vain do wicked men boast and set their own obstinacy in opposition to the judgments of God, for they shall not escape his hand, and even 'from the temple,' which was their lurking-place of false confidence, his voice shall come forth, and believers will then receive the fruit of their patience." Would that we did not at the present day experience similar contempt in hypocrites, who set at nought all remonstrances and threatenings, and have no respect for the word of God! To them, therefore, instead of the mild and gentle voice which they now hear, we are compelled to threaten "a tumultuous voice," which they shall one day hear from other and very different masters; for since the world, with irreligious scorn, disdains the word of God, it shall be constrained not only to hear, but likewise to experience, an armed voice, that is, fire and sword.

7. *Before she travailed, she brought forth.* Having formerly comforted believers, that they might not be discouraged by the insolence and contempt

[466] "His verront la gloire de Dieu autrement qu'ils ne pensent." "They shall see the glory of God in a different manner from what they think."

of brethren, whom he would at length punish, and having thus commanded them to wait for the coming of the Lord with a steady and resolute heart, the Lord at the same time adds, that he will punish them in such a manner that, by their destruction, he will provide for the safety of believers. Nor does he speak of one or two men, but of the whole Church, which he compares to a woman. The same metaphor has already been sometimes employed by him; for God chiefly aims at gathering us into one body, that we may have in it a testimony of our adoption, and may acknowledge him to be a father, and may be nourished in the womb of the Church as our mother. This metaphor of a mother is therefore highly appropriate. It means that the Church shall be restored in such a manner that she shall obtain a large and numerous offspring, though she appear for a time to be childless and barren.

Before her pain came upon her. He repeats the same statement which he has already employed on other occasions; but he expresses something more, namely, that this work of God shall be sudden and unexpected; for he guards believers against carnal views, that they may not judge of the restoration of the Church according to their own opinion. Women carry a child in the womb for nine months, and at length give birth to it with great pain. But the Lord has a very different manner of bringing forth children; for he says that he will cause the child to see the light, before it be possible to perceive or discern it by any feeling of pain. On this account he likewise claims the whole praise for himself, because a miracle sets aside the industry of men.

She brought forth a male. He expressly mentions "a male," in order to describe the manly and courageous heart of these children; for he means that they shall be a noble offspring, and not soft or effeminate. In like manner we know that believers are regenerated by the Spirit of Christ, that they may finish, with unshaken fortitude, the course of their warfare; and in this sense Paul says that they "have not the spirit of timidity." (Romans 8:15.)

8. *Who hath heard such a thing?* He extols the greatness of the thing of which he has spoken; for he means that there shall be a wonderful and "unheard of" restoration of the Church; so that believers shall not judge of it from the order of nature, but from the grace of God; for when men reflect upon it: they think that it is like a dream, as the Psalmist says. (Psalm 126:1.) He does not mean that the Church shall be restored perfectly and in a moment; for the advancement of this restoration is great and long-continued, and is even slow in the estimation of the flesh; but he shews that even the beginning of it exceeds all the capacity of the human understanding. And yet he does not speak hyperbolically; for we often see that the Church brings forth, which previously did not appear to be pregnant. Nay more, when she is thought to be barren, she is rendered fruitful by the preaching of the gospel; so that we greatly admire the event, when it has happened, which formerly we reckoned to be altogether incredible.

These things were fulfilled in some measure, when the people returned from Babylon; but a far brighter testimony was given in the gospel, by the

publication of which a diversified and numerous offspring was immediately brought forth. In our own times, have we not seen the fulfillment of this prophecy? How many children has the Church brought forth during the last thirty years, in which the gospel has been preached? Has not the Lord his people, at the present day, in vast numbers, throughout the whole world? Nothing, therefore, has been here foretold that is not clearly seen.

Shall a nation be born at once? He illustrates the glory of the miracle by a metaphor. No "nation" ever came into the world in an instant; for it is by degrees that men assemble, and grow in number, and spread their nation. But the case is very different with the Church, which all at once, and in more than one place, brings forth a vast number of children. It amounts to this, that God, in a wonderful manner, will cause innumerable children of the Church, in an extraordinary manner, to be born all at once and suddenly.

Shall a land be brought forth in one day? The word {ארץ}, (*eretz*,) "a land," may be taken either for any country, or for its inhabitants.

9. *Do I bring to the birth?* As in the preceding verse he extolled in lofty terms the work of God, so he now shews that it ought not to be thought incredible, and that we ought not to doubt of his power, which surpasses all the order of nature; for, if we consider who it is that speaks, and how easy it is for him to perform what he has promised, we shall not remain in such uncertainty as not instantly to recollect that the renewal of the world is in the hand of him, who would have no difficulty in creating a hundred worlds in a moment. A little before, by a burst of astonishment, he intended to magnify the greatness of the work. But now, lest the minds of good men should be perplexed or embarrassed, he exhorts them to consider his strength; and, in order that he may more fully convince them that nothing is so difficult in the eyes of men as not to be in his power and easily performed by him, he brings forward those things which we see every day; for in a woman's bringing forth a child we see clearly his wonderful power. Shall not the Lord manifest himself to be far more wonderful in enlarging and multiplying the Church, which is the principal theater of his glory? It is therefore exceedingly wicked to limit his strength, by believing that he is less powerful, when he shall choose to act directly and by openly stretching out his hand, than when he acts by natural means.

10. *Rejoice ye with Jerusalem.* He promises that they who formerly were sad and melancholy shall have a joyful condition; for Isaiah has in view not his own age, but the time of the captivity, during which believers continually groaned, and, overwhelmed with grief, almost despaired; and therefore he exhorts and stimulates to joy all believers, who are moved by strong affection toward the Church, and reckon nothing more desirable than her prosperity. In this way he instructs them that none shall have a share in so valuable a blessing but they who are prompted by a godly love of the Church, and desire to seek her deliverance, and that too when she is contemptible in the eyes of the world; as the Psalmist says,

"For thy meek ones love her stones, and will have compassion on her dust." (Psalm 102:14.)

And therefore he adds, —

All ye that mourn for her; for, since in the captivity there was frightful and shocking desolation, and there appeared to be no longer any hope of safety, he arouses believers, and bids them be of good cheer, or at least prepare themselves for joy. And this exhortation contains also a promise and something more, for a bare promise would not have carried so much weight. But those statements must not be limited exclusively to a single period; for we ought to abide by the general rule, of which we have often spoken already, namely, that those promises must be extended from the return of the people down to the reign of Christ, and to the full perfection of that reign.

11. *That ye may suck.* This verse ought to be joined with the preceding verse; for the Prophet explains what shall be the occasion of joy, namely, because the wretched and miserable condition of the Church shall be changed into a happy and prosperous condition. By the word "suck" he makes an allusion to young infants; as if he had said, "That you may enjoy your mother with every advantage, and may hang on her breasts." Here all believers, whatever may be their age, are compared by him to children, that they may remember their infirmity and may be confirmed by the strength of the Lord; and therefore this metaphor of "sucking" and "milking" ought to be carefully observed.

From the breast of her consolations. Some take the word "consolations" in an active, and others in a passive sense; but I prefer to adopt the passive signification; for he means the consolations which the Church has received, and of which he makes his children partakers. And indeed none can be greater or more abundant, none can be more excellent, than that ground of joy; and this appears more clearly from the following clause, "that ye may be delighted with the brightness of her glory."

12. *I cause peace to flow on her like a river.* He continues his metaphor, and compares the children of God to infants, that are carried in the arms, and warmed in the bosom of their mothers, who even play with them. And in order that he may express more strongly his affection toward us, he compares himself to a mother, whose love, as we have formerly seen, (page 30,) exceeds every other by a wide interval. (Isaiah 49:15.) The Lord wishes to be to us in the room of a mother, that, instead of the annoyances, reproaches, distresses, and anxieties, which we have endured, he may treat us gently, and, as it were, fondle us in his bosom. By the word "peace" he means prosperity.

And the glory of the Gentiles as an overflowing torrent. The word "glory" contains a repetition, by which he denotes every kind of riches, so that nothing is wanting to full and perfect peace; for, since the Gentiles had formerly lived luxuriously, and had enjoyed a vast abundance of everything desirable, he affirms that all riches, and everything that belongs to a happy life, shall

be possessed by believers, as the rivers run into the sea. By "constant flowing" he denotes continuance; for, since God is an inexhaustible fountain, his peace differs widely from the peace of the world, which quickly passes away and is dried up. Whenever therefore we behold the sad and melancholy condition of the Church, let us remember that these promises relate to us not less than to that people. Seeing that the Lord has rivers of peace which he wishes to cause to flow into his Church, let us not despair even amidst the fiercest wars; but, in our distresses and straits, let us cheer our hearts and rejoice. When he takes pleasure in us as infants, and not as men of mature age, we ought to acknowledge our condition, that we may be satisfied with such consolations. And indeed it is a token of remarkable condescension that he thus bears with our weakness.

13. *As a man* [467] *whom his mother comforteth.* It is wonderful that the Prophet, who appeared to have already spoken enough about this renewal, dwells on it so largely. But, because he can neither express the greatness and warmth of the love which God bears toward us, nor satisfy himself with speaking about it, for that reason he mentions and repeats it frequently.

And you shall have consolation in Jerusalem. There are two ways in which this may be explained. It may be said that believers shall have joyful hearts, when they shall behold the Church restored; or, that the Church, after having been restored, shall discharge her duty by gladdening her children. I prefer the latter interpretation, though either of them is admissible. The former appears to be a richer interpretation; but we must consider what the Prophet meant, and not what we think the most beautiful. In the first place, indeed, he makes God the author of the joy, and justly; but, in the second place, he adds that Jerusalem is his handmaid. But this is not addressed to irreligious scorners, who are not moved by any solicitude about the Church, but to those who, with holy zeal, declare that they are her children.

14. *And ye shall see.* By the word "see," he expresses undoubted experience, that believers may not doubt as to the result, but, embracing this prediction with full belief, may patiently endure for a time the barrenness of the Church.

And your bones shall flourish as grass. He illustrates his former statement by a metaphor, saying that "their bones" shall regain their former vigor, as faded "grass" becomes fresh and green again. He mentions the "bones," which are commonly dried up by a melancholy spirit, (Proverbs 17:22,) and, on the other hand, are replenished and invigorated by a happy and cheerful disposition. Thus he describes an ardent and invaluable joy, and seems to allude to the sadness by which believers had been almost dried up during

[467] "The English version, which in multitudes of cases inserts 'man' where the original expression is indefinite, (translating {οὐδείς}, for example, always 'no man') here reverses the process, and dilutes 'a man' to 'one.' The same liberty is taken by many other versions, old and new, occasioned no doubt by a feeling of the incongruity of making a full-grown man the subject of maternal consolations. The difficulty might, if it were necessary, be avoided by explaining {אישׁ} (ish) to mean a man-child, as it does in Genesis 4:1; 1 Samuel 1:11; and in many other cases. But the truth is, that the solecism, which has been so carefully expunged by these translators, is an exquisite trait of patriarchal manners, in their primitive simplicity. Compare Genesis 24:67; Judges 17:2; 1 Kings 2:19, 20, and the affecting scenes between Thetis and Achilles in the Iliad." — Alexander.

the captivity, and had become like dead men. The Lord therefore comforts them, and promises that the Church shall flourish, and shall abound in everything that is desirable; as if bones, that wanted moisture, should regain their former vigor, or as grass, which appears to be dead during the winter, recovers its freshness every year.

And the hand of Jehovah shall be known toward his servants. That they may cherish confidence, he nexts bids them rise to God, who will then reveal his assistance. It follows from this, that the hand of God has not always been known, but has sometimes remained concealed, as if he had no care about his people. At first sight, he appeared to have cast them off; for Daniel, and other good men, (Daniel 1:6,) not less than Zedekiah, (Jeremiah 52:9,) were carried into captivity. He says, that when the fine weather shall smile upon them, there shall be such a distinction between the good and the bad, as to make manifest this hand, which formerly was in some measure hidden; because he will no longer conceal himself, or permit the wicked to ravage without control, but will openly shew how great is his solicitude about his people. If therefore for a time the enemies have the superiority, and pursue their lawless course without being punished, if we appear to be overlooked and destitute of all assistance, let us not despair; for the time will come when the Lord will reveal himself, and will rescue us from their assaults and tyranny.

15. *For, lo, Jehovah will come in fire.* The object of this ({ὑποτύπωσις}) lively description is, that believers, when they see worthless men laughing at their distresses, and growing more and more insolent, may not on that account turn aside from the right path, or lose courage; for he intended not only to smite wicked men, who are moved by no threatenings, and scorn all instruction, [468] but to comfort good men, that they may feel that they are happy, because they are under God's protection; and may not attach themselves to the wicked on account of the prosperity of all their undertakings. Their advantage is, therefore, what he has chiefly in view, that they may be satisfied with God's protection and grace. But it may admit of doubt whether or not he includes the last judgment, along with the temporal punishments with which he now begins to chastise the wicked. For my own part, I have no doubt that he intends to include that judgment also, along with those which were only the forerunners of eternal destruction.

Will come. This began to be accomplished, when, by carrying away the people to Babylon, God took vengeance on domestic foes. Next, when the time of the deliverance was accomplished, he attacked more severely the wicked Gentiles by an armed force, and ceased not to give other and various proofs of his approach, by which he shewed himself to be present with the elect people, and came in fire to judge their enemies. Lastly, we know that he will come in fire at the last day, to take vengeance on all the wicked. But this passage ought not to be limited to the last judgment, so as to include

[468] "Et se moquent de tout ce qu'on leur dit." "And mock at everything that is said to them."

all the rest. Yet these threatenings, as we shall see soon afterwards, are especially directed by the Prophet against hypocritical Jews.

These metaphorical expressions are very customary in Scripture; for we could not comprehend this dreadful judgment of God in any other way than by the Prophets employing metaphors drawn from known and familiar objects. (2 Thessalonians 1:8; 2 Peter 3:7.) By means of them the prophets endeavor to make a deep impression on our senses, that, struck with the true fear of God, we may not envy the wicked, for whom such dreadful vengeance is prepared. Hence we see how trivial and useless are the speculations of the Sophists, who dispute about the refined nature and qualities of that fire; for the design of Scripture is to point out to us under figures the dreadful judgment of God, which otherwise we could not imagine or understand. This is still more evident from the word "sword," in the following verse; for it conveys the same meaning.

16. *For Jehovah will judge in fire.* Here he brings forward nothing new, but merely confirms the former statement, and shews that this judgment will be dreadful; that none may think that it is a matter of small importance. Accordingly, he describes that horror in strong language, that the wicked may fear, and that believers, on the other hand, may keep themselves holy and chaste, and may withdraw from the society of the wicked. Yet let them endure patiently the unjust and cruel attacks of enemies, till the armed avenger come forth front heaven. [469]

And many shall be the slain of Jehovah. He threatens the destruction of all men, so that there may be a prodigious mass of corpses. And he expressly added this, because ungodliness reigned everywhere, and believers were subjected to a dangerous temptation on account of the prosperity of the wicked; for such is the fickleness of our minds, that we allow ourselves to be led away by a bad custom, and are alarmed by a multitude, as if it were sufficient for restraining the hand of God. This sinful fear the Prophet corrects by reminding' them, that the more ungodliness shall abound, and the greater the number of wicked men, so much the more will the wrath of the Lord be kindled, that he may make a greater and more extensive slaughter; and the multitude and conspiracy of the ungodly shall not hinder him from carrying them away by the same ruin.

17. *They who sanctify themselves.* He now describes those enemies of whom he said, that God's anger would be kindled against them; for it might have been doubtful whether he spoke of foreign and avowed enemies, or directed his discourse to the despisers of God, although they had been mixed with those who were elect and holy; and therefore he plainly addresses the false and degenerate Jews. Nor have I any doubt that, in the first place, he rebukes hypocrites, and, in the second place, when he says, "Who eat swine's flesh," he describes men of immoral lives, that is, those who were

[469] "Jusques a tant que Dieu vienne du ciel a main armee pour en faire vengeance." "Till God come from heaven with an armed force, to take vengeance on them."

openly wicked and grossly licentious. Hypocrites sanctified themselves, that is, assumed false disguises of holiness, and deceived many under this pretense.

They *purified themselves in the gardens;* that is, they polluted themselves with various superstitions, although they imagined that, by means of those superstitions, they rendered themselves pure in the sight of God. Others, without any reserve, despised God and all religion. It is therefore a general statement, in which he includes all the ungodly, to whatever class they may belong; that is, both those who openly display their wickedness, and those who hide and cover it by various disguises.

Behind one in the midst. [470] Some commentators supply the word "pool," or "laver;" as if holy water had been placed "in the midst" of the garden for ablutions. But another meaning would be equally appropriate; that every one chose a God for himself exclusively, and therefore every one out of many trees had his own tree.

18. *For I — their works, and their thoughts.* [471] He confirms what he said in the preceding verse; namely, that punishment shall be executed on all the ungodly, in order that, although the Lord permit them for a time to sin with impunity, yet believers, being convinced that they shall one day be punished, may guard against following their example. The Lord here testifies that he sees and observes their works, and that one day he will actually manifest that none can be concealed from his eyes. Others understand by it that the ungodly can accomplish nothing without God's permission. That statement is indeed true, but is not applicable to this passage; for everybody sees that it is unnatural, and at variance with the context of the Prophet, who merely confirms what he formerly said, that hypocrites and wicked men shall not finally escape with impunity, because God perceives all their actions, and schemes, and thoughts; and that they gain nothing by their evasions, as if they were never to be dragged to the judgment.

Because the time is come. These words confirm still more what has been already said, for he says that the time is at hand when he shall assemble all the nations, that he may cast off the hypocrites and ungodly, and gather and adopt a people to himself from among them. The Jews were puffed up with pride, and despised all other nations as unholy. But the Lord declares that he will adopt those nations, that they may be partakers of his glory, of which the Jews prove themselves to be unworthy.

This is a remarkable passage, which teaches us that God is not confined to any people, so as not to choose whomsoever he pleases, by casting off unbelievers whom he formerly called to himself. This is abundantly explained by Paul, (Romans 10:19; 11:25,) where he shews that we have come into a

[470] "Gessenius attaches to it here (as he does in 2 Samuel 4:6) the sense of the interior or court of an oriental house, and applies it to the edifice in which the lustrations were performed before entering the gardens; which may also be the meaning of the Septuagint version, {εἰς} {τοὺς} {κήπους}, {ἐν} {τοῖς} {προθύροις}. Maurer and others follow Scaliger, who makes it mean the midst of the grove or garden, where the idol was commonly erected. But Knobel, by ingeniously combining Genesis 42:5; Psalm 42:5; Psalm 68:26, makes it not improbable that "in the midst," means in the crowd or procession of worshippers." — Alexander.

[471] "Car je voy leurs oeuvres et leurs pensees." "For I see their works and their thoughts."

possession which was left empty, after the Jews were cast off through their unbelief. Isaiah now threatens them in this manner. "Think not that God is in want of peoples when you have revolted and have rendered yourselves unworthy of his grace, for he will have others; but he will shew that he is the judge, and will not finally permit you to abuse so great forbearance."

And they shall come. He says that "they shall come," because, being ingrafted by unity of faith, they shall be united in the Church with the true Jews, who have not swerved from the adoption; for, in consequence of the Jews being near to God, the Gentiles, who were at a distance, must be joined to them, that, by the removal of disagreement, they might become one body.

And shall see my glory. To "see the glory" of the Lord, is nothing else than to enjoy that grace which he had bestowed on the Jews; for the special privilege of that nation was, that they beheld the glory of God, and had tokens of his presence, he says that now the Gentiles, who had not enjoyed these benefits, shall see and behold that glory, for the Lord will reveal himself to all without exception.

19. *And I will place in them a sign.* This may be understood in two ways; either that God holds out a sign, or that by some symbol or mark he seals his own people, that they may be placed in safety. The former exposition is more generally approved, but some reason childishly about it as relating to the sign of the cross, while others refer it to the preaching of the Gospel. In my opinion both are mistaken; for he seems rather to allude to what, Moses tells us, happened at the departure and deliverance of the people. It is also declared (Revelation 7:3) that "as many as the Lord hath sealed" shall be safe, even when his anger shall be fiercely kindled throughout the whole world; just as they whose door-posts were marked in Egypt escaped safely. (Exodus 12:13.) And thus he shews that none can escape God's wrath, except the elect, on whom the Lord has impressed his mark and seal.

And will send some of them, being reserved. In a word, the Prophet heightens the description of what has been already said about the grievous and terrible vengeance which the Lord will execute on the ungodly; for all would have perished without distinction if the Lord had not marked some of them with his seal. From the general destruction of the whole nation, therefore, he says that he will reserve a small number. And this is the true meaning of the Prophet; just as he had said, in other passages, that he would rescue "a remnant" from the general conflagration. (Isaiah 1:9; 10:22.) Of this band, which had been reserved, he says that some shall be his heralds to celebrate his name among the Gentiles; just as we see that the doctrine of salvation, by the agency of a few, was spread far and wide.

To the nations of Tarshish, Pul, and Lud. By the name "Tarshish" he denotes Cilicia, and includes the whole coast of the Mediterranean Sea opposite to Judea. Others think that it denotes Africa and Cappadocia; but I rather adopt the former view. By Lud, some suppose Lydia to be meant; and others, Asia Minor. By "those who draw the bow" are meant the Parthi-

ans, because they were skillful in archery. By Tubal and Javan he denotes Italy and Greece, and by the Islands he denotes unknown countries; for by the name "Islands," as we have seen on many former occasions, the Jews denoted all that lay beyond the sea.

Which have not heard my name. He means that the knowledge of God shall be spread throughout the whole world; for the Greeks, Italians, Parthians, Cilicians, and other nations had heard nothing about pure religion and the true worship of God; and the whole world was plunged in the deepest darkness of ignorance. He therefore promises that the glory of God shall be known in every part of the world. The word "nations" is emphatic; for at that time the Lord was known to not more than one people, but now he has revealed himself to all.

20. *And they shall bring.* Here he clearly explains what was formerly said, namely, that all who shall escape and survive, though they be few in number, shall nevertheless be priests, who shall bring sacrifices to God from all places. He alludes to the ancient ceremony of the Law, though he points out the difference that will be between those oblations and the sacrifices of the ancient Law; for he appoints a new kind of punishment and new sacrifices. As he had said that he would gather all the nations, so he now shews that the priests, whom he had appointed, shall not labor in vain; for God will grant prosperity to their undertakings.

All your brethren. He gives the name of "brethren" to those who formerly were strangers; for he has in his eye the new relation which arises from faith. We know that foreign nations were ingrafted by faith into the family of Abraham. Yet others bring out a different meaning, which I do not absolutely reject. "When God shall gather a new people to himself out of foreign nations, the Jews, who had been scattered in all directions, shall be brought into one place." This was also accomplished; but it seems more appropriate to refer it to the calling of the Gentiles, because at that time, by the removal of the difference, a brotherly relation began to be established among all whom God wished to adopt to be his children. Abraham was the father of one nation, and yet not all who were descended from him according to the flesh are accounted his children; for the Ishmaelites and the Edomites were rejected. (Romans 9:7.) The time when he became "the father of many nations" (Genesis 17:5; Romans 4:17) was when God adopted the Gentiles, and joined them to himself by a covenant, that they might follow the faith of Abraham. And thus we see the reason why the Prophet gives the name of "brethren" of the Jews to us, who formerly were aliens from the Church of God. It is because he had previously cast out of their place false and reprobate brethren.

It is our duty to observe this fruit which is produced by the godly labors of those who faithfully serve the Lord, namely, that they "bring their brethren" from deadly errors to God, the fountain of life. By this consolation they ought to cheer their hearts, and to support them amidst the distresses and

tribulations which they endure. The Lord does not suffer any of his own people to perish. Thus it is a high enjoyment and privilege, when he wishes to make use of our labors for delivering our "brethren."

Out of all nations. He means that there shall no longer be any difference between Jews and Gentiles; because God will throw down "the partition-wall," (Ephesians 2:14,) and will form a Church "out of all nations." And thus was fulfilled the saying of David concerning Christ,

"Ask of me; I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance, and the ends of the earth for thy possession." (Psalm 2:8.)

When he speaks of the "holy mountain," he accommodates himself to the customs and usages of that period; for at Jerusalem God was worshipped in the temple. But now the temple is everywhere diffused; for everywhere we are at liberty to "lift up holy hands to God," (1 Timothy 2:8,) and there is no longer any distinction of places. He likewise mentions oblations and sacrifices, which were offered in the temple; although the sacrifices which are now to be offered differ widely from the ancient sacrifices. But the prophets, as we have frequently remarked, were under a necessity of borrowing comparisons from known and familiar objects. Formerly the sacrifices were taken from the flocks and herds; but the Apostles and other priests of Christ slew men themselves, and offered them as a living sacrifice to God by the Gospel. Paul testifies that he discharged the office of the priesthood, when he slew men by the sword of the Gospel, "that they might be an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit." (Romans 15:1 6.)

It is not therefore a legal priesthood, and does not resemble that of the Papists, who say that they sacrifice Christ; [472] but it is the priesthood of the Gospel, by which men are slain, in order that, being renewed by the Spirit, they may be offered to the Lord. Thus, whomsoever we can gain to Christ, we offer in sacrifice, that they may be wholly consecrated to God. Moreover, every person sacrifices when he devotes and dedicates himself to God, and offers to him unreserved obedience; and this is the sacrifice which Paul calls "reasonable." (Romans 12:1.) The end of our calling is here pointed out to be, that, washing away our pollutions, and being dead to ourselves, we may learn to devote ourselves to the cultivation of holiness.

With horses and chariots. There are some who endeavor to find an allegory here, and who think that the Prophet made use of the word "bring" on this account, that the Gospel does not constrain men by fear, but rather draws them gently, so that of their own accord they betake themselves to God, and run with cheerfulness and joy. But for my own part, I take a simpler view of this passage. Because this doubt might arise in the minds of many persons, "How is it possible that men shall come to us from countries so distant?" he replies, "Horses, chariots, and carriages shall not be wanting; for the Lord has at his command all that can be of service for assisting his people and conducting them to the end which he has in view." Yet I do not deny that

[472] "Qui se vantent de sacrifier Iesus Christ." "Who boast of sacrificing Jesus Christ."

the Gospel may be called a "chariot," because it conveys us to the hope of eternal life; but I think that the Prophet simply declares that nothing shall hinder God from gathering his Church, and that he will have at his command all the necessary means, that none of the elect whom he has called may fail in the middle of the course.

21. *And I will even take some of them for priests and Levites.* The Prophet heightens the description of that which he had already declared about the extraordinary grace of God. He had made known that the Church of God should be collected out of all nations, so that, in spite of every difficulty and obstruction, even distant nations should draw near to them. But now he proceeds further, and instructs them that the Gentiles shall not only be adopted by God, but shall also be elevated by him to the highest honor. Already it was a great honor, that unclean and polluted nations were reckoned to be a holy people; but now here is something far more wonderful, that they are elevated to the highest pinnacle of rank.

Hence we see that the priesthood under Christ is very different from what it was under the Law; for under the Law one tribe exclusively was admitted to the priesthood, and the Gentiles, as unclean, were so far from having it in their power to discharge that priesthood, that they were even forbidden to enter into the temple; but now all are admitted without distinction. Some expound this passage in a general manner, that the Gentiles shall be priests; that is, shall offer themselves to God, as Scripture frequently denominates all believers "a royal priesthood." (1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 1:6; 5:10.) But he appears to describe in an especial manner ministers and teachers whom the Lord also chose from among the Gentiles, and appointed to execute this distinguished office; that is, to preach the Gospel; such as Luke, Timothy, and others of the same class, who offered spiritual sacrifices to God by the Gospel.

22. *For as the new heavens.* Here he promises that the restoration of the Church shall be of such a nature that it shall last for ever. Many might be afraid that it would be ruined a second time; and therefore he declares that henceforth, after having been restored by God, its condition shall be permanent. Accordingly, he mentions here two benefits of surpassing excellence, restoration and eternity. When he speaks of "new heavens" and a "new earth," he looks to the reign of Christ, by whom all things have been renewed, as the Apostle teaches in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Now the design of this newness is, that the condition of the Church may always continue to be prosperous and happy. What is old tends to decay; what is restored and renewed must be of longer continuance. (Hebrews 8:13.)

So shall your seed and your name remain. God had promised that "the sun and moon," so long as they remained in heaven, should be witnesses of the eternal succession, that the posterity of David might not be cut off. But because some interruption arose from the treachery and ingratitude of the people, the restoration effected by Christ actually confirmed that prediction.

Justly, therefore, does Isaiah say, "Your sons shall succeed to you, and your grandsons shall succeed to your sons;" and as God will establish the world, that it may never perish, so the succession of the Church shall be perpetual, that it may be prolonged through all ages.

In a word, he explains what he had formerly said about renewing the world, that none may think that this relates to trees, or beasts, or the order of the stars; for it must be referred to the inward renewal of man. The ancients were mistaken when they thought that these things related absolutely to the last judgment; and they had not sufficiently weighed the context of the Prophet or the authority of the Apostle. Yet I do not deny that they extend as far as to that judgment, because we must not hope for a perfect restoration before Christ, who is the life of the world, shall appear; but we must begin higher, even with that deliverance by which Christ regenerates his people, that they may be new creatures. (2 Corinthians 7:1.)

23. *From a month to his month, and from a Sabbath to his Sabbath.* [473] The Prophet again points out what shall be the difference between the nature of the spiritual worship of God which shall be under the reign of Christ and of the carnal worship which was under the Law. Sacrifices were offered every month at the new moon. There were Sabbaths, and other festivals, and solemn days, which they carefully observed. But under the reign of Christ there shall be a constant and uninterrupted solemnity; for there are not fixed and stated days of sacrifices on which we must go to Jerusalem, or offer anything in one place or in another; but our oblations, festivals, and rejoicings are continued from day to day in unbroken succession. Yet he alludes to the ancient custom of sacrifices as we have already said that the prophets are frequently accustomed to do.

So then the Lord wishes to have "pure sacrifices" offered to him daily, (1 Peter 2:5,) not such as were formerly offered under the Law or are now offered by Papists, who either rely foolishly on their ceremonies, as if they were expiations of crime, or basely venture to sacrifice Christ, [474] but spiritual sacrifices, that we may reverence and adore God with a pure and sincere worship. (John 4:24.) As to the opinion held by some, that this passage proves the abrogation of the Law and of ancient ceremonies, it does not appear to me to rest on sufficient grounds, it is indeed certain that those legal ceremonies have been set aside, and that may be gathered from this passage; but in proof of that point I would choose to employ other passages which contain stronger evidence. There is only here a contrast between the Sabbath and festivals which were celebrated under the Law, and the perpetual Sabbath which we have at the present day. (Hebrews 4:9, 10.)

24. *And they shall go forth.* We must not here attempt to obtain subtle and ingenious interpretations; for he simply informs those who shall be

[473] "Depuis un mois jusques a un autre mois, et depuis un Sabbat jusques a son autre Sabbat." "From one month till another month, and from one Sabbath till his other Sabbath."

[474] "Ou mesmes d'une audace desesperee osent se vanter qu'ils sacrifient Jesus Christ." "Or even with desperate audacity dare to boast that they sacrifice Jesus Christ."

adopted into the Church that they shall see, all around them, the dreadful vengeance of God. Yet there is an implied contrast between the straits of the calamity and the free departure; as if he had said, "Out of the dark prison in which they had been confined they shall again come forth to the light."

And shall see the dead bodies of men. He does not mean that this slaughter shall take place in the assembly of believers; for this would greatly diminish the happiness of the Church, in which God displays all testimonies of joy and gladness. But as he formerly spoke of the perpetual glory by which he shall dignify his people, so he now threatens the punishment which he shall inflict on the reprobate, that the godly may be more careful to keep themselves in the fear of God.

And their fire shall not be extinguished. When he says that they shall be tormented by "fire," this mode of expression, as I have formerly remarked, [475] is metaphorical. And this is clearly evident from the succeeding clause; for worms will not be formed out of the earth to gnaw the hearts of unbelievers. The plain meaning, therefore, is, that the wicked shall have a bad conscience as an executioner, to torment them without end, and that torment awaits them greater than all other torments; and finally, that they shall tremble and be agitated in a dreadful and shocking manner, as if a worm were gnawing the heart of a man, or a fire were consuming it, and yet thus consumed, he did not die.

And they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh. Because the wicked are now held in the highest honor, and from their lofty position look down with contempt on good men, the Prophet threatens a shocking change; for, along with unutterable torments, they shall also endure the deepest disgrace; as it is just and right that they who despised and reproached the glory of God shall be loaded with every reproach, and shall be the objects of abhorrence to angels and to the whole world.

[475] Commentary on Isaiah, vol. 2 p. 387.

Historical Translation of Isaiah

Translation: Chapter 33

CHAPTER 33

1 Wo to thee that spoilest, And was not spoiled; Who dealest wickedly, And they dealt not wickedly with thee! When thou shalt have ceased to spoil, Thou shalt be spoiled; When thou shalt have ceased to deal wickedly, They shall deal wickedly with thee.

2 O Jehovah, have pity upon us; We have hoped in thee; Be thou, who hast been their arm in the morning, Our salvation also in the time of trouble.

3 At the voice of the tumult the people fled; At thy exaltation the nations were dispersed.

4 And your prey shall be gathered by your gathering of cater-pillars, Advancing thither, according to the running of locusts.

5 Jehovah is exalted, who dwelleth on high; He hath filled Zion with judgment And righteousness.

6 And the stability of thy times shall be Strength, salvation, wisdom, And knowledge; The fear of Jehovah is his treasure.

7 Behold, their messengers shall cry without; The ambassadors of peace shall weep bitterly.

8 The roads are deserted, The traveler hath ceased; He hath violated the treaty, He hath despised the cities, He hath paid no regard to any man.

9 The earth hath mourned And languished; Lebanon is ashamed And hewn down; Sharon hath been made like a wilderness; Bashan And Carmel have been shaken.

10 Now will I arise, saith Jehovah; Now will I be exalted; Now will I lift up myself.

11 Ye shall conceive chaff; Ye shall bring forth stubble; The fire of your breath shall devour you.

12 And the peoples shall be the burnings of lime; [476] As thorns cut up shall they be burnt in the fire.

13 Hear, ye that are far off, what I have done; Ye that are near, acknowledge my power.

14 The sinners in Zion are afraid; Terror hath seized the hypocrites. [477] Which of us [478] shall dwell with devouring fire? Which of us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?

15 He who walketh in righteousnesses And speaketh what is right; Who despiseth the gain from violence And calumny; Who shaketh his hands from accepting a bribe; Who stoppeth his ear, that he may not hear blood; Who shutteth his eyes, that he may not see evil.

16 He shall dwell in high places; Fortifications of rocks shall be his refuge; Bread shall be given to him, And his waters (shall be) sure.

17 Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty; They shall behold the land (that is) very far off.

18 Thine heart shall meditate terror. Where is the scribe? where is the weigher? Where is he who singleth out the principal houses?

19 The fierce people thou shalt not see, The people of a confused lip, so that thou canst not understand; Of a stammering tongue, so that thou canst not comprehend.

20 Look at Zion, the city of our solemnities; [479] Thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a peaceful habitation, A tent which shall not be carried away, The stakes of which shall never be removed, And of which none of the ropes shall be broken:

21 Thus, [480] shall the mighty Jehovah there be to us, A place of streams, of broad rivers, Through which there shall not pass a ship with oars, And through which a splendid ship shall not pass.

22 For Jehovah is our Judge; Jehovah is our Lawgiver; Jehovah is our King; He himself will save us.

23 Thy cords were loosed, So that they did not fasten their mast, Nor spread the sail; Then was the prey of much spoil divided; The lame also seized the prey.

24 And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick; The people that dwell in it have been freed from iniquity.

[476] Or, Who instead of us?
[477] Or, Of our assemblies.
[478] Or, For if.
[479] Or, He will come with the recompense of God.
[480] Or, To the forest of his plain.

Translation: Chapter 34

CHAPTER 34

1 Draw near, ye nations, to hear; And ye peoples, hearken. Let the earth hear, And its fullness; The world, And all its productions.

2 For the indignation of Jehovah is on all nations, And his fury on all their army; He hath destroyed them; He hath delivered them to slaughter.

3 Their slain shall be east out; And from their carcasses shall come up their stench; And the mountains shall melt on account of their blood.

4 And all the armies of heaven shall fade away, And shall be rolled up as a scroll. The heavens And all their armies shall fall down, As a leaf falleth down from a vine, And as it falleth from the fig-tree.

5 For my sword is made drunken in the heavens. Behold, it shall come down on Edom, Even on the people of my curse to judgment.

6 The sword of Jehovah hath been filled with blood; It hath been made fat with fatness; Even with the blood of lambs And of goats, With the fat of the kidneys of rams; For the sacrifice of Jehovah is on Bozrah, And a great slaughter in the land of Edom.

7 And the unicorns shall come down with them, And the bullocks with the bulls; And their land shall be made drunken with blood, And their dust shall be made fat with fatness.

8 For (it is) the day of vengeance of Jehovah, The year of recompenses for the cause of Zion.

9 And her streams shall be turned into pitch, And her dust into brimstone; And her land shall become burning pitch.

10 By night And by day it shall not be quenched; Its smoke shall continually go up; From generation to generation it shall lie waste; Tone shall pass through it for ever And ever.

11 Therefore shall the pelican And the owl take possession of it; The great

owl And the raven shall dwell in it; And he shall stretch over it the cord of emptiness, And the plummets of vanity.

12 They shall call her nobles without a kingdom, And all her princes shall be nothing.

13 In her palaces she shall bring forth thorns, And nettles And thistles in her fortresses; And she shall be a habitation for dragons, And an abode for the young ones of the ostrich.

14 And the wild beasts shall meet with the satyrs; And the screech-owl shall cry to his companion; There also shall the fairy dwell, And shall find for herself a peaceful abode.

15 There shall the owl make her nest, And lay, And hatch And gather her young under her shadow; Yea, there shall the vultures be gathered together, Every one with her mate.

16 Inquire at the book of Jehovah, And read. Not one of those shall fail; Tot one shall want her mate; For his mouth hath commanded, And his Spirit hath gathered them.

17 And he hath cast the lot for them; And his hand hath divided it to them for ever, as by a cord. Therefore they shall inhabit it; From generation to generation they shall dwell in it.

Translation: Chapter 35

CHAPTER 35

1 The wilderness And the desert shall be glad; The loathsome place shall rejoice, And shall flourish like the lily.

2 Flourishing it shall flourish, And shall even rejoice with rejoicing, And shall sing; The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, The beauty of Carmel And Sharon; They shall see the glory of Jehovah, The majesty of our God.

3 Strengthen ye the weak hands, Confirm the tottering knees.

4 Say to them that are trembling in heart, Be strong, fear not. Behold, your God will come with vengeance; God himself will come with a recompense, [481] And will save you.

5 Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened, And the ears of the deaf shall be opened.

6 Then shall the lame man leap like a stag, The tongue of the dumb mall shall sound loudly; For waters shall be digged in the desert, And rivers in the wilderness.

7 The dry place shall be changed into a pool, And the parched country into fountains of waters; And in the habitation of dragons, And in its lair, Shall be a place for the reed And the rush.

8 And a path shall be there, And a way, And it shall be called, The holy way. An unclean person shall not pass through it; And he shall be to them one that walketh in the way, That fools may not go astray.

9 There shall not be there a lion; Nor shall a wild beast go up by it; Neither shall it be found there; That the redeemed may walk.

10 Therefore shall the redeemed of Jehovah return, And shall come to Zion with rejoicing; And everlasting joy shall be on their head; And they

[481] Or, My ring.

shall obtain joy And gladness; And sorrow And sighing shall flee away.

Translation: Chapter 36

CHAPTER 36

1 It came to pass in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah, that Sennacherib, king of Assyria, came up against all the defended cities of Judah, And took them.

2 Then the king of Assyria sent Rabshakch from Lachish, with a powerful army, to Jerusalem, to king Hezekiah, who stood at the conduit of the upper pool in the way of the fullers field.

3 And there came out to him Eliakim, son of Hilkiah, who was over the house, And Shebna the chancellor, And Joab, the son of Asaph, the secretary.

4 And Rabshakeh said to them: Say now to Hezekiah? Thus saith the great king, the king of Assyria, What confidence is this in which thou trustest? I have said, (only a word of the lips.)

5 Counsel And strength for war. Now in whom hast thou trusted, that thou hast rebelled against me?

6 Behold, thou hast rusted in that broken staff of reed, on Egypt, on which if one lean, it will go into his hand And pierce it. Such is Pharaoh, king of Egypt, to all who have confidence in him.

7 And if thou shalt say to me, We trust in Jehovah our God; is it not, he whose high places And altars Hezekiah hath taken away, And hath said to Judah And Jerusalem, Ye shall worship before this altar?

8 Now, come, give a hostage to my master, the king of Assyria. I will give thee two thousand horses; wilt thou have horsemen to set upon them?

9 And how dost thou despise the face of one captain of the least of my masters servants, And place thy confidence in Egypt for chariots And horsemen?

10 And have I now come up without Jehovah to this land, to destroy it? Jehovah said to me: Go up against this land, to destroy it.

11 Then said Eliakim, And Shebna, And Joah, to Rabshakeh: Speak, I pray, to thy servants, in the Syrian language, (for we understand it,) And speak not to us in the Jewish language, in the hearing of the people who are on the wall.

12 And Rabshakeh said: Hath my master sent me to thy master And to thee to speak those words? Is it not to the men who sit on the wall, that they may eat their own dung, And drink their own urine with you?

13 Therefore Rabshakeh stood, And cried with a loud voice in the Jewish language, And said: Hear the words of the great king, the king of Assyria.

14 Thus saith the king, Let not Hezekiah impose upon you, for he will not be able to deliver you.

15 And let not Hezekiah make you trust in Jehovah, saying, By delivering will Jehovah deliver us; this city shall not be given up into the hand of the king of Assyria.

16 Listen not to Hezekiah; for thus saith the king of Assyria, Make with me a blessing, And come out; And let every one eat of his own vine, And let every one eat of his own fig-tree, And let every one drink the waters of his own well.

17 Till I come And take you into a land like your own land, a land of corn And wine, a land of bread And vineyards.

18 Lest perhaps Hezekiah deceive you, saying, Jehovah will deliver us. Have any of the gods of the nations delivered their land out of the hand of the king of Assyria?

19 Where is the god of Hamath And Arpad? Where is the god of Sepharvaim? Have they delivered Samaria out of my hand?

20 Who is there among all the gods of those lands that hath delivered his land out of my hand; that Jehovah should rescue Jerusalem out of my hand?

21 They were silent, And did not answer him a word; for this was the commandment of the king, Do not answer him.

22 Then came Eliakim, who was over the house And Shebna the chancellor, And Joab, the son of Asaph, the secretary, to Hezekiah, with rent garments, And told him the words of Rabshakeh.

Translation: Chapter 37

CHAPTER 37

1 Now, it came to pass, that Hezekiah, when he heard this rent his clothes, And covered himself with sackcloth, And went into the house of Jehovah.

2 At the same time he sent Eliakim, who was over the palace, And Shebna the chancellor, and the eldest of the priests, covered with sackcloth, to Isaiah the son of Amoz, the prophet.

3 Who said to him, Thus saith Hezekiah, This is a day of trouble, and of rebuke, And of blasphemy; for the children have come to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth.

4 If, perhaps, Jehovah thy God will hear the words of Rabshakeh, whom his master, the king of Assyria, hath sent to curse the living God, And to rebuke with words which Jehovah thy God hath heard. Thou shalt therefore lift up a prayer for the remnant that is still left.

5 The servants of King Hezekiah came to Isaiah.

6 And Isaiah said to them, Thus shall ye say to your master: Thus saith Jehovah, Fear not the words which thou hast heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have reproached me.

7 Behold, I will bring a wind upon him; for he shall hear a report, And shall return to his own land; And I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.

8 And Rabshakeh, having returned, found the king of Assyria besieging Libnah; for he had heard that he was departed from Lachish.

9 And hearing concerning Tirhakah, king of Ethiopia, He hath gone out to fight against thee; after having heard it, he sent messengers to Hezekiah, saying:

10 Thus shall ye say to Hezekiah king of Judah: Let not thy God, in whom thou trustest, deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be given up

into the hand of the king of Assyria.

11 Behold, thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria have done to at hands, how they have destroyed them; And shalt thou be delivered?

12 Have the gods of the nations delivered those whom my fathers destroyed, Gozan, And Itaran, And Rezeph, And the children of Edom, who were in Telassar?

13 Where is the king of Hamath, the king of Arphad, the king of the city of Sepharvaim, of Hena And Iva?

14 Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, And read it, And went up to the house of Jehovah, and spread it before Jehovah.

15 Then Hezekiah prayed to God, saying:

16 O Jehovah of hosts, God of Israel, who dwellest between the cherubim, thou alone art God over all the kingdoms of the earth; thou hast made heaven And earth.

17 Incline thine ear, O Jehovah, And hear; open thine eyes, O Jehovah, And see; And hear all the words of Sennacherib, who hath sent to reproach the living God.

18 Truly, O Jehovah, the kings of Assyria have destroyed all the nations, And their land,

19 And have cast their gods into the fire; for they were not gods, but the work of men's hands, wood, And stone; therefore they have destroyed them.

20 And now, O Jehovah our God, save us from his hand; that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou alone art Jehovah.

21 Then Isaiah, the son of Amoz, sent to Hezekiah, saying: Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, Since thou hast prayed to me concerning Sennacherib, king of Assyria;

22 This is the word which Jehovah hath spoken concerning him: The virgin daughter of Zion hath despised thee, hath laughed at thee; The daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee. Whom hast thou reproached?

23 And whom hast thou blasphemed? Against whom hast thou exalted thy Voice, And lifted up thy hands on high? Even against the Holy One of Israel.

24 By the hand of thy servants thou hast reproached the Lord, And hast said, By the multitude of my chariots I will go up, To the heights of the mountains, To the sides of Lebanon; I will cut down the tallest of her cedars, Her choice firs; Then will I come to the height of his border, And even to his level forest. [482]

25 I will dig, And will drink waters; With the sole of my feet I will dry up all the lakes of the siege.

26 Hast thou not heard that I made it long ago, That I formed it from ancient days? And should I now bring it to be a desolation, To be heaps of ruins, like fortified cities?

27 For their inhabitants were maimed, Were terrified And confounded;

[482] Or, While he was worshipping in the temple of Nisroch, his god.

They were made like the grass of the field And the green herb, Like the grass of the house-tops, which withereth before it is ripe.

28 I know thy sitting down, And thy going out, And thy entrance, And thy indignation against me.

29 Because thou wast angry against me, Thy tumult hath come up into my ears. Therefore will I put my hook [483] in thy nostril, And my bridle ill thy lips, And will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest.

30 And this shall be a sign to thee; Thou shalt eat this year that which groweth of itself, And in the second year that which springeth up of itself; And in the third year ye shall sow And reap, And shall plant vineyards, And eat the fruit of them.

31 And that which shall be preserved of the house of Judah, And that which shall be left, Shall vet strike root downward, And shall bear fruit upward.

32 For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, And that which shall be preserved of Mount Zion. The zeal of Jehovah of hosts will do this.

33 Therefore thus saith Jehovah concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not enter into this city, Nor throw an arrow into it; And he who is defended by a shield shall not seize it, Nor cast a balister against it.

34 By the way that he came shall he return, And shall not enter into this city, saith Jehovah.

35 And I will be a protector to this city, To save it, for my own sake, And for the sake of my servant David.

36 And the angel of Jehovah went forth, And smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred And eighty-five thousand; And when the people arose early in the morning, behold, they were all corpses of dead men.

37 Then Sennacherib, king of Assyria, departed, And went, And returned, And dwelt in Nineveh.

38 And it came to pass, while he was worshipping his god in the temple of Nisroch, [484] that his sons, Adrammeleeh And Sharezar, smote him with the sword, And fled into the land of Armenia; And Esarhaddon his son reigned in his stead.

[483] Or, Give charge to thy house.

[484] "Et Ezechias pleura amerement." "And Hezekiah wept bitterly."

Translation: Chapter 38

CHAPTER 38

1 In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, came to him, And said to him: Thus saith Jehovah, Give charge concerning thy house; [485] for thou shalt die, And shalt not live.

2 Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall, And prayed to Jehovah.

3 And he said, I beseech thee, O Jehovah, remember now that I have walked before thee in truth, And with a perfect heart, And have done what was right in thine eyes. And Hezekiah wept with sore weeping. [486]

4 Then was communicated the word of Jehovah to Isaiah, saying,

5 Go, And say to Hezekiah: Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Jacob thy father: I have heard thy prayer, And have seen thy tears: Behold, I add to thy days fifteen years.

6 And I will deliver thee And this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria; And I will be a protector to this city.

7 And this shall be a sign to thee from Jehovah, that Jehovah will do this thing, of which he hath spoken:

8 Behold, I bring back the shadow of degrees, by which it hath gone down on the sun-dial of Ahaz, ten degrees. And he sun went back on the sundial ten degrees, by which it had already gone down.

9 The writing of Hezekiah, king of Judah, when he had been sick, And had recovered from his sickness.

10 I said in the cutting off of my days, I shall go to the gates of the grave; I am deprived of the residue of my years.

11 I said, I shall not see God, God in the land of the living; I shall no longer behold man with the inhabitants of the world.

[485] Or, Through leanness; or, Through sickness; or, By taking away.
[486] Or, I determined; or, I laid down.

12 Sly habitation is departed, And is removed from me as a shepherds tent; I have cut off; as a weaver, my life: From lifting up [487] he will cut me off; From day even to night wilt thou make an end of me.

13 I reckoned [488] till the dawn; As a lion, so he hath broken my bones; From the dawn till night thou wilt make an end of me.

14 As a crane or a swallow, I chattered; I mourned as a dove. My eyes were lifted up on high, O Lord, it hath oppressed me; comfort me.

15 What shall I say? He who hath spoken to me hath done it. I shall be moved [489] all the days of my life In the bitterness of my soul.

16 O Lord, by all who shall live beyond those (years) Shall the life of my spirit (be known;) And that thou didst cause me to sleep, And didst make me alive.

17 Behold, in peace my bitterness was bitter; And thou hast been pleased (to rescue) my soul from the pit; [490] For thou hast east behind thy back all my sins.

18 For hell shall not confess thee; Death shall not praise thee; They that go down into the pit shall not wait for thy truth.

19 The living, the living, he shall confess to thee, As I (do) this day; The father to the sons shall make known thy truth.

20 Jehovah to save me; And we will sing our songs All the days of our life in the house of Jehovah.

21 Now, Isaiah had said, They shall take a mass of figs, and apply it to the boil, And they shall live.

22 For [491] Hezekiah had said, What is the sign that I shall go up into the house of the Lord?

[487] Or, I shall walk trembling.
[488] Or, Thou hast loved my soul from the pit of destruction.
[489] Or, Now.
[490] Or, Her misery is ended.
[491] Or, Was saying.

Translation: Chapter 39

CHAPTER 39

1 At that time Merodach-Baladan, son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters And a present to Hezekiah, after having heard that he had been sick, And was recovered.

2 And Hezekiah was glad on account of them, And showed to them the house of his treasure, silver, And gold, And spices, precious ointment, And all his armory, And all that was contained in his treasures; there was not anything in his house, And in all his kingdom, which Hezekiah did not show.

3 Then came Isaiah the prophet to king Pezekiah, And said to him, What did those men say. And whence came they to thee. Hezekiah answered, They came to me from a distant country, from Babylon.

4 Then he said, What have they seen in thy house? And Hezekiah said, They have seen all that is in my house; And there is nothing in my treasures which I have not showed to them.

5 Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, Hear the word of Jehovah of hosts:

6 Behold, the days come, that all that is in thy house, And all that thy fathers have treasured up till this day, shall be carried to Babylon; And nothing shall be left, saith Jehovah.

7 Of thy sons which shall issue from thee, whom thou shalt beget, shall they take; And they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.

8 Hezekiah said to Isaiah, Good is the word of Jehovah which thou hast spoken. And he said, At least there shall be peace And permanency in my days.

Translation: Chapter 40

CHAPTER 40

1 Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, Saith your God.

2 Speak ye according to the heart of Jerusalem; And cry to her, That her warfare is accomplished; That her iniquity [492] is pardoned; For she hath received at the hand of Jehovah Double for all her sins.

3 A voice crying in the wilderness, Prepare the way of Jehovah; Make straight in the desert a path for our God.

4 Every valley shall be exalted, And every mountain And hill shall be laid low; And the crooked shall be made straight, And the rough places shall become a plain.

5 And the glory of Jehovah shall be revealed, And all flesh shall see it together; That the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it.

6 The voice said, [493] Cry; And I said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, And all the goodliness of it as the flower of the field.

7 The grass is withered; The flower is faded; Because the breath of Jehovah hath blown upon it. Surely, the people is grass.

8 The grass withereth; The flower fadeth; But the word of our God shall stand for ever.

9 Go up into the high mountain, O Zion, that bringest tidings; Lift up thy voice aloud, O Jerusalem, that bringest tidings; Lift it up, be not afraid; Say to the cities of Judah, Behold your God!

10 Behold, the Lord Jehovah shall come with strength; And his arm shall be powerful. Behold, his reward is with him, And his work is before his face.

11 He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; He shall gather the lambs in his arm, And shall early them in his bosom, And shall gently lead those that

[492] Or, None shall be wanting.
[493] Or, Why wouldst thou say?

are with young.

12 Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, And measured the heavens with his palm, And held with three fingers the dust of the earth, And weighed the mountains in scales, And the heavens in a balance?

13 Who hath instructed the spirit of Jehovah, Or hath guided him by counsel, And hath taught him?

14 From whom sought he counsel, that he might advise him? And who taught him the path of judgment, And instructed him in knowledge, And showed to him the way of wisdom?

15 Lo, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, And are reckoned as the small dust of the balance; Lo, he taketh up the islands as a very little thing.

16 And Lebanon would not be sufficient to make a fire, Nor its beasts for a burnt-offering.

17 All nations are as nothing before him, And in comparison of him are reckoned less than nothing, And what hath no existence.

18 To whom then have ye likened God? Or what resemblance will ye appoint to him?

19 The workman prepareth a graven image, The goldsmith overlayeth it with gold, And (casteth) golden chains.

20 The poor man chooseth for his offering wood that will not rot; He procureth a skilful workman. To prepare a graven image that shall not be moved.

21 Do ye not know? Have ye not heard? Hath it not been told you from the beginning? Have ye not been instructed from the foundations of the earth?

22 It is he that sitteth on the circle of the earth, The inhabitants of which are as locusts; He stretcheth out heaven as a curtain, And spreadeth it out as a tent to be inhabited.

23 He bringeth the mighty to nothing, The rulers of the earth as if they were not.

24 It is as if they had not been planted; It is as if they had not been sown; It is as if their stock had no root in the earth. Even while he bloweth on them, they wither, And the whirlwind carrieth them away as stubble.

25 And to whom will ye liken me, That I may be like? saith the Holy One.

26 Lift up your eyes on high, And see who hath created those things, Bringing out their army by number; He will call to all of them by name; By the greatness of his strength, And by the might of his power, None shall fail. [494]

27 Why wilt thou say, [495] O Jacob? And why wilt thou speak, O Israel? My way is hidden from Jehovah, And my judgment passeth away from my God.

[494] Or, Surely.
[495] Or, Thy Protector.

28 Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard That Jehovah is the God of eternity, Who hath created the ends of the earth? He fainteth not, And is not worn out by fatigue; And there is no searching of his understanding.

29 He giveth power to the faint, And to him who hath no might he imparteth strength.

30 The youths are wearied, And they faint; And the young men by falling full.

31 But they who wait upon Jehovah shall gather new strength; They shall raise their wings as eagles; They shall run, And shall not be wearied; They shall walk, And shall not faint.

Translation: Chapter 41

CHAPTER 41

1 Be silent to me, O islands; And let the peoples collect their strength; Let them draw near; then let them speak; Let us come near together to judgment.

2 Who raised up righteousness from the east, Called him to his foot, Gave nations before him, And subdued kings; Gave them as dust to his sword, And as driven stubble to his bow?

3 He pursued them; he departed in peace, By the way that his foot had not gone.

4 Who hath appointed And done it. He who calleth the nations from the beginning. I Jehovah am the first, And with the last I am the same.

5 The islands saw, And were afraid; The farthest boundaries of the earth trembled; They drew near And came.

6 Every one brought assistance to his neighbor, And said to his neighbor, Be courageous.

7 The carver encouraged the founder, And he that beateth with the hammer him that striketh by turns; And he said, It is good for soldering; And he fastened it with nails, that it might not be moved.

8 But thou, O Israel, (art) my servant, O Jacob, whom I have chosen, Thou seed of Abraham my friend.

9 For I have taken thee from the ends of the earth; From its eminences have I called thee; And I have said to thee, Thou art my servant; I have chosen thee, And have not cast thee off;

10 Fear not, for I am with thee; Be not terrified, for I am thy God; For I strengthen thee; yea, [496] I will help thee; Yea, I will uphold thee with the

[496] Or, May be astonished.

right hand of my righteousness.

11 Behold, they who provoke thee, Shall be ashamed And shall blush; They who contend with thee, Shall become as nothing, And shall perish.

12 Thou shalt seek them, And shalt not find them; They who contend with thee shall be as nothing, And they who fight with thee shall be as consumption.

13 For I (am) Jehovah thy God, Taking hold of thy right hand, And saying to thee, Fear not, I will help thee.

14 Fear not, thou worm Jacob, Ye dead men of Israel. I will help thee, saith Jehovah, And thy Redeemer, [497] the Holy One of Israel.

15 Behold, I have made thee a cart, Like a sharp thrashing instrument having teeth; Thou shalt thrash the mountains, And beat them small; And thou shalt reduce the hills to dust.

16 Thou shalt winnow them; And the wind shall carry them away, And the whirlwind shall scatter them. But thou shalt rejoice in Jehovah; Thou shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel.

17 The needy And poor shall seek waters, Which are nowhere to be seen; Their tongue shall be parched with thirst. I Jehovah will listen to them; I the God of Israel will not forsake them.

18 I will open rivers on lofty mountain-tops, And fountains in the midst of a plain; I will make the wilderness pools of waters, And the dry land fountains of waters.

19 In the wilderness I will give the cedar, The sloe, the myrtle, And the pine; I will set in the desert the fir-tree, The elm And poplar together.

20 Therefore let them see And know; Let them likewise think And understand; That the hand of Jehovah hath done this, And that the Holy One of Israel hath created it.

21 Plead your cause, saith Jehovah; Produce your strong reasons, saith the king of Jacob.

22 Let them bring them forth, And let them tell us what is to come; Let them declare the former things which were, And we will lay our heart to them; And we shall know the latest of those things; And declare ye to us what is to come.

23 Tell what shall be hereafter, That we may know that ye are gods; Yea, do good, or do evil, That we may relate And likewise may see [498] it.

24 Behold, you are of nothing, And your work is of nothing; (The man) hath chosen abomination in you.

25 I have raised him from the north, And he hath come; From the rising of the sun shall he call on my name; And he shall come to princes, as to clay; And he shall tread the clay like a potter.

26 Who hath declared from the beginning, that we may know? Beforehand, And we will say, (He is) righteous. Surely, there is none that declareth;

[497] Or, I will uphold him.
[498] Or, The mighty.

Surely, there is none that causeth (us) to hear; Surely, there is none that heareth your words.

27 The first to Zion; Behold, behold them; And I will give a messenger to Jerusalem.

28 I looked, And there was none; I inquired at them, And there was no counselor; I asked them, And they answered not a word.

29 Behold, all are vanity; And their works are a failure; Their images are wind And confusion.

Translation: Chapter 42

CHAPTER 42

1 Behold, my servant; I will lean upon him; [499] Mine sleet, in whom my soul is well pleased. I have put my Spirit upon him; He shall exhibit judgment to the nations.

2 He shall not cry aloud; He shall not lift up, Nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets.

3 A bruised reed he shall not break, And the smoking flax he shall not quench; He shall bring forth judgment in truth.

4 He shall not thine, nor be discouraged, Till he set judgment in the earth; And the islands shall wait for his law.

5 Thus saith God [500] Jehovah, The Creator of the heavens, And who stretcheth them out; Who spreadeth out the earth, And its productions; Giving breath to the people who dwell in it, And spirit to them who walk on it.

6 I Jehovah have called thee in righteousness, And will hold thee by thy hand; And will keep thee, And will place thee for a covenant of the people, For a light of the nations;

7 That thou mayest open the eyes of the blind; That thou mayest bring out the prisoners from the prison, And from the house of the prison those who sit in darkness.

8 I am Jehovah, that is my name; And my glory will I not give to another, Nor my praise to graven images.

9 Behold, the former things have come; And new things do I declare; Before they spring up, I will make them known to you.

10 Sing to Jehovah a new song, His praise from the end of the earth; Ye

[499] Or, These words.

[500] "Ce suis-je, ce suis-je." "It is I, it is I."

who go down to the sea, And its fullness; Ye islands, And their inhabitants.

11 Let the desert And its cities cry aloud, The villages where Kedar dwelleth; Let the inhabitants of the rock sing; And let them shout from the top of the mountains.

12 Let them give glory to Jehovah, And let them declare his praise in the islands.

13 Jehovah shall go forth as a giant; And as a warrior shall he rouse his zeal; He shall cry aloud; he shall shout; He shall strengthen himself against his adversaries.

14 I have kept silence for a long time; I have been silent, And have refrained myself; I will cry like a woman in travail; I will destroy And swallow at once.

15 I will reduce mountains And hills to a wilderness; I will dry up all their herbage; I will make the rivers islands; And I will dry up the pools.

16 And I will lead the blind by a way which they knew not; I will cause them to walk in paths which they had not known; And I will turn darkness before them into light, And crooked ways into a plain. These things [501] will I do to them, And I will not forsake them.

17 They shall be turned back, With shame shall they be ashamed, Who trust in a graven image; And who say to a molten image; Ye are our gods.

18 O ye deaf, hear; And ye blind, be attentive to see.

19 Who is blind but my servant? Who is deaf but my messenger whom I send? Who is blind as he that is perfect, And blind as the servant of Jehovah?

20 By seeing many things which thou observest not; By opening the ears, so that he may not hear.

21 Jehovah is well-pleased on account of his righteousness, That he may honor And magnify his law.

22 But this people hath been robbed And trodden down; They shall all be snared in prisons, And they shall be hidden in caves; They shall be made a spoil, And there shall be none to deliver; A prey, And none shall say, Restore.

23 Who among you will hear this? Who will hearken? Who will attend for the time to come?

24 Who gave Jacob to be a prey, And gave up Israel to the robbers? Was it not Jehovah? Because we have sinned against him, And they would not walk in his ways, And did not hearken to his law.

25 Therefore he hath poured upon him The fury of his anger, And the strength of battle. It set him on fire on every side, And he gave no heed to it; It burned him, But he laid it not to heart.

[501] Or, Surely.

Translation: Chapter 43

CHAPTER 43

1 And now thus saith Jehovah, Thy Creator, O Jacob, And thy Former, O Israel; Fear not, for I have redeemed (thee); I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine.

2 When thou shalt pass through the waters, I will be with thee; Through rivers, they shall not overflow thee; When thou shalt pass through the fire itself, thou shalt not be scorched; And the flame shall not kindle on thee.

3 For I am Jehovah thy God; The Holy One of Israel, thy Savior; I have given Egypt as the price of thy redemption, Ethiopia And Sheba in thy room.

4 Because thou hast been precious in my eyes, Thou hast been honorable, And I have loved thee. I will give a man in thy stead, And peoples instead of thy soul.

5 Fear not, for I am with thee; I will bring thy seed from the East, And I will gather thee from the West.

6 I will say to the North, Give; And to the South, Hinder not; Bring my sons from a distance, And my daughters from the end of the earth.

7 All are called by my name, And I have created them for my glory; I have formed them; yea, I have made them.

8 That I may bring forth the blind people, who have eyes; And the deaf, who have ears.

9 Let all the nations be assembled together, And let the peoples be gathered. Who is there among them to declare this, And to cause us to hear the former things? Let them produce their witnesses, they shall be declared righteous; But let them hear, And they shall says, It is truth.

10 Ye are my witnesses, saith Jehovah, And my servant, whom I have chosen. Therefore ye shall know And believe me; And ye shall understand that I am He; Before me there was no god formed; Nor shall there be after

me.

11 I, I [502] am Jehovah; And there is no Savior besides me.

12 I have declared, And have saved, And have made you to heat; And there is no strange (god) among you. Ye are my witnesses, saith Jehovah, That I am God.

13 Even before the day was, I was; And there is none to deliver out of my hand. I will do; And who shall disannul it?

14 Thus saith Jehovah, your Redeemer, The Holy One of Israel; For your sake have I sent to Babylon, And have made them come down. They are all fugitives; And the cry of the Babylonians is in the ships.

15 I am Jehovah, your Holy One; The Creator of Israel, your King.

16 Thus saith Jehovah, Who maketh a way in the sea, And a path in the stormy waters.

17 When he bringeth (them) out, The chariot And the horse, The army And the power, Lie down together, so that they do not rise. They are quenched; they are quenched like flax.

18 Remember not the former things, And mention not the things that are ancient.

19 Behold, I do a new thing; Now it shall arise; Shall ye not know it? This time [503] I will make a way ill the wilderness, Rivers in the desert.

20 The beast of the field shall honor me; The dragons, And the young of the ostrich; Because I will give waters in the wilderness, Rivers in the desert, To give drink to my people, my chosen.

21 This people have I created for myself; They shall declare my praise.

22 And thou hast not called on me, O Jacob; But thou hast been wearied of me, O Israel.

23 Thou hast not brought to me the cattle of thy burnt-offerings; And thou hast not honored me with thy sacrifices; I have not made thee to serve with offering, Nor to be wearied with incense.

24 Thou hast not bought cane for me with money, And hast not made me drunk with the fat of thy sacrifices; But thou hast made me to serve with thy sills; And thou hast made me to weary with thine iniquities.

25 I, I [504] am He, Who blot out thine iniquities for my own sake; Therefore I will not remember thy sins.

26 Bring to my remembrance; Let us plead together; declare thou, that thou mayest be justified.

27 Thy first father hath sinned, And thy teachers have transgressed against me.

28 Therefore I will pollute the princes of the sanctuary; And I will make Jacob a curse, And Israel a reproach.

[502] "Ce suis-je, ce suis-je." "It is I, it is I."
[503] Or, The tongs.
[504] Or, By myself.

Translation: Chapter 44

CHAPTER 44

1 Yet now hear, O Jacob, my servant, And Israel whom I have chosen.

2 Thus saith Jehovah, thy Maker, And thy Former from the womb; He will help thee. Fear not, O Jacob, my servant, O beloved, whom I have chosen.

3 For I will pour waters on that which is thirsty, And floods on the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit on thy seed, And my blessing on thy productions.

4 And they shall spring up as among the grass, As willows near the streams of waters.

5 One shall say, I belong to Jehovah; And another shall be called by the name of Jacob; Another shall write with his hand, (I belong) to Jehovah, And shall be surnamed by the name of Israel.

6 Thus saith Jehovah, the King of Israel, And his Redeemer, Jehovah of hosts; I am the first, And I am also the last; And besides me there is no God.

7 And who as I shall call, Shall declare this, And set it in order before me, Since I appointed the people of the age? And let them tell them the things that are coming, And the things that shall come.

8 Fear ye not, And be not terrified. Have I not since then made thee to hear? And have I not declared it? Therefore ye are my witnesses, That there is no God besides me, And there is no strong God whom I know not.

9 The formers of a graven image are all vanity; And their desirable things do no; profit; And they are their own witnesses That they do not see, nor know; And therefore they shall be confounded.

10 Who is the maker of God? And who is it that hath molten a graven image, Which is profitable for nothing?

11 Behold, all his companions shall be ashamed; And the workmen themselves are of men; Though they all assemble, And stand up, They shall tremble, And be ashamed together.

12 The worker in iron shall take the file; [505] He shall work in the coals; He shall form it with hammers; He shall work in it with the arm of his strength; He shall even be hungry, so that his strength shall fail; He shall not drink water, so that he shall faint.

13 The carpenter stretcheth out his rule; He marketh it with a dyed thread; He adjusteth it with planes; He shapeth it with a compass; He maketh it according to the shape of a man, According to the image of a man, That it may remain in the house.

14 He shall cut down for himself cedars; He shall take the pine And the oak; He shall supply himself with trees of the forest; He shall plant a pine which the rain shall nourish.

15 Then shall a man have them for burning; For he shall take of them, And shall warm himself; Yea, he shall heat an oven, And shall bake bread; He shall also make a god, And worship it; He shall make an idol, And shall bow down before it.

16 Part of it he shall burn in the fire; Of a part he shall make ready flesh, And shall cat it; He shall roast roast. And shall be satisfied. Next, he shall warm himself, And shall say, Ah! I am warmed, And have seen the fire.

17 The remainder of it he turneth into a god, Into his graven image; He boweth down before it; He worshippeth And prayeth to it, Saying, Deliver me; for thou art my God.

18 They have not known, nor understood; For he hath smeared their eyes, that they may not see, And their heart, that they may not understand.

19 It cloth not return into their heart; They have not knowledge, nor understanding, to say, Part of it I have burned in the fire; Yea, on the coals of it have I baked bread; I have roasted flesh, And have eaten it; Shall I turn the remainder of it into an abomination? Shall I bow down before the stock of a tree?

20 He feedeth on ashes: A deceived heart turneth him aside, So that he cannot deliver his soul, nor sly, Is there not a lie in my right hand?

21 Remember these things, O Jacob; And Israel, for thou art my servant; I have formed thee; thou art my servant; O Israel, do not thou forget me.

22 I have blotted out, as a cloud, thy iniquities; As a vapor, thy sins. Return thou to me; For I have redeemed thee.

23 Praise, O ye heavens; For Jehovah hath done it; Shout, ye lower parts of the earth; Burst forth into praise, ye mountains; O forest. And every tree that is in it; For Jehovah hath redeemed Jacob, And will be glorified ill Israel.

24 Thus saith Jehovah, thy Redeemer, And thy Maker from the womb: I am Jehovah, who maketh all things, Who stretcheth out the heavens above,

[505] Or, I will ungird.

Who spreadeth out the earth by my power; [506]

25 Who frustrateth the tokens of the diviners; Who maketh the soothsayers mad; Who turneth wise men backward; And who maketh their knowledge foolishness;

26 Who upholdeth the word of his servant, And performeth the counsel of his messengers; Saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited; And to the cities of Judah, Ye shall be built; And I will raise up her ruins.

27 Who saith to the deep, Be thou dried up; And I will make dry thy rivers;

28 Who saith to Cyrus, Thou art my shepherd; And he shall fulfil all my will; Even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; And to the Temple, Thou shalt be founded.

[506] Or, Only.

Translation: Chapter 45

CHAPTER 45

1 Thus saith Jehovah to his anointed, To Cyrus, whose right hand I have taken hold of, To subdue nations before him; Therefore will I loose [507] the loins of kings; To open the doors before him; Therefore the gates shall not be shut.

2 I will go before thee; And will make straight the crooked ways; I will break asunder the brazen doors; And I will hew down the iron bars.

3 And I will give thee treasures of darkness, And things hidden in secret places; That thou mayest know that I am Jehovah, Who call thee by thy name; Even the God of Israel.

4 For the sake of my servant Jacob, And for the sake of Israel, mine elect; I will call thee by thy name; I will surname thee, though thou hast not known me.

5 I am Jehovah, And there is none besides me; There is no god besides me; I have girded thee, though thou hast not known me.

6 Therefore shall they know, From the rising of the sun, And from the west, That there is none besides me. I am Jehovah; And there is none besides me.

7 Forming light, And creating darkness; Making peace, And creating evil; I Jehovah do all these things.

8 Drop down, ye heavens, from above; And let the clouds pour down righteousness; Let the earth be opened; And let salvation And righteousness come forth; Let her bring them forth together: I Jehovah have created it.

9 Wo to him that striveth with his Maker! A potsherd to the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to his maker, Why hast thou made? And,

[507] Or, Ye distant.

Thy work hath no hands?

10 Wo to him that saith to his father, Why hast thou begotten And to the woman, Why dost thou bring forth?

11 Thus saith Jehovah, The Holy One of Israel, And his Maker; Ask me of things to come; Concerning my sons command ye me, And concerning the work of my hands.

12 I have made the earth, And have created man upon it; It is I, whose hands have stretched out the heavens; And all their army have I commanded.

13 I have raised him up in righteousness, And will make straight all his ways. He shall build my city, And shall release my captivity; Not for price nor for reward, Saith Jehovah of hosts.

14 Thus saith Jehovah; The labor of Egypt, the merchandise of Ethiopia, And the Sabeans of great stature, Shall pass over to thee, And shall be thine; They shall walk behind thee; In chains shall they pass over, And shall reverence And beseech thee. Surely [508] God is in thee; And there is no other besides God.

15 Truly thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Savior!

16 All of them shall be covered with shame, And shall even blush: With shame shall go away together All the makers of graven images.

17 Israel hath been saved in Jehovah with eternal salvation; Ye shall not be covered with shame; Neither shall ye blush even for ever.

18 For thus saith Jehovah, who createth the heavens; God himself, the Maker of the earth; Who made it, And furnished it; He created it not empty; He formed it to be inhabited; I am Jehovah, And there is none besides me.

19 Not in secret have I spoken, In a place of the darkness of the earth; Not in vain have I said to the seed of Jacob, Seek me; I Jehovah speak righteousness; I declare what is right.

20 Assemble yourselves, And come; Draw near together, ye rejected [509] of the nations. They know nothing, who carry about the wood of a graven image, And who pray to a god who cannot save.

21 Publish ye, And bring forward; Yea, let them consult together. Who hath caused this to be heard from the beginning? And who hath declared it from ancient times? Is it not I Jehovah? And there is no other god besides me; A just God, And a Savior; There is none besides me.

22 Look to me, And ye shall be saved, All the ends of the earth; For I am God, And there is none else.

23 By myself have I sworn; In righteousness hath the word gone out of my mouth, Which shall not return; That to me every knee shall bend; Every tongue shall swear.

24 Surely in Jehovah, will he say, Have I righteousness And strength; To him shall he come; And all who provoke him shall be ashamed.

25 In Jehovah all the seed of Israel Shall be justified, And shall glory.

[508] Or, Take courage.
[509] Or, a thought.

Translation: Chapter 46

CHAPTER 46

1 Bel hath bowed down; Nebo is fallen; Their images shall be on the beasts And the cattle; They who carry you are burdened by you; A wearisome burden.

2 They bowed down; they stooped together; And they could not withdraw themselves from the binden; And their soul hath gone away into captivity.

3 Hear me, O house of Jacob; All ye the remnant of the house of Israel; Who are borne from the womb; Who are carried from the breast.

4 And even to old age I am the same; And even to gray hairs I will carry. I have made, And I will bear; I will carry, And will save.

5 To whom will ye liken, And make me equal, And compare me, that I may be like?

6 Lavishing gold out of bags; Weighing silver in a balance; They shall hire a goldsmith, to make of it a god; To bow down before it, And to worship it.

7 They shall carry him on the shoulder; They shall lead him about; They shall put him in his place; There shall he stand; From his place shall he not remove; Moreover, if any one cry to him, he will not answer, Nor deliver him from his trouble.

8 Remember ye this, And blush; [510] Return to your heart, ye transgressors.

9 Remember the former things of old; For I am God, And there is none besides, And there is none like me.

10 Declaring the latest event from the beginning, And from antiquity those things which had not yet been done; Saying, My counsel shall stand, And I will do whatever I wish.

[510] Or, As a man.

11 Calling a bird [511] from the east, From a distant country the man of my counsel; I have spoken, And accordingly I will accomplish it; I have thought, And I will do it.

12 Hear me, ye that are stubborn in heart, Who are far from righteousness.

13 I will cause my righteousness to come near, And it shall not be delayed; And my salvation shall not tarry; And I will place salvation in Zion, And my glory in Jerusalem.

[511] Or, In the multitude.

Translation: Chapter 47

CHAPTER 47

1 Come down, And sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon; Sit on the ground; There is no throne for the daughter of the Babylonians; For they shall no more call thee tender And delicate.

2 Take millstones, And grind meal; Unbind thy curled locks, make bare the feet; Uncover the limbs, that thou mayest cross the rivers.

3 Thy baseness shall be exposed, And thy shame shall be seen; I will take vengeance, And will not meet a man. [512]

4 Our Redeemer, his name is Jehovah of hosts, The Holy One of Israel.

5 Sit thou silent, enter into darkness, O daughter of the Babylonians; For they shall no longer call thee the mistress of kingdoms.

6 I was angry with my people; I profaned my inheritance; And I gave them up into thy hand; Thou didst not show compassion to them; On the old man didst thou heavily lay thy yoke.

7 And thou saidst, I shall for ever be a mistress. Hitherto thou hast not applied thy mind to it, And hast not remembered her end.

8 But now hear this, thou delicate woman, That sitteth confidently; Who saith in her heart, I am, And there is none besides me; I shall not sit as a widow, And I shall not know bereavement.

9 But those two things shall suddenly come to thee, Bereavement And widowhood; In their perfection shall they come upon thee, For the multitude [513] of thy divinations, And for the abundance of thy auguries.

10 For thou trustedst in thy malice; Thou saidst, No one seeth me. Thy wisdom And thy knowledge have led thee astray; And thou saidst in thy heart, It is I, And there is none besides me.

[512] "Et tu ne sqauras d'ou il viendra." "And thou shalt not know whence it shall come."

[513] Or, Hath upheld.

11 Therefore shall evil come upon thee, the dawn of which thou knowest not crushing shall fall upon thee, which thou shalt not be able to avert; Destruction shall suddenly come upon thee, which thou knowest not; [514]

12 Stand now amidst thy divinations, And amidst the multitude of thy auguries, In which thou hast wearied thyself from thy youth: If perhaps thou mayest be profited, If perhaps thou mayest prevail.

13 Thou hast wearied thyself with the multitude of thy counsels; Let the binders of the heavens, The watchers of the stars, who predict by the moon, Stand now And deliver thee, From those things which shall come upon thee.

14 Behold, they shall he as stubble; The fire shall burn them; They shall not deliver their soul from the strength of the flame; There shall not be a coal to warm, Nor a light at which they may sit.

15 So shall they be to thee with whom thou weariedst thyself, Thy traders from thy youth. Every one shall wander into his own quarter; There shall be no one to save thee.

[514] Or, They shall stand up.

Translation: Chapter 48

CHAPTER 48

1 Hear this, O house of Jacob, Ye who are called by the name of Israel, Who have come forth from the waters of Judah, Who swear by the name of Jehovah, And remember the God of Israel, Not in truth, nor in righteousness.

2 For from the holy city they are called, And they rely on the God of Israel, Whose name is Jehovah of hosts.

3 Long ago did I declare the former things; They went out of my mouth; I published them; I did them suddenly, And they came.

4 For I knew that thou art obstinate; And thy neck is all iron sinew; And thy forehead is of brass.

5 Long ago did I declare them to thee; Before they came, I showed to thee; Lest perhaps thou shouldst say, My idol hath done these things; My graven image And my molten image hath commanded them.

6 Thou hast heard; see all things; And will ye not declare them? Even now have I made thee to hear new things, And hidden things, which thou didst not know.

7 Now for the first time have they been created, And not long ago, nor by a succession of time; Thou hadst not heard them; Lest thou shouldst say, Behold, I knew.

8 Surely thou hadst not heard; Surely thou hadst not known; Surely it is not long since thine ear was opened; For I knew that by transgressing thou didst transgress; Therefore have I called thee a rebel from the womb.

9 For my names sake I will delay my fury; And for my praise I will restrain myself toward thee, So as not to cut thee off.

10 Behold, I have tried thee, And not like silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.

11 For mine own sake, for mine own sake, will I do it; For how shall my

name be profaned? And I will not give my glory to another.

12 Hear me, O Jacob, And O Israel, my called; I, even I, am the first; Also I am the last.

13 Surely my hand hath founded the earth; And my right hand hath measured [515] the heavens with the palm; When I call them they stand up [516] together.

14 Assemble yourselves, all of you, And hear. Who among them declareth those things? Jehovah hath loved him, And will execute his pleasure against Babylon, And his arm against the Babylonians.

15 I, I have spoken; Surely I have called him, I have led him; Therefore he shall prosper in his way.

16 Draw near to me, hear this. I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; Since the thing was done, there was I; And now the Lord Jehovah, And his Spirit, hath sent me.

17 Thus saith Jehovah, thy Redeemer, The Holy One of Israel. I am Jehovah thy God, Who teacheth thee profitably, Who directeth thee in the way which thou goest.

18 O if thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! Then should thy peace have been as a river, And thy righteousness as the waves of the sea.

19 Thy seed should have been as the sand, And the children of thy womb as the small stones of it; Her name would not be cut off, And would not be destroyed before my face.

20 Come forth from Babylon; Flee from the Babylonians. With the voice of rejoicing tell this; Publish, And carry it even to the end of the earth. Say ye, Jehovah hath redeemed his servant Jacob.

21 Therefore they thirsted not when he led them through the deserts; He made water to flow to them from the rock; He clave the rock, And the waters flowed out.

22 There is no peace, saith Jehovah to the wicked.

[515] Or, It is work.

[516] "Ce suis-je, ce suis-je." "It is I, it is I"

Translation: Chapter 49

CHAPTER 49

1 Hear me, O islands! And hearken, ye peoples from afar. Jehovah hath called me from the womb; From my mothers belly he hath had my name in remembrance.

2 And he hath placed nay mouth like a sharp sword; In the shadow of his hand he hath protected me, And hath placed me as a polished arrow; in his quiver hath he hid me;

3 And said to me, Thou art my servant, O Israel! In thee will I he glorified.

4 But I said, In vain have I toiled; Uselessly And unprofitably have I exhausted my strength; and my judgment is before Jehovah; And my work before my God.

5 And now saith Jehovah, Who formed me from the womb to be his servant, That I may bring back Jacob to him: And though Israel be not gathered, Yet I shall be glorious in the eyes of Jehovah, And my God shall be my strength.

6 And he saith, It is a light thing that thou shouldst be my servant, To raise up the tribes of Jacob, And that thou shouldst restore the desolations of Israel; Therefore have I appointed thee to be a light of the Gentiles, That thou mayest be my salvation to the end of the earth.

7 Thus saith Jehovah, The Redeemer of Israel, His Holy One, To the contemptible in the soul, To the abhorred nation, To the servant of rulers; Kings shall see, And princes shall arise, And shall worship for the sake of Jehovah; For faithful is the Holy One of Israel, who hath chosen thee.

8 Thus saith Jehovah, In a time of good-pleasure have I listened to thee; In the day of salvation have I assisted thee; And I will preserve thee. And give thee for a covenant of the people, That thou mayest raise up the earth, That thou mayest possess by inheritance the desolate heritages;

9 That thou mayest say to them that are bound, Go forth! To them that are in darkness, Show yourselves. On the ways they shall feed; On all the high places shall be their pastures.

10 They shall not hunger nor thirst; The heat And the sun shall not smite them; For he that hath compassion on them shall guide them; And by the fountains of waters shall he lead them.

11 And I will place all my mountains for a way; And my paths shall be elevated.

12 Behold! those from afar shall come; And, behold! those from the North, And from the sea; And those from the land of Sinis. [517]

13 Praise ye, O heavens! And rejoice, thou earth; And break forth into praise, ye mountains; For Jehovah hath comforted his people, And will have compassion on his poor.

14 Yet Zion hath said, Jehovah hath forsaken me, And my Lord hath forgotten me.

15 Shall a woman forget her infant, So as not to have compassion oil the soil of her womb? Even though they have forgotten, Yet will not I forget thee.

16 Behold! on the palms of my hands have I engraven thee; Thy walls are continually before me.

17 Thy builders hasten; Thy destroyers And demolishers shall depart far from thee.

18 Lift up thine eyes round about, And see. All are assembled, And have come to thee. I live, saith Jehovah, That thou shalt be clothed with them all, as with an ornament, And shalt be bound with them round about as a bride.

19 For thy desolations, And thy wastes, And thy ruined land, Shall now be too narrow for the multitude of its inhabitants; And thy destroyers shall depart far away.

20 The children of thy bereavement shall yet say in thine ears, The place is too narrow for me; Make room for me. that I may dwell.

21 And thou shalt say in thine heart, Who hath begotten me those? For I am bereaved [518] And solitary, A wanderer And an exile; Who then hath brought up those? Behold! I was left alone; Whence are they?

22 Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Behold! I will lift up my hand to the Gentiles, And will erect my banner to the people; And they shall bring thy sons in their bosom, And thy daughters shall be carried on their shoulders.

23 And kings shall be thy nursing-fathers, And their queens thy nurses; With their faces on the ground they shall worship thee, And shall lick the dust of thy feet; And thou shalt know that I am Jehovah, For they who wait for me shall not be ashamed.

24 Shall the prey be taken from the mighty? And shall the captivity of

[517] Or, Sinim.
[518] Or, Barren.

the righteous [519] be delivered?

25 Yet thus saith Jehovah; Even the captivity of the mighty shall be taken away, And the prey of the tyrant shall be delivered; For I will contend with him who contendeth with thee, And I will save thy children.

26 And I will feed thy spoilers with their own flesh, And they shall be made drunk with their own blood as with new wine; And all flesh shall know that I am Jehovah, Thy Savior And thy Redeemer, The Mighty One of Jacob.

[519] Or, The righteous captivity.

Translation: Chapter 50

CHAPTER 50

1 Thus saith Jehovah: Where is that bill of your mothers divorcement Whom I have dismissed? Or who is the creditor To whom I sold you? Behold! for your iniquities ye have been sold, And to your transgressions was Your mother dismissed.

2 Why came I, And no mall (met me)? Called I, And no man answered? By shortening hath my hand been shortened, So that it cannot redeem? Is there not in me power to deliver? Behold! by my rebuke I dry up the sea; I put rivers in the wilderness, So that their fishes purify for want of water, And die for thirst.

3 I clothe the heavens with blackness, And make their covering like sackcloth.

4 The Lord Jehovah hath given me the tongue of the learned, That I may know a word in season to the weary. In the morning will he awaken, In the morning will he awaken mine ear, That I may hear as the learned.

5 The Lord Jehovah hath opened mine ear, And I was not rebellious: I did not turn back.

6 I exposed my body to the smiters, And my cheeks to them that tore me; My face I did not hide from shame And spitting.

7 For the Lord Jehovah will assist me; Therefore I was not ashamed; Therefore have I set my time as a flint; And I know that I shall not be confounded.

8 He is near that justifieth me: Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together: Who is the opponent of my cause? Let him draw near to me.

9 Behold! the Lord Jehovah will assist me; Who is he that shall condemn me? Behold! all shall wax old as a garment; The moth shall consume them.

10 Who is there among you that feareth Jehovah? Let him hear the voice

of his servant. He who hath walked in darkness, And hath had no light; Let him trust in the name of Jehovah, And rely on his God.

11 Behold! ye all kindle a fire, And are surrounded with sparks. Walk ye in the light of your fire, And in the sparks which ye have kindled. From my hand hath this been to you; Ill sorrow shall ye lie down.

Translation: Chapter 51

CHAPTER 51

1 Hearken to me, ye that follow righteousness, Ye that seek Jehovah; Look ye to the rock of your hewing, And to the hole of the pit whence ye were digged.

2 Look ye to Abraham your father; And to Sarah, who bore you; For I called him alone, And blessed And multiplied him.

3 Surely Jehovah will comfort Zion; He will comfort all her desolations; And he will make her desert like a place of delights, And her wilderness like the garden of Jehovah: Gladness And joy shall be found in her; Confession And the voice of a song.

4 Attend to me, my people; And listen to me, my nation; For the law shall go forth from me; And I will reveal my judgment for a light of the peoples.

5 My righteousness is near; My salvation hath gone forth; And my arms shall judge the peoples: For me shall the islands wait, And in my arm shall they hope.

6 Lift up your eyes toward heaven, And look upon the earth beneath; For the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, And the earth shall wax old like a garment, And its inhabitants shall perish in the same manner; But my salvation shall endure for ever. And my righteousness shall not perish.

7 Hearken to me, ye that know righteousness; A people in whose heart is my law. Fear ye not the reproach of men, And be not discouraged by their slander.

8 For the moth shall consume them like a garment; The worm shall consume them like wool; But my righteousness shall continually endure, And my salvation for ever And ever.

9 Awake, O arm of Jehovah! Awake, be clothed with strength! Awake as in ancient days, As in generations long ago past. Art thou not that arm

which crushed the proud one, Which slew the dragon?

10 Art thou not that arm which dried up the sea, The water of the vast gulf; Which turned the depth of the sea into a path, For the passage of the redeemed?

11 Therefore the redeemed by Jehovah shall return; They shall come to Zion with a song; And everlasting joy shall be upon their head; They shall obtain gladness And joy, And sorrow And groaning shall flee away.

12 I, I am he that comforteth you. Who art thou that thou shouldst be afraid of man that shall die, Of the son of man, that shall be accounted grass?

13 And hast forgotten Jehovah thy Maker, Who stretched out the heavens, And founded the earth; And hast dreaded continually every day The rage of the destroyer, When he prepareth to lay waste? And where is the rage of the destroyer?

14 The exile hasteneth to be loosed, That he may not die in a pit, And that his bread may not fail.

15 And I am Jehovah thy God, Who divide the sea, And its waves shall roar; Jehovah of hosts is his name.

16 And I have put my words in thy mouth; And in the shadow of my hand have I protected thee; That I may plant the heavens And found the earth; That I may say to Zion, Thou art my people.

17 Awake, awake, O Jerusalem! Arise, thou who hast drunk from the hand of Jehovah the cup of his fury; Pressing out, thou hast drunk the dregs of the cup of distress. [520]

18 Of all the sons whom she bore, There is no one to guide her; Of all the sons whom she brought up, There is no one to take her by the hand.

19 These two things have happened to thee; Who shall bewail thee? Desolation And destruction, And the famine And the sword; Who shall comfort thee?

20 Thy sons have fainted; They lay down at the head of all the streets, As a wild bull in a net, Full of the indignation of Jehovah, Of the rebuke of thy God.

21 Therefore now hear this, thou afflicted, And drunken, but not with wine

22 Thus saith thy Lord, Jehovah, And thy God, the avenger of his people; Behold! I have taken out of thy hand The cup of affliction [521] The dregs of the cup of my fury; Thou shalt not drink of it any more.

23 And I will put it into the hand of thy oppressors, Who said to thy soul, Bow down, And we shall pass over; And thou didst lay thy body as the ground, And as the street to them that pass over.

[520] Or, Of trembling.
[521] Or, Of trembling.

Translation: Chapter 52

CHAPTER 52

1 Awake, awake, O Zion! Be clothed with thy strength, Be clothed with the garments of thy beauty, O Jerusalem! the holy city; For there shall no longer come into thee, The uncircumcised And unclean.

2 Shake thyself from the dust; Arise, sit, O Jerusalem! Loose thyself from the chains of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion!

3 For rims saith Jehovah for naught were ye sold; Therefore shall ye be redeemed without money.

4 For thus saith the Lord Jehovah Into Egypt my people went down aforetime, That they might sojourn there; But Assyria hath oppressed them without cause.

5 And now, What have I here, saith Jehovah, That my people should be carried away for naught, And that they who rule over them should cause them to howl, Saith Jehovah, And that every day continually: My name should be exposed to reproach?

6 Therefore shall my people know my name; Therefore shall they know in that day That it is I who speak; Behold! I shall be present.

7 How beautiful upon the mountains Are the feet of him that bringeth tidings, That proclaimeth peace, That bringeth good tidings, That proclaimeth salvation, That saith to Zion, Thy God reigneth!

8 The voice of thy watchmen! They have lifted up the voice; They shall shout for joy together; For they shall see eye to eye, When Jehovah shall restore Zion.

9 Praise ye, And rejoice together, Ye wildernesses of Jerusalem; For Jehovah hath comforted his people; He hath redeemed Jerusalem.

10 Before the eyes of all the nations Jehovah hath made bare the arm of his holiness; And all the ends of the earth Shall see the salvation of our God.

11 Depart ye, depart ye; Go ye out thence; Touch not the unclean thing; Go ye out of the midst of her; Be clean, ye that bear the vessels of Jehovah.

12 For not in haste shall ye go out, And not in flight shall be your journey; For Jehovah shall go before you, And the God of Israel shall assemble you.

13 Behold! my servant shall have prosperous success, Shall be exalted, Shall be lifted up, And shall be very high.

14 As many were shocked at thee; (So much was his face disfigured by men, [522] And his form by the sons of men;) [523]

15 So shall he sprinkle many nations; Kings shall shut their mouths on him; For what had not been declared to them they shall see, And what they had not heard they shall understand.

[522] Or, More than men.
[523] Or, More than the sons of men.

Translation: Chapter 53

CHAPTER 53

1 Who will believe our report? And to whom hath the arm of Jehovah been revealed?

2 Yet he shall grow up before him as a twig, And as a root out of a desert land; He hath no form nor beauty; We will see him; And his countenance is not such that we should desire him.

3 Despised And rejected among men; A man of sorrows; Acquainted with infirmity; We hid, as it were, the face from him; And we did not at all esteem him.

4 Surely our sicknesses he bare; And our sorrows he carried; And we thought him to be smitten, Wounded by God And afflicted.

5 But he was wounded for our iniquities; He was bruised for our sins; The chastisement of our peace was upon him; And in his wound [524] we have healing.

6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray; Every one hath turned to his own way; And Jehovah hath laid upon him the iniquities of us all.

7 He was condemned And afflicted; [525] And he opened not his mouth. As a lamb shall he be led to the slaughter; And as a sheep before her shearers shall he be dumb, And shall not open his mouth.

8 From prison And judgment was he taken; And who shall relate his generation? For he was cut off out of the land of the living; For the transgression of my people was he wounded.

9 And he laid open to wicked men his grave, And to the rich man his death. Although he did no iniquity, And there was no deceit in his mouth.

10 Yet Jehovah was pleased to bruise him, And to subject him to infirmity.

[524] Or, In his medicine.
[525] Or, Oppressed.

When he shall have offered his soul as a sacrifice, He shall see a seed; [526] He shall prolong his days; And the will of Jehovah shall prosper in his hand.

11 Of the labor of his soul he shall see, And shall be satisfied; And by his doctrine [527] shall my righteous servant justify many; For he shall bear their iniquities.

12 Therefore will I divide to him a portion with the great; And he shall divide the spoil with the strong; Because he poured out his soul unto death, And was ranked with the transgressors; He bare the sin of many, And prayed for the transgressors.

[526] Or, He shall see posterity.
[527] Or, By the knowledge of him.

Translation: Chapter 54

CHAPTER 54

1 Shout, O barrens that didst not bear; Shout And sing, thou that didst not conceive; For more are the children of the widow, Than the children of the married woman, saith Jehovah.

2 Widen the place of thy tabernacles; And let them stretch out the curtains of thy tents; Spare not; Lengthen thy cords; And strengthen thy stakes.

3 For on the right hand And on the left thou shalt be multiplied; And thy seed shall possess the Gentiles; And they shall inhabit the desolate cities.

4 Fear not, for thou shalt not be ashamed; And blush not, for thou shalt not be exposed to disgrace; Yea, the shame of thy youth thou shalt forget; And the reproach of thy widowhood thou shalt no longer remember.

5 For thy husband is thy Make, Whose name is Jehovah of hosts; And thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called. [528]

6 For as a woman forsaken And broken in spirit Jehovah hath called thee; And a wife of youth, Who hadst been dismissed, Saith thy God.

7 For a little moment have I forsaken thee, And with great mercies will I gather thee.

8 In a moment of wrath I hid my face for a little from thee; But with everlasting kindness have I had compassion on thee, Saith Jehovah thy Redeemer.

9 For the waters of Noah [529] this is to me; As I have sworn that the waters of Noah Shall no more pass over the earth; So have I sworn that I will not be wroth with thee, To rebuke thee.

10 For the mountains shall indeed be shaken, And the hills shall tremble;

[528] Or, The Holy One of Israel shall be called the Redeemer And God of the whole earth.
[529] Or, As the days of Noah.

But my mercy shall not depart from thee, And the covenant of my peace shall not waver, Saith Jehovah, who hath compassion on thee.

11 O thou wretched, tossed by a tempest, Destitute of consolation; Behold! I will build thy stones on carbuncles, And will found thee on sapphires.

12 And I will lay thy windows with pearls, And thy gates with shilling stone, And all thy borders with precious stone.

13 For all thy children shall be taught by Jehovah, And thy children shall have great peace.

14 In righteousness shalt thou be equipped; Thou shalt be far from oppression, for thou shalt not fear it; And from terror, for it shall not come near thee.

15 And he who assembleth shall assemble against thee without me; He who assembleth in thee shall fall against thee.

16 Behold! I have created the smith, That bloweth the coals in the fire, And bringeth out the instrument for his work; I have created the waster to destroy.

17 No instrument that hath been formed against thee shall prosper; And every tongue that hath risen against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the inheritance of the servants of Jehovah; And their righteousness is from me, saith Jehovah.

Translation: Chapter 55

CHAPTER 55

1 Ho! all that are thirsty, Come ye to the waters; And ye who have not money, Come ye, buy, And eat. Come ye, buy without money, And wine And milk without any price.

2 Wherefore do ye spend [530] money, not for bread? And your labor, not so as to be satisfied, Hear ye by hearing me; And eat ye that which is good; And let your soul delight itself in fatness.

3 Incline your ear, And come to me; Hear, And your soul shall live; And I will strike a covenant of eternity with you, The faithful mercies of David.

4 Behold I have given him a witness to the peoples, A leader And instructor to the peoples.

5 Behold! thou shalt call a nation which thou knowest not; And a nation that knew not thee shall run to thee; For the sake of Jehovah thy God, And of the Holy One of Israel; For he hath glorified thee.

6 Seek ye Jehovah, while he is found; Call upon him, while he is near.

7 Let the wicked man forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to Jehovah, And he will have compassion on him; To our God; for he aboundeth in pardoning.

8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, And my ways are not your ways, saith Jehovah.

9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So far do my ways exceed your ways, And my thoughts your thoughts.

10 Surely, as the rain cometh down, And the snow from heaven, And returneth not thither. But watereth the earth, And causeth it to bring forth And bud. That it may give seed to the sower And bread to the eater;

[530] Or, Weigh out.

11 So shall be my word which shall go out of nay mouth It shall not return to me empty; Till it do what I wish, And accomplish that to which I sent it.

12 Therefore with peace shall ye go out, And with peace shall ye be led forth; The mountains And hills shall break out before you into joy, And all the trees of the fields shall clap their hands.

13 Instead of the bramble shall grow up the fir-tree; And instead of the nettle [531] shall grow up the myrtle; [532] And it shall be to Jehovah for a name; For an everlasting covenant, that shall not be cut off.

[531] Or, The thorn.
[532] Or, The Elm.

Translation: Chapter 56

CHAPTER 56

1 Thus saith Jehovah; Keep ye judgment, And do righteousness; For my salvation is near, that it may come; And my righteousness, that it may be revealed.

2 Happy is the man who shall do this, And the son of man who shall take hold of this; Keeping the Sabbath, so that he may not profane it; And keeping his hand, that he may abstain from all that is evil.

3 And let not the son, that is a foreigner, speak, That is joined to Jehovah, saying, By separating hath Jehovah separated me from his people; And let not the eunuch say, I am a dry tree.

4 For thus saith Jehovah to the eunuchs, Who keep my Sabbaths, And choose the things that please me, And take hold of my covenant;

5 In my house And within my walls, I will give to them a place And a name Better than of sons And of daughters; I will give to them an everlasting name, Which shall not be cut off.

6 The children, I say, of the foreigner, Who shall be joined to Jehovah? That they may minister to him, And may love the name of Jehovah; That they may be his servants; Whosoever shall keep the Sabbath, so that he may not profane it, And shall embrace my covenant:

7 Them will I bring into the mountain of my holiness, And will make them joyful in my house of prayer; Their burnt-offerings And sacrifices Shall be acceptable on mine altar; For my house shall be called A house of prayer to all peoples,

8 Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Who gathereth the outcasts of Israel: Still more will I gather upon him his gathered.

9 O all ye beasts of the field! Come to devour; O all ye beasts of the forest!

10 His watchmen are blind; All are ignorant; All are dumb dogs, that cannot bark; They lie down And sleep; They love slumber.

11 And those dogs, strong of appetite, know not to be satisfied; The shepherds themselves know not? nor understand; All of them look to their own ways; Every one to his gain from his end.

12 Come ye, I will fletch wine; We shall drink strong liquor; As today, so shall be tomorrow, Or better, And more abundant.

Translation: Chapter 57

CHAPTER 57

1 The righteous man hath perished, And there is no man that layeth it to heart: Men of mercy are gathered, And there is none that considereth, That the righteous man is gathered from the face of the evil.

2 Peace shall come; They shall rest in their beds, Whosoever walketh before him.

3 And draw near, ye sons of the sorceress; The seed of the adulterer And the whore.

4 On whom have ye made sport? On whom have ye opened the mouth? On whom have ye stretched out the tongue? Are ye not rebellious children? A lying seed?

5 Warming themselves among the oaks [533] under every green tree; Sacrificing children in the valleys, Under the cliffs of the rocks,

6 Among the smooth stones of the valley [534] is thy portion; They, they are thy lot; Even to them hast thou poured out a drink-offering, And offered a sacrifice. Shall I take pleasure in these things? [535]

7 On a lofty And high mountain hast thou set thy bed; Yea, thou art gone up to it to offer a sacrifice.

8 Behind the door And behind the door-post Hast thou set thy memorial; Thou hast been discovered to another than me; Thou art gone up; Thou hast enlarged thy bed; Thou hast made a covenant with them; Thou lovedst their bed in the place which thou sawest.

9 And thou wentest to the king with ointment; Thou multipliedst thy disguises; Thou sentest thy ambassadors to a distant place; Thou art humbled

[533] Or, With the gods.
[534] Or, In parts of the river.
[535] Or, Shall I repent of these things?

even to hell.

10 Thou art wearied with thy manifold journeying; And hast not said, There is no hope: Thou hast found the life of thine hand; Therefore thou hast not grieved.

11 And whom hast thou worshipped, And of whom hast thou been afraid, That thou hast dealt falsely, And hast not remembered me, Blot laid it on thy heart? Is it not because I have held my peace, And therefore thou never fearest me?

12 I will declare thy righteousness, And thy deeds; And they shall not profit thee.

13 When thou shalt cry, let thy troops deliver thee; Yet the wind shall carry them all away; Vanity shall seize them. But he who hopeth in me shall obtain the land by inheritance, And shall possess the mountain of my holiness.

14 And he shall say, Prepare, prepare; Level the road; Remove the stumbling-block out of the way of my people.

15 For thus hath spoken the high And Lofty One, Who dwelleth in eternity, Whose name is Holy; I inhabit the high And holy, And with the afflicted, And with him who is lowly in spirit; That I may revive the spirit of the lowly, That I may revive the heart of the afflicted.

16 For I will not contend for ever, Nor will I be always wroth; For the spirit shall be clothed [536] before me, And the wind have I made.

17 For the iniquity of his lust I was wroth, And smote him; I have concealed myself, And will be wroth; But he turned And departed in the way of his heart.

18 I have seen his ways, And will heal him, And will lead him, restoring consolations To him And to his mourners.

19 I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace to them that are afar off, And to them that are near, saith Jehovah, And I heal him.

20 But the wicked are as the troubled sea, Which cannot rest; And its waters will east out filth And mud.

21 There is no peace to the wicked, saith my God.

[536] Or, Shall be concealed, or, Shall fail.

Translation: Chapter 58

CHAPTER 58

1 Cry with the throat, spare not; Raise thy voice as with a trumpet; And proclaim to my people their sin, And to the house of Jacob their iniquity.

2 Yet they seek me daily, And wish to know my ways, As a nation that did righteousness, And neglected not the judgment of her God; They inquire at me about the judgments of righteousness: They wish to approach to God.

3 Wherefore have we fasted, And thou didst not take notice of it? Wherefore have we humbled our souls, And thou knewest not? Behold! on the day that ye fast, ye find pleasure, And exact all your demands.

4 Behold! for strife And contention ye fast, And that ye may smite with the wicked fist. Fast not, as ye do this day, That ye may cause your voice to be heard on high.

5 Is it such a fast as I have chosen? That a man may afflict his soul for a day, And may hang down his head as a bulrush, And may spread sackcloth And ashes? Wilt thou call this a fast, And a day acceptable to Jehovah?

6 Is not this the fast that I have chosen? To loose wicked bonds, To undo heavy burdens, To let the oppressed go free, And that ye may burst asunder every yoke?

7 Is it not that thou shalt break thy bread to the hungry, And shalt bring the wandering poor to thy house? If thou shalt see the naked, that thou shalt cover him; And that thou shalt not hide thyself from thine own flesh?

8 Then shall break forth as the dawn thy light; And thy health shall quickly spring up; Righteousness shall go before thy face, And the glory of Jehovah shall gather thee.

9 Then shalt thou call, And Jehovah will listen; Thou shalt cry, And he shall say, Behold! I am here. If thou shalt take away from the midst of thee

the burden, And the pointing of the finger, And the speech of vanity; [537]

10 If thou shalt pour out thy soul to the hungry man, And shalt satisfy the afflicted soul, Thy light shall arise in darkness, And thy obscurity as noon-day;

11 And Jehovah shall always conduct thee, And shall satisfy thy soul in drought, And shall make fit thy bones; And thou shalt be as a well-watered garden, And as a fountain of waters, Whose waters fail not.

12 And from thee shall be those who shall restore the deserts of the age; Thou shalt raise up the foundations of generation And generation; And thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths for inhabiting.

13 If thou shalt turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, And shalt not do thy pleasure on my holy day, And shalt call the Sabbath a delight, To consecrate it to Jehovah, because it is honorable, And shall give honor to it, So as not to follow thine own ways, Nor to find thine own pleasure, Nor to speak thine own words;

14 Then shalt thou delight thyself in Jehovah; And I will cause thee to ride on the high places of the earth, And will feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father; For the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it.

[537] Or, The unprofitable speech.

Translation: Chapter 59

CHAPTER 59

1 Behold! the hand of Jehovah is not shortened, That it cannot, save; Nor is his ear heavy, That it cannot hear.

2 But your sins have made a separation Between you And your God; And your sins have hidden his face from you, That he may not heal.

3 For your hands are polluted with blood, And your fingers with iniquity; Your lips have uttered falsehood; Your tongue hath spoken wickedness.

4 There is none that crieth for justice, None that contendeth for truth; They trust in vain things, And talk icily; They conceive mischief, arid bring forth iniquity.

5 They hatch the eggs of the basilisk, And weave the webs of spiders; He that eateth of their eggs shall die; If they be crushed, there shall come forth a viper.

6 Their webs shall not become clothing, And they shall not cover themselves with their works; For their works are works of iniquity; [538] And the work of violence is in their hands.

7 Their bet run to evil, And hasten to shed innocent blood; Their thoughts are vain thoughts; [539] Wasting And destruction are in their paths.

8 The way of peace they know not; And there is no judgment in their steps: They have corrupted their paths; Whosoever walketh by them shall not know peace.

9 Therefore judgment hath departed far from us; And justice doth not overtake us. We looked for light, And, behold! obscurity; For brightness, And, behold! we walk amidst thick darkness.

10 We grope for the wall like the blind; We grope like those who have

[538] Or, Of vanity. And the work of violence is in their hands.

[539] Or, Thoughts of iniquity.

been deprived of sight; We stumble at noon-day as in the night; Ill solitary places like dead men.

11 We all roar like bears; And moaning, we moan like doves We looked for judgment, And it is not visible; For salvation, And it is far off from us.

12 For our iniquities are multiplied before thee; And our sins have testified against us; [540] for our iniquities are with us, And we know our sins.

13 We have done wickedly, And have lied to Jehovah, And have turned back from our God; Speaking slander And revolt; Conceiving And uttering from the heart words of falsehood.

14 And judgment is driven back, And justice is far off; For truth is fallen in the street, And equity cannot come forth.

15 Yea, truth faileth; And he who hath withdrawn from evil hath become a prey. And Jehovah saw it; And it displeased his eyes, that there was no judgment.

16 He saw that there was no man, And wondered that none came forward; [541] Therefore his arm brought [542] salvation to him; And his righteousness, it upheld him.

17 And he put on righteousness as a coat of mail, And the helmet of salvation on his head; He put on vengeance as a robe, And was clothed with indignation as a cloak.

18 As if for the sake of recompenses, As if for rendering vengeance, For rendering indignation to his adversaries, Recompense to his enemies, He will render recompense to the islands.

19 Therefore they shall fear the name of Jehovah from the west, And his glory from the rising of the sun; For the enemy shall come as a river; And the Spirit of Jehovah shall drive him. [543]

20 And a Redeemer shall come to Zion, And to them who have returned from iniquity in Jacob, Saith Jehovah.

21 And this my covenant I make with them, saith Jehovah; My Spirit that is upon thee, And my words which I have put in thy mouth, Shall not depart out of thy mouth, Nor out of the mouth of thy seed, Nor out of the mouth of thy seeds seed, saith Jehovah, From this time even for ever.

[540] Or, Our sins answer to us.
[541] Or, Interceded.
[542] Or, Made.
[543] Or, Shall chase him away.

Translation: Chapter 60

CHAPTER 60

1 Arise, be bright; For thy brightness is come; And the glory of Jehovah is risen upon thee.

2 For, behold! darkness shall cover the earth, And thick darkness the peoples; But Jehovah shall arise upon thee; And his glory shall be seen upon thee.

3 And the Gentiles shall walk to thy brightness, And kings to the luster of thy rising.

4 Lift up thine eyes round about, And see. They all are assembled that they may come to thee; Thy sons shall come from afar; Thy daughters shall be nursed at the side.

5 Then thou shalt see, And shalt be bright; Thou shalt tremble, And thy heart shall be enlarged; Because the abundance of the sea [544] shall be converted to thee; The riches [545] of the Gentiles shall come to thee.

6 A multitude of camels shall cover thee, Of the dromedaries of Midian And Ephah; All they from Sheba shall come; They shall bring gold And incense, And shall declare the praises of Jehovah.

7 All the sheep of Kedar shall be gathered together to thee; The rams of Nebaioth shall minister to thee; They shall ascend to the good-pleasure of mine altar; And I will glorify the house of my glory.

8 Who are those that fly as a cloud, And as doves to their windows?

9 Surely the islands shall wait for me, And the ships of Tarshish; That they may bring thy sons from afar, Their silver And their gold with them, To the name of Jehovah thy God, And to the Holy One of Israel; For he hath glorified thee.

[544] Or, The multitude of the sea.
[545] Or, Strength.

10 And the sons of the foreigner shall build thy walls, And their kings shall minister to thee; For in my wrath I smote thee; And in my loving-kindness have I had compassion on thee.

11 And thy gates shall be open continually; They shall not be shut by day nor by night; That the riches [546] of the Gentiles may be carried to thee, And that their kings may be led.

12 For the nation And kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; The nations, Is, shall be utterly destroyed.

13 The glory of Lebanon shall come to thee; The fir-tree, the pine, And the box together; To the beauty [547] of the place of my holiness; For I will glorify the place of my feet.

14 And the sons of them that afflict thee Shall come bending to thee; And all who despised thee, Shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; And they shall call thee the City of Jehovah, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel.

15 Instead of thy having been forsaken And hated, So that no man passed through thee, I will make thee an eternal excellency, The joy of generation And generation.

16 And thou shalt suck the milk of the Gentiles; Thou shalt suck the breast of kings; And thou shalt know that Jehovah Am thy Savior And thy Redeemer, The Mighty One of Jacob.

17 For brass I will bring gold; And for iron I will bring silver; And for wood, brass; And for stones, iron; And I will make thy magistracy peace, And thine exactors, righteousness.

18 Oppression shall no longer be heard in thy hind; Wasting or destruction within thy borders; And thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, And thy gates, Praise.

19 And thou shalt no longer have the sun for the light of days, Nor shall the brightness of the moon give light to thee; For Jehovah shall be to thee an everlasting light, And thy God shall be thy glory.

20 Thy sun shall no longer set; And thy moon shall no longer wane; For Jehovah shall be to thee an everlasting light; And the days of thy mourning shall be ended.

21 Thy people also shall all be righteous; They shall inherit the land for ever; The branch of his planting shall be the work of my hands, That I may be glorified.

22 A little one shall become a thousand; A small one, a strong nation; Jehovah will hasten this in her time.

[546] Or, Strength.
[547] Or, To adorn.

Translation: Chapter 61

CHAPTER 61

1 The Spirit of the Lord Jehovah is upon me; On that account Jehovah hath anointed me; He hath sent me to preach to the afflicted; [548] To bind up the broken in heart; To proclaim liberty to the captives, The opening of the prison to them that are bound.

2 To proclaim the year of the good-pleasure of Jehovah, And the day of vengeance to our God; To comfort all that mourn.

3 To appoint to the mourners in Zion; That I may give to them beauty instead of ashes, The oil of joy instead of mourning, The garment of gladness instead of an afflicted spirit; To call them trees of righteousness, The plantation of Jehovah, To glorify him.

4 And they shall build the deserts of the age; They shall raise up the ancient wildernesses; And they shall restore the cities of desolation, The wildernesses of many ages.

5 And strangers shall stand And feed your sheep; And the sons of the foreigner shall be Your husbandmen And vine-dressers.

6 But ye shall be called the Priests of Jehovah; Men shall call you the Ministers of our God; Ye shall eat the substance of the Gentiles; And ye shall rise by their glory.

7 Instead of your shame there shall be a double reward; And instead of disgrace they shall rejoice in their portion; For in their land they shall possess the double, And they shall have everlasting joy.

8 For I Jehovah love judgment; I hate robbery in the burnt-offering; And I will establish their work in truth, And will make an everlasting covenant with them.

[548] Or, To the meek.

9 And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles; And their offspring in the midst of the peoples; All who see them shall acknowledge them That they are the seed blessed by Jehovah.

10 Rejoicing I will rejoice in Jehovah; My soul shall be joyful in my God; Nor he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation; He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness; As a bridegroom hath he adorned me, And as a bride decorated with her jewels.

11 For, as the earth putteth forth her bud, And as the garden causeth her seed to spring up, So the Lord Jehovah will cause righteousness to spring up, And praise before all the nations.

Translation: Chapter 62

CHAPTER 62

1 On account of Zion I will not be silent; And on account of Jerusalem I will not rest; Till her righteousness go forth as brightness, And till her salvation burn like a lamp.

2 And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, And all the kings of the earth thy glory; And thou shalt be called by a new name, Which the mouth of Jehovah shall name.

3 And thou shalt be a crown of glory in the hand of Jehovah; And the diadem of the kingdom in the hand of thy God.

4 Thou shalt no more be called forsaken; Nor shall thy land be any more called desolate; For they shall call thee, My good-pleasure in her; And they shall call thy land, Married; For the good-pleasure of Jehovah is in thee, And thy land shall be married.

5 For, as a young man marrieth a virgin, So shall thy sons marry thee; And with the joy of the bridegroom over the bride Thy God will rejoice over thee.

6 On thy walls, O Jerusalem, I have appointed watchmen, Who, during the whole day And the whole night together, Shall not keep silence. Ye that are mindful [549] of Jehovah, Be ye not silent;

7 And give him not silence, Till he establish, And till he make Jerusalem, A praise in the earth.

8 Jehovah hath sworn by his right hand, And by the arm of his strength; If I shall any more give thy corn For food to thine enemies, And if the sons of the foreigner shall drink thy wine, For which thou hast labored.

9 For they who have gathered it shall eat it, And shall praise Jehovah;

[549] Or, That celebrate the memory.

And they that collect it shall drink wine, In my holy courts.

10 Pass through, pass through the gates; Clear the way for the people; Level, level the road; Pave it with stones; Lift up a standard to the peoples.

11 Behold! Jehovah hath proclaimed to the end of the earth; Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold! thy Savior cometh; Behold! his reward is with him, And the effect of his work is before him.

12 And they shall call thee, A holy people, Redeemed by Jehovah; And they shall call thee The City sought out, Not forsaken.

Translation: Chapter 63

CHAPTER 63

1 Who is this that cometh from Edom? With red garments from Bozrah? This that is beautiful in his raiment, Marching in the greatness of his strength? I, who speak in righteousness, Mighty to save.

2 Wherefore is thy raiment red? And thy garments like one that treadeth in the wine-press?

3 Alone have I pressed the wine-press; And of the peoples there was none with me; For I will tread them in my wrath, And will trample them down in my fury; And their blood shall be sprinkled on my garments, And I will stain all my raiment.

4 For the day of vengeance is in my heart; And the year of my redeemed is come.

5 Therefore I looked, And there was none to help; And I wondered that there was none to uphold; Therefore mine arm brought salvation to me And my wrath upheld me.

6 And I will tread down the peoples in my wrath, And will make them drunk in my fury, And will east down their strength to the earth.

7 The mercies of Jehovah will I keep in remembrance, The praises of Jehovah; According to all that Jehovah hath bestowed on us, And in the abundance of kindness toward the house of Israel, Which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercies, And according to the multitude of his loving-kindnesses.

8 For he said, Surely they are my people; Children that do not lie; Therefore he became their Savior.

9 In all their affliction he was afflicted; [550] And the angel of his presence

[550] Or, In all their affliction there was no affliction.

saved them; In his love And in his compassion he redeemed them; And he bare them And carried them all the days of the age.

10 But they were rebellious, And provoked his Holy Spirit; Therefore he was turned to be their enemy, And fought against them.

11 And he remembered the days of old, In which Moses was with his people. Where is he that made them to come up out of the sea, With the shepherd of his flock? Where is he that put his Holy Spirit in the midst of them?

12 That led them by the right hand of Moses, By the arm of his glory; That divided the waters before them, That he might gain for himself all everlasting name?

13 That made them walk through the depths, As a horse ill the desert, So that they did not stumble?

14 He went down, as a beast into a plain; The Spirit of Jehovah gave him rest; So didst thou lead thy people, That thou mightst make for thyself a glorious name.

15 Look down from heaven; Behold from the habitation, Of thy holiness And of thy glory. Where is thy zeal And thy strength? The multitude of thy bowels, And of thy compassions toward me, Have been restrained.

16 Surely thou art our Father, Though Abraham do not know us, And Israel do not acknowledge us; Yet thou art our Fattier And out Redeemer; From everlasting is thy name.

17 Why didst thou cause us, O Jehovah, To wander from thy ways? Why didst thou cause our heart To depart from thy fear? Return, on account of thy servants, To the tribes of thine inheritance.

18 For a little time the people of thy holiness possessed it; Our adversaries have trodden down thy sanctuary.

19 For a long period have we been They over whom thou hast not ruled, On whom thy name hath not been called.

Translation: Chapter 64

CHAPTER 64

1 O that thou wouldst rend the heavens! That thou wouldst come down! That the mountains would flow down at thy presence!

2 As by the burning of a melting fire, [551] The fire hath made the waters to boil, That thou mightst make thy name known to thine adversaries; The nations trembled at thy presence.

3 When thou didst terrible things, Which we looked not for, Thou camest down; The mountains flowed down at thy presence.

4 From of old they have not heard, Nor perceived by the ears; Eye hath not seen a God besides thee, That doeth such things to him that waiteth for him.

5 Thou hast met him that rejoiceth And worketh righteousness; In thy ways they remembered thee; Behold! thou wast angry, And we have sinned; In them is perpetuity, And we shall be saved. [552]

6 And we have all been as the unclean; And all our righteousnesses as a defiled garment; And we all fade as a leaf; And our iniquities, as the wind, Have carried us away.

7 There is none that calleth on thy name, Nor that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee; For thou hast hidden thy face from us, And hast made us to languish In the hand of our iniquity.

8 And now, O Jehovah, thou art our Father; We are the clay, And thou our potter; We all are the work of thy hands.

9 Be not angry, O Jehovah, beyond measure; Neither remember iniquity for ever. Behold! see, we beseech thee, We all are thy people.

10 The cities of thy holiness have been a desert; Zion hath been a desert;

[551] Or, As by a burning fire that melteth.
[552] Or, We have been saved.

Jerusalem hath been a wilderness.

11 The house of our sanctuary And of our glory, In which our fathers praised thee, Hath been burnt with fire; And all our desirable things are laid waste.

12 Wilt thou restrain thyself for these things, O Jehovah! Wilt thou be silent? And wilt thou afflict us beyond measure?

Translation: Chapter 65

CHAPTER 65

1 I have manifested myself to them that asked not; I have been found by them that sought me not; I said, Behold me, behold me, To a nation that called not on my name.

2 I have stretched out my hands every day To a rebellious people, Walking in a way not good, After their own thoughts.

3 A people that provoketh me always to my face, That sacrifieth in gardens, And offereth incense on bricks:

4 Who dwell in the graves; Who pass the night in the deserts; Who eat swines flesh; And broth of unclean things is in their vessels:

5 Who say, Remain by thyself; Approach not to me; For I would sanctify thee; [553] Those shall be smoke in my fury, A fire that burneth all the day.

6 Behold! it is written before me; I will not be silent from rendering And recompensing into their bosom,

7 Your iniquities, And the iniquities of your fathers together, saith Jehovah. Because they have offered incense on the mountains, And have dishonored me on the hills, Therefore I will measure back their ancient work, Into their bosom.

8 Thus saith Jehovah: As if one should find a grape in a cluster, And should say, Destroy it not, For a blessing is in it; So will I do for the sake of my servants, That I may not destroy the whole.

9 And I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, And out of Judah the heir of my mountains; And mine elect shall possess it by inheritance; And my servants shall dwell there.

10 And Sharon shall be an abode of flocks, And the valley of Achor a

[553] Or, For I am holier than thou.

place for herds to lie down in, To my people who have sought me.

11 But ye are forsakers of Jehovah, Who forget the mountain of my holiness, Who prepare a table for the army, And fill an oblation to the number.

12 Therefore I will number you to the sword, And ye all shall be cut down by slaughter; Because I called, And ye answered not; I spoke, And ye heard not; And ye did evil before mine eyes, And chose the things in which I took no pleasure.

13 Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold! my servants shall eat, And ye shall be hungry; Behold! my servants shall drink, And ye shall be thirsty; Behold! my servants shall rejoice, And ye shall be covered with shame.

14 Behold! my servants shall shout for gladness of heart; And ye shall cry aloud for grief of heart, And shall howl for anguish of spirit.

15 And ye shall leave your name for a curse to mine elect; The Lord Jehovah shall slay you, And shall call his servants by another name.

16 He who blesseth himself in the earth Shall bless himself in the faithful God; And he who sweareth in the earth Shall swear by the faithful God; For the former afflictions, Are surrendered to forgetfulness, And hidden from mine eyes.

17 For, behold! I will create, New heavens And a new earth; The former shall not be remembered, Igor come into mind.

18 But rejoice And be glad for ever, In the things which I create; For, behold! I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, And her people a joy.

19 And I will be glad in Jerusalem, And will rejoice in my people; And the voice of weeping shall no more be heard in her, Nor the voice of crying.

20 There shall be no more there an infant of days, Nor an old man that fulfilleth not his days; For the son of a hundred years shall die young; And the sinner who is the son of a hundred years shall be accursed.

21 They shall build houses, And shall inhabit them; They shall plant vines, And shall eat the fruit of them.

22 They shall not build that another may inhabit; They shall not plant that another may eat; For according to the days of a tree Shall be the days of my people; And mine elect shall perpetually enjoy, The work of their hands.

23 They shall not toil in vain; And they shall not bring forth in terror; For the seed of the blessed of Jehovah shall they be, And their offspring with them.

24 And it shall be, before they cry, I will listen; While they are yet speaking, I will hear.

25 The wolf And the lamb shall feed together; And the lion shall eat straw like the ox; And the serpent shall have dust for his food. They shall not destroy, And shall not hurt, In all my holy mountain, saith Jehovah.

Translation: Chapter 66

CHAPTER 66

1 Thus saith Jehovah: Heaven is my throne, And the earth is my footstool: Where is that house which ye will build for me? And where is this place of my rest?

2 Yet all these things hath my hand made, And all these things began to be, saith Jehovah; And I look to him who is humble And contrite in spirit, And who trembleth at my word.

3 He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man; He that sacrificeth a sheep, as if he stabbed a dog; He that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swines flesh; He that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol; And truly they have chosen their own ways; And their soul hath delighted in their abominations.

4 I also will choose their delusions, And will bring upon them their terror; Because I called, And no man answered; I spoke, And they heard not; And they did evil before mine eyes, And chose those things in which I take no delight.

5 Hear the word of Jehovah, Ye that tremble at his word. Your brethren that hate you. And that cast you out for my names sake, Have said, Let Jehovah be glorified. [554] But he shall be seen to your joy, And they shall be ashamed.

6 A voice of tumult from the city! A voice from the temple! The voice of Jehovah Rendering recompense to his adversaries.

7 Before she was in labor, she brought forth; Before her pain came upon her she was delivered of a male.

8 Who hath heard such a thing? Who hath seen such thing? Shall the earth bring forth in one day? Shall a nation be born at once? For as soon

[554] Or, Jehovah is severe, or, Jehovah shall be glorified.

as Zion had the pains of child-bearing? Immediately she brought forth.

9 Shall I bring to the birth, And not bring forth? saith Jehovah. Shall I cause to bear. And yet restrain? saith thy God.

10 Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, And be glad with her, All ye that love her; Rejoice for joy with her, All ye that mourn for her;

11 That ye may suck And be satisfied From the breast of her consolations; That ye may milk And be delighted, With the brightness of her glory.

12 For thus saith Jehovah: Behold! I cause peace to flow on her like a river, And the glory of the Gentiles as an overflowing torrent; Thus ye shall suck; Ye shall be carried on the shoulder, And shall be dandled on the knees.

13 As a man whom his mother comforteth, So will I comfort you; And ye shall have comfort on Jerusalem.

14 And ye shall see, And your heart shall rejoice; And your bones shall flourish like the grass; And the hand of Jehovah shall be known toward his servants, And he shall be enraged against his enemies.

15 For, behold! Jehovah shall come in fire; And his chariots, as a whirlwind; That he may utter his wrath in fury, And his rebuke in a flame of fire.

16 For with fire, And with his sword, Shall Jehovah judge all flesh; And many shall be the slain of Jehovah.

17 They that sanctify themselves, And that purify themselves in the gardens behind one in the midst, That eat swines flesh, And the abomination, And the mouse, Shall be consumed together, saith Jehovah.

18 For I (know) their deeds And their thoughts; Because the time is come, That I should assemble all nations And languages; And they shall come, And shall see my glory.

19 And I will put a mark upon them, And will send some of them that are escaped, To the nations of Tarshish, Pul, And Lud, that draw the bow To Tubal And Jayan; To the distant islands, Which have not heard my name, And have not seen my glory; And they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles.

20 And they shall bring all your brethren, Out of all nations, An oblation to Jehovah, On horses, And chariots, And wagons, On mules And swift animals, To my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith Jehovah; As the children of Israel bring in a clean vessel To the house of Jehovah.

21 And even some of them will I take For priests And Levites, saith Jehovah.

22 For, as the new heavens And the new earth, which I make, Remain before me, saith Jehovah; So shall your seed And your name remain.

23 And it shall be, That from month to his month, And from Sabbath to his Sabbath, All flesh shall come, To worship before me, saith Jehovah.

24 And they shall go forth, And shall see the carcasses of the men who have rebelled against me; For their worm shall not die, And their fire shall not be quenched; And they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh.

The Sun-Dial of Ahaz

THE SUN-DIAL OF AHAZ.

This is believed to be the earliest account of a Sun-Dial that is anywhere to be found in history, and, on that account, has arrested the attention of scholars little addicted to the study of the Holy Scriptures. The form of it, which can now be nothing else than a matter of ingenious conjecture, has been investigated with uncommon industry, and illustrated with great profusion of learning. Little aid can be obtained from the incidental notice of the sacred historian, which our author has expounded with more than his usual conciseness.

A preliminary question relates to the Hebrew word {מעלות}, *(magnaloth,)* which, like the Latin word *gradus,* literally means *steps,* but might naturally enough mean *degrees.* It has been contended that {βαθμοὺς} the term used by Josephus, is liable to a similar ambiguity, and may have been used by him in its literal signification. Michaelis differed so widely from this view, that he considered, {מעלה} (magnalah) to signify a degree, in the sense used by modern mathematicians, who divide a circle into 360 degrees, so that 10 degrees (10°) would denote the ninth part of a right angle; and he supports his opinion by shewing that this use of the word degree did not take its rise among European philosophers, but traveled from the East, and, like our ordinary numerals, had an Arabic origin.

Assuming that the word denotes steps, there is still abundant room for diversity of interpretation. Some have thought that there was a flight of steps leading to the royal palace of Ahaz, on the top of which was placed a gnomon, (or obelisk,) and that the steps served to measure the shadow of the sun which was thrown upon them. Others refer it to an earlier period, when the sun-dial consisted of a massive structure, towering into the sky like other monuments of Oriental architecture, and built with scientific precision, but unfitted by its cumbrous form to vie with the accuracy and elegance of lighter instruments which belong to a more advanced age of sci-

ence The type of such buildings is naturally sought, not in Judea, where such studies were never cultivated, but among the Egyptians, and especially among the Babylonians, to whom the Greeks and other nations were indebted for their knowledge of astronomy. {Πόλον} {μὲν} {γὰρ} {γνώμονα} {καὶ} {τὰ} {δυώδεκα} {μέρεα} {τῶς} {ἡμέρης}, {παρὰ} {Βαβυλωνίων} {ἔμαθον} {οἱ} {Ελληνες} "For the Greeks learned from the Babylonians the dial, and the gnomon, and the division of the day into twelve (parts) hours." (Herodotus Eut., 109.) Nothing is more natural than to suppose that Ahaz directed some architect to copy a celebrated building in Babylon, the general form of which may be gathered from the description given by Bishop Stock,* whose version of the passage, and note, accompanied by a drawing, we shall lay before our readers: —

Behold, I turn the shadow of the degrees,
By which the sun is gone down on the dial of Ahaz,**
Backward ten degrees.
So the sun turned back ten degrees,
On the dial, by which it had gone down.

In what manner the shadow was made to go backward ten degrees is a question totally distinct from the form of the dial. That it was effected by a motion of the sun itself, or by a change of the relative position of the earth to that luminary, though this has been boldly stated and argued, is a notion too extravagant to need refutation. There is plausibility in the view suggested by Doederlein, that "the change of the shadow depended entirely on a cloud, which intercepted, and in a manner altogether extraordinary refracted, the rays of the sun, and thus made the shadow or the light to go back ten degrees." Rosenmuller relates, on the authority of another commentator, an alteration of the shadow of a sun-dial, to the extent of an hour and half, which was effected by the shadow of a cloud at Metz, in the beginning of the eighteenth century. Without inquiring into the historical evidence of such an occurrence, or entering into long and intricate reasonings on the principles of optics, which would be unsuitable to this place, we shall only remark, that the transaction was undoubtedly miraculous; for it is declared to have been "a sign from Jehovah." In this respect, it is but one of innumerable miracles which were performed by an Almighty hand in the sight of the Jewish people, and which have been recorded in order to strengthen the faith, and aid the devotion, of the worshippers of God in all ages, who delight to "praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men." — Ed.

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Greek Words and Phrases

- {ἀετός}: 1
- {ἀκούσας} {ἀγγελίαν}: 1
- {ἀμάρτυρον}: 1
- {ἀνακεφαλαίωσις}: 1
- {ἀνδρίζεσθε}: 1
- {ἀνθρωπομορφῶς} : 1
- {ἄνυδρος}: 1
- {ἅπαξ} {λεγόμενον}: 1
- {ἐμοῦ} {θανόντος} {γαῖα} {μιχθήτω} {πυρί}: 1
- {ἐφήμερον}: 1
- {ὀφθήσομαι}: 1
- {ὁραθήσομαι} {αὐτοῖς}: 1
- {ὥσπερ} {γὰρ} {τοῖς} {σώμασιν} {ἡμῶν} {ἕως} {μὲν} {ἂν} {ἐρρωμένος} {ᾖ} {τις} {οὐδὲν} {ἐπαισθάνεται} {τῶν} {καθ} {ἕκαστα} {σαθρῶν} {ἐπ᾽} {ἂν} {δὲ} {ἀρρώστημα} {συμβῶ} {πάντα} {κινεῖται} {κἂν} {ῥῆγμα} {κἂν} {στρέμμα} {κἂν} {αλλό} {τι} {τῶν} {ὑπαρχόντων} {σαθρῶν} {ᾖ} {οὕτω} {καὶ} {τῶν} {πόλεων} {καὶ} {τῶν} {τυράννων}.: 1
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- {εἰ} {ἀδικητέον} {τυραννίδος} {περὶ} {ἀδικητέον}: 1
- {εἰ} {βούλεσθε} {σὐλογηθῶναι}: 1
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- {νεκροί}: 1

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- {πρὸς} {αὔξησιν}: 1
- {πρὸς} {τὶ}: 1
- {σκηνὴ}: 1
- {συμπτώματα}: 1
- {τὸ} {ποίημα}: 1 2
- {τεθνεῶτες}: 1
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- {Ὀνῳ} {τὶς} {ἔλεγε} {μῦθον·} {ὁ} {δὲ} {τὰ} {ὦτα} {ἐκίνει}: 1
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Hebrew Words and Phrases

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- :{אברים} 1
- :{אדדה} 1 2
- :{אדמה} 1
- :{אולי} 1
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Latin Words and Phrases

- Aio to : 1
- Astrologia: 1
- Croesus Halym penetrans magnam pervertet opum vim: 1
- Olim truncus eram ficulnus, inutile lignum; Quum faber, incertus scamnum faceretne: 1
- Pronaque quum spectent animalia caetera terram, Os homini sublime dedit, coelumque videre Jussit, et erectos ad sidera tollere vultus: 1
- Quoad domum taam, vel, domui tuae: 1
- ad cor: 1
- confundamini: 1
- descenderat: 1
- propter: 1
- qui mortui estis in Israel: 1
- quoe erat arida: 1
- secundum cor: 1
- vanitas: 1
- videntes: 1
- Animadversiones Philologicae: 1
- Distulit in seram commissa piacula mortem: 1
- Nunquid super his non indignabor: 1
- Quum fortunic ipsi minaci Mandaret]aqueum, mediumque ostenderet unguem: 1
- Recede a me: 1
- afflues: 1
- conflues: 1
- ejus tempore: 1
- lectisternium: 1

- quod Babylonium olet: 1
- suo tempore: 1

French Words and Phrases

- A ceux qui la veulent contempler en foy: 1
- A l'idole corruptible: 1
- A la rigueur: 1
- A leur advis: 1
- A ne tenir conte des menaces d'iceluy: 1
- Afin de destourner les idiots (qu'ils appellent) de lira dedans: 1
- Afin de ne la point voir: 1
- Apres des erreurs et superstitions: 1
- Assavoir, sur belles paroles: 1
- Au chemin d'entre Iudee et Babylone: 1
- Au moins qu'il y ait paix: 1
- Au travers de la quelle ceste desconfiture passera sans espargner endroit quelconque: 1
- Aux causes secondes: 1
- Aux enfans de ce monde: 1
- C'est leur vraye felicite d'estre conjoints a leur Sauveur: 1
- Car il n' empoigne la verge soudainement: 1
- Car il y aura paix: 1
- Car tonte son etude est: 1
- Ce mot d' eleu : 1
- Ce peu qu'ils ont de conscience: 1
- Ce qu' aussi nous devons faire: 1
- Ce suis-je, ce suis-je: 1 2 3 4 5 6
- Certainement nos enfans sont plus savans et religieux qu'eux: 1
- Comme celuy qui fut donne a Pyrrhus: 1
- Comme si Dieu n'en cust rien veu: 1
- Comme si toutes les autres villes n'estoyent rien derant Dieu au pris de ces-

teci: 1
- D’autant qu’ils estoyent de matire corruptible: 1
- D’escheles: 1
- D’un remords de mauvaise conscience: 1
- De ce beau theater du monde: 1
- De la droite fiance en luy: 1
- De leurs ennemis: 1
- Dechassant par la splendeur de sa vertu toutes tenebres d’ignorance: 1
- Des idolatres mesmes: 1
- Des poures pecheurs: 1
- Devant moy: 1
- Doit considerer et savoir que ce que fait ici Ezechias, luy est enjoint en cas semblable: 1
- En les punissant: 1
- En son conseil: 1
- En un seul homme: 1
- En voyant les Gentils avoir toutes choses a souhait: 1
- Encor qu’il y en air un: 1
- Encore qu’il leur air pardonne: 1
- Estoit decrete et ordonne desia en son conseil: 1
- Et: 1
- Et Ezechias pleura amerement: 1
- Et exauce les souspirs faits en foy: 1
- Et jetter au sein d’iceluy sa tristesse et soliciltude: 1
- Et n’ont que faire de luy: 1
- Et qu’il ne se soucie des choses de ce monde: 1
- Et semblent estre elevees jusqu’ au ciel: 1
- Et tu ne sqauras d’ou il viendra: 1
- Evangile, c’est a dire Bonne nouvelle: 1
- Fortifler ceux qui sont prests a tomber: 1
- Hors de ce monde: 1
- Il a de belles paroles: 1
- Il devoit (ce semble) monstrer la vertu de bonne heure, et non pas declarer ce qu’il feroit apres le siege leve: 1
- Il ne fait pas grand bruit: 1
- Il s’esleve d’une saincte colere alencontre de la folie desesperee des hommes: 1
- Ils ont defie tous dangers: 1
- Ils seront sacrifiez par les mains d’aussi mecans qn’eux: 1
- Jusqu’ a ce que quelque oiseau soit apparu: 1
- Jusqu’ ace qu’il nons esleve en haut a soy: 1
- L’ a-il pas appele pour venir apres soy: 1
- L’apparence d’un ver de terre: 1
- L’arc en la nuce: 1

- La reconciliation avec Dieu: 1
- Le Seigneur m’a delivre: 1
- Le mal m’ oppresse: 1
- Lequel viendroit avec une merveilleuse vistesse: 1
- Les bestes sauvages (assavoir Ziim avec Iim,) s’y rencontreront: 1
- Les ennemis de l’Eglise: 1
- Les fideles: 1
- Les idols et l’idolatrie: 1
- Les maisons: 1
- Les profanes et incredules: 1
- Lesquelles ne pourroyent demeurer debout si les hommes n’y mettoyent la main: 1
- Mais c’estoit temps perdu: 1
- Mais celle ou il y aura des sergens de bande, capitaines, colonels et autres conducteurs: 1
- Mais pareillement a mis une priere en la bouche, et un bouclier au bras des fideles pour resister a la tentation: 1
- N’y en a point d’autre que Dieu: 1
- Non pas a ces sages mondains: 1
- Non pas que pour crainte d’estre mal voulu, il se descharge sur le Seigneur: 1
- Nonobstant la multitude des derins et augures: 1
- Nulle forme d’Eglise: 1
- Outre ces ans-ci: 1
- Par un poete profane: 1
- Paraventure, ou possible: 1
- Pour adoucir la tristesse des fideles de ces tempsla: 1
- Pour l’amour de mon sainct nom: 1
- Pour recognoistre Dieu, qui les chastioit si rudement: 1
- Pource que nous avons ose abolir les traditions et ceremonies qui estoyent en usage de long temps: 1
- Puis qu’il estoit ills et successeur de David: 1
- Puis que ton naturel est d’assister aux tiens, quand tout est reduit au desespoir: 1
- Puisque sa force n’estoit point diminuee, ni sa beneficence refroidie: 1
- Qu’ ils ont eu tort de guerroyer: 1
- Qu’il faisoit son conte de mourir: 1
- Qu’ils seroyent constrains de signer leur condamnation: 1
- Quand leurs coeurs sont endureis: 1
- Quand on leur apportoit nouvelles de l’ ennemi: 1
- Que Dieu sera plus fort qu’ eux: 1
- Que l’homme est plus beste que los bestes mesmes: 1
- Que la guerre qu’il entreprendoit de faire auroit heureuse issue, et seroit benite du ciel: 1
- Que le vent d’adversite ne les puisse abattre: 1

- Que nons avons traduit Guerre, pour “le temps,” comme s’il estoit dit Son temps est accompli: 1
- Que tous sont vanite: 1
- Quel orgueil estce donc que le premier qui voudra mettre la main a la besogne se face autant de dieux que bon luy semblera: 1
- Qui comprend en soy le regne de Christ jusqu’ a la fin du monde: 1
- Qui ne sommes qu’une poignee de gens: 1
- Qui sont plus vaines que la vanite mesme: 1
- S’ils ont quelque loisir de reprendre haleine: 1
- Satisfaction ou recompenses: 1
- Selon le coeur: 1
- Seulement: 1
- Si nous ne daignons ouvrir la bouche pour prier: 1
- Son Eglise composee de toutes les nations de la terre: 1
- Tant s’en faut qu’elle ose tonner si haut que de coustume, que mesmes elle n’osera desserrer les dents: 1
- Tant sous le vieil que sous le nouveau testament: 1
- Tellement qu’ils ne marchent qu’en trainant les jambes ou a clochepied: 1
- Un esprit humble et modeste: 1
- Un renonvellement incroyable, ou seconde creation du monde: 1
- mirage: 1
- qu’il estoit monte: 1
- ton bon droict: 1
- A en remercier Dieu: 1
- A l’histoire de la deliverance d’Egypte: 1 2
- Admonneste les fideles: 1
- Afin de donner puis apres a son Eglise des enfans legitimes qui luy assistent: 1
- Afin que les hommes creussent de sa majeste tout ce que bon leur sembleroit: 1
- Afin que nous comprenions mieux ce qui nons est dit de luy: 1
- Ains recognoissent que leurs vices empeschent que ceste puissance ne se monstre: 1
- Au bon chemin: 1
- Au chapitre precedent: 1
- Au pere celeste: 1
- Au service de leur maistre: 1
- Ausquels la grace a este faite: 1
- Avec ceux qui leur remonstrent choses pour leur salut: 1
- C’est comme s’il accordoit qu’il fust ainsi: 1
- Car je voy leurs oeuvres et leurs pensees: 1
- Ceux qui traduisent, Je luy distribueray portion avec plusieurs: 1
- Ceux-la sont doctes: 1
- Chacun en son endroict: 1

- Comme aux asnes qui font signe d’oreilles: 1
- Comme les hommes sont incontinent destournez du droit chemin: 1
- Comme par feu ardent qui fait fondre: 1
- Comme plusieurs t’ont eu en horreur: 1
- Comme s’il accordoit qu’elles fassent vrayes: 1
- Comme si tu eusses gaigne ta vie en travaillant de tes mains: 1
- De desloyaute et traison: 1
- De mort: 1
- De nons amener a salut: 1
- De tout temps: 1
- Depuis un mois jusques a un autre mois, et depuis un Sabbat jusques a son autre Sabbat: 1
- Des esprits malins: 1
- Doit neeessairement estre aussi mechant qu’eux: 1
- Dureront a jamais: 1
- En ce qu’il addresse sa parole a tous: 1
- En cherchant le chemin de vie eternelle: 1
- En l’histoire de la deliverance d’Egypte: 1
- En nos articles de foy: 1
- En recognoissance du bien que Joseph avoit fait au royaume: 1
- Encore qu’ils facent du pis qu’ils pourrent: 1
- Et Persiques: 1
- Et ce ne sont pas les ignorans seulement qui font cela, ains ceux qui veulent estre estimez les plus subtils entre eux: 1
- Et gehenne: 1
- Et les appelle apostats: 1
- Et leur feray venir les choses qu’ils craignoyent: 1
- Et mesmes vent redresser celuy qui est au sepulcher: 1
- Et ne mesureroyent sa grandeur infinie a leur petitesse: 1
- Et ne veulent ouir autre chanson: 1
- Et que Mercure estoit le dieu des marchans qui out leurs livres de contes: 1
- Et se moquent de tout ce qu’on leur dit: 1
- Fideles: 1
- His verront la gloire de Dieu autrement qu’ils ne pensent: 1
- Hors du pays qui leur avoit este promis et donne: 1
- Il n’a point change de nature: 1
- Il ne faut plus offrir a Dieu des bestes brutes: 1
- J’aime mieux le prendre pour cantique : 1
- Je feray qu ils cognoistront avoir failli, tellement que ce qu ils craignoyent leur tombera dessus la teste: 1
- Je ne voy point de raison pourquoy OEcolampade a traduit, II a expose ses hants lieux au riche: 1
- Jusques a tant que Dieu vienne du ciel a main armee pour en faire vengeance: 1

- L’une au ciel, l’autre en terre: 1
- Le Sainct d’Israel, qui est ton Redempteur, sera appele le Dieu de toute la terre, ou, Le Sainct d’Israel sera appele ton Redempteur et Dieu de toute la terre: 1
- Le danger estoit qu’ils n’ estaignissent la foy d’une petite troupe de fideles: 1
- Les hommes miserables de nature: 1
- Lesquels desirent (s’ils veulent dire la verite) estre certains de leur salut, et que ce qu’ils deviendront: 1
- Leur droit: 1
- Mais c’est sans parler: 1
- Mais celle des meschans est effroyable: 1
- Mais d’autant qu’il leur avoit jure fidelite: 1
- Mais ils n’ont jamais peu faire un seul hornroe juste: 1
- Mais leur peche en est cause: 1
- Mais seulement pour la petite troupe des fideles: 1
- Mais tout s’evanouira comme fumee: 1
- Maistres charpentiers et massons: 1
- Maistres passez: 1
- Murmurent entre les dents: 1
- Ne touchcz point la souillure: 1
- Non pas mesmes de l’espesseur d’une ongle: 1
- Non pas qu’il puisse tenir les meschans en bride: 1
- Non pas qu’ils le pensent oisif ni endormi au ciel: 1
- Non point pour soy, mais pour nous: 1
- Nous n’avons aucune part au royaume de Dieu: 1
- On ne sauroit recevoir promesse queleonque: 1
- On peut lire ceci en deux sortes, assavoir comme nous l’avons traduit, Car ceci m’est comme les eaux de Noe, ou, Ceci m’est comme les jours de Noe: 1
- Ou mesmes d’une audace desesperee osent se vanter qu’ils sacrifient Jesus Christ: 1
- Ou, jouiront en vieil aage de l’oeuvre de leurs mains: 1
- Par Rahab, : 1
- Par la predication de l’Evangile: 1
- Par les biens terriens: 1
- Par une obstination mechante: 1
- Piacula commissa propter quae expiatio debetur: 1
- Piaculum committere: 1
- Pour conformer l’esperance des fideles: 1
- Pour debatre: 1
- Pour piller et brigander: 1
- Pour rire et chanter quand elle florit, et pleurer lors qu’elle est persecutee: 1
- Pour vous estre rude et ennemi a jamais: 1
- Pource qu’elles ont este mesprisees et rejettees: 1
- Pource qu’il retient son bras: 1

- Pource que c’est une chose avenue depuis peu d’annees: 1
- Qu’ en sacrifiant un boeuf, e’est autant que s’ils coupoyent la gorge a un homme: 1
- Quand la guerre est juste, celuy qui prend la prove est juste possesseur d’icelle: 1
- Que la moindre partie de leur corps est souillee d’extorsion: 1
- Que nons avons traduit banni: 1
- Que telles gens n’esperent point que Dieu s’approche d’eux: 1
- Quelqu’un dira: 1
- Qui ferment les entrailles, et sont sans affection: 1
- Qui gemissent sous le fardeau de leurs pechez: 1
- Qui la fait reluire: 1
- Qui pensent bien honnorer Christ en s’agenouillant derant cette idole de Rome pour baiser sa pantoufle: 1
- Qui se vantent de sacrifier Iesus Christ: 1
- Regardez a la pierre dont vous avez este coupez: 1
- S’il ne nous recoit gratuitement, en pardonnant nos offenses: 1
- S’il veut contrefaire le docteur, et n’a doctrine ni savoir: 1
- Selon la coustume des criminels qui demandent misericorde: 1
- Si nons l’escoutons attentivement: 1
- Si nous ne changeons de vie: 1
- Tellement que le nombre de ceux qui revindrent en Judee fut bien petit: 1
- Tout le vieil homme: 1
- Toutes fois sa posterite en a este delivree: 1
- Toutes les marques exterieures: 1
- si nous sommes persecutez: 1
- tout leur saoul: 1
- trousser: 1
- trousser baggage: 1
- trousser un homme: 1