CALVIN'S COMMENTARIES

COMMENTARY ON JOEL • AMOS • OBADIAH JONAH • MICAH • NAHUM

JOHN CALVIN

SOLI DEO GLORIA

Commentary on Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, and Nahum

John Calvin

Translated from the original Latin
by the Rev. John Owen

Monergism Books

Commentary on Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, and Nahum

John Calvin

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Contents

Translator's Preface to Joel, Amos, and Oba… vii
Translator's Preface to Jonah, Micah, and Na… xii
Commentary on Joel 1
Commentary on Joel 2
Joel 1 4
Joel 1:1-4 4
Joel 1:5 8
Joel 1:6-7 9
Joel 1:8 11
Joel 1:9 12
Joel 1:10 12
Joel 1:11 13
Joel 1:12 14
Joel 1:13-15 14
Joel 1:16-17 17
Joel 1:18 18
Joel 1:19-20 19
Joel 2 22
Joel 2:1-11 22
Joel 2:12-13 30
Joel 2:14 35
Joel 2:15-17 37
Joel 2:18-19 43
Joel 2:20 44
Joel 2:21 46
Joel 2:22 47
Joel 2:23 48
Joel 2:24 50
Joel 2:25 50
Joel 2:26 51
Joel 2:27 52
Joel 2:28 53
Joel 2:29 57
Joel 2:30-31 58
Joel 2:32 63
Joel 3 68
Joel 3:1-3 68
Joel 3:4-6 73
Joel 3:7 76
Joel 3:8 77
Joel 3:9-11 78
Joel 3:12 80
Joel 3:13 81
Joel 3:14 81
Joel 3:15 83
Joel 3:16 83
Joel 3:17 84
Joel 3:18-19 85
Joel 3:20 87
Joel 3:21 87
Commentary on Amos 90
Commentary on Amos 91
Amos 1 92
Amos 1:1 92
Amos 1:2 94
Amos 1:3-5 96
Amos 1:6-8 101
Amos 1:9-10 103
Amos 1:11-12 104
Amos 1:13-15 106
Amos 2 108
Amos 2:1-3 108
Amos 2:4-5 110
Amos 2:6 113
Amos 2:7 115
Amos 2:8 117
Amos 2:9-12 119
Amos 2:13 124
Amos 2:14-16 125
Amos 3 127
Amos 3:1-2 127
Amos 3:3-8 129
Amos 3:9 136
Amos 3:10 138
Amos 3:11-12 138
Amos 3:13-14 140
Amos 3:15 142
Amos 4 144
Amos 4:1 144
Amos 4:2 146
Amos 4:3 147
Amos 4:4-6 148
Amos 4:7 151
Amos 4:8 152
Amos 4:9 153
Amos 4:10 155
Amos 4:11 156
Amos 4:12-13 157
Amos 5 161
Amos 5:1 161
Amos 5:2 162
Amos 5:3 163

Amos 5:4-6 164
Amos 5:7 167
Amos 5:8 168
Amos 5:9 171
Amos 5:10 172
Amos 5:11 173
Amos 5:12 174
Amos 5:13 175
Amos 5:14 177
Amos 5:15 178
Amos 5:16 180
Amos 5:17 182
Amos 5:18 183
Amos 5:19 184
Amos 5:21-23 185
Amos 5:24 188
Amos 5:25-26 190
Amos 5:27 194
Amos 6 196
Amos 6:1 196
Amos 6:2 198
Amos 6:3 199
Amos 6:4 200
Amos 6:5 202
Amos 6:6-7 203
Amos 6:8 204
Amos 6:9 206
Amos 6:10 206
Amos 6:11 209
Amos 6:12 209
Amos 6:13 211
Amos 6:14 212
Amos 7 214
Amos 7:1-3 214
Amos 7:4-6 218
Amos 7:7-9 219
Amos 7:10-13 222
Amos 7:14-15 231
Amos 7:16 233
Amos 8 237
Amos 8:1-2 237
Amos 8:3-4 238
Amos 8:5 240
Amos 8:6 242
Amos 8:7 242
Amos 8:8 244
Amos 8:9 245
Amos 8:10 246
Amos 8:11-12 247
Amos 8:13-14 251
Amos 9 253
Amos 9:1 253
Amos 9:2-4 256
Amos 9:5 258
Amos 9:6 259
Amos 9:7 261
Amos 9:8-9 262
Amos 9:10 265
Amos 9:11 266
Amos 9:12 269
Amos 9:13 270
Amos 9:14 271
Amos 9:15 272
Commentary on Obadiah 274
Commentary on Obadiah 275
Obadiah 1 277
Obadiah 1:1 277
Obadiah 2-4 278
Obadiah 5 281
Obadiah 6 282
Obadiah 7-8 283
Obadiah 9 287
Obadiah 10-11 288
Obadiah 12-14 290
Obadiah 15 292
Obadiah 16 294
Obadiah 17 294
Obadiah 18 296
Obadiah 19-20 297
Obadiah 21 298
Commentary on Jonah 301
Commentary on Jonah 302
Jonah 1 304
Jonah 1:1-2 304
Jonah 1:3 308
Jonah 1:4 312
Jonah 1:5 313
Jonah 1:6 317
Jonah 1:7 319
Jonah 1:8-10 322
Jonah 1:11-12 326
Jonah 1:13-14 329
Jonah 1:15 332
Jonah 1:16 332
Jonah 1:17 336
Jonah 2 339

Jonah 2:1-2 339
Jonah 2:3 341
Jonah 2:4 342
Jonah 2:5-6 344
Jonah 2:7 345
Jonah 2:8-9 347
Jonah 2:10 350
Jonah 3 351
Jonah 3:1-2 351
Jonah 3:3 352
Jonah 3:4 354
Jonah 3:5 355
Jonah 3:6-8 357
Jonah 3:9 363
Jonah 3:10 364
Jonah 4 368
Jonah 4:1 368
Jonah 4:2 369
Jonah 4:3 374
Jonah 4:4 376
Jonah 4:5 378
Jonah 4:6-8 379
Jonah 4:9 382
Jonah 4:10-11 383
Commentary on Micah 387
Commentary on Micah 388
Micah 1 389
Micah 1:1 389
Micah 1:2 391
Micah 1:3-4 392
Micah 1:5 395
Micah 1:6 398
Micah 1:7 399
Micah 1:8-9 400
Micah 1:10 402
Micah 1:11 404
Micah 1:12 405
Micah 1:13 406
Micah 1:14 406
Micah 1:15 408
Micah 1:16 409
Micah 2 411
Micah 2:1 411
Micah 2:2 412
Micah 2:3 413
Micah 2:4 414
Micah 2:5 416
Micah 2:6 417
Micah 2:7 419
Micah 2:8 422
Micah 2:9 424
Micah 2:10 424
Micah 2:11 426
Micah 2:12-13 427
Micah 3 431
Micah 3:1-3 431
Micah 3:4 434
Micah 3:5 436
Micah 3:6-7 438
Micah 3:8 441
Micah 3:9-10 444
Micah 3:11-12 447
Micah 4 453
Micah 4:1-2 453
Micah 4:3 459
Micah 4:4 464
Micah 4:5 465
Micah 4:6-7 468
Micah 4:8 471
Micah 4:9-10 472
Micah 4:11-13 475
Micah 5 481
Micah 5:1-2 481
Micah 5:3 487
Micah 5:4 488
Micah 5:5 490
Micah 5:6 493
Micah 5:7-8 494
Micah 5:9 497
Micah 5:10-15 497
Micah 6 505
Micah 6:1-2 505
Micah 6:3 507
Micah 6:4 508
Micah 6:5 509
Micah 6:6-8 511
Micah 6:9 516
Micah 6:10-11 518
Micah 6:12 520
Micah 6:13-14 521
Micah 6:15 523
Micah 6:16 523
Micah 7 526
Micah 7:1-2 526
Micah 7:3 528
Micah 7:4 530

Micah 7:5-6 531
Micah 7:7 532
Micah 7:8 534
Micah 7:9 536
Micah 7:10 539
Micah 7:11-12 541
Micah 7:13 544
Micah 7:14 545
Micah 7:15 548
Micah 7:16-17 549
Micah 7:18 551
Micah 7:19 555
Micah 7:20 556
Commentary on Nahum 559
Commentary on Nahum 560
Nahum 1 563
Nahum 1:1 563
Nahum 1:2 564
Nahum 1:3 566
Nahum 1:4 568
Nahum 1:5 569
Nahum 1:6 570
Nahum 1:7 571
Nahum 1:8 572
Nahum 1:9 573
Nahum 1:10 575
Nahum 1:11 576
Nahum 1:12 578
Nahum 1:13 580
Nahum 1:14 581
Nahum 1:15 583
Nahum 2 586
Nahum 2:1-2 586
Nahum 2:3 589
Nahum 2:4 590
Nahum 2:5 591
Nahum 2:6 592
Nahum 2:7 592
Nahum 2:8 594
Nahum 2:9 595
Nahum 2:10 597
Nahum 2:11-12 599
Nahum 2:13 601
Nahum 3 604
Nahum 3:1 604
Nahum 3:2-3 605
Nahum 3:4 606
Nahum 3:5-6 608
Nahum 3:7 610
Nahum 3:8-10 611
Nahum 3:11 614
Nahum 3:12 615
Nahum 3:13 615
Nahum 3:14-15 616
Nahum 3:16-17 618
Nahum 3:18 620
Nahum 3:19 621
Historical Scripture Translations 623
Translation: Joel 1 624
Translation: Joel 2 626
Translation: Joel 3 629
Translation: Amos 1 631
Translation: Amos 2 633
Translation: Amos 3 635
Translation: Amos 4 637
Translation: Amos 5 639
Translation: Amos 6 641
Translation: Amos 7 643
Translation: Amos 8 645
Translation: Amos 9 647
Translation: Obadiah 1 649
Translation: Jonah 1 651
Translation: Jonah 2 653
Translation: Jonah 3 654
Translation: Jonah 4 655
Translation: Micah 1 657
Translation: Micah 2 659
Translation: Micah 3 661
Translation: Micah 4 663
Translation: Micah 5 665
Translation: Micah 6 667
Translation: Micah 7 669
Translation: Nahum 1 671
Translation: Nahum 2 673
Translation: Nahum 3 675
Addenda to Joel 677
Addenda to Amos 680
Index of Scripture References 683
Index of Scripture Commentary 702
Greek Words and Phrases 704
Hebrew Words and Phrases 708
Latin Words and Phrases 725
French Words and Phrases 730

Translator's Preface to Joel, Amos, and Obadiah

Translator's Preface

This volume contains the Writings of three Prophets. Joel exercised his office among the Jews; Amos, though a native of Judea, was yet appointed a Prophet of The Ten Tribes; and Obadiah's prophecy refers only to Edom.

The great master of Hebrew criticism, Bishop Lowth, speaking, in his twenty-first Prelection, of Joel, says, that though he differs much in style from Hosea, he is yet "*equally poetical.*" He represents him as "*elegant, clear, diffuse, and flowing, and also very sublime, severe, and fervid.*" Admitting the perspicuity of his diction, and the clearness of his arrangements, he yet confesses that the matter which he handles is sometimes obscure, especially towards the end of his Prophecy.

With regard to the style of Amos, the Bishop differs widely from Jerome, who has characterized the Prophet as "*unskillful in speech, but not in knowledge,*" (imperitum sermone, set non in scientia.) Lowth, on the contrary, regarded him as "*not a whit behind the very chiefest Prophets, being in elevation of sentiment and nobleness of mind almost equal to the very firsts and hardly inferior to any of them in splendor of diction and elegance of composition.*" [1]

Of Obadiah, nothing more is said by the Bishop than that he left but a small monument of his genius, and that a considerable portion of that is contained in the prophecy of Jeremiah. Of his composition Dr. Henderson says, "*Its principal features are animation, regularity, and perspicuity.*"

[1]— Pastoreum nostrum {μηδεν} {ὑστερηκεναι} {τωv} {ὑπερ} {λιαv} {προφητωv}; ut sensuum elatione et magnificentia spiritus prope summis parem, ita etiam dictionis splendore et compositionis elegantia vix quoquam inferioreum. --- Lowth, Prael. xxi.

There is especially one subject in connection with the present Volume, which seems to require particular notice — The interpretation of those prophecies which speak of the future restoration of the Jews to their own land. Calvin viewed some passages, as having been already accomplished in their return from Babylon, which in the estimation of others are yet to be fulfilled; while he interpreted those which evidently refer to what is future, in such a way as clearly shows that he did not consider that the Jews are to be restored again to their own country. That justice may be done to him, we must know and bear in mind the principles by which he was guided: for it is not to be supposed, that one so versed in Scripture, who had studied it with so much labor, and manifested, as it is commonly admitted, so much penetration and discernment as an expounder, would have taken such a view of this subject on slight grounds, without adopting a rule of interpretation, which, according to what he thought, was countenanced by Scriptural examples.

It must first be observed, that Calvin, in common with others, regarded the history as well erg the institutions of the people of Israel, as in great measure typical of things under the Gospel. Their temporal evils and blessings, their temporal oppressions and deliverances, were intended to set forth the spiritual state and condition of the Christian Church. The free choice of the people by God, their Egyptian bondage, their passage through the wilderness and their possession of the land of Canaan, were events symbolical of things connected with that spiritual community afterwards formed by the preaching of the Gospel; and of the same character was the subsequent captivity of that people in Babylon, and their restoration afterwards to their own land.

The next thing to be noticed is, that Promises of Blessings made to the people of Israel had in some instances a twofold meaning, and had reference to two things — the one temporal and the other spiritual. The restoration, for instance, from Babylon, was a prelude of the restoration or redemption by Christ. It was not only typical, but a kind of an initiative process, which was to be completed, though in a sublimer sense, by the Savior of man. The first was a restoration from temporal evils; the second was still a restoration, but from evils of a spiritual kind. The performance of the promise, in one case, was the commencement of a restorative work, which was to be completed in the other: the temporal restoration was eventually succeeded by that which is spiritual.

But the most material point in interpreting the Prophecies is The Language which is Used: rightly to understand this language forms the main difficulty. There are Promises which, as admitted by Calvin, look beyond the restoration from Babylon; and they are couched in terms, which, if taken literally, most evidently show that there is to be a second restoration. What is there, it may be asked, which can justify a departure from the letter of the promises? This is the chief question, on which the whole matter depends. Calvin evidently thought that the literal sense cannot be taken, as that

would be inconsistent with the general character of the ancient prophecies; for he considered that many of the prophecies, which relate to the Church of the New Testament, were conveyed in a language suitable to the institutions then existing, and in consistency with the notions which then prevailed, as to religion and divine worship. Hence the Temple, Mount Sion, sacrifices, offerings, the priests, as well as the restoration of the people to their own land, and their perpetual establishment in it, are often spoken of in those very promises which incontestably refer to the Gospel dispensation. Now, if in some cases, as confessed by most, if not by all, the language is not to be taken literally, but as representing the success, the extension and the blessings of the Gospel, why should it be taken literally in other similar cases? The possession of the land of Canaan was to the people of Israel one of their chief blessings, and was a signal token of the divine favor. Banishment from it was not only a temporal loss, but involved also the loss of all their religious privileges. Nothing, therefore, could have conveyed to their minds a higher idea of redemption than the promise of restoration to their own land, and a perpetual possession of it.

The foregoing seem to have been the views by which Calvin was guided in his interpretation: and the Editor must be allowed to express his concurrence, though he is fully aware, that there have been, and that there are still, many celebrated men of a contrary opinion.

There is another idea which Calvin suggests, in connection with this subject. He regarded The Promises made in some instances by the Prophets as to the future prosperity of the people of Israel, and the perpetuity of their institutions and privileges, as Conditional, even when no condition is expressed. Instances of the same kind are to be found in the writings of Moses and of the earlier Prophets. Promises of perpetuity are made, (as for instance, respecting the priesthood,) and often unaccompanied by any conditions; and yet they were conditional, as the event proved, and in accordance with the tenor of the covenant under which the Israelites lived. The same view may also be taken of such promises as are found in the later Prophets, that is, such as bear on them a national stamp: they were announced unconditionally; but as they included blessings which belonged to the people as subjects of the Mosaic covenant, they were necessarily conditional, dependent as to their accomplishment on their obedience. Hence Jeremiah, who had himself announced promises of this kind, says, that the time would come when God would establish another covenant; and for this reason, because the people of Israel had broken the former covenant.

The Editor feels it to be his duty to say generally of Calvin's Expositions that the more maturely he considers them, after having compared them with those of others, both modern and ancient, the more satisfied he is with them, and the more he admires the acuteness and solid judgment they display. Perhaps no individual, possessing his high qualifications, natural, acquired, and spiritual, has ever, either in ancient or modern times, exercised himself

so much in the study of the Holy Scriptures, and produced Comments so original and so valuable.

What is remarkable in Calvin as an Expositor is his unvarying attention to the context. This was his polar star, which enabled him to steer clear and safe through many intricacies and ambiguities no to the meaning of particular words, and even of sentences. His first object seems to have been to ascertain the general drift of a passage or of a chapter; and his next, to harmonize its several parts. There are many words which have various meanings, and the surest way of ascertaining their meaning in any given sentence, is to inquire what comports with the context. There is indeed no other way by which we can make a choice, when a word admits of different senses. Probably no Commentator has ever paid so much attention to this canon of interpretation as Calvin did. The ground on which he almost at all times rejects a sense given by others to words or to sentences is, that it does not suit the place, or, to adopt an expression he frequently uses, that it does not square (non quadrat) with the passage.

It has been often thought that more difficulty attends the Hebrew language than other languages, owing to the variety of meaning which belongs to some of its words. But this variety exists quite as much, and indeed much more, in many other languages, and even in our own. What enables us in numberless instances to ascertain the meaning of a word, and even often of a sentence, is what stands connected with it, that is, the context. It is what goes before and comes after, not only in a sentence, but often in a long passage, that explains the precise meaning of many words. To transfer the meaning of a word from one passage to another, and to say that because it has a certain meaning in one place, it must have the same in another, (except the word has but one meaning,) is certainly not the way to explain Scripture or any other writing. The best expositor in this respect is no doubt the context.

It is well known that these Lectures were delivered extempore, and were taken down by some of those who heard them; and we have them now as thus taken down, and afterwards corrected by Calvin. This circumstance accounts for the occasional defect of order and for occasional repetitions. But these drawbacks seem to have been more than compensated by the freshness and vigor, the life and animation which these spontaneous effusion of his mind exhibit. In none of his other writings, as it appears to the Editor, has Calvin shone forth with so much lustre as an able, clear, plain, and animated an Expounder, as in these Lectures. There is a flow and energy to be found in them not equaled in those productions which he composed in private, and finished with more careful attention to order and style. When the mind is well stored and the memory retentive, as was the case in no ordinary degree with Calvin, a public auditory has usually the effect of calling into action all the powers of the mind; and, as frequently in the present instance, the consequence is, that the finest and the most striking thoughts are elicited,

and are expressed in a language the most energetic, calculated to produce the deepest impressions.

J.O.

Thrussington November, 1846.

Translator's Preface to Jonah, Micah, and Nahum

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

Contained in this Volume, as in the last, are the Writings of *three* Prophets: and they are explained and elucidated in the Author's peculiar manner; every sentence being dissected and examined, and the meaning ascertained according to the context, without the introduction of any extraneous matters. The main object throughout seems to have been to exhibit the genuine sense and design of the Sacred Writers.

The Book of Jonah is a plain narrative, and no part is supposed to have been written in the style of poetry except the prayer in the second chapter.

Some things in this Book have furnished Infidels with objections, and have induced some learned men, bearing at least the name of believers, to indulge in inventions. To satisfy Infidels or themselves, they have endeavored to prove, that this Book is either an historical allegory, or a parable, or a dream, or a moral fiction, or something else still more absurd and extravagant. But all these are mere vagrant conjectures, wholly groundless, rendered plausible only by a show of learning, and calculated to do tenfold more mischief than all the sneers and cavils of Infidels. The Bible Is A Book Of Miracles as well as of Prophecies; and an attempt to divest it of its Miracles is an attempt to divest it of one of its distinctive properties. Its Prophecies, which are continued Miracles, capable in many instances of ocular demonstration, attest those Miracles which were confined to certain times and occasions, as these were also in some cases performed for the purpose of gaining credit at the time to what was predicted. But there are no Miracles recorded in Scripture, which involve as much exercise of divine power as the fulfillment of Prophecies,

though less visible in its operation. [2]

The fact that Miracles of some sort form a part of the records of false religions and of superstitious times, is no reason for disbelieving the Miracles of Scripture. Almost all errors are imitations of truth, and superstition is man's substitute for true Religion. The existence of a false coin is no evidence that there is no genuine coin, but, on the contrary, proves that it exists. Independently of the general character of the Miracles recorded in Scripture, what has been just stated, their *connection* with indubitable Prophecies is an argument in their favor, which neither heathen nor Christian superstition is capable of adducing. Both must stand or fall together. If the truth of Prophecies be allowed, then the reality of Miracles cannot with any reason be denied. They are so connected together, that they cannot possibly be separated.

Learned men, being driven back, as it were, by manifest and palpable absurdities, have sometimes resiliated beyond the limits of reason and truth; being disgusted, and justly so, by Heathen and Popish Miracles, they have often been imperceptibly led to doubt all Miracles, as when we are frequently deceived, we are tempted to conclude that there is no such a thing as honesty in the world. And hence has arisen the attempt to obliterate Miracles from Scripture; and various hypotheses have been suggested, and supported in some instances by no small measure of ingenuity and learning: but it is an attempt which ought in the strongest manner to be deprecated and condemned as being nothing less than a sacrilege, the robbing of God's Word of one of its peculiar characteristics, even of that by which God has visibly proved his supreme power; for by reversing and changing those laws of nature, which at the creation he had fixed and established, he has given a manifest demonstration of his Omnipotence and Sovereignty. He has made it known to the world by Miracles, that He who has constructed the wonderful mechanism of nature, can alter, change, and reconstruct it whenever He pleases.

"The opinion," says Dr. *Henderson, "which* has been most generally entertained is that which accords to the Book a strictly historical character; in other words, which affirms that it is a relation of facts which actually took place in the life and experience of the Prophet. Nor can I view it in any other light while I hold fast an enlightened belief in the divine authority of the Books composing the Canon of the Old Testament, and place implicit reliance on the authority of the Son of God. Into the fixed and definite character of the Canon I need not here enter, having fully discussed the subject elsewhere; but assuming that all the Books contained in it possess the divine sanction, the test to which I would bring the question, and by

[2] "Prophecy is of a prodigious extent; it commenced from the fall of man, and reaches to the consummation of all things. So many illustrious events falling in, one after another, just as the word of prophecy foretold they should, must afford the most convincing proof that our Religion is, as it claims to be, of divine institution, — a proof the more convincing, because it is continually growing upon us; and the farther we are removed from the source of our religion, the clearer is the evidence of its truth." — Bishop Hurd.

which, in my opinion, our decision must be mainly formed, is the unqualified manner in which the personal existence, miraculous fate, and public ministry of JONAH are spoken of by our Lord. He not only explicitly recognizes the prophetic office of the son of Amittai, (**{**Ιωνα**}** **{**του**}** **{**προφητου**}**,) just as he does that of Elisha, Isaiah, and Daniel, but represents his being in the belly of the fish as a real miracle, (**{**το**}** **{**σημειον**}**,) grounds upon it, as a fact, the certainty of the future analogous fact in his own history; *assumes* the actual execution of the commission of the Prophet at Nineveh; positively asserts that the inhabitants of that city repented at his preaching; and concludes by declaring respecting himself, "*Behold*! a greater than Jonah is here," (Matthew 12:39-41; 16:4.) Now is it conceivable that all these historical circumstances would have been placed in this prominent light, if the person of the Prophet, and the brief details of his narrative, had been purely fictitious? On the same principle that the historical bearing of the reference in this ease is rejected, may not that to the Queen of Sheba, which follows in the connection, be set aside, and the portion in the First Book of Kings, in which the circumstances of her visit to Solomon are recorded, be converted into an allegory, a moral fiction, or a popular tradition? The two eases, as adduced by our Lord, are altogether parallel; and the same may be affirmed of the allusion to Tyre and Sidon, and that to Sodom in the preceding chapter."

This reasoning is conclusive on the subject, and cannot be fairly evaded. Our learned author adds another consideration: —

"Certainly in no other instance in which our Savior adduces *passages* out of the Old Testament for the purpose of illustrating or confirming his doctrines, can it be shown that any point or circumstance is thus employed which is not historically true. He uniformly quotes and reasons upon them as containing accounts of universally admitted facts, stamps them as such with the high sanction of his own authority, and transmits them for the confident belief of mankind in all future ages."

That the preservation of Jonah in the bowels of the fish was an impossibility according to the course and nature of things, as they now exist, is quite evident: but it was no greater reversion of nature than the parting of the Red Sea, or the dividing of the streams of Jordan, or the sustentation of life in Moses during his stay on the Mount for forty days. The laws of nature were equally suspended in all these instances; and to deny to Him, who made these laws to be what they are, the power of changing them, is an inconsistency which no reason can justify.

The next Prophet is Micah; and his Book is especially interesting on account of the prediction it contains of the birth-place of our Savior, and also of the establishment of his Kingdom, and the spread of his Gospel. The prophecy recorded in the fourth chapter is one of the most splendid in all the Writings of the Prophets. We find the same in the second chapter of Isaiah; but it is fuller and given more at large by Micah. The idea of borrowing seems not compatible with the fact, that each declares that what they delivered

was conveyed to them by a vision: and there is nothing unreasonable in the thought, that the Divine Spirit communicated the very same things, to a certain extent, to two individual Prophets; and the fact that more, on the same subject, was revealed to one than to the other, seems to favor the notion, that the whole was communicated to each separately.

It is a subject worthy of being noticed, — that it was not the practice of the Prophets to refer to the testimony of one another, or even expressly to the commandments included in the Law of Moses. Isaiah indeed once said, "To the Law and to the Testimony." Though the sins which generally prevailed were distinctly condemned in the Law, especially the idolatry which was so common, they yet never quoted the commandments, and brought them to bear on the reigning corruptions. This may appear singular: but the way to account for it seems to be this, — that the Prophets' authority was the same with that of Moses: Their communications proceeded from the same Author; and there was no necessity to confirm what they said by referring to what the Law sanctioned. The same God, who gave the Law by Moses, sent his messages to the people by his Prophets. And hence arises a strong, though, as it were, an incidental, proof of the Divine character of what they have written.

The style of Micah much resembles, in some respects, the style of Hosea. His transitions are sometimes abrupt, and the sudden change of persons is not unfrequent. *Lowth* in his Prelections describes him as "being brief in words, sententious, concise, pointed, — sometimes bordering on the obscurity of Hosea, — in many parts lofty and fervid, and highly poetical." [3] *Marckius* says, that, "his diction is elegant, not very unlike that of Isaiah." [4] *Henderson's* account is more extensive, but on the whole just, as well as discriminating, — "His style is concise, yet *perspicuous,* [5] *nervous,* vehement, and energetic; and, in many instances, equals that of Isaiah in boldness and sublimity. He is rich and beautiful in the varied use of tropical language, indulges in paranomasias, preserves a pure and classical diction, is regular in the formation of parallelisms, and exhibits a roundness in the construction of his periods, which is not surpassed by his more celebrated contemporary. Both in administering threatenings and communicating promises, he evinces great tenderness, and shows that his mind was deeply affected by the subjects of which he treats. In his appeals he is lofty and energetic. His description of the character of Jehovah, chap. 7:18-20, is unrivalled by any contained elsewhere in Scripture."

"Some of his prophecies," says *Newcome, "*are distinct and illustrious ones, as Micah 2:12, 13; Micah 3:12; 4:1-4, 10; Micah 5:2, 3, 4; Micah 6:13; 7:8-10. We may justly admire the* beauty* and *elegance* of his manner —

[3] "Michas plerumque brevis est, pressns, concisus, acutus; nonnunquam ad Hoseae obscuritatem prope accedens; in multis elatus et fervidus, valdeque poeticus." — Prael. 21

[4] "Dictio elegans, non admodum dissimilis isti Iesaiae."

[5] This must be qualified; in most parts it is so, but in some, it borders, as Lowth says, on the obscurity of Hosea's style.

Micah 2:12, 13; Micah 4:1, 2, 3, and particularly the two first lines of verse 4; his *animation,* — Micah 1:5, lines 3, 4; Micah 2:7, 10, line 1; Micah 4:9; his *strength of expression,* — Micah 1:6, 8; Micah 2:3, lines 3, 4; Micah 3:2, 3, 12; Micah 7:1, 2, 4, line 1, 19, line 2; his *pathos,* — Micah 1:16; Micah 2:4; his *sublimity,* — Micah 1:2, 3, 4; Micah 3:6, 12; Micah 4:12, lines 3, 13; Micah 5:8; Micah 6:1, 9-16; Micah 7:16, 17."

The *three* first chapters are throughout comminatory, in which judgments are denounced on both nations, the Jews and the Israelites, and in which are also enumerated the various evils which prevailed, idolatry as the chief, and its accompanying sins — injustice, oppression, and cruelty. — The *fourth* and the *fifth* chapters are of an opposite character, being prophetic of blessings, appertaining more especially to the Kingdom of Christ, while at the same time the previous sufferings and trials of the Church are graphically described. — In the *sixth* chapter the people are summoned to a trial; the Lord had a controversy with them. Being proved guilty of ingratitude, ignorance, injustice, and idolatry, they are threatened with awful judgments. — In the *seventh* and last chapter the Prophet bewails the paucity of good men, deplores the faithlessness and perfidy of the people, turns to the Lord, entertains hope, foretells the restoration of the Church and the fall of its enemies, and ends with a rapturous exclamation, having been evidently favored with a glimpse of the rich and abundant mercies which God had in reserve for his people.

The Prophet Nahum has but one subject — the Fall Of Nineveh — and he keeps to his subject without diverging to any other. In mentioning the sins of Nineveh, the first thing he states is a wicked design against the Lord, referring no doubt to the purpose formed of entirely destroying the Kingdom of Judah. In describing afterwards the vices of the people of Nineveh, he especially mentions their rapaciousness, deceit, injustice, oppression, and barbarous cruelty, and compares Nineveh to the den of lions.

The special design of the Prophet in the description he gives, at the beginning of *the first* chapter, of the character of the Almighty, was to delineate him as He is to his enemies, as the God of vengeance, who vindicates his own honor, and defends his own cause against profane and rebellious opponents. He only makes a transient allusion to his goodness towards his people. The other subject was that which was suitable to his purpose. He was going to denounce irrevocable judgment on God's adversaries; he therefore described Him as the God of vengeance: and the extremely awful character here presented to us by one who spoke, as he was inspired from above, ought to be well weighed and seriously considered, especially by all those who are not become God's friends, but still continue his enemies.

The *second* chapter contains a vivid description of the fierce assailants of Nineveh, of their success, of the plunder of the city, and of the captivity of its people, with an exultation over the den of lions. To prevent, as it were, any hope of escape, the Prophet, in the *third* chapter, gives, according to Calvin

and many other Commentators, a graphic view of the ransack of the city, as though he were an eye-witness; then he states the reasons for this dreadful overthrow, reminds the Ninevites of what had happened to another powerful and well fortified city, shows the uselessness of resistance, and declares the doom of the city to be irrevocable and irremediable. How wonderfully exact has been the fulfillment of this Prophecy! [6] Who can contemplate it without acknowledging that He who spoke by the Prophets is the supreme, who rules and overrules all the events of time?

The style of Nahum has been admired by all critics. *Lowth* says, that *"no* one of the minor Prophets seems to equal the sublimity, the vehemence and the boldness of Nahum: besides, his Prophecy is a complete and finished poem; his exordium is magnificent, and indeed majestic; the preparation for the destruction of Nineveh, and the description of its ruin, and its greatness, are expressed in most vivid colors, and possess admirable perspicuity and fulness." [7]

This Volume contains a very interesting portion of The Minor Prophets. The History of Jonah is in many respects very instructive. [8] The Prophecies of Micah are some of the most remarkable in the Old Testament. Nahum exhibits in language the most awful the vengeance of the Almighty against the enemies of his Church. And readers will find that our Commentator continues to exercise his talents in that capacity with his wonted vigor, penetration, and judgment. An impartial consideration of his labors cannot fail to impress our minds with veneration for his character, and especially with gratitude to the only Giver of all good for having so richly endued his servant, and for having employed him in services so conducive to the interest of true religion. Such was the respect in which he was held by Bishop *Horsley,* whose learning and acuteness were not of an ordinary kind, that in quoting his comment on a portion of the eighteenth chapter of Isaiah, he calls him" The Venerable Calvin."

J.O.

Thrussington, July 1847.

[6] Those who wish to see this proved at large, may consult Bishop Newton on the Prophecies. Vol. 1: Diss. 9.

[7] "Verum ex omnibus minoribus Prophetis nemo videtur aequare sublimitatem, ardorem et audaces spiritus Nahumi: adde quod vaticinium integrum et justum est poema; exordium magnificum est et plane angus-tum; apparatus ad excidium Ninivae, ejusque excidii descriptio et amplificatio, ardentissimis coloribus exprimatur, et admirabilem habet evidentiam et pondus." — Prael. 21.

[8] It has been made the groundwork of a most interesting volume of Essays by the late Revelation Thomas Jones of Creaton, under the title of "Jonah's Portrait."

Commentary on Joel

Commentary on Joel

Calvin's Preface to Joel

I proceed now to explain The Prophet Joel. The time in which he prophesied is uncertain. Some of the Jews imagine that he exercised his office in the time of Joram, king of Israel, because a dreadful famine then prevailed through the whole land, as it appears evident from sacred history; and as the Prophet record a famine, they suppose that his ministry must be referred to that time. Some think, that he taught under Manasseh, but they bring no reason for this opinion; it is, therefore, a mere conjecture. Others think that he performed his office as a teacher not only under one king, but that he taught, at the same time with Isaiah, under several kings.

But as there is no certainty, it is better to leave the time in which he taught undecided; and, as we shall see, this is of no great importance. Not to know the time of Hosea would be to readers a great loss for there are many parts which could not be explained without a knowledge of history; but as to Joel there is, as I have said, less need of this; for the import of his doctrine is evident, though his time be obscure and uncertain. But we may conclude that he taught at Jerusalem, or at least in the kingdom of Judah. As Hosea was appointed a Prophet to the kingdom of Israel, so Joel had another appointment; for he was to labor especially among the Jews and not among the Ten Tribes: this deserves to be particularly noticed.

Now the sum of the Book is this: At the beginning, he reproves the stupidity of the people, who, when severely smitten by God, did not feel their evils, but on the contrary grew hardened under them: this is one thing. Then he threatens far more grievous evils; as the people became so insensible under all their punishments, that they were not humbled, the Prophet declares that there were evils at hand much worse than those they had hitherto experienced: this is the second thing. Thirdly, he exhorts

the people to repentance, and shows that there was required no common evidence of repentance; for they had not lightly offended God, but by their perverseness provoked him to bring on them utter ruin: since, then, their obstinacy had been so great, he bids them to come as suppliants with tears, with sackcloth, with mourning, with ashes, that they might obtain mercy; for they were unworthy of being regarded by the Lord, except they thus submissively humbled themselves: this is the third subject. The fourth part of the Book is taken up with promises; for he prophesies of the Kingdom of Christ, and shows, that though now all things seemed full of despair, yet God had not forgotten the covenant he made with the fathers; and that therefore Christ would come to gather the scattered remnants, yea, and to restore to life his people, though they were now lost and dead.

This is the sum and substance. But we shall see, as we proceed, that the chapters have been absurdly and foolishly divided. He thus begins —

Chapter 1

Lecture Thirty-eighth

Joel 1

J

Joel 1:1-4

1. The word of the Lord that came to Joel the son of Pethuel.

1. Verbum Jehovae quod fuit ad Joel, filium Pethuel.

2. Hear this, ye old men, and give ear, all ye inhabitants of the land. Hath this been in your days, or even in the days of your fathers?

2. Audite hoc senes, et auscultate omnes incolae terrae, an fuerit hoc diebus vestris, et si diebus patrum vestrorum.

3. Tell ye your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children another generation.

3. Super hoc filiis vestris narrate, et filii vestri filiis suis, et filii ipsorum generationi posterae.

4. That which the palmerworm hath left hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left hath the cankerworm eaten; and that which the cankerworm hath the caterpiller eaten.

4. Residuum locustae comedit (est alia species) bruchus (ita ponamus, quoniam non possumus certo scire quaenam fuerint istae species) et residuum bruchi comedit locusta et residuum locustae comedit eruca (alii primo loco ponunt Erucam, est proprie chenille, et puto potius esse hoc posterius. Picardi vocant casee, quasi {:ליסא verisimile est deductum fuisse nomen illud vulgare ab Hebraeis, quia est fere idem: sed tamen ego non anxie sudo in istis nominibus, quia de sensu Prophetae satis constabit. Nunc venio ad inscriptionem libri.)

The word of Jehovah which came to Joel, the son of Pethuel. He names here his father; it is hence probable that he was a man well known and of some celebrity. But who this Pethuel was, all now are ignorant. And what the Hebrews hold as a general rule, that a prophet is designated, whenever his father's name is added, appears to me frivolous; and we see how bold they are in devising such comments. When

no reason for any thing appears to them, they invent some fable, and allege it as a divine truth. When, therefore, they are wont thus to trifle, I have no regard for what is held by them as a rule. But yet it is probable, that when the Prophets are mentioned as having sprung from this or that father, their fathers were men of some note.

Now what he declared by saying, that he delivered the word of the Lord, is worthy of being observed; for he shows that he claimed nothing for himself, as an individual, as though he wished to rule by his own judgment, and to subject others to his own fancies; but that he relates only what he had received from the Lord. And since the Prophets claimed no authority for themselves, except as far as they faithfully executed the office divinely committed to them, and delivered, as it were from hand to hand, what the Lord commanded, we may hence feel assured that no human doctrines ought to be admitted into the Church. Why? Because as much as men trust in themselves, so much they take away from the authority of God. This preface then ought to be noticed, which almost all the Prophets use, namely, that they brought nothing of their own or according to their own judgment, but that they were faithful dispensers of the truth intrusted to them by God.

And the word is said to have been to Joel; not that God intended that he alone should be his disciple, but because he deposited this treasure with him, that he might be his minister to the whole people. Paul also says the same thing, --- that to the ministers of the Gospel was committed a message for Christ, or in Christ's name, to reconcile men to God, (2 Corinthians 5:20;) and in another place he says, `He has deposited with us this treasure as in earthen vessels,' (2 Corinthians 4:7.) We now understand why Joel says, that the word of the Lord was delivered to him, it was not that he might be the only disciple; but as some teacher was necessary, Joel was chosen to whom the Lord committed this office. Then the word of God belongs indeed indiscriminately to all; and yet it is committed to Prophets and other teachers; for they are, so to speak, as it were trustees (depositarii --- depositories.)

As to the verb {היה} eie, there is no need of philosophizing so acutely as Jerome does: ``How was the word of the Lord made?'' For he feared lest Christ should be said to be made, as he is the word of the Lord. These are trifles, the most puerile. He could not, however, in any other way get rid of the difficulty but by saying that the word is said to be made with respect to man whom God addresses, and not with respect to God himself. All this, as ye must see, is childish; for the Prophet says here only, that the word of the Lord was sent to him, that is, that the Lord employed him as his messenger to the whole people. But after having shown that he was a fit minister of God, being furnished with his word, he speaks authoritatively, for he represented the person of God.

We now see what is the lawful authority which ought to be in force in the Church, and which we ought to obey without dispute, and to which all ought to submit. It is then only that this authority exists, when God himself speaks by men, and the Holy Spirit employs them as his instruments. For the Prophet brings not forward any empty title; he does not say that he is a high priest of the tribe of Levi, or of the first order, or of the family of Aaron. He alleges no such thing, but says that the word of

God was deposited with him. Whosoever then demands to be heard in the Church, must of necessity really prove that he is a preacher of God's word; and he must not bring his own devices, nor blend with the word any thing that proceeds from the judgment of his own flesh.

But first the Prophet reproves the Jews for being so stupid as not to consider that they were chastised by the hand of God, though this was quite evident. Hence they pervert, in my judgment, the meaning of the Prophet, who think that punishments are here denounced which were as yet suspended; for they transfer all these things to a future time. But I distinguish between this reproof and the denunciations which afterwards follow. Here then the Prophet reproaches the Jews, that having been so severely smitten, they did not gain wisdom; and yet even fools, when the rod is applied to their backs, know that they are punished. Since then the Jews were so stupid, that when even chastised they did not understand that they had to do with God, the Prophet justly reproves this madness. ``Hear'', he says, ``ye old men; give ear, all ye inhabitants of the land, and declare this to your children''. But the consideration of this passage I shall put off till tomorrow.

Prayer.

Grant, Almighty God that as almost the whole world give such loose reins to their licentiousness, that they hesitate not either to despise or to regard as of no value thy sacred word --- Grant, O Lord that we may always retain such reverence as is justly due to it and to thy holy oracles and be so moved whenever thou deignest to address us that being truly humbled, we may be raised up by faith to heaven, and by hope gradually attain that glory which is as yet hid from us. And may we at the same time so submissively restrain ourselves, as to make it our whole wisdom to obey thee and to do thee service, until thou gatherest us into thy kingdom, where we shall be partakers of thy glory, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lecture Thirty-ninth.

Hear this, ye old men; and give ear, all ye inhabitants of the land: has this been in your days, and in the days of your fathers? This declare to your children and your children to their children, and their children to the next generation: the residue of the locust has the chafer eaten, and the residue of the chafer has the cankerworm eaten, and the residue of the cankerworm has the caterpillar eaten [9] I have in the last Lecture already mentioned what I think of this passage of the Prophet. Some think that a future punishment is denounced; but the context sufficiently proves that they mistake and pervert the real meaning of the Prophet; for, on the contrary, he reproves here the hardness of the people, --- that they fell not their plagues. And as men are not easily moved by God's judgments, the Prophet here declares that God had executed such a vengeance as could not be regarded otherwise than miraculous; as though he said, ``God often punishes men, and it behooves them to be attentive as soon as he raises up his finger. But common punishments are wont to be unheeded; men soon forget those punishments to which they have been

[9] All these are different kinds of locusts. There are in Hebrew ten names for them, designative probably of so many kinds. There are four here: {,{גזם gizam, the young locust; ,{ארבה} arebe, so called from their number, one on the wing; ,{ילק} ilak, one of the hairy bristly kind; and {λψσʼ}, chesil, one unfledged. Following the probable ideal meaning of the words, we may give them these names, ---the cutter, the multiplier, the licker, and the devourer. --- Ed.

accustomed. God has, however, treated you in an unusual manner, having openly as it were put forth his hand from heaven, and brought on you punishments nothing less than miraculous. Ye must then be more than stupid, if ye perceive not that you are smitten by God's hand.'' This is the true meaning of the Prophet, and may be easily gathered from the words.

Hear, ye old men, he says. He expressly addresses the old, because experience teaches men much; and the old, when they see any thing new or unusual, must know, that it is not according to the ordinary course of things. He who has past his fiftieth or sixtieth year, and sees something new happening which he had never thought of, doubtless acknowledges it as the unusual work of God. This is the reason why the Prophet directs here his discourse to the old; as though he said, ``I will not terrify you about nothing; but let the old hear, who have been accustomed for many years to many revolutions; let them now answer me, whether in their whole life, which has been an age on the earth, have they seen any such thing'' We now perceive the design of the Prophet; for he intended to awaken the Jews that they might understand that God had put forth his hand from heaven, and that it was impossible to ascribe what they had seen with their eyes to chance or to earthly causes, but that it was a miracle. And his object was to make the Jews at length ashamed of their folly in not having hitherto been attentive to God's punishments, and in having always flattered themselves, as though God slept in heaven, when yet he so violently thundered against them, and intended by an extraordinary course to move them, that they might at last perceive that they were summoned to judgment.

He afterwards adds, And all ye inhabitants of the land. Had the Prophet addressed only the old, some might seize on some pretext for their ignorance; hence he addressed and from the least to the greatest; and this he did, that the young might not exempt themselves from blame in proceeding in their obstinacy and in thus mocking God, when he called them to repentance. Hear, he says, all ye inhabitants of the land; has this been in your days or in the days of your fathers? He says first, has such a thing been in your days, for doubtless what happens rarely deserves a greater consideration. It is indeed true that foolish men are blind to the daily works of God; as the favor of God in making his sun to rise daily is but little thought of by us. This happens through our ingratitude; but our ingratitude is doubled, and is much more base and less excusable, when the Lord works in an unwonted manner, and we yet with closed eves overlook what ought to be deemed a miracle. This dullness the Prophet now reproves, Has such a thing, he says, ``happened in your days, or in the days of your fathers? Ye can recall to mind what your fathers have told you. It is certain that for two ages no such thing has happened. Your torpidity then is extreme, since ye neglect this judgment of God, which from its very rareness ought to have awakened your minds.''

He then adds, Tell it to your children, your children to their children, their children to the next generation. In this verse the Prophet shows that the matter deserved to be remembered, and was not to be despised by posterity, even for many generations. It appears now quite clear that the Prophet threatens not what was to be, as some interpreters think; it would have been puerile: but, on the contrary, he expos-

tulates here with the Jews, because they were so slothful and tardy in considering God's judgments; and especially as it was a remarkable instance, when God employed not usual means, but roused, and, as it were, terrified men by prodigies. Of this then tell: for {עליה} olie means no other thing than `tell or declare this thing to your children;' and further, your children to their children. When any thing new happens, it may be, that we are at first moved with some wonder; but our feeling soon vanishes with the novelty, and we disregard what at first caused great astonishment. But the Prophet here showed, that such was the judgment of God of which he speaks, that it ought not to have been overlooked, no, not even by posterity. Let your children, he says, declare it to those after them, and their children to the fourth generation: it was to be always remembered.

He adds what that judgment was, --- that the hope of food had for many years disappointed them. It often happened, we know, that locusts devoured the standing corn; and then the chafers and the palmer worms did the same: these were ordinary events. But when one devastation happened, and another followed, and there was no end; when there had been four barren years, suddenly produced by insects, which devoured the growth of the earth; --- this was certainly unusual. Hence the Prophet says, that this could not have been chance; for God intended to show to the Jews some extraordinary portent, that even against their will they might observe his hand. When any thing trifling happens, if it be rare, it will strike the attention of men; for we often see that the world makes a great noise about frivolous things. But this wonder, says the Prophet, ``ought to have produced effect on you. What then will ye do, since ye are starving, and the causes are evident; for God has cursed your land, and brought these insects, which have consumed your food before your eyes. Since it is so, it is surely the time for you to repent; and you have been hitherto very regardless having overlooked God's judgments, which have been so remarkable and so memorable.'' Let us now proceed.

Joel 1:5

5. Awake, ye drunkards, and weep; and howl, all ye drinkers of wine, because of the new wine; for it is cut off from your mouth.

5. Awake, ye drunkards, and weep; and howl, all ye drinkers of wine, because of the new wine; for it is cut off from your mouth.

The Prophet adds this verse for the sake of amplifying; for when God sees men either contemptuously laughing at or disregarding his judgments, he derides them; and this mode the Prophet now adopts. `Ye drunkards,' he says, `awake, and weep and howl.' In these words he addresses, on the subject in hand, those who had willfully closed their eyes to judgments so manifest. The Jews had become torpid, and had covered themselves over as it were with hardness; it was then necessary to draw them forth as by force into the light. But the Prophet accosts the drunkards by name; and it is probable that this vice was then very common among the people. However that might be, the Prophet by mentioning this instance shows more convincingly, that there was no pretense for passing by things, and that the Jews could not excuse their indifference if they took no notice; for the very drunkards, who had degenerated from the state of men, did themselves feel the calamity, for the wine

had been cut off from their mouth. And this expression of the Prophet, ``Awake'', ought to be noticed; for the drunkards, even while awake, are asleep, and also spend a great portion of time in sleep. The Prophet had this in view, that men, though not endued with great knowledge, but even void of common sense, could no longer flatter themselves; for the very drunkards, who had wholly suffocated their senses, and had become thus estranged in their minds, did yet perceive the judgment of God; though drowsiness held them bound, they were yet constrained to awake at such a manifest punishment. What then does this ignorance mean, when ye see not that you are smitten by God's hand?

To the same purpose are the words, Weep and howl. Drunkards, on the contrary, give themselves up to mirth, and intemperately indulge themselves; and there is nothing more difficult than to make them to feel sorrow; for wine so infatuates their senses, that they continue to laugh in the greatest calamities. But the Prophet says, Weep and howl, ye drunkards! What then ought sober men to do? He then adds, Cut off is the wine from your mouth. He says not, ``The use of wine is taken away from you;'' but he says, from your mouth. Though no one should think of vineyards or of winecellars or of cups, yet they shall be forced, willing or unwilling, to feel the judgment of God in their mouth and in their lips. This is what the Prophet means. We then see how much he aggravates what he had said before: and we must remember that his object was to strike shame into the people, who had become thus torpid with regard to God's judgments.

As to the word {עסיס} osis, some render it new wine. {עסס} osas is to press; and hence {עסיס} osis is properly the wine that is pressed in the wine-vat. New wine is not what is drawn out of the bottle, but what is pressed out as it were by force. But the Prophet, I have no doubt, includes here under one kind every sort of wine. Let us go on.

Joel 1:6-7

6. For a nation is come up upon my land, strong, and without number, whose teeth are the teeth of a lion, and he hath the cheek teeth of a great lion.

6. Quia gens ascendit super terram meam, robusta et absque numero, dentes ejus dentes leonis, et maxillae (alii vertunt, molares) leonis illis (quanquam aliud est nomen: alii vertunt, leunculum.)

7. He hath laid my vine waste, and barked my fig tree: he hath made it clean bare, and cast it away; the branches thereof are made white.

7. Posuit vineam meam in vastitatem (vel, desolationem) et ficulneam meam in decorticationem: nudando nudavit eam et disjecit, albi facti sunt rami ejus.

Of what some think, that punishment, not yet inflicted, is denounced here on the people, I again repeat, I do not approve; but, on the contrary, the Prophet, according to my view, records another judgment of God, in order to show that God had not only in one way warned the Jews of their sins, that he might restore them to a right mind; but that he had tried all means to bring them to the right way, though they proved to have been irreclaimable. After having then spoke of the sterility of the fields and of other calamities, he now adds that the Jews had been visited with war. [10] Surely

[10] But most commentators consider these two verses as containing a more particular descrip-

famine ought to have touched them, especially when they saw that evils, succeeding evils, had happened for several years contrary to the usual course of things, so that they could not be imputed to chance. But when God brought war upon them, when they were already worn out with famine, must they not have been more than insane in mind, to have continued astonied at God's judgments and not to repent? Then the meaning of the Prophet is, that God had tried, by every means possible, to find out whether the Jews were healable, and had given them every opportunity to repent, but that they were wholly perverse and untamable.

Then he says, Verily a nation came up. The particle {כי} ki is not to be taken as a causative, but only as explanatory, Verily, or surely, he says, a nation came up; though an inference also is not amiss, if it be drawn from the beginning of the verse: `Hear, ye old men, and tell your children;' what shall we tell? even this, that a nation, etc. But in this form also {כי} ki would be exegetical, and the sense would be the same. This much as to the meaning of the passage.

A nation, then, came up over my land. God here justly claims the land of Canaan as his own heritage, and does so designedly, that the Jews might more clearly know that he was angry with them; for their condition would not have been worse than that of other nations, had not God resolved to punish them for their sins. There is here then an implied comparison between Judea and other countries, as though the Prophet said, ``How comes it, that your land is wasted by wars and many other calamities, while other countries are at rest? This land is no doubt sacred to God, for he has chosen it for himself, that he might rule in it; he has here his own habitation: it then must be that there is some cause for God's wrath, as your land is so miserably wasted, when other lands enjoy tranquillity.'' We now perceive what the Prophet means. A nation, he says, came up upon my land, and what then? God could surely have prevented this; he could have defended his own land, of which he was the keeper, and which was under his protection: how then had it happened that enemies with impunity inundated this land, having marched into it and utterly laid it waste, except that it had been forsaken by the Lord himself?

A nation, he says, came up upon my land, strong and without number; and further, who had the teeth of a lion, the jaw-bones of a young lion. The nations had no strength which God could not in an instant have broken down, nor had he need of mighty auxiliaries, for he could by a nod only have reduced to nothing whatever men might have attempted: when, therefore, the Assyrians so impetuously assailed the Jews they were necessarily exposed to the wantonness of their enemies, for they were unworthy of being protected, as hitherto, by the hand of God.

He afterwards adds, that his vine had been exposed to desolation and waste, his fig-tree to the stripping of the bark. God speaks not here of his own vine, as in some other places, in which he designates his Church by this term; but he calls everything on earth his own, as he calls the whole race of Abraham his children: and he thus reproaches the Jews for having reduced themselves to such wretchedness through

tion of the devastations produced by the locusts mentioned before. That they are called “a nation” is according to prophetic style, and what has been done by heathen poets: the wasting of the vine and the barking of the fig-tree seem more suitable to this view. It is true that {,{גוי nation, and not {וזם} people, as in Proverbs 30:25, is here used; but, as Dr. Henderson observes, it seems to have been selected on purpose ``to prepare the minds of the Jews for the allegorical use made of these insects in chapter 2.'' --- Ed.

their own fault; for they would have never been spoiled by their enemies, had not God, who was wont to defend then, previously rejected them; for there was nothing in their land which he did not claim as his own; as he had chosen the people, so he had consecrated the land to himself. Whatsoever, then, enlisted in Judea, was, as it were, sacred to God. Now when both the vines and the fig-trees were exposed to the depredations of the unbelieving, it was certain that God no longer ruled there. How so? Even because the Jews had expelled him. He afterwards enlarges on the same subject; for what follows, By denuding he has denuded it and cast it away, is not a mere narrative; the Prophet here declares not simply what had taken place; but as we have already said, adduces more proof, and tries to awaken the drowsy senses of the people, yea, to arouse them from that lethargy by which the minds of all had been seized; hence it is that he uses in his teaching so many expressions. This is the reason why he says that the vine and the fig-tree had been denuded, and also that the leaves had been taken away, that the branches had been made bare and white; so that there remained neither produce nor growth.

Many interpreters join these three verses with the former, as if the Prophet now expressed what he had said before of the palmer worm, the chafer, and the locust; for they think that he spake allegorically when he said that all the fruits of the land had been consumed by the locusts and the chafers. They therefore add, that these locusts, or chafers, or the palmer worms, were the Assyrians, as well as the Persian and the Greeks, that is, Alexander of Macedon and the Romans: but this is wholly a strained views so that there is no need of a long argument; for any one may easily perceive that the Prophet mentions another kind of punishments that he might in every way render the Jews inexcusable who were not roused by judgments so multiplied, but remained still obstinate in their vices. Let us now proceed.

Joel 1:8

8. Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth.

8. Plange tanquam puella, accincta sacco, super marito adolescentiae suae.

The Prophet now addresses the whole land. Lament, he says; not in an ordinary way, but like a widow, whose husband is dead, whom she had married when young. The love, we know, of a young man towards a young woman, and so of a young woman towards a young man, is more tender than when a person in years marries an elderly woman. This is the reason that the Prophet here mentions the husband of her youth; he wished to set forth the heaviest lamentation, and hence he says ``The Jews ought not surely to be otherwise affected by so many calamities, than a widow who has lost her husband while young, and not arrived at maturity, but in the flower of his age.'' As then such widows feel bitterly their loss, so the Prophet has adduced their case.

The Hebrews often call a husband {בעל} bol, because he is the lord of his wife and has her under his protection. Literally it is, ``For the lord of her youth;'' and hence it is, that they also called their idols {בעלים} bolim, as though they were as we have often said in our comment on the Prophet Hosea, their patrons.

The sum of the whole is, That the Jews could not have continued in an unconcerned state, without being void of all reason and discernment; for they were forced,

willing or unwilling, to feel a most grievous calamity. It is a monstrous thing, when a widow, losing her husband when yet young, refrains from mourning. Now then, since God had afflicted his land with so many evils, he wished to bring on them, as it were, the grief of widowhood. It follows ---

Joel 1:9

9. The meat offering and the drink offering is cut off from the house of the Lord; the priests, the Lord's ministers, mourn.

9. Succisa est oblatio et libamen e domo Jehovae: luxerunt sacerdotes, ministri Jehovae.

Here, in other words, the Prophet paints the calamity; for, as it has been said, we see how great is the slowness of men to discern God's judgments; and the Jews, we know, were not more attentive to them than we are now. It was, therefore, needful to prick them with various goads, as the Prophet now does, as though he said, ``If ye are not now concerned for want of food, if ye consider not even what the very drunkards are constrained to feel, who perceive not the evil at a distance, but taste it in their lips --- if all these things are of no account with you, do at least look on the temple of God, which is now destitute of its ordinary services; for through the sterility of your fields, through so great a scarcity, neither bread nor wine is offered. Since then ye see that the worship of God has ceased, how is it ye yourselves still remain? Why is it that ye perceive not that God's fury is kindled against you? For surely except God had been most grievously offended, he would at least have had some regard for his own worship; he would not have suffered his temple to remain without sacrifices.''

The Jews, we know, daily poured their libations, and offered meat-offerings. When, therefore, Joel mentions {מנחה} meneche and libation, he doubtless meant to show that the worship of God was nearly abolished. But God would have never permitted such a thing, had he not been grievously offended by the sins of men. Hence the indifference, or rather the stupidity of the people, is more clearly proved, inasmuch as they perceived not the signs of God's wrath made evident even in the very temple. It follows ---

Joel 1:10

10. The field is wasted, the land mourneth; for the corn is wasted: the new wine is dried up, the oil languisheth.

10. Vastatus est ager, luxit terra (hoc est, luxerunt terrae incolae;) quia vastatum est (idem est verbum vel, quia periit) frumentum, aruit (est a verbo {יבש}, non a {בוש}, quod significat pudefacere: quanquam utraque radix significationem hanc admittit apud Hebraeos: quia ergo aruit) mustum et exterminatum est (infirmatum ad verbum, ab {אמל}; sed significat debilitatum esse) oleum.

The Prophet goes on here with the same subject, and uses these many words to give more effect to what he said; for he knew that he addressed the deaf, who, by long habit, had so hardened themselves that God could effect nothing, at least very little, by his word. This is the reason why the Prophet so earnestly presses a subject so evident. Should any one ask what need there was of so many expressions, as it seems to be a needless use of words; I do indeed allow that all that the Prophet

wished to say might have been expressed in one sentence, as there is here nothing intricate: but it was not enough that what he said should be understood, except the Jews applied it to themselves, and perceived that they had to do with God; and to make this application they were not disposed. It is not then without reason that the Prophet labors here, and enforces the same thing in many words.

Hence he says, The field is wasted, and the land mourns; for the corn has perished, for dried up has the wine, for destroyed has been the oil. And by these words he intimates that they seeing saw nothing; as though he said, ``Let necessity extort mourning from you; ye are indeed starving, all complain of want, all deplore the need of bread and wine; and yet no one of you thinks whence this want is, that it is from the hand of God. Ye feel it in your mouth, ye feel it in your palate, ye feel it in your throat, ye feel it in your stomach; but ye feel it not in your heart.'' In short, the Prophet intimates that the Jews were void of right understanding; they indeed deplored their famine, but they were like brute beasts, who, when hungry, show signs of impatience. So the Jews mourned, because their stomach disquieted them; but they knew not that the cause of their want and famine was their sins. It afterwards follows ---

Joel 1:11

11. Be ye ashamed, O ye husbandmen; howl, O ye vinedressers, for the wheat and for the barley; because the harvest of the field is perished.

11. Erubescite agricolae, ululate vinitores super tritico et hordeo; quia periit messis agri.

The Prophet says nothing new here, but only strengthens what he had said before, and is not wordy without reason; for he intends here not merely to teach, but also to produce an effect: And this is the design of heavenly teaching; for God not only wishes that what he says may be understood, but intends also to penetrate into our hearts: and the word of God, we know, consists not of doctrine only, but also of exhortations, and threatenings, and reproofs. This plan then the Prophet now pursues: Ye husband men, he says, be ashamed, and ye vinedressers, howl; for perished has the harvest of the field. The sum of the whole is, that the Jews, as we have already said, could by no excuse cover their indifference; for their clamor was everywhere heard, their complaints everywhere resounded, that the land had become a waste, that they were themselves famished that they were afflicted with many calamities; and yet no one acknowledged that God, who visited them for their sins, was the author. But what remains I shall put off until to-morrow.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou invites us daily by various means to repentance, and continues also to urge us, because thou sees our extreme tardiness, --- O grant that we may at length be awakened from our indifference, and suffer us not to be inebriated by the charms of Satan and the world; but by thy Spirit rouse us to real groaning, that, being ashamed of ourselves, we may flee to thy mercy, and doubt not but that thou wilt be propitious to us, provided with a sincere heart we call on thee, and seek that reconciliation which thou daily offerest to us by thy Gospel in the name of thy only begotten Son. Amen.

Joel 1:12

12. The vine is dried up, and the fig tree languisheth; the pomegranate tree, the palm tree also, and the apple tree, even all the trees of the field, are withered: because joy is withered away from the sons of men.

12. Vitis exaruit, et ficulnea infirmata est (vel, periit;) malogranatum, etiam palma et malus, omnes arbores exaruerunt: certe exaruit gaudium a filiis hominum.

Lecture Fortieth

The Prophet now concludes his subjects which was, that as God executed judgments so severe on the people, it was a wonder that they remained stupefied, when thus reduces to extremities. The vine, he says, has dried up, and every kind of fruit; he adds the fig-tree, afterwards the {רמון} remun, the pomegranate, (for so they render it,) the palm, the apple-tree, [11] and all trees. And this sterility was a clear sign of God's wrath; and it would have been so regarded, had not men either wholly deceived themselves, or had become hardened against all punishments. Now this {αναὶσθησὶα} (insensibility) is as it were the very summit of evils; that is, when men feel not their own calamities, or at least understand not that they are inflicted by the hand of God. Let us now proceed ---

Joel 1:13-15

13. Gird yourselves, and lament, ye priests: howl, ye ministers of the altar: come, lie all night in sackcloth, ye ministers of my God: for the meat offering and the drink offering is withholden from the house of your God.

13. Accingimini et plangete sacerdotes; ululate, ministri altaris; venite, pernoctate cum saccis, ministri Dei mei: quia prohibita est a domo Dei vestri oblatio et libamen.

14. Sanctify ye a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the Lord your God, and cry unto the Lord,

14. Sactificate jejunium, vocate coetum, congregate senes, omnes incoles terrae, in domum Jehovae Dei vestri, et clamate ad Jehovam,

15. Alas for the day! for the day of the Lord is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come.

15. Heus Diem! Quia propinquus est dies Jehovae, et tanquam vastitas ab Omnipotente veniet.

Now the Prophet begins to exhort the people to repentance. Having represented them as grievously afflicted by the hand of God, he now adds that a remedy was at hand, provided they solicited the favor of God; and at the same tine he denounces a more grievous punishment in future; for it would not have been enough that they had been reminded of their calamities and evils, except they also feared in time to come. Hence the Prophet, that he might the more move them, says, that the hand of God was still stretched out, and that there was something worse nigh at hand, except they of themselves anticipated it. This is the purport of the whole. I now

[11] Of the three foregoing trees we may add this account: The pomegranate, {רמון,} grows about 20 feet high, has a straight stem and spreading branches, and bears large red blossoms. Its fruit is about the size of an orange, and is delicious and cooling. The palm or date-tree, {תמר,} is sometimes as high as 100 feet, and remarkably straight. Its fruit grows in clusters under its leaves, and is in taste very sweet. Palm branches were emblems of victory. What is called here the apple-tree, {תפוח,} was no doubt the citron-tree. The word is derived from {נפח,} to breathe, on account of the extreme fragrance it emits. --- Ed.

come to the words.

Be girded, lament and howl, he says, ye priests, the ministers of the altar The verb {חגרו} chegeru may be explained in two ways. Some understand it thus ``Gird yourselves with sackcloth;'' for shortly after he says with sackcloth, or in sackcloth. But we may take it as simply meaning, gird yourselves, that is, Hasten; for this metaphorical expression often occurs. As to the drift of the passage, there is but little difference, whether we read, ``Gird yourselves with sackcloth,'' or, ``Hasten.'' And he addresses the priests, though a common and general exhortation to the whole people afterwards follows. But as God made them the leaders of his people, it behaved them to afford others an example. It is the common duty of all the godly to pray for and to further the salvation of their brethren; but it is a duty especially enjoined on the ministers of the word and on pastors. So also, when God calls those to repentance who preside over others, they ought to lead the way, and for two reasons; --- first, because they have not been in vain chosen by the Lord for this end, that they might outshine others, and be as luminaries; --- secondly, because they who bear any public office ought to feel a double guilty when the Lord visits public sins with judgment. Private men indeed sin; but in pastors there is the blame of negligence, and still more, when they deviate even the least from the right way, a greater offense is given. Rightly then does the Prophet begin with the priests, when he bids the whole people to repent. And he not only bids them to put on sackcloth, but commands them also, as we shall see, to proclaim a fast, and then to call an assembly: ye priests, he says, be girded, and put on sackcloth, wail, howl, and pass the night in sackcloth; and then he calls them the ministers of the altar and the ministers of God, but in a different sense; for the Prophet does not substitute the altar for God, as he would thus have formed an idol; but they are called the ministers of the altar, because they offered there sacrifices to God. They are indeed with strict propriety the ministers of God; but as the priests, when they sacrificed, stood in the presence of God, and as the altar was to them as it were the way of access to him, they are called the ministers of the altar. He calls them, at the same time, the ministers of God, and, as it has been stated, they are properly so called.

But he says here {אלהי} alei (my God.) The iod, my, is by some omitted, as if it were a servile letter, but redundant. I, however, doubt not but that the Prophet here mentions Him as his God; for he thus intended to claim more authority for his doctrine. His concern or his contest was with the whole people; and they, no doubt, in their usual ways proudly opposed against him the name of God as their shield. ``What! are we not the very people of God?'' Hence the Prophet, in order to prove this presumption false, sets forth God as being on his side. He therefore says, `The ministers of my God.' Had any one objected and said, that he was in common the God of the whole people, the Prophet had a ready answer, --- ``I am specially sent by Him, and sustain his person, and plead the cause which he has committed to me: He is then my God and not yours.'' We now then see the Prophet's meaning in this expression. He now adds, for cut off is offering and libation from the house of our God. He confesses Him at the same time to be their God with reference to the priesthood; for nothing, we know, was presumptuously invented by the Jews, as

the temple was built by Godly command, and sacrifices were offered according to the rule of the law. He then ascribes to the priesthood this honor, that God ruled in the temple; for God, as we have already said, approved of that worship as having proceeded from his word: and to this purpose is that saying of Christ, `We know what we worship.' But yet the priests did not rightly worship God; for though their external rites were according to the command of God, yet as their hearts were polluted, it is certain that whatever they did was repudiated by God, until, being touched with the fear of his judgment, they fled to his mercy, as the Prophet now exhorts them to do.

He afterwards adds, sanctify a fast, call an assembly, gather the old, all the inhabitants of the land. {קדש} kodash means to sanctify and to prepare; but I have retained its proper meaning, sanctify a fast; for the command had regard to the end, that is, sanctification. Then a fast proclaim --- for what purpose? That the people might purge themselves from all their pollutions, and present themselves pure and clean before God. Call an assembly. It appears that there was a solemn convocation whenever a fast was proclaimed among the people: for it was not enough for each one privately at home to abstain from food, except all confessed openly, with one mouth and one consent, that they were guilty before God. Hence with a fast was connected a solemn profession of repentance. The uses and ends of a fast, we know, are various: but when the Prophet here speaks of a solemn fast, he doubtless bids the people to come to it suppliantly, as the guilty are wont to do, who would deprecate punishment before a judge, that they may obtain mercy from him. In the second chapter there will be much to say on fasting: I only wish now briefly to touch on the subject.

He afterwards bids the old to be gathered, and then adds, All the inhabitants of the land. But he begins with the old, and justly so, for the guilt of the old is always the heaviest. But this word relates not to age as in a former instance. When he said yesterday, `Hear ye, the aged,' he addressed those who by long experience had learnt in the world many things unknown to the young or to men of middle age. But now the Prophet means by the old those to whom was intrusted the public government; and as through their slothfulness they had suffered the worship of God and all integrity to fall into decay, rightly does the Prophet wish them to be leaders and precursors to the people in their confession of repentance; and further, it behaved them, on account of their office, as we have said of the priests, to lead the way. Joel at the same time shows that the whole people were implicated in guilt, so that none could be excepted, for he bids them all to come with the elders.

Call them, he says, to the house of Jehovah your God, and cry ye to Jehovah. We hence learn why he had spoken of fasting and of sackcloth, even that they might humbly deprecate God's wrath; for fasting of itself would have been useless, and to put on sackcloth, we know, is in itself but an empty sign: but prayer is what the Prophet sets here in the highest rank, and fasting is only an appendage, and so is sackcloth. Whosoever then puts on sackcloth and withholds prayer, is guilty of mockery; and no one can derive any good from mere fasting; but when fasting and sackcloth are added to prayer, and are as it were handmaids, then they are not uselessly practiced. We may then observe, that the end of fasting and sackcloth

was no other, than that the priests together with the whole people, might present themselves suppliantly before God, and confess themselves worthy of destruction, and that they had no hope except from his gratuitous mercy. This is the meaning.

It now follows, Alas the day! for nigh is the day of Jehovah. Here the Prophet, as it was at first stated, threatens something worse in future than what they had experienced. He has hitherto been showing their torpidity; now he declares that they had not yet suffered all their punishments, but that there was something worse to be feared, except they turned seasonably to God. And he now exclaims, as though the day of Jehovah was before his eyes, and he calls it the day of Jehovah, because in that day God would stretch-forth his hand to execute judgment; for while he tolerates men or bears with their sins, he seems not to rule in the world. And though this mode of speaking is common enough in Scripture, it ought yet to be carefully noticed; for all seem not to understand that God calls that his own day, when he will openly shine forth and appear as the judge of the world: but as long as he spares us, his face seems to be hidden from us; yea, he seems not to govern the world. The Prophet therefore declares here that the day of the Lord was at hand; for it cannot be, but that the Lord must at length rise up and ascend his throne to punish men, though for a time he may connive at them. But the interjection, expressive of grief, intimates that the judgment, of which the Prophet speaks, was not to be despised, for it would be dreadful; and he wished to strike terror into the Jews, for they were too secure. And he says, The day is nigh, that they might not procrastinate, as they were wont to do, from day to day: for though men be touched by God's judgments they yet even desire time to be prolonged to them, and they come very tardily to God. Hence the Prophet, that he might correct this their great slothfulness, says that the day was nigh.

He adds, {יבוא} {משדי} {כשד} kashed meshadi ibu `as a desolation from the Almighty will it come.' The word {שדי} shadi signifies a conqueror; but it proceeds from the verb {שדד} shadad; and this in Hebrew means ``to desolate,'' or ``to destroy.'' The powerful and the conqueror is called {שדי} shadi; and hence they call God {שדי} shadi, on account of his power. Some derive it from udder: then they call God {שדי} shadi as though Scripture gave him this name, because from him flows all abundance of good things as from a fountain. But I rather refer this name to his strength and power, for the Jews, we know, gloried in the name of God as one armed to defend their safety. Whenever then the Prophets said that God was {שדי} shadi, the people laid hold on this as a ground for false confidence, ``God is almighty, we are then secure from all evils.'' But yet this confidence was not founded on the promises: and it was, we know, an absurd and profane presumption to have thus abused the name of God. Since then the Jews foolishly pricked themselves on this, that God had adopted them for his people, the prophet says here, ``There will come a desolation from the Almighty;'' that is, ``God is Almighty, but ye are greatly deceived in thinking that your safety is secured by his power; for he will, on the contrary, be opposed to you, inasmuch as ye have provoked his wrath.'' It follows ---

Joel 1:16-17

16. Is not the meat cut off before our eyes, yea, joy and gladness from the house

of our God?

16. An non coram oculis nostris cibus excisus est? e domo Dei nostri gaudium et exultatio?

17. The seed is rotten under their clods, the garners are laid desolate, the barns are broken down; for the corn is withered.

17. Putrefacta sunt grana subtus sulcos suos, desolata sunt reconditoria (vel, apothecae desolatae sunt,) diruta sunt horrea, quia exaruit frumentum.

He repeats the same thing as before, for he reproaches the Jews for being so slow to consider that the hand of God was against them. Has not the meat, he says, been cut off before our eyes? joy and exultation from the house of our God? Here he chides the madness of the Jews, that they perceived not things set before their eyes. He therefore says that they were blind in the midst of light, and that their sight was such, that seeing they saw nothing: they surely ought to have felt distressed, when want reached the temple. For since God had commanded the first-fruits to be offered to him, the temple ought not by any means to have been without its sacrifices; and though mortals perish a hundred times through famine and want, yet God ought not to be defrauded of his right. When, therefore, there was now no offering nor libation, how great was the stupidity of the people not to feel this curse, which ought to have wounded them more than if they had been consumed a hundred times by famine? We see then the design of the Prophet's words, that is, to condemn the Jews for their stupidity; for they considered not that a most grievous judgment was brought on them, when the temple was deprived of its usual sacrifices.

He afterwards adds, that joy and gladness were taken away: for God commanded the Jews to come to the temple to give thanks and to acknowledge themselves blessed, because he had chosen his habitation among them. Hence this expression is so often repeated by Moses, `Thou shalt rejoice before thy God;' for by saying this, God intended to encourage the people the more to come cheerfully to the temple; as though he said, ``I certainly want not your presence, but I wish by my presence to make you glad.'' But now when the worship of God ceased, the Prophet says, that joy had been also abolished; for the Jews could not cheerfully give thanks to God when his curse was before their eyes, when they saw that he was their adversary, and also when they were deprived of the ordinances of religion. We now then perceive why the Prophet joins joy and gladness with oblations: they were the symbols of thanksgiving.

He shows the cause of the evil, Rotted have the grains in the very furrows. For they call seeds {פרדות} peredut from the act of scattering. He then calls grains by this name, because they are scattered; and he says that they rotted in the fields when they ought to have germinated. He then adds, The granaries halve become desolated and the barns have been pulled down; for there was no use for them. Hence we conclude, that sterility had become most grievousand perpetual; for if the people had been only afflicted by famine for a few harvests or for one year, the Prophet would not have spoken thus. The famine must then have been, as it has been already stated for a long time. Let us now proceed ---

Joel 1:18

18. How do the beasts groan! the herds of cattle are perplexed, because they have no pasture; yea, the flocks of sheep are made desolate.

18. Quomodo ingemuit bestia? Confusa sunt armenta boum? Quia desunt illis pascua: etiam greges ovium desolati sunt.

The Prophet amplifies his reproof, that even oxen as well as other animals felt the judgment of God. There is then here an implied comparison between the feeling of brute animals and the insensibility of the people, as though he said, ``There is certainly more intelligence and reason in oxen and other brute animals than in you; for the herds groan, the flocks groan, but ye remain stupid and confounded. What does this mean?'' We then see that the Prophet here compares the stupidity of the people with the feeling of animals, to make them more ashamed.

How, he says, has the beast groaned? The question serves to show vehemence; for if he had said in the form of a narrative, that the animals groaned, that the cattle were confounded, and that the flocks perished, the Jews would have been less affected; but when he exclaims and, moved with astonishment, speaks interrogatively, How does the beast groan? He, no doubt, wished to produce an effect on the Jews, that they might perceive the judgment of God, which they had before passed by with their eyes closed, though it was quite manifest. It follows ---

Joel 1:19-20

19. O Lord, to thee will I cry: for the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness, and the flame hath burned all the trees of the field.

19. Ad te Jehovam clamabo, quia ignis consumpsit pascua (vel, habitacula) deserti: et flamma accendit omnes arbores agri.

20. And the beasts of the field cry also unto thee: for the rivers of waters are dried up, and the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness.

20. Etiam bestiae agri clamabunt ad te (quanquam {ערג} proprium est cervi, ut dicunt grammatici, sicuti etiam Psalmo 42 habetur: est illic idem verbum: clamabunt igitur bestiae ad te,) quia aruerunt decursus aquarum, quia ignis consumpsit habitacula (vel, pascua) deserti.

When the Prophet saw that he succeeded less than he expected, leaving the people, he speaks of what he would do himself, I will cry to thee, Jehovah. He had before bidden others to cry, and why does he not now press the same thing? Because he saw that the Jews were so deaf and listless as to make no account of all his exhortations: he therefore says, ``I will cry to thee, Jehovah; for they are touched neither by shame nor by fear. Since they throw aside every regard for their own safety, since they account as nothing my exhortations I will leave them, and will cry to thee;'' which means this, --- ``I see, Lord, that all these calamities proceed from thy hand; I will not howl as profane men do, but I will ascribe them to thee; for I perceive thee to be acting as a judge in all the evils which we suffer.'' Having then before declared that the Jews were more tardy than brute animals and having reproached them for feeling less acutely than oxen and sheep, the Prophet now says, that though they all remained obstinate, he would yet do what a pious man and a worshipper of God ought to do, I will cry to thee --- Why? Because the fire has consumed the pastures, or the dwellings, of the wilderness.

He here again gives an awful record of God's judgments. Though the heat may burn up whole regions, yet we know that pasture-lands do not soon wither, especially on mountains; and of such cold pastures he speaks here. We know that however great may be the fertility of mountains, yet coolness prevails there, and that, in the greatest drought, the mountainous regions are ever green. But the Prophet tells us here of an unusual thing, that the dwellings of the wilderness were burnt up. Some render {נאות} naut pastures; others, dwellings: but as to the meaning, we may read either; for the Prophet refers here to cold and humid regions, which never want moisture in the greatest heats. Some render the word, the beautiful or fair spots of the wilderness, but improperly. He doubtless means pastures, or dwellings, or folds. The fire then has consumed the dwellings, or pastures of the wilderness. This was not usual; it did not happen according to the ordinary course of nature: it then follows that it was a miracle. This is the reason why the Prophet says, that it was now time to cry to God; for it did not appear to be fortuitous, that the heat had burnt up regions which were moist and well watered. The flame, he says hath burnt up all the trees of the field.

He afterwards adds The beasts of the field will also cry (for the verb is in the plural number;) the beasts then will cry. The Prophet expresses here more clearly what he had said before that though the brute animals were void of reasons they yet felt God's judgment, so that they constrained men by their example to feel ashamed, for they cried to God: the beasts then of the field cry. He ascribes crying to them, as it is elsewhere ascribed to the young ravens. The young ravens, properly speaking, do not indeed call on God; and yet the Psalmist says so, and that, because they confess, by raising up their bills, that there is no supply for their want except God supports them. So also the Prophet mentions here the beasts as crying to God. It is indeed a figure of speech, called personification; for this could not be properly said of beasts. But when the beasts made a noise under the pressure of famine, was it not such a calling on God as their nature admitted? As much then as the nature of brute animals allows, they may be said to seek their food from the Lord, when they send forth lamentable cries and noises, and show that they are oppressed with famine and want. When, therefore, the Prophet attributes crying to beasts, he at the same time reproaches the Jews with their stupidity, that they did not call on God. ``What do you mean,'' he says. ``See the brute animals; they show to you what ought to be done; it is at least a teaching that ought to have effect on you. If I and the other prophets have lost all our labor, if God has in vain performed the office of a teacher among you, let the very oxen at least be your teachers; to whom indeed it is a shame to be disciples, but it is a greater shame not to attend to what they teach you; for the oxen by their example lead you to God.''

We now perceive how much vehemence there is in the Prophet's words, when he says, Even the beasts of the field will cry to God; for the streams of waters have dried up, and the fire has consumed the dwellings, or the pastures of the wilderness. He again teaches what I have lately stated, that sterility proceeded from the evident judgment of God, and that it ought to have struck dread into men, for it was a sort of miracle. When, therefore the courses of waters dried up on the mountains, how

could it be deemed natural? {אפיקים} aphikim mean courses of waters or valleys through which the waters run. The Prophet here refers, no doubt, to those regions which, through the abundance of water, always retain their fertility. When, therefore, the very valleys were burnt up, they ought surely to own that something wonderful had happened. On this account, he ascribes crying to herds and brute animals, and not any sort of crying, but that by which they called on God. What remains we shall defer till to-morrow.

Prayer.

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou sees us to be surrounded with the infirmity of our flesh, and so held by, and, as it were, overwhelmed with, earthly cares, that we can hardly raise up our hearts and minds to thee, --- O grant, that being awaked by thy word and daily warnings, we may at length feel our evils, and that we may not only learn by the stripes thou inflictest on us, but also of our own accord, summon ourselves to judgment, and examine our hearts, and thus come to thy presence, being our own judges; so that we may anticipate thy displeasure, and thus obtain that mercy which thou best promised to all, who, turning only to thee, deprecate thy wrath, and also hope for thy favor, through the name of one Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Chapter 2

Lecture Forty-first

Joel 2

Joel 2:1-11

J

1. Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand;

1. Clangite tuba in Sion, et clamate (alii vertunt, tantarizate: sed est generale verbum: clamate igitur, vel, clamorem odite) in monte sancto meo: contremiscant omnes incolae terrae, quia venit dies Jehovae, quia propinquus est.

2. A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations.

2. Dies tenebrarum et caliginis, dies nubis et obscuritatis, sicut aurora expanditur super montes, populus magnus et robustus (vel, terribilis;) similis ei non fuit a seculo, et post eum, non addet (hoc est, non erit amplius) ad annos generationis et generationis (ego cogor uno contextu legere haec omnia; dicam postea suo loco rationem.)

3. A fire devoureth before them; and behind them a flame burneth: the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, and nothing shall escape them.

3. Coram facie ejus (coram ipso) devorans ignis, et post eum exuret flamma: sicut hortus Eden terra coram ipso (ante faciem ejus ad verbum;) et post eum desertum solitudinis (vel, vastitatis;) adeoque evasio non erit ei.

4. The appearance of them is as the appearance of horses; and as horsemen, so shall they run.

4. Quasi aspectus equorum aspectus ejus, et tanquam equites current.

5. Like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains shall they leap, like the noise of a flame of fire that devoureth the stubble, as a strong people set in battle

array.

5. Sicut vocem quadrigarum (sic {מרכבות} interpretes vertunt: postea dicam de hoc verbo,) super cacumina montium saltabunt, secundum vocem flammae ignis vorantis stipulam, quasi populus robustus (vel, terribilis) paratus ad proelium.

6. Before their face the people shall be much pained: all faces shall gather blackness.

6. A facie ejus pavebunt populi, omnes facies colligent nigredinem.

7. They shall run like mighty men; they shall climb the wall like men of war; and they shall march every one on his ways, and they shall not break their ranks:

7. Quasi gigantes (vel, fortes) discurrent, sicut viri proelii ascendent murum, et vir (hoc est, quisque in viis suis ambulabit, et non tardabunt gressus suos (alii, non inquirent de viis suis.)

8. Neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk every one in his path: and when they fall upon the sword, they shall not be wounded.

8. Vir fratrem suum (hoc est, quisque socium suum) non premet, quisque in viis suis ambulabit: usque in gladium cadent (hoc est, super gladium cadent) non vulnerabuntur (alii, non concupiscent.)

9. They shall run to and fro in the city; they shall run upon the wall, they shall climb up upon the houses; they shall enter in at the windows like a thief.

9. Per urbem gradientur, per murum discurrent, in domos ascendent, usque ad fenestras intrabunt tanquam fur.

10. The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining:

10. Coram eo contremiscet terra, et angentur coeli; sol et luna nigrescent, et stellae retrahent splendorem suum.

11. And the Lord shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp is very great: for he is strong that executeth his word: for the day of the Lord is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?

11. Et Jehova edet vocem suam coram exercitu suo, quia magna valde castra ejus: quia robustus qui facit (vel, exequitur) verbum ejus; quia magnus dies Jehovae, et terribilis valde, et quis sustinebit eum?

This chapter contains serious exhortations, mixed with threatening; but the Prophet threatens for the purpose of correcting the indifference of the people, whom we have seen to have been very tardy to consider God's judgments. Now the reason why I wished to join together these eleven verses was, because the design of the Prophet in them is no other than to stir up by fear the minds of the people. The object of the narrative then is, to make the people sensible, that it was now no time for taking rest; for the Lord, having long tolerated their wickedness, was now resolved to pour upon them in full torrent his whole fiery. This is the sum of the whole. Let us now come to the words.

Sound the trumpet, he says, in Zion; cry out in my holy mountain; let all the inhabitants of the earth tremble. The Prophet begins with an exhortation. We know, indeed that he alludes to the usual custom sanctioned by the law; for as on festivals trumpets were sounded to call the people, so also it was done when anything

extraordinary happened. Hence the Prophet addresses not each individually; but as all had done wickedly, from the least to the greatest, he bids the whole assembly to be called, that they might in common own themselves to be guilty before God, and deprecate his vengeance. It is the same as though the Prophet had said that there was no one among the people who could exempt himself from blame, for iniquity had prevailed through the whole body. But this passage shows that when any judgment of God is impending, and tokens of it appear, this remedy ought to be used, namely, that all must publicly assemble and confess themselves worthy of punishments and at the same time flee to the mercy of God. This, we know, was, as I have already said, formerly enjoined on the people; and this practice has not been abolished by the gospel. And it hence appears how much we have departed from the right and lawful order of things; for at this day it would be new and unusual to proclaim a fast. How so? Because the greater part are become hardened; and as they know not commonly what repentance is, so they understand not what the profession of repentance means; for they understand not what sin is, what the wrath of God is, what grace is. It is then no wonder that they are so secure, and that when praying for pardon is mentioned, it is a thing wholly unknown at this day. But though people in general are thus stupid, it is yet our duty to learn from the Prophets what has always been the actual mode of proceeding among the people of God, and to labor as much as we can, that this may be known, so that when there shall come an occasion for a public repentance, even the most ignorant may understand that this practice has ever prevailed in the Church of God, and that it did not prevail through inconsiderate zeal of men, but through the will of God himself.

But he bids the inhabitants of the land to tremble. By these words he intimates, that we are not to trifle with God by vain ceremonies but to deal with him in earnest. When therefore, the trumpets sound, our hearts ought to tremble; and thus the reality is to be connected with the outward signs. And this ought to be carefully noticed; for the world is ever disposed to have an eye to some outward service, and thinks that a satisfaction is given to God, when some external rite is observed. But we do nothing but mock God, when we present him with ceremonies, while there is no corresponding sincere feeling in the heart; and this is what we shall find handled in another place.

The Prophet now adds threatening, that he might stir up the minds of the people: For coming, he says, is the day of Jehovah for nigh it is. By these words he first intimates that we are not to wait until God strikes us, but that as soon as he shows signs of his wrath, we ought to anticipate his judgment. When God then warns us of his displeasure, we ought instantly to solicit pardon: nigh, he says, is the day of Jehovah. What follows has a regard to the end which we have mentioned; for the Prophet paints the terrible judgment of God with the view of rousing minds wholly stupid and indifferent.

And then he says, A day of darkness and of thick darkness, a day of clouds and of obscurity, as the dawn which expands over the mountains. By calling it a dark and gloomy day, he wished to show that there would be no hope of deliverance; for, according to the common usage of Scripture, we know that by light is designated

a cheerful and happy state, or the hope of deliverance from any affliction: but the Prophet now extinguishes, as it were, every hope in this world, when he declares that the day of Jehovah would be dark, that is, without hope of restoration. This is his meaning. When he says afterwards, As the dawn which expands, etc., he mentions this to signify the celerity with which it would come; for we know how sudden is the rising of the dawn on the mountains: the dawn spreads in a moment on the mountains, where darkness was before. For the light penetrates not immediately either into valleys or even into plains; but if any one looks at the summits of mountains, he will see that the dawn rises quickly. It is then the settle as though the Prophet said, ``The day of the Lord is nigh, for the Lord can suddenly stretch forth his hand, as the dawn spreads over the mountains.''

He then mentions its character, A people great and strong to whom there has not been the like from the beginning, or from ages and after whom there will be no more the like, to the years of a generation and a generation. Here the Prophet specifies the kind of judgment that would be, of which he had generally spoken before; and he shows that what he had hitherto recorded of God's vengeance ought not to be so understood as that God would descend openly and visibly from heaven, but that the Assyrians would be the ministers and executioners of his vengeance. In short, the Prophet shows here that the coming of that people ought to have been as much dreaded as if God had put forth his hand and executed on his people the vengeance deserved by their sins. And by these words he teaches us, that men gain nothing by being blind to the judgments of God; for God will notwithstanding execute his works and use the instrumentality of men; for men are the scourges by which he chastises his own people. The Chaldeans and the Assyrians were unbelievers; yet God used them for the purpose of correcting the Jews. This the Prophet now shows, that is, that God was the avenger in these very Assyrians, for he employed them as the ministers and executioners of his judgment. We see at the same time that the Prophet describes here the terrible wrath of God to shake off from the Jews their tardiness; for he saw that they were not moved by all his threatening, and ever laid hold on some new flattering pretenses. This is the reason why he gives such a long description.

Before them, he says, the fire will devour, and after them the flame will burn. He means that the vengeance of God would be such as would consume the whole people: for God has in various ways begun to chastise the people, but, as we have seen, without any advantage. The Prophet then says here that the last stroke remained, and that the Lord would wholly destroy men so refractory, and whom he could not hitherto restore to a sound mind by moderate punishments. For he had in a measure spared them, though he had treated them sharply and severely, and given them time to repent. Hence, when the Prophet saw that they were wholly irreclaimable, he says, that it now only remained that the Lord should at once utterly consume them.

He adds, As the garden of Eden the land is before them, and after them it is the land of solitude; and so (and also) there will be no escape from them. Here the Prophet warns the Jews, that though they inhabited a most pleasant country and one

especially fruitful, there was no reason for them to flatter themselves, for God could convert the fairest lands into a waste. He therefore compares Judea to the garden of Eden or to Paradise. But such also was the state of Sodom, as Moses shows. What did it avail the Sodomites that they dwelt as in Paradise, that they inhabited a rich and fertile land, and thought themselves to be nourished as in the bosom of God? So also now the Prophet says, ``Though the land is like Paradise, yet when the enemy shall march through it, a universal waste shall follow, a scattering shall everywhere follow, there shall be no cultivation, no pleasantness, no appearance of inhabited land, for the enemy will destroy every thing'' His purpose was to prevent the Jews, by confiding in God's blessing, which they had hitherto experienced, from heedlessly disregarding in future his vengeance; for his wrath would in a moment consume and devour whatever fruitfulness the land had hitherto possessed. This is the meaning. He therefore concludes that there would be no escape from these enemies, the Assyrians, because they would come armed with a command to reduce to nothing the whole land.

He afterwards adds many similitudes, which any one of himself can sufficiently understand: I shall not therefore be long in explaining them, and many words would be superfluous. As the appearance of horses their appearance, and as horsemen, so will they run. This verse sets forth again the suddenness of vengeance, as though the Prophet had said, that long distance would be no obstacle, for the Assyrians would quickly move and occupy Judea; for distance deceived the Jews, and they thought that there would be a long respite to them. Hence the Prophet here removes this vain confidence, when he says that they would be like horses and horsemen. He then adds, ---

Like the sound of chariots. They expound {מרכבות} merecabut, chariots, though the Hebrews rather think them to be harnesses or saddles as we call them; but yet I prefer to view them as chariots; for what the Prophet says, that they shall leap on the tops of mountains like the sound of chariots, would not be suitably applied to the trappings of horses. They then shall leap on tops of mountains --- but how? as chariots, that is, they shall come with great force, or make a great and terrible noise. And he speaks of the tops of mountains for there we know the noise is greater when there is any commotion. The Prophet, therefore, does in every way amplify God's vengeance, that he might awaken the Jews, who by their indifference had too long provoked the Lord's wrath.

Like the sound, he says, of the flame of fire, or of a fiery flame, devouring the stubble. He compares the Assyrians to a flame, which consumes all things; and he compares the Jews to stubble, though they thought themselves fortified by many forces and strongholds.

At length he adds, As a strong people, prepared for battle; their face the people will dread, and all faces shall gather blackness. By these words the Prophet intimates that the Assyrians at their coming would be supplied with such power as would, by report only, lay prostrate all people. But if the Assyrians should be so formidable to all people, what could the Jews do? In short, the Prophet here shows that the Jews would by no means be able to resist enemies so powerful; for they would by

their fame alone so lay prostrate all people, that none would dare to rise up against them. He then compares them to giants. As giants, he says, they will run here and there; as men of war they will climb the wall, and man (that is, every one) in his ways shall walk. The Prophet heaps together these various expressions, that the Jews might know that they had to do with the irresistible hand of God, and that they would in vain implore assistance here and there; for they could find no relief in the whole world, when God executed his vengeance in so formidable a manner. He says further, they shall not stop their goings, though some render the words, ``They shall not inquire respecting their ways;'' for he had said before, ``They shall proceed in their ways:'' then the meaning is, They shall not come like strangers, who, when they journey through unknown regions, make anxious inquiries, whether any be lying in wait, whether there be any turnings in the road, whether the ways be difficult and perplexed: They shall not inquire, he says; they shall securely proceed, as though the road was open to them, as though the whole country was known to them. This part also serves to show celerity, that the Jews might dread the vengeance of God the same as if it was quite nigh them.

He then adds, A man shall not push his brother. By this mode of speaking the Prophet means that they would come in perfect order, so that the multitude would create no confusion, as it is mostly the case: for it is very difficult for an army to march in regular order without tumult, like two or three men walking together. For when a hundred horsemen march together some commonly hinder others. When therefore so large a number assemble together, it can hardly be possible for them not to retard and impede one another. But the Prophet declares that this would not be the case with the Assyrians, for the Lord would direct their goings. Though then the Lord would bring so large a multitude, it would yet be so well arranged and in such order, that no one would push his companion, or be any hindrance to him. A man, he says, shall in his way proceed, even without any impediment.

And on swords they shall fall, and shall not be wounded: that is, they shall not only be strong men of war, so that they shall intrepidly face every kind of danger; but they shall also escape unhurt from all weapons; though they may rush on swords like madmen and show no care for themselves, they shall not yet be wounded. But this may be taken in a still simpler way, ``They shall not be wounded'' that is, as if they could not be wounded. And it seems to me to be the genuine sense of the Prophet, that they would not entertain any fear of death, so as cautiously to attack their enemies, but would with impunity provoke death itself by casting themselves on the very swords: they would not then fear any wound, but dare to face swords as if they were wholly harmless to them. Some render the word, ``they shall not covet;'' and then the word means as if the Prophet had said, that they would not be covetous of money. But this meaning can hardly suit this place; and we see that the best sense seems to be, that they would heedlessly rush on swords, as though they could not be wounded.

It afterwards follows, Through the city shall they march; over the wall shall they run here and there; into houses shall they climb; through the windows shall they enter like a thief. The Prophet here shows that the Jews in vain trusted in their fortified

cities, for the enemies would easily penetrate into them. They shall march, he says, through the city, that is, as though there were no gates to it. The meaning then is, that though Judea abounded in cities, which seemed impregnable and appeared sufficient to arrest the course of enemies, as it had happened almost always, so that great armies were forced to desist when any strong fortified city stood in their way; yet the Prophet says that cities would be no impediment to the Assyrians at their coming to Judea, for they would march through the city, as along a plain road, where no gates are closed against them. They shall then march through the midst of cities as through a plain or open fields. To the same purpose is what follows, They shall run here and there over the wall, he says. These are indeed hyperbolical words; yet, when we consider how slow men are to fear punishment, we must allow that the Prophet in these expressions does not exceed moderation. They shall then run up and down through the city; that is, ``In vain you expect that there will be to you any rest or quietness, for ye think that you sill be able for a time to sustain the onsets of your enemies: This,'' he says, ``will by no means be the case, for they shall run here and there over the wall, as though it were a plain. Besides, they shall climb into the houses, and enter in through the windows, and do this as a thief; that is, though there should be no hostile attack, yet they shall stealthily and secretly penetrate into your houses: when there will be a great tumult, when the whole regions shall meet in arms, and when ye will think yourselves able to resist, they will then as thieves quietly enter into your houses and come in through the windows, and ye shall not be able to close up the passage against them.''

Then he adds, Before their face shall the earth tremble, and in anguish shall be the heavens; the sun and the moon shall become dark, and the stars shall withdraw their brightness. The Prophet speaks here more hyperbolically; but we must ever remember that he addressed men extremely stupid: it then behaved him to speak in an unusual manner, that he might touch their feelings; for it avails nothing to speak in all ordinary way to perverse men, especially to those who have divested themselves of all shame, and whom Satan has fascinated, so that they fear nothing and grieve at nothing. When therefore each stupidity lays hold on the minds of men, God must thunder that his word may be heard. As then the listlessness of the people was monstrous, so it was necessary, so to speak, for the Prophet to utter monstrous words. This is the reason why he now says, Before their face (namely, that of the enemies) shall the land tremble; and then he adds, The heavens also shall be in anguish; not that the heavens would fear the Assyrians; but the Prophet intimates that such would be the vengeance, that it would terrify the whole world; and this he intimates, that the Jews might cease to expect any subterfuges, for they flattered themselves, as though they could fly on the clouds, or could find for themselves some hiding-places or some corners at a distance. The Prophet gives them to understand that the whole world would be full of horror, when the Lord would come furnished with his army. He speaks also of the sun and the moon; as though he said, ``There will be no more any hope of aid from created things; for the vital light itself shall fail, when the Lord shall pour forth the flood of his fury: The sun and the moon, he says, shall become dark; and the stars shall withhold their brightness. Though then ye lift

up your eyes, not even a spark of light will there be to comfort you, for darkness on every side will cover you; and ye shall know by heaven as well as by earth that God is angry with you. Here, in short, he shuts up against the Jews every avenue to hope; for not only the Assyrian will rage on earth, but God will also give signs of vengeance from heaven, so that the sun will be constrained to show such a sign, as well as the moon and all the stars.

He at last adds, And Jehovah will utter his voice before his army. The Prophet seems in this verse to anticipate whatever objection men might adduce. ``O! thou denounces on us great terrors, and as if the Assyrians were not to be counted as men, as if no other people were in the world, as if there was no other army, as if there were no other forces, as if none else had courage; but if the Assyrians are at this day formidable, they have yet neighbors who can gather a force sufficient easily to oppose them'' And Egypt was then a populous country, and well fortified; and who would not have said that the Egyptians were equal to the Assyrians? and the Jews also thought themselves safe through a treaty with them. And then there was Syria; and there were many kingdoms, with which the Jews might have boasted that they were surrounded, so that no access to them was open to the Assyrians; for however insufficient were the people of Moab or the people of Amman, yet they were all joined together, even Edom, and Ammon, and Moab: and then Tyrus and Sidon, and the many neighboring kingdoms, might certainly have been sufficient to resist the Assyrians. Now, that no one might object all this, the Prophet shortly anticipates it by saying, that God would be the leader of his army; as though he had said, ``I have already declared this to be the hand of God: for the Assyrians will not come here of their own accord; that is, without being stirred up by God: but as this truth has not as yet sufficiently moved your feelings, know that God will be the leader of this army: God will send forth his voice before his army.'' Here he distinctly calls the Assyrians the attendants of God; they shall not then come as soldiers hired by their own king, they shall not come as carrying on war for an earthly king, but the Lord himself shall guide them, and by his voice encourage them. By this expression the Prophet shows that the Jews would not have a contest with one nation only, but also with God himself and with all his celestial power.

He therefore says, God will utter his voice before his army; for very great will be his camp. He again repeats that the multitude which was to execute the biddings of God would be so great, that the Jews would seek forces in vain to resist it. Strong, he says, is he who executes his word. He expresses more clearly what I have stated already, that though cupidity impelled the Assyrians, that though they were intent on rapine and plunder, yet they would not come merely through an impulse of their own, but that the Lord would prepare them and use them as his instruments: ``Powerful, then, is he who does the word of God; that is, who executes his command; not that the Assyrians designed to show regard to God or to offer to him their service, as the faithful do, who willingly devote themselves to Him; but that the Lord by his secret providence guided them and employed them to punish his own people.

He afterwards adds in the last place, For great will be the day of Jehovah and terrible, and who will endure it? In this clause he shows that the vengeance would

be such as would reduce the Jews to nothing, and that it was now time to repent, and that if they still turned a deaf ear to what the Prophet denounces, God would punish their perverseness.

Now with regard to what he says, that strong is he who does the word of God, we have elsewhere reminded you that men serve God in two ways, --- they either execute his commands willingly, or are led to do so by a blind impulse. The angels and the faithful perform God's commands, because they are guided by the spirit of obedience; but the wicked also, and the devil who is their head, fulfill God's biddings; this, however, is not to be imputed to them as obedience, for they are only led by their own wicked purposes, and seek to destroy, as far as they can, the whole government of God; but they are constrained, willing or unwilling, to obey God, not of their own accord or willingly, as I have said, but the Lord turns all their efforts to answer the end which he has decreed. Whatever, then, Satan and the wicked attempt to do, they at the same time serve God and obey his commands; and though they rage against God, he yet holds them in by his bridle, and also so guides their attempts and their purposes as to answer his own ends. In this sense, then, it is, that Joel says, that the Assyrians would do the word of God; not that it was their purpose to obey God, not that God had commanded them anything, but he puts the word of the Lord here for his secret purpose. As, then, the wicked perform no voluntary obedience to God, but constrained, when they execute God's commands; so there is a twofold command or word of God: there is the command by which he teaches his own children and leads them to obey him; and there is another, a hidden command, when he deigns not to address men, and shows not what pleases him or what he means to do, but suffers them to be led by their own sinful desires; in the meantime, he has his own secret purpose, which by them he executes though without their intention.

Prayer.

Grant, almighty God, that as thou invites us daily with so much kindness and love, and makes known to us thy paternal goodwill, which thou didst once show to us in Christ thy Son, --- O grant, that, being allured by thy goodness, we may surrender ourselves wholly to thee, and become so teachable and submissive, that wherever thou guidest us by thy Spirit thou mayest follow us with every blessing: let us not, in the meantime, be deaf to thy warnings; and whenever we deviate from the right way, grant that we may immediately awake when thou warnest us, and return to the right path, and deign thou also to embrace us and reconcile us to thyself through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lecture Forty-second

Joel 2:12-13

12. Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning:

12. Atque etiam nunc dicet Jehova, convertimini ad me in toto corde vestro, et in jejunio, et in fletu, et in planctu.

13. And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth

him of the evil.

13. Et scindite cor vestrum, et non vestimenta vestra, et convertimini ad Jehovam Deum vestrum, quia ipse propitius et misericors, longus ad iram, et multus clementia, et poenitebit eum super malo.

The Prophet, having proclaimed the dreadful judgment which we have noticed, now shows that he did not intend to terrify the people without reason, but, on the contrary, to encourage them to repentance; which he could not do without offering to them the hope of pardon; for as we have said before, and as it may be collected from the whole of Scripture, men cannot be restored to the right ways except they entertain a hope of God's mercy inasmuch as he who has been ungodly, when he despairs, wholly disregards himself, observing no restraint. Hence the Prophet now represents God as propitious and merciful, that he might thus kindly allure the people to repentance.

He says first, And even now the Lord says, Turn ye to me. The Prophet exhorts the people, not in his own name, but speaks in the person of God himself. He might indeed have borne witness to the favor which he proclaimed; but the discourse becomes more striking by introducing God as the speaker. And there is a great importance in the words, even now; for when one considers what we have noticed in the beginning of the chapter, a prospect of relief could hardly have been deemed possible. God had, indeed, in various ways, tried to restore the people to the right way; but, as we have seen, the greater part had become so void of feeling, that the scourges of God were wholly ineffectual; there remained, then, nothing but the utter destruction which the Prophet threatened them with at the beginning of the second chapter. Yet, in this state of despair, he still sets forth some hope of mercy, provided they turned to him; even now, he says. The particles {וגם} ugam are full of emphasis, ``even now'' that is, ``Though ye have too long abused God's forbearance, and with regard to you, the opportunity is past, for ye have closed the door against yourselves; yet even now, --- which no one could have expected, and indeed what ought to be thought incredible by yourselves, --- even now God waits for you, and invites you to entertain hope of salvation.'' But it was necessary that these two particles, even now, should be added; for it is not in the power of men to fix for themselves, as they please, the season for mercy. God here shows the acceptable time, as Isaiah says (Isaiah 49:8) to be, when he has not yet rejected men, but when he offers to be propitious. We must then remember that the Prophet gives not here liberty to men to delay the time, as the profane and scorners are wont to do, who trifle with God from day to day; but the Prophet here shows that we must obey the voice of God, when he invites us, as also Isaiah says, `Behold now the time accepted, behold the day of salvation: seek God now, for he is near; call on him while he may be found.' So then, as I have reminded you, these two particles, even now, are added, that men may be made attentive to the voice of God when he invites them, that they may not delay till tomorrow, for the Lord may then close the door, and repentance may be too late. We at the same time see how indulgently God bears with men, since he left a hope of pardon to a people so obstinate and almost past recovery.

Even now, he says, turn ye to me with your whole heart. The Prophet here reminds

us that we must not act feignedly with God; for men are ever disposed to trifle with him. We indeed see what almost the whole world is wont to do. God graciously meets us and is ready to receive us unto favor, though we have a hundred times alienated ourselves from him; but we bring nothing but hypocrisy and disguise: hence the Prophet declares here distinctly, that this dissimulation does not please God, and that they can hide nothing, who only pretend some sort of repentance by external signs, and that what is required is the serious and sincere feeling of the heart. This is what he means by the whole heart; not that perfect repentance can be formed in men, but the whole or complete heart is opposed to a divided heart: for men well understand that God is not ignorant; yet they divide their heart, and when they bestow some portion on God, they think that he is satisfied; and in the meantime there remains an interior and some hidden perverseness, which separates them far from God. This vice the Prophet now condemns, when he says, Turn with the whole heart. He then shows that it is an hypocrisy abominable to God, when men keep the greater part of their heart, as it were, closed up, and think it enough, if only they bring, so to speak, some volatile feeling.

He afterwards adds, fasting, and weeping, and mourning; and by these words he shows how grievously they had sinned; as though he said, that they deserved not only one kind of destruction, but were worthy of hundred deaths; that God therefore would not now be content with any common repentance, and except they came suppliantly and deeply felt their own guilt. It is indeed true, that we ought daily and even constantly to sigh, because we continue almost every hour to provoke God's wrath against us; but the Prophet here speaks of solemn fasting, because the people had so grievously offended God that there was required some extraordinary confession, such as he here describes. Come then to me with fasting, and weeping, and wailing'' that is ``Show at length that you are guilty and submissively deprecate the vengeance which ye have through your wickedness deserved.'' He speaks like a judge, when he tells the criminal, not to act dissemblingly, but simply to confess his fault. The guilty are indeed wont to weave many excuses to avoid punishment; but when the judge deems a man guilty, and he is abundantly proved to be so, he says, ``What good can you do? for these your shuffling and subterfuges make your case worse: for now I hold you bound, and you cannot escape by these shifts, and will only the more provoke my displeasure. If then you wish me to show you favor, own how grievously you have offended, and without any coloring; confess now that you are worthy of death, and that nothing else remains for you, except I mercifully pardon you: for if you try to extenuate your crime, if you attempt by some excuse to seek reprief, you will gain nothing.'' So now does the Lord deal with this people: Turn to me, he says; first, sincerely; then with fasting, with weeping, and with wailing; that is, ``Let it appear that you suppliantly deprecate the destruction which ye have deserved, for moderate repentance will not do, inasmuch as ye are guilty before me of so many crimes.'' We now apprehend the Prophet's meaning.

He then subjoins, Rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn to Jehovah your God. The Prophet again repeats that we ought to deal sincerely with God; for all those ceremonies, by which men imagine that they discharge their duties, are mere

mockeries, when they are not preceded by a pure and sincere heart. But as they were wont under mournful circumstances to rend their garments, he therefore says, ``God has become now insensible to these customs; for with regard to men, ye are ceremonious enough, and more than enough: ye indeed rend your garments, and thus draw pity from men, and yet your heart remains whole, there is no rending, no opening; Rend then your heart,'' that is, ``Leave off thus to mock God, as ye have been wont to do, and begin with your heart.'' It is indeed certain that the orientals were given to many ceremonies; but the vice the Prophet here condemns in the Jews is natural as it were to all men; so that every one of us is inclined to hypocrisy, and has need of having his attention drawn to the sincerity of the heart. We must then remember that this truth is to be set forth at all times and to all nations. Let any one search himself and he will find that he labors under this evil, --- that he would rather reed his garment than his heart. And since the Jews usually observed this custom, the Prophet does not without reason deride it, and say, that it was of no account with God except they rent their hearts. But when he bids them to rend their hearts and not their garments, though he seems to repudiate that external practice, he does not yet distinctly condemn it, but intimates that it was a lawful thing, provided the heart was rent. Now this expression, Rend the heart, ought not to be deemed harsh, for it is to be referred to the external practice: when they rent the garments, they made themselves naked before God and put off all ornaments; but he wished them to be displeased with themselves, and rather to make bare the heart itself. The heart of hypocrites, we know, is wrapped up, and they ever have recourse to hiding places, that they may avoid the presence of God. Then the similitude is most suitable, when the Prophet bids them to rend the heart. Besides, the passage is clear enough, and needs not many remarks; it means, that God regards the real feeling of the heart, as it is said in Jeremiah [4:14]; he is not content with ocular obedience, such as men exhibit, but he would have us to deal with him in sincerity and truth.

Hence he repeats again, Turn to Jehovah your God. Here the Prophet shows, from what God is, that men foolishly and grossly deceive themselves when they would please God with their ceremonies: ``What!'' he says, ``have you to do with a child?'' For the import of the words is this, --- ``When an offense against man is to be removed, ye anxiously come to him: now when ye perceive that God is angry with you, ye think that he will be propitious to you, if ye only trifle with him; can God bear such a reproach?'' We hence see what the Prophet means when he says, Turn to Jehovah your God; that is, ``Remember that you have not to do with a block of wood or with a stone, but with your God, who searches hearts, and whom mortals can by no crafts deceive'' The same is said by Jeremiah, `Israel, if thou turnest, turn to me,' (Jeremiah 4:1;) that is, ``Pretend not to turn by circuitous courses and windings, but come in a direct way, and with a real feeling of heart, for I am he who calls thee'' So also now the Prophet says, Turn to Jehovah your God

Then follows the promise of pardon, For he is propitious and merciful. We have already said that repentance is preached in vain, except men entertain a hope of salvation; for they can never be brought to fear God truly, unless they trust in him as their Father, as it is stated in Psalm 130:4 `With thee is propitiation that thou

mayest be feared.' Hence, whenever the Prophets were anxious to effect anything by their doctrine, while exhorting the people to repentance, they joined to the invitation ``Come,'' the second part, ``Ye shall not come in vain.'' This ``Come,'' comprehends all exhortations to repentance; ``Ye shall not come in vain,'' includes this testimony respecting God's grace, that He will never reject miserable sinners, provided they return to him with the heart. The Prophet then now engaged on this second head; God, he says, is propitious and merciful. And this connection is to be observed by us; for as Satan fills us with insensibility when God invites us, so also he draws us away into despair when God denounces judgment, when he shows that it is not time for sleep. ``What good will you gain?'' Thus Satan by his craft disheartens us, that we may labor in vain, when we seek to be reconciled to God. Hence, whenever Scripture exhorts us to repentance, let us learn to join this second part, ``God invites us not in vain.'' If then we return to him, he will be instantly inclined to grant forgiveness; for he wills not that miserable men should labor in vain or be tormented. This is the benefit of which the Prophet speaks when he says that God is propitious and merciful.

He afterwards adds, that he is slow to wraths and abundant in goodness. These testimonies respecting God occur often in other places; and all the Prophets, as well as David, have borrowed these declarations from Exodus 34:6; where the nature of God is described; and He is said there to be propitious and merciful, slow to wrath, and abundant in goodness. Though there is no need of dwelling longer on these words, as we perceive the Prophet's design; yet more extended remarks will not be superfluous since the Prophet so much at large recommends the mercy of God. Though men too much indulge themselves in security, yet when God calls them to himself, they are not able to receive his favor; though he may testify twice or thrice that he will be propitious to them, yet he cannot persuade them but with great difficulty. This is the reason why the Prophet, after having said that God is propitious and merciful, adds, that he is slow to wrath, and abundant in goodness; it was, that the Jews might overcome their distrust, and that however much despair might keep them back, they might not yet hesitate to come to God, seeing that he declares himself to be so merciful.

He at last adds, He will repent of the evil. The Prophet here not only describes the nature of God, but goes further and says, that God, who is by nature placable, will not remain fixed in his purpose, when he sees people returning to him in sincerity; but that he suffers himself to be turned to show favor, so as to remit the punishment which he had previously denounced. And it is a mode of speaking which often occurs in Scripture, that God repents of evil; not that he really changes his purpose, but this is said according to the apprehensions of men: for God is in himself immutable, and is said to turn from his, purpose, when he remits to man the punishment he has previously threatened. Whatever proceeds from God's mouth ought to be regarded as an inviolable decree; and yet God often threatens us conditionally, and though the condition be not expressed it is nevertheless to be understood: but when he is pacified to us and relaxes the punishment, which was in a manner already decreed according to the external word, he is then said to repent. And we know, that as we

do not apprehend God such as he is, he is therefore described to us in such a way as we can comprehend, according to the measure of our infirmity. Hence God often puts on the character of men, as though he were like them; and as this mode of speaking is common, and we have spoken of it elsewhere, I now pass it by more briefly. It follows ---

Joel 2:14

14. Who knoweth if he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him; even a meat offering and a drink offering unto the Lord your God?

14. Quis novit an revertatur et poeniteat eum, et relinquat post se (alii vertunt, post eum; ego tamen malo sic transferre, Relinquat post se) benedictionem, oblationem et libamen Jehovae Deo vestro?

The Prophet seems at first sight to leave men here perplexed and doubtful; and yet in the last verse, as we have seen, he had Offered a hope of favor, provided they sincerely repented. Hence the Prophet seems not to pursue the same subject, but rather to vary it: and we have already said, that all exhortations would be frigid, nay, useless, by which God stirs us up to repentance, except he were to testify that he is ready to be reconciled. Seeing then that the Prophet here leaves the minds of men in suspense, he seems to rescind what he has before alleged respecting God's mercy. But we must understand that this is a mode of speaking which often occurs in Scripture. For wherever God is set forth to us as one hardly willing to pardon, it is done to rouse our slothfulness, and also to shake off our negligence. We are at first torpid when God invites us, except he applies his many goads; and then we act formally in coming to him: it is hence needful that both these vices should be corrected in us, --- our torpor must be roused, --- and those self-complacences, in which we too much indulge ourselves, must be shaken off. And this is the object of the Prophet; for he addresses, as we have seen, men almost past recovery. If he had only said, God is ready to pardon, if he had used this way of speaking, they would have come negligently, and would not have been sufficiently touched by the fear of God: hence the Prophet here, as it were, debates the matter with them, ``Even though we ought justly to despair of pardon, (for we are unworthy of being received by God,) yet there is no reason why we should despair; for who knows'' which means ``God is placable and we must not despair.''

The Prophet then sets forth here the difficulty of obtaining pardon, not to leave men in suspense, for this would be contrary to his former doctrine; but to create in them a desire for the grace of God, that they might by degrees gather courage, and yet not immediately rise to confidence, but that they might come anxiously to God, and with much deliberation, duly considering their offenses. We now understand the purpose of the Prophet.

But this will be easier understood by supposing two gradations in repentance. Then the first step is, when men feel how grievously they have offended. Here sorrow is not to be immediately removed after the manner of impostors, who cajole the consciences of men, so that they indulge themselves, and deceive themselves, with empty self-flatteries. For the physician does not immediately ease pain, but considers what is more necessary: it may be he will increase it, for a thorough clearing

may be needful. So also do the Prophets of God, when they observe trembling consciences, they do not immediately apply soothing consolations, but on the contrary show that they ought not, as we have already said, to trifle with God, and exhort them while willingly running to God, to set before them his terrible judgment, that they may be more and more humbled. The second step is, when the Prophets cheer the minds of men, and show that God now willingly meets them, and desires nothing more than to see men willing to be reconciled to him.

The Prophet is now urging them to take the first step, when he says, Who knows whether the Lord will turn? But some may object and say, ``Then the Prophet has spoken inconsistently; for first he has described God as merciful, and has spoken of his goodness without any reserve; and then he throws in a doubt: he seems here to observe no consistency.'' I answer, that the Prophets of God do not always very anxiously hold to what seems consistent in their discourses; and farther, that the Prophet has not spoken here in vain or inconsiderately; for he, in the first place, generally sets forth God as merciful, and afterwards addresses particularly a people who were almost past recovery, and says, ``Though ye think that it is all over with you as to your salvation, and ye deserve to be rejected by God, yet ye ought not to continue in this state; rather entertain a hope of pardon'' This is what the Prophet had in view; he throws in no doubt, so as to make the sinner uncertain, whether or not he could obtain pardons; but as I have said, he wished only to rouse torpidity, and also to shake off vain self-flatteries.

He then adds, And leave after him a blessing. We here see more clearly what I have already said, that the Prophet, considering the state of those whom he addressed, states a difficulty; for the Jews were not to escape temporary punishment, and the Prophet did not intend to dismiss them in a secure state, as though God would inflict on them no punishment; nay, he wished to bend their necks that they might receive the strokes of God, and calmly submit to his correction. But all hope might have been lost, when the Jews saw, that though the Prophet had declared that God would be propitious, they were yet not spared, but suffered severe punishment for their sins, --- ``What does this mean? Has God then disappointed us? We hoped that he would be propitious, and yet he ceases not to be angry with us.'' Hence the Prophet now subjoins, Who knows whether he will leave behind him a blessing?

What is this --- behind him? What does it mean? Even this, that as God was to be a severe judge to punish the people's wickedness, the Prophet now says, ``Though God beats you with his rods, he can yet relieve you by administering comfort. Ye indeed think that you are beaten almost to death; but the Lord will temperate his wrath, so that a blessing will follow these most grievous punishments'' We now, then, understand the purpose of the Prophet: for he does not simply promise pardon to the Jews, but mitigates the dread of punishment, that is, that though God would chastise them, he would yet give place to mercy. Then God will leave behind him a blessing; that is ``These strokes shall not be incurable'' And this admonition is very necessary, whenever God deals severely with us; for when we feel his wrath, we then think that there is no grace remaining. It is then not without reason that the Prophet says, that God leaves behind him a blessing; which means, that when he shall pass by us with

his rod, he will yet restrain his severity, so that some blessing will remain.

He afterwards adds, {אלהיכם} {ליהוה} {ונסך} {מנחה} meneche unesac laleuve Aleicam, an offering and a libation, he says, to Jehovah your God. This has been designedly added, that the Jews might entertain more hope. For with regard to them, they had deserved to be wholly exterminated a hundred times; yea, they deserved to pine away utterly through famine: but the Prophet intimates here, that God would have a regard for his own glory and his worship. ``Though,'' he says, ``we have deserved to perish by famine, yet God will be moved by another consideration, even this, --- that there may be some offering, that there may be some libation in the temple: since then God has chosen us a people to himself, and has required the first-fruits to be offered to him, and has consecrated for himself all our provision and all our produce in the first-fruits, and also in the daily offerings, though he has now resolved to consume us with famine and want, yet that his worship may continue, he will make the land fruitful to us, corn and wine will yet be produced for us,'' But the Prophet does not mean that there would only be so much corn as would be enough for offerings, or only so much wine as would be sufficient for libations; but he means, as I have already said, that though God would not provide for the safety of the people, he would yet have a regard for his own glory. God required the corn and the wine to be offered to him, not that he needed them, but because he consecrated to himself our provision. As then he would have the food and provisions, on which we live, to be sacred to him, he will not allow them wholly to fail. ``God will yet surely pity us, and he will pity us, because he has deigned to choose us a people to himself, and so to join us with himself, that he wishes to eat, as it were, with us.'' For God seemed then to partake, as it were, of the same table with his people; for the law required bread or the ears of corn, and also wine, to be offered to God: not that he, as I have said, needed such supports; but that he might show that he had all things in common with his people. This communion then, or fellow-participation of God with his chosen people, gave them more hope; and this is what the Prophet had in view.

Prayer.

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou seest us so foolish in nourishing our vices, and also so ensnared by the gratifications of the flesh, that without being constrained we hardly return to thee, --- O grant, that we may feel the weight of thy wrath, and be so touched with the dread of it, as to return gladly to thee, laying aside every dissimulation, and devote ourselves so entirely to thy service, that it may appear that we have from the heart repented, and that We have not trifled with thee by an empty pretense, but have offered to thee our hearts as a sacrifice, so that we and all our works might be sacred offerings to thee through our whole life, that thy name may be glorified in us through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lecture Forty-third

Joel 2:15-17

15. Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly:

15. Clangite tuba in Sion, sanctificate jejunium, indicite conventum:

16. Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts: let the bridegroom go forth of his

chamber, and the bride out of her closet.

16. Colligite populum, sanctificate coetum, coedunate senes, colligite parvulos et sugentes ubera, et egrediatur sponsus e penetrali suo et sponsa e thalamo suo.

17. Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?

17. Inter atrium et altare plorent sacerdotes, ministri Jehovae, et dicant, Propitius esto Jehova super populum tuum; et ne des haereditatem tuam in opprobrium, ut dominentur super eos gentes: cur dicent in populis, Ubi est Deus corum?

Here again the Prophet reminds them that there was need of deep repentance; for not only individuals had transgressed, but the whole people had become guilty before God; and we also know how many and grievous their sins had been. There is no wonder then that the Prophet requires a public profession of repentance.

He bids them first to sound the trumpet in Zion. This custom, as we have seen at the beginning of the chapter, was in common use under the Law; they summoned their meetings by the sound of trumpets. There is then no doubt but that the Prophet here refers to an extraordinary meeting. They sounded the trumpets whenever they called the people to the festivals. But it must have been unusual for the Jews to proclaim a fast on account of God's heavy judgment, which was to come on them unless it was prevented. He then shows the purpose of this, bidding them to sanctify a fast By this word {קדש} kodesh, he means a proclamation for a holy purpose. Sanctify, then a fast, that is, Proclaim a fast in the name of God.

We slightly touched on the subject of fasting in the first chapter, but deferred a fuller discussion to this place. Fasting, we know, is not of itself a meritorious work, as the Papists imagine it to be: there is, indeed, strictly speaking, no work meritorious. But the Papists dream that fasting, in addition to its merit and worth, is also by itself of much avail in the worship of God; and yet fasting, when regarded in itself is an indifferent work. [12] It is not then approved by God, except for its end; it must be connected with something else, otherwise it is a vain thing. Men, by private fastings prepare themselves for the exercise of prayer, or they mortify their own flesh, or seek a remedy for some hidden vices. Now I do not call fasting temperance; for the children of God, we know, ought through their whole life to be sober and temperate in their habits; but fasting, I regard that to be, when something is abstracted from our moderate allowance: and such a fast, when practiced privately, is, as I have said, either a preparation for the exercise of prayer, or a means to mortify the flesh, or a remedy for some vices.

But as to a public fast, it is a solemn confession of guilt, when men suppliantly approach the throne of God, acknowledge themselves worthy of death, and yet ask pardon for their sins. Fasting then, with regard to God, is similar to black and mean garments and a long beard before earthly judges. The criminal goes not before the judge in a splendid dress, with all his fine things, but casts away every thing that was before elegant in his appearance, and by his uncombed hair and long beard he tries

[12] Medium opus, “a middle work, neutral, neither good nor bad”. — Ed.

to excite the compassion of his judge. There is, at the same time, another reason for fasting; for when we have to do with men, we wish to please their eyes and conciliate their favor; and he who fasts, not only testifies openly that he is guilty, but he also reminds himself of his guilt; for as we are not sufficiently touched by the sense of God's wrath, those aids are useful which help to excite and affect us. He then who fasts, excites himself the more to penitence.

We now perceive the right use of fasting. But it is of public fasting that the Prophet speaks here. For what purpose? That the Jews, whom he had before summoned, might present themselves before God's tribunal, and that they might come there, not with vain excuses, but with humble prayer. This is the design of fasting. We now see how foolishly the Papists have abused fasting; for they think it to be a meritorious work; they imagine that God is honored by abstinence from meat; they also mention those benefits of fasting to which I have referred; but they join fasts with festivals, as if there was some religion in abstaining from flesh or certain meats. We now then perceive by what gross puerilities the Papists trifle with God. We must then carefully notice the end in view, whenever the Scripture speaks of fasting; for all things will be confounded, except we lay hold on the principle which I have stated --- that fasting ought ever to be connected with its end. We shall now proceed.

Proclaim, he says, a meeting {עצרה} otsare is not properly an assembly, but the deed itself: [13] hence also the word is transferred to festivals. Proclaim, then, a meeting, call the people, sanctify the assembly. The word, sanctify, seems to be taken here in a sense different from what it had been before. The people, in order to engage in holy services, performed those rites, as it is well known, by which they cleansed themselves from their pollutions. No one entered the temple without washing; and no one offered a sacrifice without abstaining from an intercourse with his wife. The Prophet then alludes to these legal purgations when he says Sanctify the assembly.

He afterwards adds, Bring together the old, gather the young sucking the breasts. With regard to the old, we have said before that they are separately named, because they ought to have taken the lead by their example; and further a greater guilt belonged to them, for we know that it is a duty incumbent on the old to govern others, and, as it were, to hold the reins. But when the old themselves become dissolute, and restrain not the lusts of the young, they are doubly culpable before God. It is no wonder then that the Prophet bids here the old to be called; for it became them to be the leaders of others in confessing their repentance. But what follows seems strange. He would have the young, sucking the breasts, to be assembled. Why are these brought in as involved in guilt? Besides, the people were to own their repentance; and yet infants are without understanding and knowledge; so that they could not humble themselves before God. It must, then, have been a mockery and a vain show; nay, the Prophet seems to encourage the people in hypocrisy by bidding young infants to assemble together with men and women. To this I answer, that children ought to have been brought together, that those grown up and advanced

[13] That is, restraint. Literally it is, Proclaim a restraint. And as it means a restraint generally from labor as well as from food, it is applied to designate a feast-day, when men are detained or restrained from labor. — Ed.

in years might through them perceive what they deserved; for the wrath of God, we know, reached to the very infants, yea, and to brute animals: when God puts forth his hand to punish any people, neither asses nor oxen are exempt from the common scourge. Since, then, God's wrath comes upon brute animals and upon young infants, it is no wonder that the Lord bids all to come forth publicly and to make a confession of repentance; and we see the same to have been the case with brute animals; and when, if the Lord grants, we shall come to the Prophet Jonah, we shall then speak on this subject. The Ninevites, when they proclaimed a fast, not only abstained themselves from meat and drink, but constrained also their oxen and horses to do the same. Why? Because the very elements were involved, as it were, with them in the same guilt: ``Lord, we have polluted the earth; whatever we possess we have also polluted by our sins; the oxen the horses, and the asses, are in themselves innocent, but they have contracted contagion from our vices: that we may therefore obtain mercy, we not only offer ourselves suppliantly before thy face, but we bring also our oxen and horses; for if thou exercises the fullest severity against us, thou wilt destroy whatever is in our possession.'' So also now, when the Prophet bids infants to be brought before God, it is done on account of their parents. Infants were in themselves innocent with regard to the crimes of which he speaks; but yet the Lord could have justly destroyed the infants together with those of advanced age. It is then no wonder that in order to pacify God's wrath the very infants are summoned with the rest: but as I have already said, the reason is on account of their parents, that the parents themselves might perceive what they deserved before God, and that they might the more abhor their sins by observing that God would take vengeance on their children, except he was pacified. For they ought to have reasoned from the less to the greater: ``See, if God exercises his own right towards us, there is destruction not only hanging over us, but also over our children; if they are guilty through our crimes, what can we say of ourselves, who are the authors of these evils? The whole blame belongs to us; then severe and dreadful will be God's vengeance on us, except we be reconciled to him.''

We now then perceive why infants were called, together with their parents; not that they might confess their penitence, as that was not compatible with their age, but that their parents might be more moved, and that such a sight might touch their feelings, and that dread might also seize them on seeing that their children were doomed to die with them for no other reason, but that by their contagion and wickedness they had infected the whole land and everything that the Lord had bestowed on them.

He afterwards subjoins, Let the bridegroom go from his closet, or recess, and the bride from her chamber. It is the same as though the Prophet had bidden every joy to cease among the people; for it was of itself no evil to celebrate nuptials; but it behooved the people to abstain from every rejoicing on seeing the wrath of God now suspended over them. Hence, things in themselves lawful ought for a time to be laid aside when God appears angry with us; for it is no season for nuptials or for joyful feasts, when God's wrath is kindled, when the darkness of death spreads all around. No wonder, then, that the Prophet bids the bridegroom and the bride to come forth

from their chamber, that is, to cast aside every joy, and to defer their nuptials to a more suitable time, and now to undergo their delights, for the Lord appeared armed against all. It would have been then to provoke, as it were, His wrath, to indulge heedlessly in pleasures, when he wished not only to terrify, but almost to frighten to death those who had sinned; for when the Lord threatens vengeance, what else is indifference but a mockery of his power? ``I have called you to weeping and wailing; but ye have said, `We will feast:' as I live, saith the Lord, this iniquity shall never be blotted out.'' We see how extremely displeased the Lord appears there to be with those who, having been called to weeping and fasting, did yet indulge themselves in their pleasures; for such, as I have said, altogether laugh to scorn the power of God. The Prophet's exhortation ought then to be noticed, when he bids the bridegroom and the bride to leave their nuptials, and to put on the same mournful appearance as the rest of the people. He thus shook off heedlessness from all, since God had appeared with tokens of his wrath. This is the sum of the whole.

Then it follows, Between the court and the altar let the priests, the ministers of Jehovah, weep. It was the priests' office, we know, to pray in the name of the whole people; and now the Prophet follows this order. It was not, indeed, peculiar to the priests to pray and to ask pardon of God; but they prayed in the name of all the people. The reason must be well known to us; for God intended by these legal types to remind the Jews, that they could not offer prayers to him, except through some mediator; the people were unworthy to offer prayers by themselves. Hence the priest was, as it were, the middle person. The whole of this is to be referred to Christ; for by him we now pray; he is the Mediator who intercedes for us. The people stood then afar off, we now dare to come nigh to God; for the vail is rent, and through Christ we are all made priests. Hence, we are allowed in familiar way and in confidence to call God our Father: and yet without Christ's intercession, no access to God would be open to us. This then was the reason for the legal appointment. Hence the Prophet now says, Let the priests weep; not that he wished the people in the meantime to neglect their duty; but he expresses what had been prescribed by the law of God; that is, that the priests should offer supplications in the name of the people.

And he says, Between the court and the altar; for the people remained in the court, the priests themselves had a court by its side which they called the sacerdotal court; but the people's court was over against the sanctuary. Then the priest stood, as it were, in the middle between God, that is, the ark of the covenant, and the people: the people also were standing there. We now perceive that what the Prophet meant was, that the people had the priests as their mediators to offer prayers; and yet the confession of them all was public. He calls the priests the ministers of Jehovah, as we have before found. He thus designates their office; as though he had said, that they were not more worthy than the rest of the people, as though they excelled by their own virtue or merits; but that the Lord had conferred this honor on the tribe of Levi by choosing them to be his ministers. It was then on account of their office that they came nearer to God, and not for any merit in their own works.

He further adds, Spare, Lord, or be propitious to, thy people; and give not thy

heritage to reproach, that the Gentiles may rule over them. Here the Prophet leaves nothing to the priests, but to flee to God's mercy; as though he had said that now no plea remained for the people, and that they were greatly deceived if they pretended any excuse, and that their whole hope was in God's mercy. He afterwards shows the ground on which they were to seek and to hope for mercy; and he calls their attention to God's gratuitous covenant, Give not thy heritage for a reproach to the Gentiles. By these words he shows, that if the Jews depended on themselves, they were past recovery; for they had so often and in such various ways provoked God's wrath, that they could not hope for any pardon: they had also been so obstinate that the door as it were had been closed against them on account of their hardness. But the Prophet here reminds them, that as they had been freely chosen by God as his peculiar people, there remained for them a hope of deliverance, but that it ought not to have been sought in any other way. We now then understand the design of the Prophet, when he speaks of God's heritage; as though he had said, that the people could now undertake nothing to pacify God, had they not been God's heritage: Give not then thy heritage to reproach. He had in view the threatening, which he had before mentioned; for it was an extreme kind of vengeance, when the Lord determined to visit his people with utter destruction; after having worn them out and consumed them by famine and want, God resolved wholly to consume them by the sword of enemies. It is then to this vengeance that he now alludes when he says, That the Gentiles may not rule over them. It is therefore absurd, as many do, to connect with this the discourse concerning the locusts: such a thing is wholly inconsistent with the design of the Prophet. [14]

It is then added, Why should they say among the people, Where is their God? The Prophet now adduces another reason, by which the Jews might propitiate God, and that is, because his own glory is concerned: this reason has indeed an affinity to the former, for God could not expose his heritage to the reproaches of the Gentiles without subjecting also his holy name to their blasphemies. But the Prophet shows here more distinctly that God's glory would be subject to reproach among the nations, if he dealt with the people according to the full demands of justice; for the Gentiles would contemptuously deride him, as though he could not save his people. Hence in this second clause he reminds us, that when engaged in seeking pardon, we ought to place before our eyes The glory of God, that we ought not to seek our own salvation without remembering the holy name of God, which ought of right to be preferred to all other things. And at the same time he strengthens also the hope of the people, when he teaches that the glory of God is connected with the salvation of those who had sinned; as though he had said, ``God, that he may provide for his own glory, will have mercy on you.'' They must then have come more willingly to God's presences when they saw that their salvation was connected with the glory of

[14] Dr. Henderson, in his learned work on the Minor Prophets, lately published, agrees with Calvin in rejecting the interpretation alluded to here, though adopted by many learned men. He considers that the Assyrians, and not locusts, are described in the beginning of this chapter and that the Prophet "employs language borrowed from the appearance and movements of these insects, in order to make a deeper impression upon his hearers, whose minds were full of ideas derived from them as instruments of the calamity under which they were suffering." The locusts in the first chapter are spoken of as having already appeared; but the judgment detailed in this chapter is represented as future. — Ed.

God, and that they would be saved that the name of God might be preserved safe and free from blasphemies.

We now then perceive what the Prophet meant in this verse: he first strips the Jews of all confidence in works, showing that nothing remained for them except they fled to God's free mercy. He then shows that this mercy is folded on God's gratuitous covenant, because they were his heritage. In the third place, he shows that God would be merciful to them from a regard to his own glory, lest he should expose it to the reproaches of the Gentiles, if he exercised extreme severity towards his people. Let us now proceed ---

Joel 2:18-19

18. Then will the Lord be jealous for his land, and pity his people.

18. Et aemulatus est (aemulabitur, ad verbum) Jehova (hoc est, zelo ducetur Jehova) super terram suam, et propitius erit (et miserabitur, vel, parcet; nam {חמל} est parcere) populo suo.

19. Yea, the Lord will answer and say unto his people, Behold, I will send you corn, and wine, and oil, and ye shall be satisfied therewith: and I will no more make you a reproach among the heathen.

19. Et respondit Jehova (vel, respondebit) et dicit (vel, dicet) populo suo, Ecce ego mitto vobis triticum et mustum et oleum, et saturabimini eo (vel illis potius, est mutatio numeri,) et non dabo vos amplius opprobium inter Gentes.

The Prophet here again repeats, that prayers would not be in vain, provided the Jews truly humbled themselves before God. Then God, he says, will be jealous for his land and spare his people. He confirms what I have already said that God would deal mercifully with his people, because they were his heritage, that is because he had chosen them for himself. For the title of heritage, whence does it proceed except from the gratuitous covenant of God? for the Jews were not more excellent than others, but election was the only fountain from which the Jews had to draw any hope. We now then see why these words, God will be jealous for his land, are added; as though he said ``Though this land has been polluted by the wickedness of men, yet God has consecrated it to himself: He will, therefore, regard his own covenant, and thus turn away his face from looking on their sins.'' He will spare, he says, his people, that is, his chosen people: for, as I have said, the Prophet no doubt ascribes here the safety of the people, and the hope of their safety, to the gratuitous election of God; for the jealousy of God is nothing else but the vehemence and ardor of his paternal love. God could not, indeed, express how ardently he loves those whom he has chosen without borrowing, as it were, what belongs to men. For we know that passions appertain not to him; but he is set forth as a father, who burns with jealousy when he sees his son ill-treated; he acknowledges his own blood, his bowels are excited, --- or, as a husband, who, on seeing dishonor done to his wife, is moved; and though he had been a hundred times offended, he yet forgets every offense; for he regards that sacred union between himself and his wife. Such a character, then, does God assume, that he might the better express how much and how intensely he loves his own elect. Hence he says, God will be jealous for his land. As he has hitherto been inflamed with just wrath, so now a contrary feeling will overcome the

former; not that God is agitated by various passions, as I have already said, but this mode of speaking transferred from men, is adopted on account of our ignorance.

He afterwards says, God has answered [15] and said to his people, Behold, I will send to you corn, wine, and oil. The Prophet does not here recite what had been done, but, on the contrary, declares, that God in future would be reconciled to them; as though he said, ``I have hitherto been a herald of war, and bidden all to prepare themselves for the coming evil: but now I am a messenger to proclaim peace to you; if only you are resolved to turn to God, and to turn unfeignedly, I do now testify to you that God will be propitious to you; and as to your prayers know that they are already heard; that is, know that as soon as they were conceived, they were heard by the Lord.'' Hence he says, He has answered; that is ``If, moved by my exhortation, ye return with sincerity to God, he will meet you, nay, he has already met you; he waits not until ye have done all that ye ought to do; but when he bids you to come to his temple and to weep, he at the same time wipes off your tears, he removes every cause of sorrow and anxiety.'' God, then, has answered; that is, ``I am to you a certain and sufficient witness, that your prayers have been already accepted before God, though, as I have before reminded you, ye have not offered them.''

And, at the same time, he speaks of the effect, Behold, I will send to you corn, wine, and oil; and ye shall be satisfied. Here, by the effects, he proves that God would be propitious; for want of food was the first evidence of God's displeasure, to be followed by the destruction which the Prophet had threatened. What does he say now? God will restore to you abundance of corn, wine, and oil; and he says further, I will not give you to the Gentiles for a reproach that they may rule over you

We now then apprehend the meaning of the Prophet; for he not only promises that God would be placable but also declares that he was already placable; and this he confirms by external tokens; for God would immediately remove the sins of his wrath, and turn them into blessings. Hence he says, `He will give you abundance of corn, wine, and oil, so as fully to satisfy you.' As they had perceived that God was angry with them by the sterility of the land, and also by its produce being consumed by chafers, by locusts, and other animals or insects; so now the Lord would testify his love to them by the abounding fruitfulness of every thing. And then he joins another sentence, I will not give you any more for a reproach to the Gentiles. When he says, ``any more,'' he intimates that they had been before exposed to reproach; and we indeed know that they were then suffering many evils; but there remained that destruction of which we have heard. God does then here promise, that they should no more be subject to the reproaches of the Gentiles provided they repented; for the Prophet ever speaks conditionally. It now follows ---

Joel 2:20

20. But I will remove far off from you the northern army, and will drive him into a land barren and desolate, with his face toward the east sea, and his hinder part toward the utmost sea, and his stink shall come up, and his ill savour shall come up,

[15] There is no reason for rendering this in the past tense: it is in the same predicament with the verb, "will be jealous," in the former verse, and ought to be rendered like it in the future time, "will answer." The comment founded on this rendering, though true in itself, is yet too refined, and suits not this place. — Ed.

because he hath done great things.

20. Et Aquilonarem procul abigam a vobis, et disjiciam eum ad terram desertam et siccitatis: facies ejus ad mare orientale, et terminum ejus (disjiciam; ego enim {απο} {του} {κοινου} repeto) ad mare novissimum: et ascend et foetor ejus, et ascendet putredo ejus; quia magnificavit ad faciendum (hoc est, quia magnifice se extulit ad faciendum.)

In this verse he more fully confirms the Jews, that they might not be afraid of reproach from the Gentiles. It may have been that the Assyrians were now in readiness, prepared for war; it was then difficult to free the Jews from every fear. The Prophet had said generally that they would be no more subject to the mockeries of the Gentiles; but yet fear could not but be felt by them. ``We see the Assyrians already armed; and what can we expect but to be devoured by them? for we are not able to resist them.'' Anxiety then must have constantly tormented the Jews, had he not distinctly and in express words declared, ``It is in God's power to drive away the Assyrians, and to confound all their attempts.'' The Prophet, therefore, is now on this subject. The Northlander, [16] he says, will I remove far from you. The Chaldeans and the Assyrians, we know, were northward of Judea. He then means here by the North those enemies, whose preparations terrified the Jews. Hence he says, I will drive them from you, and drive them far into a land of desert and of drought [17] . By these words he intimates, that though furnished with the greatest forces, and gaping for the land of Judea, and ready in their cupidity to devour it, the Syrians would yet return home without effecting anything; I will cast them into a desert land. In vain, he says, they covet your abundance, and desire to satisfy themselves with the fertility of your land; for I will drive them and their dread away.

He then adds, His face to the east sea, and his rear to the hindmost sea; that is, I will scatter them here and there, so that his front shall be to one sea, (supposed to be the Salt Sea,) and his extremity to the hindermost sea, which was doubtless the Mediterranean: for the Salt Sea was east to the Jews, that is, it lies, as it is well known, towards the east. We now perceive in part what the Prophet means. But it must, at the same time, be added, that the Prophet removes fear from the Jews, which occupied their minds by observing the power of the Assyrians so great and extensive. ``What is to be done? though God is present with us, and protects us by his help, yet how will he resist the Assyrians, for that army will fill the land''. ``God will yet find means,'' says the Prophet; ``though the Assyrians should occupy the whole land, from the Salt or the East Sea to the Meridian or Mediterranean Sea, yet will God drive away this vast multitude: there is no reason then that ye should fear.'' Hence the Prophet has designedly set forth how terrible the Assyrian forces would be, that he might show that they could not be resisted, unless the Lord should

[16] Dr. Henderson agrees with Calvin in rendering this word, Northern or Highlander, and quotes Coverdale as rendering it, Him of the North. He considers this word as of "prime importance in the interpretation of this prophecy." Locusts visited Palestine not from the north, but from the south. "That, however," he adds, "which determines the question, is the addition of the patronymic {י to ,{צפון indicating that the North was not merely the quarter whence the subject of the discourse came, but that its native country lay to the North of Palestine; just as ,{התימני the Temanite, means the Southern, etc. --- Ed.

[17] Literally, "Into a land dry and desolate." — Ed.

disperse them and disappoint all their efforts. At last he adds, And his ill savor shall ascend: but I am not able to finish to-day.

Prayer.

Grant, Almighty God, that as we continue to excite thy wrath against us, and are so insensible, though thou exhortest us daily to repentance, --- O grant, that what thy Prophet teaches may penetrate into our hearts, and be like a sounding trumpet, that we may be really and sincerely made humble before thee, and be so touched with the sense of thy wrath, that we may learn to put off all the depraved affections of our flesh, and not merely to deplore the sins we have already committed: and do thou also look upon us in future, that we may diligently walk in thy fear, and consecrate ourselves wholly to thee; and as thou hast deigned to choose us for thine inheritance, and gather us under thy Christ, may we so live under him as our leader, until we be at length gathered into thy celestial kingdom to enjoy that happy rest, which thou hast promised to us, and which thou promisest also daily, and which has been purchased by the blood of the same, our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Lecture Forty-fourth

Yesterday the Prophet spake of the northern enemy, and said that it was in God's power to drive him far away, that he might not hurt the people, that his vast army would not prevent the dispersion of his power and enterprises. Now he adds this, which we could not finish yesterday, Ascend will his ill savor, and ascend will his rottenness; for highly has he borne or exalted himself to do his purpose The Prophet expresses here more than in the former sentence, and that is, that God would turn to reproach the whole power of the Assyrian. The reason he subjoins deserves to be noticed, `He has highly exalted himself in his doings,' which means, that he was elated with great pride, thinking he could do anything; therefore he says, `Ascend will his rottenness and ill savor.' This contains a very striking allusion; for when men deliberate about great things, it is the game as if they were to raise up themselves on high; and we also observe that hither tend their designs, who are engaged in difficult and arduous undertakings; for they are not content with their lots but try to climb above the clouds. Since then the design of all mortals is to rise aloft, when they seek for themselves more than what is just, the Prophet, deriding this folly, says, ``Ascend will the ill savor of the Assyrian, as a bad smell ascends from a putrid carcass. He thinks,'' he says, ``that he can do what he pleases, as though heaven and earth were under his control: his power, enterprises forces and splendor, shall not ascend; but his ill savor only shall ascend as from a dead carcass.'' Why so? ``He has mightily exalted himself,'' he says, ``to do his purpose.''

He now understand the design of the Prophet: and hence this useful instruction may be gathered, that God so checks the foolish confidence of those who pride themselves on their own strength, that he not only casts them down, but also turns their glory into shame, so that nothing ascends from them but ill savor and the smell of rottenness. Now follows what is of an opposite character: ---

Joel 2:21

21. Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice: for the Lord will do great things.

21. Ne timeas terra, exulta et laetare; quia magnifice extulit se Jehova ad facien-

dum.

Here he shows that God would have his turn to exalt himself, which the Assyrian presumptuously attempted to do. For God seems for a time to lie still, when he withholds himself, when he puts not forth his power, but waits to see the tendency of the insane conspiracies and the Satanic madness of those who rise up against him and his Church. But having for a time thus restrained himself, he at length comes forth; and this is what the Prophet means when he says, God has highly exalted himself to do his purpose. The Assyrian first attempted this; but now the Lord in his turn will raise up himself. God indeed could have done this before, but he would not; and we see this to be his usual mode of proceeding, to connive at the presumption of men, till the ripened time comes which he has predetermined; and then he dissipates in a moment their enterprises.

God, then, has now nobly exalted himself; therefore rejoice and exult, O Land. But he says first, Fear not, O Land; and then, Exult and rejoice For it was necessary, in the first place, to remove the fear with which the minds of all were now seized. The Prophet, then, begins with consolation; for the Jews could have hardly entertained any joy, except the fear that oppressed them was first shaken off. Hence the Prophet maintains due order by saying, ``Fear not, O Land, but rather exult and rejoice.'' He afterwards subjoins ---

Joel 2:22

22. Be not afraid, ye beasts of the field: for the pastures of the wilderness do spring, for the tree beareth her fruit, the fig tree and the vine do yield their strength.

22. Ne timeatis bestiae agri, quia germinarunt pascua deserti, quia arbor protulit fructum suum, ficulnea et vitis protulerunt virtutem (vel, substantiam) suam.

Here the Prophet turns his address to the beasts; not that his instruction suited them; but it was a more efficacious mode of speaking, when he invited the very beasts to a participation of the people's joy; for except the Jews had been made to know that God's wrath was now nigh at hand, no consolation which the Prophet has hitherto applied would have been of any weight with them. But now since they perceived that God's wrath did not only suspend over them, but extended much farther, even to the beasts, and since the Lord would have mercy on them, so that his blessing would be partaken in common by the beasts and brute animals, the address was far more impressive. We hence see that the Prophet, for the best reason, directed his discourse to the very beasts, though destitute of mind and discernment. For in addressing brute animals he addressed men with double force; that is, he impressed their minds more effectually, so that they might seriously confess how great was God's wrath, and also how great would be his blessing.

Beasts, he says, fear not. Then the beasts of the field ought to have dreaded the judgment of God which he had before denounced; for except God had been pacified to his people, the fire of his wrath would have consumed the whole land, trees and pastures; so all the beasts must have been famished. But now when God is reconciled to his people, his blessing will smile on the brute animals. What then is to be said of men? For God is properly propitious to them, and not to brute animals. We hence see that the fruit of reconciliation is made more evident, when it is in part

extended to the brute creation.

He therefore says, Fear not, ye beasts of the field: for the pastures of the desert will grow, the trees will bring forth their fruit. By these words the Prophet intimates, that had God's wrath toward his people been implacable, the sterility of the land would not have been improved. Now then whence came so sudden a change that the pastures grew, that the trees produced their fruits, both the fig-tree and the vine, except that God was pleased to bless the land, after having received men into favor? We now then apprehend the meaning of the Prophet, even this, --- that the land would be made by an angry God to execute his judgment, and that there would be no remedy for the barrenness of the land until men propitiated God. This is the sum of the whole. It now follows ---

Joel 2:23

23. Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month

23. Et filii Sion exultate, et gaudete in Jehova Deo vestro, quia dedit vobis pluviam ad justitiam (alii vertunt, doctorem justitiae; sed de eo paulo post dicemus) et descendere faciet vobis imbrem pluviam (vel, pluviam tempestivam, ut vertunt: dicemus etiam de hac voce) et pluviam in mense primo.

He now exhorts the Jews also to rejoice, but in a way different from that of the land and of the beasts. Rejoice, he says, in your God. For the beasts and the sheep, while rejoicing, cannot raise their thoughts higher than to their food: hence, the joy of brute animals, as they say, terminates in its object. But the Prophet sets forth God before the Jews as the ground of their joy. We then see how he distinguishes them from brute animals from the land and other elements; for he not only bids them to rejoice in meat and drink, in the abundance of provisions, but he also bids them to rejoice in the Lord their God; and he says no more, ``The land will yield its strength, or the vines and fig-trees, or the trees, will produce their fruit, and the pastures will grow;'' no, he speaks not now in this manner, but he says ``God himself will give you rain:'' for he had to do with men, endued with understanding, yea, with those very Jews who had been from their childhood taught in the law of God: he speaks, not only of the land, not only of bread and wine, but of the Giver himself.

He then reminds them of God's blessing, and declares that God would be so propitious to them as to pour down his grace upon them, and act the part of a father and a guardian towards them. God then, he says, will bring forth or give to you rain according to what is necessary. Some translate {המורה} emure a teacher; and the meaning of the word, we know, is doubtful. At the same time {מורה} mure is very often taken for rain, and sometimes generally, and sometimes for a particular kind of rain, as we shall presently see. Though then {מורה} mure signifies a teacher, yet the context here seems not to allow that sense. They who have thus taken it seem to have been led by this one reason, --- that it is absurd to set in the first place, and as it were on a higher grade, those fading blessings which belong only to the support and nourishment of the body. But this reason is very foolish; for the Prophets, we know, lead children as it were by initial principles to a higher doctrine. No wonder then that

the Prophet here affords them a taste of God's favor in blessings belonging to the body; he afterwards ascends higher, as we shall see: and this view is certainly what the context demands; for the Prophet says at last, ``I will hereafter pour my Spirit on all flesh,'' etc. In these words the Prophet commends the favor of God, which ought to be held as the most valuable: but he begins now with temporal benefits, that he might lead by degrees, and by various steps, a people, rude and weak, to something higher.

Then the word, teacher, by no means suits this place; and we must mark also what immediately follows. He introduces a word derived from {מורה} mure; he afterwards adds {מורה} mure the second time, which no doubt, means rain; all confess this, and confess it to be taken for rain in the same verse. When all agree then on this point, it seems somewhat strained to render it in the same verse a teacher and also rain; especially since we find that the Prophet's object is this, --- to make the people to recognize God's blessing in outward things. There is also another thing which has lead astray these interpreters. There follows immediately the word {לצדקה} latsadke, according to what is just. When they join together these word, {המורה} {לצדקה} emure latsadke, they ask, What is the rain of righteousness? They have hence thought that a teacher is here meant. But we know that {משפט} and {צדקה} meshapheth and tsadke are often taken in Scripture for a just measure, for equity. ``God then will not deal with you unequally as hitherto; but having been reconciled to you, he will reassume the part of a father, and will also observe towards you a legitimate order; for things have been on both sides in confusion, inasmuch as ye have been carrying on war against God, and your wickedness has subverted the whole order of nature. But now, God being pacified towards you, there will be on both sides an equable state of things, everything will be in a fitting condition; he will not deal with you any more in an irregular manner.'' We now then perceive the real meaning of the Prophets and see how frivolous are the reasons which influenced these interpreters, who have rendered the words, ``Teacher of righteousness.'' I do not love strained expositions.

Let us now return to the words of the Prophet: He will give to you, he says, rain according is what is fit; then he adds, He will make to descend on you showering rain, (using another word;) and he adds again the word {מורה} mure, which, no doubt, means rain, and no one denies this. But yet it seems that the word {גשם} geshem has here a specific meaning, and some think it to be a violent shower, occasioned by a storm or tempest; and yet we may gather from many parts of Scripture that the word means rain in general. Now {מורה} mure seems here to be taken for the rain of September, which the Greeks call {τξωιμον}, {προιμον}; and so they call {מלקוש} melkush {οψιμον}, opsimon, or the latter rain, as a common interpreter has rendered it. And the cultivated land, we know, needs these two rains, that is, after sowing, and when the fruit is ripening, --- after sowing, that the ground by receiving moisture may make the seed to grow; for it then wants moisture to nourish the roots. Hence, the rain of September or October, which is after sowing, is rightly called seasonable rain; and the Greeks, as I have already said, call it {πρωιμον} proimon; and James, following them, so calls it in James 5, `He will give you rain,' he says, `both of the first

time and the late rain,' that is, of the month of March. For in those warm climates the harvests we know, is earlier than with us. We here gather the corn in July but they gather it there in May. The fruit then ripens with them in March, when they need the late rain. And in Jeremiah 5 it appears quite evident, that {מורה} mure, as in this place, is called the rain, which comes down after sowing; for God says there, `I will give you,' etc., and first he uses the general word {גשם} geshem, and then he adds the two kinds of rain, which are also mentioned here; and afterwards he adds, `In their time,' that is, each rain in its time and season. --- Then {מורה} mure has its time, and {מלקוש} melkush also has its time; otherwise the words of the prophet would not be consistent.

We now see what the Prophet means. Of the word {מלקום} melkush we have said something in Hosea. Then the Prophet says now, that God would be so propitious to the Jews, as to neglect no means of testifying his favor towards them; for he would give them rain in the month of October and in the month of March, to fertilize the ground after sowing, and before the harvest or before the fruit came to maturity. Here then is promised to the Jews that the land would be made fertile by natural means. It now follows ---

Joel 2:24

24. And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the fats shall overflow with wine and oil.

24. Et implebuntur horrea frumento et resonabunt torcularia vino (musto, ad verbum: diximus de hac voce prius,) et oleo.

He goes on with the same subject in this verse, and shows the effects of rain; for when the earth is irrigated and satiated with sufficient moisture, it brings forth fruit, rich and plentiful. God then will cause that the rains shall not be useless, for the floors shall be full of wheat, and the fats shall overflow with wine as well as oil. He afterwards adds ---

Joel 2:25

25. And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpiller, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you.

25. Et reddam vobis annos (pro aliis annis, subaudiendum est) quibus comedit locusta, bruchus, eruca ({חסיל}, alii vertunt, rubiginem: sed dixi primo capite me non adeo solicitum esse de istis vocibus, quia etiam ignotae sunt hodie ipsis Judaeis; sed certum est esse insecta, quae corrumpunt omnes terrae fruges, ut tunc diximus,) exercitus meus magnus, quem miseram ad vos.

The Prophet confirms what he had previously said, and states what is of an opposite character, --- that God can as easily restore a rich fruitfulness to the land as he had before rendered it barren by sending devouring insects. I will give you years, (for the other years,) he says; and that the Jews might more fully understand that all this was in God's hand, he expressly declares that the cankerworms, the chafers, and the locusts [18] , were his army and as it were his hired army, whom he had employed as it seemed good to him. The spoilers, then, which had destroyed the whole

[18] There are four sorts mentioned in Hebrew as in the first chapter: one of them is omitted here and in the Latin text. — Ed.

produce of the land, were, as the Prophet declares, the messengers of God: it was not, he says, by chance that the locusts, or the cankerworms, or the chafers came; but God hired these soldiers, they were his forces and his army to distress the whole people; then famine and want consumed them. It is not then to no purpose that the Prophet mentions here that these destructive insects were God's army; it is to show more fully what is here promised; for God, who had by this army devoured the whole increase of the land, can now easily restore plenty for the barrenness of past years. Now, when any one lays down his arms, the land is afterwards cultivated, and brings forth its usual fruit: so the Lord also now shows, that the land had been barren, because he had sent forth his army, which laid waste its whole produce. But now, he says, when I shall restore you to favor, there will be no army to devour your fruit: the land then will nourish you, for there will be nothing to prevent you to receive its wonted produce.

Had not the Jews been made assured that the land had been sterile, because the locusts, and the chafers, and the cankerworms, were the army which the Lord had prepared they might have ever dreaded these spoilers: ``Surely the locusts will spring up, the chafers and the cankerworms will come, to devour all the fruit.'' The Prophet shows that this happened not by chance: ``Now then, when God shall be reconciled to you, the land will yield its increase, and nothing shall hinder you from enjoying its abundance.''

By calling this army great, he shows that God has no need of strong forces to subdue men; for when he prepares locusts and insects, which are but little things, they snatch food from the mouths of men and leave them in want; though no one puts forth a sword against them, they yet pine away with hunger. The Prophet then derides here the arrogance of men, and shows that God needs not do much, when he intends to reduce them to nothing. Let us now proceed ---

Joel 2:26

26. And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you: and my people shall never be ashamed.

26. Et comedetis comedendo et vos satiando, et laudabitis nomen Jehovae Dei vestri; quia egit vobiscum mirabiliter (ad miraculum,) et non pudefiet populus meus in perpetuum.

He now concludes what he has hitherto said of God's blessing. As the Jews were starving while God was offended, so he promises that when reconciled to him they should have abundance of produce from the land: Ye shall eat plentifully, he says, and satisfy yourselves. But he mentions also their gratitude; for it was an evidence of true repentance when they praised the name of God, whom they understood to be the giver of their abundance; for he had before proved that the land was under his power, when he consumed its whole substance, so that none of it came to supply the wants of man. Hence the Prophet exhorts them to give thanks, that they might thus declare that they from the heart repented. Ye shall then praise the name of Jehovah your God''. Why? ``Because he will deal with you wonderfully. He takes away here every plea for ignorance. We know how difficult it is to lead men to do this act

of religion, for which we yet confess that we were born; for what is more natural than to acknowledge God's bounty towards us, when we enjoy many blessings? But yet, though God in various ways stimulates us, he cannot draw from us genuine gratitude. This is the reason why the Prophet now says, ``God will deal with you wonderfully: though ye are stupid, God will yet by his power awaken you; for he will not deal with you in a common way.'' He then mentions something miraculous, that he might leave to the Jews no excuse, in case they considered not God's bounty and perceived not in this change, first, what they had deserved and then how merciful God had been to them: for this change could not have been ascribed to chance; nor was it a common thing, that when the Jews had been for four successive years nearly consumed with wants and when the enemy was at hand, they should see the land now fruitful, that they should see it freed from destructive insects, that they should be also at peace, and not disturbed by the dread of any foreign enemy. Since the Lord, then, would beyond hope give them a serene instead of a turbulent sky, should not such a wonderful change deeply affect them? This is what the Prophet now means, --- ``As the Lord will deal with you wonderfully, there will be no excuse for your torpidity, if ye will not be diligent in praising his name.''

Not ashamed, he says, shall my people be for ever. The Jews are here reminded by implication of their former disgrace; for they had been greatly confounded; though enemies touched them not, no, not even with their finger, they yet died through famine; an enemy was also prepared, as we have seen, to destroy them. They were therefore frightened with dread, and also perplexed with their own evils, by which God had almost worn them out. The Prophet says now, My people shall not be ashamed for ever, intimating that God would at length relieve his people from their evils, that they might not, as hitherto, be ashamed. He at last subjoins ---

Joel 2:27

27. And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the Lord your God, and none else: and my people shall never be ashamed.

27. Et cognoscetis, quia in medio Israel ego, et ego Jehova Deus vester, et nullus praeterea: et non pudefiet populus meus in seculum.

He repeats the same sentence; and in the beginning of the verse he unfolds what I have already said --- that the miracle would be such as to constrain the people to praise God. Ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel: and this was the case, because God showed not in an ordinary way his kindness to them, and especially because it had been foretold, and also because this reason had been adduced --- that God was mindful of his covenant. The manner, then, in which he dealt with them, and farther, the prediction itself, left to the people no pretext for ignorance. Hence the Prophet now says, `Ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel,' and still more, `that I am Jehovah your God.' By these words the Prophet reminds us, that the deliverance of the people from their evils was to be wholly ascribed to the gratuitous mercy of God; for we have already seen, that things would have been past hope, had not this consolation been added --- `Turn ye even now to me.' The Prophet therefore repeats, that there would be no other reason why God would deal so kindly with his people, and so mercifully spare them, but this --- that he dwelt in the midst of Israel:

but whence was this dwelling, except that God had gratuitously chosen this people? This indeed availed much to raise up the people; for how could they have hoped that God would be propitious to them, had they not been reminded of this truth that God was dwelling in the midst of them? Not because they were worthy, but because he deigned to come down to them.

He afterwards adds, And none else. By this sentence the Prophet more sharply stimulates them to return immediately to God; for if they deferred longer disappointment would be in delay. That the Jews, then, might not, after their usual manner, procrastinate, he says that there is no other God; and thus he shows that there was no remedy for their evils, except they sought to be reconciled to God. ``There is then no God besides me, and I dwell in the midst of thee.'' The Lord claims to himself every power, and then kindly invites the people to himself, and for this reason, --- because he dwells in the midst of them. That the people, then, might not form other expectations, God shows that all their hope was in him alone. He farther shows, that salvation was not to be sought afar off, provided the people had not forgotten the covenant, that God was dwelling in the midst of them. But a higher doctrine follows ---

Joel 2:28

28. And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:

28. Et accidet post sic (hoc est, postea,) effundam Spiritum meum super omnem carnem: et prophetabunt filii vestri et filiae vestrae: senes vestri somnia sommabunt: juvenes vestri (aut, viri electi) visiones videbunt.

We have explained why the Prophet began with earthly blessings. One may indeed think that this order is not regular; for Christ does not in vain remind us, that the kingdom of God ought to be first sought, and that other things shall be added in their place, (Matthew 6;) for food, and every thing that belongs to this frail life, are, as it were, additions to the spiritual life. But the Prophet designedly mentioned first the evidence of God's favor in outward benefits; for we see how slow the perceptions of men are, and how slothful they are in seeking spiritual life. As, then, men rise to things above with so much difficulty, the Prophet makes use of the best helps; and we must indeed be dealt with as we usually deal with children. For as there is not so much discernment in them as to be influenced by reasons, we set before them what is suitable to their weak and simple comprehension; so the Prophet did; for he showed first that God would be kind to the Jews in food for the body, and having used this as a help, he then added, Afterwards I will pour my Spirit upon all flesh.

By these words the Prophet reminds us, that people act absurdly when they are satisfied with vanishing things, when they ask of God nothing more excellent than to be pampered like brute animals; for in what do the children of God differ from asses and dogs, except they aspire after spiritual life? The Prophet, then, after having set before them lower things, as though they were children, now brings before them a more solid doctrine, (for thus they were to be led,) and affords them a taste of the favor of God in its external signs. ``Ascend, then, now,'' he says, ``to spiritual

life: for the fountain is one and the same; though when earthly benefits occupy and engross your attention, ye no doubt pollute them. But God feeds you, not to fill and pamper you; for he would not have you to be like brute animals. Then know that your bodies are fed, and that God gives support to you, that ye may aspire after spiritual life; for he leads you to this as by the hand; be this then your object.'' We now, then, understand why the Prophet did not at first speak of the spiritual grace of God; but he comes to it now. He began with temporal benefits, for it was needful that an untutored people should be thus led by degrees, that on account of their infirmity, sluggishness, and dullness, they might thus make better progress, until they understood that God would for this end be a Father to them.

Prayer.

Grant, Almighty God, that since we want so many aids while in this frail life, and as it is a shadowy life, we cannot pass a moment, except thou dost continually, and at all times, supply through thy bounty what is needful, --- O grant, that we may so profit by thy so many benefits, that we may learn to raise our minds upwards, and ever aspire after celestial life, to which by thy gospel thou invites us so kindly and sweetly every day, that being gathered into thy celestial kingdom, we may enjoy that perfect felicity, which has been procured for us by the blood of thy Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Lecture Forty-fifth

And it shall be, that I shall afterwards pour my Spirit upon all flesh, and prophesy shall your sons and your daughters and your old men shall dreams dream, and your young men shall visions see. We mentioned in our last lecture why the Prophet now at length speaks of the spiritual grace of God, having before spoken of earthly blessings. The order may seem indeed irregular; but it can be easily accounted for. The Prophet said first that God, being reconciled to the people, would openly manifest this by external proofs, by restoring abundance of wine and corn; for the almost wearing out of the people by famine and want, being the evidence of God's vengeance, the Prophet made the testimony of reconciliation to be in tokens of a contrary kind. But as the restoration of the Church consists not either in the fruitfulness of the land, or in the abundance of provisions, the Prophet now raises higher the thoughts of the godly, and makes them to look for the spiritual grace of God: hence he says, I shall afterwards pour my Spirit upon all flesh

The Prophet, no doubt, promises here something greater than what the fathers under the Law had experienced. The gift of the Spirit, we know, was enjoyed even by the ancients; but the Prophet promises not what the faithful had before found; but, as we have said, something greater: and this may easily be gathered from the word here used, ``pour out;'' for {שפך} shephek means not to distill, but to pour forth in great abundance; and God did not pour out his Holy Spirit so abundantly and so largely under the law as after the manifestation of Christ. Since, then, the gift of the Spirit was more copiously given to the Church after the advent of Christ, the Prophet uses here an unwonted expression --- that God would pour out his Spirit.

Another circumstance is added, upon all flesh. Though the Prophets, as we know, had formerly their colleges, yet they were but few in number. As then the gift of

prophecy was rare among the Jews, the Prophets in order to show that God would deal more bountifully to his new Church when restored, says, that he would pour out his Spirit upon all flesh. He then intimates that all in common would be partakers of the gift of the Spirit, and of its rich abundance, while under the law a few had but a sparing taste of it. We now then perceive the design of the Prophet; it was to make a manifest difference between the state of the ancient people and the state of the new Church, of the restoration of which he now speaks. The comparison is, that God would not only endow a few with his Spirit, but the whole mass of the people, and then that he would enrich his faithful with all kinds of gifts, so that the Spirit would seem to be poured forth in full abundance: I will then pour out my Spirit upon all flesh. We hence learn how absurdly the Greek interpreter has rendered this, ``I will pour out from my Spirit:'' for he diminishes this promise by saying, ``From my Spirit,'' as though God promised here some small portion of his Spirit; while, on the contrary the Prophet speaks of abundance, and intended to express it.

It follows, Prophesy shall your sons and your daughters. The Prophet now proceeds to explain what he had said, unfolding at large what he meant by the expression, ``upon all flesh,'' which was this, --- that the whole people would prophesy, or that the gift of prophecy would be common and prevail every where among all the Jews, in a new and unusual manner. The ancients had also Prophets though in number few; but now the Prophet extends this gift and favor to all orders: Prophesy then shall your sons and your daughters, he says, so that he does not exclude women.

He afterwards mentions two kinds of prophesying, Your old men shall dreams dream, and your young men shall visions see. ``Young men'' mean literally ``chosen,'' {בחורים} bechurim: but as in middle age strength prevails most in man, those who possess vigor and judgment, and as yet retain their strength, are called ``chosen:'' hence by ``chosen'' he means those of mature age. When God manifested himself to the Prophets, it was usually done, we know, by dreams and visions, as it is said in Numbers 12: this was, as we may say, the ordinary method. The Prophet now refers to these two modes of communication, and says, that the gift of prophecy would be common to men and women, to the old and those of middle age. We now perceive the import of this verse. There is then no difference between dreams and visions, only the Prophet mentions these two kinds, that readers might better understand, that what the Prophet had stated before generally would be common to all.

But I have already said that this prophecy must be referred to the advent of Christ; for we know that what is here described was not fulfilled until after Christ appeared in the world: and the Prophet now preaches of the new restoration of the Church, which we know, was suspended until the Gospel was proclaimed. Let us now then see whether God, after Christ was revealed, performed what he had spoken by his Prophet. Peter, in Acts 2, says, that this prophecy was fulfilled when the Spirit was sent. But it may be objected, that all were not endued with the gift of prophecy, even when God opened all the treasures of his grace; and Paul says that they were not all prophets even when the Church especially flourished; and experience proves the same. How then could Peter say, that this --- that God would pour out his Spirit upon

all flesh, was fulfilled? To give a reply to this is not difficult: let us only remember, that the Prophet speaks comparatively, as the Scripture is wont to do. He affirms not in express terms that all would be partakers of this gift, but that in comparison with the ancient Church, this gift would be as it were common, and that it was so is well known: for if any one compares the ancient Church with that abundance which God vouchsafed to his people after Christ's advent, he will certainly find true what I say --- that the Spirit of God, who was given only to few under the law, was poured out upon all flesh. True then is what the Prophet says, provided this contrast is to be understood --- that God was much more bountiful towards his new Church than formerly towards the fathers: for the Prophets then were not many, but they were many under the gospel.

We must also remember that the Prophet hyperbolically extols the grace of God; for such is our stupidity and dullness, that we can never sufficiently comprehend the grace of God, except it is set forth to us in hyperbolical language; nor is there indeed any excess in the thing itself, if we take a right view of it: but as we hardly understand the hundredth part of God's gifts, when he presents them before our eyes, it was needful to add a commendation, calculated to elevate our thoughts. The spirit of God is then constrained to speak hyperbolically on account of our torpidity or rather carelessness. We need not however to fear, lest our thoughts should go beyond the words; for when God would carry us above the heavens, we can hardly ascend two or three feet.

We now then perceive why the Prophet mentions all flesh without exception: first, there were more Prophets, as I have said, under the gospel than under the law; hence, the comparison is very suitable; --- and, secondly the Prophet speaks not here of the public office of teaching, for he calls those Prophets who had not been called to teach, but who were endued with so much of the light of truth, that they might be compared with the Prophets; and certainly the knowledge which flourished in the primitive Church was such, that the meanest were in many respects equal to the ancient Prophets; for what did God confer on the ancient Prophets except the power of foretelling something to come? It was a special gift, and very limited. Besides these predictions are hardly worthy to be compared with the celestial wisdom made known in the gospel. Faith then after the coming of Christ, if rightly estimated according to its value, far excels the gift of prophecy. And so the Prophet here, not without reason, dignifies with so honorable name those who were private men, and to whom was not intrusted the office of teaching among the people, but who were only illuminated; for their light was much superior to the gift of prophecy in many of those who lived under the law. We now understand what the Prophet means when he makes the Spirit of God to be common, without distinction, to all the godly, so that they possess what excels the gift of prophesying.

Now as to the two kinds of gifts mentioned here, it must be observed, that the Prophet spoke according to what was commonly known among the people: for as the Jews were accustomed to dreams and visions, the Prophet therefore made use of these terms; and this manner of speaking occurs often in the Prophets, and it ought to be borne in mind by us. When they speak of the worship of God, they mention

sacrifices, `They shall come and bring frankincense and gold; they shall lead camels laden with the wealth of the land.' In short, in their prophecies they raise altars and build a temple: and yet no such things were seen after Christ appeared: for the Gentiles came not to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices; nay, shortly after the temple was destroyed, there was no altar among them, and the whole legal worship ceased. What then is to be understood by such expressions, as --- that people shall come from all places to sacrifice together? Even this --- They set forth under a visible form the spiritual worship of God. It is so in this place; as it was the usual way among the ancients that God manifested himself by dreams and visions to the Prophets, so he says, your old men shall dreams dream, and your young men shall visions see: but the Prophet no doubt sets forth under these forms of speech that light of knowledge in which the new Church excelled after Christ appeared: he indeed compares the light of faith to prophecy, as we have already stated; but he accommodates his manner of speaking or his discourse to the comprehension of his people, for he knew whom he addressed. All the Prophets have followed the same rule; `There shall be offered a sacrifice,' says Malachi, `from the rising to the setting of the sun.' What is this sacrifice? The Papists take this for the mass; ``Then under the kingdom of Christ there is to be some sacrifice; and we do not now offer to God sheep and calves; it therefore follows, that there is to be the sacrifice of bread and wine:'' and this is said, as though the Prophet had thus refinedly philosophized on the word, sacrifice, while he was teaching a rude people according to what they could bear. But what he meant was, that the worship of God would be universal among all nations. The same thing is intended by Joel when he says, I shall pour forth my Spirit upon all flesh: your old men shall dreams dream, and your young men shall visions see. We now see the whole meaning of the Prophet. Now it follows ---

Joel 2:29

29. And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.

29. Atque etiam super servoset super ancillas in diebus illis effundam Spiritum meam.

As the particle {גם} gam amplifies in Hebrew, it seems singular that the Prophet now limits to a few a gift common to all; for he had previously said, ``Upon all flesh will I pour out my Spirit;'' and now, ``Upon servants and handmaids;'' and he puts down ``Also''. If he had simply said ``Upon servants and handmaids will I pour out my Spirit,'' there would have been no inconsistency, for it would have been the explanation of his former statement; for we know that what the Prophet says of all men must be taken with exception, inasmuch as many who were unbelievers were without this gift, and even those who before excelled in some sort of divine knowledge; we indeed know that the Jews were blinded, and we also know that not all among the common people were partakers of this excellent gift. There is no doubt, therefore, but that this which is said of ``all flesh,'' must be limited to the Church. It would not, then, have appeared strange, had the Prophet now added, ``Upon servants and handmaids;'' but the particles {וגם} ugam, ``And also,'' create difficulty: it is a way of speaking to enlarge on what has been said, but here it seems not to enlarge; for

to pour out the Spirit upon all the people, is more than to pour it out on servants and handmaids. The solution is twofold: the particles {וגם} ugam are sometimes to be taken confirmatively. `I have blessed him,' said Isaac of his son Jacob, `and also blessed shall he be.' So in this place we may take the words of the Prophet to be, yea surely, being a repetition serving to confirm what had been said: but I prefer another sense; for the Prophet, I doubt not, meant here to add something more incredible than what he had previously said, ``Upon servants and maid-servants will I pour out my Spirit,'' that is, even upon those who were before Prophets; for they shall be enriched with a new gift, and shall gain increasing knowledge after the restoration of the Church, which is now approaching. We apprehend this to be the meaning of the Prophet. He had promised the grace of the Spirit to the whole body of the faithful, which appears, as I have said, from comparing the ancient state with our own: but now, after having spoken of the mass or the common people, he comes to the Prophets, who were superior to others who before performed the office of teaching, who attained rank and degree in the Church; these also shall gain accessions; that is, ``My Spirit shall not only be conspicuous in the ignorant and the common people, but also in the Prophets themselves.''

Surely it is a greater thing when they are taught who were before superior to others, and whom the Lord had set over the Church, and when they appear as new men, after having received a gift which the Lord had not previously conferred on them. When, therefore, new light appears in such men, it is certainly a greater thing than when the Spirit is poured out on the common people. We now then see the Prophet's meaning as to the servants and the handmaids. [19]

He then repeats, In those days, intimating that so sudden and incredible the change will be, that Prophets will seem to have been before untaught men; for a much more excellent doctrine shall be given them. Then God shall so pour out his Spirits that all the ancient prophecies will appear obscure and of no value, compared with the great and extraordinary light which Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, will bring at his rising. And he mentions ``handmaids'', for there were, we know, Prophetesses under the Law. Let us now go on ---

Joel 2:30-31

30. And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke.

30. Et ponam (statuam) prodigia in coelis et terra, sanguinem et ignem et columnas nubis.

31. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the

[19] However true in itself is what is here advanced, yet the exposition seems rather too refined, and what the passage does not require. The difficulty stated will vanish, when we consider that “all flesh” is a general expression, afterwards particularized and limited: and “and all flesh,” according to what is subsequently specified, evidently means all conditions of men, men in all states and of every age, and not the whole of mankind. “And also,” in verse 29, is very emphatical, as the persons afterwards mentioned were of the lowest grade, “servants and handmaids,” that is, slaves: and such were many of the first converts to Christianity. See Galatians 3:28; Colossians 3:11. Though the word for ‘servants’ does not necessarily mean those in a servile condition, yet it has that meaning. The same is true of the word for handmaids. Hagar, expressly called a bondwoman by Paul, is called by this name, Genesis 16:1. And to view the words as signifying slaves, would make the prophecy more striking, as being literally fulfilled at the first promulgation of the Gospel.

great and the terrible day of the Lord come.

31. Sol vertetur in tenebras et luna in sanguinem, antequam veniat dies Jehovae magnus et terribilis.

The Prophet seems here to contradict himself; for he had hitherto promised that God would deal kindly and bountifully with his people; and every thing he has said tended to elevate the spirits of the people and fill them with joy: but now he seems again to threaten them with God's wrath and to strike miserable men with fear; who had not as yet a breathing time; for at the time the Prophet spoke, the Jews, we know, were in the greatest sorrow. What then is his purpose in adding a new cause of grief, as though they had not sorrow and lamentation enough? But it is rather an admonition than a threatening. The Prophet warns them of what would be, lest the faithful should promise themselves some happy condition in this world, and an exemption from all cares and troubles; for we know how prone men are to self-indulgence. When God promises any thing, they flatter themselves and harbor vain thoughts, as though they were beyond the reach of harm, and free from every grief and every evil. Such indulgence the flesh contrives for itself. Hence the Prophet reminds us, that though God would bountifully feed his Church, supply his people with food, and testify by external tokens his paternal love, and though also he would pour out his Spirit, (a token far more remarkable,) yet the faithful would continue to be distressed with many troubles; for God designs not to deal too delicately with his Church on earth; but when he gives tokens of his kindness he at the same time mingles some exercises for patience, lest the faithful should become self-indulgent or sleep on earthly blessings, but that they may ever seek higher things.

We now then understand the Prophet's design: he intends not to threaten the faithful, but rather to warn them, lest they should deceive themselves with empty dreams, or expect what is never to be, that is, to enjoy a happy rest in this world. Besides, the Prophet regards also another thing: we know indeed that men are hardly led to seek the grace of God, except when they are, as it were, forcibly drawn; hence spiritual life is neglected, and whatever belongs to the celestial kingdom, when we have all kinds of supplies on earth. The Prophet then commends here the spiritual grace of which he speaks, for this reason, --- that the condition of men would be miserable, were not the Lord to exhilarate their minds and refresh them with the comfort which we have already noticed. --- How so? There will be prodigies in heaven and on earth, the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, and all things shall be in disorder and in horrible darkness. What then would become of men, were not God to shine on them by the grace of his Spirit, to support them under such a confusion in heaven and on earth, and to show himself to be their Father?

We then see that this was added for the fuller commendation of God's grace, that men might know, that they would be much more miserable if God called them not to himself by the shining light of his Spirit. And that this was the Prophet's design, we may learn from the discourse of Christ, which he made to his disciples a short time before his death. They asked what would be the sign of his coming, when he reminded them of the destruction of the temple, (Matthew 24:3-25:46). They thought that he would immediately accomplish that triumph of which they had heard,

that they would be made participators of that eternal beatitude of which Christ had so often spoken to them. Christ then warned them not to be deluded with so gross a notion. He spoke of the destruction of Jerusalem, and then declared that all these things would be only the presages of evils --- ``These,'' he says, ``shall be only the preludes; for tumults will arise, wars shall be, and all places will be full of calamities; in a word, there will be an immense mass of all evils.'' As Christ then corrected the mistake, with which the minds of the disciples were imbued, so the Prophet here checks vain imaginations, lest the faithful should think that Christ's kingdom would be earthly, and fix their minds on corn and wine, on pleasures and quietness, on the conveniences of the present life: I will give you, he says, prodigies in heaven and on earth blood, fire, and dark clouds; the sun all be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before it shall come --- the day of Jehovah, great and terrible

We now see why the Prophet adds here this sad catalogue, and how well these things harmonize together, --- that God would testify his paternal love by the manifestation of Christ, --- and that he would exhibit tokens of his wrath, which would fill the whole world with anxiety and fear.

What he says of blood and darkness is, no doubt, to be taken metaphorically for a disordered state of things; for we know that calamities are often compared to obscurity and darkness. It is the same as though he said, ``So great will be the succession of evils, that the whole order of nature will seem to be subverted that the very elements will put on a new form; the sun, which illuminates the earth, will be turned into darkness, the moon into blood; the calamities which shall come will take away every token of God's kindness. Then nothing will remain, but that men, sunk, as it were, in the deepest abyss of all evils, will seek some spark of grace from God and never find it; for heaven will be dark, the earth will be covered with thick darkness.'' We then see that the Prophet does not express what would be, word for word, nor is he to be understood as speaking, as they say, literally, but he uses a figurative mode of speaking, by which he sets forth such a dreadful state of things, that the very elements would put on a new appearance; for the sun would not any more perform its office, and the moon would refuse its light to the earth. As God, then, would take away all tokens of his favor, so the Prophet, by blood, by darkness and by dark clouds, sets forth metaphorically that sorrows by which the minds of men would necessarily be possessed.

Now if any one asks, why by the coming of Christ was God's wrath more stirred up against men? for this may seem to be without reason. To this I answer, that it was, as it were accidental: for if Christ had been received as he ought to have been, if all embraced him with due reverence, he would have certainly been the giver, not only of spiritual grace, but also of earthly happiness. The felicity of all, then, would have in every respect been made complete by the coming of Christ, had not their wickedness and ingratitude kindled up anew the wrath of God; and we see what a flood of evils burst forth immediately after the preaching of the gospel. Now when we consider how severely God afflicted his people formerly, we cannot but say that much heavier have been the calamities inflicted on the world since the manifestation of Christ, --- whence this? Even because the world's ingratitude had arrived to its

highest point, as indeed it is at this day: for the light of the gospel has gone forth again, and God has exhibited himself to the world as a Father, and we see how great is the wickedness and perversity of men in rejecting the gifts of God; we see some contemptuously rejecting the Gospel, and others impelled by satanic fury to resist the doctrine of Christ; we see them making a boast of their blasphemies, and we see them kindled with cruel rage and breathing slaughters against the children of God; we see the world full of ungodly men and of the despisers of God; we see an awful contempt of God's grace prevailing everywhere: we see such an unbridled licentiousness in wickedness, that it ought to make us ashamed of ourselves and weary of our life. Since, then, the world is so ungrateful for such a favor, is it a wonder that God should show more dreadful tokens of his vengeance? For certainly at this day, when we closely examine the condition of the world, we find that all are miserable, and even those who applaud themselves, and whom the world admire as semigods. How can it be otherwise? The common people, doubtless, groan under their miseries, and that because God thus punishes the contempt of his grace, which he has again offered to us, and which is so unworthily rejected. Inasmuch, then, as so base an ingratitude on the part of men has provoked God's wrath, it is no wonder that the sound of his scourges is everywhere heard: for the servant who knows his lord's will and does it not, is worthy, as Christ declares, of heavier stripes, (Luke 12.) And what happens through the whole world is, that after God has shone by his gospel, after Christ has everywhere proclaimed reconciliation, they now openly fall away, and show that they prefer having God angry than propitious to them: for when the gospel is rejected, what else is it but to declare war against God, and to scorn and not to receive the reconciliation which God is ready to give, and of which he treats of his own accord with men?

It is then no wonder that the Prophet says here, that the world would be full of darkness after the appearance of Christ, who is the Sun of Righteousness, and who has shone upon us with his salvation: but it was, as it were, accidental, that God exhibited himself with so much severity to the world, when yet it was the acceptable time, when it was the day of salvation and of good-will; for the world suffered not that to be fulfilled which God had promised to us by the Prophet Joel, nor received the Spirit of adoption, when they might have safely fled to God; nay, when God was ready to cherish them in his own bosom. But since they were refractory and untractable, it was necessary for God to visit such perverseness in an unusual manner. It is no wonder then that the Prophet says, that in those days there shall be prodigies in heaven and on earth, for the sun shall be turned into darkness, etc., before it shall come --- the day of Jehovah, great and terrible

It may be asked what day the Prophet refers to: for he has hitherto spoken of the first coming of Christ; and there seems to be some inconsistency in this place. I answer, that the Prophet includes the whole kingdom of Christ, from the beginning to the end; and this is well understood, and in other places we have stated that the Prophets common speak in this manner: for when the discourse is concerning Christ's kingdom, they sometimes refer to its commencement only, and sometimes they speak of its termination; but they often mark out by one delineation the whole course

of the kingdom of Christ, from its beginning to its end; and such is the case here. The Prophet, by saying, `After those days I will pour out my Spirit,' no doubt meant that this, as we have explained, would be fulfilled when Christ should commence his kingdom, and make it known through the teaching of the gospel: Christ poured out then his Spirit. But as the kingdom of Christ is not for a few days, or for a short time, but continues its course to the end of the word, the Prophet turns his attention to that day or that time, and says, ``There shall, in the meanwhile, be the greatest calamities: and whosoever shall not flee to the grace of God shall be very miserable; they shall never find rest nor comfort, nor the light of life, for the world shall be sunk in darkness; and God shall take away from the sun, the moon, the elements, and all other aids, the tokens of his favor; and he will show himself everywhere to be angry and offended with men.'' The Prophet further shows, that these evils of which he speaks would not be for a few days or a few years, but perpetual; `Before,' he says, `the day of Jehovah, great and terrible, shall come.' In short, he means that all the scourges of God, which he had hitherto mentioned, would be, as it were, preparations to subdue the hearts of men, that they might with reverence and submission receive Christ. As, therefore, men carry by nature a high spirit, and cannot bend their neck to recede the yoke of Christ, hence the Prophet says here that they were to be subdued by severe scourges, when God would remove all evidences of his love, and fill heaven and earth with dread. Thus, then, he would in a manner change the hardness and contumacy which is innate in men, that they might know that they had to do with God. And, at the same time, the Prophet reminds them, that unless they were amended by these scourges, something more dreadful remained for them, --- the Judge would at last come from heaven, not only to clothe the sun and moon in darkness, but to turn life into death. It would, indeed, be far better for the reprobate to die a hundred times than always to live and thus to sustain eternal death in life itself.

The Prophet then means, that men persisting in their obstinacy shall meet with something more grievous and more ruinous than the evils of this life, for they must all at last stand before the tribunal of the celestial Judge: for the day of Jehovah, great and terrible, will come. He refers, in this sentence, to unbelievers and rebels against God; for when Christ shall come, he will be a Redeemer to the godly; no day in their whole life will shine on them so pleasantly; so far will this day be from bringing terror and fear to them, that they are bidden, while expecting it, to lift up their heads, which is a token of cheerfulness and joy. But as the Prophet Joel's object was to humble the confident pride of the flesh, and as he addressed the refractory and the rebellious, it is no wonder that he sets before them what is terrific and dreadful.

Prayer.

Grant, Almighty God, that as we are now surrounded on every side by so many miseries, and as our condition is such, that amidst groans and continual sorrows, our life could be hardly sustained without being supported by spiritual grace, --- O grant, that we may learn to look on the face of thine Anointed, and seek comfort from him, and such a comfort as may not engross our minds, or at least not retain us in the world, but raise our thoughts to heaven, and daily sell to our hearts the

testimony of our adoption, and that though many evils must be borne by us in this world, we may yet continue to pursue our course, and to fight and to strive with invincible perseverance, until having at length finished all our struggles, we reach that blessed rest, which has been obtained for us by the blood of thy only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Lecture Forty-sixth

Joel 2:32

32. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call.

32. Et erit, quisquis invocaverit nomen Jehovae liberabitur: quia in monte Sion et in Jerusalem erit evasio, sicuti promisit Jehova, et in residuis quos Jehova vocaverit.

We said yesterday that the Prophet denounced future calamities, that he might thus stimulate men, distressed by many evils, to seek God: we indeed know how tardy we are by nature, except the Lord goads us continually. The subject, then, on which we discoursed yesterday tended to show, that as so many and so grievous calamities would press on the Jews, all would be miserable who fled not to God, and that this consolation only would remain to them in their extreme evils: but now the Prophet seasonably adds, Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered. Having then stimulated men to seek God, he now gives them firm assurance of being saved, provided they in sincerity and from the heart fled to God.

This is indeed a remarkable passage, for God declares that the invocation of his name in a despairing condition is a sure port of safety. What the Prophet had said was certainly dreadful, --- that the whole order of nature would be so changed, that no spark of light would appear, and that all places would be filled with darkness. What, therefore, he says now is the same as though he declared, that if men called on the name of God, life would be found in the grave. They who seem to be even in despair, and from whom God seems to have taken away every hope of grace, provided they call on the name of God, will be saved, as the Prophet declares, though they be in so great a despair, and in so deep an abyss. This circumstance ought to be carefully noticed; for if any one takes this sentence of the Prophet by itself, though then it would not be frigid, it would not yet be so striking; but when these two things are joined together, --- that God will be the judge of the world, who will not spare the wickedness of men, but will execute dreadful vengeance, --- and that yet salvation will be given to all who will call on the name of the Lord, we see how efficacious the promise is; for God offers life to us in death, and light in the darkest grave.

There is, therefore, great importance in the expression, {והיה} ueie, `Then it shall be;' for the copulative is to be regarded as an adverb of time, `Then whosoever shall invoke the name of the Lord,' etc. And he uses the word ``deliver;'' for it was needful to show that the saved differ nothing from the lost. Had the Prophet used the word ``preserve,'' he would have spoken less distinctly; but now when he promises deliverance, he bids us to set up this shield against trials even the heaviest; for God possesses power sufficiently great to deliver us, provided only we call on him.

We now then understand what the Prophet had in view: He shows that God would

have us to call on him not only in prosperity, but also in the extreme state of despair. It is the same as though God had called to himself the dead, and declared that it was in his power to restore life to them and bring them out of the grave. Since then God invites here the lost and the dead, there is no reason why even the heaviest distresses should preclude an access for us or for our prayers; for we ought to break through all these obstacles. The more grievous, then, our troubles are, the more confidence we ought to entertain; for God offers his grace, not only to the miserable, but also to those in utter despair. The Prophet did not threaten a common evil to the Jews, but declared that by the coming of Christ all things would be full of horror: after this denunciation he now subjoins, `Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered.'

But as Paul cites this place in Romans 10, and extends it to the Gentiles, we must inquire in what sense he takes the testimony of the Prophet. Paul means to prove that adoption was common to the Gentiles, that it was lawful for them to flee to God, and familiarly to invoke him as a Father: `Whosoever,' he says, `shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.' He hence proves that the Gospel ought to have been preached even to the Gentiles, as invocation arises from faith: for except God shines on us by his word, we cannot come to him; faith, then, is ever the mother of prayer. Paul seems to lay stress on the universal particle, Whosoever; as though he said, that Joel did not speak of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles, that he testified that God would indiscriminately, and without exception, receive all who would seek him. But Paul appears to misapply the Prophet's words; for Joel no doubt addresses here the people, to whom he was appointed as a teacher and prophet. What Paul then applies generally to all mankind seems not to have been so intended by the Prophet. But to this there is an easy answer; for the Prophets after having spoken of the kingdom of Christ, had no doubt this truth in view, that the blessing in the seed of Abraham had been promised to all nations; and when he afterwards described the miserable state in which the whole world would be, he certainly meant to rouse even the Gentiles, who had been aliens from the Church, to seek God in common with his elect people: the promise, then, which immediately follows, is also addressed to the Gentiles, otherwise there would be no consistency in the discourse of the Prophet. We therefore see that Paul most fitly accommodates this place to his subject: for the main thing to be held is this, that the blessing in Christ was promised not only to the children of Abraham but also to all the Gentiles. When, therefore, the Prophet describes the kingdom of Christ, it is no wonder that he addresses the Jews and Gentiles in common: and then, what he said of the state of the world, that it would be full of horrible darkness, undoubtedly refers, not to the Jews only, but also to the Gentiles. Why was this done, except to show that nothing else remains for them but to flee to God? We then see that an access is here opened to the Gentiles that they may with one consent call on God together with the Jews.

If there is promised salvation and deliverance to all who shall call on the name of the Lord, it follows as Paul reasons that the doctrine of the Gospel belongs to the Gentiles also; for their mouths must have otherwise been closed, yea, and the mouths of us all: had not God himself anticipated us by his word, and exhorted us

to pray, we must have been dumb. It would have been a great presumption in us to present ourselves before God, except he had given us confidence and promised to hear us. If then the liberty of praying is common to all, it follows that the doctrine of salvation is common to all. We must now also add, that as deliverance is promised to all who shall call on the name of God, his own power is taken from God, when salvation is sought in any other but in him alone: and we know that this is an offering which he claims exclusively for himself. If, then, we desire to be delivered, the only remedy is, to call on the name of Jehovah.

He afterwards adds, For in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as Jehovah has promised. The Prophet here intimates, that though the people might seem apparently to have been destroyed, yet God would be mindful of his covenant so as to gather the remnant. Such, indeed, was the slaughter of the people, that no hope whatever, according to the flesh, remained; for they were scattered through various parts of the world; there was no social body, no distinct nation, no civil government, no worship of God. Who, then, could have thought that the Church of God would survive? Nay, the probability was, that after thirty or fifty years, the name of Abraham and of his seed would have become wholly extinct; for they had joined in one body with the Chaldees and the Assyrians. That scattering then was, as it were, the death of the whole nation. But God, by Joel, declares here, that there would yet be deliverance in mount Zion and in Jerusalem; that is, ``Though I shall for a time exterminate this people, that the land may remain desolate, there shall yet be a restoration, and I will again gather a certain body, a Church, on mount Zion and in Jerusalem.'' This is the substance.

We learn from this place, that however much God may afflict his Church, it will yet be perpetuated in the world; for it can no more be destroyed than the very truth of God, which is eternal and immutable. God indeed promises, not only that the state of the Church shall be perpetual, but that there will be, as long as the sun and moon shall shine in heaven, some people on earth to call on his name. Since it is so, it follows, that the Church cannot be utterly subverted or wholly perish, however severely and heavily the Lord may chastise it. However great then the scattering of the Church may be, the Lord will yet gather members, that there may be a people on earth to show, that he who is in heaven is true and faithful to his promises. And this truth deserves a careful attention; for when we see the Church scattered, immediately this doubt creeps into our minds, ``Does God intend wholly to destroy all his people, --- does he mean to exterminate all the seed of the faithful?'' Then let this passage be remembered, ``In mount Zion there will be deliverance,'' after the Lord shall have punished the profane despisers of his name, who abused his patience, and falsely professed his name.

But he adds, As Jehovah has promised, which serves for confirmation; for the Prophet bids us here to regard God rather than our own state. When indeed we believe our eyes, we cannot but think sometimes that it is all over with the Church; for when God inflicts heavy punishment on his servants, there seems to us no remedy; and when we believe the diseases of the Church to be incurable, our hearts immediately fail us, except God's promise comes to our minds. Hence the Prophet recalls

our thoughts to God, as though he had said, ``Judge not of the safety of the Church by sight, but stand and rely on the word of God: he has spoken, he has said, that the Church shall be perpetual.'' Let us plant our foot on this promise, and never doubt but that the Lord will perform what he has declared.

But it is subjoined by the Prophet as a sort of correction, And in the remnant whom Jehovah shall call: and it was necessary to state this distinctly, lest hypocrites, as they usually do, abuse what had been said. They who occupy high stations in the Church, and pass in name for the children of God, swell, we know, with great confidences and boldly trifle with God; for they think that he is bound to them, when they make a show either of external badges or of profession, in which they glory before men: they think this display sufficient. We may indeed gather from many parts of Scripture, that the Jews were inflated with this false presumption of the flesh, that they imagined God to be bound to them. Hence the Prophet shows, that he did not address all the Jews indiscriminately, because many of them were spurious children of Abraham, and had become degenerated. If then under this pretense alone they wished to lay hold on the promise of salvation, the Prophet shows that they were excluded from the Church of God, since they were not legitimate children, after having departed from the faith and piety of their father Abraham. He therefore mentions remnant: and by this word be means, in short, that the whole multitude could not be saved, but only a small number.

When therefore we speak of the salvation of the Church, we ought not to gather into one bundle all who profess themselves to be the children of God; for we see that hardly one in a hundred worship God in truth and without hypocrisy, for the greater part abuse his name. We see, at this day, how dishonest is the boasting of the Papists; for they think that the Church of God dwells among them, and they scorn us because we are few. When we say that the Church of God is to be known by the word and the pure administration of the sacraments, ``Indeed,'' they say, ``could God have forsaken so many people among whom the gospel has been preached?'' They think that after Christ has been once made known, his grace remains fixed, and cannot by any means be taken away whatever may be the impiety of men. Since then the Papists so shamefully lay claim to the name of Church, because they are many in number, it is no wonder that the Prophet, who had the same contest with the Jews and Israelites, had here expressly mentioned a remnant; as though he said, ``In vain do the ungodly boast of God's name, since he regards them not as his people.'' The same truth we observe in Psalm 15, and in Psalm 24; where the citizens of the Church are described; they are not those who pride themselves on external symbols, but who worship God with a sincere heart, and deal honestly with their neighbors; such dwell on the mountain of God. It was not a difficult thing for hypocrites to thrust themselves into the sanctuary, and to present there their sacrifices to God; but the Prophet shows that none are owned by God, but those who have a sincere heart and pure hands. So also in this place Joel says, that this Church indeed would be saved, but not the vast multitude, --- who then? the remnant only.

But the clause which follows must be noticed, Whom Jehovah shall call. We have already seen that the Church of God consists often of a very small number; for God

counts not any his children, but those who devote themselves sincerely and from the heart to his service, as Paul says `Whosoever calls on the name of God, let him depart from iniquity;' and many such are not found in the world.

But it is not enough to hold, that the Church of God is only in the remnant; it must be also added that the remnant abide in God's Church for no other reason but that the Lord has called them. Whence then is it that there is a portion in the Church, which shall remain safe, while the whole world seems to be doomed to destruction? It is from the calling of God. And there is no doubt but that the Prophet means by the word, call, gratuitous election. The Lord is indeed often said to call men, when he invites them by the voice of his gospel; but there is what surpasses that, a hidden call, when God destines for himself those whom he purposes to save. There is then an inward call, which dwells in the secret counsel of God; and then follows the call, by which he makes us really the partakers of his adoption. Now the Prophet means, that those who will be the remnant shall not stand by their own power, but because they have been called from above, that is, elected. But that the election of God is not to be separated from the outward call, I allow; and yet this order ought to be maintained, that God, before he testifies his election to men, adopts them first to himself in his own secret counsel. The meaning is, that calling is here opposed to all human merits, and also to virtue and human efforts; as though he said, ``Men attain not this for themselves, that they continue a remnant and are safe, when God visits the sins of the world; but they are preserved by his grace alone, because they have been chosen.'' Paul also speaks of the remnant in Romans 11, and wisely considers that passage, `I have kept for myself seven thousand.' [1 Kings 19:18.]

It is then God's peculiar province to keep those who fail not: and hence Paul says that they are the remnant of grace; for if God's mercy were taken away, there would be no remnant among the whole human race. All, we indeed know, are worthy of death, without any difference: it is therefore the election of God alone which makes the difference between some and others. Thus we see that the gratuitous goodness of God is extolled by the Prophet, when he says that a remnant shall be saved, who shall be called by the Lord: for it is not in the power of men to keep themselves unless they are elected; and the gratuitous goodness of God is the security as it were of their salvation. Now follows ---

Chapter 3

Joel 3

J

Joel 3:1-3

1. For, behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem,

1. Quia ecce, diebus illis et tempore illo, quo convertam captivitatem Jehudah et Jerusalem;

2 I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land.

2 Et congregabo (tunc congregabo) omnes gentes, et descendere faciam in vallem Jesephat, et disceptabo illic cum ipsis super populo meo et super haereditate mea Israel, quia disperserunt inter gentes et partiti sunt terram meam (addemus et hunc etiam versum.)

3 And they have cast lots for my people; and have given a boy for an harlot, and sold a girl for wine, that they might drink.

3 Et super populo meo jecerunt sortem et posuerunt, puerum pro scorto (hoc est, addixerunt pro scorto) et pullam vendiderunt pro vino ut biberunt.

The Prophet confirms in these words what he had before taught respecting the restoration of the Church; for it was a thing difficult to be believed: when the body of the people was so mutilated, when their name was obliterated, when all power was abolished, when the worship of God also, together with the temple, was subverted, when there was no more any form of a kingdom, or even of any civil government, who could have thought that God had any concern for a people in such a wretched condition? It is then no wonder that the Prophet speaks so much at large of the restoration of the Church; he did so, that he might more fully confirm what would have otherwise been incredible.

He therefore says, Behold, in those days, and at that time, in which I shall restore the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, I shall then make all Gentiles to come down

into the valley of Jehoshaphat. And the Prophet says this, because the Jews were then hated by all people, and were the execration and the dregs of the whole world. As many nations as were under heaven, so many were the enemies of the Jews. A fall then inter despair was easy, when they saw the whole world incensed against them: ``Though God may wish to redeem us, there are yet so many obstacles, that we must necessarily perish; not only the Assyrians are enraged against us, but we have found even greater hatred in our own neighbors.'' We, indeed, know that the Moabites, the Ammonites, the Syrians, the Sidonians, the Idumeans, the Philistines, and, in short, all in the surrounding countries, were very hostile to the Jews. Seeing then every access to their land was closed up to the Jews, it was difficult to entertain any hope of deliverance, though God encouraged them. For this reason the Prophet now says, that God would be the judge of the whole world, and that it was in his purpose and power to call together all the Gentiles, as though he said, ``Let not the number and variety of enemies frighten you: the Assyrians alone, I know, are not your enemies, but also all your neighbors; but when I undertake the defense of your cause, I shall be alone sufficient to protect you; and however much all people may oppose, they shall not prevail. Then believe that I shall be a sufficient defender, and shall deliver you from the hand of all the nations'' We now perceive the Prophet's design when he declares, that God would come to the valley of Jehoshaphat, and there call together all nations.

But the Prophet says, In those days, and at that time, when the Lord shall restore the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, etc. This time the Jews limit to their return: they therefore think, that when liberty to return was granted them by Cyrus and Darius, what the Prophet declares here was then fulfilled; Christian doctors apply this prediction to the coming of Christ; but both interpret the words of the Prophet otherwise than the drift of the passage requires. The Prophet, no doubt, speaks here of the deliverance we have just noticed, and at the same time includes the kingdom of Christ; and this, as we have seen in other parts, is very commonly done. While then the prophets testify that God would be the redeemer of his people, and promise deliverance from Babylonian exile, they lead the faithful, as it were, by a continuous train or course, to the kingdom of Christ. For what else was the Jewish restoration, but a prelude of that true and real redemptions afterwards effected by Christ? The Prophet then does not speak only of the coming of Christ, or of the return of the Jews, but includes the whole of redemption, which was only begun when the Lord restored his people from the Babylonian exile; it will then go on from the first coming of Christ to the last day; as though he said, ``When God will redeem his people, it will not be a short or momentary benefit, but he will continue his favor until he shall visit with punishment all the enemies of his Church.'' In a word, the Prophet here shows, that God will not be a half Redeemer, but will continue to work until he completes everything necessary for the happy state of his Church, and makes it in every respect perfect. This is the import of the whole.

We also see that the Prophet Haggai speaks in the same manner of the second temple, --- that the glory of the second temple shall be greater than that of the first, (Haggai 2) He, however referred, no doubt, to the prophecy of Ezekiel; and Ezekiel

speaks of the second temple, which was to be built after the return of the people from exile. Be it so, yet Ezekiel did not confine to four or five ages what he said of the second temple: on the contrary he meant that the favor of God would be continued to the coming of Christ: so also Joel means here, when he says, When God shall restore the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, he will then call together all the nations; as though he said, ``God will pour out not a small portion of grace, but will become the complete Redeemer of his people; and when the whole world shall rise against him, he will yet prevail; he will undertake the cause of his Church, and will secure the salvation of his people. Whosoever then will attempt to delay or hinder the restoration of the Church, shall by no means succeed; for the Lord, the defender of his people, will judge all nations.''

Let us now see why the Prophet particularly mentions the valley of Jehoshaphat. Many think that valley to be intended, which was called the Valley of Blessing, where Jehoshaphat obtained a signal and a memorable victory, when yet he was not provided with large forces, and when many nations conspired against him. Though Jehoshaphat fought against a large army with a few people, he yet wonderfully succeeded; and the people there presented thanks to God, and gave a name to the place. Hence, many think that this valley is mentioned, that the Prophet might remind the Jews how wonderfully they were saved; for their enemies had come for the very purpose of destroying the whole of God's people, and thought that this was wholly in their power. The memory then of this history must have animated the minds of the godly with a good hope; for God then undertook the cause of a small number against a vast multitude; yea, against many and powerful nations. And this view seems to me probable. Some place this valley of Jehoshaphat half way between the Mount of Olives and the city; but how probable their conjecture is I know not.

Unquestionably, with regard to this passage, their opinion, in my judgment, is the most correct, who think that there is here a recalling to mind of God's favor, which may in all ages encourage the faithful to entertain hope of their salvation. Some, however, prefer to take the word as an appellative; and no doubt {יהושפט} ieushaphath means the judgment of God; and so they render it, ``The valley of the judgment of God.'' If this is approved I do not oppose. And, doubtless, though it be a proper name, and the Prophet speak here of that holy King, to encourage the Jews to follow his example, he yet alludes, no doubt, to the judgment of God, or to the contest which he would undertake for the sake of his people: for it immediately follows {שם} {עמם} {שפטתי} {וכ} uneshaphathti omem shim, ``And I will contend with them there:'' and this verb is derived from {שפט} shephath. Hence also, if it be the proper name of a place, and taken from that of the King, the Prophet here meant, that its etymology should be considered; as though he said, ``God will call all nations to judgment, and for this end, that he may dwell in the midst of his people, and really testify and prove this.''

Some apply this passage to the last judgment, but in too strained a manner. Hence also has arisen the figment, that the whole world shall be assembled in the valley of Jehoshaphat: but the world, we know, became infected with such delirious things, when the light of sound doctrine was extinguished; and no wonder, that the

world should be fascinated with such gross comments, after it had so profaned the worship of God. [20]

But with respect to the intention of the Prophets he, no doubt, mentions here the valley of Jehoshaphat, that the Jews might entertain the hope that God would be the guardian of their safety; for he says everywhere that he would dwell among them, as we have also seen in the last chapter, ``And God will dwell in the midst of you.'' So also now he means the same, I will assemble all nations, and make them to come down to the valley of Jehoshaphat; that is, though the land shall for a time be uncultivated and waste, yet the Lord will gather his people, and show that he is the judge of the whole world; he will raise a trophy in the land of Judah, which will be nobler than if the people had ever been safe and entire: for how much soever all nations may strive to destroy the remnant, as we know they did, though few remained; yet God will sit in the valley of Jehoshaphat, he will have there his own tribunal, that he may keep his people, and defend them from all injuries. At the same time, what I have before noticed must be borne in mind; for he names here the valley of Jehoshaphat rather than Jerusalem, because of the memorable deliverance they had there, when God discomfited so many people, when great armies were in an instant destroyed and without the aid of men. Since God then delivered his people at that time in an especial manner through his incredible power, it is no wonder that he records here the name of the valley of Jehoshaphat.

I will contend, he says, with them there for my people, and for my heritage, Israel. By these words the Prophet shows how precious to God is the salvation of his chosen people; for it is no ordinary thing for God to condescend to undertake their cause, as though he himself were offended and wronged; and God contends, because he would have all things in common with us. We now then, see the reason of this contention, --- even because God so regards the salvation of his people, that he deems himself wronged in their person; as it is said in another place, ``He who toucheth you toucheth the apple of mine eye''. And to confirm his doctrine still more, the Prophet adds, For mine heritage, Israel. God calls Israel here his heritage, to strengthen distressed minds, and also to comfort them; for if the Jews had only fixed their minds on their own state, they could not but think themselves unworthy of being regarded by God; for they were deemed abominable by all nations; and we also know that they were severely chastised for having departed from all godliness and for having, as it were, wholly alienated themselves from God. Since, then, they were like a corrupted body, they could not but despond in their adversity: but the Prophet here comes to their assistance, and brings forward the word heritage, as though he said, ``God will execute judgment for you, not that ye are worthy, but because he has chosen you: for he will never forget the covenant which he made with your father Abraham'' We see, then, the reason he mentions heritage: it was, that the Jews might not despair on account of their sins; and at the same time he commends, as before, the gratuitous mercy of God, as though he had said, ``The

[20] "To this valley or glen, in which is the celebrated burying-place of the Jews, the Rabbins have appropriated the name, (the valley of Jehosaphat,) and maintain, that in it the final judgment of the world is to be held; — a conceit in which they have been followed by many Christian writers, as well as by the Mohammedans." — Dr. Henderson.

reason for your redemption is no other, but that God has allotted to himself the posterity of Abraham and designed them to be his peculiar people'' What remains we must defer until to-morrow.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou not only invites us continually by the voice of thy Gospel to seek thee, but also offerest to us thy Son as our Mediator, through whom an access to thee is open, that we may find thee a propitious Father, --- O grant, that relying on thy kind invitation, we may through life exercise ourselves in prayer: and as so many evils disturb us on all sides, and so many wants distress and oppress us, may we be led more earnestly to call on thee, and, in the meantime, be never wearied in this exercise of prayer; that, being through life heard by thee, we may at length be gathered to thy eternal kingdom, where we shall enjoy that salvation which thou hast promised to us, and of which also thou daily testifiest to us by thy Gospel, and be for ever united to thy only begotten Son, of whom we are how members; that we may be partakers of all the blessings, which he has obtained for us by his death. Amen.

Lecture Forty-seventh.

We said in our yesterday's Lecture, that God proves the singular love he has to his Church by condescending to undertake her cause, and contend as a worldly man would do for his paternal inheritance. He says, that his heritage, Israel, had been dispersed among the nations; as though he said, that it was an intolerable thing that enemies should, like robbers, thus divide his heritage. He speaks first of the people, then of the land; for God, as it is well known, consecrated the land to himself, and he would not have it occupied by profane nations. There was then a twofold sacrilege, --- the people were carried away into distant lands, and others were sent to inhabit and possess their land, which God had destined for his children and elect people.

There follows now another indignity still greater; for they cast lot on God's people, --- On my people they have cast lot, and prostituted a boy for a harlot, and a girl have they sold for wine, that they might drink. By these words the Prophet enhances the injury done them; for the Jews had been reproachfully treated. Some measure of humanity is mostly shown when men are sold; but the Prophet here complains in the person of God, that the Jews had been exposed to sale, as though they were the off scourings of mankind, and of no account. They have cast lots he says; and this was to show contempt; and the Prophet expresses more clearly what he meant, and says, that a boy had been given for a harlot, and a girl for wine. Some consider the Prophet as saying, that boys were prostituted to base and scandalous purposes; but I prefer another view, --- that the enemies sold them for a mean price to gratify their gluttony, or their lust; as though the Prophet had said, that the Jews had to endure a grievous reproach by being set to sale, as they say, and that at the lowest price. He farther adds another kind of contempt; for whatever price the enemies procured by selling, they spent it either on harlot or on feasting. We hence see that a twofold injury is here mentioned, --- the Jews had been so despised as not to be regarded as men, and had been sold not for the usual prices, but had been disposed of in contempt by their enemies almost for nothing; --- and the other reproach was, that

the price obtained for them was afterwards spent on gluttony and whoredom: yet this people was sacred to God. Now this contumelious treatment, the Prophet says, God would not endure, but would avenge such a wrong as if done to himself. This is then the meaning.

But the reason which induces me thus to interpret the Prophet is because he says that a girl was sold for wine, as the boy for a harlot; and the construction of the Prophet's words is the same. It is indeed certain that in the latter clause the Prophet meant nothing else but that the price was wickedly spent for vile and shameful purposes; then the former clause must be understood in the same way. Let us proceed

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Joel 3:4-6

4. Yea, and what have ye to do with me, O Tyre, and Zidon, and all the coasts of Palestine? will ye render me a recompence? and if ye recompense me, swiftly and speedily will I return your recompence upon your own head;

4. Atque etiam, quid vobis mecum Tyre et Sidon, et cuncti termini Palestinae? An mercedem vobis rependitis mihi? Etsi confertis hoc in me, velox (subito) rependam mercedem vestram in caput vestrum;

5. Because ye have taken my silver and my gold, and have carried into your temples my goodly pleasant things:

5. Quia argentum meum et aurum meum abstulistis, et desiderabilia mea bona transtulistis in templa vestra (alii, palatia.)

6. The children also of Judah and the children of Jerusalem have ye sold unto the Grecians, that ye might remove them far from their border.

6. Et filios Jehudah et filios Jerusalem vendidistis filiis Graecorum, ut elongaretis eos a termino suo (hoc est, procul abduceretis eos a finibus suis.)

God expostulates here with Tyre and Sidon, and other neighboring nations, and shows that they vexed his people without cause Had they been provoked some excuse might have been made; but since they made war of their own accord, the wrong was doubled. This is what God means these words. What have ye to do with me, O Tyre and Sidon? He indeed continues the subject before explained: but he speaks of the concern here as hid own; he seems not now to undertake the protection of his own people, but detents his own cause. ``What have ye to do with me?'' he says. God then interposes himself; as though he said, that the Syrians and Sidonians were not only called by him to judgment because they had unjustly wronged his people, and brought many troubles on men deserving no such things; but he says also, that he stood up in his own defense. ``What have I to do with you, O Syrians and Sidonians?'' as we say in French, Qu'avons-nous a desmeller? (what have we to decide?) Now the Prophet had this in view, that the Syrians and Sidonians became voluntary enemies to the Jews, when they had no dispute with them; and this, as we have said, was less to be borne. ``What then have ye to do with me, O Syrians and Sidonians? Do I owe anything to you? Am I under any obligation to you? Do ye repay me my recompense?'' that is, ``Can you boast of any reason or just pretense for making, war on my people?'' He then means, that there had been no wrong done to the Syrians and Sidonians, which they could now retaliate, but that they made an attack

through their own wickedness, and were only impelled by avarice or cruelty thus to harass the miserable Jews: ``Ye repay not,'' he says, ``a recompense to me; for ye cannot pretend that any wrong has been done to you by me.''

But if ye repay this to me, he says, I will swiftly return the recompense on your head. {גמל} gimel means not only to repay, as the Hebrew scholars ever render it, but also to confer, to bestow, (conferre, ut loquuntur Latine) as it has been stated in another place. `What shall I repay to the Lord for all the things which he has recompensed to me?' This is the common version; but it is an improper and inconsistent mode of speaking. David no doubt refers to God's benefits; then it is, `What shall I repay for all the benefits which the Lord has bestowed on me?' Then he who first does wrong, or bestows good, is said to recompense; and this is the sense in this place. `If ye,' he says, `thus deal with me, ``swiftly'', {מהרה} mere suddenly (for the word is to be taken as an adverb,) will I return recompense on your head;' that is, ``Ye shall not be unpunished, since ye have acted so unjustly with me and my people.'' We now perceive the whole meaning of the Prophet: He enhances the crime of the Syrians and Sidonians, because they willfully distressed the Jews, and joined themselves to their foreign enemies, for the purpose of seizing on a part of the spoil. As, then, vicinity softened not their minds, their inhumanity was on this account more fully proved. But, as I have said, the Lord here places himself between the two parties, to intimate, that he performs his own proper office when he takes care of the safety of his Church.

He afterwards shows that this wickedness should not be unpunished --- If ye deal thus with me, he says, I shall swiftly (suddenly) return the recompense on your heads. This passage contains a singular consolation; for God declares that whatever evils the faithful endure belong to him, and also that he will not suffer those under his protection and defense to be distressed with impunity, but will quickly return recompense on the heads of those who unjustly injure his heritage. We now understand the Prophet's design: he doubtless intended to support the minds of the godly with this thought, --- that their afflictions are objects of concern with God and that he will shortly be the avenger of them, however necessary it may be that they should for a time be thus violently and reproachfully treated by wicked men.

Let us now proceed: He says that their silver and their gold had been taken away by the Syrians and the Sidonians. All who were the neighbors of that people, no doubt, derived gain from their calamity, as is usually the case. They were at first ill disposed towards them; there was then a new temptation; they gaped after booty: and they showed themselves openly their enemies, when they saw that there was hope of gain. Such was the case with the Syrians and Sidonians. There is no doubt, but that they sedulously courted the favor of the Assyrians, that they helped them with provisions and other things, that they might partake of the spoil. It was, therefore, no wonder that gold and silver was taken away by them, for the carriage of them to Assyria would have been tedious: and, as I have just hinted, it is usually the case, that conquerors gratify those by whom they have been assisted. Many extend this plunder generally to the whole wealth of the people; that is, that the enemies plundered what gold and silver there was in Judea, and that the Sidonians got a por-

tion of it for themselves. But there seems to have been a special complaint, that the sacred vessels of the temple were taken away by the Syrians and Sidonians: I therefore prefer to render the word, temples, rather than palaces. Some say, `Ye have carried away my silver and my gold to your palaces.' Though the word is capable of two meanings, yet the Prophet, I have no doubt, refers here to the temples. The Syrians, then, and the Sidonians profaned the silver and the gold of the temple by dedicating them to their idols; they adorned their idols with spoils taken from the only true God. This was the reason why God was so exceedingly displeased. There was, indeed, a cause why God, as we have said, contended for the whole nation of Israel: but it was a far more heinous wrong to spoil the temple, and to strip it of its ornaments, and then to adorn idols with its sacred vessels; for God was thus treated with scorn; and in contempt of him, the Syrians and Sidonians built, as it were, a trophy of victory in their own dens, where they performed sacrilegious acts in worshipping fictitious gods.

Ye have taken away, he says, my gold and silver, and my desirable good things. God speaks here after the manner of men; for it is certain that even under the law he stood in no need of gold or silver, or of other precious things; he wished the temple to be adorned with vessels and other valuable furniture for the sake of the ignorant (rudis --- rude) people; for the Jews could not have been preserved in pure and right worship, had not God assisted their weak faith by these helps. (adminiculis --- props, aids) But yet, as obedience is acceptable to him, he says that whatever was an ornament in the temple was a desirable thing to him; while, at the same time, by speaking thus, he put on, as I have said, a character not his own, as he has no need of such things, nor is he delighted with them. We ought not, indeed, to imagine God to be like a child, who takes delight in gold and silver and such things; but what is said here was intended for the benefit of the people, that they might know that God approved of that worship, for it was according to his command. He therefore calls every thing that was in the temple desirable, Ye have, he says, carried away into your temples my desirable good things.

It follows, And the children of Judah, and the children of Jerusalem, have ye sold to the children of the Grecians [21] . There is here another complaint subjoined, --- that the Syrians and Sidonians had been sacrilegious towards God, that they had cruelly treated God's afflicted people. In the last verse, God inveighed against the Syrians, and Sidonians for having prostituted to their idols gold and silver stolen from him; he now again returns to the Jews themselves, who, he says, had been sold to the children of the Grecians; that is, to people beyond the sea: for as Javan passed into Europe, he includes under that name the nations beyond the sea. And he says, that they sold the Jews to the Greeks that they might drive them far from their own borders, so that there might be no hope of return. Here the cruelty of the Syrians and Sidonians becomes more evident; for they took care to drive those wretched men far away, that no return to their country might be open to them, but that they might be wholly expatriated.

We now perceive what the Prophet had in view: He intended that the faithful

[21] {לבני היונים} to the children of the Ivanites, or Javanites. --- Ed.

though trodden under foot by the nations, should yet have allayed their grief by some consolation, and know that they were not neglected by God; and that though he connived at their evils for a time, he would yet be their defender, and would contend for them as for his own heritage, because they had been so unjustly treated. He afterwards adds ---

Joel 3:7

7. Behold, I will raise them out of the place whither ye have sold them, and will return your recompense upon your own head:

7. Ecce ego excitabo eos e loco in quem vendidistis eos, et rependam mercedem vestram in caput vestrum.

The Prophet declares here more fully and expressly, that God had not so deserted the Jews, but that he intended, in course of time, to stretch forth his hand to them again. It was indeed a temporary desertion: but it behaved the faithful in the meantime to rely on this assurance, --- that God purposed again to restore his people: and of this the Prophet now speaks, Behold, he says, I will raise them from the place unto which ye have sold them; as though he said ``Neither distance of place, nor the intervening sea, will hinder me from restoring my people.'' As then the Syrians and Sidonians thought that the Jews were precluded a return to their country, because they were taken away into distant parts of the world, God says that this would be no obstacle in his way to collect again his Church.

But it may he asked, When has this prediction been fulfilled? as we indeed know that the Jews have never returned to their own country: for shortly after their return from exile, they were in various ways diminished; and at length the most grievous calamities followed, which consumed the greatest part of the people. Since this then has been the condition of that nation, we ought to inquire whether Christ has collected the Jews, who had been far dispersed. We indeed know that they were then especially scattered; for the land of Judea never ceased to be distressed by continual wars until Jerusalem was destroyed, and the people were almost wholly consumed. Since then it has been so, when can we say that this prediction has been fulfilled? Many explain the words allegorically, and say, that the Prophet speaks of apostles and martyrs, who, through various persecutions, were driven into different parts; but this is a strained view. I therefore do not doubt, but that here he refers to a spiritual gathering: and it is certain that God, since the appearance of Christ, has joined together his Church by the bond of faith; for not only that people have united together in one, but also the Gentiles, who were before alienated from the Church, and had no intercourse with it, have been collected into one body. We hence see, that what the Prophet says has been spiritually fulfilled; even the children of Judah and the children of Jerusalem have been redeemed by the Lord, and restored again, not on foot or by sea; for Jerusalem has been built everywhere as it is said in Zechariah.

I will therefore gather them, he says; and he adds, I will return recompense on your head He again confirms what he said before, --- that though the ungodly should exult, while ruling over the children of God, their cruelty would not be unpunished; for they shall find that the Church is never neglected by God; though he may subject it to various troubles, and exercise its patience, and even chastise it, he will yet be

ever its defender. It follows ---

Joel 3:8

8. And I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hand of the children of Judah, and they shall sell them to the Sabeans, to a people far off: for the LORD hath spoken it

8. Et vendam filios vestros et filias vestras in manum filiorum Jehadah, et vendent eos Sabaeis, genti lonquinquae, quia Jehovah loquutus est.

The Prophet describes here a wonderful change: the Syrians and Sidonians did sell the Jews; but who is to be the seller now? God himself will take this office, --- I, he says, will sell your children, as though he said, ``The Jews shall subdue you and reduce you to bondage,'' --- by whose authority? ``It shall be, as if they bought you at my hands.'' He means that this servitude would be legitimate; and thus he makes the Jews to be different from the Syrians and Sidonians, who had been violent robbers, and unjustly seized on what was not their own: and hence the manner of the sale is thus described, --- ``I myself shall be the author of this change, and the thing shall be done by my authority, as if I had interposed my own name;'' and the Jews themselves shall sell, he says, your sons and your daughters to the Sabeans, a distant nation; that is, the people of the East: for the Prophet, I doubt not, by mentioning a part for the whole, meant here to designate Eastern nations, such as the Persians and Medes; but he says, that the Tyrians and Sidonians shall be driven to the meet distant countries; for the Sabeans were very far distant from the Phoenician Sea, and were known as being very nigh the Indians. [22]

But it may be asked here, When has God executed this judgment? for the Jews never possessed such power as to be able to subdue neighboring nations, and to sell them at pleasure to unknown merchants. It would indeed be foolish and puerile to insist here on a literal fulfillment: at the same time, I do not say, that the Prophet speaks allegorically; for I am disposed to keep from allegories, as there is in them nothing sound nor solid: but I must yet say that there is a figurative language used here, when it is said, that the Syrians and Sidonians shall be sold and driven here and there into distant countries, and that this shall be done for the sake of God's chosen people and his Church, as though the Jews were to be the sellers. When God says, ``I will sell,'' it is not meant that he is to descend from heaven for the purpose of selling, but that he will execute judgment on them; and then the second clause, --- that they shall be sold by the Jews, derives its meaning from the first; and this cannot be a common sake, as if the Jews were to receive a price and make a merchandise of them. But God declares that the Jews would be the sellers, because in this manner he signifies his vengeance for the wrong done to them; that is, by selling them to the Sabeans, a distant nation. We further know, that the changes which then followed were such that God turned upside down nearly the whole world; for he drove the Syrian and the Sidonians to the most distant countries. No one could have thought

[22] "This prophecy was fulfilled before and during the rule of the Maccabees, when the Jewish affairs were in so flourishing a state, and the Phoenician and Philistine powers were reduced by the Persian arms under Artaxerxes Mnemon, Darius Ochus, and especially Alexander and his successors. On the capture of Tyre by the Grecian monarch, 13,000 of the inhabitants were sold into slavery. When he took Gaza also, he put 10,000 of the citizens to death and sold the rest, with the women and children, for slaves." — Dr. Henderson.

that this was done for the sake of the Jews, who were hated and abominated by all. But yet God declares, that he would do this from regard to his Church even sell the Syrians and the Sidonians, though it was commonly unknown to men; for it was the hidden judgment of God. But the faithful who had been already taught that God would do this, were reminded by the event how precious to God is his heritage, since he avenges those wrongs, the memory of which had long before been buried. This then is the import of the whole. The Prophet now subjoins ---

Joel 3:9-11

9. Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up:

9. Publicate hoc in Gentibus, sanctificate proelium, excitate robustos, venient, ascendent omnes viri bellatores.

10. Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruninghooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong.

10. Concidite vomeres vestros in gladios et falces vestras in lanceas; debilis dicat, Ego sum robustus.

11. Assemble yourselves, and come, all ye heathen, and gather yourselves together round about: thither cause thy mighty ones to come down, O Lord.

11. Congregamini et venite omnes gentes, congregamini in circuitu (hoc est, undique congregamini;) illic prosteruet Jehova fortes tuos.

Some think these words were announced lest the people, being terrified by their evils, should become wholly dejected; and they elicit this meaning, --- that God placed this dreadful spectacle of evils before their eyes, that the Jews might prepare and strengthen themselves for enduring them; that though nations should everywhere rise up, they might yet abide arm in the hope, that God would be the defender of his own Church. But the Prophet, I doubt not, continues the same discourse, and denounces war on the heathen nations, who had molested the Church with so many troubles; Publish this, he says, among the nations, proclaim war, rouse the strong; let them come, let them ascend: and we know how necessary it was by such means to confirm what he had previously said: for the ungodly are moved by no threats, nay, they laugh to scorn all God's judgments; while the faithful yielding to their evils, can hardly raise up their minds, even though God promises to be a helper to them. Except, then, the matter had been set forth as painted before their eyes they would not have experienced the power of consolation. Hence the lively representation we see here was intended for this end, --- that the people, being led to view the whole event, might entertain hope of their future salvation, while they now saw God collecting his army, and mustering his forces to punish the enemies of his Church. The faithful, then not only hearing by mere words that this would be, but also seeing, as it were, with their eyes what the Lord sets forth by a figure, and a lively representation, were more effectually impressed and felt more assured that God would become at length their deliverer.

We now then see why the Prophet here bids war to be everywhere announced and proclaimed, and also why he bids the strong to assemble, and all warlike men to ascend; as though he said, ``The Lord will not disappoint you with empty words,

but will come provided with an army to save you. When ye hear, then, that he will be the author of your salvation, think also that all nations are in his power, and that the whole world can in a moment be roused up by his rod, so that all its forces may from all quarters come together, and all the power of the world meet in obedience to him. Know, then, that being provided with his forces, he comes not to you naked, nor feeds you with mere words, as they are wont to do who have no help to give but words only: this is not what God does; for he can even to-day execute what he has denounced; but he stays for the ripened time. In the meanwhile, give him his honor, and know that there is not wanting the means to protect you, if he wished; but he would have you for a time to be subject to the cross and to tribulations that he may at length avenge the wrongs done to you.''

It may be now asked who are the nations meant by the Prophet? for he said before, that God would visit all nations with punishment, whereas, there was then no nation in the world friendly to the Jews. But in this there is nothing inconsistent; for God caused all the enemies of the Church to assail one another on every side, and to destroy themselves with mutual slaughters. Hence, when he designed to take vengeance on the Tyrians and Sidonians, he roused up the Persian and Medes; and when he purposed to punish the Persian and Medes, he called the Greeks into Asia; and he had before brought low the Assyrians. Thus he armed all nations, but each in its turn; and one after the other underwent the punishment they deserved. And so the expression of the Prophet must not be taken in a too restricted sense, as though the Lord would at the same time collect an army from the whole world, to punish the enemies of his Church; but that he rouses the whole world, so that some suffer punishment from others; and yet no enemy of the Church remains unpunished. We now perceive the Prophet's objects in saying, Publish this among the nations; that is, God will move dreadful tumults through the whole world, and will do this for the sake of his Church: for though he exposes his people to many miseries, he will yet have the remnant, as we have before seen, to be saved.

He afterwards adds, Beat your plowshares into swords. When Isaiah and Micah prophesied of the kingdom of Christ, they said, `Beat your swords into pruninghooks, and your spears into plowshares', (Isaiah 2:4, Micah 4:3.) This sentence is now inverted by Joel. The words of Isaiah and Micah were intended figuratively to show that the world would be at peace when Christ reconciled men to God, and taught them to cultivate brotherly kindness. But the Prophet says here, that there would be turbulent commotions everywhere, so that there would be no use made of the plough or of the pruninghook; husbandmen would cease from their labor, the land would remain waste; for this is the case when a whole country is exposed to violence; no one dares go out, all desert their fields, cultivation is neglected. Hence the Prophet says, `Turn your plowshares into swords, and your pruninghooks into spears;' that is, field labor will cease, and all will strenuously apply themselves to war. And let the weak say, I am strong, for there will then be no exemption from war. Excuses, we know, availed formerly on the ground of age or disease, when soldiers were collected; and if any one could have pleaded disease, he was dismissed; but the Prophet says, that there will be no exemption then; ``God'', he says, ``will

excuse none, he will compel all to become warriors, he will even draw out all the sick from their beds; all will be constrained to put on arms''. It hence appears how ardently the Lord loves his Church, since he spares no nations and no people, and exempts none from punishment; for all who have vexed the Church must necessarily receive their recompense. Since then God so severely punishes the enemies of his Church, he thereby gives a singular evidence of his paternal love to us.

At length he concludes, There will Jehovah overthrow thy mighty ones. Though the Prophet uses the singular number, ``thy'', he no doubt refers to the whole earth; as though he said, ``Whatever enemies there may be to my people, I will cut them down, however strong they may be.'' We now perceive that everything the Prophet has hitherto said has been for this end --- to show, that God takes care of the safety of his Church, even in its heaviest afflictions, and that he will be the avenger of wrongs, after having for a time tried the patience of his people and chastised their faults --- that there will be a turn in the state of things, so that the condition of the Church will be ever more desirable, even under its greatest evils, than of those whom the Lord bears with and indulges, and on whom he does not so quickly take vengeance.

Prayer.

Grant, Almighty God, that as we are assailed on every side by enemies, and as not only the wicked according to the flesh are incensed against us, but Satan also musters his forces and contrives in various ways to ruin us, --- O grant, that we being furnished with the courage thy Spirit bestows, may fight to the end under thy guidance and never be wearied under any evils. And may we, at the same time, be humbled under thy mighty hand when it pleases thee to afflict us and so sustain all our troubles that with a courageous mind we may strive for that victory which thou promises to us, and that having completed all our struggles we may at length attain that blessed rest which is reserved for us in heaven through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lecture Forty-eighth

Joel 3:12

12. Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about.

12. Expergefiant et ascendant gentes ad vallem Josaphat: quia illic sedebo ad judicandum omnes gentes ex circuitu.

The Prophet proceeds with the same subject, --- that God will at length become an avenger of the wrongs of his people, when they shall be unjustly harassed by profane men. We indeed know that God does not immediately succor his servants but rests as though he did not regard their troubles; but this he does to try their patience; and then at a suitable time he declares that he had not been indifferent, but had noticed the evils done to them, and deferred punishment until the wickedness of his enemies had been completed. So he says now, that God will at length be the defender of his people against all the nations assembled from every quarter in the valley of Jehoshaphat. Of this valley we have said enough already. But the chief thing is, that the afflictions of the Church shall not go unpunished; for God at the right time will ascend his tribunal, and cause all nations from every part of the earth

to assemble and to be there judged. Now it follows ---

Joel 3:13

13. Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great.

13. Mittite falcem, quia maturuit messis: venite, descendite, quia plenum est torcular, refertae sunt cuppae, quia multiplicata est malitia ipsorum.

As God defers his judgments when miserable men groan under their burdens, the Prophet uses a form of speech, which represents God as not delaying, but, on the contrary, as hastening to judgment, though this be not perceived by carnal minds; for these two things well agree together --- God waiting his opportunity as to the ungodly and suspending the punishment they deserve --- and yet quickly accelerating their destruction; for he is said to defer with respect to men, because one day with us is like a hundred years; and he is said to hasten, because he knows the exact points of time. So he says in this place, Put forth the sickle, for the harvest has ripened. He uses metaphorical words, but he afterwards expresses without a figure what he means and says, that their wickedness had multiplied

But there are here two metaphors, the one taken from the harvest, and the other from the vintage. The Prophet calls those reapers who have been destined to execute his judgment; for God makes use as it were of the hired work of men, and employs their hands here and there as he wills. He afterwards adds another metaphor, taken from the vintage, Full, he says, are the presses and the vats overflow; and at last he expresses what they mean, --- that their wickedness had multiplied, that is, that it was overflowing. God said to Abraham, that the wickedness of the Canaanites was not then completed; and long was the space which he mentioned for he said that after four hundred years he would take vengeance on the enemies of his people: that was a long time; and Abraham might have objected and said ``Why should God rest for so long a time?'' The answer was this, --- that their wickedness was not as yet completed. But the Prophet says here, that their wickedness had multiplied; he therefore gives to God's servants the hope of near vengeance, as when the harvest approaches and the vintage is nigh at hand; for then all have their minds refreshed with joy. Such is the Prophet's design; to encourage the faithful in their hope and expectation of a near deliverance, he declares that the iniquities of their enemies had now reached their full measure, so that God was now ready to execute on them his vengeance. This is the purport of the whole. It follows ---

Joel 3:14

14. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision.

14. Populi, populi in vale concisionis (vel, tribulae,) quia propinquus dies Jehovae in valle concisionis.

The Prophet confirms the same truth; but he multiplies words, because the devastation of the Church might have taken away all hope from God's servants; for who could have said that the Church could be restored when it was so miserably wasted, yea, almost reduced to nothing? For the people were so scattered that the name of Israel was of no account. The people then had ceased to exist, for they had lost their

name; in short, the constitution of the Church was dissolved, and all might have said, that the people were given up to thousand modes of destruction, as all execrated the name of Israel. Since it was so, whatever the Prophets said of the restoration of the people might certainly have seemed incredible. The repetition then is not superfluous, when the Prophet in various forms of words testifies and affirms that God would abide faithful, and that, though Israel should perish according to what men could see, yet God had power enough to vivify the people when dead: hence the Prophet speaks emphatically, Nations! Nations! for he assumes here the character of a herald, as indeed this office had been committed to him, and shows that his predictions would not be fruitless, that he declared not words which would vanish into air, but that whatever he declared in God's name was full of power and energy. It might indeed have appeared ridiculous in the Prophet to summon all nations since his doctrine was laughed to scorn, even at Jerusalem. How could his voice penetrate to the utmost borders of the world and be there heard? Though hidden then was the power of this prediction, it yet showed itself at last, and it was really made evident that the Prophet spoke not in vain.

Besides, he addresses the nations as though they could hear; but he raises thus his voice, and nobly triumphs over all the wicked for the sake of the godly, though the wicked then proudly ruled and with high disdain: ``They shall come,'' he says, ``at length before God's tribunal, though they now tread the Church under foot; yea, the nations, the nations.'' He does not now mention the valley of Jehoshaphat, but of concision. {חרוף} cheruts some take for a fixed decree; but the word means a sledge or an instrument for threshing. We know not the mode of threshing used by the Jews, but it is evident from several passages that {חרוף} cheruts was an instrument with which they were wont to thresh; and I am inclined to adopt this sense; for the Prophet had first called God's judgment a harvest, then he compared it to presses. But if the word ``concision'' is more approved, I object not; at the same time, I do not doubt but that the Prophet alludes to threshing, as he ascribes to God his own office, that of scattering nations, who seem now to have conspired for the destruction of the Church. If any one considers it to mean a fixed decree, or a cutting off, as it means in Isaiah, I make no objection; for many give this interpretation. I have, however, explained what I most approve.

As to the drift of the subject, there is no ambiguity; the meaning of the Prophet is, --- that God will so punish all the ungodly, that he will cut down and scatter them all, as when the corn is threshed on the floor.

At last he adds, that nigh was the day of Jehovah in the valley of the sledge. He intimates, that though God as yet connived at their wickedness, yet the day was coming on, unknown indeed to men, and that he would come at length to that valley, that is, that he would inflict such punishment as would prove that he was the protector of his people. Of this valley we have spoken already; and no doubt he has throughout a reference to it, otherwise he would not have used a suitable language, when he said, Ascend into the valley. But what is to ascend into the valley? for, on the contrary, he ought to have spoken of descending. But he compares Judea with other parts of the world; and it is, as it is well known elevated in its situation. Then

the higher situation of Judea well agrees with the ascent of which the Prophet speaks. But he ever means that God would so punish the nations as to make it evident that he did this in favor of his Church, as we shall soon see more clearly. But he says ---

Joel 3:15

15. The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining.

15. Sol et luna obscurabuntur (vel, contrahent nigredinem,) et stellae retrahent splendorem suum.

I have already explained this verse in chapter 2: the Prophet, as we then stated, describes in these words the terrible judgment of God, in order to shake off the indifference of men, who carelessly hear and despise all threatening, except the Lord storms their hearts. These figurative expressions then are intended to awaken the ungodly, and to make them know that it is a serious matter when the Lord proclaims his judgment. Let us now go on with the passage ---

Joel 3:16

16. The LORD also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the LORD will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel.

16. Et Jehova e Sion rugiet, et e Jerusalem dabit (edat) vocem suam; et contremiscent coeli et terra: et Jehova spes erit populo suo, et fortitudo filiis Israel.

The Prophet explains here more clearly his object, or the end for which he had hitherto spoken of God's judgment; for what we have heard served only to spread terror: but now the Prophet shows that his purpose was to console the faithful, and to give some relief to their troubles and sorrows. This is the reason why he introduces God as roaring from Zion and crying from Jerusalem. Roaring is ascribed to God, inasmuch as he compares himself in another place to a lion, when representing himself as the faithful protector of the salvation of his people: ``I will be,'' he says, ``like the lion, who suffers not the prey to be taken from him, but boldly defends it with all the fierceness he possesses: so also will I do, I will not suffer my people to be taken from me.'' In this sense does the Prophet now say, that God will roar from Zion. God had been for a time despised; for the nations had prevailed against his chosen people, and plundered them at their pleasure; and God then exercised not his power. Since God had been for a time still, the Prophet says now, that he will not always conceal himself, but that he will undertake the defense of his people, and be like a lion; for he will rise up in dreadful violence against all his enemies.

And tremble, he says, shall the heaven and the earth. As almost the whole world was opposed to his elect people, the Prophet carefully dwells on this point, that nothing might hinder the faithful from looking for the redemption promised to them: ``Though the heaven and the earth,'' he says, ``raise oppositions God will yet prevail by his wonderful power. Tremble, he says, shall all the elements; what, then, will men do? Though they muster all their forces, and try all means, can they close up the way against the Lord, that he may not deliver his people?'' We now understand the Prophet's design in speaking of the shaking of heaven and earth.

He at last adds, God will be a hope to his people, and strength to the children

of Israel. In this part he gives a sufficient proof of what I have stated, --- that he denounces extreme vengeance on the nations for the sake of his Church; for the Lord will at length pity his people, though they may seem to have perished before he succors them. However past hope then the people may be in their own estimation and in that of all others, yet God will again raise up the expectation of all the godly, who shall remain, and will inspire them with new courage. He speaks in general of the children of Israel; but what he says belongs only to the remnant, of which the Prophet had lately spoken; for not all, we know, who derive their origin from the fathers according to the flesh, were true Israelites. The Prophet refers here to the true Church; and hence Israel ought to be taken for the genuine and legitimate children of Abraham; as Christ, in the person of Nathanael, calls those true Israelites who imitated the faith of their father Abraham. I shall to-day finish this Prophet; I do not therefore dwell much on every sentence. It now follows ---

Joel 3:17

17. So shall ye know that I am the Lord your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more.

17. Et cognoscetis quod ego sim Jehova Deus vester, habitans iu Sion, monte sanctitatis meae: et erit Jerusalem sanctitas, et alieni non transibunt per eam amplius.

This is a confirmation of the preceding doctrine, ye shall know, he says, that I am your God. The Prophet intimates that the favor of God had been so hidden during the afflictions of the people, that they could not but think that they were forsaken by God. His word ought indeed to be sufficient for us in the greatest evils; for though God may cast us into the deepest gulfs, yet when he shines upon us by his word, it ought to be a consolation abundantly available to sustain our souls. But yet, unless God really appears, we are confounded, and ask where is his power. For this reason the Prophet now says, that the faithful shall at length know, that is, really know him as their God.

There is a twofold knowledge, --- the knowledge of faith, received from his word, --- and the knowledge of experience, as we say, derived from actual enjoyment. The faithful ever acknowledge that salvation is laid up for them in God; but sometimes they stagger and suffer grievous torments in their minds, and are tossed here and there. However it may be with them, they certainly do not by actual enjoyment know God to be their Father. The Prophet therefore now treats of real knowledge, when he says, that they shall know that they have a God, --- how are they to know this? By experience. Now this passage teaches us, that though God should not put forth his hand manifestly to help us, we ought yet to entertain good hope of his favor; for the Prophet spoke for this end, --- that the godly might, before the event or the accomplishment of the prophecy should come, look to God and cast on him all their cares. Then the faithful, before they had real knowledge, knew God to be their Father, and hence hesitated not to flee to him though what the Prophet testified had not yet been visibly accomplished.

Dwelling in Zion, the mountain of my holiness: This has been designedly added,

that the faithful might know, that God made not a covenant in vain with Abraham, that mount Zion had not in vain been chosen, that they might there call on God; for we must have our attention called to the promises, otherwise all doctrine will become frigid. Now we know that all the promises have been founded on a covenant, that is, because God had adopted the people, and afterwards deposited his covenant in the hand of David, and then he designated mount Zion as his sanctuary. Since, then, all the promises flow from this fountain, it was necessary to call the attention of the Jews to the covenant: and this is the reason why the Prophet says now that God dwells in Zion; for otherwise this doctrine would no doubt only lead to superstition. God, indeed, we know, cannot be included within the circumference of any place, much less could he be confined to the narrow limits of the temple; but he dwelt on mount Zion on account of his own law, because he made a covenant with Abraham, and afterwards with David.

It then follows, And Jerusalem shall be holy, and aliens shall not pass through it any more. While he declares that Jerusalem shall be holy, he exempts it at the same time from profanation. We know that it is a common mode of speaking in Scripture, and what often occurs, that God's heritage is holy, and also, that they profaned it. Hence, when the people were exposed as a prey to the pleasure of their enemies, the heritage of God became forsaken and polluted, profane men trod Jerusalem as it were under foot. But now the Prophet exempts the holy city from this pollution, as though he said, ``The Lord will not allow his people to be thus miserably harassed, and will show that this city has been chosen by him, and that he has in it his dwelling. Aliens then shall no more pass through it --- Why? For it is first the holy city of God, and then, of his Church.

But as this promise extends to the whole kingdom of Christ, God doubtless makes here a general promise, that he will be the protector of his Church, that it may not be subject to the will of enemies; and yet we see that it often happens otherwise. But this ought to be imputed to our sins, for we make the breaches. God would, indeed be a wall and a rampart to us, as it is said elsewhere, (Isaiah 26:1;) but we betray his Church by our sins. Hence aliens occupy a place in it: Ye we see at this day; for Antichrist, as it has been foretold, has now for ages exercised dominion in God's sanctuary. Since it is so, we ought to mourn at seeing God's holy Church profaned. Let us yet know, that God will take care to gather his elect, and to cleanse them from every pollution and defilement. It follows ---

Joel 3:18-19

18. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord, and shall water the valley of Shittim.

18. Et erit in die illa, stillabunt montes mustum, et colles decurrere facient lac; et omnes rivi Jehudah emittent aquas (hoc est, descendere facient,) et fons e domo Jehovae egredietur et irrigabit vallem Sittim.

19. Egypt shall be a desolation, and Edom shall be a desolate wilderness, for the violence against the children of Judah, because they have shed innocent blood in

their land.

19. Aegyptus in solitudinem erit, et Edom in desertum solitudinis erit, propter vexationem filiorum Jehudah; quia fuderunt sanguinem innoxium (vel, purum) in terra sua (vel, ipsorum.)

The Prophet here declares that God will be so bountiful to his people, that no good things will be wanting to them either in abundance or variety. When God then shall restore his Church, it will abound, he says, in every kind of blessing: for this is the meaning of this language, Distill new wine shall the mountains, and the hills shall make milk to run down; and all rivers also shall have abundant waters, and a fountain shall arise from the house of Judah to irrigate the valley of Shittim. We now perceive the design of Joel. But we must remember that when the Prophets so splendidly extol the blessings of God, they intend not to fill the minds of the godly with thoughts about eating and drinking; but profane men lay hold on such passages as though the Lord intended to gratify their appetite. We know, indeed, that God's children differ much from swine: hence God fills not the faithful with earthly things, for this would not be useful for their salvation. At the same time, he thus enlarges on his blessings, that we may know that no happiness shall in any way be wanting to us, when God shall be propitious to us. We hence see that our Prophet so speaks of God's earthly blessings, that he fills not the minds of the godly with these things but desires to raise them above, as though he said, that the Israelites would in every way be happy, after having in the first place been reconciled to God. For whence came their miseries and distresses of every kind, but from their sins? Since, then, all troubles, all evils, are signs of God's wrath and alienation, it is no wonder that the Lord, when he declares that he will be propitious to them, adds also the proofs of his paternal love, as he does here: and we know that it was necessary for that rude people, while under the elements of the Law, to be thus instructed; for they could not as yet take solid food, as we know that the ancients under the Law were like children. But it is enough for us to understand the design of the Holy Spirit, namely, that God will satisfy his people with the abundance of all good things, as far as it will be for their benefit. Since God now calls us directly to heaven, and raises our minds to the spiritual life, what Paul says ought to be sufficient, --- that to godliness is given the hope, not only of future life, but also of that which is present, (1 Timothy 4;) for God will bless us on the earth, but it will be, as we have already observed, according to the measure of our infirmity.

The valley of Shittim was nigh the borders of the Moabites, as we learn from Numbers 25:1, and Joshua 2:1. Now when the Prophet says, that waters, flowing from the holy fountains would irrigate the valley of Shittim, it is the same as though he said, that the blessing of God in Judea would be so abundant, as to diffuse itself far and wide, even to desert valleys.

But he afterwards joins, that the Egyptians and Idumeans would be sterile and dry in the midst of this great abundance of blessings, for they were professed enemies to the Church. Hence God in this verse declares that they shall not be partakers of his bounty; that though all Judea would be irrigated, though it would abound in honeys milk, and wine, yet these would remain barren and empty; Mizraim, then, shall be a

solitude, Edom shall be a desert of solitude. Why? Because of the troubles, he says, brought on the children of Judah. God again confirms this truth, that he has such a concern for his Church, that he will avenge wrongs done to it. God, then, does not always come to our help when we are unjustly oppressed, though he has taken us under his protection; but he suffers us for a time to endure our evils; and yet the end will show, that we have been ever dear to him and precious in his sight. So he says now, that for the harassments which the Egyptians and Idumeans occasioned to the children of Judah, they shall be destitute, notwithstanding the abundance of all good things.

Because they shed, he says, innocent blood in their (or, in their own) land. If we refer this to Egypt and Idumea, the sense will be, that they had not protected fugitives, but, on the contrary, cruelly slew them, as though they had been sworn enemies. Many, we know, during times of distress, fled to Egypt and Idumea, to seek refuge there. As, then, the Egyptians had been so inhuman towards the distressed, the Prophet threatens them with vengeance. But I prefer to view what is said as having been done in Judea; they have then shed innocent Blood, that is, in Judea itself. As God had consecrated this land to himself to pollute it with unjust slaughters was a more atrocious crime. Forasmuch then as the Egyptians and Idumeans thus treated the Jews, and slew them in their own country in a base manner, though they were abiding quietly at home, it is no wonder that God declares, that he would be the avenger of these wrongs. It follows ---

Joel 3:20

20. But Judah shall dwell for ever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation.

20. Et Jehudah in aeternum habitabit (alii passive accipiunt, habitabitur) et Jerusalem erit in generationem et generationem.

God here testifies that his redemption would not be for a short time, but that its fruit would be for a long, period, yea, perpetual: for it would be but a small thing for the Church to be redeemed, except God kept it safe under his own power. This second thing the Prophet now adds, --- that Judah shall always remain safe, and that Jerusalem shall be for a continued succession of ages. The ungodly, we know, sometimes flourish for a time, though before God they are already doomed to destruction. But the Prophet here declares, that the fruit of the redemption he promises will be eternal: for God is not led to deliver his Church only for a moment, but he will follow it with perpetual favor, and remain constant in his purpose and ever like himself; he is therefore the eternal and faithful protector of his people. The last verse follows ---

Joel 3:21

21. For I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed: for the Lord dwelleth in Zion.

21. Et mundabo sanguinem corum, non mundavi: et Jehova habitans in Sion.

The beginning of the verse is in various ways explained. Some make a stop after cleanse thus, ``I will cleanse, yet their blood I will not cleanse;'' as though God had said, that he would forgive heathen nations all their other wrongs, but could not forgive them the great cruelty they had exercised against his elect. So the sense

would be, ``Avarice may be borne, I could pass by robberies; but, since they slew my people, I am in this case wholly unforgiving.'' Hence, according to this view, God shows how precious to him is the life of his saints, inasmuch as he says, that he will not be pacified towards those ungodly men who have shed innocent blood. But this sense seems rather too forced. Others render thus, ``Their blood will I cleanse, and will not cleanse,'' that is, ``I will cleanse the Jews from their defilements, but I will not use extreme severity;'' as he says also in Isaiah 48, `I will not refine thee as gold or silver, for thou wouldest turn all into dross.' They hence think that God promises here such a cleansing of the Church, as that he would not use extreme rigor, but moderate his cleansing, as it is needful with regard to our defilements, of which we are all so full.

But this sense seems to me more simple, --- that God would cleanse the blood which he had not cleansed; as though he said, ``I have not hitherto cleansed the pollutions of my people; they are then become, as it were, putrid in their sins; but now I will begin to purify all their wickedness, that they may shine pure before me.'' There is a relative understood as is often the case in Hebrew. But {נקה} neke is taken in Jeremiah 30:11, in another sense, that God will exterminate his Church: but we cannot in this place elicit any other meaning than that God will cleanse his Church from pollutions; for the Prophet, no doubt, means the defilements of which the people were full. They will not, then, be able to enjoy the favor of God while lying in their filth. Now God, in promising to be a Redeemer, comes to the very fountain and the first thing, --- that he will wash away their filth; for how could God be the Redeemer of the people, except he blotted out their sins? For as long as he imputes sins to us, he must necessarily be angry with us, we must be necessarily altogether alienated from him and deprived of his blessing. He then does not say in vain that he will be a purifier; for when pollutions are cleansed, there follows another thing, which we have already noticed as to this, future redemption, and with this ---

He at last concludes and says And Jehovah shall dwell in Zion. The Prophet recalls again the attention of the people to the covenant; as though he said, ``God has willingly and bountifully promised all that has been mentioned, not because the people have deserved this, but because God has deigned long ago to adopt the children of Abraham, and has chosen mount Zion as his habitation.'' He shows then this to be the reason why God was now inclined to mercy, and would save a people, who had a hundred times destroyed themselves by their sins.

Prayer.

Grant, Almighty God, that as we have, in this world, to fight continually, not only with one kind of enemies, but with numberless enemies, and not only with flesh and blood, but also with the devil, the prince of darkness, --- O grant, that, being armed with thy power, we may persevere in this contest; and when thou afflictest us for our sins, may we learn to humble ourselves, and so submit to thy authority, that we may hope for the redemption promised to us; and though tokens of thy displeasure may often appear to us, may we yet ever raise up our minds by hope to heaven, and from thence look for thy only begotten Son, until, coming as the Judge of the world, he gathers us and brings us to the fruition of that blessed and eternal life, which he

has obtained for us by his own blood. Amen.

End of the Commentaries on Joel.

Commentary on Amos

Commentary on Amos

Lecture Forty-ninth

He shows himself the time when he began to discharge his office of a teacher; but it does not appear how long he prophesied. The Jews indeed, think that his course was long; he continued his office, as they write, under four kings. But he mentions here only the reigns of Uzziah and Jeroboam. His purpose was to mark the time when he began to execute his office of a Prophet, but not to express how long he labored for God in that office; and why he mentions only the beginning, we shall in its proper place notice. It is, indeed, certain, that he commenced his work under king Uzziah, and under king Jeroboam: and this also is to be noticed, that he was appointed a Prophet to the kingdom of Israel. For though he arose from the tribe of Judah, yet the Lord, as we shall see set him over the kingdom of Israel. He sometimes turns his discourse to the tribe of Judah, but only, as it were, accidentally, and as occasion led him; for he mainly addressed the Ten Tribes. I now come to his words.

Chapter 1.

Amos 1

A

Amos 1:1

1. The words of Amos, who was among the herdmen of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel, two years before the earthquake.

1. Verba Amos, qui fuit inter pastores (vel, pecuarios) ex Tucua: quae vidit super Israel diebus Uzziah regis Juhudah, et diebus Jarobeam filii Joas regis Israel, biennio ante motum (vel {χασμα}) terrae. nominibus, quia de sensu Prophetae satis constabit. Nunc venio ad inscriptionem libri.)

Amos boasts not here, in speaking of his own words, that he adduced anything as from himself, but avows himself to be only the minister of God; for he immediately adds that he received them by a vision. God himself raised up the Prophets and employed their labor; And, at the same time, guided them by his Spirit, that they might not announce anything but what had been received from him, but faithfully deliver what had proceeded from him alone. These two things then, well agree together, --- that the prophecies which follow were the words of Amos and that they were words revealed to him from above; for the word {חזה}, chese, which Amos uses, properly means, to see by revelation; [23] and these revelations were called prophecies.

But he says, that he was among the shepherds of Tekoa. This was a mean towns and had been shortly before surrounded by walls and had ever been previously a village. He then mentions not his country, because it was celebrated, or as though

[23] There is an incongruity in our language in saying, "The words of Amos, which he saw." To see words, except when written, is no proper expression. To avoid this, Newcome has paraphrased the passage thus, — "Which had come to him in a vision." There would be no necessity for this, had we a suitable term for "words," which in Hebrew has the same latitude of meaning with {λογος} in Greek. Dathius renders it, Effata, oracles. They were the things, the matters, the events, which the Prophet saw, or were discovered to him in a supernatural manner. The faculty of sight seems to have been used, because scenes were presented often to the prophets, when these communications were made to them; and then seeing became the term to designate these divine revelations, when nothing but messages, either of mercy or of judgment, were conveyed to the prophets. --- Ed.

he could derive thereby more authority or renown: but, on the contrary he calls himself a Tekoan, because God drew him forth from an obscure place, that he might set him over the whole kingdom of Israel. They are therefore mistaken, as I think, who suppose that Amos was called one of the shepherds on account of his riches, and the number of his flocks; for when I weigh every thing, I see not how could this be. I indeed allow that {נקדים}, nukodim are not only shepherds who do the work, but men possessing flocks, carrying on a large business; for the king of Moab is said to have been a {נקד}, nukod, and that he fed large flocks; but it was by hired shepherds. As to the Prophets I do not see how this can be applied to him; for Tekoa was not a place famous for wealth; and as I have said, it was a small town, and of no opulence. I do not then doubt, but that Amos, by saying that he was a shepherd, pours contempt on the pride of the king of Israel, and of the whole people; for as they had not deigned to hear the Prophets of God, a keeper of sheep was sent to them.

It must be further noticed, that he is not called a shepherd of Tekoa, but from Tekoa; and interpreters have not observed this preposition. We shall see in chapter seven, that though Amos sprang from the tribe of Judah, he yet dwelt in the kingdom of Israel: for the priest, after he had slandered him before the king, bade him to go elsewhere, and to eat his own bread, and not to disturb the peace of the country. He therefore dwelt there as a stranger in a land not his own. Had he been rich, and possessing much wealth, he would have surely dwelt at home: why should he change his place? Since then it appears evident, that he was a sojourner in the land of Israel, he was, no doubt, one of the common people. So that his low condition (ignobilitias---ignobility) was intended for this purpose, --- that God might thereby repress the arrogance of the king of Israel, and of the whole people; for we know how much inflated they were on account of the fruitfulness of their land and their riches. Hence Amos was set over them as a Prophet, being a shepherd, whom God had brought from the sheepfolds.

The time also is to be observed, when he is said to have seen these prophecies; it was in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, two years before the earth-quake, and in the days of Jeroboam, the son of Joash. What the state of that time was, I described in explaining the prophecies of Hosea. Sacred history relates that the kingdom of Israel flourished under the second Jeroboam; for though he was an ungodly and wicked man, yet God spared then his people, and caused that not only the ten tribes should remain entire, but also that Jeroboam should enlarge his kingdom; for he had recovered some cities which had been lost. The state of the people was then tranquil, and their prosperity was such as filled them with pride, as it commonly happens. Uzziah also so reigned over the tribe of Judah, that nothing adverse prevailed there. Shortly after followed the earthquake. The time this earthquake happened, sacred history does not mention. But Josephus says, that it was when Uzziah seized on the priestly office, and was smitten with leprosy. He therefore makes that stroke of leprosy and the earthquake to be at the same time. But Amos, as well as other Prophets, spoke of it as a thing well known: thus Zechariah, after the people's return, refers to it in chapter 14: (Zechariah 14:5),

`There shall be to you a terror,
such as was in the earthquake under king Uzziah.'

He states not the year, but it was then commonly known.

Then the Prophet meant nothing more than to show by this event, that he denounced God's vengeance on the Israelites, when they were in prosperity, and were immersed, as it were, in their pleasures. And satiety, as it ever happens, made them ferocious; hence he was not well received; but his authority is hereby more confirmed to us; for he did not flatter the people in their prosperity, but severely reproved them; and he also predicted what could not be foreseen by human judgment, nay, what seemed to be altogether improbable. Had he not then been endued with the heavenly Spirit, he could not have foretold future calamities, when the Jews, as I have already said, as well as the Israelites, and others, promised themselves all kinds of prosperity; for God then spared the kingdom of Israel and the kingdom of Judah, nor did he execute his judgment on neighboring nations.

We must now observe this also, that the words which he saw were concerning Israel. We hence learn, as I have already said that the Prophet was specifically appointed for the Israelites, though born elsewhere. But how and on what occasion he migrated into the kingdom of Israel, we know not; and as to the subject in hand, it matters not much: but it is probable, as I have said before, that this was designedly done, that God might check the insolence of the people, who flattered themselves so much in their prosperity. Since, then, the Israelites had hitherto rejected God's servants, they were now constrained to hear a foreigner and a shepherd condemning them for their sins, and exercising the office of a judge: he who proclaims, an impending destruction is a celestial herald. This being the case, we hence see that God had not in vain employed the ministry of this Prophet; for he is wont to choose the weak things of the world to confound the strong, (1 Corinthians 1) and he takes Prophets and teachers from the lowest grade to humble the dignity of the world, and puts the invaluable treasure of his doctrine in earthly vessels, that his power, as Paul teaches us, may be made more evident (2 Corinthians 4:7.)

But there was a special reason as to the Prophet Amos; for he was sent on purpose severely to reprove the ten tribes: and, as we shall see, he handled them with great asperity. For he was not polite, but proved that he had to do with those who were not to be treated as men, but as brute beasts; yea, worse in obstinacy than brute beasts; for there is some docility in oxen and cows, and especially in sheep, for they hear the voice of their shepherd, and follow where he leads them. The Israelites were all stubbornness, and wholly untamable. It was then necessary to set over them a teacher who would not treat them courteously, but exercise towards them his native rusticity. Let us now proceed; for of the kingdom of Uzziah and of Jeroboam the son of Joash, the second of that name, we have spoken on the in Hosea 1:1. It now follows
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Amos 1:2

2. And he said, The Lord will roar from Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the habitations of the shepherds shall mourn, and the top of Carmel shall wither.

2. Et dixit, Jehova e Sion ruget, et e Jerusalem edet (vel, emittet) vocem suam;

et lugebunt (vel, disperibunt) habitacula pastorum; et arescet (vel, pudefiet) vertex Carmeli. [24]

He employs here the same words which we explained yesterday in the Lecture on Joel; but for another purpose. By saying, `Jehovah from Zion shall roar,' Joel intended to set forth the power of God, who had been for a time silent, as though he was not able to repel his enemies. As God was then despised by the ungodly, Joel declares that he had power, by which he could instantly break down and destroy all his enemies and defend his Church and chosen people. But now Amos, as he addresses the Israelites, does here defend the pure worship of God from all contempt and declares to the Israelites, that how much soever they wearied themselves in their superstitions they still worshipped their own devices; for God repudiated all the religion they thought they had. There is, then, to be understood an implied or indirect contrast between mount Zion and the temples which the first Jeroboam built in Dan and Bethel. The Israelites imagined that they worshipped the God of their father Abraham; and there were in those places greater displays (pompae --- pomps) than at Jerusalem. But the Prophet Amos pours contempt on all these fictitious forms of worship; as though he said, ``Ye indeed boast that the God of Abraham is honored and worshipped by you; but ye are degenerate, ye are covenant breakers, ye are perfidious towards God; he dwells not with you, for the sanctuaries, which you have made for yourselves, are nothing but brothels; God has chosen no habitation for himself, except mount Zion; there is his perpetual rest: Roar then will Jehovah from Zion.''

We now see what the Prophet had in view: for he not only shows here, that God was the author of his doctrine, but at the same time distinguishes between the true God and the idols, which the first Jeroboam made, when by this artifice he intended to withdraw the ten tribes from the house of David and wholly to alienate them from the tribe of Judah: it was then that he set up the calves in Dan and Bethel. The Prophet now shows that all these superstitions are condemned by the true God: Jehovah then shall roar from Zion, he will utter his voice from Jerusalem. He no doubt wished here to terrify the Israelites, who thought they had peace with God. Since, then, they abused his long-suffering, Amos now says that they would find at length that he was not asleep. ``When God then shall long bear with your iniquities, he will at last rise up for judgment.''

By roaring is signified, as we said yesterday, the terrible voice of God; but the Prophet here speaks of God's voice, rather than of what are called actual judgments really executed, that the Israelites might learn that the examples of punishments which God executes in the world happen not by chance, or at random, but proceed from his threatening; in short, the Prophet intimates that all punishments which God inflicts on the ungodly and the despisers of his word, are only the executions of what the Prophets proclaimed, in order that men, should there be any hope of their

[24] Rendered literally from the Hebrew, this verse is a fine specimen of sublime simplicity: the poetical inversion of words is preserved: — And he said,— Jehovah from Zion will roar, And from Jerusalem will he send forth his voice; Then mourn with the inhabitants of shepherds, And wither will the top of Carmel. The roarings of lions are dreadful to shepherds. God's voice is either of mercy or of judgment; it is the latter here, and evidently that of drought, (see Amos 5:6,) as the withering of Carmel was to be the effect. — Ed.

repentance, might anticipate the destruction which they hear to be nigh. The Prophet then commends here very highly the truth of what God teaches, by saying that it is not what vanishes, but what is accomplished; for when he destroys nations and kingdoms, it comes to pass according to prophecies: God then shall utter his voice from Jerusalem

Then it follows, And mourn shall the habitations of shepherds {אבל}, abel, means to mourn, and also to be laid waste, and to perish. Either sense will well suit this place. If we read, mourn, etc., then we must render the following thus, and ashamed shall be the head, or top, of Carmel. But if we read, perish, etc., then the verb {בש} besh must be translated, wither; and as we know that there were rich pastures on Carmel, I prefer this second rendering: wither then shall the top of Carmel; and the first clause must be taken thus, and perish shall the habitations of shepherds

As to what is intended, we understand the Prophet's meaning to be, that whatever was pleasant and valuable in the kingdom of Israel would now shortly perish, because God would utter his voice from Zion The meaning then is this, --- ``Ye now lie secure, but God will soon, and even suddenly, put forth his power to destroy you; and this he will do, because he denounces on you destruction now by me, and will raise up other Prophets to be heralds of his vengeance: this will God execute by foreign and heathen nations; but yet your destruction will be according to these threatening which ye now count as nothing. Ye indeed think them to be empty words; but God will at length show that what he declares will be fully accomplished.''

With respect to Carmel, there were two mountains of this name; but as they were both very fertile, there is no need to take much trouble to inquire of which Carmel the Prophet speaks. Sufficient is what has been said, --- that such a judgment is denounced on the kingdom of Israel as would consume all its fatness; for as we shall hereafter see, and the same thing has been already stated by the Prophet Hosea, there was great fertility as to pastures in that kingdom.

We must, at the same time, observe, that the Prophet, who was a shepherd, speaks according to his own character, and the manner of life which he followed. Another might have said, `Mourn shall the whole country, tremble shall the palaces,' or something like this; but the Prophet speaks of mount Carmel, and of the habitations of shepherds, for he was a shepherd. His doctrine no doubt was despised, and many profane men probably said, ``What! he thinks that he is still with his cows and with his sheep; he boasts that he is God's prophet, and yet he is ever engrossed by his stalls and his sheepfolds.'' It is then by no means improbable, but that he was thus derided by scornful men: but he purposely intended to blunt their petulance, by mingling with what he said as a Prophets those kinds of expressions which savored of his occupation as a shepherd. Let us now proceed ---

Amos 1:3-5

3. Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron:

3. Sic dixit Jehova, Super tribus sceleribus Damasci et super quatuor non ero propitius ei; quia trituraverunt serris (vel, tribulis ferreis) Gilead.

4. But I will send a fire into the house of Hazael, which shall devour the palaces of Benhadad.

4. Et mittam ignem in domum Chasael, et vorabit palatia Ben-Adad.

5. I will break also the bar of Damascus, and cut off the inhabitant from the plain of Aven, and him that holdeth the sceptre from the house of Eden: and the people of Syria shall go into captivity unto Kir, saith the Lord.

5. Et confringam vectem Damasci et excidam habitatorem ex Bikath-Aven (vel, ex planitie Aven, vel, molestiae vel, doloris: alii vertunt, ex templo idoli) et tenentem sceptrum e domo Eden (alii appellative accipiunt, e domo voluptatis;) et transferetur populus Syriae Kirah (in Kir) dicit Jehova.

It is singular that Amos said that his words were concerning Israel, and that he should now turn to speak of Damascus and the country of Syria. This seems inconsistent; for why does he not perform the office committed to him? why does he not reprove the Israelites? why does he not threaten them? why does he not show their sins? and why does he speak of the destruction then nigh to the people of Syria? But it is right here to consider what his design was. He shows briefly, in the last verse, that ruin was nigh the Israelites; for God, who had hitherto spared them, was now resolved to ascend his tribunal. But now, that he might better prepare the Israelites, he shows that God, as a judge, would call all the neighboring nations to an account. For had the Prophet threatened the Israelites only, they might have thought that what they suffered was by chance, when they saw the like things happening to their neighbors: ``How is it credible that these evils and calamities have flowed from God's vengeance, since the Idumeans, the Moabites, the Ammonites, the Syrians, and the Sidonians, are implicated in these evils in common with ourselves? For if God's hand pursues us, it is the same with them: and if it is fate, that with blind force exercises its rule over the Moabites, the Idumeans, and the Syrians, the same thing, doubtless, is to be thought of our case.'' Thus all the authority of the Prophet must have lost its power, except the Israelites were made to know that God is the judge of all nations.

We must also bear in mind, that the kingdom of Israel was laid waste, together with other neighboring countries, as war had spread far and wide; for the Assyrian, like a violent storm, had extended through the whole of that part of the world. Not only, then, the Israelites were distressed by adversities at that time, but all the nations of which Amos prophesied. It was hence necessary to add the catalogue which we here find, that the Israelites might have as many confirmations respecting God's vengeance, as the examples which were presented to their eyes, in the dire calamities which everywhere prevailed. This is to be borne in mind. And then the Prophet regarded another thing: If the Idumeans, the Moabites, the Syrians, and Ammonites, were to be treated so severely, and the Prophet had not connected the Israelites with them, they might have thought that they were to be exempted from the common punishments because God would be propitious to them; for hypocrites ever harden themselves the more, whenever God spares them: ``See, the Ammonites and the Moabites are punished; the Idumeans, the Syrians, and other nations, are visited with judgment: God then is angry with all these; but we are his children, for he is

indulgent to us.'' But the Prophet puts here the Israelites in the same bundle with the Moabites, the Idumeans, and other heathen nations; as though he said, ``God will not spare your neighbors; but think not that ye shall be exempt from his vengeance, when they shall be led to punishment; I now declare to you that God will be the judge of you all together.''

We now apprehend the design of the Prophet. He wished here to set before the eyes of the Israelites the punishment of others to awaken them, and also to induce them to examine themselves for we often see, that those who are intractable and refractory in their disposition, when directly addressed are not very attentive; but when they hear of the sins of others, and especially when they hear something of punishment, they will attend. The Prophet therefore designed by degrees to lead the Israelites to a teachable state of mind, for he knew them to be torpid in their indulgences, and also blinded by presumption, so that they could not be easily brought under the yoke: hence he sets before them the punishment which was soon to fall on neighboring nations.

We must yet observe that there was another reason I do not throw aside what I have already mentioned; but the Prophet no doubt had this also in view, --- that God would punish the Syrians, because they cruelly raged against the Israelites especially against Gilead and its inhabitants. As God, then, would inflict so grievous a punishment on the Syrians, because they so cruelly treated the inhabitants of Gilead, what was to be expected by the Israelites themselves who had been insolent towards God, who had violated his worship who had robbed him of his honor, who had in their turn destroyed one another! For, as we shall hereafter see, there was among them no equity, no humanity; they had forgotten all reason. Since, then, the Israelites were such, how could they hope that so many and so detestable crimes should go unpunished, when they saw that the Syrians, though uncircumcised, were not to be spared, because they so cruelly treated professed enemies, on whom they lawfully made war?

I now come to the words of the Prophet: Thus saith Jehovah, For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, will not be propitious to it; literally, I will not convert it [25] : but I take this actively that God would not turn himself to mercy, or that he would not be propitious to Damascus. We know that Damascus was the capital of Syria; And the Prophet here, by mentioning a part for the whole, threatens the whole people, and summons all the Syrians to God's tribunal, because they had inhumanely treated, as we shall see, the city of Gilead. But he says, God will not be propitious for three and four transgressions of Damascus. Some take this meaning, ``For three transgressions I have been propitious, for four I will not be.'' But there is no need of

[25] Eam non restituam — 'I will not restore it.' — Bishop Lowth. Of all commentators, Dathius gives the best explanation of the first part of this verse. His remarks are these: — "There is here mentioned a fourth sin, for which God would no longer defer punishment. The three sins, which had preceded the fourth, signify all those sins which they had besides committed, a definite number being put for a number indefinite." But as to the phrase, {{לא}, אשיבנו} non avertam illud --- `I will not turn it away,' so as to forgive it, that is, the fourth sin, he seems not to have been so felicitous; for the reference is evidently to Damascus. It will admit of either these renderings, --- ``I will not restore it,'' that is, to favor; or ``I will not turn away from it,'' so as to let it go unpunished. The whole verse I would render thus: --- Thus saith Jehova, --- For three transgressions of Damascus, Yea, for the fourth, I will not turn away from it; For it threshed Gelead with iron wains. Literally, it is, ``they threshed;'' for it is usual with the prophets, when speaking of a city or people, to pass from the singular to the plural number. --- Ed.

adding anything to the Prophet's words; for the most suitable sense here is that for the many sins of Damascus God would not be propitious to it: and the Prophet, I have no doubt, intended by the two numbers to set forth the irreclaimable perverseness of the Syrians. Seven in Scripture is an indefinite number, and is taken, as it is well known, to express what is countless. By saying then, three and four transgressions, it is the same as if he had said seven: but the Prophet more strikingly intimates the progress the Syrians made in their transgressions, until they became so perverse that there was no hope of repentance. This then is the reason, that God declares that he would no more forgive the Syrians, inasmuch as without measure or limit they burst forth into transgressions and ceased not, though a time for change was given them. This is the true meaning. And the Prophet repeats the same form of speech in speaking of Gaza, of Amman, of Edom, and of other nations.

Let us learn from this place, that God, whom the world regards as too cruel, when he takes vengeance on sins, shows really and by sure proof the truth of what he declares so often of himself in Scripture, and that is, that he bears long and does not quickly take vengeance: though men are worthy to perish yet the Lord suspends his judgments. We have a remarkable proof of this in these prophecies; for the Prophet speaks not only of one people but of many. Hence God endured many transgressions not only in the Syrians, but also in other nations: there was not then a country in which a testimony to God's forbearance did not exist. It hence appears, that the world unjustly complains of too much rigor, when God takes vengeance, for he ever waits till iniquity, as it was stated yesterday, reaches its highest point.

There is besides presented to us here a dreadful spectacle of sins among so many nations. At the same time, when we compare that age with ours, it is certain that greater integrity existed then: all kinds of evils so overflow at this day, that compared with the present, the time of Amos was the golden age; and yet we hear him declaring here, that the people of Judah and of Israel, and all the other nations, were monstrously wicked, so that God could not bring them to repentance. For he testifies not here in vain, that he would punish wickedness wholly obstinate since they had not turned to him, who had advanced to the number seven; that is, who had sinned, as it has been before stated, without measure or limits: and this ought also to be noticed in the Prophet's words; but I cannot now proceed farther.

Prayer.

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou seest us to be of a disposition so hard and rebellious, that we are not, without great difficulty, drawn to thee, --- O grant, that we may at least be subdued by the threatenings thou daily denouncest on us, and be so subdued, that being also drawn by thy word, we may give up ourselves to thee, and not only suffer ourselves to be constrained by punishments and collections, but also obey thee with a willing mind, and most readily offer ourselves to thee as a sacrifice of obedience, so that being ruled by the Spirit of thy Son, we may at length attain that blessed rest, which has been prepared for us by the same thy Son our Lord. Amen.

Lecture Fiftieth

We explained in yesterday's Lecture, that what the Prophet means by the three

and four transgressions of Damascus, is perverse and incurable wickedness; for God here declares that he had borne long enough with the sins of Damascus, and that now he is in a manner forced to proceed to extreme rigor, seeing that there was no hope of amendment. But what follows may seem strange; for immediately the Prophet subjoins, Because they have threshed Gilead with iron wains, or serrated machines. He records here only one wickedness: where, then, were the seven of which he spoke? The answer may be easily given. By naming the three and four sins of Damascus, he means not different kinds of sins, but rather the perverseness which we have mentioned; for they had been extremely rebellious against God, and God had suspended his vengeance, till it became evident that they were unhealable. It was, therefore, not necessary to mention here seven different sins; for it was enough that Damascus, which means the kingdom of Syria, was held bound by such a degree of obstinacy, that no remedy could be applied to its transgressions; for it had for a long time tried the patience of God.

Now the Prophet subjoins, I will send fire unto the house of Hazael, which will devour the palaces of Ben-hadad. The Prophet speaks still of the kingdom of Syria; for we know that both Ben-hadad and Hazael were kings of Syria. But Jerome is much mistaken, who thinks that Ben-hadad was here put in the second place, as if he had been the successor of Hazael, [26] while sacred history relates that Hazael came to Elisha when Ben-hadad was ill in his bed, (2 Kings 8:9;) and he was sent to request an answer. Now the Prophet declared that Hazael would be the king of Syria, and declared this not without tears; for he pitied his own people, of which this Syrian would be the destroyer. After he returned home, he strangled Ben-hadad, and took to himself the royal dignity. But it is common enough in Scripture to speak of a thing present, and then, as in this place, to add what has past, I will send fire into the house of Hazael, and this fire will devour the palaces of Ben-hadad; as though he said, ``I will destroy the kingdom of Syria, I will consume it as with burning.'' But he first names the house of Hazael, and then the palaces of Ben-hadad; as though he said, ``No ancientness shall preserve that kingdom from being destroyed.'' For, metaphorically, under the word fire, he designates every kind of consumption; and we know how great is the violence of fire. It is then as though he said, that no wealth, no strength, no fortifications, would stand in the way to prevent the kingdom of Syria from being destroyed.

He then adds, I will break in pieces the bar of Damascus The Prophet confirms what he had already said; for Damascus, being strongly fortified, might have seemed unassailable. By bar, the Prophet, mentioning a part for the whole, meant strongholds and everything which could keep out enemies. Nothing, then, shall prevent enemies from taking possession of the city of Damascus. How so? Because the Lord will break in pieces its bars.

It is then added, I will cut off, or destroy, the inhabitant from Bikoth Aven, or from the plain of Aven. It is uncertain whether this was the proper name of a place or

[26] There were two Ben-hadads: the one whom Hazael strangled, 2 Kings 8:15; and his son who succeeded him, 2 Kings 13:3. But ben-hadad seems to have been the name of many of the kings of Syria, as Pharaoh was the common name of the kings of Egypt. Hence the palaces of Ben-ha-dad were probably those built by several kings of that name. — Ed.

not, though this is probable; and yet it means a plain, derived from a verb, which signifies to cut into two, or divide, because a plain or a valley divides or separates mountains; hence a valley or plain is called in Hebrew a division. Now, we know that there were most delightful plains in the kingdom of Syria, and even near Damascus. Aven also may have been the name of a place, though it means in Hebrew trouble or laborer. But whatever it may have been, the Prophet no doubt declares here, that all the plains nigh Damascus, and in the kingdom of Syria, would be deprived of their inhabitants. I will then destroy the inhabitant from the plain of Aven, and the holder of the scepter from the house of Eden, or from the house of pleasure. This also may have been the name of a place, and from its situation a region, which, by its pleasantness greatly delighted its inhabitants. But the Prophet, I have no doubt, alludes, in these two words, to trouble and pleasure Removed, he says, shall be the people of Syria into Kir. The purport of this is, that the kingdom of Syria would be wasted, so that the people would be taken into Assyria; for the Prophet declares that the Assyrians would be the conquerors, and remove the spoils into their own kingdom, and lead away the people as captives; for the word city, as a part for the whole, is put here for the whole land. It now follows ---

Amos 1:6-8

6. Thus saith the Lord; For three transgressions of Gaza, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they carried away captive the whole captivity, to deliver them up to Edom:

6. Sic dicit Jehova, Super tribus sceleribus Gazae et super quatuor, non ero propitius ei, quia transtulerunt captivitatem perfectam, ut concluderent in Edom:

7. But I will send a fire on the wall of Gaza, which shall devour the palaces thereof:

7. Et mittam ignem in murum Gazae, qui devorabit palatia ejus:

8. And I will cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod, and him that holdeth the sceptre from Ashkelon, and I will turn mine hand against Ekron: and the remnant of the Philistines shall perish, saith the Lord God.

8. Et excidam habitatorem de Azoto et tenentem sceptrum de Ascalon; et convertam (vel, reducam) manum meam super Ekron, et peribunt reliquiae Philistinorum, dicit Dominus Jehova.

Amos directs here his discourse against Gaza, which the Philistine occupied. It was situated in the tribe of Judah, towards the sea; but as the Anakims were its inhabitants, the Philistine kept possession of it. Then the Jews had these enemies as {ακτωρηκους}, (guardians of the shore), who had a greater opportunity of doing harm from being so near: and we may learn from the Prophet's words, that the Philistines, who dwelt at Gaza, when they saw the Israelites oppressed by their enemies, joined their forces to foreign allies, and that the Jews did the same. God then now denounces punishment on them.

As to the word, Gaza, some think that it was given to the city, because Cambyses, when warring with the Egyptians, had deposited there his money and valuable furniture; and because the Persian call a treasure, gaza; but this is frivolous. We indeed know that the Greek translators ever put {γ} (gamma) for an {ע}, (oin); as of Omorrha they make Gomorrha, so of Oza they make Gaza. Besides, the city had this

name before the time of Cambyses. It was then more probably thus called from its strength: and that the Greeks rendered it Gaza was according to their usual practice, as I have said as to other words. But there were two Gazas; when the first was demolished, the inhabitants built another near the sea. Hence Luke, in the 8th chapter of the Acts says, that Gaza was a desert; and he thus makes a difference between Gaza on the sea-side and the old one, which had been previously demolished. But Amos speaks of the first Gaza; for he threatens to it that destruction, through which it happened that the city was removed to the shores of the Mediterranean.

I come now to the Prophet's words: ``God, he says, will not be propitious to Gaza for three and four transgressions, as the Philistine had so provoked God, that they were now wholly unworthy of pardon and mercy. I reminded you in yesterday's Lecture, that there is presented to us here a sad spectacle, but yet useful; for we here see so many people in such a corrupted state, that their wickedness was become to God intolerable: but at this day the state of things in the world is more corrupt, for iniquity overflows like a deluge. Whatever then men may think of their evils, the Lord from heaven sees how great and how irreclaimable is their obstinacy. It is nothing that some throw blame on others, or look for some alleviation, since all are ungodly and wicked: for we see that God here declares that he would, at the same time, take vengeance on many nations. The Idumeans might then have objected, and said, that their neighbors were nothing better; others might have made the same excuse; every one might have had his defense ready, if such a pretext availed, that all were alike implicated in the same guilt and wickedness. But we see that God appears here as a judge against all nations. Let us not then be deceived by vain delusions, when we see that others are like us; let every one know that he must bear his own burden before God: I will not then be propitious for three and for four transgressions

Because they carried away, he says, a complete captivity The Prophet records here a special crime, --- that the Gazites took away Jews and Israelites, and removed them as captives into Idumea, and confined them there. I have already said that it was not the Prophet's design to enumerate all their sins, but that he was content to mention one crime, that the Israelites might understand that they were involved in a heavier guilt, because they had grievously offended both God and men. If then so severe a vengeance was to be taken on Gaza, they ought to have known, that a heavier vengeance awaited them, because they were guilty of more and greater sins. But he says that they had effected a complete captivity, inasmuch as they had spared neither women, nor children, nor old men; for captivity is called perfect or complete, when no distinction is made, but when all are taken away indiscriminately, without any selection. They then carried away a complete captivity, so that no pity either for sex or for age touched them: that they might shut them up, he says, in Edom.

Now follows a denunciation of punishment, --- that God would send a fire on the wall of Gaza, to devour its palaces. And it hence appears that Gaza was a splendid town, and sumptuously built; and for this reason the Prophet speaks of its palaces. He shows, at the same time, that neither strength nor wealth would prevent God from executing the punishment which the Gazites deserved. He names also other cities of

Palestine, even Ascalon and Azdod, or Azotus, and Ecron. These cities the Philistine then possessed. The Prophet then intimates, that wheresoever they might flee, there would be no safe place for them; for the Lord would expose as a prey to enemies, not only Gaza, but also all the other cities. We may conclude that Ascalon was the first city; for there was the royal residence, though Gaza was the capital of the whole nation; it might yet be that the pleasantness of its situation, and other attractions, might have induced the king to reside there, though it was not the metropolis; Him then who holds the scepter I will cut off from Ascalon. He at last concludes, that all the remnants of Palestine would be destroyed. Now, whenever God denounces destruction on the Jews, he ever gives some hope, and says that the remnant would be saved: but here the Prophet declares that whatever remained of that nation would be destroyed; for God purposed to destroy them altogether, and also their very name.

He therefore adds, that Jehovah Lord had spoken, saith the Lord Jehovah This was added for confirmation; for the Philistine were then in possession of many and strong defenses, so that they boldly laughed to scorn the threatening of the Prophet. He therefore brings forward here the name of God. Now follows the prediction respecting Tyrus: ---

Amos 1:9-10

9. Thus saith the Lord; For three transgressions of Tyrus, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they delivered up the whole captivity to Edom, and remembered not the brotherly covenant:

9. Sic dicit Jehova, Super tribus sceleribus Tyri et super quatuor non ero ei propitius, quia concluserunt captivitatem perfectam in Edom, et non recordati sunt foederis fratrum:

10. But I will send a fire on the wall of Tyrus, which shall devour the palaces thereof.

10. Et mittam ignem in murum Tyri, qui comedet palatia ejus.

He uses nearly the same words respecting Tyrus which he did respecting Gaza, and charges it with the same sin, which was that of removing the Jews from their country, as refugees and exiles, into Idumea, and of selling them as captives to the Idumeans. As of all the rest, he declares the same of Tyrus, that they had not lightly sinned, and that therefore no moderate chastisement was sufficient; for they had for a long time abused God's forbearance, and had become stubborn in their wickedness.

But what he says, that they had not been mindful of the covenant of brethren, some refer to Hiram and David; for we know that they had a brotherly intercourse, and called each other by the name of brothers; so great was the kindness between them. Some then think that the Tyrians are here condemned for having forgotten this covenant; for there ought to have remained among them some regard for the friendship which had existed between the two kings. But I know not whether this is too strained a view: I rather incline to another, and that is, that the Syrians delivered up the Jews and the Israelites to the Idumeans, when yet they knew them to be brethren: and they who implicate themselves in a matter of this kind are by no means excusable. When I see one conspiring for the ruin of his own brother, I see a

detestable and a monstrous thing; if I abhor not a participation in the same crime, I am involved in the same guilt. When therefore the Syrians saw the Idumeans raging cruelly against their brethren, for they were descended from the same family, they ought doubtless to have shown to the Idumeans how alienated they were from all humanity and how perfidious they were against their own brethren and relatives. Now the Prophet says, that they had been unmindful of the covenant of brethren, because they made themselves assistants in so great and execrable a crime as that of carrying away Jews into Idumea, and of shutting them up there, when they knew that the Idumeans sought nothing else but the entire ruin of their own brethren. This seems to be the real meaning of the Prophet.

But he adds, that God would send a fire on the wall of Tyrus to consume its palaces. When this happened, cannot with certainty be known: for though Tyrus was demolished by Alexander, as Gaza also was, these cities, I doubt not, suffered this calamity long before the coming of Alexander of Macedon; and it is probable, as I have already reminded you, that the Assyrians laid waste these countries, and also took possession of Tyrus, though they did not demolish that city; for in Alexander's time there was no king there, it had been changed into a republic; the people were free, and had the chief authority. There must then have been there no small changes, for the state of the city and its government were wholly different from what they had been. We may then conclude that Tyrus was laid waste by the Assyrians, but afterwards recovered strength, and was a free city in the time of Alexander the Great. Let us now proceed: for I dwell not on every word, as we see that the same expressions are repeated by the Prophet.

Amos 1:11-12

11. Thus saith the Lord; For three transgressions of Edom, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because he did pursue his brother with the sword, and did cast off all pity, and his anger did tear perpetually, and he kept his wrath for ever:

11. Sic dicit Jehova, Super tribus sceleribus Edom et super quatuor non ero ei propitius, quia persequutus est gladio fratrem suum, et violavit misericordias suas, et diripuit in seculum ira ejus, et indignationem servavit perpetuo:

12. But I will send a fire upon Teman, which shall devour the palaces of Bozrah.

12. Et mittam ignem in Theman, qui comedet palatia Bozrah.

The Prophet now passes to the Idumeans themselves. He had denounced ruin on the uncircumcised nations who delivered up the Jews into their hands: but they deserved a much heavier punishment, because their crime was much more atrocious. The Idumeans derived their origin, as it is well known, from their common father Isaac and bore the same symbol of God's covenant, for they were circumcised. Since nearness of blood, and that sacred union, could not make them gentle to the Jews, we hence perceive how brutal was their inhumanity. They were then unworthy of being forgiven by God, when he became so severe a judge against heathen nations. But the Prophet says now, that the Idumeans had sinned more than their neighbors, and that their obstinacy was unhealable and that hence they could no longer be borne, for they had too long abused God's forbearance, who had withheld his vengeance

until this time.

He charges them with this crime, that they pursued their brother with the sword. There is here an anomaly of the number, for he speaks of the whole people. Edom then pursued his brother, that is, the Jews. But the Prophet has intentionally put the singular number to enhance their crime: for he here placed here, as it were, two men, Edom and Jacob, who were really brothers, and even twins. Was it not then a most execrable ferocity in Edom to pursue his own brother Jacob? He then sets before us here two nations as two men, that he might more fully exhibit the barbarity of the Idumeans in forgetting their kindred, and in venting their rage against their own blood. They have then pursued their brother with the sword; that is, they have been avowed enemies, for they had joined themselves to heathen nations. When the Assyrians came against the Israelites, the Idumeans put on arms: and this, perhaps, happened before that war; for when the Syrians and Israelites conspired against the Jews, it is probable that the Idumeans joined in the same alliance. However this may have been, the Prophet reproaches them with cruelty for arming themselves against their own kindred, without any regard for their own blood.

He afterwards adds, They have destroyed their own compassions; some render the words, ``their own bowels;'' and others in a strained and improper manner transfer the relative to the sons of Jacob, as though the Prophet had said, that Edom had destroyed the compassions, which were due, on account of their near relationship, from the posterity of Jacob. But the sense of the Prophet is clearly this, --- that they destroyed their own compassions, which means, that they put off all sense of religion, and cast aside the first affections of nature. He then calls those the compassions of Edom, even such as he ought to have been influenced by: but as he had thrown aside all regard for humanity, there was not in him that compassion which he ought to have had.

He then adds, His anger has perpetually raged He now compares the cruelty of the Idumeans to that of wild beasts; for they raged like fierce wild animals, and spared not their own blood. They then raged perpetually, even endlessly, and retained their indignation perpetually. The Prophet seems here to allude to Edom or Esau, the father of the nation; for he cherished long, we know, his wrath against his brother; as he dared not to kill his brother during his father's life. Hence he said, I will wait till my father's death, then I will avenge myself, (Genesis 27:41) Since Esau then nourished this cruel hatred against his brother Jacob, the prophet here charges his posterity with the same crime; as though he had said, that they were too much like their father, or too much retained his perverse disposition, as they cherished and ever retained revenge in their hearts, and were wholly implacable. There may have been other causes of hatred between the Idumeans and the posterity of Jacob: but they ought, notwithstanding, whatever displeasure there may have been, to have forgiven their brethren. It was a monstrous thing past endurance, when a regard for their own blood did not reconcile those who were, by sacred bonds, connected together. We now perceive the object of the Prophet: and we here learn, that the Idumeans were more severely condemned than those mentioned before, and for this reason, --- because they raged so cruelly against their own kindred.

He says in the last place, I will send fire on Teman, to consume the palaces of Bozrah By fire he ever means any kind of destruction. But he compares God's vengeance to a burning fire. We know that when fire has once taken hold, not only on a house, but on a whole city, there is no remedy. So now the Prophet says, that God's vengeance would be dreadful, that it would consume whatever hatred there was among them: I will then send fire on Teman; which, as it is well known, was the first city of Idumea. Let us now proceed ---

Amos 1:13-15

13. Thus saith the Lord; For three transgressions of the children of Ammon, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have ripped up the women with child of Gilead, that they might enlarge their border:

13. Sic dicit Jehova, Super tribus sceleribus filiorum Ammon, et super quatuor non ero ei propitius; quia secuerunt gravidas (praegnantes) Gilead, ut propagarent suum terminum:

14. But I will kindle a fire in the wall of Rabbah, and it shall devour the palaces thereof, with shouting in the day of battle, with a tempest in the day of the whirlwind:

14. Et accendam ignem in muro Rabbah, qui vorabit palatia ejus in clamore (vel, jubilo) in die proelii, in turbine die tempestatis:

15. And their king shall go into captivity, he and his princes together, saith the LORD.

15. Et transibit rex eorum in captivitatem, ipse et principes ejus simul, dicit Jehova.

He now prophesies against the Ammonites, who also derived their origin from the same common stock; for they were the posterity of Lot, as it is well known; and Lot was counted as the son of Abraham, as Abraham, having taken him with him from his country brought him up, no doubt, as his own son. Then Abraham was the common father of the Jews and of the Ammonites. Now, when the children of Ammon, without any regard to relationship, joined their forces to those of enemies, and conspired together, their cruelty admitted of no excuse. And there is no doubt but that they were guilty of many other crimes; but God, by his Prophet, enumerates not all the sins for which he had purposed to punish them, and only points out distinctly, as in passing, but one sin, and generally declares, that such people were utterly past hope, for they had hardened themselves in their wickedness.

He therefore says of the children of Ammon, that they rent the pregnant women Some take {הרות}, erut, for {הרים}, erim, mountains; but I see not what can induce them, unless they think it strange that pregnant women were rent, that the Ammonites might extend further their borders; and for this ends it would be more suitable to regard the word as meaning mountains; as though he said, ``They have cut through mountains, even the earth itself; there has been no obstacle through which the Ammonites have not made their way: an insatiable cupidity has so inflamed them, that they have rent the very mountains, and destroyed the whole order of nature.'' Others take mountains metaphorically for fortified cities; for when one seeks to take possession of a kingdoms cities stand in his way like mountains. But this exposition is too strained.

Now, since {הרות}, erut, mean women with child, the word, I doubt not, is to be taken in its genuine and usual sense, as we see it to be done in Hosea. [Hoseah 13:16.] But why does the Prophet say, that the Ammonites had rent pregnant women? It is to show, that their cupidity was so frantic, that they abstained not from any kind of cruelty. It is possible that one be so avaricious as to seek to devour up the whole earth, and yet be inclined to clemency. Alexander, the Macedonian, though a bloody man, did yet show some measure of kindness: but there have been others much more cruel; as the Persian, of whom Isaiah speaks, who desired not money, but shed blood, (Isaiah 13:17) So the Prophet says here of the Ammonites, that they not only, by unlawful means, extended their borders, used violence and became robbers who spoiled others of their property, but also that they did not spare even women with child. Now this is the worst thing in the storming of towns. When a town has wearied out an enemy, both pregnant women, and children, and infants may, through fury, be destroyed: but this is a rare thing, and never allowed, except under peculiar circumstances. He then reproaches the Ammonites, not only for their cupidity, but also for having committed every kind of cruelty to satisfy their greediness: they have then torn asunder women with child, that they might extend their borders.

I will therefore kindle a fire in the wall of {רבה}, Rabe, which shall devour its palaces, (the Prophet adds nothing new, I shall therefore go on,) and this by tumult, or by clamour, in the day of war. The Prophet means that enemies would come and suddenly lay waste the kingdom of Ammon; and that this would be the case, as a sudden fire lays hold on wood, in the day of war; that is as soon as the enemy attacked them, it would immediately put them to fight, and execute the vengeance they deserved, by a whirlwind in the day of tempest By these figurative terms the Prophet intimates that the calamity destructive to the Ammonites, would be sudden.

He finally adds, And their king shall go into captivity, he and his princes together As {מלכם}, melcam, was an idol of the people, some regard it here as a proper name; but he says, {ושריו} {הוא} {מלכם}, melcam eva ushariu, `their king, he and his princes;' hence the Prophet, no doubt, names the king of Ammon, for he joins with him his princes. He says then that the ruin of the kingdom would be such, that the king himself would be led captive by the Assyrians. This prediction was no doubt fulfilled, though there is no history of it extant.

Prayer.

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou hast designed, by so many examples, to teach the world the fear of thy name, we may improve under thy mighty hand, and not abuse thy forbearance, nor gather for ourselves a treasure of dreadful vengeance by our obstinacy and irreclaimable wickedness, but seasonably repent while thou invites us, and while it is the accepted time, and while thou offerest to us reconciliation, that being brought to nothing in ourselves, we may gather courage through grace, which is offered to us through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lecture Fifty-first

Amos 2

A

Amos 2:1-3

1. Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Moab, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because he burned the bones of the king of Edom into lime:

1. Sic dicit Jehova, Super tribus sceleribus Moab et super quatuor non convertam eum (vel, non convertam me, sicut prius diximus,) quia ipse combussitossa regis Edom in calcem:

2. But I will send a fire upon Moab, and it shall devour the palaces of Kerioth: and Moab shall die with tumult, with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet:

2. Et mittam ignem in Moab qui comedet palatia, ({קריות}, alii vertunt urbium appellative: sed magis arbitror esse proprium nomen loci) et morietur in tumultu Moab, in strepitu, in clangore tubae.

3. And I will cut off the judge from the midst thereof, and will slay all the princes thereof with him, saith the Lord.

3. Et excidam judicem e medio ejus, et omnes principes ejus occidam cum eo, dicit Jehova.

Now Amos prophesies here against the Moabites, and proclaims respecting them what we have noticed respecting the other nations, --- that the Moabites were wholly perverse, that no repentance would be hoped for, as they had added crimes to crimes, and reached the highest pitch of wickedness; for, as we have said, the number, seven, imports this. The Prophet then charges the Moabites here with perverseness: and hence we learn that God's vengeance did not come hastily upon them, for their wickedness was intolerable since they thus followed their crimes. But he mentions one thing in particular, --- that they had burnt the bones of the king of Edom.

Some take bones here for courage, as though the Prophet had said, that the whole strength of Edom had been reduced into ashes: but this is a strained exposition; and

its authors themselves confess that they are forced to it by necessity, when yet there is none. The comment given by the Rabbis does not please them, --- that the body of a certain king had been burnt, and then that the Moabites had strangely applied the ashes for making a cement instead of lime. Thus the Rabbis trifle in their usual way; for when an obscure place occurs, they immediately invent some fable; though there be no history, yet they exercise their wit in fabulous glosses; and this I wholly dislike: but what need there is of running to allegory, when we may simply take what the Prophet says, that the body of the king of Edom had been burnt: for the Prophet, I doubt not, charges the Moabites with barbarous cruelty. To dig up the bodies of enemies, and to burn their bones, --- this is an inhuman deed, and wholly barbarous. But it was more detestable in the Moabites, who had some connection with the people of Edom; for they descended from the same family; and the memory of that relationship ought to have continued, since Abraham brought up Lot, the father of the Moabites; and thus the Moabites were under an obligation to the Idumeans. If then any humanity existed in them, they ought to have restrained their passions, so as not to treat so cruelly their brethren. Now, when they exceeded all moderation in war, and raged against dead bodies, and burnt the bones of the dead, it was, as I have said, an extremely barbarous conduct. The meaning then is, that the Moabites could no longer be borne with; for in this one instance, they gave an example of savage cruelty. Had there been a drop of humanity in them, they would have treated more kindly their brethren, the Idumeans; but they burnt into lime, that is, into ashes, the bones of the king of Edom, and thereby proved that they had forgotten all humanity and justice. We now understand the Prophet's meaning.

He therefore adds a threatening, I will send a fire on Moab, which shall devour the palaces of {קריות}, Koriut We have stated that what the Prophet means by these modes of speaking is that God would consume the Moabites by a violent punishment as by a burning fire, that fortified places could not hinder him from executing his vengeance, and that though they were proud of their palaces, yet these would avail them nothing.

And he subjoins, Moab shall die with tumult, with noise, with the sound of the trumpet; that is, I will send strong enemies, who will come and make no peace with the Moabites, but will take possession of every place, and of fortified cities, by force and by the sword. For what the Prophet means by tumult, by shouting, by the sound of the trumpet, is, that the Moabites would not come under the power of their enemies by certain agreements and compacts, as when a voluntary surrender is made, which usually mitigates the hostile rage of enemies; no, he says, it shall not be so; for their enemies shall have not only their wealth but their lives also.

He finally adds, And I will cut off the judge from the midst of her, and will slay her princes, saith Jehovah. God here declares, that the kingdom of the Moabites and the people shall be no more; for we know that men cannot exist as a body without some civil government. Wherever then there is an assemblage of men, there must be princes to rule and govern them. Hence, when God declares that there would be no more a judge among the Moabites, it is the same thing as if he had said, that

their name would be blotted out; for had the people of Moab continued, some princes must have necessarily, as we have said, remained among them. When princes then are destroyed, the people must also perish, for there is no security for them. The Prophet then denounces not here a temporary punishment on the Moabites, but utter ruin, from which they were never to rise. This is the meaning. Let us now proceed ---

Amos 2:4-5

4. Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have despised the law of the Lord, and have not kept his commandments, and their lies caused them to err, after the which their fathers have walked:

4. Sic dicit Jehova, Super tribus sceleribus Jehudah, et super quatuor non convertam cum; quia spreverunt (vel, abjecerunt) legem Jehovae, et statuta ejus non custodierunt; et errare eos fecerunt mendacia sua, post quae ambulaverunt patres ipsorum:

5. But I will send a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem.

5. Et mittam ignem in Jehudah, qui devorabit palatia Jerusalem.

Amos turns now his discourse to the tribe of Judah, and to that kingdom, which still continued in the family of David. He has hitherto spoken of heathen and uncircumcised nations: what he said of them was a prelude of the destruction which was nigh the chosen people; for when God spared not others who had through ignorance sinned, what was to become of the people of Israel, who had been taught in the law? For a servant, knowing his master's will, and doing it not, is worthy of many stripes, (Luke 12:47) God could not, then, forgive the children of Abraham, whom he had adopted as his peculiar people, when he inflicted each grievous punishments on heathen nations, whose ignorance, as it is commonly thought by men, was excusable. It is indeed true, that all who sin without law will justly perish, as Paul says in Romans 2, but when a comparison is made between the children of Israel and the wretched heathens, who were immersed in errors, the latter were doubtless worthy of being pardoned, when compared with that people who had betrayed their perverseness, and, as it were, designedly resolved to bring on themselves the vengeance of God.

The Prophet then having hitherto spoken of the Gentiles, turns his discourse now to the chosen people, the children of Abraham. But he speaks of the tribe of Judah, from which he sprang, as I said at the beginning; and he did this, lest any one should charge him with favoring his own countrymen: he had, indeed, migrated into the kingdom of Israel; but he was there a stranger. We shall now see how severely he reproved them. Had he, then, been silent as to the tribe of Judah, he might have been subject to calumny; for many might have said, that there was a collusion between him and his own countrymen and that he concealed their vices, and that he fiercely inveighed against their neighbors, through a wicked emulation, in order to transfer the kingdom again into the family of David. Hence, that no such suspicion might tarnish his doctrine, the Prophet here summons to judgment the tribe of Judah, and speaks in no milder language of the Jews than of other nations: for he says, that they,

through their stubbornness, had so provoked God's wrath, that there was no hope of pardon; for such was the mass of their vices, that God would now justly execute extreme vengeance, as a moderate chastisement would not be sufficient. We now then understand the Prophet's design.

I come now to the words: For they have despised, he says, the law of Jehovah. Here he charges the Jews with apostasy; for they had cast aside the worship of God, and the pure doctrine of religion. This was a crime the most grievous. We hence see, that the Prophet condemns here freely and honestly as it became him, the vices of his own people, so that there was no room for calumny, when he afterwards became a severe censor and reprover of the Israelites; for he does not lightly touch on something wrong in the tribe of Judah, but says that they were apostates and perfidious, having cast aside the law of God. But it may be asked, why the Prophet charges the Jews with a crime so atrocious, since religion, as we have seen in the Prophecies of Hosea, still existed among them? But to this there is a ready answer: the worship of God was become corrupt among them, though they had not so openly departed from it as the Israelites. There remained, indeed, circumcision among the Israelites; but their sacrifices were pollutions, their temples were brothels: they thought that they worshipped God; but as a temple had been built at Bethel contrary to God's command, the whole worship was a profanation. The Jews were somewhat purer; but they, we know, had also degenerated from the genuine worship of God. Hence the Prophet does not unjustly say here, that they had despised the law of God.

But we must notice the explanation which immediately follows, --- that they kept not his statutes. The way then by which Amos proves that the Jews were covenant-breakers, and that having repudiated God's law, they had fallen into wicked superstitions, is by saying, that they kept not the precepts of God. It may, however, appear that he treats them here with too much severity; for one might not altogether keep God's commands either through ignorance or carelessness, or some other fault, and yet be not a covenant-breaker or an apostate. I answer, --- That in these words of the Prophet, not mere negligence is blamed in the Jews; but they are condemned for designedly, that is, knowingly and willfully departing from the commandments of God, and devising for themselves various modes of worship. It is not then to keep the precepts of God, when men continue not under his law, but audaciously contrive for themselves new forms of worship; they regard not what God commands, but lay hold on anything pleasing that comes to their minds. This crime the Prophet now condemns in the Jews: and hence it was that they had despised the law of God. For men should never assume so much as to change any thing in the worship of God; but due reverence for God ought to influence them: were they persuaded of this --- that there is no wisdom but what comes from God --- they would surely confine themselves within his commands. Whenever then they invent new and fictitious forms of worship, they sufficiently show that they regard not what the Lord wills, what he enjoins, what he forbids. Thus, then, they despise his law, and even cast it away.

This is a remarkable passage; for we see, first, that a most grievous sin is condemned by the Prophet, and that sin is, that the Jews confined not themselves to God's law, but took the liberty of innovating; this is one thing: and we also learn how

much God values obedience, which is better, as it is said in another place, than all sacrifices, (1 Samuel 15:22) And that we may not think this a light or a trifling sin, let us notice the expression --- that they despised the law of God. Every one ought to dread this as the most monstrous thing; for we cannot despise the law of God without insulting his majesty. And yet the Holy Spirit declares here, that we repudiate and reject the law of God, except we wholly follow what it commands, and continue within the limits prescribed by it. We now perceive what the Prophet means.

But he also adds, that their own lies deceived or caused them to go astray. He here confirms his preceding doctrine; for the Jews had ever a defense ready at hand, that they did with good intent what the Prophet condemned in them. They, forsooth! sedulously worshipped God, though they mixed their own leaven, by which their sacrifices were corrupted: it was not their purpose to spend their substance in vain, to undergo great expenses in sacrifices, and to undertake much labor, had they not thought that it was service acceptable to God! As then the pretense of good intention, (as they say,) ever deceives the unbelieving, the Prophet condemns this pretense, and shows it to be wholly fallacious, and of no avail. ``It is nothing,'' he says, ``that they pretend before God some good intention; their own lies deceive them.'' And Amos, no doubt, mentions here these lies, in opposition to the commands of God. As soon then as men swerve from God's word, they involve themselves in many delusions, and cannot but go astray; and this is deserving of special notice. We indeed see how much wisdom the world claims for itself: for as soon as we invent anything we are greatly delighted with it; and the ape, according to the old proverb, is ever pleased with its own offspring. But this vice especially prevails, when by our devices we corrupt and adulterate the worship of God. Hence the Prophet here declares, that whatever is added to God's word, and whatever men invent in their own brains is a lie: ``All this,'' he says, ``is nothing but imposture.'' We now see of what avail is good intention: by this indeed men harden themselves; but they cannot make the Lord to retract what he has once declared by the mouth of his Prophet. Let us then take heed to continue within the boundaries of God's word, and never to leap over either on this or on that side; for when we turn aside ever so little from the pure word of God, we become immediately involved in many deceptions.

It then follows, After which have walked their fathers; literally it is, Which their fathers have walked after them: [27] but we have given the sense. The Prophet here exaggerates their sin, the insatiable rage of the people; for the children now followed their fathers. This vice, we know, prevailed in all ages among the Jews; leaving the word of God, they ever followed their own dreams, and the delusions of Satan. Since God had now often tried to correct this vice by his Prophets, and no fruit followed, the Prophet charges them here with hardness, and by this circumstance enhances the

[27] This is one of the peculiarities of the Hebrew language — the use of two pronouns, the one before, and the other after the verb; and the preposition, when necessary, is given with the latter, and not the former. There is a similar peculiarity in the Welsh, exactly the same and of common occurrence. There are several instances of likeness between the two languages, and even an identity of idiom, and that in those things in which they differ from other languages. In the present instance the Welsh is literally, word for word, the Hebrew — y shai yr aeth eich tadau ar eu hol — which your fathers have gone after them. — Ed.

sin of the Jews: ``It is nothing new,'' he says, ``for children to imitate their fathers, and to be wholly like them: they are then the bad eggs of bad ravens.'' So also said Stephen,

`Ye are hard and uncircumcised in heart, and resist the Holy Spirit, as your fathers also did formerly,' (Acts 7:51.)

We now understand the intention of the Prophet.

But we hence learn of what avail is the subterfuge resorted to by the Papists, when they boast of antiquity. For they set up against the Law, the Prophets, and the Gospel, this shield, --- that theirs is the old religion, that they have not been the first founders, but that they follow what has been handed down to them from early times, and observed for many ages. When the Papists boastingly declare all this, they think that they say enough to put God to silence, and wholly to reject his Word. But we see how frivolous is this sort of caviling, and how worthless before God: for the Prophet does not concede to the Jews the example of the fathers as an excuse, but sets forth their sin as being greater because they followed their perfidious fathers, who had forsaken the Law of the Lord. The same thing is also said by Ezekiel,

`After the precepts of your fathers walk not,'
(Ezekiel 20:18.)

We now see what sort of crime is that of which the Prophet speaks. At last a threatening follows, ``The Lord saith, Fire will I send on Judah, which shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem.' But all this we have already explained. Let us now proceed ---

Amos 2:6

6. Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes;

6. Sic dicit Jehova, Super tribus sceleribus Israel et super quatuor non convertam cum (vel, ad eum,) quia emerunt (vel, vendiderunt: quidam enim deducunt a {כרת}, et putant {מ} esse literam formalem nominis: alii autem deducunt a {מכר} quod est vendere vel mercari; sed sensus Prophetae eodem redit, quia intelligit quasi ad nundinationem expositos fuisse justos; ideoque proestabit vertere, pretium ipsorum; quasi diceret, commercium non secus ac de merce voenale fuisse habitum; quoniam ergo emerunt) justum pro argento, et miserum pro calceamentis.

The Prophet here assails the Israelites, to whom he had been sent, as we have said at the beginning. He now omits every reference to other nations; for his business was with the Israelites to whom he was especially appointed a teacher. But he wished to set before them, as in various mirrors, the judgment of God, which awaited them, that he might the more effectually awaken them: and he wished also to exhibit in the Jews themselves an example of the extreme vengeance of God, though there was greater purity among them, at least a purer religion, and more reverence for God prevailed as yet among them. He in this way prepared the Israelites, that they might not obstinately and proudly reject his doctrine. He now then addresses them, and says that they continued unmoved in their many sins. The import of the whole is, that if the Moabites, the Idumeans, the Tyrians, the Sidonians, and other nations, and that if the Jews as well as these were irreclaimable in their obstinacy, so that their

diseases were incurable, and their wickedness such as God could no longer endure, the Israelites were also in the same condition; for they also continued perverse in their wickedness, and provoked God, and repented not, though God had waited long, and exhorted them to repent.

It is now meet for us to bear in mind what we have before said, --- that if impiety was so rampant in that age, and the contempt of God so prevailed, that men could not be restored to a sane mind, and if iniquity everywhere overflowed, (for Amos accuses not a few people, but many nations,) let us at this day beware, lest such corruptions prevail among us; for, certainly, the world is now much worse than it was then: nay, since the Prophet says here, that both the Israelites and the Jews were wholly irreclaimable in their obstinacy, there is no excuse for us at this day for deceiving ourselves with an empty name, because we have the symbol of faith, having been baptized; and in case we have other marks, which seem to belong to the Church of God, let us not think that we are therefore free from guilt, if we allow ourselves that unruliness condemned here by the Prophet both in the Israelites and in the Jews; for they had become hardened against all instructions, against all warnings. Let, then, these examples rouse our attention, lest we, like them, harden ourselves so much as to constrain the Lord to execute on us extreme vengeance.

Let us now especially observe what the Prophet lays to the charge of Israel. He begins with their cruel deeds; but the whole book is taken up with reproofs; there is to the very end a continued accusation as to those crimes which then prevailed among the people of Israel. He does not then point out only one particular crime, as with respect to the other nations; but he scrutinizes all the vices of which the people were guilty, as though he would thoroughly anatomize them. But these we shall notice in their proper order.

Now as to the first thing, the Prophet says, that the just among the Israelites was sold for silver, yea, for shoes. It may be asked, Why is it that he does not begin with those superstitions, in which they surpassed the Jews? for if God had resolved to destroy Jerusalem and his own temple, because they had fallen away into superstitious and spurious modes of worship, how much more ought such a judgment to have been executed on the Israelites, as they had perverted the whole law, and had become wholly degenerate; and even circumcision was nothing but a profanation of God's covenant? Why, then, does not the Prophet touch on this point? To this I answer, --- That as superstition had now for many years prevailed among them, the Prophet does not make this now his subject; but we shall hereafter see, that he has not spared these ungodly deprivations which had grown rampant among the Israelites. He indeed sharply arraigns all their superstitions; but he does this in its suitable place. It was now necessary to begin with common evils; and this was far more opportune than if he had at first spoken of superstitions; for they might have said, that they did indeed worship God. He therefore preferred condemning the Jews for alienating themselves from the pure commandments of God; and as to the Israelites, he reproves here their gross vices. But after having charged them with cruelty, shameless rapacity, and many lusts, after having exposed their filthy abominations, he then takes the occasion, as being then more suitable of exclaiming

against superstitions. This order our Prophet designedly observed, as we shall see more fully from the connection of his discourse.

I now return to the words, that they sold the just for silver, and the poor for shoes. He means that there was no justice nor equity among the Israelites, for they made a sale of the children of God: and it was a most shameful thing, that there was no remedy for injuries. For we hence, no doubt, learn, that the Prophet levels his reproof against the judges who then exercised authority. The just, he says, is sold for silver: this could not apply to private individuals, but to judges, to whom it belonged to extend a helping hand to the miserable and the poor, to avenge wrongs, and to give to every one his right. It is then the same as though the Prophet had said, that unbridled licentiousness reigned triumphant among the Israelites, so that just men were exposed as a prey, and were set, as it were, on sale. He says, first, that they were sold for silver, and then he adds for shoes: and this ought to be carefully observed; for when once men begin to turn aside from the right course, they abandon themselves to evil without any shame. When an attempt is first made to draw aside a man that is just and upright and free from what is corrupt, he is not immediately overcome; though a great price may be offered to him, he will yet stand firm: but when he has sold his integrity for ten pieces of gold, he may afterwards be easily bought, as the case is usually will women. A woman, while she is pure, cannot be easily drawn away from her conjugal fidelity: she may yet be corrupted by a great price; and when once corrupted, she will afterwards prostitute herself, so that she may be bought for a crust of bread. The same is the case with judges. They, then, who at first covet silver, that is, who cannot be corrupted except by a rich and fat bribe, will afterwards barter their integrity for the meanest reward; for there is no shame any more remaining in them. This is what the Prophet points out in these words, --- That they sold the just for silver; that is, that they sold him for a high price, and then that they were corrupted by the meanest gift, that if one offered them a pair of shoes, they would be ready without any blush of shame to receive such a bribe.

We now then see the crime of which Amos accused the Israelites. They could not raise an objection here, which they might have done, if he touched their superstitions. He wished therefore to acquire authority by reprobating first their manifest and obvious crimes. He afterwards, as it has been stated, speaks in its proper place, of that fictitious worship, which they, after having rejected the Law of God, embraced. It follows ---

Amos 2:7

7. That pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, and turn aside the way of the meek: and a man and his father will go in unto the same maid, to profane my holy name:

7. Anhelantes super pulverem terrae ad caput inopum, viam miserorum (vel, pauperum) deflectere facient: vir et pater ejus ingredientur ad puellam ut profanent nomen sanctum meam (vel, nomen sanctitatis meae.)

Here Amos charges them first with insatiable avarice; they panted for the heads of the poor on the dust of the earth. This place is in my judgment not well understood.

{שאף}, shaph, means to pant and to breathe, and is taken often metaphorically as signifying to desire: hence some render the words, ``They desire the heads of the poor to be in the dust of the earth;'' that is, they are anxious to see the innocent cast down and prostrate on the ground. But there is no need of many words to refute this comment; for ye see that it is strained. Others say, that in their cupidity they cast down the miserable into the dust; they therefore think that a depraved cupidity is connected with violence, and they put the lust for the deed itself.

But what need there is of having recourse to these extraneous meanings, when the words of the Prophet are in themselves plain and clear enough? He says that they panted for the heads of the poor on the ground; as though he had said, that they were not content with casting down the miserable, but that they gaped anxiously, until they wholly destroyed them. There is then nothing to be changed or added in the Prophet's words, which harmonize well together, and mean, that through cupidity they panted for the heads of the poor, after the poor had been cast down, and were laid prostrate in the dust. The very misery of the poor, whom they saw to be in their power, and lying at their feet, ought to have satisfied them: but when such an insatiable cupidity still inflamed them, that they panted for more punishment on the poor and the miserable, was it not a fury wholly outrageous? We now perceive the Prophet's meaning: He points out again what he has said in the former verse, --- that the Israelites were given to rapacity, avarice, and cruelty of every kind.

He adds at last, and the way of the miserable they pervert. He still inveighs against the judges; for it can hardly comport with what belongs to private individuals, but it properly appertains to judges to pervert justice, and to violate equity for bribery; so that he who had the best cause became the loser, because he brought no bribe sufficiently ample. We now see what was the accusation he alleged against the Israelites. But there follows another charge, that of indulgence in lusts.

Prayer.

Grant, almighty God, that since we see so grievous punishments formerly executed on unbelievers who had never tasted of the pure knowledge of thy word, we may be warned by their example, so as to abstain from all wickedness, and to continue in pure obedience to thy word; and that, as thou hast made known to us that thou hatest all those superstitions and depravations by which we turn aside from thy word, --- O grant, that we may ever be attentive to that role which has been prescribed to us by thee in the Law, as well as in the Prophets and in the Gospel, so that we may constantly abide in thy precepts, and be wholly dependent on the words of thy month, and never turn aside either to the right hand or to the left, but glorify thy name, as thou has commanded us, by offering to thee a true, sincere, and spiritual worship, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lecture Fifty-second

It follows, in the seventh verse, that the son and the father entered in into the same maid. The Prophet here charges the people of Israel with the unbridled lusts which prevailed then among them; which were promiscuous and even incestuous. It is, we know, a detestable monstrosity when a father and a son have connection with the same woman; for the common feeling of mankind abhors such flagitousness.

But the Israelites were so much addicted to their own lusts, that the father and the son had the same woman in common; as indeed it must happen when men allow themselves excessive indulgences. A strumpet will, indeed, readily admit a son and a father without any difference, for she has no shame; and no fear of God restrains abandoned women given up to filthiness. It hence becomes a common thing for a father and a son to pollute themselves by an incestuous concubinage. But it is no diminution of guilt before God, when men, blinded by their lusts, make no difference, and without any discrimination, and without any shame, follow their own sinful propensities. Whenever this happens, it certainly proves that there is no fear of God, and that even the common feeling of nature is extinct. Hence the Prophet now justly condemns in the Israelites this crime, that the father and the son entered in into the same woman.

An amplification of this crime is also added, --- that they thus polluted the holy name of God. We indeed know that the people of Israel were chosen for this end --- that the name of God might be supplicated by them; and well known is that declaration, often repeated by Moses,

`Be ye holy, for I am holy' (Leviticus 11:44)

Hence the children of Israel could not defile themselves without polluting at the same time the name of God, which was engraven on them. God then complains here of this profanation; for the children of Israel not only contaminated themselves, but also profaned whatever was sacred among them, inasmuch as the name of God was exposed to reproach, when the people thus gave way to their filthy lusts. We now understand what the Prophet means. It follows ---

Amos 2:8

8. And they lay themselves down upon clothes laid to pledge by every altar, and they drink the wine of the condemned in the house of their god.

8. Et super vestes oppignoratas accubuerunt prope omne altare, et vinum damnatorum biberunt in domo Dei sui.

Here the Prophet again inveighs against the people's avariciousness, and addresses his discourse especially to the chief men; for what he mentions could not have been done by the common people, as the lower and humbler classes could not make feasts by means of spoils gained by judicial proceedings. The Prophet then condemns here, no doubt, the luxury and rapacity of men in high stations. They lie down, he says, on pledged clothes nigh every altar. God had forbidden, in his law, to take from a poor man a pledge, the need of which he had for the support of life and daily use, (Exodus 22:26) For instance, it was prohibited by the law to take from a poor man his cloak or his coat, or to take the covering of his bed, or any thing else of which he had need. But the Prophet now accuses the Israelites, that they took away pledges and clothes without any distinction, and lay down on them nigh their altars. This belonged to the rich.

Then follows another clause, which, strictly speaking, must be restricted to the judges and governors, They have drunk the wine of the condemned in the house, or in the temple, of their God This may also be understood of the rich, who were wont to indulge in luxury by means of ill-gotten spoils: for they litigated without cause;

and when they gained judgment in their favor, they thought it lawful to fare more sumptuously. This expression of the Prophet may therefore be extended to any of the rich. But he seems here to condemn more specifically the cruelty and rapaciousness of the judges. We now then perceive what the Prophet had in view by saying, that they lay down on pledged garments.

He then says that they drank wine derived from fines, which had been laid on the condemned. But this circumstance, that is added, ought to be observed, --- that they lay down near altars and drank in the very temple: for the Prophet here laughs to scorn the gross superstition of the Israelites, that they thought that they were discharging their duty towards God, provided they came to the temple and offered sacrifices at the altar. Thus, indeed, are hypocrites wont to appease God, as if one by puppets played with a child. This has been a wickedness very common in all ages, and is here laid to the charge of the Israelites by the Prophet: they dared with an open front to enter the temple, and there to bring the pledged garments, and to feast on their spoils. Hypocrites do ever make a den of thieves of God's temple, (Matthew 21:13) for they think that all things are lawful for them, provided they put on the appearance, by external worship, of being devoted to God. Since, then, the Israelites promised themselves impunity and took liberty to sin, because they performed religious ceremonies, the Prophet here sharply reproves them: they even dared to make God a witness of their cruelty by bringing pledged garments and by blending their spoils with their sacrifices, as though God had a participation with robbers.

We hence see that rapaciousness and avarice are not alone condemned here by the Prophet, but that the gross superstition of the Israelites is also reprobated, because they thought that there would be no punishment for them, though they plundered and robbed the poor, provided they reserved a part of the spoil for God, as though a sacrifice from what had been unjustly got were not an abomination to him.

But it may be asked, Why does the Prophet thus condemn the Israelites for they had no sacred temple; and we also know (as it has been elsewhere stated) that the temples, in which they thought that they worshipped God, were filthy brothels, and full of all obscenity. How is it, then, that the Prophet now so sharply inveighs against them, because they mingled their spoils with their impure sacrifices? To this the answer is, That he had regard to their views, and derided the grossness of their minds, that they thus childishly trifled with the God whom they imagined for themselves. We say the same at this day to the Papists, --- that they blend profane with sacred things, when they prostitute their masses, and also when they trifle with God in their ceremonies. It is certain that whatever the Papists do is an abomination; for the whole of religion is with them adulterated: but they yet cease not to wrong God, whose name they pretend to profess. Such also were then the Israelites: though they professed still to worship God, they were yet sacrilegious; though they offered sacrifices to the calves in Dan and in Bethel, they yet reproached God, for they ever abused his name. This, then, is the crime the Prophet now condemns in them. But what I have said must be remembered, --- that this blind assurance is reprehended

in the Israelites, that they thought spoils to be lawful provided they professed to worship God: but they thus rendered double their crime, as we have said; for they tried to make God the associate of robbers, mingling as they did their pollutions with their sacrifices. Let us proceed ---

Amos 2:9-12

9. Yet destroyed I the Amorite before them, whose height was like the height of the cedars, and he was strong as the oaks; yet I destroyed his fruit from above, and his roots from beneath.

9. Et ego exterminavi Amorrhaeum a facie ipsorum, cujus proceritas erat sicut proceritas cedrorum, et qui fortis erat sicut quercus; et perdidi fructum ejus superne et radicem ejus subtus.

10. Also I brought you up from the land of Egypt, and led you forty years through the wilderness, to possess the land of the Amorite.

10. Et ego eduxi vos e terra Egypti, et deduxi vos (ambulare feci vos ad verbum) in deserto per quadraginta annos ad possidendam terram Amorrhaei.

11. And I raised up of your sons for prophets, and of your young men for Nazarites. Is it not even thus, O ye children of Israel? saith the Lord

11. Et suscitavi ex filiis vestris prophetas, et ex juvenibus vestris Nazaraeos: annon etiam hoc, filii Israel? dicit Jehovah.

12. But ye gave the Nazarites wine to drink; and commanded the prophets, saying, Prophesy not.

12. Et propinastis Nazaraeis vinum, et super prophetis mandastis, dicendo, Non prophetabitis.

God expostulates here with the Israelites for their ingratitude. He records the benefits he had before conferred on that people; and then shows how unworthily and disgracefully they had conducted themselves; for they forgot their many blessings and proudly despised God, and acted as if they were like other nations, and not bound to God for the singular benefit of adoption. The sum then is that God here complains that he had ill bestowed his blessings; and he reproves the people for their impiety, inasmuch as they did not lead a holier life after having been freely redeemed.

He says first, I have exterminated the Amorite before their face. God shows here that he was disgracefully defrauded by the Israelites, for whose sake he had previously destroyed the Amorites. For why were the Amorites exterminated, but that God would cleanse the land, and also, that he might give there a dwelling to his own people, that he might be purely worshipped? Then the people of Israel ought to have given up themselves wholly to the service of God; but as they neglected to do this, they frustrated the purpose of God, who had expelled the Amorites from that land, yea, and entirely destroyed them. The first complaint then is, that the children of Israel were nothing better than the Amorites, though God had given them the land, which was taken from its natives, that they might dwell in it, and on the condition, that his name should be there worshipped. Hence the Prophets say elsewhere, that they were Amorites. They ought to have been a new people; but as they followed the examples of others, in what did they differ from them? They are therefore called

their posterity. But the Prophet speaks not here so severely; he only reproves the Israelites, because they differed in nothing from the Amorites, whom they knew to have been destroyed that they might be introduced into their place, and succeed to their inheritance.

It is then added, that the Amorites were tall in stature, and also that they were strong men. By these words the Prophet intimates that the Amorites were not conquered by the people's valor, but by the wonderful power of God. We indeed know that they were dreaded by the people of Israel, for they were like giants. Then the Prophet speaks here of their height and strength, that the Israelites might consider that they overcame them not by their own valor, but that the land was given them by a miracle, for they had to do with giants, on whom they could hardly dare to look. It was then God who prostrated the cedars and the oaks before his people. We hence learn, that the Israelites could not boast of their own strengths as though they took possession of the land, because by means of war they ejected their enemies; for this was done by the singular kindness of God. They could not indeed have contended with their enemies, had not that been fulfilled which the Lord had so often foretold, `For you, while still, I will fight,' (Exodus 14:14) We now perceive the Prophet's intention. But we may hence farther learn, that the Israelites had not possessed the land, because they were more excellent than the Amorites, its ancient inhabitants; but because it so pleased God. There was therefore no reason for the people of Israel to be proud on account of any excellency. It hence appears that they, who did not consider this remarkable kindness done to them, were more than doubly ungrateful to God.

He says that their fruit above and root below were destroyed. By this metaphor God enlarges on what he said before, that the Amorites had been exterminated, so that none of them remained. ``I have demolished,'' he says, or, ``I have entirely destroyed the root beneath and the fruit above; I have extinguished the very name of the nation.'' And yet the Israelites were not better, though the Amorites were thus destroyed; but having succeeded in their place, they became like them: this was utterly inexcusable. The more severe God's vengeance had been towards the Amorites, the more ought the Israelites to have extolled his favor: but when with closed eyes they passed by so remarkable a testimony of God's paternal love, it appears that they were extremely wicked and ungrateful.

He afterwards subjoins, I have made you to ascend from the land of Egypt; I have made you to walk in the desert for forty years, in order to possess the land of the Amorite. The circumstances here specified are intended to confirm the same thing, that God had miraculously redeemed his people. Men, we know, for the most part extenuate the favors of God; nay, this evil is innate in us. This is the reason why the Prophet so largely describes and extols the redemption of the people. Hence he says now that they had been led out of the land of Egypt. And they ought to have remembered what had been their condition in Egypt; for there they were most miserably oppressed. When therefore that coming out was set before them, it was the same as if God had reminded them how shamefully they had been treated, and how hard had been their bondage in Egypt. That beginning ought to have humbled

them, and also to have stimulated them to the cultivation of piety. When now they proudly exulted against God, when no recollection of their deliverance laid hold on them, this vice is justly laid to their charge by the Prophet: ``See,'' he says, ``I have brought you forth from the land of Egypt; what were ye then? what was your nobility? what was your wealth or riches? what was your power? For the Egyptians treated you as the vilest slaves; your condition then was extremely ignominious; ye were as lost, and I redeemed you: and now buried is the recollection of so illustrious a kindness, which deserved to be for ever remembered.''

He afterwards adds, I have made you to walk, etc. The Prophet here reminds them of the desert, that the Israelites might know that God might have justly closed up against them an entrance into the land, though he had promised it for an inheritance to Abraham. For how was it that the Lord led them about for so long a time, except that they, as far as they could, had denied God, and rendered themselves unworthy of enjoying the promised land? Then the Prophet indirectly blames the Israelites here for having been the cause why God detained them for forty years without introducing them immediately into the promised land; which might have easily been done, had they not closed the door against themselves by their ingratitude. This is one reason why the Prophet now speaks of the forty years. And then, as God had in various ways testified his kindness towards the Israelites, he had thus bound them the more to himself; but an ungodly forgetfulness had buried all his favors. God daily rained manna on them from heaven; he also gave them drink from a dry rock; he guided them during the day by a pillar of cloud, and in the night by fire: and we also know how often God bore with them, and how many proofs he gave them of his forbearance. The Prophet, then, by speaking here of the forty years, meant to counsel the Israelites to call to mind the many favors, by which they were bound to God, while they were miraculously led by him for forty years in the desert.

He now subjoins, I have raised from your sons Prophets, and Nazarites from your young or strong men, (for {בחרים}, becharim, as we have elsewhere said, are called by the Hebrews chosen men;) then from your youth or chosen men have I raised Nazarites. Was it not so, O children of Israel? or certainly it was so: for the particle {אף}, aph, sometimes is a simple affirmation, and sometimes an addition. Is not then all this true, O children of Israel? saith Jehovah. God first reminds them that he had raised up Prophets from their sons. It if a remarkable proof of God's love, that he deigns to guide his people by Prophets: for if God were to speak himself from heaven, or to send his angels down, it would apparently be much more dignified; but when he so condescends as to employ mortal men and our own brethren, who are the agents of his Spirit, in whom he dwells, and by whose mouth he speaks, it cannot indeed be esteemed as highly as it deserves, that the Lord should thus accommodate himself to us in so familiar a manner. This is the reason why he now says, that he had raised up Prophets from their sons. They might have objected and said, that he had introduced the Law, and that then the heaven was moved, and that the earth shook: but he speaks of his daily favor in having been pleased to speak continually to his people, as it were, from mouth to mouth, and this by men: I have raised up, he says, Prophets from your sons; that is, ``I have chosen angels from the

midst of you.'' The Prophets are indeed, as it were, celestial ambassadors, and God commands them to be heard, the same as if he himself appeared in a visible form. Since then he choose angels from the midst of us, is not this an invaluable favor? We hence see how much force is contained in this reproof, when the Lord says, that Prophets had been chosen from his own people.

And he mentions also the Nazarites. It appears sufficiently evident from Numbers 6:1-8, why God appointed Nazarites. Nothing is more difficult, we know, than to induce men to follow a common rule; for they ever seek something new; and hence have arisen so many devices, so many additions, in short, so many leavenings by which God's worship is corrupted; for each wishes to be more holy than another, and affects some singularity. In case then any one had a wish to consecrate himself to God beyond what was commonly required, the Lord instituted a peculiar observance, that the people might not attempt any thing without at least his permission. Hence, when any one wished to consecrate himself to God, though they were all holy, he yet observed certain regulations: he abstained from wine; he allowed his hair to grow; in a word, he observed those ceremonial rites which we find in the chapter already referred to. God now reminds the Israelites that he had omitted nothing calculated to preserve them pure and holy, and entire in his worship.

After having related these two things, he asks them, Is not all this true? The facts were indeed well known: then the question, it may be said, was superfluous. But the Prophet designedly asked the Israelites the question here --- Is it not so? that he might more deeply touch their hearts. We indeed often despise things well known, and we see how many heedlessly allow what they hear, and pass by things without any thought. Such must have been the torpidity of the Israelites; they might have confessed without disputing that all this was true, --- that the Lord had raised up Prophets from their children, and that he had given to them that peculiar service of which we have spoken; but they mighty at the same time, have contemptuously overlooked the whole, had not this been added: ``What do ye mean, O Israelites? ye do indeed see that nothing has been left undone by me to retain you in my service: how then is it now, that your lust leads you away from me, and that having shaken off the yoke, ye grow thus wanton against me?'' We now perceive why the Prophet inserted this clause, for it was necessary that the Israelites should be more sharply roused, that being convicted, they might acknowledge their guilt.

But it now follows, Ye have to the Nazarites quaffed wine, and on the Prophets ye have laid a command, that they should not prophesy God complains here that the service which he had instituted had been violated by the people. It seems indeed a light offense, that wine had been given to the Nazarites; for the kingdom of God, we know, is not meat and drink, (1 Corinthians 8:8) though this saying of Paul was not yet made known, it was yet true in all ages. It was then lawful for the Nazarites to drink wine, provided they used moderation. To this the simple answer is that it was lawful to drink wine, for they of their own accord undertook to abstain from it. In similar manner God forbade the priests to drink wine or strong drink whenever they entered the temple. God indeed did not wish to be served with this kind of ceremony; but his intention was to show, by such a rite, that a greater temperance is required

in priests than in the people in general. His purpose then to withdraw them from the common mode of living, when they entered the temple; for they were as mediators between God and his people: they ought then to have consecrated themselves in a special manner. We now see that the priests were reminded by this external symbol, that greater holiness was required in them than in the people. The same thing must be also said of the Nazarites. The Nazarites might drink wine; but during the time they consecrated themselves to God, they were not allowed to drink wine, that they might thereby acknowledge that they were in a manner separated from the common habits of men, and were come nearer to God. We now understand why it was not lawful for the Nazarites to drink wine.

But it is frivolous for the Papists to pretend this example, and to introduce it in defense of their superstitions, and of their foolish and rash vows, which they undertake without any regard to God: for God expressly sanctioned and confirmed whatever the Nazarites did under the law. Let the Papists show a proof for their monastic vows, and foolish rites, by which they now trifle with God. We also know that there is a great difference between the Nazarites and the Papal monks; for the monks vow perpetual celibacy; others vow abstinence from flesh during life; and these things are done foolishly and rashly. They indeed think that the worship of God consists in these trifles. They promise what is not in their own power; for they renounce marriage, when they know not whether they are endued with the gift of chastity. And to abstain from flesh all their life is more foolish still, because they make this to be a part of God's service. I do, at the same time, wonder that they bring forward this example, since there are none so holy under the Papacy as to abstain from wine. As for the Carthusians and other monks of the holier sort, they seem determined to take revenge on abstinence from flesh, for they choose the sweetest and the liveliest wine; as though they intended to get a compensation for the loss and deprivation they undergo, when they pledge to God their abstinence from flesh, by reserving the best wine for themselves. These things are extremely ludicrous. Besides it is a sufficient reply if we adduce what I have already said, that the Nazarites did nothing under the law but what God in his word approved and sanctioned.

Since God then so sharply and severely reproved the Israelites for giving wine to the Nazarites, what must be expected now, when we transgress the chief commandments of God, when we corrupt his whole spiritual worship? It seemed apparently but a venial sin, so to speak, in the Nazarites to drink wine. Had they become wanton or robbed, or had they done wrong to their brethren, or committed forgery, the charge against them would have doubtless been much more atrocious. Yet the Prophet does not now abstain from bitterly complaining that they drank wine. Then, since God would have us to worship him in a spiritual manner, a much heavier charge lies against us, if we violate his spiritual worship. As, for instance, if we now pollute the sacraments, if we corrupt the purity of divine worship, if we treat his word with scorn, yea, if we transgress as to these main points of religion, much less is our excuse. Let us then remember that the Prophet here reproves the Israelites for giving wine to the Nazarites.

He then adds, that they commanded the Prophets not to prophesy. It is certain

that the Prophets were not forbidden to speak, at least expressly forbidden: but when the liberty of teaching faithfully as they ought to do is taken away from God's servants, and a command to this effect is given them, it is the same thing as to reject wholly their doctrine. The Israelites wished Prophets to be among them; and yet they could not endure their plain reproofs. But when they had polluted the worship of God, when their whole conduct became dissolute, the Prophets sharply inveighed against them: this freedom could not be endured by the Israelites; they wished to be spared and flattered. What then the Prophet now lays to their charge is that they forbade God's servants to declare the word freely and honestly as God had commanded them. Hence he says, On the Prophets they have laid a charge, that they should not prophesy.

This evil reigns in the world at this day. It would indeed be an execrable audacity wholly to reject the Lord's word; this is what even ungodly men dare not openly to do: but they wish at the same time some middle course to be adopted, that God might not fully exercise authority over them. They then would gladly put restraint on the Holy Spirit, so as not to allow him to speak but within certain limitations: ``See, we willingly allow thee some things, but this we cannot bear: so much asperity is extremely odious.'' And under the Papacy at this day the liberty of prophesying is wholly suppressed: and among us how many there are who wish to impose laws on God's servants beyond which they are not to pass? But we see what the Prophet says here, --- that the word of God is repudiated when the freedom of teaching is restrained, and men wish to be flattered, and desire their sins to be covered, and cannot bear free admonitions.

Let us also notice the word command, which the Prophet uses. {צוה}, tsue, means to order, to command, or to determine, in an authoritative manner. The Prophet then does not expostulate with them, because there were many who clamored, who murmured against the Prophets, as it is always the case; but he rather condemns the audacity of the chief men for daring to consult how they might silence the Prophets, and not allow them the free liberty of teaching, as we find it to be done even now. For not only in taverns and lurking-places do the ungodly clamor when their sins are severely reproved, but they also go forth publicly and complain that too much liberty is allowed the ministers of the word, and that some course ought to be adopted to make them speak more moderately. It is then this sacrilege that the Prophet now rebukes, when he says, that the ungodly commanded the Prophets, that they should not prophecy, as though they made a law, as though they wished to proclaim a decree, that the Prophets should not speak so boldly and so freely. It now follows ---

Amos 2:13

13. Behold, I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves.

13. Ecce ego angustians (vel, angustiatus, constrictus, vel, constringens) in loco vestro (vel, sub vobis,) sicuti constringitur plaustrum quod plenum est manipulo (id est, manipulis.)

The verb {עיק}, oik, in Hebrew is often transitive, and it is also a neuter. This place then may admit of two interpretations. The first is, that God was pressed under the Israelites, as a wagon groans under too much weight; and so God expostulates by

Isaiah, that he was weighed down by the Israelites, `Ye constrain me,' he says, `to labor under your sins' (Isaiah 1:14) The sense then, that God was pressed down under them, may be viewed as not unsuitable: and yet the more received interpretation is this, ``Behold, I will bind you fast as a wagon is bound.'' I am, however, more inclined to take the first meaning, --- that God here reprehends the Israelites, because he had been pressed down by them: for {תחתיכם}, tacheticam, properly signifies, ``Under you,'' which some render, but strainedly, ``Is your place:'' for when the verb is transitive, they say, that {תחתיכם}, tacheticam, must be rendered ``In your place:'' but this is frigid and forced; and the whole passage will run better, if we say, ``I am bound fast under you, as though ye were a wagon full of sheaves; [28]'' that is, ``Ye are to me intolerable.'' For God carried that people on his shoulders; and when they loaded him with the burden of iniquities, it is no wonder that he said that they were like a wagon --- a wagon filled with many sheaves: ``Ye are light as wind, but ye are also to me very burdensome, and I am forced at length to shake you off:'' and this he afterwards shows.

Prayer.

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast not only redeemed us by the blood of thy only begotten Son, but also guides us during our earthly pilgrimage, and suppliest us with whatever is needful, --- O grant, that we may not be unmindful of so many favors, and turn away from thee and follow our sinful desires, but that we may continue bound to thy service, and never burden thee with our sins, but submit ourselves willingly to thee in true obedience, that by glorifying thy name we may carry thee both in body and soul, until thou at length gatherest us into that blessed kingdom which has been obtained for us by the blood of thy Son. Amen.

Lecture Fifty-third

Amos 2:14-16

14. Therefore the flight shall perish from the swift, and the strong shall not strengthen his force, neither shall the mighty deliver himself:

14. Peribit fuga a veloce, et fortis non roborabit vires suas, et robustus non servabit (non liberabit) animam suam:

15. Neither shall he stand that handleth the bow; and he that is swift of foot shall not deliver himself: neither shall he that rideth the horse deliver himself.

15. Et tenens arcum non stabit, et velox pedibus suis non liberabit, neque ascensor equi liberabit animam suam.

16. And he that is courageous among the mighty shall flee away naked in that

[28] This verse has caused great labor to commentators; and many have been the views given. The first difficulty is in the words rendered in our version, "under you." {{תחת and with the lod commonly added when there is a suffix, often occurs, and means on doubt, an place, a spot, a standing, as in the following passages: Exodus 10:23; 16:29; 1 Samuel 14:9; Habakkuk 3:16; and this seems to be its meaning here. Then the second difficulty is about ``the cart'' or wagon. Some consider it to be the vehicle to carry corn; and others, the machine to thresh it as Newcome and others do: but this view is not consistent with the other expressions used in this clause. A critic, quoted by Poole, evidently gives the meaning in these words, Sensus est, q.d. Ego vos in eas angustas adducam, unde vos ipsos mimime expedire valeatis --- ``The sense is, as though he said, I will bring you to those straits, from which ye will by no means be able to deliver yourselves.'' I would then translate the verse thus: --- Behold, I will confine you in your place, As a wagon confines its load---the sheaves; or word for word, As a wagon confines the filling of it --- the sheaf. The rendering of the last line by Newcome is certainly not what the original will bear; his translation of the whole verse is this: --- Therefore, behold I will press your place, As a loaded corn-wain presseth its sheaves. It is not pressing or crushing that corresponds with the contents of the following verses, but confining and reducing to straits from which they could not escape. --- Ed.

day, saith the Lord

16. Et qui robustus est corde suo inter fortes nudus fugiet die illa, dicit Jehova.

I explained yesterday the verse, in which the Prophet says, in the name of God, that the people were like a grievous and heavy burden, as though they were a wagon laden with many sheaves. I stated that the Prophet's words are differently explained by many interpreters, who give this view, --- that God compares himself to a loaded wagon, under which the people were to be crushed. But no necessity constrains us to take the same verb in two senses, active and neuter, as they do; and then the comparison seems not quite suitable; and farther, it is better, as I have said, to say, that God complains, that he was loaded and pressed down under the people, than to render {תחתיכם}, tacheticm, ``In your place;'' for this is wholly a strained rendering. But most suitable is the Prophet's meaning, when understood as the complaint of God, that it was a grievous thing to bear the burdens of the people, when he saw that they were men of levity, and, at the same time, burdensome.

Hence the Prophet now denounces vengeance such as they deserved; and he says first, Perish shall flight from the swift, etc., that is, no one will be so swift as to escape by fleeing; and the valiant shall do nothing by fighting; for it is to confirm strength when one resists an adversary and repels assaults. The valiant, therefore, shall fight with no advantage; and then, The strong shall not deliver his own life: he who holds the bow shall not stand; that is, he who is equipped with a bow, and repels his enemy at a distance, shall not be able to stand in his place. He who is swift on foot shall not be able to flee, nor he who mounts a horse; which means that whether footmen or horsemen, they shall not, by their celerity, be able to escape death. And, lastly, he who is stout and intrepid in heart among the valiant shall flee away naked, being content with life alone, and only anxious to provide for his own safety.

The Prophet intimates by all these words, that so grievous would be the slaughter of the people, that it would be a miracle if any should escape.

We now then see how severely the prophet at the very beginning handled this people. He no doubt observed their great obduracy: for he would not have assailed them so sharply at first, had they not been for a long time rebellious and had despised all warnings and threatening. Amos was not the first who addressed them; but the Israelites had hardened themselves against all threatenings before he came to them. It therefore behaved him sharply to reprove them, as God treats men according to their disposition. I come now to the third chapter.

Chapter 3.

Amos 3

Amos 3:1-2

1. Hear this word that the Lord hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying,

1. Audite verbum hoc quod pronunciat Jehova super vos, filii Israel, super totam familiam eduxi (vel, ascendere feci) e terra Aegypti, dicendo,

2. You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.

2. Tantummodo vos cognovi ex omnibus familiis terrae: propterea visitabo super vos omnes iniquitates vestras.

The Prophet wished doubtless by these words to confirm his own authority, for he saw that his doctrine was regarded with contempt: and it is probable that the words recited here were not only once delivered by him, but had been often repeated. We know how great was the pride and confidence of that people: it was therefore needful to beat it down, that they might be habituated to dread and fear, when God reproved them by his Prophets.

It was then the common mode of speaking, when he said, Hear the word which God has spoken concerning your, O children of Israel. He brings forward here the name of God, that they might know that they had not to do with a mortal man, or with a shepherd, such as he was. We then observe here, what I have just referred to, and that is, that the Prophet seeks to strengthen his authority as a teacher, that he might gain more respect among the people. But he adds, concerning the whole family which I brought up out of Egypt It is certain that this discourse was not addressed except to the ten tribes; why, then, does the Prophet speak here so generally? Even because the kingdom of Israel formed the greater portion of the race of Abraham, and on this account they boasted that the adoption continued to be possessed by them. Since, then, they despised the tribe of Judah, and the half-tribe of Benjamin, which was connected with it, and had ever boasted of their great number, the Prophet says

here, by way of concession, that they were indeed the blessed seed, the posterity of Abraham; in a word, the elect people, whom God had redeemed from Egypt. Then the Prophet includes not here the kingdom of Judah, but concedes to the Israelites what they boasted, --- that they were the elect people, the holy race of Abraham, the very nation which had been miraculously delivered. ``Let, then,'' he says, ``all these boastings be granted, yet God will not, on this account, desist from executing his judgment upon them.''

We now apprehend the design of the Prophet: he first seeks to gain respect for his doctrine, and takes occasion to speak of his own vocation, that he brought nothing of his own, but only discharged faithfully the office committed to him; yea, that he was the organ of the Holy Spirit, and adduced nothing from his own mind, but only spoke what the Lord had commanded him. And then, as the Israelites, relying on their large number, thought that wrong was done them, when they were severely reprehended by the Prophets, and as there was an absurd rivalship between them and the kingdom of Judah, the Prophet concedes to them that for which they were foolishly proud; but, at the same time, he shows that they in vain confided in their number, inasmuch as God summoned them to judgment, though they were the elect people, and the holy seed, and the redeemed nation. These are the main points.

The Prophet afterwards declares what he had in charge, Only you have I known of all the families of the earth: I will therefore visit you for your iniquities. Many think that he still concedes to the Israelites what they were wont to boast of, --- that they were separated from the common class of men, because the Lord had adopted them: but it seems rather to be a reproach cast on them. God then brings forward here his benefits, of which we noticed yesterday a similar instance, that he might enhance the more the sin of the people, in returning the worst recompense to God, by whom they had been so liberally and so kindly treated: ``I,'' he says, ``have loved you only.'' It is indeed true, that the Israelites, as we have in other places often observed, gloried in their privileges; but the Prophet seems not to have this in view. God then expostulates with them for being so ungrateful: You only, he says, have I known. It is indeed certain that God's care is extended to the whole human race, yea even to oxen and asses, and to the very sparrows. Even the young of ravens cry to him, and the smallest bird is fed by him. We hence see that God's providence extends to all mortal beings; but yet not in an equal degree. God has ever known all men so as to give what is needful to preserve life. God has, therefore, made his sun to rise on all the human race, and has also made the earth to produce food. Then as to the necessaries of life, he performs the office of a Father towards all men. But he has known his chosen people, because he has separated them from other nations, that they might be like his own family. Israel, then, is said to be known, because God favored them alone with a gratuitous adoption, and designed them to be a peculiar people to himself. This is the knowledge of which the Prophet now speaks.

But by saying that they only, {רק}, rek, had been known, he shows that they had been chosen through God's singular favor, for there was no difference between the seed of Abraham and other nations, when regarded in themselves, otherwise this exception would have been superfluous. For if there had been any superiority or

merit in the people of Israel, this objection might have readily been made, ``We have indeed been chosen, but not without cause, for God had respect to our worthiness.'' But as they in nothing differed from other nations, and as the condition of all was alike by nature, the Lord upbraids them with this, that he had known them only; as though he said ``How has it happened, that ye are my peculiar possession and heritage? Has it been by your merit? Has it been because I was more bound to you than to other nations? Ye cannot allege these things. It has therefore been my gratuitous adoption. Ye are then the more bound to me, and less excusable is your ingratitude for rendering to me so unjust a recompense.'' So also Paul says, `Who makes thee to differ?' (1 Corinthians 4:7) He wished to show that every excellency in men ought to be ascribed to God. For the same purpose it is said here, you only have I loved and known of all the families of the earth: ``What were you? Ye were even the children of Adam, as all other nations; the same has been the beginning of all. There is then no reason for you to say, that I was attached to you by any prepossession; I freely chose you and chose you alone.'' All this tends to amplify grace; and ingratitude on their part does hereby appear more evident. For had God spoken these words of his general benefits, the guilt of his chosen people would not have been so great: but when he says that they only had been chosen, when others were passed by, their impiety seemed doubtless more base and wicked in not acknowledging God in their turn, so as to devote themselves wholly to Him, to whom they owed every thing.

And the bounty of God shines forth also in this respect, that he had known the Israelites alone, though there were many other nations. Had God owed any thing to men, he would not have kept it from them; this is certain. But since he repudiated all other nations, it follows, that they were justly rejected, when he made no account of them. Whence then was it that he chose the Israelites? We here see how highly is God's grace exalted by this comparison of one people with all other nations. And the same thing also appears from these words, of all the families of the earth; as though God had said, ``There were many nations in the world, the number of men was very great; but I regarded them all as nothing, that I might take you under my protection; and thus I was content with a small number, when all men were mine; and this I have done through mere favor, for there was nothing in you by which ye excelled others, nor could they allege that they were unjustly rejected. Since then I preferred you of my own will, it is evident that I was under no obligation to you.'' We now then understand the design of the Prophet's words.

He then subjoins, I will therefore visit upon you your iniquities. God declares here, that the Israelites would have to suffer a heavier judgment, because they acknowledged not their obligations to God, but seemed willfully to despise his favor and to scorn him, the author of so many blessings. Since then the Israelites were bound by so many and so singular benefits, and they at the same time were as wicked as other nations the Prophet shows, that they deserved a heavier punishment, and that God's judgment, such as they deserved, was nigh at hand. This is the substance of the whole. It now follows ---

Amos 3:3-8

3. Can two walk together, except they be agreed?

3. An duo ambulabunt simul nisi inter ipsos conveniat?

4. Will a lion roar in the forest, when he hath no prey? will a young lion cry out of his den, if he have taken nothing?

4. An rugiet leo in sylva et praeda non erit ei? an dabit leo (vel, leunculus edet, vel, emittet) vocem suam e cubili suo (vel, lustro) quum nihil ceperit?

5. Can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth, where no gin is for him? shall one take up a snare from the earth, and have taken nothing at all?

5. An cadet avis super laqueum ad terram absque aucupe (et auceps non erit ei? Ad verbum;) an tollet auceps laqueum ex terra priusquam capturam ceperit? (ad verbum, et capiendo non capiet: sed ego redidi sensum Prophetae.)

6. Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?

6. An clanget tuba in urbe et populus non contremiscet? An erit malum in urbe quod Jehova non fecerit?

7. Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.

7. Quia (vel, certe) non faciet Dominator Jehova quidquam nisi revelaverit secretum suum servis suis Prophetis.

8. The lion hath roared, who will not fear? the Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy?

8. Leo rugivit, quis non timeat? Dominator Jehova locutus est, quis non prophetet?

The Prophet here accumulates similitudes which may, however, be reduced to five particulars. He first shows that he uttered no empty words, but had God's authority for what he said; and he appeals to him as his witness and approver: this is one thing. Then he shows that God designedly announces the punishment he would inflict on transgressors, that they might in time repent, and that he does not cry out for no reason, as unreflecting men grow angry for nothing, but that he is driven to anger by just causes, and therefore terrifies them by his Prophets. He teaches, thirdly, that nothing happens by chance, that the Israelites might thereby be made to consider more attentively the judgments of God. In the fourth place, he declares that men are extremely stupid, when they are not moved by the threats which they hear proceed from God. He intimates, in the fifth place, that the execution of them was ready to take place, and that when God has denounced anything, his threatenings are not vain, such as those by which children are terrified.

These, then, are the five points, which we shall hereafter notice in their due order. He at the same time confirms what he said at the beginning of the chapter, --- that God did not suddenly take vengeance on the Israelites, but called them to repentance, provided they were healable. He had indeed spoken before more distinctly, `For three transgressions, and for four, I will not be propitious to them:' but now he demands attention from the people of Israel, ``Hear this ye children of Israel, Will two men walk together, except they agree among themselves?'' By these words he teaches, that though God might have immediately and unexpectedly brought punishment on them, he yet spared them and suspended his judgment, until they

repented, provided they were not wholly irreclaimable. Amos now then confirms the truth, that God would not punish the Israelites, as he might justly, but would first try whether there was any hope of repentance.

Let us now come to the first similitude; he asks Will two walk together without agreeing? Some forcibly misapply the Prophet's words, as though the meaning was, that God was constrained to depart from that people, because he saw that they were going astray so perversely after their lusts. The sense, according to these, would be, ``Do you wish me to walk with you?'' that is ``Do you wish that my blessing should dwell among you, that I should show to you, as usual, my paternal love, and bountifully support you? Why then do ye not walk with me, or, why should there not be a mutual consent? Why do ye not respond to me? for I am ready to walk with you.'' But this exposition, as ye see, is too strained. There are other two, which are these, --- either that the Prophet intimates here that so many of God's servants did not, as it were with one mouth, threaten the Israelites in vain, --- or, that the consent of which he speaks was that of God with his Prophets. This last exposition being rather obscure, requires to be more clearly explained. Some, then, take the sense of this verse to be the following, --- ``I am not alone in denouncing punishment on you; for God has before warned you by other Prophets; many of them still live; and ye see how well we agree together: we have not conspired after the manner of men, and it has not happened by any agreements that Isaiah and Micah denounce on you what ye hear from my mouth. It is then a hidden accordance, which proceeds from the Holy Spirit.'' This sense is not unsuitable.

But there is a third equally befitting, to which I have briefly referred, and that is, that the Prophet here affirms that he speaks by God's command, as when two agree together, when they follow the same road; as when one meets with a chance companion, he asks him where he goes, and when he answers that he is going to a certain place, he says I am going on the same road with you. Then Amos by this similitude very fitly sets forth the accordance between God and his Prophets; for they did not rashly obtrude themselves so as to announce anything according to their own will, but waited for the call of God, and were fully persuaded that they did not by any chance go astray, but kept the road which the Lord had pointed out. This could not itself have been a sufficiently satisfactory proof of his call; but the Prophet had already entered on his course of teaching; and though nearly the whole people clamored against him, he yet had given no obscure proofs of his call. He does not then here mention the whole evidence, as though he intended to show that he was from the beginning the Prophet of God; but he only confirms, by way of reproof, what his teaching had before sufficiently attested. Hence he asks, Will two walk together except they agree among themselves? as though he said, ``Ye are mistaken in judging of me, as though I were alone, and in making no account of God: ye think me to be a shepherd, and this is true; but it ought to be added, that I am sent by God and endued with the gift of prophecy. Since then I speak by God's Spirit, I do not walk alone; for God goes before, and I am his companion. Know then that whatever I bring forward proceeds not from me, but God is the author of what I teach.''

This seems to be the genuine meaning of the Prophet: by this similitude he affirms that he faithfully discharged his office, for he had not separated himself from God, but was his companion: as when two agree together to travel the same road; so also he shows that he and God were agreed. If, however, the former interpretation be more approved, I will not dispute the point; that is, that the Prophet here confirms his own doctrine by alleging that he was not alone, but had other colleagues; for it was no common confirmation, when it appeared evident that the other Prophets added their testimony to what he taught. As, however, he does not apply this similitude in this way, I know not whether such was his design: I have therefore brought forward what seems to me to be a simpler view.

The second similitude follows, Will a lion roar in the forest without a prey? Will a lion send forth his voice from his den when he has caught nothing? By this verse he intimates that God does not cry out for nothing by his Prophets; for ungodly men supposed that the air was only made to reverberate by an empty sound, when the Prophets threatened, ``These,'' they said, ``are mere words;'' as though indeed they could not find that the necessity of crying arose from themselves, because they had provoked God by their vices. Hence the Prophet, meeting their objection, says, ``If lions roar not, except when they have obtained a prey, shall God cry from heaven and send forth his voice as far as the earth, when there is no prey?'' The meaning is, that the word of God was very shamefully despised by the Israelites, as though there was no reason for crying, as though God was trifling with them. His word is indeed precious, and is not thrown heedlessly into the air, as if it were a mere refuse; but it is an invaluable seed. Since the Lord cries, it is not, says Amos, without a lawful cause. How so? The lions do not indeed roar without prey; God then does not cry by his Prophets, except for the best reason. It hence follows that the Israelites were hitherto extremely stupid inasmuch as they did not listen with more earnestness and attention to the teaching of the Prophets, as though God had uttered only an empty sound.

The third similitude now follows, Will a bird fall on the earth, he says, without a fowler? The Prophet means here that nothing happens without being foreseen by God; for as nets are laid for birds, so God ensnares men by his hidden punishments. Unexpectedly indeed calamity comes, and it is commonly ascribed to chance; but the Prophet here reminds us that God stretches his nets, in which men are caught, though they think that chance rules, and observe not the hand of God. They are deceived, he says; for the bird foresees not the ensnaring prepared for him; but yet he falls not on the earth without the fowler: for nets weave not themselves by chance, but they are made by the industry of the man who catches birds. So also calamities do not happen by chance, but proceed from the secret purpose of God. But we must observe, that similitudes ought not to be too strictly applied to the subject in hand. Were one to asks how God could compare himself here to a fowler, as there is craft and artifice employed in catching innocent birds, when nets are laid for them, it would be a frivolous question; for it is evident enough what the Prophet meant, and that the design of his words was to show, that punishments fall on men, and that they are ensnared through the secret purpose of God; for God has long

ago foreseen what he will do, though men act heedlessly, as the birds who foresee nothing.

Then it follows in the fourth place, Will the fowler remove his snare before he has made a capture? In this second clause the Prophet intimates that the threatening of God would not be without effect; for he will execute whatever he declares. It is indeed certain, that fowlers often return home empty, and gather their nets though they have taken nothing; but the Prophet, as I have said, in using these similitudes, only states what fowlers usually do, when they are in hope of some prey. As for instance, when one spreads his nets, he will wait, and will not gather his nets until he takes some prey, if so be that a prey should come; he may indeed wait in vain all night. Then as fowlers are not wearied, and wish not to lose their labor after they have spread their nets, so also the Prophet says that God does not in vain proclaim his threatenings to serve as empty bugbears, but that his nets remain until he has taken his prey; which means, that God will really execute what he has threatened by his Prophets. The meaning then is, that God's word is not ineffectual, but when God declares any thing, it is sure to be accomplished: and hence he reproves the Israelites for receiving so heedlessly and with deaf ears all God's threatening, as though he was only trifling with them. ``It will not be,'' he says, ``as you expect; for God will take his prey before he takes up his nets.''

He adds, in the last place, Shall a trumpet sound and the people tremble not? Here he reprehends, as I have said, the torpidity of the people, to whom all threatening were a sport: ``When a trumpet sounds,'' he says, ``all tremble; for it is a signal of danger. All then either fly for aid or stand amazed, when the trumpet sounds. God himself cries, his voice deserves much more attention than the trumpet which fills men's minds with dread; and yet it is a sound uttered to the deaf. What then does this prove, but that madness possesses the minds of men? Are they not destitute of all judgment and of every power of reason?'' We hence see that the Prophet in these words intended to show, that the Israelites were in a manner fascinated by the devil, for they had no thought of evils; and though they knew that God sounded the trumpet and denounced ruin, they yet remained heedless, and were no more moved than if all things were in a quiet state. What remains I cannot now finish.

Prayer.

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou art pleased daily to exhort us to repentance, and dost not suddenly execute thy judgment by which we might be in an instant overwhelmed, but givest us time to seek reconciliation, --- O grant, that we may now attend to thy teaching, and all thy admonitions and threatenings, and become teachable and obedient to thee, lest thou be constrained on finding us hardened against thy threatening, and wholly irreclaimable, to bring on us extreme vengeance: make us then so to submit ourselves to thee in the spirit of teachableness and obedience, that being placed under the protection of thy Son, we may truly call on thee as our Father, and find thee to be so in reality, when thou shalt show to us that paternal love, which thou hast promised, and which we have all experienced from the beginning, who have truly and from the heart called on thy name, through the same, even Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lecture Fifty-fourth

In our last Lecture were noticed these words of Amos --- that a whole people tremble at the sound of a trumpet; he now seems to add a sentence wholly different, and says, No calamity happens, except through God. But he had before said what we already noticed respecting the sound of the trumpet, that the people might understand that nothing happens by accident, and that punishments are, for just reasons, inflicted by the Lord; and this he soon after confirms by saying, that God did nothing, without having first revealed his secret to his Prophets. The meaning then is that the people at Israel were extremely stupid for not having repented after so many warnings; nay, they remained still in their perverseness, though they had been constrained by the most powerful means.

We now then comprehend what the Prophet means; but that the whole subject may be made more clear, let us notice this intervening sentence, there is no evil in the city which God has not done. By these words the Prophet reminds us, that calamities happen not by chance, as the vulgar of mankind believe; for the words, ``Prosperous or adverse fortunes'' are, we know, in the mouths of all, as though God was idle in heaven, and took no care of human affairs. Hence, whatever happens, the world usually ascribes it to fortune. But the Prophet here shows that the government of this world is administered by God, and that nothing happens except through his power. He does not, indeed, treat here of sin: but the Prophet, according to the usual practice, calls whatever is adverse to us, {רעה}, roe, evil. Whatever, then, we naturally shun, is usually called an evil; and this mode of speaking Amos follows here, as God is said by Isaiah to have in his power night and day, light and darkness, good and evil, (Isaiah 45:7) When good and evil are spoken of there, it is certain that what is referred to is prosperity and adversity. So also here, the Prophet teaches that men are chastised by God whenever anything adverse happens to them, as though he said that fortune rules not, as the world imagines, and that things do not take place at random; but that God is at all times the judge of the world. In short, Amos wished to recall the people to an examination of their lives, as though he summoned them to the tribunal of God; and he showed by evident external tokens that God was justly offended with the Israelites: ``Ye see that you are severely dealt with, do you think that God sleeps idly in heaven? Since nothing happens but by the will of God, he now designs to awaken you by treating you with so much sharpness and severity, so that you may know your vices.'' We now then perceive the design of the Prophet in saying, that there was no evil in the city which God had not done.

In a similar manner, also, does God by Jeremiah sharply expostulate with the people, because they imputed slaughters in war, famine, and other evils, to fortune. When, therefore, any calamity happened, the Jews complained of bad fortune, as the world are wont to do. God was displeased and severely reproved this profane notion; for the government of the world was thus taken away from him: for, were any thing to take place against his will, so much would be abstracted from his power; and farther men would grow hardened in their sins; for however grievously he might punish them, they would not yet acknowledge his hand: they might indeed cry out under the strokes, and feel how severe his scourges were; but they would not regard the

hand of the striker, which is the principal thing, as it is stated elsewhere, (Isaiah 9:13) Then the Prophet takes this as granted, that, whenever any calamity happens, men are extremely stupid, if they are not roused and reflect on their sins, and consider the tokens of God's wrath, so as to flee to him, and confess themselves guilty and implore his mercy.

But he had before spoken of the sound of the trumpet; for every excuse was thereby taken away from the Israelites, as God had not only recalled them to the right way by his scourges but also preceded these by his word: and he shows how justly he was displeased with them; hence the Prophet adds another sentence, For the Lord Jehovah will do nothing without revealing his secret to his servants, the Prophets. The Prophet declares in this verse, that God dealt not with the Israelites as with heathen nations; for God punished other people without warning them by his word; he summoned to judgment neither the Idumeans, nor the Ammonites, nor the Egyptians, but executed his vengeance, though he never addressed them. Different was his dealing with the Israelites; for God not only brought on them such punishment as they deserved, but he preceded it by His word, and showed beforehand what evil was nigh them, that they might anticipate it; he indeed gave them time to repent, and was ready to pardon them, had they been capable of being restored. Now then the Prophet aggravates the guilt of the people, because they had not only been chastised by the Lord, but they might, if they chose, have turned aside their punishment; instead of doing so they hardened themselves in their wickedness.

God then will do nothing without revealing his secret to his servants, the Prophets. This ought to be confined to that people, and it ought also to be confined to the punishments of which the Prophet speaks. It is certain that God executes many judgments which are hid both from men and angels; and Amos did not intend to impose a necessity on God, as if he was not free to do any thing without previously revealing it; such was not the Prophet's design; but his object was simply to condemn the Israelites for their irreclaimable perverseness and obstinacy, that, having been warned, they did not seriously think of repenting, but despised all God's threatening, and even scorned them. God then will do nothing, that is, ``God will not treat you in an ordinary way, as he does with other nations, whom he chastises without speaking to them. They, for the most part, understand not what is done; but God in a paternal manner kindly reminds you of your sins, shows why he resolves to chastise you and forewarns you, that you may have time to seek and ask forgiveness.''

God therefore reveals his secret to his Prophets; that is, ``He does not suddenly or unexpectedly punish you, as he might do, and as ye see that he does with respect to others; but he proclaims what he will do, and sends his messengers, as though they were heralds sent to denounce war on you; and at the same time they open a way for reconciliation, provided ye are not wholly past recovery, and perverse in your wickedness. Ye are then doubly inexcusable, if God can do nothing by his word and by the punishment which he afterwards subjoins to his word.'' We now comprehend the object of the Prophet. Then foolish is the question, at least unreasonable, ``Does God here bind himself by a certain law, that he will do nothing, but what he previously reveals to his Prophets?'' For Amos means not this, but only affirms that

it was the common method which the Lord adopted in chastising that people. It is certain, that the Prophets did not know many things; for God distributed his Spirit to them by measure: all things then were not revealed to the Prophets. But Amos here only intimates that God did not deal with his chosen people as he did with heathen nations; for these often found God unexpectedly displeased with them, and had no time to reflect, that they might repent. Much more kindly and mercifully has God acted, says Amos, with that people; for God was unwilling suddenly to overwhelm or to surprise them, but has warned them by his Prophets. We see how widely this doctrine opens; but it is enough to understand the Prophet's design, and to know the purpose to which his discourse ought to be applied.

God then will do nothing without revealing first his secret to the Prophets. He calls it a secret, because men are perplexed when God executes vengeance on them, and stand amazed: but when they are in time warned, then what God designs becomes evident to them, and they know the cause and the source of punishment. Thus then the secret is revealed which was hid from miserable men: and the guilt of the people is doubled, when, after these threatening, they do not repent.

It now follows, The lion roars who would not fear? The Lord Jehovah speaks, who would not prophesy? In this verse the Prophet reproved the Israelites for their usual contentions with the Prophets when their sins were sharply reprehended. Thus indeed are men wont to do; they consider not that Prophets are sent from above, and that there is a charge committed to them. Hence, when Prophets are severe in their words, the world clamors and wrangles: ``What do these men intend? Why do they urge us so much? Why do they not allow us to rest quietly? for they provoke against us the wrath of God.'' Whenever then men are roused, they immediately menace God's Prophets with strife and contention, and regard not threatening as coming from God himself. This vice the Prophet now condemns: The lion roars, he says, who would not fear? God speaks, who would not prophesy? ``Ye think that I am your adversary; but ye can gain nothing by quarreling with me: were I silent, the voice of God would of itself be formidable enough. The evil then proceeds not from my mouth, but from God's command; for I am constrained, willing or unwilling, to obey God: he has chosen me to be a Prophet, and has showed what he intends that I should proclaim. What can I do, he says? I am not at liberty to invent revelations; but I faithfully bring forth to you what has been delivered to me by the Lord. How great then is your madness, that ye contend with me, and consider not that your strife and contention is with God himself?'' We now see what the Prophet meant, and also understand, why he adduced the four similitudes, of which we have already spoken. I now proceed with the remaining context.

Amos 3:9

9. Publish in the palaces at Ashdod, and in the palaces in the land of Egypt, and say, Assemble yourselves upon the mountains of Samaria, and behold the great tumults in the midst thereof, and the oppressed in the midst thereof.

9. Promulgate in palatiis Asdod, et in palatiis terrae Aegypti, et dicite, Congregamini super montes Samaria, et videte tumultus multos (vel, concussiones multas) in medio ejus, et oppressiones in medio ejus.

Amos begins here to set judges over the Israelites; for they would not patiently submit to God's judgment: and he constitutes and sets over them as judges the Egyptians and Idumeans. This prophecy no doubt increasingly exasperated the minds of the people, who were already very refractory and rebellious; but yet this was necessary. God, indeed, had cited them to his tribunal, as long as a hope of reconciliation remained: when they became angry on account of God's threatening, clamored against his servants, yea, and obstinately disputed, as though they were guilty of no fault, what remained, but that God should constitute judges over them, whom the Prophet names, even the Egyptians and Idumeans? ``Ye cannot bear my judgment; unbelievers, who are already condemned, shall pronounce sentence upon you. I am indeed your legitimate judge; but as ye have repudiated me, I will prove to you how true my judgment is; I will be silent, the Egyptians shall speak.'' And who were these Egyptians? Even those who were equally guilty with the Israelites, and labored under the same charges, or were at least not far from deserving a similar punishment; and yet God would compel the Israelites to hear the sentence that was to be pronounced on them by the Egyptians and Idumeans. We know how proudly the Israelites gloried in their primogeniture; but the Lord here exposes to scorn this arrogance, because they made such bad use of his benefits. We now then perceive the Prophet's intention.

Publish, he says, in the palaces of Ashdod, in the palaces of the land of Egypt, and say --- what? ``Assemble on the mountains of Samaria.'' He would have the Egyptians and the Idumeans to meet together, and the mountains of Samaria to be as it were the theater, though the idea of a tribunal is more suitable to the similitude that is used. It was then, as though the Egyptians and Idumeans were to be seated on an elevated place; and God were to set before them the oppressions, the robberies and iniquitous pillages, which prevailed in the kingdom of Israel. Assemble then on the mountains of Samaria. The Prophet alludes to the situation of the country: for though Samaria was situated on a plain, [29] there were yet mountains around it; and they thought themselves hid there, and were as wine settled on its lees. God says now, ``Let the Egyptians and Idumeans meet and view the scene; I will allot them a place, from which they can see how greatly all kinds of iniquity prevail in the kingdom of Israel. They indeed dwell in their plain, and think themselves sufficiently defended by the mountains around; but from these mountains even the very blind will be able to see how abominable and shameful is their condition.''

Let them come and see, he says, the oppressions in the midst of her. The word he uses is {מהומת}, meumet, tumults; but he means oppressions, committed without any regard to reason or justice, when all things are done with glamour and violence. ``Let them see then the oppressions, let them see the distresses.'' He speaks of their deeds; he afterwards mentions the persons; but the Prophet means the same thing, though he uses different forms of expression, that is, that the kingdom of Israel was filled with many crimes; for plunder of every kind prevailed there and men kept within no bounds of moderation, but by tumult and clamor pillaged the poor and the

[29] This is a mistake: Samaria was situated on a hill, and not on a plain: but there were hills or mountains surrounding it; so that what is said here equally applies to the place. — Ed.

miserable. It now follows ---

Amos 3:10

10. For they know not to do right, saith the Lord, who store up violence and robbery in their palaces.

10. Et non noverunt facere rectum, dicit Jehova, thesaurizantes rapinam et praedam in palatiis suis.

In this verse he confirms what I have already said of oppressions: he says that they despised every thing right. But not to know this lessens not their guilt, as though they ignorantly offended; but the Prophet means, on the contrary, that they had cast away far from them everything that was just and allowed themselves all liberty in sinning, without any discrimination, without any shame; as though he said, ``They are brute animals, who are void of all judgments of all reason, and of all shame; for they seek not to have a light understanding any more.'' here then he accuses the Israelites of wilful blindness; for they hardened themselves in every evil, and extinguished all judgments shame and reasons so that they no longer distinguished between what was just and unjust: and he mentions one thing in particular --- that they accumulated much wealth by plunder and robbery. The Israelites were no doubt guilty of many other crimes; but by stating a part for the whole, he mentions one thing which includes other things, and intimates, that the people were wholly given to all kinds of crimes, and that as they had cast aside every shame, obliterated every distinction, and repudiated every regard for justice, they abandoned themselves to every kind of wickedness. This, is the import of the Prophet's words.

But our Prophet points out here the gross sins of the Israelites, because he had previously constituted the blind as their judges. Hence it was the same as though he had said, ``Though the Egyptians and the Idumeans are void of light, yet your iniquity is so palpable, that they will be able to perceive it. There is indeed no necessity of any subtle disputation, since plunders and pillages are carried on with so much violence, since no moderation or equity is any longer observed, and no shame exists; but men rush headlong with blind impetuosity into every kind of evil; so that the very blind, though without eyes, can know what your state is. Then the Egyptians and Idumeans will perceive your vices, when located on the neighboring mountains.'' This is the meaning. It now follows ---

Amos 3:11-12

11. Therefore thus saith the Lord God; An adversary there shall be even round about the land; and he shall bring down thy strength from thee, and thy palaces shall be spoiled.

11. Propterea sic dicit Dominus Jehova, Adversarius et quidem in circuitu terrae, et tollet abs te robur tuum et diripientur palatia tua.

12. Thus saith the Lord; As the shepherd taketh out of the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear; so shall the children of Israel be taken out that dwell in Samaria in the corner of a bed, and in Damascus in a couch.

12. Sic dicit Jehova, Quemadmodum eripit pastor ex ore leonis duo crura vel externam partem auris, sic eripientur filii Israel qui habitant in Samaria in angulo lecti, et in Damasco tanquam in grabato.

The Prophet here announces the punishment God would inflict on the Israelites. An enemy, he says, and indeed one around you, etc. Some think {צר}, tsar, to be a verb in the imperative mood; but this cannot be maintained. But Amos, here declares that an enemy was near the Israelites, who would besiege them on every side. The ungodly are ever wont to seek escapes, and if they see the smallest hole, they think that they can escape. Strange is the presumption of men with regard to God: when they see themselves hemmed in, they are really frightened, yea, they become wholly disheartened; but yet they seek subterfuges on the right hand and on the left, and never submit to God except when constrained. This is the reason why the Prophet now says, that an enemy was near, and indeed around them; as though he said, ``You have no reason to think that there is any way of escape open to you; for God has hemmed you in on every side; there is therefore a siege which so confines you, that you in vain hope to escape.'' An enemy, he says, is indeed around --- around the whole land, who will take away from thee thy strength. Here the Prophet removes from the Israelites their vain confidence; for they could not think of God's vengeance, while looking on their own power. They indeed thought that they had sufficient protection in their own large number, riches, and arms, as men are wont to set up against God what proceeds from himself, as though creatures could do anything against him, and as though God could not take away, when he pleases, what he has given: and yet such is the blindness of men. Hence the Prophet says, that all the wealth and all the strength in which the Israelites excelled would be useless, inasmuch as an enemy, he says, armed by God, shall take from thee thy strength; and thy palaces shall be plundered.

In the next verse he leaves some hope, though this is not avowedly done. For when he says that some would be saved, as when a shepherd snatches from the jaws of a lion the ear of a sheep or two legs, it is not the Prophet's design to mitigate the severe judgment of which he had before spoken; but shows, on the contrary, that when any should be saved, it would not be because the people would defend themselves, or were able to resist; but that it would be as when a trembling shepherd snatches some small portion of a spoil from the lion's mouth. We must bear in mind what I have just said of the proud confidence of the people; for the Israelites thought that they were safe enough from danger; and therefore despised all threatenings. But what does Amos say? ``Think not,'' he says, ``that there will be any defense for you, for your enemies will be like lions, and there will be no more strength in you to resist them than in sheep when not only wolves but lions, seize them and take them as their prey.'' When any thing is then saved, it is as it were by a miracle; the shepherd may perhaps take a part of the ear or two legs from the lion's mouth when he is satisfied. The shepherd dares not to contend with the lion; he always runs away from him, but the lion will have his prey and devour it at his pleasure; when he leaves a part of the ear or two legs, the shepherd will then seize on them, and say, ``See, how many sheep have been devoured by lions:'' and these will be the proof's of his loss. So now the Prophet says, ``The Lord will expose you as a prey to your enemies, and their rapacity will not be less dreaded by you than that of a lion: in vain then ye think yourselves defended by your forces; for what is a sheep to a lion?

But if any part of you should remain, it will be like an ear or a leg: and still more, --- as when a lion devours a sheep, and leaves nothing after having taken his prey until he is satisfied, so shall it happen to you''.

They are then mistaken who think that the preceding commination is here designedly mitigated; for the Prophet does not do this, but continues the same subject, and shows that the whole people would become a prey, that their enemies would be like lions, and that they would have no strength to resist. Some hope, I indeed allow, is here given to the people; for, as it has been before seen, God intended that there should ever be some remnant as a seed among that chosen people. This, I admit, is true: but we must yet regard what the Prophet treats of; and what he had in view. He then did not intend here expressly to console the Israelites; though incidentally he says, that some would remain, yet his object was to show that the whole kingdom was now given up as a prey to lions, and that nothing would be saved except a very small portion, as when a shepherd carries away an ear when the wolves and lions had been satiated. [30] It follows ---

Amos 3:13-14

13. Hear ye, and testify in the house of Jacob, saith the Lord GOD, the God of hosts,

13. Audite et testificamini in domo Jacob, dicit Dominus Jehova, Deus exercituum,

14. That in the day that I shall visit the transgressions of Israel upon him I will also visit the altars of Bethel: and the horns of the altar shall be cut off, and fall to the ground.

14. Quia die quo visitabo scelera Israel super ipsum, etiam visitabo super altaria Bethel: et scindentur cornua altaris et cadent ad terram.

Amos, I have no doubt, added this passage, to show that the superstitions, in which he knew the Israelites falsely trusted, would be so far from being of any help to them, that they would, on the contrary, lead them to ruin, because the people were by them provoking God's wrath the more against themselves. When the Israelites heard that God was offended with them, they looked on their sacrifices and other superstitions, as their shield and cover: for thus do hypocrites mock God. But we know that the sacrifices offered at Bethel were mere profanations; for the whole worship was spurious. God had indeed chosen to himself a place where he designed sacrifices to be offered. The Israelites built a temple without any command, nay, against the manifest prohibition of God. Since then they had thus violated and corrupted the whole worship of God, strange was their madness to dare to obtrude on God their superstitions, as though they could thus pacify his displeasure! The Prophet then rebukes now this stupidity and says, In the day when God shall visit the sins of Israel, he will inflict punishment on the altars of Bethel By the sins, which the Prophet mentions, he means plunder, unjust exactions, robbery, and similar crimes; for there prevailed then, as we have seen, among the people, an unbridled cruelty, avarice, and perfidiousness.

Hence he says now, When God shall visit the sins of Israel; that is, when he shall punish avarice, pride, and cruelty; when he shall execute vengeance on pillages

[30] For further commentary on the end of this verse, see this selection in Lecture 55. — fj.

and robberies, he shall then visit also the altars of Bethel. The Israelites thought that God would be propitious to them while they sacrificed though they were wholly abandoned in their lives: they indeed thought that every uncleanness was purified by their expiations; and they thought that God was satisfied while they performed an external worship. Hence, when they offered sacrifices, they imagined that they thus made a compact with God, and presented such a compensation, that he dared not to punish their sins. Their own fancy greatly deceives them,'' says Amos. For, as we know, this was, at the same time, their principal sin, --- that they rashly dared to change the worship of God, that they dared to build a temple without his command; in short, that they had violated the whole law. God then will begin with superstitions in executing judgment for the sins of the people. We now then understand the Prophet's design in saying, that God would visit the altars of Bethel when inflicting punishment on the sins of Israel.

But as it was difficult to produce conviction on this subject, the Prophet here invites attention, Hear ye, and testify, he says, in the house of Jacob. Having bidden them to hear, he introduces God as the speaker: for the Israelites, as we know they were wont to do, might have pretended that Amos had, without authority, threatened such a punishment. ``Nothing is mine,'' he says. We then see the design of this address, when he says, Hear: he shows God to be the author of this prophecy, and that nothing was his own but the ministration. Hear ye, then, and testify in the house of Jacob By the word testify, he seals his prophecy that it might have more weight, that they might not think that it was a mere mockery, but might know that God was dealing seriously with them, Then testify ye in the house of Jacob. And for the same purpose are the titles which he ascribes to God, The Lord Jehovah, he says, the God of hosts He might have used only one word, ``Thus saith Jehovah,'' as the prophets mostly do; but he ascribes dominion to him, and he also brings before them his power, --- for what end? To strike the Israelites with terror, that vain flatteries might no longer, as heretofore, take possession of them; but that they might understand, that so far were they from doing anything towards pacifying God's wrath by their superstitions, that they thereby the more provoked him.

Prayer.

Grant, Almighty God, that inasmuch as we so provoke thee daily by our sins, that we are worthy of eternal destruction, and no good remains in us, and though we are severely chastised with temporal punishments, thou dost not yet take from us the hope of that mercy, which thou hast promised in thy Son to those who truly and from the heart repent and call on thee as their Father, --- O grant, that being touched with the sense of our evils, we may, in true humility, and with the genuine feeling of penitence, offer ourselves as a sacrifice to thee, and seek pardon with such groaning, that having undergone temporal punishments, we may finally enjoy that grace which is laid up for all sinners, who truly and from the heart turn to thee and implore that mercy which has been prepared for all those who really prove themselves to be the members of thine only begotten Son. Amen.

Lecture Fifty-fifth

One thing escaped me yesterday: pain in my head prevented me to look on the

book. The Prophet says in the twelfth verse, that the children of Israel would be so delivered as when a shepherd rescues only an ear, or some part of a sheep: he adds, ``So the children of Israel shall be rescued who dwell in Samaria in a corner of a bed, and at Damascus on a couch This similitude I did not explain. Some think that Damascus is here compared with Samaria, as the more opulent city; for Jeroboam the Second had extended the limits of his kingdom to that city, and subdued some portion of the kingdom of Syria: they then suppose, that Samaria is called a corner of a bed on account of its confined state, and Damascus a couch; but there is no reason for this. He might have better called Damascus a bed. Others give this exposition, ``They who shall escape among the people of Israeli shall not be the valiant and the brave, who will oppose the attack of the enemy, or with arms in hand defend themselves; but those shall be safe who will hide themselves and flee to their beds.'' But the Prophet seems here to compare Damascus and Samaria to beds for this reason, because the Israelites thought that they would find in them a safe receptacle: ``Thought then ye dwell at Samaria and Damascus as in a safe nest, it will yet be a miracle if a few of you will escape; it will be as when a shepherd carries away the ear of a sheep, after the lion has satiated himself.'' This seems to be the genuine meaning of the Prophet; for I doubt not but that he derides the foolish confidence in which the Israelites indulged themselves, thinking that they were secure from all danger when shut up within the gates of Samaria or of Damascus. ``Ye think that these nests will be safe for you; but lions, shall break through, and hardly one in a hundred, or in a thousand, shall in a corner of a bed escape; it will be as when a lion leaves an ear or part of a leg.'' Let us now proceed ---

Amos 3:15

15. And I will smite the winter house with the summer house; and the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall have an end, saith the Lord.

15. Et percutiam domum hyemalem cum domo aestiva, et peribunt domus eburneae et deficient domus magnae, dicit Jehova.

Amos shows again that in vain the great people trusted in their wealth and fortified places; for these could not hinder God from drawing them forth to punishment. As then abundance blinds men, and as they imagine themselves to be as it were inaccessible, especially when dwelling in great palaces, the Prophet here declares, that these houses would be no impediment to prevent God's vengeance to break through; I will then destroy the winter-house together with the summer-house. Amos no doubt intended by this paraphrase to designate the palaces. The poor deem it enough to have a cottage both for winter and summer; for they change not the parts of their buildings, so as to inhabit the hotter in winter, and to refresh themselves in the colder during summer: no such advantage is possessed by the poor, for they are content with the same dwelling through life. But as the rich sought warmth in winter, and had their summer compartments, the Prophet says, that their large and magnificent buildings would be no protection to the rich, for God's vengeance would penetrate through them; I will destroy then the winter with the summer house

And then he says, Fail shall the houses of ivory. We now see more clearly that the Prophet speaks here against the rich and the wealthy, who inhabited splendid

and magnificent palaces. Perish then shall the houses of ivory and fail shall the great houses; some say, many houses, but improperly; for the Prophet continues the same idea; and as he had before mentioned houses of ivory so he now calls them great houses; for they were not only built for use and convenience, like common and plebeian houses, but also for show and display; for the rich, we know, are ever lavish and profuse, not only in their table and dress, but also in their palaces. This is the meaning. Now follows ---

Chapter 4.

Amos 4

A

Amos 4:1

1. Hear this word, ye kine of Bashan, that are in the mountain of Samaria, which oppress the poor, which crush the needy, which say to their masters, Bring, and let us drink.

1. Audite verbum hoc vaccae Basan, qui estis in monte Samariae, quae opprimitis pauperes, quae conteritis egenos, quae dicitis dominis eorum, Affer et bibemus.

He who divided the chapters seems not to have well considered the Prophet's argument: for he pursues here his reproof of the rich, and he had been prophesying against the chief men in the kingdom of Israel. We indeed know how much ferocity there is in the rich, when they become formidable to others by their power. Hence the Prophet here laughs to scorn their arrogance: Hear, he says, this word; as though he said, ``I see how it will be; for these great and pompous men will haughtily despise my threatening, they will not think themselves exposed to God's judgment; and they will also think that wrong is done to them: they will inquire, `Who I am,' and ask, `How dares a shepherd assail them with so much boldness?' ``Hear then ye cows; as though he said, that he cared not for the greatness in which they prided themselves. ``What then is your wealth? It is even fatness: then I make no more account of you than of cows; ye are become fat; but your power will not terrify me; your riches will not deprive me of the liberty of treating you as it becomes me and as God has commanded me.'' We hence see that the Prophet here assails with scorn the chief men of the kingdom, who wished to be sacred and untouched. The Prophet asks by what privilege they meant to excuse themselves for not hearing the word of the Lord. If they pleaded their riches and their own authority; ``These,'' he says, ``are fatness and grossness; ye are at the same time cows and I will regard you as cows; and I will not deal with you less freely than I do with my cattle.'' We now then perceive the Prophet's intention.

But he goes on with his similitude: for though he here accuses the chiefs of the

kingdom of oppressing the innocent and of distressing the poor, he yet addresses them in the feminine gender, who dwell, he says, on the mountain of Samaria, who oppress the poor, who consume the needy, who say, etc. He does not think them worthy of the name of men; and yet they wished to be viewed a class separate from the common people, as though they were some heroes or halfgods. The Prophet, by way of contempt, calls them here cows; and he also withholds from them the name of men. Bashan, we know, derived its name from fatness; it was a very rich mountain, and celebrated for its pastures: as the fertility of this mountain was well known among that people, the Prophet gave the name of the cows of Bashan to those fat and full men: and it was right that they should be thus roughly handled, because through fatness, as it is usually the case, they had contracted dullness; for when men abound in riches, when they become great in power, they forget themselves and despise God, for they think themselves beyond the reach of danger. As then this security makes the rich torpid and inattentive to any threatenings, and disobedient to God's word, so that they regard all counsels superfluous, the Prophet here rebukes them with greater asperity, and addresses them, by way of reproach, under the name of cows. And when he says that they were on the mountain of Samaria, this is still ironical; for they might have made this objection, that they dwelt in the royal city, and were watchful over the state of the whole nation, and that the kingdom stood through their counsels and vigilance: ``I see how it is,'' he says; ``Ye are not on mount Bashan, but on the mount of Samaria; what is the difference between Samaria and Bashan? For ye are there inebriated with your pleasures: as cows, when fattened, are burdened with their own weight, and can hardly draw along their own bodies; so it is with you, such is your slowness through your gluttony. Samaria then, though it may seem to be a watch-tower, is yet nothing different from mount Bashan: for ye are not there so very solicitous (as ye pretend) for the public safety; but, on the contrary, ye devour great riches; and as your cupidity is insatiable, the whole government is nothing else to you than fatness or a rich pasturage.''

But the Prophet chiefly reproves them, because they oppressed the poor and consumed the needy. Though the rich, no doubt, did other wrongs, yet as they especially exercised cruelty towards the miserable, and those who were destitute of every help, this is the reason why the Prophet here elates expressly that the poor and the needy were oppressed by the rich: and we also know, that God promises special aid to the miserable, when they find no help on earth; for it more excites the mercy of God, when all cruelly rage against the distressed, when no one extends to them a helping hand or deigns to aid them.

He adds, in the last place, what they say to their masters. I wonder why interpreters render this in the second person, who say to your masters; for the Prophet speaks here in the third person: they seem therefore designedly to misrepresent the real meaning of the Prophet; and by masters they understand the king and his counselors, as though the Prophet here addressed his words to these chief men of the kingdom. Their rendering then is unsuitable. But the Prophet calls those masters who were exactors, to whom the poor were debtors. The meaning is, that the king's counselors and judges played into the hands of the rich, who plundered the poor; for

when they brought a bribe, they immediately obtained from the judges what they required. They are indeed to be bought by a price who hunt for nothing else but a prey.

They said then to their masters, Bring and we shall drink; that is, ``Only satiate my cupidity, and I will adjudge to thee what thou wouldest demand: provided then thou bringest me a bribe, care not, I will sell all the poor to thee.'' We now comprehend the design of the Prophet: for he sets forth here what kind those oppressions were of which he had been complaining. ``Ye then oppress the poor, --- and how? Even by selling them to their creditors, and by selling them for a price. Hence, when a reward is offered to you, this satisfies you: Ye inquire nothing about the goodness of the cause, but instantly condemn the miserable and the innocent, because they have not the means of redeeming themselves: and the masters to whom they are debtor; who through your injustice hold them bound to themselves, pay the price: there is thus a mutual collusion between you.'' It now follows ---

Amos 4:2

2. The Lord God hath sworn by his holiness, that, lo, the days shall come upon you, that he will take you away with hooks, and your posterity with fishhooks.

2. Juravit Dominus Jehova per sanctuarium suum, quia ecce dies veniunt super vos, et tollet vos in clypeo (vertunt quidam; alii, in hamo,) et residuum vestrum in spina piscationis.

Here Amos declares what sort of punishment awaited those fat cattle, who being well fed despised God, and were torpid in their fatness. He therefore says, that the days were nigh, when they should be taken away together with all that they had, and all their posterity, as by a hook of a fisher.

But to give more effect to his combination, he says that God had sworn by his sanctuary. [31] The simple word of God ought indeed to have been sufficient: but as we do not easily embrace the promises of God, so also hypocrites and the reprobate are not easily terrified by his threatening; but they laugh to scorn, or at least regard as empty, what God's servants declare. It was then necessary that God should interpose this oath, that secure men might be more effectually aroused.

``The Lord then has sworn by his sanctuary''. It is singular that God should swear by his temple rather than by himself: and this seems strange; for the Lord is wont to swear by himself for this reason, --- because there is none greater by whom he can swear, as the Apostle says, (Hebrews 6:13.) God then seems to transfer the honor due to himself to stones and wood; which appears by no means consistent. But the name of the temple amounts to the same thing as the name of God. God then says that he had sworn by the sanctuary, because he himself is invisible, and the temple was his ostensible image, by which he exhibited himself as visible: it was also a sign and symbol of religion, where the face of God shone forth. God did not then divest himself of his own glory, that he might adorn with it the temple; but he rather accommodated himself here to the rude state of men; for he could not in himself be

[31] This word is commonly rendered 'holiness,' though it is also used to denote 'the sanctuary.' Calvin has been blamed for taking it here in the latter sense. What induced him to do so is evident from his comment: and when we consider all the circumstances of the passage, we may perhaps be disposed to think him right. — Ed.

known, but in a certain way appeared to them in the temple. Hence he swore by the temple.

But the special reason, which interpreters have not pointed out, ought to be noticed, and that is, that God, by swearing by his sanctuary, repudiated all the fictitious forms of worship in which the Israelites gloried, as we have already seen. The meaning is this, --- ``God, who is rightly worshipped on mount Zion, and who seeks to be invoked there only, swears by himself; and though holiness dwells in himself alone, he yet sets before you the symbol of his holiness, the sanctuary at Jerusalem: he therefore repudiates all your forms of worship, and regards your temples as stews or brothels.'' We hence see that there is included in this expression a contrast between the sanctuary, where the Jews rightly and legitimately worshipped God, and the spurious temples which Jeroboam built, and also the high places where the Israelites imagined that they worshipped him. We now then understand what is meant by the words, that God sware by his sanctuary

And he sware by his sanctuary, that the days would come, yea, were nigh, in which they should be taken away with hooks, or with shields. {צנה}, tsane, means in Hebrew to be cold: [32] but {צנות}, tsanut denotes shields in that language, and sometimes fishing-hooks. Some yet think that the instrument by which the flesh is pulled off is intended, as though the Prophet still alluded to his former comparison. But another thing, which is wholly different, seems to be meant here, and that is, that these fat cows would be drawn out as a little fish by a hook; for afterwards he mentions a thorn or a hook again. It is the same as though he had said, ``Ye are indeed of great weight, and ye are very heavy through your fatness; but this your grossness will not prevent God from quickly taking you away, as when one draws out a fish by a hook.'' We see how well these two different similitudes harmonize: ``Ye are now trusting in your own fatness, but God will draw you forth as if ye were of no weight at all: ye shall therefore be dragged away by your enemies, not as fat cows but as small fishes, and a hook will be sufficient, which will draw you away into remote lands.'' This change ought to have seriously affected the Israelites, when they understood that they would be stripped of their fatness and wealth, and then taken away as though they were small fishes, that a hook was enough, and that there would be no need of large wagons. It follows ---

Amos 4:3

3. And ye shall go out at the breaches, every cow at that which is before her; and ye shall cast them into the palace, saith the LORD.

3. Et per rupturas exibitis unaquaeque coram se (coram facie sua,) et projicietis vos ab excelso (vel, ex palatio,) dicit Jehova.

The Prophet expresses now, in different words, what would be the future calamity of that kingdom; but he still speaks of the rich and the chief men. For though he threatened also the common people and the multitude, it was not yet needful expressly to name them, inasmuch as when God fulminates against the chief men, terror ought surely to seize also the humbler classes. The Prophet then designedly

[32] It is once applied in Proverbs 25:13, to denote the piercing cold of snow; but its ideal meaning seems to be, pointed, piercing, penetrating: hence it means a thorn, a goad, and also a fishing-hook. — Ed.

directs his discourse still to the judges and the king's counselors, Ye shall go forth at the breaches, every one of you. We see that he continues as yet the same mode of speaking, for he counts not those pompous and haughty masters as men, but still represents them as cows, ``Every one'', that is, every cow, he says, shall go forth through the breaches over against it. We know how strictly the rich observe their own ranks and also how difficult it is to approach them. But the Prophet says here, that the case with them would be far different: ``There will not be,'' he says, ``a triple wall or a triple gate to keep away all annoyances, as when ye live in peace and quietness; but there will be breaches on every side, and every cow shall go forth through these breaches; yea, shall throw herself down from the very palace: neither the pleasures nor the indulgence, in which ye now live, shall exist among you any more; no, by no means, but ye will deem it enough to seek safety by flight. Each of you will therefore rush headlong, as when a cow, stung by the gadfly or pricked by goads runs madly away.'' And we know how impetuous is the flight of cows. So also it will happen to your says the Prophet. We now then perceive the import of the words.

Some take {הרמונה}, ermune, for Armenian because the Israelites were led away into that far country; and others, take it for the mount Amanus; but for this there is no reason. I do not take its as some do, as meaning, ``In the palace,'' but, on the contrary, ``From the palace,'' or, from the high place. Ye shall then throw yourselves down from the palace; that is, ``Ye shall no more care for your pomps and your pleasures, but will think it enough to escape the danger of death, even with an impetuosity like that of beasts, as when cows run on headlong without any thought about their course.''

It was not without reason that he repeated the name of God so often; for he intended to shake off from the Israelites their self-complacencies; inasmuch as the king's counselors and the judges, as we have already stated, were extremely secure and careless; for they were in a manner stupefied by their own fatness. It follows ---

Amos 4:4-6

4. Come to Bethel, and transgress; at Gilgal multiply transgression; and bring your sacrifices every morning, and your tithes after three years:

4. Ita in Bethel et scelerate agite, in Gilgal adjicite scelerate agendum, et adducite mane sacrificia vestra, ad tres dies (hoc est, tertio anno) decimas vestras;

5. And offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving with leaven, and proclaim and publish the free offerings: for this liketh you, O ye children of Israel, saith the Lord God

5. Et adolete e fermento laudem et adducite voluntarias oblationes, publicite; quia sic vobis libuit, filii Israel, dicit Adonai Jehova.

6. And I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.

6. Atque etiam ego dedi vobis mundiciem dentium (alii vertunt, obtusiones, sed male) in omnibus oppidis vestris, et penuriam panis in omnibus regionibus vestris; et non estis reversi usque ad me, dicit Jehova.

The Prophet here again pours contempt on the perverse confidence, in which the Israelites were become hardened. They thought, indeed, that their worship was fully

approved by God, when they offered Sacrifices in Bethel and Gilgal. But the Prophet here shows, that the more sedulously they labored in performing sacred things, the more grievously they offended God, and the heavier judgment they gained for themselves. ``What do you obtain by wearying yourselves, when ye so strictly offer sacrifices, and omit nothing that is prescribed in the law of God? Only this --- that you provoke God's wrath more and more.'' But he condemns not the Israelites for thinking that they rendered a compensation, as hypocrites were wont to think, and were on this account often reproved by the Prophets; but he denounces their modes of worship as vicious and false, and abominable before God. The Prophets reprobated sacrifices for two reasons; --- first, because hypocrites brought them before God as a compensation, that they might escape the punishment they deserved, as though they paid God what they owed. Thus at Jerusalem, in the very temple, they profaned the name of God; they offered sacrifices according to what the law prescribed, but disregarded the true and legitimate end; for they thought that God was pacified by the blood of beasts, by incense, and other external rites: it was therefore a preposterous abuse. Hence the Prophets often reproved them, inasmuch as they obtruded their sacrifices on God as a compensation, as though they were real expiations for cleansing away sins: this, as the Prophets declared, was extremely puerile and foolish. But, secondly, Amos now goes much farther; for he blames not here the Israelites for thinking that they discharged their duty to God by external rites, but denounces all their worship as degenerate and perverted, for they called on God in places where he had not commanded: God designed one altar only for his people, and there he wished sacrifices to be offered to him; but the Israelites at their own will had built altars at Bethel and Gilgal. Hence the Prophet declares that all their profane modes of worship were nothing but abominations, however much the Israelites confided in them as their safety.

This is the reason why he now says Go ye to Bethel. It is the language of indignation; God indeed speaks ironically, and at the same time manifests his high displeasure, as though he had said, that they were wholly intractable, and could not be restrained by any corrections, as we say in French, Fai du pis que to pouvras So also God speaks in Ezekiel 20:39, `Go, sacrifice to your idols.' When he saw the people running headlong with so much pertinacity into idolatry and superstitions, he said, ``Go;'' as though he intended to inflame their minds. It is indeed certain, that God does not stimulate sinners; but he thus manifests his extreme indignation. After having tried to restrain men, and seeing their ungovernable madness, he then says, ``Go;'' as though he said, ``Ye are wholly irreclaimable; I effect nothing by my good advice; hear, then, the devil, who will lead you where you are inclined to go: Go then to Bethel, and there transgress; go to Gilgal, and transgress there again; heap sins on sins.''

But how did they transgress at Bethel? Even by worshipping God. We here see how little the pretense of good intention avails with God, which hypocrites ever bring forward. They imagine that, provided their purpose is to worship God, what they do cannot be disapproved: thus they wanton in their own inventions, and think that God obtains his due, so that he cannot complain. But the Prophet declares all their

worship to be nothing else than abomination and execrable wickedness, though the Israelites, trusting in it, thought themselves safe. ``Add, then, to transgress in Gilgal; and offer your sacrifices in the morning; be thus diligent, that nothing may be objected to you, as to the outward form.''

After three years, [33] that is, in the third year, ``bring also your tenths''; for thus it was commanded, as we read in Deuteronomy 14:28. Though, then, the Israelites worshipped God apparently in the strictest manner, yet Amos declares that the whole was vain and of no worth, yea, abominable before God, and that the more they wearied themselves, the more they kindled the wrath of God against themselves. And to the same purpose is the next verse.

And burn incense with the leaven of thank offering He speaks of peace-offerings; sacrifices of thanksgiving were wont to be offered with leaven; but with other sacrifices they presented cakes and unleavened bread. It was lawful in peace-offerings to offer leaven. However sedulous, then, the Israelites were in performing these rites, the Prophet intimates that they were in no way approved by God inasmuch as they had departed from the pure command of the law. Some take leaven in a bad sense, as meaning a vicious and impure sacrifice, which the law required to be free from leaven; but this view seems not suitable here; for nothing is here condemned in the Israelites, but that they had departed from what the law prescribed, that they had presumptuously changed the place of the temple, and also raised up a new priesthood. They were in other things careful and diligent enough; but this defection was the chief abomination. It could not then be, that God would approve of deprivations; for obedience, as it is said elsewhere, is of more account before him than all sacrifices, (1 Samuel 15:22) Proclaim, he says, {נדבות}, nudabut, voluntary oblations. What he means is, ``Though ye not only offer sacrifices morning and evenings as it has been commanded you, though ye not only present other sacrifices on festivals, but also add voluntary oblations to any extent, yet nothing pleases me.''

Bring forth then, and proclaim voluntary offerings; that is, ``Appoint solemn assemblies with great pomp; yet this would be nothing else than to add sin to sin: ye are acting wickedly for this reason, --- because the very beginning is impious.''

But the last part of the verse must be noticed, For so it has pleased you, O children of Israel, saith the Lord Jehovah. By saying that the Israelites loved to do these things, he reprobates their presumption in devising at their own will new modes of worship; as though he said, ``I require no sacrifices from you except those offered at Jerusalem; but ye offer them to me in a profane place. Regard then your sacrifices as offered to yourselves, and not to me.'' We indeed know how hypocrites ever make God a debtor to themselves; when they undertake any labor in their frivolous ceremonies, they think that God is bound to them. But God denies that this work was done for him, for he had not enjoined it in his law. ``It has thus pleased you,'' he says, ``Vous faites cela pour votre plaisir et bien mettez le sur vos comptes``. We then see what Amos meant here by saying, `It has so pleased you, O children of Israel:' it is, as if he had said, ``Ye ought to have consulted me, and simply to have

[33] Literally, "on the third of days," {לשלשת ימים:} but days here are evidently for years. ``I cannot doubt,'' says Dr. Henderson, ``but that the Prophet has in view the enactment recorded in Deuteronomy 14:29, 26:12 ,{ימים} days, mean here, as in Leviticus 25:29, Judges 17:10, the fullest complement of days, i.e., a year.'' --- Ed.

obeyed my word, to have regarded what pleased me, what I have commanded; but ye have despised my word, neglected my law, and followed what pleased yourselves, and proceeded from your own fancies. Since, then, your own will is your law, seek a recompense from yourselves, for I allow none of these things. What I require is implicit submission, I look for nothing else but obedience to my law; as ye render not this but according to your own will, it is no worship of my name.''

Prayer.

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou wouldest have our life to be formed by the rule of thy law, and hast revealed in it what pleaseth thee, that we may not wander in uncertainty but render thee obedience, --- O grant, that we may wholly submit ourselves to thee, and not only devote our life and all our labors to thee, but also offer to thee as a sacrifice our understanding and whatever prudence and reason we may possess, so that by spiritually serving thee, we may really glorify thy name, through Christ our Lord. Amen

Lecture Fifty-sixth

But I gave you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your borders; and ye turned not to me, saith Jehovah. God here expostulates with the people on account of their incurable perverseness; for he had tried to restore them to the right way, not only by his word, but also by heavy punishments; but he effected nothing. This hardness doubled the guilt of that people, as they could not be subdued by God's chastisements.

The Prophet now says, that the people had been chastised with famine, I gave them, he says, cleanness of teeth. It is a figurative expression, by which Amos means want, and he explains it himself by want of bread The whole country then labored under want and deficiency of provisions, though the land, as it is well known, was very fruitful. Now since the end of punishment is to turn men to God and his service, it is evident, when no fruit follows, that the mind is hardened in evil. Hence the Prophet shows here, that the Israelites were not only guilty, but had also pertinaciously resisted God, for their vices could be corrected by no punishment. We have just mentioned famine, another kind of punishment follows ---

Amos 4:7

7. And also I have withholden the rain from you, when there were yet three months to the harvest: and I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city: one piece was rained upon, and the piece whereupon it rained not withered.

7. Atque etiam ego prohibui a vobis pluviam, quum adhuc essent tres menses ad messem; et plui super urbem unam, et super alteram urbem non feci pluere; pars una compluebatur, et super quam non pluebat exaruit.

I have said that another kind of punishment is here recorded by the Prophet; it is not, however, wholly different: for whence comes the want we have noticed, except through drought? For when God intends to deprive men of support, he shuts up heaven and makes it iron, so that it hears not the earth, according to what we have noticed elsewhere. Yet these words of the Prophet are not superfluous; for God would have the punishment he inflicts on men to be more attentively considered. When

men are reduced to want, they will indeed acknowledge it to be the curse of God, except they be very stupid; but when a drought precedes, when the earth disappoints its cultivators, and then a want of food follows, more time is given to men to think of God's displeasure. This is the reason why the Prophet now distinctly speaks of rain being withheld, after having said that the people had been before visited with a deficiency of provisions; as though he said ``Ye ought to have returned, at least after a long course of time, to a sound mind. If God had been offended with you only for one day, and had given tokens of his displeasure, the shortness of time might have been some excuse for you: but as the earth had become dry; as God had restrained rain, and as hence sterility followed, and afterwards there came want, how great was your stupidity not to attend to so many and so successive tokens of God's wrath?'' We now perceive why the Prophet here connects drought with want of food, the cause with the effect: it was, that the stupidity of the people might hence be more evident.

But he says that God had withheld rain from them, when three months still remained to the harvest. When it rains not for a whole month, the earth becomes dry, and men become anxious, for it is an ill omen: but when two months pass without rain, men begin to be filled with apprehension and even dread; but if continual dryness lasts to the end of the third month, it is a sign of some great evil. The Prophet, then, here shows that the Israelites had not been in an ordinary way chastised, and that they were very stupid, as they did not, during the whole three months, apply their minds to consider their sins, though God urged them, and though his wrath had been manifested for so long a time. We now then see that the hardness of the people is amplified by the consideration of time, inasmuch as they were not awakened by a sign so portentous, When there were yet three months, he says, to the harvests I withheld rain from you.

Another circumstance follows, ``God rained on one city, on another he did not rain; one part was watered, and no drop of rain fell on another This difference could not be ascribed to chance: except men resolved to be willfully mad, and to reject all reason, they must surely have been constrained to confess these to have been manifest signs of God's wrath. How came it, that one place was rained upon, and another remained dry? that two neighboring cities were treated so differently? Whence was this, except that God appeared angry from heaven? The Prophet then does here again condemn the obstinacy of the people: they did not see in this difference the wrath of God, which was yet so very conspicuous. The import of the whole is, that God shows that he had to do with a people past recovery; for they were refractory and obstinate in their wickedness, and could bear the application of no remedy. It follows ---

Amos 4:8

8. So two or three cities wandered unto one city, to drink water; but they were not satisfied: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.

8. Et venerunt duae tres urbes ad unam urbem, ut biberent aquas, et non satiatae sunt: et non reversi estis usque ad me, dicit Jehova.

Marking the difference, the Prophet relates, that two or three cities had come

to one, to seek drink, and that they were not satisfied, because the waters failed on account of so large a number: for though the fountains could have supplied the inhabitants, yet when such a multitude flowed from every quarter, the very fountains became exhausted. The Prophet thus aggravates the punishment brought by God on the Israelites; for so great was the thirst, that whole cities had recourse to fountains, where they heard that there was any water. It was indeed an unusual thing for inhabitants to leave their own city and to run to another to seek water, like wild beasts who, when satiated with prey, run far for water: but it is an unwonted thing for men to undertake a long journey for the sake of finding drink: for they dig wells for themselves, and seek water by their own industry, when rivers do not flow, or when fountains do not supply them with drink. When therefore men are forced to leave their own homes and to seek water at a distance, and when they exhaust the fountains, it is a portend which ought to be observed.

But how was it that the Israelites took no notice of God's hand, which was then as it were visible? Hence then, as they repented not, their obstinate blindness became quite evident. They were no doubt terrified with fear and harassed by grief; but all this produced no effect, for they continued in their sins, took delight in their own superstitions, and pursued the same life as before. Since then they divested not themselves of their own character, nor ceased to provoke continually the wrath of God, their hopeless and incorrigible obstinacy is here manifestly proved. This was the Prophet's design. It follows ---

Amos 4:9

9. I have smitten you with blasting and mildew: when your gardens and your vineyards and your fig trees and your olive trees increased, the palmerworm devoured them: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord

9. Percussi vos Orientali vento et rubigine; magnos [34] hortos vestros et vites vestros et ficulneas vestras et oliveta vestra voravit bruchus (vel, eruca;) et non reversi estis usque ad me, dicit Jehova.

Though one kind of punishment may not convince men, they are yet thereby proved with sufficient clearness to be guilty before God. But when in various ways he urges them, and after having tried in vain to correct them in one way, he has recourse to another, and still effects nothing, it hence more fully appears that they, who are thus ever unmoved, and remain stupid whatever means God may adopt to lead them to repentance, are altogether past recovery. This is the drift of what the Prophet now adds: he says that they had been smitten by the east wind He shows that want of food does not always proceed from one cause; for men become hardened when they feel only one evil: as the case is when a country labors under a drought, it will be thought to be as it were its fate. But when God chastises men in various ways, they ought then no doubt to be touched and really affected: when, on the contrary, they pass by all punishments with their eyes closed, it is certain, that they are wholly obstinate and so fascinated by the devil, that they feel nothing and discern nothing. This is the reason why the Prophet records the various punishments

[34] The words are, {גנותיכם, הרבות} ``the abundance of your gardens,'' and not your great or large gardens. I would thus render the verse --- I smote you with blight and with mildew; The abundance of your gardens and of your vineyards, And your figs and your olives, the locust devoured; yet ye turned not to me, saith Jehovah. --- Ed.

which had been already inflicted on the people.

Hence he says now, that they had been smitten by the east wind, and by the mildew. What mischief the mildew does to the standing corn, we know; when the sun rises after a cold rain, it burns out its substance, so that the ears grow yellow, and rottenness follows. God then says, that the standing corn of the people had been destroyed by this blasting, after dryness had already prevailed though not through the whole land in an equal degree; for God rained on one part, while a neighboring region was parched through want of rain: the Prophet having stated this, now mentions also the mildew.

He says further, that the fig-trees and vines had been consumed, that the gardens had been destroyed, and that the olive trees had been devoured by chafers or palmer worms. Since then the Israelites had been in so many ways warned, was it not a strange and monstrous blindness, that being affrighted they could bear these chastisements of God, and be not moved to return to the right way? If the first chastisement had no effect, if the second also had been without fruit, they ought surely at last to have repented; but as they proceeded in their usual course, and continued like themselves in that contumacy of which we have spoken, what any more remained for them, but to be wholly destroyed as those who had trifled with God? We now then understand what the Prophet means.

Moreover, this passage teaches, as other similar passages do, that seasons vary not by chance; that now drought prevails, and then continual rains destroy the fruits of the earth, that now chafers are produced, and then that heaven is filled with various infections, --- that these things happen not by chance, is what this passage clearly shows: but that they are so many tokens of God's wrath, set before our eyes. God indeed does not govern the world, according to what profane men think, as though he gave uncontrolled license both in heaven and earth; but he now withholds rain, then he pours it down in profusion; he now burns the corn with heat, then he temperates the air; he now shows himself kind to men, then he shows himself angry with them. Let us then learn to refer the whole order of nature to the special providence of God. I mention his special providence, lest we should dream only of some general operation, as ungodly men do: but let us know that God would have himself to be seen in daily events, so that the tokens of his love may make us to rejoice, and also that the tokens of his wrath may humble us, to the end that we may repent. Let this then be learnt from the present words of the Prophet.

Amos further teaches us, that wind and rain, hail and droughts heat and cold, are arms or weapons by which God executes vengeance on account of our sins. Whenever God then intends to inflict punishment on us, he puts on his armor, that is, he sends either rain, or wind, or drought, or heat, or hail. Since it is so, let us not think that either rain or heat is fortuitous, or that they depend on the situation of the stars as ungodly men imagine. Let us therefore know, that all nature so obeys God's command, that when rain falls seasonably, it is a token of his love towards us, and that when it is unseasonable, it is a proof of his displeasure. It is meet to think the same of heat and of cold, and of all other things. Let us now go on with the words of the Prophet ---

Amos 4:10

10. I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt: your young men have I slain with the sword, and have taken away your horses; and I have made the stink of your camps to come up unto your nostrils: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord.

10. Misi in vos pestem secundum rationem Aegypti; percussi gladio robustos vestros, cum captivitate equorum vestrorump; ascendere feci foetorem castrorum vestrorum et ad nares vestras (vel, usque ad nares vestras, ut copula supervacua sit;) et non reversi estis usque ad me, dicit Jehova.

God now expostulates with the people, because their perverseness had not been subdued even by additional punishments; for he had in vain exhorted and stimulated them to repentance. He says, that they had been smitten with pestilence. The Prophet has hitherto spoken only of the sterility of the land, and of the fruit being destroyed by infections; he has hitherto mentioned want only with its causes; this only has been stated: but now he adds that the people had been afflicted with pestilence, and also with war, and that they had still persevered in their wickedness. Whatever measures then God had adopted to correct the vices of the people, the Prophet now complains and deplores, that they all had been tried in vain. But so many upbraidings are mentioned, that God might show that there was no more any hope of pardon, inasmuch as they thus continued to be untractable and perverse.

He then says that he had sent pestilence according to the manner of Egypt {דרך}, darec, means a way, but is taken for mode or manners as the 10th chapter of Isaiah [35] `I will smite him according to the manner of Egypt,' says God, speaking of Sennacherib, as though he said, ``Ye know how formerly I checked the fury of Pharaoh; I will now put on the same armor, that I may drive far from you your energy Sennacherib.'' But the Prophet says here, that God had exercised towards the Israelites the same extreme rigor which he had used towards the Egyptians; as though he said, ``I have been forced by your obstinacy to turn my power against you: ye know how Egypt was formerly smitten by me from kindness to your fathers; I then showed how dear to me was your preservation, by putting forth my strength to destroy the Egyptians: how is it that I now turn my weapons against you for your destruction? I have been indeed always ready to oppose your enemies, and kindly to cherish you in my paternal bosom. As then ye are become to me like the Egyptians, how is this and whence this change, except that ye have constrained me by your irreclaimable wickedness?''

We now then see why the Prophet speaks here expressly of the Egyptians. He intimates that God could not show favor to the Israelites, which he would have continued to show, had they not closed the door against it; as though he said, ``I had chosen you from other nations; but now I chastise you, not as I do the uncircumcised Gentiles, but I avowedly carry on war with you, as though ye were Egyptians.'' We see how much it serves for amplification, when Amos compares the Israelites to the Egyptians, as though he had said that they, by their perverse wickedness, had extinguished all God's favor, so that the memory of their gratuitous adoption was of no

[35] See Isaiah 10:24,26. — fj.

more avail to them. I have therefore sent among you pestilence after the manner of Egypt.

And he adds, I slew with the sword your strong men. It was a different kind of punishment, that all the strong had been slain, that their horses had been led into captivity, and that, finally, the foetor of dead bodies had ascended to suffocate them. These were certainly unusual tokens of God's wrath. As the people had not repented, it became now again quite evident, that their diseases were not healable; for God had effected nothing by the application of so many remedies. These different kinds of punishments ought to be carefully noticed, because the Lord has collected them together, as so many arguments to prove the contumacy of the people.

By saying that the foetor of camps had ascended to their nostrils, it was the same as if he had said, ``There has been no need of external force; though no enemy had been hostile to you, ye have yet been suffocated by your own foetor; for this came up from your own camps into your nostrils, and deprived you of life. Since God then had raised up this intestine putridity, ought you not to have been at length seriously affected, and to have returned to a right mind? Inasmuch then as no fruit followed, who does not see, that you have been in vain chastised, and that what alone remains for you is utter destruction? As God has hitherto stimulated you in vain by punishments, were he to proceed, he would lose all his labor. Since then God has hitherto to no purpose visited you with his scourges, there is no reason why he should chastise you more moderately: you must now then be utterly destroyed.'' This is the meaning: and he further adds ---

Amos 4:11

11. I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord

11. Subverti vos secundum subversionem Dei contra (vel, in) Sodomam et Gomorrham; et fuistis quasi torris ereptus ab incendio: et non reversi estis ad me, dicit Jehova.

Amos proceeds further, and says, that God had used a severity towards his chosen people similar to that which formerly he showed towards Sodom and Gomorrah. That, we know, was a memorable evidence of God's wrath, which ought to have filled all ages with dread, as it ought also at this day: and Scripture, whenever it graphically paints the wrath of God, sets Sodom and Gomorrah before our eyes. It was indeed a dreadful judgment, when God destroyed those cities with fire from heaven, when they were consumed, and when the earth, cleaving asunder, swallowed up the five cities. But he says that nearly the same ruin had taken place among the people of Israel, only that a few escaped, as when any one snatches a brand from the burning; for the second clause of the verse ought no doubt to be taken as a modification; for had Amos only said, that they had been overthrown as Sodom and Gomorrah, he would have said too much. The Prophet then corrects or modifies his expression by saying, that a few had remained, as when one snatches a brand from the burning. But in the meantime, they ought to have been at least moved by punishments so grievous and dreadful, since God had manifested his displeasure to them, as he did

formerly to Sodom and Gomorrah.

History seems, at the same time, to militate against this narrative of Amos; for he prophesied under Jeroboam the second, the son of Joash; and the state of the people was then prosperous, as sacred history records. How then could it be, that the Israelites had been destroyed like Sodom and Gomorrah? This difficulty may be easily solved, if we attend to what sacred history relates; for it says that God had pity on the Israelites, because all had been before consumed, the free man as well as the captive, (2 Kings 14:25, 26) When, therefore, there was so deplorable a devastation among the people, it was God's purpose to give them some relief for a time. Hence he made king Jeroboam successful, so that he recovered many cities; and the people flourished again: but it was a short prosperity. Now Amos reminds them of what they had suffered, and of the various means by which God had stimulated them to repentance though they proved wholly untamable.

Then these two things are in no way inconsistent, --- that the Israelites had been consumed before God spared them under Jeroboam, --- and that they had yet been for a time relieved from those calamities, which proved ruinous both to the captive and to the free, as it is expressly declared. We must, at the same time, remember, that there was some residue among the people; for it was God's design to show mercy on account of his covenant. The people were indeed worthy of complete destruction; but it was God's will that some remnant should continue, lest any one should think that he had forgotten his covenant. We hence see why God had preserved some; it was, that he might contend with the wickedness of the people, and show that his covenant was not wholly void. So the Lord observed a middle course, that he might not spare hypocrites, and that he might not abolish his covenant; for it was necessary for that to stand perpetually, however ungodly and perfidious the Israelites may have been. The Prophet then shows, that God had been faithful even in this case, and constantly kept his covenant, though all the Israelites had fallen away from him. He at length concludes ---

Amos 4:12-13

12. Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.

12. Propterea sic faciam tibi Israel; et quia hoc faciam tibi, praepara te in occursum Dei tui Israel.

13. For, lo, he that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is his thought, that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth, The LORD, The God of hosts, is his name.

13. Quia ecce formans montes, creans spiritum (aut, ventum,) annuntians homini quae sit cogitatio ejus, faciens auroram, tenebras (et tenebras, subaudienda est copula,) ambulans super excelsa loca terrae, Jehova, Deus exercituum, nomen ejus.

Amos here declares, in the person of God, that the people in vain hoped for pardon, or for a modification, or an abatement, or an end to their punishment; for God had in vain made the attempt, by many scourges and chastisements, to subdue their extreme arrogance: therefore, he says, thus will I do to you. What does this particle {כה}, ke, thus, mean? Some think that God here denounces on the Israelites

the punishments they had before experienced: but the Prophet, I doubt not, means something much more grievous. He now removes the exception which he lately mentioned as though be had said, that God would execute extreme punishment on this reprobate people without any mitigation. This will I do to thee, Israel: ``Thou hast already perceived with how many things I armed myself to take vengeance on the despisers of my law; I will now deal more severely with thee, for thy obstinacy compels me. Since, then, I have hitherto produced no effect on you, I will now bring the last punishment: for remedies cannot be applied to men past recovery.'' Thus, then, he says, will I do to thee Israel. [36]

And because I will do this to thee, etc {עכב}, okob, means often a reward or an end: this place may then be thus rendered: `I will at length surely do this to you;' but the sense the most suitable seems to be this, Because I will this do to you, prepare to meet thy God. The passage may be explained in two ways: either as an ironical sentence, or as a simple and serious exhortation to repentance. If we take it ironically, the sense will be of this kind, ``Come, now, meet me with all your obstinacy, and with whatever may serve you; will you be able to escape my vengeance by setting up yourselves against me, as you have hitherto done?'' And certainly the Prophet, in denouncing final ruin on the people, seems here as though he wished designedly to touch them to the quick, when he says, ``Meet now thy God and prepare thyself:'' that is, ``Gather all thy strength, and thy forces, and thy auxiliaries; try what all this will avail thee.'' But as in the next chapter, the Prophet exhorts again the Israelites to repentance, and sets before them the hope of favor, this place may be taken in another sense, as though he said, ``Since thou seest thyself guilty, and also as thou seest that thou art seeking subterfuges in vain, being not able by any means to elude the hand of thy judge, then see at last, that thou meet thy God, that thou mayest anticipate the final ruin which is impending.'' The Prophets, we indeed know, after having threatened destruction to the chosen people, ever moderate the asperity of their doctrine, as there were at all times some remnant seed, though hidden. And similar passages we have seen both in Joel and in Hosea. It is not, therefore, improper to explain the words of Amos in this sense, --- that though the people were almost past hope, he yet exhorted them to anticipate God's wrath. Prepare then thyself to meet thy God, as though he said, ``However worthy thou art of being destroyed and though the Lord seems to have closed up the door of mercy, and despair meets thee on every side, thou can't yet mitigate God's wrath, provided thou prepares to meet him.''

But this preparation includes real renovation of the heart: it then takes place, when men are displeased with themselves, when with a changed mind they submit to God, and humbly pray for forgiveness. There is then an important meaning in the Prophet's words, Prepare thyself. With regard to meeting God, we know what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 9: ,

`If we judge ourselves, we shall not be judged by the Lord.'

How comes it, then, that God deals severely with us, except that we spare our-

[36] There seems to be a reference in “thus” to the judgment denounced on Israel in the 2nd and 3rd verses of this chapter: he declares that he will deal with Israel “thus,” or in the manner before described. — Ed.

selves? Hence this indulgence, with which we flatter ourselves, provokes God's wrath against us. We cannot then meet God, except we become our own judges, and condemn our sins and feel real sorrow. We now see what the Prophet means, if we regard the passage as not spoken ironically.

But that he might rouse careless men more effectually, he then magnificently extols the power of God; and that he might produce more reverence and fear in men, especially the hardened and the refractory, he adorns his name with many commendations. As it was difficult to turn the headstrong, the Prophet accumulates many titles, to move the people, that they might entertain reverence for God. ``God,'' he says, ``has formed the mountains, and created the spirit,'' and further, ``he knoweth hearts, and men themselves understand not what they think of, except as far as God sets before them their thoughts; God maketh the morning and the darkness, and walketh in the high places of the earth; and his name is, Jehovah, God of hosts.'' Why were all these encomiums added, but that the hearts of men might be touched, who were before void of thought and sunk in blind stupidity? We now understand the Prophet's object. But what remains to be said on the words will be added in tomorrow's lecture.

Prayer.

Grant, Almighty God, that since by thy word thou kindly invites us to thyself, we may not turn deaf ears to thee, but anticipate thy rod and scourges; and that when, for the stupidity and thoughtlessness by which we have become inebriated, thou addest those punishments by which thou sharply urgest us to repent, --- O grant, that we may not continue wholly intractable, but at length turn our hearts to thy service and submit ourselves to the yoke of thy word, and that we may be so instructed by the punishments, which thou hast inflicted on us and still inflictest, that we may truly and from the heart turn to thee, and offer ourselves to thee as a sacrifice, that thou mayest govern us according to thy will, and so rule all our affections by thy Spirit, that we may through the whole of our life strive to glorify thy name in Christ Jesus, thy Son our Lord. Amen.

Lecture Fifty-seventh

We have explained the last verse of the fourth chapter, except that there remains something to be said of the glorious representation given of God by the Prophet. He says first, that he had formed the mountains then that he had created the spirits, afterwards that he declares to man what is his thoughts, makes the morning and the darkness, and walks on the high places of the earth Such an accumulation of words might seem superfluous, only this main thing must be borne in mind, that it was necessary for men, whose minds were exceedingly torpid to be aroused that they might seriously consider what we have seen had been denounced on them. Hence the Prophet sought to shake off from the Israelites their thoughtlessness, by setting God before them in his greatness; for when his name only is announced, he is wholly neglected by the greatest part of men. It was therefore necessary that something should be added, that they who were asleep might be awakened, and understand how great and how fearful the power of God is. This is the design of all that we read here.

The word {רוח}, ruch, is interpreted in two ways. Some refer it to the wind, and others to the soul of man. If we take it for the wind, it will join suitably with the creation of mountains, for the winds emerge from them on account of their cavity. If you understand it of man's soul, it will agree with the following clause. It appears to me more probable that the Prophet speaks of man's soul; though one may possibly choose to connect both, so that there is an allusion to wind, and that yet Amos, about to speak of thought, first mentions the spirit.

But what the Prophet says, that God announces to men what their thought is --- this is done in various ways. We indeed know that the end of teaching is, that men may confess their guilt, who before flattered themselves; we know also that the word of God is like a two-edged sword, which penetrates into the bones and marrow, and distinguishes between thoughts and feelings, (Hebrews 4:12) God then thus draws men out of their recesses into the light; and he also convinces them without the word; for we know how powerful are the secret movements (instinctus --- influences) of the Spirit. But the Prophet meant only here, that the Israelites had to do with God, who is the searcher of hearts, and from whom nothing is hid, however concealed it may be. Each one is to himself the best witness of his own thoughts; but the Prophet ascribes to God a higher degree, for he understands whatever any one conceives in his mind, better than he who seems to have all his own thoughts well understood. [37] Since men therefore craftily hide themselves, the Prophet here reminds them that they cannot succeed, for God understands what they inwardly think better than they themselves. We now then perceive what he substantially means.

Some explain the words, that God makes the morning darkness, as if Amos had said, that he converts light into darkness; but we ought rather to consider a copulative to be understood; for he here declares the power of God, not only as displayed in once creating the world, but also in preserving the order of nature, and in minutely regulating the changes of times and seasons. Let us now proceed to the fifth chapter.

Chapter 5

[37] This conjecture is fully borne out by the fact, that the copulative {,{ו vau, is found in more than twenty MSS., as given by Kennicott: it is also found in the Septuagint. --- Ed.

Amos 5

Amos 5:1

1. Hear ye this word which I take up against you, even a lamentation, O house of Israel.

1. Audite verbum hoc quod ego tollo super vos, lamentum domus Israel.

Some render the verse thus, ``Hear ye this word, because upon you, or for you, I raise a lamentation:'' but we shall hereafter speak more at large as to the proper rendering. Let us see what the subject is. The Prophet here denounces on the Israelites the punishment they had deserved; and yet they did not think that it was nigh; and they ferociously despised, I have no doubt, the denunciation itself, because no chance had as yet taken place, which might have pointed out such a destruction. Hence the Prophet and his threatenings were both despised.

He however threatens them here in severe terms with the judgment of God, which they feared not: and this is the reason why he says, Hear ye. It was not, indeed, without reason that he thus began and intimated that they greatly flattered themselves, nay, that they stopped their ears against wholesome counsels: the admonition would have been otherwise superfluous. The Prophet then indirectly reproves that supine indifference in which the Israelites indulged themselves.

But with regard to the words, some, as I have before mentioned, refer this lamentation to Amos himself, as though he had said, that he lamented the state of the people, finding that they were so stupid, and did not perceive how dreadful the wrath of God is. Since, then, they thus flattered themselves in their sins, those interpreters think that the Prophet here assumes the character of a mourner for that irreclaimable people. Hear, he says, this word even because I lament over you. For the more refractory the people were, the more touched with grief the prophet no doubt was: for he saw how horrible the judgment of God was, which was nigh them, on account of their stubbornness. No wonder then that the Prophet says here, that he undertook or raised lamentation for the people; and this mode of speaking is

common in Scripture.

But yet I rather think that another sense is more suitable to this place, which becomes evident by putting in an exegetic particle, Hear ye then this word which I raise upon you, even a lamentation, etc. The word {משא}, mesha, rendered burden, is derived from the verb {נשא}, nusha, which means to raise up: and there is a striking allusion to the subject treated of here. For the Prophet does not here simply teach the people, nor comfort them, nor does he only warn them, but he denounces on them the last punishment. We hence see the import of the expression, to raise up a word; it was the same as though he said, ``I lay on you this prophecy:'' for a burden is laid on the shoulders of men when God's wrath is denounced.

It afterwards follows, Even a lamentation, O house of Israel; which means, ``I raise upon you a word, which will constrain you to mourn and lament: though now ye are so refractory against God, that ye spurn all warnings, and reject all threatening; yet this word shall at last prove mournful to you.'' This seems to be the genuine sense of the Prophet: in the first place, he reproves the stupidity of the people of Israel, by demanding a hearing; then he reproves their contempt of God in despising all threatenings; and he shows also that this prophecy would prove mournful to them for having so long trifled with God, ``The lament of the house of Israel shall be this word, which I now raise up upon you.'' it follows ---

Amos 5:2

2. The virgin of Israel is fallen; she shall no more rise: she is forsaken upon her land; there is none to raise her up.

2. Cecidit nec adjiciet ut resurgat virgo Israel: relicta est super terram suam; non est qui attollat.

This was substantially the vengeance which was now nigh the Israelites, though they rested securely, and even scorned all the threatening of God. The virgin of Israel, he says, has fallen Expounders have too refinedly explained the word virgin; for they think that the people of Israel are here called a virgin, because God had espoused them to himself, and that though they ought to have observed spiritual chastity towards God, they yet abandoned themselves to all kinds of pollutions: but a virgin, we know, is a title given for the most part by the Prophets to this or that people on account of their delicacies; for Babylon, no less than Samaria or the people of Israel, is called a virgin. Certainly this refined interpretation cannot be applied to Babylon, to Egypt, to Tyre, and to other places. I have therefore no doubt but the Prophet here arraigns the Israelites, because they, relying on their strength, indulged themselves. They were quiet in their own retreats, and when all kinds of blessings abounded, they lived daintily and sumptuously. As then they were indulging themselves in such pleasures he calls them a virgin. The virgin of Israel then has fallen, and shall no more rise again.

A condition may be here included, as an exhortation to repentance immediately follows: we may then fitly regard this as being understood, ``except they timely repent:'' otherwise the Israelites must have fallen without hope of restoration. But we may also refer this to the body of the people: fallen then had the virgin of Israel, not so however that they were all destroyed, as we shall hereafter see; for the

Prophet says that the tenth part would remain: but this is rightly said of the people generally; for we know that the kingdom had so fallen, that it never afterwards did rise. A remnant of the tribe of Judah did indeed return to Jerusalem; but the Israelites are at this day dispersed though various parts of the world; yea, they are hid either in the mountains of Armenia, or in other regions of the East. Since then what the Prophet here denounces has been really fulfilled as to the whole kingdom, we may take the place without supposing any thing understood, ``Fallen has the virgin of Israel.'' For as God showed mercy when the people as a body were destroyed, that some remained, is what does not militate with the prophecy, that the whole body had fallen. Fallen then has the virgin of Israel, nor will she any more rise again; that is, the kingdom shall not by way of recovery be restored; and this, we know, has never taken place.

Forsaken is she, he says, on her own land, and there is none to raise her up; which means, that she will continue fallen: though she may remain in her own place, she will not yet recover what she had lost. We now understand the Prophet's meaning; and, at the same time, we see that that people had so fallen, as never to rise again, as it has been stated, into a kingdom. Let us now proceed ---

Amos 5:3

3. For thus saith the Lord God; The city that went out by a thousand shall leave an hundred, and that which went forth by an hundred shall leave ten, to the house of Israel.

3. Quia sic dicit Dominus Jehova, Urbs e qua egrediebantur mille, manebunt in ea centum; et e qua egrediebantur centum, manebunt (ad verbum, restabunt) decem domui Israel.

The Prophet now expresses more clearly what he had before said, --- that the kingdom would perish and yet so that the Lord would preserve some remnants. Then as to the body of the people, Israel had fallen; but as to a few remnants they were saved; but they were a small numbers such as the Prophet mentions. We hence see that some hope of mercy was given to God's chosen people, and that in the meantime destruction was denounced on the whole nation. We have already seen that their wickedness was past hope; it was therefore necessary to announce to them the sentence of final ruin; but it was so done, as not to drive to despair the faithful few, who remained hid among the multitude.

The city then, from which a thousand went forth, shall have a hundred remaining; and the city from which went forth a hundred, shall have ten. Armies were wont formerly to be decimated, when any sedition had been made: but God threatens the Israelites here with a much heavier judgment, that only the tenth part would be saved from ruin. We now then perceive the design of the Prophet. Now this could not alleviate the grief of the people; but the hypocrites were more exasperated, on hearing that few would be saved, and that all hope of deliverance was cut off from them. When, therefore, they saw that God dealt with them with so much severity, envy increased their griefs and more embittered their minds; and this was what the Prophet designed; for it was of no use to apply any solace to the despisers of God: but as God knew that there were some seed remaining among the people, he intended to

provide for the miserable, who would have been a hundred times swallowed up with grief, had no mitigation been offered them. The Prophet then directs his discourse to the few, when he says, ``In the city from which a thousand had gone forth there will be a hundred; and in that from which a hundred went forth, ten will remain alive.'' It now follows ---

Amos 5:4-6

4. For thus saith the Lord unto the house of Israel, Seek ye me, and ye shall live:

4. Quia sic dicit Jehova domui Israel, Querite me, et vivetis.

5. But seek not Bethel, nor enter into Gilgal, and pass not to Beersheba: for Gilgal shall surely go into captivity, and Bethel shall come to nought.

5. Et ne quaeratis Bethel, et in Gilgal ne eatis, et ne transeatis in Berseba; quia Gilgal migrando migrabit, et Bethel erit in nih ilum (vel, in molestiam.)

6. Seek the Lord, and ye shall live; lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and devour it, and there be none to quench it in Bethel.

6. Quaerite Jehovam et vivetis; ne transeat (vel, scindat) quasi ignis domum Joseph, et absorbeat, et non sit extinguens in Bethel.

Amos here again exhorts the Israelites to repentance; and it was an address common to all, though the greater part, as we have said, were altogether past recovery; but it was necessary, as long as they continued a chosen people, to call them to repentance; for they had not been as yet abdicated. We further know, that the Prophets preached in order to invite some to God, and to render others inexcusable. With regard to the end and design of public teaching, it is, that all should in common be called: but God's purpose is different; for he intends, according to his own secret counsel, to draw to himself the elect, and he designs to take away all excuse from the reprobate, that their obstinacy may be more and more apparent. We must further bear in mind, that while the people of Israel continued, the doctrine of repentance and faith was preserved among them; and the reason was that to which I have alluded, because they remained as yet in the fold of God. It is no wonder then that the Prophet gives again to the Israelites the hope of pardon, provided they repented.

Thus saith Jehovah to the house of Israel, Seek me, and ye shall live. This sentence has two clauses. In saying, Seek me, the Prophet exhorts the Israelites to return to a sane mind: and then he offers them the mercy of God, if only they sought from the heart to reconcile themselves to him. We have elsewhere said that men cannot be led to repentance, unless they believe that God will be propitious to them; for all who think him to be implacable, ever flee away from him, and dread the mention of his name. Hence, were any one through his whole life to proclaim repentance, he could effect nothing, except he were to connect with this the doctrine of faith, that is, except he were to show that God is ready to give pardon, if men only repent from the heart. These two parts, then, which ought not to be separated, the Prophet here connects together very wisely and for the best reason, when he says, Seek me, and ye shall live; intimating that the gate of mercy was still open, provided the Israelites did not persevere in their obstinacy. But, at the same time, he lays this to their charge, --- that they willfully perished through their own fault; for he shows that in themselves was the only hindrance, that they were not saved; for God was not only

ready to receive them into favor, but also anticipated and exhorted them, and of his own free will sought reconciliation. How then was it, that the Israelites despised the salvation offered to them? This was the madness which he now charges them with; for they preferred ruin to salvation, inasmuch as they returned not to God when he so kindly invited them, Seek me, and ye shall live The same thing is stated in another place, where it is said, that God seeketh not the death of a sinner, (Ezekiel 18:32)

But as we have already said, the Prophets spoke thus in common to all the people, but their doctrine was not to all efficacious; for the Lord inwardly attracted his elect, and others were rendered inexcusable. But still this is true, that the whole blame, that they perished, were in the children of Israel, for they refused the salvation offered to them. What indeed was the cause of their destruction, but their own obstinacy? And the root of the evil, was it not in their own hearts? Then none of them could evade the charge made against them by the Prophet, --- that they were the authors of their own ruin, for each of them must have been conscious of his own perverseness.

But Amos afterwards defines the character of true repentance, when he says, Seek not Bethel, go not to Gilgal, pass not over to Beersheba Some think that the Prophet here repudiates all the disguises, which are usually pretended by hypocrites. We indeed know that when God calls such men to himself, that they seek indirect and tortuous courses; for none of them return sincerely and willingly to God. Men indeed see that they are justly reproved for having departed from God: but when they are called back to him they take a circuitous course, as I have said, and not the straight road. Thus, though they pretend to seek God, they seek subterfuges that they may not present themselves to him. All this is no doubt true; but the Prophet advances farther; for he shows here, that the Israelites by going to Bethel not only lost all their labor, but also grievously offended God; for superstition was in itself condemnable. If Amos had preached at Jerusalem, he might have said, ``Go not into the temple, for in vain ye offer sacrifices;'' as indeed he does say hereafter, ``Come not with your flock.'' For he there shows, that God is not to be pacified by ceremonies; nay, in that very chapter, he rejects feast-days and sacrifices; but in this place he ascends higher, and says that these two things are wholly contrary --- to seek God, and to seek Bethel; as though he said, ``If ye from the heart return to me, renounce all the superstitions to which you have been hitherto attached.''

It is indeed a proof of true conversion, when the sinner is displeased with himself on account of his sins and hates the things which before pleased him and with a changed mind devotes himself wholly to God. It is of this that the Prophet now treats; as though he said, ``If there is in you a purpose to return to God, cast away all your superstitions; for these two things --- true religion and idolatry, cannot be joined together. As long then as ye remain fixed in that false worship, to which you have accustomed yourselves, ye continue alienated from God. Then reconciliation with him demands that you bid adieu to all your corrupt forms of worship.'' The import of the whole then is this, --- that the Israelites could not be reconciled to God, except they departed from their superstitions. Let them turn away, he says, from Bethel, and Gilgal, and Beersheba

We indeed know that the calves were made at Bethel; and Gilgal, no doubt, became celebrated for the passing of the people over Jordan, and also, as it is well known, for the circumcising of the children of Abraham; and as to Beersheba, we know that Abraham dwelt there for a long time, and frequently offered sacrifices to God. Now, this vicious zeal ({κακοζηλία} --- evil zeal or affectation) ever prevails in the world; without reason or judgment it lays hold on something special, when it undertakes to set up the worship of God, as we see to be the case under the Papacy. But God has prescribed to us a certain rule according to which he is to be worshipped; it is not then his will that there should be a mixture of our inventions. When therefore the posterity of Abraham presumptuously availed themselves of his example, and when they extolled the memorable event of the circumcision, God repudiated all contrivances of this kind; for as it was well known, it was expressly his will to be worshipped at Jerusalem; and by appointing one tabernacle and one altar, he designed to cherish unity and concord among the people. We now then understand that it was the intention of Amos to show, that the conversion of the people would be fictitious, until they turned away from all the superstitions and vicious modes of worship, in which they had habituated themselves: hence, Seek not Bethel, come not is Gilgal, pass not over to Beersheba.

The same thing may be said at this day to those who wish to blend the dregs of the Papacy with the pure and holy worship of God; for there are at this day many go-betweens, (mediatores) who, while they see that our doctrine cannot be disapproved of, yet wish to contrive some middle course; that is, they wish to reconcile Popery with the doctrine of the Gospel. But the Prophet shows that such a mixture cannot be endured by God. How so? Because light cannot agree with darkness. Hence, corruptions, except they be abolished, will always subvert the true worship of God. We now see, that the lesson conveyed by this doctrine is, that the pure worship of God cannot be restored while the corruptions of the world, which are contrary to his word, prevail.

Come not then to Gilgal, for by migrating it shall migrate There is an alliteration in the words of the Prophet, ``Gilgal by rolling shall be rolled;'' for Gilgal means rolling. Were such a phraseology allowable, it would be this, ``Gilgal by gilling shall be gilled;'' that is, it shall be rolled with quick rolling. God intimates that this place, under the protection of which the Israelites thought themselves safe, would be destroyed, as it had been already destined for destruction. Gilgal then be migrating shall migrate; not that the place could remove, but that it would be wholly demolished, so that nothing should remain there but dreadful tokens of God's vengeance.

He then adds, Seek Jehovah, and ye shall live This repetition is not superfluous: the Prophet confirms what I have already stated, that such was the opposition between the true and legitimate worship of God, and idolatry and superstition, that the people of Israel, as long as they retained their corruptions, proved that they had nothing to do with God, whatever they may have pretended with their mouths and by their ceremonies. Seek God, he says, and ye shall live; and this repetition was very useful for this end, that hypocrites might know that they were justly condemned, inasmuch as they did not consecrate themselves wholly to God; for they were ever

ready to contend with God whenever they could. ``Why does God deal so strictly with us? why does he not concede to us at least something? for we do not deny him every thing. But if we do what we think to be right, why does he not indulge us at least on this account?'' But when God not only urges hypocrites by his doctrine, but visits them also with punishments then they become angry, and even raise a clamor. Hence the Prophet, the second time, calls them to this duty, Seek Jehovah, and ye shall live; as though he said, ``Ye will gain nothing by evasion; for if any one seeks God truly and from the heart, God will not disappoint him; he will receive him into favor and will bless him. That ye then pine away in your calamities, impute this to your own obstinacy and stubbornness: it is so, because ye do not truly seek God; for while ye retain your corruptions, as I have said before, ye do not seek him.''

But he adds Lest he pass on like a fire. {צלח}, tselach, means to pass on, to advance; it means also to break out, and sometimes to prosper; but, in this place, the Prophet no doubt meant what I have said. Then it is, Lest he advance like fire upon the house of Joseph and consume it, and there be none to extinguish it in Bethel. The kind of vengeance which God threatened is not here expressed, but it may be easily understood. There is, therefore, in the meaning no obscurity; for he declares, that if the Israelites hardened their hearts against God, a burning was nigh at hand, which would seize on them, devour, and consume them. There shall come then or shall advance, a fire upon the house of Joseph; some say, shall burst out, which amounts to the same thing. By the house of Joseph is meant Ephraim; for he was, we know, the second son of Joseph; and, by taking a part for the whole, the Prophets usually include the ten tribes, as it is well known, when they mention Ephraim; and the kingdom of Israel is sometimes called the house of Joseph. Lest then he ascend as fire into the house of Joseph, and consume it, and there be none to extinguish it: this was said, because the Israelites never thought that they should be thus consumed by a sudden burning. The fire then shall devour the house of Joseph, and there will be none to quench it.

In the verse before I omitted one thing, to which I shall now advert. The Prophet said, that Bethel would be for a trouble, or be nothing. Bethel, we know, is called in another place Bethaven, the house of iniquity; and Aven means in Hebrew sometimes iniquity, sometimes grief or trouble, sometimes labor or difficulty, and sometimes nothing. It is not to be taken for iniquity in this place; this is certain: but Amos, on the contrary, speaks of punishment, which awaited that place, since it was abominable in the sight of God. As then he had said of Gilgal, that it would be rolled; so now he says of Bethel, that it would be for a trouble or grief, or be nothing. Either senses would be appropriate; --- that Bethel, from which the Israelites hoped for a remedy to all their evils, would be to them a trouble, that is, the cause of their ruin, or that it would be nothing; as though he had said, that their hopes would be fallacious and empty in expecting any relief from Bethel. It afterwards follows ---

Amos 5:7

7. Ye who turn judgment to wormwood, and leave off righteousness in the earth.

7. Qui convertunt in absynthium judicium, et justitiam in terra dimittunt.

Here the Prophet, after having inveighed against superstitions, comes to the

second table of the law. The Prophets are sometimes wont to shake off self-complacencies from hypocrites, when they spread before God their external veils, by saying that all their ceremonies are useless, except accompanied with integrity of heart: but in this place the Prophet expressly condemns in the Israelites two things; that is, that they had corrupted the true worship of God, departed from the doctrine of the law, and polluted themselves with ungodly superstitions; and he also reprehends them for their wicked and dishonest conduct towards men, --- for their disregard of what was right and equitable, --- for plunder, cruelty, and fraud. This second subject the Prophet handles, when he says, that they converted judgment into wormwood and allowed righteousness to fall on the ground. But the rest I must defer till tomorrow.

Prayer.

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou seest us to be so entangled, not only by depraved lusts, but also by the allurements of Satan, and by our own ignorance and blindness, --- O grant, that being roused by thy word we may at the same time learn to open our eyes to thy wholesome warnings by which thou callest us to thyself: and since we cannot do this without thy Spirit being our guide and leader, grant that he may enlighten our eyes, to the end that, being truly and from the heart tarried to thee, we may know that thou art propitious and ready to hear all who unfeignedly seek thee, and that, being reconciled to thee in Christ, we may also know that thou art to us a propitious Father, and that thou wilt bestow on us all kinds of blessings, until thou at length gatherest us to thy celestial kingdom, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lecture fifty-eighth

Ye who convert judgment into wormwood, and leave righteousness on the ground. We stated yesterday why the Prophet added this sentence: he wished in every way to prove the Israelites guilty. Having inveighed against their superstitions, he now adds, that they acted also falsely and iniquitously towards men. And he attacks the chiefs who ruled the people, not because they were alone culpable, but because they drew with them the whole community. We know that diseases descend from the head to the whole body: and this is the reason why the Prophet directs his address especially to the rulers. He says that they turned judgment to wormwood. This similitude often occurs. Nothing, we know, is sweeter than justice, when every one gains his own right; for this serves much to preserve peace. Hence nothing can be more gratifying to us, than when uprightness and equity prevail. This is the reason why the Prophet calls that iniquitous state of things bitterness, when no regard is had for justice and rectitude. He says also that righteousness was cast down on the ground, or thrown to the ground. Now the judges ought to have defended what was right among the people: for this, we know, is the duty enjoined them: and the Prophet now lays this to their charge that they left justice on the ground --- that they suffered it to lie prostrate. We now perceive the Prophet's design. It follows ---

Amos 5:8

8. Seek him that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night: that calleth for the

waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The LORD is his name:

8. Qui facit Pleiades et Orionem, qui convertit in lucem matutinam tenebras, et diem in noctem obtenebrescere facit: qui vocat aquas maris et effundit super superficiem terrae: Jehova nomen ejus.

Some interpreters connect this verse with the former, and think that what the Prophet had said before is here explained; but they are greatly mistaken, and misrepresent the meaning of the Prophet. We have indeed said, that the Prophet shows in that verse that the Israelites were not only perfidious and covenant-breakers with regard to God, having fallen away from his pure worship, but that they also acted iniquitously and dishonestly towards men: but these interpreters think that God is, by a metaphor, called righteousness and that religion is called judgment. This is in no way the mind of the Prophet; nay, it is, as I have already said, wholly different.

What, then, does the Prophet mean? I take this verse by itself; but yet we must see why the Prophet proclaims to us, in such sublime terms, the power of God. We know how heedlessly hypocrites trifle with Gods as though they had to do with a child: for they imagine a god according to their own fancy; yea, they transform him whenever they please, and think him to be delighted with frivolous trifles. Hence it is, that the way of pacifying God is with them so easy. When in various ways they provoke God's wrath, there is in readiness some little expiation, and they think that it is a satisfaction to God. As then hypocrites imagine that God is similar to a dead idol, this is the reason why the Prophet, in order to banish these delusions, shows that the nature of God is far different. ``What sort of being,'' he says, ``do you think God to be? for ye bring your worthless and frivolous expiations as though God would be satisfied with these trifles, as though he were a child or some silly woman: but God is He who makes the Pleiades and Orion, who turns darkness into morning, who changes day into night, who pours forth on the earth the waters of the sea [38] Go to now, and set forth your play-things, as though access to God were open to you, when ye labor to pacify him with your trifles.'' We now perceive the Prophet's object: we see how this verse ought to be taken separately, and yet to be connected with the main discourse of the Prophet; for after having inveighed against the gross vices of the people, seeing he had to contend with the headstrong, yea, with the mockers of God, he grows angry and sharply exclaims, ``What do ye think or feign God to be?'' Then the Prophet sets forth the character of God as being far different from what hypocrites imagine him to be in their own fancies. ``What are your notions of him?'' he says. ``You indeed make God to be like a child; but he made the Pleiades and Orion.''

Some translate {כימה}, kime, Arcturus. There is no need of laboring much about such names; for the Jews, ignorant of the liberal sciences, cannot at this day certainly

[38] The verse, as evidently understood by Calvin, is to be thus rendered — "He who made the Pleiades and Orion, Who turns darkness into morning, And darkens the day to night, Who calls the waters of the sea, And pours them on the face of the earth, — Jehovah is his name." This is the rendering of the Septuagint. It is not consonant with the character of Hebrew to borrow a word, as it is done in our version, from a preceding verse. Newcome has prefixed the words, "That have forsaken;" on what authority it does not appear. The obvious construction of the passage given above. — Ed.

determine what stars are meant; and they show also their complete ignorance as to herbs. They are indeed bold enough; they define what every word means; but yet they betray, as I have said, their own want of knowledge. And our Prophet was a shepherd, and had never learnt astronomy in his youth, or in his manhood. He therefore speaks of the stars according to the common notions of his age: but he, no doubt, selected two stars of an opposite influence. The Pleiades (which are also called the seven Stars) are, we know, mild; for when they rise, they moderate the rigor of the cold, and also bring with them the vernal rain. But Orion is a fiercer star, and ever excites grievous and turbulent commotions both at its rising and setting. [39] This being the case, the Prophet names here those stars most commonly known. He says ``Since the Lord changes the seasons, so that the mildness of the spring follows the rigor of winter, and since days succeed nights, and darkness comes after the light, and since it is God who renders a serene heaven suddenly cloudy by raising vapors from the veins of the earth, or from the sea, since all these changes manifest to us the wonderful power of God, how is it that men so presumptuously trifle with him? Whence is this so great a stupidity, unless they wholly overlook the works of God, and leave him a name only, and see not what is before their eyes?'' We hence see how beautifully and how strikingly the Prophet does here set forth the power of God, and how opportunely he speaks of it. He then maketh the Pleiades and Orion

And he adds, He changeth darkness into the morning, he maketh the day to grow dark into night Here he brings before us the various changes of times. The night turns not into day by chance, nor does darkness come over the earth by chance when the sun has ceased to shine. Since then this variety ought to awaken even the unwilling, and to constrain them to adore God, how is it that his majesty is treated by men with such mockery, that they bring their frivolous expiations, and think him to be no more angry with them when they present to him what is worthless and childish, as when a nurse by a pleasing sound soothes an infant? I say again, whence is this so great a stupor, except that men willfully close their eyes to so bright a display, by which God shows himself to us, that he might constrain us all to adore his name? We now see why the Prophet describes the various changes which daily take place.

He speaks also of the waters of the sea, Who calleth, he says, the waters of the sea, and poureth them on the surface of the earth Some explain this of fountains; for they think that all waters proceed from the sea, and that fountains are nothing

[39] Commentators are not agreed as to the meaning of the words rendered here, Pleiades and Orion, {כימה and .{כסיל} They are found only in two other places, Job 9:9, and Job 38:31; and in the first of these in conjunction with ,{עש} in our version, Arcturus, and also in the second with ,{מזרות} Mazzaroth. Most think that all these were names given by the Hebrews to certain stars or constellations. It is evident, that with the exception of the last, Mazzaroth, the words, Pleiades, etc., are names borrowed from the Greek poets, and first introduced by the translators of the Septuagint: but they observe no consistency; for in Job 9:9, they render ,{כימה} {Αρκτουρος}, and in Job 38:31; {πλειας} and in Amos the sentence is paraphrased and the word is left out. Again, {כסיל} is rendered {ἕσπερος}, the evening star, in Job 9:9 and {Ωρίωνος} in Job 38:31 while {עש} is translated {ἕσπερος}, and in Job 9:9, {πλειας}. This confusion proves that the translators exercised no discrimination. The Vulgate exhibits a similar inconsistency. Parkhurst's view is the most satisfactory, and corresponds with the terms used in connection with the words in Job 38:31, and with the context here. The genial heat, according to him, is ,{כימה} and the cold is .{כסיל} The passage in Job is, ``Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, ,{כימה} or loose the bands of Orion? '';{כסיל} which influences ,{מעדנות} the delights, the pleasures, the delicacies) of the genial heat, or{כימה}, open contradictions of the cold? {כסיל} In the present passage what things God is continually doing are referred to, and not his past works, which would be the case where the constellations intended. Then the first line would run this: --- He who makes the genial heat and the cold. Thus the whole passage would agree well together, as relating the various acts of God as the supreme agent in the material world. --- Ed.

else but as it were the eyes of the sea: but this passage ought rather to be viewed as referring to rains; for the power of God is not so conspicuous in the waters which come from the earth, as when he suddenly darkens the heavens with vapors. For whence is it, that the heavens, a while ago clear, is now cloudy? We see clouds rising, --- but at whose command? Philosophers indeed assign some natural causes; they say that vapors are drawn up both from the earth and the sea by the heat of the sun: but why is this done to-day rather than yesterday? Whence is this diversity, except that God shows that the element of water is under his control, and also the air itself, as veil as the vapors, which are formed as it were out of nothing? For what is vapor but gross air, or air condensed? and yet vapors arise from the hollow places of the earth as well as from the sea. Certainly the water could not of itself produce a new element: it is ponderous, and vapors rise up on high: how is it that water thus loses its own nature? But vapors are in a middle state between air and water, and yet they ascend above the air, and arise from the earth to the heavens. The Prophet therefore does not without reason say, that waters are called, that is, that these vapors are called, from the sea, and are afterwards poured on the surface of the earth. This may be understood of the clouds as well as of rain; for clouds extend over the earth and surround us; and rain is poured on the earth. This is doubtless the wonderful work of God.

Hence the Prophet concludes, Jehovah is his name It is not the idol which you have devised for yourselves; for your expiations might indeed draw a smile from a child but they cannot satisfy the judgment of God. Then think that you have to do with God himself, and let these fallacious delusions deceive you no longer.'' It follows ---

Amos 5:9

9. That strengtheneth the spoiled against the strong, so that the spoiled shall come against the fortress.

9. Qui fortificat vastatorem super robustum, et vastator super munitiones ascendet. [40]

The Prophet speaks not now of the ordinary works of God, in which his majesty, inspiring the highest reverence, as well as his dread power, shines forth; but he more closely urges the Israelites, who had become so hardened in their vices, that they were wholly inflexible. Here then the Prophet charges them with contumacy and says, ``What, think you, will take place? Ye are strong; but God will stir up robbers against you, who will prevail, and beat down and chatter in pieces that obduracy, through which you now resist God.'' Thus after having filled them with dread by setting before them the course of nature, he now holds forth this threats that they would themselves have to feel the power of God: for however callous they were, and though in their ferocity they dared to rise up against God, he declares that it would avail them nothing; inasmuch as there was in God's hand a waster, who would prevail

[40] This version differs widely from ours, but is no doubt nearer the meaning of the original. Newcome's translation is as follows — Who scattereth desolation over the strong, And bringeth desolation over the fortress. What comes nearest the original is the rendering proposed by Parkhurst, and is striking and poetical: the first line is this — Who causeth the waster to laugh at strength. The verb here used means primarily to laugh or to smile, and in a secondary sense, to be refreshed or made cheerful, or to be comforted. It is here in Hiphil, the causative mood. The whole verse may be thus rendered: — Who causeth the waster to laugh at strength; And a waster on the fortress he will bring. — Ed.

against their obduracy.

And a waster, he says, shall ascend on the very fortresses, or shall enter the fortresses. The Prophet here, in an indirect way, laughs to scorn the vain confidence which filled the Israelites, on observing that they were inclosed in fortified cities and had defenses and a powerful army. All this, he says, will be wholly useless to them when God will raise up strong depredators, who will penetrate through well fortified gates, and leap over walls, and enter strongly defended cities. We now apprehend what the Prophet had in view in these words.

It will now be easy to apply this doctrine to our own instruction: Whenever we are not suitably moved, either by the truth, or by warnings, or by threatenings, let this come to our minds which the Prophet teaches here, namely, that God cannot be mocked, and that hypocrites gain nothing by their delusive ceremonies, when they sacrifice and present their expiations, which by no means please God, --- how so? We may indeed easily learn the reason from the nature of God himself. Hence, that we may not transform God, let us learn to raise up our eyes to behold him, and also to look on all things around us; and this will constrain us to adore and fear his great power. It follows ---

Amos 5:10

10. They hate him that rebuketh in the gate, and they abhor him that speaketh uprightly.

10. Oderunt (odio habent) in porta corripientem, et loquentem rectum abominantur.

It is probable that in this verse also, the judges are reproved by the Prophet, though what is here said may be extended to the whole people: but as nearly the whole discourse is leveled against the judges, I readily subscribe to the opinion, that the Prophet now accuses the judges on this account, --- because they could not bear to be reproved for the great license they allowed themselves, but, on the contrary, abhorred all those who reproved them. What then he says as to the reprover being hated in the gate, is to be thus explained: When judges sat in the gate and perverted justice and right, and when any one reminded them of their duty, they haughtily rejected all admonitions, and even hated them. In the gate then, that is, They who ought to rule others, and to correct whatever vice there may be among the people, cannot themselves bear any reprover, when their own vices require strong remedies.

And well would it be, if this disease were healed at this day. We indeed see that kings, and those in authority, wish to be deemed sacred, and they will allow no reproof. Instantly the majesty of God is violated in their person; for they complain and cry out, whenever teachers and God's servants dare to denude their wicked conduct. This vice then, which the Prophet condemns, is not the vice of one time; for, even in the present day, those who occupy the seats of judgment wish to be exempt from all reproofs, and would claim for themselves a free liberty in sinning, inasmuch as they think not that they belong to the common class of men, and imagine themselves exempt from all reprehension; in short, they wish to rule without any equity, for power with them is nothing but unbridled licentiousness. We now understand the Prophet's meaning. It now follows ---

Amos 5:11

11. Forasmuch therefore as your treading is upon the poor, and ye take from him burdens of wheat: ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them; ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink wine of them.

11. Quia calcastis pauperem (vel, onus imposuistis,) et onus frumenti abstulistis ab eo, domos excisionis (hoc est, ex lapide quadrato) aedificabitis, et non habitabitis in illis; vineas desiderabiles plantabitis, et non bibetis vinum earum.

The Prophet here declares, that though the judges enriched themselves by plunder, yet God would not allow them to enjoy their booty, but that he would deprive them of the great wealth they had accumulated. This is the import of the whole. We hence see that the Prophet contends not here with the common people, but professedly attacks the chief men, inasmuch as from them did proceed all the prevailing evil.

The first thing is, they imposed burdens on the poor, and then, they took away corn from them He says first, ``A burden have you laid'', or, ``ye have trodden on the poor;'' for the verb may be taken in either sense, and it matters not which as to the import of the passage. It is not indeed often that we meet with a verb of four letters; [41] but interpreters explain this as meaning to tread under foot or to lay a burden. The Prophet, I doubt not, accuses here the judges of not sparing miserable men, but of burdening them with tributes and exactions; for this is to burden the poor. Then he adds, ``Ye have taken a load of corn''. The Prophet had doubtless fixed here on a species of cruelty in robbing others, the most detestable. When judges take money, or any other gift, it is less odious than when the poor are compelled to carry corn to them on their shoulders. It was the same as though they surrendered their very life to their plunderers; for when judges constrained loads of corn to be brought to them, it was as though they strangled the poor, or drew blood from their veins, inasmuch as they robbed them of their food and support. We now perceive what the Prophet meant: You have, he says, oppressed the poor, and taken from them a load of corn. Some render {בר}, ber, chosen, but improperly.

Ye shall therefore build, etc. He declares here that they would not realize their hope, though they plundered on all sides to build palaces, and though they got great possessions to enrich themselves and their heirs: ``This self-love,'' he says, ``will deceive you; defraud, rob, plunder; but the Lord will at length strip you of all your robberies: for after having been venal, and prostituted not only your souls but your shame for gain, and after having spent much labor and expense in building, ye shall not dwell in your palaces; and when ye shall have planted vineyards with great expense and care, ye shall not drink their wine.'' Isaiah also speaks in the same strain,

`O plunderer, thou shalt be exposed to plunders'

(Isaiah 33:1)

Experience also teaches the same thing; for we see how the Lord transfers from

[41] The verb is {בושסכם,} from {בושם} but in ten MSS. Of Kennicott, and in five of D'Rossi, the {ו} is left out: and then {ש} is supposed to be put for {ס,} as Amos in another place, Amos 7:14, puts {ס} for {ש.} The verb {בס,} and in its reduplicate form {בססס,} occurs in other places, and means to tread or trample under foot. The expression here literally is, ``your trampling;'' but such a form may often be expressed in our language, ``ye trample.'' The connection of the whole verse will be better seen by the following version: --- Therefore, as ye trample on the poor, And tribute of corn extort from him, --- Houses of hewn stone you may build, But ye shall not dwell in them; Vineyards of delight ye may plant, But ye shall not drink their wine. --- Ed.

one to another the possessions of this world: he who seems to provide riches after his death for his heirs for ever, passes his whole life, as we see, without enjoying his own property; for he is hungry in the midst of the greatest abundance, and even famishes himself. This is very frequently the case. And then when his abundance comes to his heirs, it falls into the hands of prodigals, who soon dissipate the whole. And sometimes the Lord allows not that such vast wealth should have heirs, and it is scattered here and there, and the very name is extinguished, though the name to such haughty and wealthy men is a great object, as they commonly wish it to be eminent in the world for some hundred ages after their death.

This passage of the Prophet ought therefore to be especially noticed. He tells us that unjust gains were laid up by these robbers and wicked plunderers, in order to amass great riches; but he adds, ``The Lord will spoil them, and will not suffer them to enjoy their abundance, however anxiously they had collected it from all quarters.'' Let us now proceed ---

Amos 5:12

12. For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins: they afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate from their right

12. Quia cognosco magnas iniquitates vestras (vel, multas, {רבים}) et robusta scelera vestra; efflictores justi, sublatores redemptionis, et pauperes in porta declinare faciunt (hoc est, causa cadere faciunt.)

The Prophet introduces God here as the speaker, that the threatening might be more authoritative: for we know, at it has been before stated, that the Prophets were despised by haughty men; but when God himself appeared as it were before them, it was strange if no fear laid hold on them; they had at least no excuse for their presumption, if God's name did not touch their hearts and humble them.

I know, he says, your iniquities; as though he said, ``Ye do not think yourselves bound to render an account to men, as probably no such account; will be rendered by you; but how will you be able, think you, to escape my tribunal? for I am your judge, and mine is the government: however ferociously ye now tread on the poor, and evasively contend with me, your crimes must necessarily be judged by me; I know your crimes. And as the rich by their splendor covered every wickedness, particularly the magistrates, who were adorned with a public character, God says that their turpitude was fully known to him: as though he said ``Contend as much as you please, still your iniquities are sufficiently apparent to me; ye will gain nothing by your subtle evasions.'' Moreover, he reprehends them not merely for slight offenses, but says that they were wholly past being borne with. When something is done amiss by the highest power, indulgence is commonly granted; for nothing is more difficult than for one who sustains so great and heavy a burden, to retain so much integrity as to be free from every blame: but the Lord shows here that they were not lightly culpable, but that their crimes were so grievous and flagrant that they could not be endured. We now then understand what was the object of the Prophet.

When therefore their own greatness dazzles the eyes of proud men, let us know that they cannot deprive God of his right; for though he may not judge them to-day, he will yet shortly ascend his tribunal: and he reminds them, that those pompous

displays by which they cover their many crimes, are only shadows which will vanish. This is what the Prophet means.

Then he calls them, The oppressors of the just He enumerates here some particulars, with regard to which, the iniquity of the judges whom he now addresses might be, as it were, felt to be gross and abominable. Ye oppress he says, the just; this was one thing: then follows another, They take {כפר}, capher, expiation, or, the price of redemption. The Prophet, I have no doubt, meant to point out here something different from the former crime. Though interpreters blend these two things, I yet think them to be wholly different; for these mercenary judges made an agreement with the wicked, whenever any homicide or other violence was perpetrated; in short, whenever any one implicated himself in any grievous sin, they saw that there was a prey taken, and anxiously gaped for it: they wished murders to be committed daily, that they might acquire gain. Since, then, these judges were thus intent on bribery, the Prophet accuses them as being takers of ransom. They ought to have punished crimes; this they did not; but they let go the wicked unpunished; they spared murderers, and adulterers, and robbers, and sorcerers not indeed without rewards, for they brought the price of redemption, and departed as if they were innocent.

We now perceive what the Prophet means here; and well would it be were this crime not so common: but at this day, the cruelty of many judges appears especially in this --- that they hunt for crimes for the sake of gain, which seems to be as it were a ransom; for this is the proper meaning of the word {כפר}, capher. As then this evil commonly prevails it is no wonder that the Prophet, while reprehending the corruptions of his time, says, that judges took a ransom.

Then he adds, The poor they turn aside from judgment in the gate This is the third crime: the Prophet complains, that they deprived miserable men of their right, because they could not bring so large a bribe as the rich; though relying on the goodness of their cause, they thought themselves sure of victory. The Prophet complains, that they were disappointed of their hope, and their right was denied them in the gate, that is, in the court of justice; for we know that it was an ancient custom for judges to sit in the gates, and there to administer justice; And hence Amos mentions here gate twice: and what he complains of was the more disgraceful, inasmuch as the judicial court was, as it were, a sacred asylum, to which injured men resorted, that they might have their wrongs redressed. When this became the den of robbers, what any more remained for them? We now then see that the Prophet speaks not here of the common people, but that he mainly levels his reproofs against the rulers. Let us go on ---

Amos 5:13

13. Therefore the prudent shall keep silence in that time; for it is an evil time.

13. Propterea prudens in tempore hoc silebit, quia tempus hoc malum est. [42]

[42] This verse literally rendered from the Hebrew is as follows: — Therefore, the prudent at that time will be silent; For a time of evil will that be. It is a rule, which may be viewed as nearly if not wholly, universal, that the substantive verb, to be, whenever understood and not expressed in the original, is to be rendered in the same tense with the other verbs in the sentence. So here, "A time of evil will that be," and not, "is;" for the previous verb is in the future tense. There are many instances of the neglect of this rule in our version, as in Psalm 23:4, "I will fear no evil: for thou art with me;" it ought to be, "for thou wilt be with me." And

Some interpreters think that a punishment is here denounced on the people of Israel, and that is, that the Lord would deprive them of Prophets and teachers. We indeed know that nothing is more to be dreaded, than that the Lord should extinguish the light of sound doctrine, and suffer us to go astray in darkness, yea, to stumble, and to rush headlong to ruin, as they do who are destitute of wholesome counsels. But I think that the meaning is quite different. Another exposition may be deemed probable, which is this, that the prudent dared not to speak on account of the prevailing tyranny; for Amos had said before that the judges, who then ruled, would not bear reproof. Hence, the prudent were forced to be silent at that time, for that time was evil; and every liberty of teaching was taken away. And this meaning opens still wider; for the silent would have to bear the wrongs done to them, and to devour inwardly their own groans, for they dared not to complain; nay, the very teachers did not oppose the torrent, for they saw that it was not the time to resist haughty and violent men. But this view may be also fitly applied to God's judgment, that the prudent would be silent, being put in fear: for silence is often connected with fear: and it is a dreadful judgment of God, when the prudent closes his mouth, or puts his hand, as it is said elsewhere, on his mouth.

As to the first exposition, I have already rejected it, and it has certainly nothing in its favor: but the second may be accommodated to the general meaning of the Prophet, that is, the prudent shall be silent at that time, because all liberty shall be taken away. I am, at the same time, unwilling thus to restrict it, as they do; for it became not a wise man to pass by in silence sins so grievous: though tyrants threatened hundred deaths, yet those on whom was laid the necessity of teaching ought not to have been silent. But the Prophet here speaks not of what the prudent would do or omit to do; on the contrary, he intimates, that whenever they began to speak, the arrogance of the judges would be so great as to repel all reproofs. The prudent then shall be silent, not willingly; for that, as I have said, would have been unworthy of wise men. And the Prophet here, by way of honor, calls those prudent who rightly discern things, who are not led away by corruptions, but remain upright; who, though they see the whole order of things collapsing, and though they see heaven and earth, as it were, mingled together, yet retain a sound judgment. Since the Prophet speaks of such men, he certainly does not mean that they would be willingly silent; for it would have been a base indolence in them thus to betray the truth and a good cause. What then does he mean? Even this --- that the wickedness of tyrants would be so great, as not to allow one word to be declared by the prudent; when any one came forth to reprove their vices, he was not suffered.

When therefore he says, that the time would be evil, he means, that such audacity would prevail, that all liberty would be denied to wise men. They would then be forced to be silent, for they could effect nothing by speaking, nay, they would have no freedom of speech allowed them: and though they attempted to discharge their office, yet tyrannical violence would instantly impose silence on them. Similar was the case with Lot, of whom it is said that he groaned and vexed his own heart, (Genesis

then the line which follows ought be rendered in the same way, for the verb is in the future tense, — “Thy rod and thy staff, they will comfort me.” — Ed.

16:1) He was constrained, I have no doubt, to be silent after having often used free reproofs; nay, he doubtless exposed himself to many dangers by his attempts to reprove the Sodomites. Such seems to me to be the meaning of the Prophet, when he says, that the prudent would be silent, because these tyrants would impose silence on all teachers, --- now throwing them into prisons, then banishing them, --- now denouncing death on them, then visiting them with some punishment, or loading them with reproaches, or treating them with ridicule as persons worthy of contempt. We now understand the Prophet's, design. We may further observe, that men have then advanced to the extremity of evil, when reception is no more given to sound doctrine and salutary counsels, and when all liberty is sternly suppressed, so that prudent men dare not to reprove vices, however rampant they may be, which even children observe, and the blind feel. When licentiousness has arrived to this pitch, it is certain that the state of things is past recovery and that there is no hope of repentance or of a better condition: and this was the meaning of the Prophet.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that as we cannot see with our eyes thy infinite and incomprehensible glory, which is hid from us, we may learn at least by thy works, what thy great power is, so as to be humbled under thy mighty hand, and never trifle with thee as hypocrites are wont to do; but to bring a heart really sincere, and also pure hands, that our whole life may testify that a true fear of thy name prevails, in our hearts: and grant, that whilst we devote ourselves wholly to thy service, we may courageously and with invincible hearts, fight against all these corruptions, by which we are on every side beset, until, having finished our warfare, we attain to that celestial rest, which has been prepared for us by Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lecture Fifty-ninth

Amos 5:14

14. Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live: and so the Lord, the God of hosts, shall be with you, as ye have spoken.

14. Quaerite bonum et non malum, ut vivatis; et erit hoc modo Jehova, Deus exercituum, vobiscum, quemadmodum dixistis.

The Prophet again repeats, that it was only owing to the Israelites themselves that it was not well with them; for God was ready to grant them his blessing; but they designedly sought a curse for themselves. Inasmuch, then, the hypocrites are wont to put away from themselves the blame of every evil, and to complain of their miseries, as though the Lord afflicted them unjustly, the Prophet here shows, that no evil happened to the Israelites, but what they procured by their vices: and at the same time he exhorts them to repentance, and gives them the hope of pardon, provided they hardened not their hearts to the last. He therefore bids them to seek good; but by adding, seek not evil, his words are full of meaning, as though he had said, that they were so fixed in their own wickedness, that they could not be torn away from it. The import of the whole, then, is this --- that the Israelites could not complain of being too severely treated by God, because they suffered not themselves to be kindly dealt with. And the Prophet assigns this as the reason --- that they were not only alienated from what was good, but that they also with avidity and eager

desire followed what was evil: in the meantime he exhorts them to repentance and adds a promise the more to encourage them.

Seek then good, he says, that ye may live; And then he adds, And thus God will be with you, as ye have said. Here the wickedness of the people is reproved who sought to bind God to themselves; for hypocrites are wont to misapply the promises: when they presumptuously reject God himself, they still wish him to be under an obligation to them. Thus they gloried that they were the children of Abraham, an elect people; circumcision was to them like a royal diadem; they sought to be superior to all other nations: and thus they abused the name of God, and at the same time they petulantly scorned both the word of God and his Prophets. As, then, they ever boasted that God was dwelling in the midst of them, the Prophet says, ``Then and thus will God be with you if ye seek what is good or the doing of good;'' for to seek good is nothing else than to endeavor to do good; as though he said ``Change your nature and your manners; for hitherto iniquity has prevailed among you; you have been violent, and rapacious, and fraudulent: begin now to do good, then God will be with you.''

There is therefore a great emphasis to be laid on the particle {כן}, can, thus will God be with you: for the Prophet reminds them of what so often occurs in the law, ``Be ye holy, for I am holy,'' who dwell in the midst of you, (Leviticus 11:44) God shows, in these words, that it could not be that he would dwell with the Israelites except they sanctified themselves, that there might be a mutual agreement. But they had no regard for holiness, and yet wished God to be bound to them. This false confidence the Prophet derides, and says, that a certain condition is fixed in the law, according to which God would dwell in the midst of them. Thus then will God be in the midst of you; that is, when he sees that you strive after uprightness and the doing of good.

I have already explained what this means, as ye have said; for he proves that foolish vaunting to be false which was heard among the Israelites: ``Has not the Lord chosen and adopted us as his people? Is not the ark of the covenant a sure pledge of his presence? How then could he depart from us? God would deny himself, were he not to keep his pledged faith; for he covenanted with our fathers, that we should be his flock even to the end of the world.'' Since, then, they thus foolishly boasted, and were, at the same time, covenant breakers, the Prophet says, ``Ye boast, indeed, by your mouth that God is in the midst of you, but see what he in his turn stipulates and requires from you. If, then, ye respond to his call, he will not surely be wanting to his pledged faith; but as ye willfully depart from him, he must necessarily become alienated from you.'' We now then perceive the meaning of the Prophet in these words. It follows ---

Amos 5:15

15. Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate: it may be that the Lord God of hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph.

15. Odio habete malum et dilligite bonum; et statuite in porta judicium, si forte misereatur Jehova Deus exercituum reliquiarum Joseph.

The Prophet inculcates the same truth; and he did this designedly; for he saw that

nothing was more difficult than to bring this people to repentance, who, in the first place, were by nature refractory; and, in the second place, were hardened by long habit in their vices. For Satan gains dominion by degrees in the hearts of men, until he renders them wholly stupid so that they discern not between right and wrong. Such, then, was the blindness which prevailed among the people of Israel: it was therefore necessary often to goad them as Amos does here.

Hence he bids them to hate evil and to love good. And this order ought to be preserved, when we desire really to turn to God and to repent. Amos here addresses perverse men, who were so immersed in their own wickedness, that they distinguished no longer between light and darkness: it was therefore not without reason that he begins with this sentence, that they should hate evil; as though he had said, that there had been hitherto a hostile disagreement between them and God, and that therefore a change was necessary, in order that they might return to him. For when any one has already wished to devote himself to God's service, this exhortation to hate evil is superfluous: but when one is sunk still in his own vices, he has need of such a stimulant. The Prophet therefore does here reprove them; and though they flattered themselves, he yet shows that they were greatly addicted to their vices.

He afterwards adds, Love good. He intimates, that it would be a new thing for them to cultivate benevolence, and to apply themselves to what was right. The import of the whole is this, --- that the Israelites would have no peace with God, until they were wholly changed and became new men; for they were now strangers to goodness, and given to wickedness and depravity. But Amos mentions here only a part of repentance: for {טוב}, thub, no doubt means the doing of good, as iniquity is properly called {רע}, ro [the doing of evil.] He speaks not here of faith, or of prayer to God, but describes repentance by its fruits; for our faith, as it has been stated in other places, is proved in this way; it manifests itself, when sincerity and uprightness towards one another flourish in us, when we spontaneously love one another and perform the duties of love. Thus then by stating a part for the whole, is repentance here described; that is, the whole, as they commonly say, is shown by a part.

But now the Prophet adds, And set up judgment in the gate He here glances at the public state of things, of which we have largely spoken in our yesterday's lecture. A deluge of iniquity had so inundated the land, that in the very courts of justice, and in the passing of judgments, there was no longer any equity, any justice. Since then corruption had taken possession of the very gates, the Prophet exhorts them to set up judgment in the gate; it may be, he says, that God will show mercy to the remnants of Joseph. The Prophet shows here that it was hardly possible that the people should continue safe; nay, that this was altogether hopeless. But as the common degeneracy, like a violent tempest, carried away the good along with it, the Prophet here admonishes the faithful not to despond, though they were few in number, but to retake themselves to God, to suffer others to fall away and to run headlong to ruin, and at the same time to provide for their own safety, as those who flee away from the burning.

We now then understand the object of the Prophet: for when the whole multitude,

given up to destruction, had laid aside every care for their safety, a few remained, who yet suffered themselves to be borne along, as though a tempest, as it has been said, had carried them away. The Prophet then does here give comfort to such good men as were still alive, and shows that though the people were sinking, there was no reason for them to despair, for the Lord still promised to be propitious to them. What this doctrine teaches is this, --- that ten ought not to regard what a thousand may do; but they ought to hear God speaking, rather than to abandon themselves with the multitude; when they see men blindly and impetuously running headlong to their own ruin, they should not follow them, but rather listen to God, and not reject his offered salvation. However much then their small number may dishearten them, they ought not yet to suffer God's promises to be forced or snatched away from them, but fully to embrace them.

The expression, it may be, is not one of doubt, as it has been stated in another place, (Joel 2:1) but the Prophet, on the contrary, intended sharply to stimulate the faithful, that he might, as it was needful, increase their alacrity. Whenever then {פן}, pen, lest perhaps or {אולי}, auli, it may be, is set down, let us know, that they are not intended to leave men's minds in suspense or perplexity, that they may despond or come to God in doubt; but that a difficulty is thereby implied, in order to stir them up and to increase the ardor of their desire: and this is necessary in a mixed state of things, for we see how great is the indolence of our flesh. Even they who desire to return to God, do not hasten with that ardor which becomes them, but creep slowly, and hardly draw themselves along; and then when many obstacles meet them, they who would have been otherwise full of courage, almost despair at every step. It is therefore necessary to apply such goadings as these, ``Take heed; for when any one is beset on every side by fire, he will not long delay, nor think with himself how he may escape without any hurt and without any inconvenience; but he will risk danger rather than that he should by delay or tardiness deprive himself of a way of escape. So also ye see, that iniquity surrounds you on every side; what then is to be done except that each of you must quickly flee away?''

We now then perceive the design of the Prophet in saying, It may be that he will show mercy. The sum of the whole is this, --- That there was need of a great change, that they might become altogether new men, who had hitherto devoted themselves to wickedness, --- and then, that the few should not wait until the whole multitude joined them; for though the people resolved to go astray, yet God ought to have been attended to, when recalling the few to himself and bidding them to escape, as it were, from the burning, --- and, thirdly, that there is stated here a difficulty, that those still healable might not come tardily to God, but that they might strive against impediments and quickly run to him seeing that they could not without great effort extricate themselves; they were therefore to come to God, not slowly; but having overcome all difficulties, they were on the contrary, to flee to him. It now follows ---

Amos 5:16

16. Therefore the Lord, the God of hosts, the Lord, saith thus; Wailing shall be in all streets; and they shall say in all the highways, Alas! alas! and they shall call the husbandman to mourning, and such as are skilful of lamentation to wailing.

16. Quapropter dicit Jehova Deus exercituum, Dominus, In omnibus compitis lamentum, et in omnibus viis dicent, Vae, vae; et vocabunt agricolam ad luctum, et lamentum erit super omnes peritos luctus.

The particle of inference, set down here, confirms what has been already said, --- that the Israelites vainly flattered themselves, though they were in the worst condition. And as the Prophet knew that there would be no end to their evasions, being, as they were, perverse hypocrites, he cuts off all their subterfuges by saying, that God had now announced his purpose concerning them, and that however they might object this or that, God's judgment could no longer be deferred by delay, for their iniquity was more than sufficiently proved.

Therefore Jehovah, he says, God of hosts, the Lord, saith. He again repeats the attributes of God, in order to set forth his supreme power; as though he had said, that the Israelites gained nothing by acting the part of sophisters with God; for that he is the supreme judge, against whom there is no appeal, and whose sentence cannot be revoked. Hence we see that what is here checked is that waywardness which deceived the Israelites, while they continued to clamor against God. Thus then saith Jehovah; this was said, that they might understand that they were depraved in their disposition, corrupt in morals, wholly given to wickedness, and without a particle of goodness in them.

Thus then saith God, In all the streets of concourse there shall be lamentation, and in all the highways they shall say, Woe! Woe! [43] The Prophet disputes not here with them, nor denounces their vices, but speaks only of punishment; as though he had said, that the litigation was decided, that there was no need of an accuser; for nothing now remained but that God should execute his vengeance on them, inasmuch as he had already contended more than enough with them. And this mode of teaching frequently occurs in the Prophets; and it ought to be observed, that we may not think that we can gain anything by our evasions, when the Lord regards us as guilty. Let us then dread the punishment, which is prepared for all the intractable and the obstinate. They shall say, he says, in all the highways, Woe! Woe! They now prattle and think to prevail by their loquacity: when they murmur against God, they think that a delay is thus attained, that he dares not to inflict punishment; but God nevertheless proceeds with his judgment; they shall cry, Woe! Woe! there will be no time then for devising shifts, but they will be wholly taken up with wailing.

They shall call, he says, the husbandman to mourning Some think {אכר}, acar, derived from {נכר}, nucar, which is to own, or, to make, one's self a stranger: and they are induced to regard it so only for this reason, because the Prophet immediately mentions those who were skillful in mourning. But, as all the Hebrews agree as to the meaning of this word, I am unwilling, without authority to make any change: and it also harmonizes well with what the Prophet says. At the same time, those Hebrew interpreters are wrong, who think that the order is inverted, as though it ought to

[43] Henderson gives a better rendering of these two lines, — In all the broad places there shall be wailing, And in all the streets, they shall say, Oh! Oh! {,רחבות from ,{רחב} to be dilated, and to be made broad or wide, mean broad places or broad streets: and ,{חוצות} from ,{חצה} to divide, signify the common streets, by which the town is divided. The exclamations, ,{הו} ,{הו} are rendered by Calvin, Vae! Vae! Eheu, in Latin, and Woe, in our language come nearest to sound in the original. ---Ed.

have been thus, ``The skillful in lamentation shall call husband men to mourning.'' But the Prophet, I doubt not, meant, that all were to be led together to mourning; for, though the manner was different, yet, in the first place, he appoints mourning to husbandmen, and then he shows that it would be common to all those who were wont to mourn.

Let us then consider what the Prophet says, Lamentation to all the skillful in mourning. Eastern nations we know, exercised themselves in acting grief, and so they do at this day. We find, indeed, that they practiced all manner of gesticulations: a greater moderation at least is seen among us, however heavy the grief may be. And this custom in former times came also into Europe; for we know that there were women hired to mourn at Rome; and we know that there were everywhere those who lamented. They therefore mourned for wages. This vicious custom the Prophet notices: but it is not discussed here whether this was done rightly or foolishly: for the Prophet here only refers to a common custom; `There will be lamentations' he says, `to all the skillful in mourning;' that is, all who are wont to employ their labor in weeping will now be fully occupied. This is the first, though the last in order, at least it is the middle between two other clauses. Now, the two others follow, which are these, --- that the very husbandmen would be led to mourning, --- and then that there would be lamentation in all the highways. But why does the Prophet say, that all the skillful in mourning were to be occupied in lamentation? Because the common calamity would thus constrain them. He further adds, that this grief would not be feigned; but that as destruction would prevail through the cities and fields none would be exempt. However much the husbandmen were unaccustomed to such rites, they would yet wail and learn this new art, says the Prophet. We now then see what these words mean: but the next verse must be joined to them ---

Amos 5:17

17. And in all vineyards shall be wailing: for I will pass through thee, saith the Lord

17. Et in omnibus vineis lamentum, quia transibo in medio tui, inquit Jehova.

A reason is now added, why the whole country would be taken up with lamentation and mourning; for the Lord would pass through the whole land. Surely nothing was more to be desired, than that God should visit his own land; but he here declares that he would pass through as an enemy. As then an enemy runs through a country and spreads devastation wherever he comes, such would be the passing through, which the Prophet now threatens. ``God, then, of whom ye boast, as dwelling in the midst of you, will come forth, lay waste, and consume the whole land, as when an enemy spreads ruin far and wide.''

But the Prophet seems to allude to the passing of God, described by Moses in Exodus 11. The Lord then passed through the middle of Egypt; that is, his wrath pervaded the whole land; no corner was safe or tranquil, for God's vengeance penetrated through every part of it. So also now the Prophet intimates, that the land of Israel would be like that of Egypt; for the Lord, who then testified his love towards the children of Abraham, would now, on the contrary, show himself an enemy to them, while passing through the midst of them. And the Prophet again indirectly

ridicules the vain confidence by which the Israelites were blinded, while they used God's name as a pretext, as it will more clearly appear from what follows, for he says ---

Amos 5:18

18. Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord! to what end is it for you? the day of the Lord is darkness, and not light.

18. Vae desiderantibus diem Jehovae! Ad quid hoc vobis? Dies Jehovae ipse tenebrae et non lux.

The Prophet expresses here more fully what he briefly and obscurely touched upon as to the passing of God through the land; for he shows that the Israelites acted strangely in setting up the name of God as their shield, as though they were under his protection, and in still entertaining a hope, though oppressed with many evils, because God had promised that they should be the objects of his care: he says that this was an extremely vain pretense. He yet more sharply reproves their presumption by saying, ``Woe to those who desire the day of Jehovah!'' This appears, even at the firstview, to be very severe; but we need not wonder that the Prophet burns with too much indignation towards hypocrites, from whom that security, through which they became ferocious against God, could hardly be shaken off. And we see that the holy Spirit treats hypocrites everywhere with much more severity than those who are openly impious and wicked: for the despisers of God, how stupid soever they may be, do not yet excuse their vices; but hypocrites seek ever to draw in God into the quarrel, and they have their veils to cover their turpitude: it was therefore necessary to treat them, as the Prophet does here, with sharpness and severity.

Woe, he says, to those who desire the day of Jehovah! Some expound this day of Jehovah of the day of death, and pervert the meaning of the Prophet; for they think that the Prophet speaks here of desperate men, who seek self-destruction, or lay violent hands on themselves. Woe, then, to those who desire the day of Jehovah, that is, who have recourse to hanging or to poison, as no other remedy appears to them. But the Prophet, as I have already reminded you, does here on the contrary rouse hypocrites. Others think that the contempt which Amos has before noticed, is here reproved; and this in part is true; but they do not sufficiently follow up the Prophet's design; for they do not observe what is special in this place, --- that hypocrites flattered themselves, falsely assuming this as a truth, that they were the people of God, and that God was bound to them. Though, then, the Israelites had been a hundred times perfidious, they yet continued arrogantly to boast of their circumcision; and then the law and the sacrifices, and all their ceremonies, were to them as banners, --- ``O! we are a holy nation, and God's heritage; we are the children of Abraham, and the redeemed of the Lord; we are a priestly kingdom.'' As then these things were ready in the mouth of all, the Prophet says, ``Woe to those who desire the day of Jehovah!'' And, indeed, when the Lord had begun to punish them for their sins, they still said, ``The Lord, it may be, intends to try our constancy: but how can he destroy us? for he would then be false; his covenant cannot be made void: it is then certain that we shall be saved, and that he will be shortly reconciled to us.'' They did not indeed expect that God would be propitious to them; but as they were overwhelmed

with many evils, they sought to allay their sorrows by such a drug.

When therefore the Prophet saw, that the Israelites so waywardly flattered themselves, and so foolishly and wickedly laid claim to the name of God, he says, Woe to those who desire the day of Jehovah! What will this be, he says, to you? The day of Jehovah will be darkness and not light; as though he said, ``God is an enemy to you, and the nearer he comes to you, the more grievously you must be afflicted: he will bring nothing to you but devastation, for he will come armed to destroy you. There is therefore no reason for you to boast that you are a chosen people, that you are a priestly kingdom, for ye are fallen away from the favor of God; and this is to be imputed to your own misconduct. God then is armed for your destruction; and whenever he will appear, he will at the same time pursue you with cruelty and violence; and it will be for your destruction that God will come thus armed to you. Whenever then the Lord will come, your evils must necessarily be increased. The day then of Jehovah will be darkness and not light.'' He afterwards confirms this truth ---

Amos 5:19

19. As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him.

19. Quemadmodum si quis fugiat coram leone, et occurrat ei ursus; et veniat domum suam, et nitatur manu sua super parietem, et eum mordeat coluber.

20. Shall not the day of the Lord be darkness, and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it?

20. Annon tenebrae dies Jehovae et non lux? et caligo et non splendor ei?

Here is expressed more clearly what the Prophet had said before, --- that hypocrites can have no hope, that the various changes, which may take place, will bring them any alleviation. Hypocrites, while straying in circuitous courses, do indeed promise better things to themselves, when the condition of the times is changed: and as Satan transforms himself into an angel of light, so hypocrites imitate the true servants of God. But it is a false imitation; for these are only fading flowers, no fruit follows; and besides, they proceed not from a living root. When the children of God are at any time pressed down by adverse events, they sustain and patiently nourish their faith with this consolation, --- that clouds soon pass away: so also when the Lord chastises them with temporal punishment, he will presently return into favor with them. Hypocrites present the same outward appearance; but they widely differ from the faithful: for when the faithful promise to themselves a prosperous issue, they are at the same time touched with a sense of their own evils, and study to reconcile themselves to God; but hypocrites continue immersed in their vices and boldly despise God; and at the same time they see here and there, and when any change happens they think that they have got rid of all evils. Inasmuch then as they deceived themselves with vain consolation, the Prophet now says, ``You have no cause to think that it will be better with you, when one calamity shall pass away; for the same thing will happen to you, as when one flees away from a lion and meets with a bear, as when one escapes from a bear, and betakes himself to his own house, and there a serpent finds him: while he is leaning with his hand on the wall, a serpent bites him. Thus the Lord has in readiness various and many ways, by which

he can punish you. When therefore ye shall have sustained one battle, when one enemy departs, the battle will be immediately renewed and that by another enemy: when a foreign power does not rage through the kingdom of Israel, the Lord will consume you either by famine, or by want, or by pestilence.'' We then see how well the context of the Prophet harmonizes together.

``You have no reason,'' he says, ``to hope for any light from the day of Jehovah.'' Why? ``For Jehovah will not come, except when armed; for, as ye conduct yourselves in a hostile manner towards him, he must necessarily take vengeance. He will, therefore, bring with him no light, except it may be to fulminate against you: but his appearance will be dreadful, even darkness and thick darkness; and then, when he ceases to pursue you in one way, he will assail you in another; and, when foreign enemies spare you, God will find means by which he may destroy you in your own land without the agency of men; for ye have already found what the sterility of the land is, and what pestilence is: the Lord then has all such modes of vengeance in his own hand. Think not, therefore, that there will be any alleviation to you, were the world to change a hundred times, and were the condition of the country wholly different.''

But the Prophet did not intend here to drive all those indiscriminately into despair, who were guilty of grievous offenses, but his design was to shake off from hypocrites their self-flatteries, that by such proofs they might be led to know that God would be ever like himself. If, then, they wished to return into favor with him, he shows that a change was needful: when they put off their perverse conduct, God would be instantly ready to give them pardon; but, if they proceeded in their vices and obstinate wickedness, and always continued in that hardness, in which they had hitherto indulged, he declares, that the day of Jehovah would be ever to them dark and gloomy, and that, though the Lord does not always use the same kind of rod, he yet has means innumerable, by which he can destroy a perverse nation, such as the Israelites then were.

Prayer.

Grant, Almighty God, that seeing we are so sleepy, yea, so fascinated by our sins, that nothing is more difficult than to put off our own nature and to renounce that wickedness to which we have become habituated, --- O grant, that we, being really awakened by thy scourgings, may truly return to thee, and that, having wholly changed our disposition and renounced all wickedness, we may sincerely, and from the heart, submit ourselves to thee, and so look forward to the coming of thy Son, that we may cheerfully and joyfully wait for him, by ever striving after such a renovations of life as may strip us of our flesh and all corruptions, until, being at length renewed after thine image, we become partakers of that glory, which has been obtained for us by the blood of the same, thy only-begotten Son. Amen.

Lecture Sixtieth

Amos 5:21-23

21. I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies.

21. Odi, reprobavi dies festos vestros, et non olfaciam in solennitatibus vestris (alii legunt, sacrificia vestra, et non olfaciam in congregationibus vestris; sed de

vocibus postea dicam suo loco.)

22. Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts.

22. Certe si obtuleritis mihi holocausta et munera vestra, grata non habebo: et pacifica pinguium vestrorum non respiciam.

23. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols.

23. Tolle a me multitudinem canticorum tuorum; et concertum lyrarum tuarum non audiam.

Here the Prophet, anticipating an objection, shows that the Israelites deceived themselves, for they believed that God was pacified by their sacrifices: he declares all these to be useless; not only, as I think, because they themselves were impure; but because all their sacrifices were mere profanations. We have said elsewhere that sacrifices are often reprehended by the Prophets, when not accompanied by godliness and sincerity: for why did God command sacrifices to be offered to him under the law, except as religious exercises? It was hence necessary that they should be accompanied with penitence and faith. But hypocrites thought, as we have seen, that they thereby discharged their whole duty: it was then a profanation of divine worship. Though the Jews, as to the external form, had not departed from the rule of the law, yet their sacrifices were vicious, and repudiated by God: ``I cannot bear them --- they are a weariness to me --- I repudiate them --- I loathe them,'' --- these are expressions we meet with every where in Isaiah. And yet hypocrites regarded their worship as conformable to the law; but impurity of heart vitiated all their works, and this was the reason that God rejected every thing which the Jews thought available for holiness. But different, as I think, was the design of our Prophet: for it was not only for this reason that he blamed the Israelites, --- because they falsely pretended God's name in their sacrifices, but because they were apostates; for they had departed from the teaching of the law, and built for themselves a spurious temple.

It is yet true that they were deluded with this false notion, that their sins were expiated by sacrifices: but God reproved the Israelites, not only for this gross error, with which the Jews were also infected but for having renounced his true and lawful worship. Hence the external form of their worship deserved to be condemned; for it was not right to offer sacrifices except on mount Zion: but they, without having the ark of the covenant, devised a worship else-where, and even there worshipped the calves. We now understand the design of the Prophet: and this ought to be carefully observed, for interpreters think that the Prophet had nothing else in view, but to condemn a false presumption in the Israelites, because they sought to satisfy God with external sacrifices, while they were yet continuing obstinately in their sins. But the other evil ought to be added, which was, that they had corrupted the true worship of God even in its outward form.

Having now pointed out the prophet's object, I come to consider his words, I have hated, I have rejected, etc. The word {חגג}, chegig, means to leap and to dance: hence {חג}, cheg, signifies a sacrifice as well as a festal day. Some then render the words, ``I have rejected your sacrifices,'' and those which follow, thus, ``I will

not smell at your solemnities.'' Others render the last word, ``assemblies.'' {עצר}, otser, means to restrain, and sometimes to gather: hence {עצרה}, ostare, means an assembly or a congregation. But {עצרת}, osteret, means a festal day, because the people, as it is well known, were then restrained from work, and also, because they were detained in the sanctuary. But with respect to the subject itself, it makes but little difference, whether we read assembly or a festal day: we see that what the Prophet meant was this, --- that God rejected all the rites, by which the Israelites thought that he was pacified, as though they were the most effectual expiations. He does not simply declare that they were of no account before God; but he speaks much stronger and says, that God despised and abhorred them. I regard, he says, with hatred your festal days. He speaks also of burnt offerings,

When ye offer me sacrifices and your gift, etc. {מנחה}, meneche, properly means a gift of flour, which was an addition to the sacrifice; but it is often taken generally for any kind of offering. It is indeed certain that the Prophet meant, that however much the Israelites accumulated their ritual observances, they did nothing towards appeasing God, inasmuch as they observed not the law that was given them; and they turned also to a wrong purpose their sacrifices; for they did not exercise themselves in piety and in the spiritual worship of God, but, on the contrary, spread veils before God, that by presenting a fictitious form of worship, they might cover all their sins; for they thought themselves to be hidden from God.

This is the reason why the Prophet declares that these offerings would not be received by God, {ארצה} {לא}, la areste, I will not accept them. The Prophet no doubt alludes here to those promises, which are to be found everywhere in the law, as he did when he said in the last verse, {אריח} {לא}, la arich, I will not smell {רוחה}, ruch, means to smell; and Moses often uses the expression, that God is delighted with the odour of sacrifices, or with the smell of incense. But when the Lord declares that odour is pleasant to him, he means that it is so, provided the people sacrificed rightly, that is, when they brought not sacrifices as false veils to cover their sins, but as true and real evidences of their faith and repentance; God promised in that case that sacrifices would be a sweet odour to him. Now, on the contrary, he declares that the perfume would not be acceptable to him, nor sacrifices appeasing. But sacrifices not only were acceptable to God, but also pacified him. Since then the Lord had so often said, that he would be propitious to his people, when sacrifices were offered, it was necessary expressly to cut off this confidence from the Israelites, when they dealt not faithfully with God. God never disappointed his true worshipers, but ever received them into favor, provided they approached him in sincerity. But as these hypocrites dealt falsely with him, they were necessarily disappointed of their hope, as the Prophet here declares.

The peace-offerings of your fat things, he says, I will not regard God indeed promised in the law that he would regard their sacrifices provided they were lawful; but as the Israelites had in two ways departed from pure worship, God now justly says, I will not look on your sacrifices, nor on the peace-offerings of your fat things He calls them the peace-offerings of fat things, intimating, that though the beasts were the choicest, they would not yet be acceptable to him; for the Lord regards not

fatness, as he needs neither meat nor drink. Then, in a word, the Prophet here sets this fatness in opposition to true godliness and obedience too. In both respects there was, as we have seen, a defect among the Israelites; for they obeyed not the law as to its outward requirements, and their hearts were impure and perverse: hence all their sacrifices were necessarily polluted and corrupt.

It follows, Take away from me the multitude of thy songs By speaking of multitude, he aims at hypocrites, who toil much in their devices without measure or end, as we see done at this day by those under the Papacy; for they accumulate endless forms of worship, and greatly weary themselves, morning and evening; in short, they spend days and nights in performing their ceremonies, and every one devises some new thing, and all these they heap together. Inasmuch, then, as men, when they have begun to turn aside from the pure word of God, continually invent various kinds of trifles, the Prophet here touches indirectly on this foolish laboriousness (stultan sedulitatem --- foolish sedulity) when he says, Take away from me the multitude of thy songs. He might have simply said, ``Thy songs please me not;'' but he mentions their multitude, because hypocrites, as I have said, fix no limits to their outward ceremonies: and a vast heap especially follows, when once they take to themselves the liberty of devising this or that form of worship. Hence God testifies here, that they spend labor in vain, for he rejects what he does not command, and whatever is not rightly offered to him.

And the harmony of lyres, or of musical instruments. But {נבל}, nabel, was an instrument, which, as to its kind, is unknown to us now. Take away, then, from me the harmony of lyres; for the verb, take away, may refer to both clauses; though some join them to the last the verb ``lo {אשמע} {לא}, la ashimo, I will not hear. The difference really is very little: but their view is the most probable, who join together the two clauses, `Take away from me the multitude of thy songs and the harmony of lyres;' with which thou thinkest me to be delighted. They afterwards take {לא} {אשמע} ``I will not hear,'' by itself. But I contend not about such minute things: it is enough to know the design of the Prophet. It now follows ---

Amos 5:24

24. But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.

24. Et decurret quasi aquae judicium, et justitia quasi torrens violentus.

Interpreters variously expound this verse. To some it seems an exhortation, as though the Prophet said, ``Ye thrust on me victims of beasts and various ceremonies; but I regard not these things; for the interior purity of heart alone pleases me: take away then all these things, which are of no moment with me, and bring what I especially require and demands even a pure and sincere heart.''

Some also think that newness of life is here described by its fruits or its evidences: for the Prophet mentions not purity, speaks not of faith and repentance, but by the fruits sets forth that renovation, which God always chiefly regards, and for the sake of which he had required sacrifices under the law. The meaning then is, that hypocrites are here recalled to true worship, because they vainly and absurdly tormented themselves with their own fictions: and by requiring from them righteousness and judgment, he required a holy and pure life, or, in a word, uprightness.

Others think that the Prophet turns aside here to celebrate the grace of Christ, which was to be made known in the gospel: and the verb {יגל}, igel, is rendered by many ``shall be revealed;'' but others more correctly derive it from the root {גל}, igel, to roll. Let justice then as it were, roll. But I will return to the second exposition. Most think that there is here a prediction of that righteousness which God was to make known by the coming of Christ; and some retain also the proper meaning of the verb {גל}, gal, to roll. They then say that the gospel is here compared to an impetuous river and a violent stream, because the Lord would rush on and penetrate through all hindrances, how many soever Satan might attempt to throw in his way. But this meaning seems not to harmonize with the Prophet's words and is in my judgment, too refined.

Some again regard the verse as a threatening, and think that God here reproves the Israelites, as though he had said, that since they were trifling with and mocking him, he would at length show what was true righteousness and what was true judgment: for hypocrites think that they come not short of a perfect state, when they are veiled by their ceremonies, inasmuch as they flee to these lurking holes, when they would cover all their flagitous deeds. Hence they think not that they are guilty, for they hide their sins under their ceremonies as under Ajax's shield. Seeing then that they thus trifle with God, some interpreters think that God here sharply reproves them and says, that they were greatly deceived, for he would himself at length make known what was true righteousness. Righteousness then shall run down or be rolled; and by this verb he expresses impetuosity; but he sets it forth afterwards more clearly by {איתן}, aitan, ``Judgment shall be a violent stream.'' But hypocrites amuse themselves as children do with their puppets. Inasmuch then as they do nothing seriously, and yet desire to pacify God as with baubles, the Prophet here shakes off such delusions, as though he said, ``Do you think that God is like a child? Why do you set up these trifles? Do you think that righteousness is a fictitious thing, or that judgment is a vain figment? The Lord will certainly show to you how precious righteousness is. It shall therefore run down as violent waters, as an impetuous stream. ``Judgment,'' he says ``shall rush upon you and overwhelm you.'' This is the third meaning.

But the verse may be again explained in a different way, as though God obviated an objection; for hypocrites, we know, always raise a clamor, and make no end of contending; ``What! Have we then lost all our labor, while endeavoring to worship God? Is all this to go for nothing? And further, we have not only offered sacrifices, but sought also to testify that the glory of God is to us an object of concern. Since then we have had a care for religion, why should God now reject us?'' The Prophet here shortly answers, --- that if only they brought forth true righteousness, their course would be free; as though he said, ``God will not put a check to your righteousness and rectitude:'' and this must be referred to the fruit or remuneration; as though the Prophet said, ``Only worship God in sincerity, and he will not disappoint you; for a reward will be laid up for you; your righteousness shall run down as a river.'' As it is said in another place, `Your righteousness shall shine as the dawn,' so it is also in this, `Your righteousness shall run down as violent waters.' There was therefore no

reason for hypocrites to expostulate and say that wrong was done them by God, or that their performances were lightly esteemed, since God openly testified, that he would provide for righteousness, that it might have a free course, like an impetuous river: and this seems to be the genuine meaning of the Prophet. While I do not wholly reject the other expositions, I do not yet follow them; but show what I mostly approve. [44]

Then the Prophet, after having bidden them to throw aside all their fictitious and spurious forms of worship, does not now simply exhort the Israelites, as some think, to exhibit righteousness and rectitude, but expresses this in the form of a promise, ``Run down shall your righteousness as impetuous waters, provided it be true, and not an empty name. Whenever God shall see in you sincere rectitude, there will certainly be prepared an ample reward for you.'' It follows ---

Amos 5:25-26

25. Have ye offered unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?

25. An victimas et munus (est {מנחה}) obtulistis mihi in deserto quadraginta annis, domus Israel?

26. But ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves.

26. Et sustulistis Sicuth Regem vestrum, et Chion, imagines vestras, stellam deorum vestrorum (vel, deos vestros,) quae fecistis vobis.

The Prophet shows in this place, that he not only reproved hypocrisy in the Israelites in obtruding on God only external display of ceremonies without any true religion in the heart; but that he also condemned them for having departed from the rule of the law. He also shows that this was not a new disease among the people of Israel; for immediately at the beginning their fathers mixed such a leaven as vitiated the worship of God. He therefore proves that the Israelites had ever been given to superstitions, and could not by any means be retained in the true and pure worship of God.

Have ye then caused sacrifices, victims, or an oblation to come before me in the desert for forty years? He addresses them as though they had perverted God's worship in the desert, and yet they were born many ages after; what does he mean? Even this, --- the Prophet includes the whole body of the people from their first beginning, as though he said, ``It is right to inclose you in the same bundle with your fathers; for you are the same with your fathers in your ways and dispositions.'' We hence see that the Israelites were regarded guilty, not only because they vitiated God's worship in one age by their superstitions, but also from the beginning. And

[44] There appears here a great candor in our Author: but the first view of the passage seems the most natural and obvious, as presented in our version, with which that of Newcome and Henderson agrees. Having before exhorted them to "take away" what they thought much of, the Prophet now exhorts them to attend to judgment and justice. The two verses, 23 and 24, may be thus rendered: — 23. Remove from me the multitude of thy songs, And the music of thy harps; I will not hear them. 24. And let judgment roll down like waters, And righteousness like a mighty stream. I prefer rendering {,המון ``multitude,'' with Calvin, rather than ``noise,'' with our version and Newcome, or ``sound'' with Henderson. It forms a variety as to the next clause. In idiomatic English the expressions would be---''thy many songs and thy harmonious harps.'' The two verses ought to be read as connected; and the 24th should begin with ``And,'' ,{ו} and not ``But.'' --- Ed.

he asks whether they offered victims to him: it is certain that such was their intention; for they at no time dared to deny God, by whom they had been not long before delivered; and we know that though they made for themselves many things condemned by the law, they ever adhered to this principle, ``The God, who hath redeemed us, is to be worshipped by us:'' yea, they always proudly boasted of their father Abraham. They had never then willingly alienated themselves from God, who had chosen Abraham their father and themselves to be his people: and indeed the Prophet shortly before had said, `Take away from me,' etc.; and then, `when ye offer to me sacrifices and a gift of flour, I will not count them acceptable.' There seems to be an inconsistency in this --- that God should deny that victims been offered to him --- and yet say that they were offered to him by the people of Israel, when, as we have stated, they had presumptuously built a profane and spurious altar. The solution is easy, and it is even this, --- that the people had ever offered sacrifices to God, if we regard what they pretended to do: for good intention, as it is commonly called, so blinds the superstitious, that with great presumption they trifle with God. Hence with respect to them we may say that they sacrificed to God; but as to God, he denies that what was not purely offered was offered to him. We now then see why God says now that sacrifices were not offered to him in the wilderness: he says so, because the people blended with his worship the leaven of idolatry: and God abhorred this depravation. This is the meaning.

But another objection may be again proposed. This defection did not prevail long, and the whole people did not give their consent to idolatry; and still more, we know what the impostor Balaam said, that Jacob had no idol; and speaking in the twentieth chapter of Numbers, [45] by the prophetic spirit, he testifies that the only true God reigned in Jacob, and that there were among them no false gods. How then does the Prophet say now that idolatry prevailed among them? The answer is ready: The greater part went astray: hence the whole people are justly condemned; and though this sin was reproved, yet they relapsed continually, as it is well known, into superstitions; and still more, they worshipped strange gods to please strumpets. Since it was so, it is no wonder that they are accused here by the Prophet of not having offered victims to God, inasmuch as they were contaminated with impure superstitions: it could not then be, that they brought anything to God. At the same time God's worship, required by his law, was of such importance, that he declared that he was worshipped by Jacob, as also Christ says,

``We know what we worship,'' (John 4:22;)

and yet not one in a hundred among the Jews cherished the hope of eternal life in his heart. They were all Epicureans or profane; nay, the Sadducees prevailed openly among them: the whole of religion was fallen, or was at least so decayed, that there was no holiness and no integrity among them; and yet Christ says, ``We know what we worship;'' and this was true with regard to the law.

Now then we see that the Prophets speak in various ways of Israel: when they regard the people, they say, that they were perfidious, that they were apostates, who

[45] Calvin is perhaps referring to Numbers 23:21, wherein the Douay version is: — 21. There is no idol in Jacob, neither is there an image god to be seen in Israel. etc. — fj.

had immediately from the beginning departed from the true and legitimate worship of God: but when they commend the grace of God, they say, that the true worship of God shone among them, that though the whole multitude had become perverted, yet the Lord approved of what he had commanded. So it is with Baptism; it is a sacred and immutable testimony of the grace of God, though it were administered by the devil, though all who may partake of it were ungodly and polluted as to their own persons. Baptism ever retains its own character, and is never contaminated by the vices of men. The same must be said of sacrifices.

I shall now return to the words of the Prophet: [46] Have you offered to me victims for forty years in the desert? He enhances their sin by the circumstance of their condition; for they were there shut up in a narrow and hard confinement, and yet they turned aside after their superstitions. And it was certainly a monstrous thing: God fed them daily with manna; they were therefore under the necessity, however unwilling, of looking up to heaven every day; for God constrained their unwillingness with no common favor. They knew, too, that water flowed for them miraculously from a rock. Seeing then that God constrained them thus to look up to him, how was it that they yet became vain through their own deceptions? It was, as I have said, a prodigious blindness. Hence the Prophet speaks of the forty years and of the desert, that the atrocity of their sin might more fully appear; for the Lord could not, by so many bonds, keep the people from such a madness.

It now follows, And ye have carried Sicuth your king. This place, we know, is quoted by Stephen in the seventh chapter of the Acts: but he followed the Greek version; and the Greek translator, whoever he was, was mistaken as to the word, Sicuth, and read, Sucoth, and thought the name an appellative of the plural number, and supposed it to be derived from {סוך} suk, which means a tabernacle; for he translated it {σκήνην} as if it was said, ``Ye bore the tabernacle of your king instead of the ark.'' But it was a manifest mistake; for the probability is, that Sicuth was the proper name of an idol. Ye bore then Sicuth your king. He called it their king by way of reproach; for they had violated that priestly kingdom, which God had instituted; for he, as a king, exercised dominion over them. Since then God would be deemed

[46] No commentator has given us a satisfactory rendering of these two verses. Perhaps that of Calvin, as a whole, comes nearest to the original. The question, Have ye, etc., is considered by many as not implying a negation but a concession, as though it had been said, "I grant this; ye did offer," etc.; and then, what is said in verse 26 was what they did besides. It was this mixture of two worships, the worship of God and the worship of idols, that is here brought against the Israelites. I venture to present the following translation: — Did you bring me sacrifices and oblation in the wilderness For forty years, O house of Israel? You did also bear Sacut, your king, And Kiun, which were your images; A star was your god, Which ye formed for yourselves. That the hosts of heaven were the objects of their worship, is evident from Stephen's Sermon in Acts 7:42, "Then God turned and gave them up to worship the host of heaven." Stephen then refers to, and quotes this passage, not from the Hebrew, but almost literally from the Septuagint. Instead of, "their figures which ye have made for yourselves," he has, "figures which ye made to worship them." He gives the meaning, but not the words. Between the words of Amos, in Hebrew, and those of Stephen, there is a material, though not verbal agreement. Two objects of idolatrous worship are mentioned, and also their images, but their names are different. The probability is, that those used by Amos were not current at the time the Greek version was made, and that the names by which those deities were then known were used. Moloch, indeed, means a king, but applied, like Baal, to several heathen gods; and Kiun is said to be Arabic, and Remphan is an Egyptic term, designating the same star or planet, which critics suppose to have been Saturn. Moloch, as Grotius suggests, had the figure of a king, and Kiun that of a star.

the king of Israel, as he had ascribed to himself that name, and since he promised to them a kingdom, as in due time he gave them, it was the basest ingratitude in them to seek an idol to be their king; it was indeed a denial of God which could not be borne, not to allow themselves to be governed by him. We hence see how sharply he upbraids them, for had refused to God his own kingdom, and created for themselves the fictitious Sleuth as their king.

Then it follows, And Kiun, your images Some think that {כיון}, Kiun, means a cake, and {כוה}, kue, is to burn, and from this they think the word is derived; but others more correctly regard it as a proper name; and the Prophet, I have no doubt, has named here some reigned god after Sleuth. Kiun then, your images; I read the words as being in apposition. Others say, ``The cake of your images;'' and some render the words literally, ``Kiun your images;'' but yet they do not sufficiently attend to the design of the Prophet; for he seems here to ridicule the madness of the people, because they dreamt that some deity was inclosed in statues and in such masks. ``Ye carried,'' he says, ``both Sicuth and Kiun, your images. I am now deprived of honor, for ye could not bear me to govern you. Ye now enjoy your King Sicuth; but, in the meantime, let us see what is the power of Sicuth and Kiun; they are nothing more than images. Seeing then that there is neither strength nor even life in them, what madness is it to worship such fictitious things?''

But some think that Kiun was the image of Saturn. What the Hebrews indeed say, that this idolatry was derived from the Persians, is wholly groundless; for the Persians, we know, had no images nor statues, but worshipped only the sacred fire. As, then, the Persians had no images. the Jews fabled, in their usual way, when they said that Kiun was an image of Saturn. But all the Jews, I have no doubt, imagined that all the stars were gods, as they made images for them; for it immediately follows, A constellation, or a star, your gods These, he says, are your gods; even stars and images; and there is here a sarcasm ({σαρκασμος};) used; for the Prophet derides the folly of the people of Israel, who, being not content with the Maker of heaven and earth, sought for themselves dead gods, or rather vain devices. ``Your gods then,'' he says, ``are images and stars.''

But it must be observed, that he calls them images: he does not, as in other places, call them idols; and this, I say, ought to be observed, for here is refuted the foolish and refinement of the Papists, who at this day excuse all their superstitions, because they have no idols; for they deny that their devices are idols. What then? They are images. Thus they hide their own baseness under the name of images. But the Prophet does not say that they were idols; he does not use that hateful word which is derived from grief or sorrow; but he says that they were images. The name then in itself has nothing base or ominous; but, at the same time, as the Lord would not have himself represented by any visible figure, the Prophet here expressly and distinctly condemns Sicuth and Kiun. The Greek translator whom Stephen followed, put down the word, types or figures, that is, images. Now, when any one says to the Papists that their figures or images are sinful before God, they boldly deny this; but we see that their evasion avails nothing.

He adds in the last place, Which ye have made for yourselves I prefer rendering

the relative {אשר}, asher, in the neuter gender, as including all their fictitious gods, and also their images, which things then ye have made for yourselves. To make these things is at all times vicious in sacred things; for we ought not to bring any thing of our own when we worship God, but we ought to depend always on the word of his mouth, and to obey what he has commanded. All our actions then in the worship of God ought to be, so to speak, passive; for they ought to be referred to his command, lest we attempt any thing but what he approves. Hence, when men dare to do this or that without God's command, it is nothing else but abomination before him. And the Greeks call superstitions {εθελοθρησκείας}; and this word means voluntary acts of worship, such as are undertaken by men of their own accord. We now understand the whole design of the Prophet. It follows ---

Amos 5:27

27. Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith the Lord, whose name is the God of hosts.

27. Et migrare faciam vos ultra Damascum, dicit Jehova, Deus exercituum nomen ejus.

Here the Prophet at last denounces exile on the Israelites as though he had said that God would not suffer them any longer to contaminate the Holy Land, which had been given them as an heritage, on the condition that they acknowledged him as the only true God. God had now, for a long time, borne with the Israelites though they had never ceased to pollute his land with superstitions. He comes now to cleanse it. I will cause you, he says, to migrate beyond Damascus; for they thought that enemies were driven, by means of that fortress, from the whole country, and they took shelter there as in a quiet nest. The expression would have otherwise no meaning, and this is what interpreters have not noticed. They say, ``I will cause you to migrate beyond Damascus'' [47] that is, to a far country; but why did the Prophet mention Damascus? This reason ought to be observed. It was because the Israelites thought that all the attacks of enemies would be prevented by having the city Damascus as their defense, which they supposed was impregnable. ``That fortress,'' the Lord says, ``will not prevent me from taking you away, and removing you as far as the Assyrians.'' We now see what the Prophet means, and why he expressly added the name of Damascus.

It follows, The God of hosts is his name [48] Here the Prophet confirms his threatening, lest hypocrites should think that he did not speak in earnest: for we know how readily they flattered themselves; and when the Lord fulminated, they remained secure. Hence the Prophet, that he might strike terror, says, that the speaker is the God of hosts, as though he said, ``Ye cannot hope to escape the vengeance which God now denounces on you; for his power is infinite, he is the Lord of hosts. See then that he is prepared to destroy you except ye timely repent.'' This is the meaning. I

[47] Here is another instance in which the meaning and not the words, is given by Stephen in Acts 7:43. In this instance, the Septuagint is the same with the Hebrew text, "beyond Damascus;" but Stephen says, "beyond Babylon." The same quarter is meant, though the name of the place is different. — Ed.

[48] There seems to be a peculiar propriety in introducing this sentence. The Israelites became the worshippers of the hosts of heaven; then the Prophet says, that Jehovah is the God of Hosts. What folly, then, it was to worship the hosts of heaven, and to forsake the God of them! — Ed.

will not now proceed farther.

Prayer.

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou seest us to be so prone to corrupt superstitions, and that we are with so much difficulty restrained by thy word, --- O grant, that we being confirmed by thy Spirit, may never turn aside either to the right hand or to the left, but be ever attentive to thee alone, and not worship thee presumptuously, nor pollute thy worship with our outward pomps, but call on thee with a sincere heart, and, recumbing on thy aid, flee to thee in all our necessities, and never abuse thy holy name, which thou hast designed to be engraven on us, but be conformed to the image of thy Son, that thou mayest be to us truly a Father, and that we may be thy children, in the name of the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

Chapter 6.

Lecture Sixty-first

Amos 6

A

Amos 6:1

1. Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria, which are named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel came!

1. Vae securis in Sion et confidentibus in monte Samaria, qui celebres fuerunt principio gentium, et ingressi sunt ad illos domus Israel.

The Prophet now directs his discourse not only to the Israelites, to whom he was especially given as an instructor and teacher, but includes the Jews also: and yet he addresses not all indiscriminately, but only the chief men, who were intent on their pleasures, as though they were exempt from the common miseries: for he does not, as many suppose, reprove here luxury and pride only; but we must remember a fact connected with their case, --- that they were not awakened by God's judgments; when God severely punished the sins of the people, the chief men remained ever heedlessly in their own dregs. This security is now condemned by our Prophet.

And this is a very common evil, as we may see, in the present day. For when the Lord afflicts a country with war or with famine, the rich make great gain of such evils. They abuse the scourges of God; for we see merchants getting rich in the midst of wars, inasmuch as they scrape together a booty from every quarter. For they who carry on war are forced to borrow money, and also the peasants and mechanics, that they may pay taxes; and then, that they may live, they are obliged to make unjust conditions: thus the rich increase in wealth. They also who are in authority, and in favor at the court of princes, make more gain in wars, in famine, and in other calamities, than during times of peace and prosperity: for when peace nourishes, the state of things is then more equable; but when the poor are burdened, the rest grow fat. And this is the evil now noticed by the Prophet.

Hence he pronounces here a curse on the secure and those at ease; not that it is an evil thing, or in itself displeasing to God, when any one quietly enjoys his leisure; but, not to be moved, when the Lord openly shows himself to be displeased

and angry, when his scourges are manifestly inflicted, but to indulge ourselves more in pleasures, --- this is to provoke him, as it were, designedly. The secure, then, and the presumptuous the Prophet here condemns, for it became them to humble themselves when they saw that God was incensed against them. They were not indeed more just than the multitude; and when God treated the common people with such severity, ought not the chiefs to have looked to themselves, and have examined their own life? As they did not do this, but made themselves drunk with pleasures, and put far off every fear and thought that the scourges of God were nothing to them, --- this was a contempt deservedly condemned by the Prophet. We see that God was in the same manner greatly displeased, as it is recorded in Isaiah: when he called them to mourning, they sang with the harp, and, according to their custom, feasted sumptuously and joyfully, (Isaiah 23:12) As then they thus persevered in their indulgences, the Lord became extremely angry; for it was, as though they avowedly despised him and scorned all his threatening.

We now observe the design of the Prophet, which interpreters have not sufficiently noticed. It behaves us indeed ever to keep in view these scourges of God, by which he began to visit the sins of the people. God can by no means endure, as I have said, such a contumacy as this, --- that men should go on in the indulgence of their sins and never regard their judge and feel no guilt. Hence the Prophet says, Woe to you who are secure in Zion, who are confident, that is, who are without any fear, on the mount of Samaria [49] He names here the mount of Zion and the mount of Samaria; for these were the chief cities of the two kingdoms, as we all know. The whole country had been laid waste with various calamities; the citizens of Jerusalem and of Samaria were, at the same time, wealthy; and then trusting in their strongholds, they despised God and all his judgments. This then was the security, full of contumacy, which is condemned by the Prophet.

He then mentions their ingratitude: he says that these mountains had been celebrated from the beginning of the nations, and that the Israelites entered into them. God here upbraids both the Jews and Israelites with having come to a foreign possession: for they had got those cities, not by their own valour, but the Lord drove out before them the ancient inhabitants. Seeing then that they perceived not that a safe dwelling was given them there by the Lord, that they might purely worship him and submit to his government, their ingratitude was inexcusable. The Prophet then, after having inveighed against the gross and heedless security, with which the chiefs of both kingdoms were inebriated, now mentions their ingratitude: ``Ye are not natives, but ye have come in, for God did go before you, for it was his will to give you this land as your possession: why then are you now so inflated with pride against him? For before your time these cities were certainly well known and celebrated; and yet this was of no avail to the natives themselves. Why then do ye

[49] "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, And to them that are secure in the mountain of Samaria." —Dr. Henderson. From not considering the main drift of what follows in this chapter, critics have proposed emendations in this verse. The careless and the secure, both at Jerusalem and Samaria, are evidently meant. Newcome renders the last line nearly the same with Henderson — "And that rest secure in the mountain of Samaria." So that the word "trust" in our version is not correct. The word used means often to be confident or secure, as well as to trust; but the law of parallelism requires it to be in the former sense here; as they were at ease in Zion, so they were confident or secure on the mount of Samaria. — Ed.

not now fear the Lord's judgment and repent, when he threatens you? Yea, when he shows his scourges to you?'' We now perceive the Prophet's meaning in this verse. It now follows ---

Amos 6:2

2. Pass ye unto Calneh, and see; and from thence go ye to Hamath the great: then go down to Gath of the Philistines: be they better than these kingdoms? or their border greater than your border?

2. Transite Chalneh et aspicite; ite illinc in Chamath magnam, et descendite in Gath Philistinorum; an meliores sint regnis istis? An terminus illorum major termino vestro?

By this representation Amos shows that there was no excuse for the Jews or the Israelites for sleeping in their sins, inasmuch as they could see, as it were in a mirror, the judgments which God brought on heathen nations. It is a singular favor, when God teaches us at the expense of others: for he could justly punish us as soon as we transgress; but this he does not, on the contrary he spares us; and at the same time he sets others before us as examples. This is, as we have said a singular favor: and this is the mode of teaching which our Prophet now adopts. He says, that Calneh and Hamath, and Gath, were remarkable evidences of God's wrath, by which the Israelites might learn, that they had no reason to rest on their wealth, to rely on their fortresses, and to think themselves free from all dangers; for as God had destroyed these cities, which seemed impregnable, so he could also cut off Jerusalem and Samaria, whenever he pleased. This is the real meaning of the Prophet.

Some read the sentence negatively ``Are not these places better than your kingdoms?'' But this is not consistent with the Prophet's words. Others attend not to the object of the Prophet; for they think that the blessings of God are here compared, as though he said, ``God deals more liberally with you than with the Chaldeans, the Assyrians, and the neighboring nations.'' For Calneh was situated in the plain of Babylon, as it is evident from Genesis 10:10; and Hamath was also a celebrated city, mentioned in that chapter, and in many other places; and Gath was a renowned city of the Philistines. In this opinion therefore interpreters mostly agree; that is, that there is set forth here God's bounty to the Jews and Israelites, seeing that he had favored them with a rich and fertile country, and preferred them to other nations. But this view seems not to me to be the correct one; for when a comparison is made between Calneh and Jerusalem, Babylon was no doubt the more fruitful and the more pleasant country, as we learn from all histories. The Prophet then does not speak here of the ancient condition of these places, but shows, as I have already said, that it availed these cities nothing, that they were wealthy, that they were fortified by all kinds of defenses; for God, at last, executed vengeance on them. Hence the Prophet declares that the same was now nigh the Jews and the Israelites.

``What will hinder the hand of God,'' he says, ``from delivering you to destruction? For if men could have arrested God's wrath by any fortresses, certainly Calneh and Hamath, and Gath, would have resisted by their forces; but the Lord has yet executed his vengeance on these cities, though fortified; your confidence then is nothing but infatuation, which deceives you.'' Jeremiah uses a similar language,

when he says, `Go to Shiloh,' (Jeremiah 7:12) He certainly does not remind the Jews, that the Lord had more splendidly adorned them than Shiloh; but he had quite a different thing in view. Shiloh had indeed been eminent, for it had long afforded a dwelling to the ark of the covenant; the sanctuary of God had been there. But at that time the place was deserted; and Jeremiah sets before the eyes of the people its sad desolation, that they might know that they ought to dread the same event, except they repented; for if they hardened their necks, nothing could prevent God from dealing with them as he did before with the inhabitants of Shiloh.

We now then perceive the meaning of the Prophet, when he says, Go and pass into Calneh, and see In bidding them to see, he no doubt refers to the dreadful change which had taken place there. For Calneh had been a strongly fortified city, and possessed supreme power; and the neighboring country was also no less pleasant than fruitful: but it was now a solitary place; for Babylon, as it is well known, had swallowed up Calneh. Since then the place afforded such a spectacle, the Prophet rightly says, Pass over into Calneh, and see; that is consider, as in a mirror, what men can gain by their pride and haughtiness, when they harden themselves against God: for this was the cause of destruction to that celebrated city.

From thence, he says, go to Hamath, {רבה}, rebe, the great; which was a well-known city of Assyria; and see there, ``How has it happened that a city so famous was entirely overthrown, except that the Lord could not endure so great a perverseness? As they had abused his patience, he at length executed his vengeance. The same thing also happened to your neighbors.'' For the Jews and the Israelites were not far distant from Gath. Now then since there were so many evidences of God's wrath before their eyes, justly does the Prophet here inveigh against their want of thought, inasmuch as they feared not God's judgment, which was nigh at hand.

Are they then better? that is, is the condition of these cities better than that of the two kingdoms, Judah and Israel? and then, Is their border larger than your border? They have indeed been reduced to such straits, that they even pay tribute for their houses, whereas formerly they occupied a wide extent of country, and ruled, as it were, with extended wings, far and wide: but God has taken away those territories: for all these cities are become tributaries. See, he says, Is their border larger than your border? It now follows ---

Amos 6:3

3. Ye that put far away the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near;

3. Qui procul rejicitis diem malum, et appropinquatis solium violentiae.

The Prophet here reproves the Jews and Israelites for another crime, --- that they had often provoked God's wrath, and ceased not by their sins to call forth new punishments, and in the meantime rejected, through their haughtiness and obstinacy, all his threatening, as if they were vain, and would never be executed on them. We must ever remember what I have said before, --- that the Prophet speaks not here of the whole people, but of the chiefs; for the expression, that they drew nigh the throne of iniquity, could not have been applied to the common people. This discourse then was addressed particularly to the judges and counselors, and those who were in power in both kingdoms, in Judah as well as in Israel.

But it is a remarkable saying, that they drove far off the evil day, while they drew nigh the throne of iniquity, or of violence; as though he said, ``Ye seek for yourselves a fever by your intemperance, and yet ye drive it far off, as drunken men are wont to do, who swallow down wine without any moderation; and when a physician comes or one more moderate, and warns them not to indulge in excess, they ridicule all their forebodings: `What! will a fever seize on me? I am wholly free from fever; I am indeed accustomed to drink wine.'' Such are ungodly men, when they provoke God's wrath as it were designedly, and at the same time scorn all threatening, as though they were safe through some special privilege. We now then see what the Prophet had in view by saying, that they drove far the evil day, and yet drew nigh the throne of iniquity He means, that they drew nigh the throne of iniquity, when the judges strengthened themselves in their tyranny, and took the liberty to steal, to rob, to plunder, to oppress. When therefore they thus hardened themselves in all kinds of licentiousness, they then drew nigh the throne of iniquity. And they put away the evil day, because they were touched by no alarm; for when the Prophets denounced God's vengeance, they regarded it as a fable.

In short, Amos charges here the principal men of the two kingdoms with two crimes, --- that they ceased not to provoke continually the wrath of God by subverting and casting under foot all equity, and by ruling the people in a tyrannical and haughty manner --- and that, in the mean time, they heedlessly despised all threatening, prolonged time, and promised impunity to themselves: even when God seriously and sharply addressed them, they still thought that the evil day was not nigh. Passages of this kind meet us everywhere in the Prophets, in which they show their indignation at this kind of heedlessness, when hypocrites putting off every feeling of grief, as though they had fascinated themselves, laughed to scorn all the Prophets, because they thought that the hand of God was far removed from them. Thus they are spoken of by Isaiah, as saying,

`Let us eat and drink, since we must die,'
(Isaiah 22:13)

They indeed thought that the Prophets did not seriously threaten them; but they regarded the mention of a near destruction as an empty bugbear. We now then understand what the Prophet meant. It follows ---

Amos 6:4

4. That lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall;

4. Qui decumbunt (vel, dormiunt) in lectis eburneis et se extendunt super strata sua (alii vertunt, et superflua; alii, induti sunt tiaris; sed utrumque mihi videtur coactum,) qui comedunt agnos e grege (hoc est, selectos) et vitulos e medio saginarii (vel, opimi pascui; nam {מרבק} quidam ita vertunt.)

Amos still pursues the reproof we have noticed at the beginning of the chapter, --- that the chief men, of whom he speaks, cast away from them all cares and anxieties, and indulged in pleasures, while the whole country was miserably distressed. We must ever bear in mind what I have already said, --- that luxury is not simply reprehended by the Prophet, as some incorrectly think, without sufficiently considering

what is said, for it is not what the Prophet treats of; but he upbraids the Israelites for setting up an iron neck against God's judgments, yea, for shamelessly trifling with God, while he was endeavoring to lead them by degrees to repentance. The Prophet complains that nothing availed with them.

He then says, first, that they slept on ivory beds. To use ivory beds was not in itself bad, except that excess is ever to be condemned; for, when we give up ourselves to pomps and pleasures, we certainly are not then free from sin: indeed, every desire for present things, which exceeds moderation, is ever justly reprehensible. And when men greedily seek splendor and display, or become ambitious and proud, or are given to delicacies, they are guilty of vices ever condemned by God. But it might be, that one used an ivory bed, who was yet willing to lie on the ground: for we know that there was then a great abundance of ivory, and that it was commonly used in Asia. Italy formerly knew not what it was to use a bed of ivory, that is, before the victory of Lucius Scipio: but after the king Antiochus was conquered, then Italy freely used ivory beds and fineries; and thus luxury broke down their courage and effeminated them.

I will come now to our Prophet: it might have been that ivory was not then so valuable in Judea: they might then have used ivory beds without blame. But Amos ever regards the miseries of those times. The rich then ought to have given up all their luxuries, and to have betaken themselves to dust and ashes, when they saw that God was incensed with them, when they saw that the fire of his vengeance was kindled. We now then perceive why Amos was so indignant against those who slept on ivory beds.

He adds, And who extend themselves on their beds: for {סרח}, sarech, is properly to extend; it means also to become fetid; and further, it means to be superfluous; and therefore some render the words, ``upon ivory beds and superfluities;'' but this is strained, and agrees not with what follows, upon their couches. The Prophet then, I have no doubt, points out here the manners of those who so heedlessly indulged themselves: ``Ye extend,'' he says, ``your legs and your arms on your couches, as idle men, accustomed to indulgences, are wont to do. But the Lord will awaken you in a new way; his scourges ought to have roused you, but ye remain asleep. Hence, since God could not terrify you by his rods, nothing more remains but to draw you forth against your will to be punished.'' This was the reason why the Prophet said that they extended themselves on their couches.

Ye eat also the lambs from the flock, and the calves from the midst of the rich pasture, or of the stall. I prefer taking {מרבק}, merebek, for folds. Since then they loved fat meat, the Prophet reproves this luxury: he had indeed in view, as it has been already said, the then calamitous time; for if the rich had in their usual way feasted, and had even taken fat meat, they would not have deserved so severe a punishment: but when the Lord called them to mourning, and when the signals of his wrath spread horror all around, it was a stupidity not to be endured, for them to continue their indulgences, which they ought, on the contrary, to have renounced. Indeed, this passage agrees with that of Isaiah, to which I have already referred. It now follows ---

Amos 6:5

5. That chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of musick, like David;

5. Concinentes super ore cithera, sicut David excogitarunt sibi instrumenta cantici.

The word {פרט}, pereth, means to divide; so some explain it, and derive it from the clusters which remain after the vintage, because there are not then thick grapes, but a cluster here and there, and a great distance between: hence they think that the participle {הפורטים}, epurethim, is to be taken here metaphorically as meaning to divide by marks, as music has its various notes; for except there be a distinct variety in singing, the sound would be confused, and would produce no pleasing effect. Who sing then with the harps and have invented for themselves, after the example of David, musical instruments.

The Prophet still continues his discourse, and shows that these men lived sumptuously; as though they did not belong to the common class, they delighted themselves, against God's will, not only in the common mode of living, but even sought new pleasures, as if they were continually at marriage feasts, or celebrating birthdays. As then they had no season for mourning, they pursued their own indulgences; and this is what the Prophet now reprehends. If then any one thinks that music is in these words condemned, he is much deceived, as it appears from the context. Indeed, the Prophet never dealt so rigidly with that people, but he ever kept to this point --- that they were extremely torpid, nay, destitute of common sense, who perceived not that God showed himself angry with them, in order that they might flee immediately to the standard of repentance and humbly deprecate, with mourning, the wrath of God, as they ought to have done. It was therefore meet ever to set before them Gods wrath, which ought to have humbled the Jews and the Israelites, inasmuch as they ever obstinately set up against God their own indifference.

In saying that after the example of David they invented for themselves musical instruments, he no doubt greatly aggravated their sin by this comparison: for it is not likely that they had abused this pretext, as hypocrites do, who are wont to boast of the examples of the saints, when they seek to disguise their own vices, --- ``What!'' some will say, ``Did not David use musical instruments?'' Others will say, ``Had not Solomon very splendid palaces?'' And some will add, ``Had not Abraham a company of servants in his house?'' So every one lays hold on what may avail for an excuse: and thus the examples of the saints are absurdly referred to by many. But it seems not probable that this was done by those whom Amos now addresses: but, on the contrary, he appears sharply to reprove them for provoking God's wrath by self indulgence, and for manifesting their perverseness, while David employed musical instruments in the exercises of religion, to raise up his mind to God. No doubt, David, when in a peaceful state, after having been delivered from all dangers, could also amuse himself: but he applied musical instruments to another purpose --- to sound forth the praises of God in the temple, that thereby he and other godly persons might together elevate their thoughts to a religious devotion. While David then, even in a state of peace and prosperity, did not allow his mind to become sunk in vain self-

indulgences, these men, when God appeared angry, when he spread terror by so many tokens of his vengeance, yet dared contumaciously to follow their own ways, so that they left off nothing of their usual pomp and of their accustomed pleasures.

We now see the design of the comparison which the Prophet makes: He aggravates, I have no doubt, their sin, because they regarded not the example of David, but transferred musical instruments to serve the purpose of gross and beastly indulgences, and thus they did when God was opposed to them, when he had begun to terrify them by his vengeance. Let us proceed ---

Amos 6:6-7

6. That drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments: but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.

6. Qui bibunt in phialis vinum, et primitiis oleorum sese ungunt, et non condolescunt super contritionem Joseph.

7. Therefore now shall they go captive with the first that go captive, and the banquet of them that stretched themselves shall be removed.

7. Propterea nunc transferentur (voluentur) in capite migrantium, et veniet luctus extensorum (est deductum ab eodem verbo jrs; diximus plura significare sed accipio pro extendere; et aliquid rursus dicendum erit in fine.)

Amos now reproaches the chiefs of both kingdoms for drinking wine in bowls, that is, in vessels either elegantly formed or precious. Some think ``silver'' to be understood ``in vessels of silver:'' but there is no need of regarding any thing as understood in the Prophet's words. The meaning is, that those men were sufficiently convicted of brutish stupidity, inasmuch as they did not forsake their indulgences, when God manifested his terrible vengeance. Since God then did thus what tended to humble them, their madness and blindness were conspicuous enough; for they indulged themselves, they drank wine according to their usual custom, when they ought to have betaken themselves, as we have said, to fasting, lamentation, and mourning, to sackcloth and ashes.

They drank wine in bowls, and further, they anointed themselves with the chief ointments Christ, we know, was anointed at least twice, (Luke 7:38 Matthew 26:7) and this practice was not blamed in David, nor in king Hezekiah, nor in others. Since then anointing was not in itself sinful, we see that the Prophet must have something particular in view. He meant to show, that when God manifested tokens of his wrath, nothing then remained for those who were conscious of having done evil, but humbly to abstain, like guilty persons, from all indulgences, that they might, by fasting and mourning, excite the mercy of God: as the Israelites had not done this, the Prophet expostulated with them. There is no need of seeking, any other interpretation of this place.

For he immediately subjoins, that they grieved not for the bruising of Joseph These words are to be read in connection with the former, and ought to be applied to the whole discourse. The Prophet then does not specifically blame the Jews and Israelites because they drank wine in bowls, because they anointed themselves with the best and most precious ointment, because they reposed on ivory beds, because they extended themselves on their couches, because they ate the best meat; but because

they securely indulged in such delights, and grieved not for the distress of their brethren, for God had miserably afflicted the whole kingdom before their eyes. How much had four tribes already suffered? and how much the whole land and those who lived in the country? Ought God to have spared any longer these chiefs? It is indeed certain, that those who were still free from these calamities were especially culpable. Since then they did not consider the wrath of God, which was evident enough before their eyes, it was a proof of stupidity wholly insane, and showed them who still indulged themselves to have been utterly besides themselves.

We now then understand the full meaning of the Prophet; and hence he says, They shall emigrate at the head of the emigrants, that is, ``when there shall be an emigration, they shall be the first in order of time. I have hitherto indulgently spared you; but as I see that you have abused my forbearance, ye shall certainly be the forerunners of others; for ye shall go first into captivity. And my rigor shall begin with you, because I see that I have hitherto lost all my labor in attempting, kindly and paternally to call you to repentance. Ye shall now then migrate at the head of the emigrants

And come shall the mourning of those who extend themselves, {סרוחים}, saruchim [50] ; that is, ``Ye indeed lie down, (as he had said before,) ye extend yourselves on your couches; but mourning shall come to you. Ye think that you can escape punishment, when ye repose quietly on your beds; but though your chambers be closed, though ye move not a finger, yet mourning shall come to you.'' We now see the connection between the words, mourning and resting in idleness and indulgence. The word {סרח}, sarech, means indeed properly to recumb; and hence some render the passage, ``Mourning shall rest on you:'' but the more received meaning is, Mourning shall come on you while recumbing. Though then they stretched out themselves on their beds, that they might pleasantly and softly recumb and rest themselves, yet mourning would come to them, that is, would enter into their chambers.

Prayer.

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou showest thyself at this day to be justly offended with us, and our own consciences reprove us, inasmuch as dreadful tokens appear, by which we may learn how much and in how many ways we have provoked thy wrath, --- O grant, that we may be really touched with the consciousness of our evils, and being afflicted in our hearts, may be so humbled, that without any outward affliction, we may wholly submit ourselves to be reproved by thee, and at the same time flee to that mercy which is laid up for us, and which thou daily offerest to us in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Lecture Sixty-second

Amos 6:8

8. The Lord God hath sworn by himself, saith the Lord the God of hosts, I abhor

[50] The words are {{סרוחים} ,{מרזה} וסר} usar merezach saruchim, --- an instance of striking alliteration. But Calvin's rendering, though amounting in its general import to the same thing, is certainly not the correct one. {סר} never means to come, but the reverse, to depart. To decline, to turn aside or away, or to depart, is its common signification. Then {מרזה} is properly shouting, either for grief or for joy; here evidently for the latter; and it may be rendered here mirth; so the clause may be thus translated --- And depart shall the mirth of the recumbents, or, of those who stretch themselves. Dr. Henderson's version is the following: --- And the shouting company of those that recline shall depart. The translation of Symmachus is, ``Taken away shall be the company of the voluptuous, {ἑταιρεία} {τρυφητων}'' The idea of ``banquet'' for the word here used, is what the Rabbins have given to it. --- Ed.

the excellency of Jacob, and hate his palaces: therefore will I deliver up the city with all that is therein.

8. Juravit Dominus Jehova per animam suam, dicit Jehova, Deus exercituum, Detestor ego excellentiam Jacob, palatia ejus odio habeo, et tradam urbem et plenitudinem ejus.

God here declares that he would not desist, because he had hitherto loaded his people with many benefits: for he had now changed his purpose, so that he would no longer continue his favors. And this was designedly added by the Prophet; for hypocrites, we know, grow hardened, when they consider what dignity had been conferred on them; for they think their possessions to be firm and perpetual: hence they become haughty towards God. Since then hypocrites act thus foolishly, the Prophet justly says that it would avail them nothing, that they had hitherto excelled in many endowments for God no longer regarded their excellency.

The word {גאון}, gaun, means in Hebrew pride and also excellency; but it is to be taken here in a good sense, as it is in many other places. In Isaiah 2:10, it cannot be taken otherwise than for glory, for it is applied to God. So also in Psalm 47:4, `The glory of Jacob, whom I loved; he had fixed the inheritance of God.' The gifts of God ever deserve praise: hence the Prophet in this place inveighs not against pride; but, on the contrary, he shows that the Israelites were deceived; for they set up their excellency and nobility in opposition to God, as though they were to be thus exempt from all punishment. God then says that he had now rejected this excellency, which yet was his gift; but as the Israelites had abused his benefits, they were therefore to be esteemed of no account. The meaning then is, --- that there is no acceptance of persons before God, that the dignity which had been conferred on the people of Israel was now of no moment; for it was a mere mask: they were unworthy of adoption, they were unworthy of the priesthood and kingdom. It was then the same as if the Prophet had said, ``I will judge you as the common people and heathens; for your dignity, of which ye are stripped, is now of no account with me.'' They had indeed long before departed from God; they were therefore wholly unworthy of being owned by God as his inheritance.

I detest then the excellency of Jacob, and his palaces; that is, all the wealth with which they have been hitherto adorned. But the Prophet does not take either palaces or excellency in a bad sense; on the contrary, he shows that God's blessings are no safeguards to the wicked, so as to avoid the judgment which they deserve.

He afterwards adds, I will deliver up the city and its fullness; that is, ``Though ye are now full of wealth, I will empty you of all your abundance''. Hence, I will deliver up the city together with its fullness, that is, its opulence.

But that this threatening might not be slighted, the Prophet confirms it by interposing an oath. Hence he says, that God had sworn. And as we know that God's name is precious to him, it is certain that it was not in vain adduced here, but on account of the hardness and contumacy of those who were wont to set at nought all the prophecies, and were wont in particular to regard as nothing all threatenings. This was the reason why the Prophet wished thus to ratify what he had said: it was, that hypocrites might understand that they could not escape the vengeance which

he had denounced. The form of swearing, as it is, may seem apparently improper; but God in this place puts on the character of man, as he does often in other places. He swears by his soul, that is, by his life, as though he were one of mankind. But we ought to accustom ourselves to such forms, in which God familiarly accommodates himself to our capacities: for what Hilary philosophizes about the soul, as though God the Father swore by his own wisdom, is frivolous: that good man certainly exposed his own doctrine to ridicule, while he was attempting to refute the Arians. ``God the Father, he says, swears by his own wisdom. Now he who is wont to swear by himself, could not swear by an inferior; but wisdom is the only begotten Son of God: hence it follows, that the Son is equal to the Father.'' These things at first sight seem plausible; but they are puerile trifles.

Let it then be observed, that God borrows from men this mode of swearing; as though he said, ``If men be believed when swearing by their life, which yet is evanescent, of how much greater weight must that oath be, by which I pledge my own life?'' Since God thus speaks, surely the whole world ought to tremble. We now apprehend the Prophet's design. Let us go on ---

Amos 6:9

9. And it shall come to pass, if there remain ten men in one house, that they shall die.

9. Et erit, si restabunt decem homines in domo una, morientur.

The Prophet here amplifies the calamity, which was nigh the people; as though he had said, that God would not now take moderate vengeance on that reprobate people, for he did nothing by dealing moderately with them: there was therefore nigh at hand the heaviest vengeance, which would reduce the people to nothing. This is the import of the Prophet's words when he says, that ten, if remaining in the same house, would die But in naming ten survivors, he intimates that a slaughter had preceded, which had taken away either the half or at least some part of the family, since ten remained. At the same time this number shows how severe and dreadful a judgment of God awaited that people, that ten would be taken away together. But it rarely happens, even when a direful pestilence prevails, that so numerous a family entirely perishes; when three out of four, or six or five out of eight, are taken away, it is a diminution which usually greatly terrifies men: but when ten are taken away together, and no one is left, it is an evidence of an awful vengeance.

We see then that the Prophet here denounces on the people utter ruin, for they could not be reformed by milder punishments: when God tried to recall them to a sane mind, he effected nothing. There was therefore no remedy for their desperate diseases: it was hence necessary entirely to take away those who were thus incurable. Perish then shall the ten, who shall remain in one house It follows ---

Amos 6:10

10. And a man's uncle shall take him up, and he that burneth him, to bring out the bones out of the house, and shall say unto him that is by the sides of the house, Is there yet any with thee? and he shall say, No. Then shall he say, Hold thy tongue: for we may not make mention of the name of the Lord

10. Et tollet eum patruus ejus et avunculus ejus (vel, comburet eum) ad tollendum

ossa e domo, et dicet ad eum qui erit in lateribus domus, An adhuc quispiam tecum? et dicet, Finis est (ad verbum, nihil;) et dicet, Tace; quia non licet recordari nominis Jehovae.

In the beginning of the verse the Prophet expresses more clearly what he had just said, --- that the pestilence would be so severe as to consume the whole family: for when he speaks of an uncle coming to bury the dead, he shows, that unless neighbors performed their duty, bodies would remain without the honor of a burial: but this never happened, except during extreme devastation; for though the pestilence destroyed many in the same city, there were yet always some who buried the dead. When therefore it was necessary for uncles to perform this office, it was evident how great the calamity would be. This the Prophet meant to express in these words, His uncle shall take him away; that is, his uncle shall take away each of the dead. But this office, being servile, as I have said, was wont to be committed to mercenaries; and when a father or an uncle was constrained to do this, it was a proof of great confusion.

An uncle then shall come and take him away {שרף}, shireph, means to burn; it is written here with {ס}, but the change of {ש} into {ס} is well known. Hence, many render the words, and shall burn him in order to take away his bones; and this interpretation seems to suit the place. Then it is, ``he will burn him, that he may carry his bones out of the house''. Dead bodies, as it is well known, were usually carried forth and burnt publicly. But as one man could not carry out a dead body especially an old man, and Amos mentions an uncle, he says, that another plan would be necessary, that the uncle would burn his nephews at home, that he might have the bones only to carry out, as he could not carry forth their dead bodies. This seems to me to be the real meaning of the Prophet. For they who explain this of a maternal uncle, have no reason on their side: it was enough to mention one only when men were so few. If indeed a maternal uncle be added to the paternal one, a great number of men would seem to have been still remaining. But when mention is made only of one uncle, this circumstance agrees best with what I have stated. An uncle shall come, he shall take him; and then, he will burn him that he may carry forth his bones. The bones could be easier carried out when the body was burnt, for the burden was not so heavy. We now then perceive the meaning of the words.

It follows, And he will say to him who shall be at the sides of the house. By the sides of the house, understand the next dwellings. He will then inquire, Is there yet any one with thee? that is, Is any one of thy neighbors alive? We cannot indeed explain the sides of the house as meaning the inner parts of the house, except one understands a reference to be made to strangers or lodgers, as though the Prophet said, ``If there will be any lodger, he will seek retreat in some corner of the house.'' Then the uncle, when the whole house had become desolate, should he by chance meet a guest, says, ``Is there any one with thee? And he shall say, There is an end'', or a decay. Though there be some ambiguity in the words, we yet see what the Prophet meant, and what he had in view. He indeed confirms what he had previously declared in the person of God, which was, --- that though ten remained alive in one house, yet all of them would die together, so that there would not be, no not one

survivor; for the uncle, on inquiring respecting his nephews, whether any remained, would hear, that there was an end, that all had perished together. Now, the design of these words was to strike men with terror; for we know how great their stupidity is, as long as God spares them: but when they feel his hand, they then dread, though they are not moved by any threatenings. This, then, is the reason why the Prophet denounces here at large on the Israelites the dreadful judgment, which they would not dread, being, as we have seen, extremely secure and thoughtless.

It follows, And he will say; Be silent; for it is not meet to mention the name of Jehovah This place is differently explained. Some think that their extreme wickedness is here noticed, that those who died, even in their last moments, would not mention the name of God. They thus then expound the words, --- ``Be silent,'' as though it were the expression of one indignant or of one who denied God. Be silent, then; for they remembered not the name of God, that is, those whom God would have humbled, repented not of their perverseness; even death itself could not bring them to the right way. Others give this exposition: Be silent, for it is not meet to mention the name of God; that is, ``What can God's name do to us? for we abhor it as a bad and an unhappy omen; for God brings us no joy''. The wicked dread the name of God, and wish it to be wholly obliterated. But it seems to me that the Prophet's design is another, which interpreters have not sufficiently weighed. We first find that the hypocrites, whom he reproves, boasted of God's name; for they said in adversity that it was the day of the Lord, as though they expected a change for the better. The Prophet now says, that the time would come when this boasting would cease, for they would perceive that God was offended with them, and they would no longer falsely pretend his name, as they had been wont to do. There is then a contrast to be understood between what is here said, and what is said in a former verse. The Prophet had previously inveighed against their rash vaunting, when they pretended the name of God without any shame, ``O! we are God's people, we are a holy nation, we are God's heritage''. As, then, they were become thus arrogant, and yet had cast away God far from them, the Prophet now says, ``These delusions shall then cease, by which ye now deceive yourselves; God will not suffer you wickedly to abuse his name, as we have ever hitherto done; and ye still go on in this iniquity. Ye shall at that time,'' he says, ``be silent respecting God's name; yea, it will be a dread to you.''

We now apprehend the Prophet's object: he means that such would be the grievousness of this last calamity, that the Israelites would really find that God was an enemy incensed against them, so that they would cast aside the false glorying which filled them with pride; yea, that they would dread the very name of God, for they would know that nothing would be better for them than to be hid from his presence. As it is said of the reprobate,

`They will say to the mountains, Cover us;
and to the hills, Bury us,'
(Revelation 6:16)

so also in this place, the Prophet says, that when hypocrites shall be struck and seriously frightened by God's judgments, their false vauntings will continue no longer;

for they would find that to be near God is to be near destruction. Be silent, then, for there is no reason for us to remember the name of Jehovah. It follows ---

Amos 6:11

11. For, behold, the Lord commandeth, and he will smite the great house with breaches, and the little house with clefts.

11. Quia ecce Jehova praecipiens et percutiet domum magnum mixtionibus (vel, contritionibus,) et domum parvam rimis (vel, rupturis, aut, scissionibus, ut vertunt, vel, scissuris.)

This verse is added only to confirm the former sentence. The Prophet indeed intimates, that the common people, as well as the chiefs, in vain trusted in their quiet state; for the Lord would destroy them all together, from the highest to the lowest. Behold, Jehovah, he says, commands etc.; by using the word commands, he means, that God had many reasons why he should take away and destroy them all. But he goes farther than this, and intimates that their destruction was dependent on the sole will of God; as though he said, ``Though the Lord may not send for ministers of vengeance, though he may not prepare great forces, yet his word only, whenever it shall go forth, will consume you all.'' We now then perceive what the Prophet means by the word ``commands.''

He afterwards adds, He will smite the great house with confusions, or, according to some, with breaking {פרס}, resas, means properly to mingle. The Prophet therefore, I doubt not, refers here to those dreadful falls which commonly happen to great and splendid palaces. When a cottage is overturned so great a ruin is not occasioned by its weight; nay, when its ruin begins to appear, fragments fall down one after another, so that the whole work falls without any violence. This, I say, is the case with small and common houses; but when there is a great building, its downfall is tremendous. I am therefore inclined to render the word ``confusion,'' and the difference between small and great houses will then be more evident. Great houses then shall be smitten with confusions, (mixtionibus, with minglings) but small houses shall be smitten with fissures or clefts. But yet, as I have already reminded you, the Prophet means that there would be a ruin, both to the principal men and to the common people, so that they would all perish, from the least to the greatest. We hence learn how great was the corruption of that people; for God punishes none but the wicked. It then follows that equity was everywhere subverted and that all orders of men were become vicious and corrupt. It follows ---

Amos 6:12

12. Shall horses run upon the rock? will one plow there with oxen? for ye have turned judgment into gall, and the fruit of righteousness into hemlock:

12. An current in rupe equi? An arabitur bobus (est, an arabit quispiam in bobus; sed quia est verbum indefinitum, ideo verto impersonaliter, an ergo aratio fiet bobus, nempe in rupe?) quia vertistis in fel judicium et fructum justitiae in absynthium.

This verse interpreters misrepresent; for some think that the Prophet, by these figurative expressions, means, that the people were wholly unprofitable as to any thing good; as some one says, ``The slothful ox wishes for the saddle, the horse wishes to plough.'' They therefore suppose that this is the meaning of the words,

``Ye are no more fitted to lead a good life than a horse is to run on a rock, or an ox to plough on a rock.'' Others think that the Prophet complains that the order of things was subverted as though he said, ``Ye have alike confounded all equity government, and justice. In short, ye have subverted all right; as when one tries to ride swiftly over a high rock, or attempts to plough there, which is contrary to the nature of things: ye are therefore become monsters.'' Others, again, understand that the Prophet here complains that he had lost all his labor; for he had been singing, according to the common proverb, to the deaf. ``What do I effect as to this iron generation? It is the same as if one tried to ride on the rock, to mount a rock on a swift horse; or as if one attempted to plough there; both which are impossible. So now, when I address stupid men, there is no fruit to my labor, and no advantage is gained.'' [51]

But let us see whether a fitter and a more suitable meaning can be elicited. We have already observed how secure the Israelites were; for they thought that God was, in a manner, bound to them, for he had pledged his faith to be a father to them. This adoption of God puffed up their hearts. The Prophet now reproves this presumptuous security; and, in a fitting manner, ``Can a horse,'' he says, ``run on a rock? and can an ox plough in a stony place? So there is not among you a free course to God's blessings. Ye ought indeed to have been the vineyard and the field of the Lord; justice and judgment ought to have reigned among, you but ye have turned judgment into gall ({ראש}, rash, which is variously taken, but as to the sense it matters but little,) ye have then turned judgment into gall, and righteousness into hemlock Since then ye are so perverse, a way for God's blessings is doubtless closed up. It cannot be that the Lord will act towards you in a manner like himself; for he must necessarily be refractory towards the refractory, as he is gentle towards the gentle''. The Prophet seems to me to mean this and if any one impartially considers the whole verse, he will easily find out the truth of what I have stated, namely, that the Prophet here reproves the supreme haughtiness of the Israelitic people, who thought God bound to them though, at the same time, they, as it were, designedly provoked his wrath. ``Ye think'', he says, ``that God will be always propitious to you; whence is this confidence? Is it because he has adopted you, because he made a covenant with your fathers? True he has done so; but what sort of covenant was it? What was engaged on your part? Was it not that ye would be perfect before him? But ye have turned judgment into gall, and righteousness into hemlock [52] Since then ye are thus covenant-breakers, what can God now do? Do you wish him to proceed in the same course, and to bestow on you his blessings? Ye do not allow them to be bestowed. For ye are become like craggy rocks. How can God proceed in his course? how can he continue his benefits to you? He can certainly no more do so than a horse, however nimble he may be, can run swiftly on a rock or an ox plough on

[51] This is the view taken by Matthew Henry, and seems not unsuitable. “The methods used for their reformation,” he says, “have been all fruitless and ineffectual. Shall horses run, etc. No; for there will be no profit to countervail the pains. God has sent them his prophets to break up their fallow ground; but they found them as hard and inflexible as the rock, rough and rugged, and they could do no good with them, nor work upon them, and therefore they shall not attempt it any more.” — Ed.

[52] “Ye have turned judgment into gall, which is nauseous, and the fruit of righteousness into hemlock, which is noxious.” — M. Henry.

a rock.'' We now understand what the Prophet means in this place. A confirmation of this view now follows, and from this connection the truth of what I have stated will become more evident.

Amos 6:13

13. Ye which rejoice in a thing of nought, which say, Have we not taken to us horns by our own strength?

13. Gaudetis in non re (hoc est, in nihilo,) dicitis, Annon in fortitudine nostra sustulimus nobis coronua?

This verse will seem better connected with the last, if we bear in mind the view to which I have referred: for the Prophet inveighs again against the careless contempt with which the Israelites were filled. Ye rejoice, he says, in a thing of nought A thing of nought he calls those fallacies, by which they were wont to deceive, not only others, but also their own selves. For hypocrites not only falsely pretend the name of God, but also deceive themselves by self flatteries, when they arrogate to themselves the name of Church, and the empty title of adoption and other things. We see this to be the case at this day with the Papists, who are puffed up with nothing; who not only with sacrilegious audacity twist the Word of God against us, that they may appear to be the true Church, but also harden themselves: and though they are ill at ease with themselves, they yet lull themselves asleep by such deceptions as these, ``God could not have suffered his Church to err; we have indeed succeeded the apostles: and though there are among us many vices and corruptions, yet God abides with us; and all who think not with us are schismatic; nay, though we may be supported by no reasons, yet their defection is not to be borne with. Let us then continue in our own state, for the Lord approves of our hierarchy.'' Thus the Papists not only deal in trifles to deceive the ignorant, but also harden themselves against God. Such was the blindness of the people of Israel. Hence the Prophet here reproves them, because they rejoiced in nothing; `In no word,' he says, for so it is; but it means that they rejoiced in nothing; for they involved themselves in mere fallacies, and thus set up their empty delusions in opposition to God and his judgments.

Who say, have we not in our own strength raised up for ourselves horns? Horns, we know are taken in Hebrew for eminence, for strength, for elevation, or for any sort of defense. Hence the expression means the same as though they had said, ``Are we not more than sufficiently fortified by our own strength?'' It is however certain that they did not say this openly; but as the Prophet possessed the discernment of the Holy Spirit, he penetrated into their hearts and brought out what was hid within. We indeed know this to be the power of the word, as the apostle teaches in the fourth chapter to the Hebrews: for the word partakes of the nature of God himself, from whom it has proceeded; and as God is a searcher of hearts, so also the word penetrates to the marrow, to the inmost thoughts of men, and distinguishes between the feelings and the imaginations. This spiritual jurisdiction [53] ought therefore to be noticed, when the Prophets allege against the ungodly such gross blasphemies; for it is certain that they had not actually pronounced the words used by the Prophet; but

[53] Jurisdicto, which means sometimes the authority to determine the import of the law; but it means here the power to interpret the thoughts of the heart. — Ed.

yet their pride had no other meaning, than that they had raised horns to themselves by their own strength. They were indeed separated from the Lord; in the meantime they wished to abide safe through their own power. What did they mean? They had become alienated from God, and yet they sought to be in a state of safety, and thought themselves to be beyond any danger. Whence came this privilege? For they certainly ought to have sheltered themselves under God's shadow, if they wished to be safe. But as they renounced God, and despised all his instructions, nay, as they were manifestly his enemies, whence was this safety to come, which they promised to themselves, except they sought to derive their strength from themselves?

We now perceive the Prophet's design: He reproves the Israelites for being content with a false and empty title and for heedlessly despising God, and for only pretending a form of religion instead of its reality; it was this so gross a vice that he condemned in them: and he shows at the same time, that they put on horns by which they assailed God; for while they were separated from him, they promised to themselves a secure and happy state. It at length follows ---

Amos 6:14

14. But, behold, I will raise up against you a nation, O house of Israel, saith the LORD the God of hosts; and they shall afflict you from the entering in of Hemath unto the river of the wilderness.

14. Certe, ecce tollo contra vos, domus Israel, dicit Jehova, Deus exercituum, gentem; et coarctabunt vos ab introitu Hemath usque ad torrentem campestrem.

At last follows a denunciation, and this is the close of the chapter. God then after having seriously exposed the vices which prevailed among the people of Israel, again declares that vengeance of which he had shortly before reminded then; but with this difference only --- that God now points out the kind of punishment which he would inflict on the Israelites. He had said before, `Behold God commands;' and then he had spoken of calamity, but expressed not whence that calamity would come: but he now points it out in a special manner, Behold he says I am raising up against you, O house of Israel, a nation, who will straiten you from the entrance into Hemath to the river, etc. The Prophet no doubt speaks here of the Assyrians, and expresses in strong terms how dreadful the war with the Assyrians would be, which was now nigh at hand; for though large was their land and country, (and being large and spacious it had many outlets,) yet the Prophet shows that there would be everywhere straits, when the Lord would raise up on high that nation I am then stirring up a nation against you.

He again calls the Lord, the God of hosts, for the same reason as before, --- that they might understand that all the Assyrians were at God's disposal, and that they would stir up war whenever he gave them a signal. The Lord then will raise up a nation, who will straiten you In what place? He speaks not here of strait places, but of a spacious country, which, as it has been stated, had many outlets. But after the Lord had armed against them the Assyrians, all the most spacious places were made strait to them, ``Ye shall be everywhere confined, so that there will be open no escape from death.''

Prayer.

Grant, Almighty God, that since we are extremely deaf to those so many holy warnings by which thou continuest to recall us to thyself, and since we ever harden ourselves against those threatenings, by which thou terrifiest us, that thou mayest break or at least correct our hardness, --- O grant, that we may, though late, yet in time, before final vengeance comes, attend to thy word and submit ourselves to thee, and in a teachable spirit undertake thy yoke, that thou mightest receive us into favor, and vouchsafe to us thy paternal kindness, and being at length reconciled to us, thou might grant us thy blessings, which thou hast promised to all thy children, who are the members of thy only begotten Son our Lord. Amen.

Chapter 7.

Lecture Sixty-third

Amos 7

A

Amos 7:1-3

1. Thus hath the Lord God shewed [54] unto me; and, behold, he formed grasshoppers in the beginning of the shooting up of the latter growth; and, lo, it was the latter growth after the king's mowings.

1. Sic ostendit mihi Dominus, et ecce formans locustas principio ascensionis herbae (hoc est, quum incipit herba ascendere: {לקש}, proprie significat secundam herbam, quam vocamus, Regian) et ecce herba post sectiones (vel, tonsuras, ut alii vertunt) Regis.

2. And it came to pass, that when they had made an end of eating the grass of the land, then I said, O Lord God, forgive, I beseech thee: by whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small.

2. Et factum est dum perficeret ad comendendum (hoc est, quum jam fere in totum absumpsisset herbam terrae,) tunc dixi, Adonai Jehova, parce, obsecro: quis stabit (vel, quis restituet) Jacob, quia parvus est?

3. The Lord repented for this: It shall not be, saith the Lord.

3. Poenituit Jehovam super hoc; Non erit, dixit Jehova.

Amos shows in this chapter that God had already often deferred the punishments which he had yet determined to inflict on the people; and thus he reminds the Israelites of their perverseness, inasmuch as they had abused the forbearance of God, and repented not after a long lapse of time: for God had suspended his judgments for this end --- that they might willingly return to the right way, as he commonly allures men by his kindness, provided they be teachable. Since then this forbearance of God had been without fruit, Amos reproves the Israelites, though he had also another object in view: for ungodly men, we know, when God spares them and does not immediately indict the punishments they deserve, laugh at them, and harden

[54] The verb is {,{הראני ``made'' or caused ``me to see;'' and so to render it would have been better; and it is the same verb in the succeeding clauses. --- Ed.

themselves for the future, so that they fear nothing; and when the Lord threatens, and does not instantly execute his vengeance, they then especially think that all threatening are mere bugbears; and therefore they harden their minds in security and think that they can with impunity trifle with God. Inasmuch then as this obstinacy prevailed among the Israelites, the Prophet here shows in various ways, that in vain they gloried, and thus securely despised the judgment of God; for though the Lord for a time had spared them, yet the final vengeance was not far distant. This is the sum of the whole: but such expression must be considered in its order.

A vision, he says, had been shown to him by the Lord; and the vision was, that God himself had formed locusts. Yet some think {יוצר}, iutsar, to be a noun, and render it, creation; others, a swarm or a troop. But these are forced expositions. The Lord then, I doubt not, formed locusts in the Prophet's presence, which devoured all the grass. He therefore says, when the grass began to grow, that is, after the cuttings of the king Here also expounders vary: some think that the shearings of the king are referred to, when the king had sheared his sheep. Others regard it as the mowing of hay; and they say, that the best grass was then cut for the use of the king, that he might feed his horses and his cattle. But these conjectures have nothing well-founded in them. I therefore doubt not, but the Prophet here calls that a royal cutting, when by a public order they began to cut their meadows. It is indeed credible that there was then some rule: as with us, no one begins the vintage at his own will, but a certain regular time is observed; so those cuttings, which were publicly done, were called royal; as the king's highway is called that which is public. But yet the Prophet, I think, refers under this figurative expression to the previous calamities, by which the people had been already reduced as to their number.

But we must supply this prophecy or vision to its proper time. I doubt not, and I think that I can gather this from certain considerations, that the Prophet here compares the time which had preceded the reign of Jeroboam, the son of Joash, with the prosperous time which followed. For when Jeroboam the Second began to reign, the kingdom was laid waste, partly by hostile incursions, and partly by drought and heat, by inclement weather, or by pestilence. Since then the condition of the people, as sacred history relates, was most miserable, hence the Prophet says, that locusts had been shown to him, which devoured all the grass and standing corn: for he not only says, that locusts were formed, but also that they devoured the grass, so that nothing remained, When they had finished, he says, to eat the grass of the earth, then I said, Lord Jehovah, etc. Thus then the Prophet shows that sure tokens of God's wrath had then already appeared, and that the people had in part been already afflicted, but yet that God had afterwards given them time for repentance.

Now by locusts I understand a moderate kind of punishment. We have seen elsewhere (Joel 1:4) that the country had been then nearly consumed by the locusts and the cankerworms, and the like pests. But in this place the Prophet metaphorically designates hostile invasions, which had not immediately laid waste the whole country but in some measure desolated it. This was indeed manifest to all, but few viewed it as the judgment of God, as also the Lord complains, that the perverse regard not the hand of the smiter, (Isaiah 10:3,4) Though then the Israelites saw their

land consumed, they did not think that God was displeased with them; for ungodly men do not willingly examine themselves nor raise their eyes to heaven, when the Lord chastises them: for they would grow, as it were, stupid in their calamities rather than set before themselves the judgment of God, that they may be seriously led to repentance: this they naturally shun almost all. Hence the Prophet says that this was especially shown to him. The calamity then was known to all, and evident before the eyes of the people; but the Prophet alone, by a vision, understood that God in this manner punished the sins of the people: at the same time, the special object of the vision was, --- to make the Israelites to know that the hand of God was withheld, as it were, in the middle of its work. They had seen the enemies coming, they had felt many evils; but they thought that the enemies retreated either through good fortune or some other means. They did not consider that God had spared them, which was the main thing. It was therefore shown to the prophet in a vision, that God spared his people, though he had resolved to destroy the whole land.

And the Prophet expressly declares, that God had been pacified through his intercession and prayer: hence appears very clearly what I have already referred to, that is, that the Prophet condemns the unbelieving for having perversely trifled with God; for they regarded the threatening which they had heard from the mouth of Amos and of others as jests. Whence was this? Because God had spared them. The Prophet shows how this took place; ``The Lord,'' he says, ``had at first resolved to destroy you, but yet he waits for you, and therefore suspends his extreme vengeance, that by his kindness he may allure you to himself; and this has been done through my prayers: for though ye think me to be adverse to you, as I am constrained daily to threaten you, and as a heavenly herald to denounce war on you; I yet feel compassion for you, and wish you to be saved. There is, therefore, no reason for you to think that I am influenced by hatred or by cruelty, when I address you with so much severity: this I do necessarily on account of my office; but I am still concerned and solicitous for your safety; and of this the Lord is a witness, and the vision I now declare to you.'' We now see that God's servants had so ruled and moderated their feelings, that pity did not prevent them from being severe whenever their calling so required; and also, that this severity did not obliterate from their minds the feelings of compassion. Amos, as we have already seen, severely inveighed against the people, sharply reproved their vices, and daily summoned irreclaimable men to the tribune it of God: as he was so vehemently indignant on account at their vices, and as he so sharply threatened them, he might have appeared to have forgotten all compassion; but this place shows that he had not yet divested himself of pity, though he faithfully discharged his office, and was not diverted from his purpose, when he saw that he had to do with wicked and obstinate men. He was therefore severe, because God so commanded him; it was what his calling required; but at the same time he pitied the people.

Let then all teachers in the Church learn to put on these two feelings --- to be vehemently indignant whenever they see the worship of God profaned, to burn with zeal for God, and to show that severity which appeared in all the Prophets, whenever due order decays, --- and at the same time to sympathize with miserable men,

whom they see rushing headlong into destruction, and to bewail their madness, and to interpose with God as much as is in them; in such a way, however that their compassion render them not slothful or indifferent, so as to be indulgent to the sins of men. Indeed, the temper of mind which I have mentioned ought to be possessed, so that they may go forth as suppliants before God, and implore pardon for miserable and wretched men: but when they come to the people, in their new character, that they may be severe and rigid, let them remember by whom they are sent and with what commands, let them know that they are the ministers of God, who is the judge of the world, and ought not therefore to spare the people: this then is to be attended to by us.

Now as to the word repent, as applied to God, let us know, as it has been elsewhere stated, that God changes not his purpose so as to retract what he has once determined. He indeed knew what he would do before he showed the vision to his Prophet Amos: but he accommodates himself to the measure of men's understanding, when he mentions such changes. It was then the eternal purpose of God, to threaten the people, to show tokens of his displeasure, and yet to suspend for a time his vengeance, that their perverseness might be the more inexcusable. But in the meantime, as this was without advantage, he sets forth another thing --- that he was already armed to execute his vengeance. God then does not relate what he had decreed, but what the Israelites deserved, and what punishment or reward was due to them. When, therefore, God begins to inflict punishment on sinners, it is as though he intended to execute fully his vengeance; he however forms a purpose in himself, but that is hid from us. As soon then as he lifts up his finger, we ought to regard it as owing to his mercy, that we are not instantly reduced to nothing; when it so happens, it is as though he changed his purpose, or as though he withheld his hand. This then ought to be borne in mind, when the prophet says, that God created locusts to devour all the grass, but that he suppliantly entreated God to put an end to this calamity. He then adds, that it repented God, not that there was any change of mind in God, but because God suddenly and beyond hope suspended the vengeance which was near at hand. It shall not then be

With regard to the clause, Be propitious, I pray; how will Jacob rise up, or who will raise up Jacob? it appears that the Prophet saw no other remedy, except the Lord, according to his infinite goodness, forgave the people, and hence he prays for pardon. In the meantime, he shows that he prayed for the Church, ``Lord,'' he says, ``thy hand does not now pursue strangers, but an elect people, thy peculiar possession:'' for by the name, Jacob, the Prophet extols the covenant which God made with Abraham and the Patriarchs; as though he said, ``O God, wilt thou be inexorable towards the people whom thou hast chosen and adopted, of whom thou art the Father? Remember that they are neither Babylonians, nor Egyptians, nor Assyrians, but a royal priesthood, and thy holy and peculiar people.'' And there is nothing that inclines God more to mercy than the recollection of his gratuitous covenant, as we have elsewhere seen.

He then says, that Jacob was small. He does not allege the worthiness of Jacob, or adduce any proof of excellency, but says that he was small; as though he said,

``O Lord, thou drawest forth now thy power against miserable creatures, who are already enfeebled enough'' for he calls him small, because he had been worn out by many calamities: and hence I said, that reference is here made to that miserable time, of which Scripture records, when it declares that the free as well as the captive were reduced to extreme distress, before Jeroboam the second began to reign. Then indeed God restored his people; but short was that favor; for immediately after the death of king Jeroboam, a sedition arose, which proved ruinous to the whole kingdom: his son Zachariah, as it is well known, was slain by Shallum, (2 Kings 15:8-10)

How then will Jacob rise up? Some take the verb {יקום}, ikum, [55] in a transitive sense, ``Who will raise him up?'' but others think it to be a neuter verb, ``How will Jacob rise up?'' that is, by what means will Jacob rise up? as {מי}, mi, may be taken to mean, how, or by what means: How then will Jacob rise up? But this difference has little to do with the main point It is then enough to say, that the Prophet here speaks of the weakness of the people, that on this account God might be more ready to forgive them. It now follows ---

Amos 7:4-6

4. Thus hath the Lord God shewed unto me: and, behold, the Lord God called to contend by fire, and it devoured the great deep, and did eat up a part.

4. Sic ostendit mihi Dominus Jehova: et ecce vocans ad disceptandum in igne Dominus Jehova, et consumpsit (aut, voravit) abyssum magnam (et consumpta fuit possessio) (alii {חלק} vertunt partem agri; sed malo accipere pro tota possessione.

5. Then said I, O Lord God, cease, I beseech thee: by whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small.

5. Et dixi, Adonai Jehova, cessa, obsecro; quis (hoc est, quomodo) consurget Jacob? (vel, quis attollet, ut prius dictum est;) quia parvus est.

6. The Lord repented for this: This also shall not be, saith the Lord God.

6. Poenituit Jehova super hoc; Etiam hoc non erit, dicit Dominus Jehova.

The Prophet shows that God had not once only spared the people, but that when he was again prepared for vengeance, he still willingly deferred it, that, if possible, the people might willingly recover themselves: but as all were unhealable, this forbearance of God produced no fruit. Now as to the words of the Prophet, we see that a heavier punishment is designated by the similitude of fire, than by what he said before when he spoke of locusts. We stated that by locusts is to be understood ordinarily a moderate punishment, one not so dreadful at first sight. For though the want and famine introduced by locusts, when they consume all kinds of fruit, are most grievous evils; yet fire sometimes strikes people with much greater dread. Hence the Prophet shows by mentioning fire, that God had become very indignant, having seen that the people had hardened themselves and could not be reformed by common and usual remedies. The Lord's usual mode of proceeding, as he declares everywhere in Scriptures is this: At first he tries to find whether men are capable of being healed, and applies not the most grievous punishment, but such as may be endured; but when he perceives in sinners hardness and obstinacy, he doubles and

[55] One MS. has {יקים}, which is, to cause to rise, or to raise up. This agrees with the Septuagint --- {αναστήσει}, and comports with the rest of the sentence; for {מי} is `who,' and not `how' or `by what means.' --- Ed.

trebles the punishment, yea, as he says by Moses, he increases his judgments sevenfold (Deuteronomy 28:25.) Such then was the manner which Amos now records; for God at first created the locusts, and then he kindled a fire, which consumed the great deep, and devoured their possession.

The point, denoting a participial form in the word here used, shows that they are mistaken who render {יוצר}, iutsar, creation, of which we have spoken before; for the point here corresponds with that in {יוצר}, iutsar, [56] . In both places the Lord shows himself to be the author of punishment, which is wont to be ascribed to chance; for men imagine that evils proceed from something else rather than from God. Hence it was necessary for this to be distinctly expressed, as the Prophet does also, when he says that locusts had been created by God, and that fire had been kindled by him.

God then called to contend by fire. It was not without a design that the Prophet uses the verb {רוב}, rub, which yet expositors have not duly weighed. For he indirectly condemns the hardness of the people, inasmuch as the Lord had already not only chastised the vices of the people, but had also contended with men depraved and obstinate: as when no justice can be obtained, a litigation becomes necessary; so the Prophet says here, that God was coming prepared with fire, to contend with the stubbornness of the people. The great deep, he says, was consumed by this fire. Hence what I have already said becomes more evident, --- that a more dreadful punishment is here described than in the first vision. The locusts devoured the grass only but the fire penetrates into the utmost deep; it consumes and destroys not only the surface of the earth, but burns up the very roots, yea, it descends to the center and consumes the whole earth. They who render {חלק}, chelak, a part, do not sufficiently attend to the design of the Prophet, for he concludes that the surface of the earth had been laid waste, because the very gulfs had not escaped the burning. And when the fire reaches to the very bowels of the earth, how could their possession stand, which was also exposed to the heat of the sun? We see how the earth is burnt up by heat, when the sun is scorching at Midsummer. We now perceive the Prophet's design.

He adds, that God was again pacified. We must ever bear in mind the object he had in view; for ungodly men thought the Prophets to be liars, whenever God did not immediately execute the vengeance he had denounced: but Amos here reminds them, that when God defers punishment, he does not in vain threaten, but waits for men to repent; and that if they still go on in abusing his patience, they will have at last to feel how dreadful is the vengeance which awaits all those who thus pervert the goodness of God, who hear not God inviting them so kindly to himself. This is the meaning. It follows ---

Amos 7:7-9

7. Thus he shewed me: and, behold, the Lord stood upon a wall made by a plumbline, with a plumbline in his hand.

7. Sic ostendit mihi: et ecce Dominus stabat (stans) super murum perpendiculi, et in manu ejus perpendiculum.

[56] The Masoretic point, called Holem, is referred to, which, being put above the {ו after the first radical letter, or in absence of the ,{ו denotes a participle. --- Ed.

8. And the Lord said unto me, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A plumbline. Then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumbline in the midst of my people Israel: I will not again pass by them any more:

8. Et dixit Jehova mihi, Quid tu vides Amos? Et dixi, Perpendiculum. Tunc dixit Dominus, Ecce ego pono perpendiculum in medio populi mei Israel: non adjiciam amplius ut transeam ipsum:

9. And the high places of Isaac shall be desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste; and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.

9. Et destruentur excelsa Isaac, et evertentur (excidentur) sanctuaria Israel; et surgam super domum Jeroboam in gladio.

This vision opens more clearly to us what the Prophet meant before, and what was the object of his doctrine: his intention was to show the people that what they had gained by their obstinacy was only to render God implacable, and to cause him not to spare them any longer, as he had hitherto done. The meaning is, --- ``God has hitherto borne with you according to his own goodness, promise not to yourselves that he will ever deal in the same manner with you; for your contumacy and waywardness has provoked him. As he sees you to be beyond measure obstinate, he must now necessarily execute on you final vengeance. There is therefore now no forgiveness provided for you; but as ye are incurable, so the Lord on his part will remain unchangeable in the rigor of his judgment, and will by no means turn to mercy.''

Interpreters explain this vision in various ways, and refinedly philosophize on the word, plumbline; and yet frigid are almost all their refinements. Were I disposed plausibly to handle this passage, I would say, that the plumbline is the law of God; for it prescribed to his people a regular order of things, which might serve as a plumbline; inasmuch as all things were directed according to the best rule. I might speak thus; but I am not disposed to refine in this manner; for I doubt not but that God meant only that this would be the last measuring; for he would punish his people without any remission and without any delay. We now apprehend the Prophet's meaning: but all this will become more evident from the words of the passage.

Thus he showed to me; and, behold, the Lord stood on a wall of a plumbline. The wall of a plumbline he calls that which had been formed by rule, as though he had said that it was a wall by a plumbline. God then stood on a plumbline-wall, and a plumbline, he says, was in his hand False then is what some interpreters say, that a plumbline was cast away by God, because he would no more perform the office of a mason in ruling his people. This is frivolous; for the Prophet testifies here expressly that a plumbline was in the hand of God.

But that which follows has an important meaning: God asks his Prophet, What sees thou, Amos? It is probable that the Prophet was astonished at a thing so mysterious. When locusts were formed, and when there was a contention by fire, he might have easily gathered what God meant; for these visions were by no means ambiguous: but when God stood on a wall with a plumbline, this was somewhat more hard to be understood; and the probability is, that the Prophet was made to feel much astonishment, that the people might be more attentive to hear his vision,

as we commonly apply our thoughts more to hidden things; for we coldly attend to what we think to be easily understood; but mysteriousness, or something difficult to be known, sharpens our minds and attention. I do not then doubt but that God made the Prophet for a time to feel amazed, with the view of increasing the attention of the people. What then dost thou see, Amos? A plumbline, he says: but, at the same time, he knew not what was the meaning of this plumbline, or what was its design. Then God answers, Behold, I set a plumbline in the midst of my people; that is, I fix this to be the last rule, or the final measure, and I will not add any more to pass by them As God had twice leaped over the bounds of his judgment by sparing them, he says, now that the last end was come, ``I will proceed no farther,'' he says, ``in forgiving them: as when a wall is formed to the plumbline, that no part may, in the least, exceed another, but that there may be regularity throughout so also this shall be the last order; this measuring shall be true and just. I will pass by them no more.'' This, I have no doubt, is the real meaning of the Prophet. We now also perceive the design of the other two visions to have been to prevent the Israelites from deceiving themselves by false self-flatteries, because God was kind and favorable to them. He shows that he dealt so with them, not because they were just; for God had already begun to execute his judgments on them; and the punishments with which they had been visited were strong evidences of their crimes: for God is not without reasons angry with men, especially with his chosen people. Since then they had been already smitten once and again, the Prophet proves that they were worthy of heavier punishments; and that punishments had been mild and moderated, was to be ascribed, he says, to the indulgence of God, because he was willing to forgive his people; but that the time had now come when he would no longer pardon them; for he saw that he had to do with irreclaimable obstinacy. This is the meaning.

It now follows, And destroyed shall be the high places of Isaac, and overthrown shall be the sanctuaries (some render palaces) of Israel; and I will rise up against the house of Jeroboam with the sword. The Prophet here distinctly declares, that the people in vain trusted in their temples and superstitions, for by these they kindled the more against themselves the wrath of God. He would not indeed have expressly threatened the high places and the temples, unless the Israelites had provoked in this way, as I have already said, the vengeance of God against themselves, inasmuch as they had corrupted the true and lawful worship of God.

Destroyed then shall be the high places of Isaac It may be asked, Why does he mention here the name of Isaac, which is rarely done by the Prophets? And there is also a change of one letter; for the word Isaac is commonly written with {ץ}, tsade, but here it is written with {ש}, shin; but it is well known that {ש}, shin and {ץ}, tsade, are interchangeably used. It is, however, beyond dispute, that the Prophet speaks here of the holy man Isaac; and the reason seems to be plainly this, --- because the Israelites absurdly pretended to imitate their father in their superstitions; for temples, we know, had been erected where Isaac had worshipped God, and also their father Abraham and Jacob. Inasmuch then as the Israelites boasted of the examples of holy fathers, the Prophet here condemns this vain and false boasting. They who understand by the word Isaac, that the Prophet threatens the Idumeans as

well as the Israelites, have no reason for their opinion; but the reason which I have already mentioned is quite sufficient.

We indeed know, that the Israelites had ever in their mouths the examples of the fathers, like the woman of Samaria, who said to Christ, `Our fathers worshipped in this mountain,' (John 4:20) So also the Israelites were wont formerly to allege, that the holy patriarchs worshipped God in those places, --- that God appeared in Bethel to holy Jacob, and also that in other places altars were built. Being armed with the examples of the fathers, they thought them to be their shield. The case is the same with the Papists in our day; when they hear of anything as having been done by the fathers, they instantly lay hold on it; but these are vain excuses. Like them were also the Israelites; hence the Prophet says, ``Behold, ye gain nothing by this fallacious pretense; for destroyed shall be the high places of Isaac, even those which are now covered by an honorable name: and at the same time the temples or palaces of Israel shall be overthrown.

And I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword We learn from this last clause that things were then, as we have stated elsewhere, in a prosperous state in the kingdom of Israel, though God had in various ways wasted it before Jeroboam: but they had been ever obstinate. He afterwards restored them to a better condition; for the state of the people greatly improved under Jeroboam: he recovered many cities enlarged the borders of his kingdoms and then the people, in their affluence began to grow wanton against God. As then the Prophet thus saw that they abused God's goodness, he denounced destruction on Jeroboam; hence he says, Against the house of Jeroboam I will rise up with the sword; that is, ``I will begin to execute my judgment on the offspring of the king himself; though I may spare him, yet his posterity shall not escape my hand.''

Prayer.

Almighty God, since thou so suspendest thy hand in chastising us, that except we be wholly blind and stupid, we must acknowledge that we are spared in order that we may willingly return to thee, and that being allured by the gentleness of thy forbearance, we may submit ourselves to thee in willing obedience, --- O grant, that we may not harden our hearts, nor be slow, nor slothful, nor even backward to repent, when thou deferrest extreme punishment, but strive to anticipate thy final vengeance, and so submit ourselves to thee, that we may be pardoned while it is time, and so hasten to offer our hearts whole and sincere to thee, and so repent, while urged by extreme danger, that there may not remain any hidden hypocrisy in our hearts, but that we may in such a way search every faculty of our soul, that thou mayest become to us a real and faithful witness of that integrity which thou requires of all who return to thee to obtain pardon through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lecture Sixty-fourth

Amos 7:10-13

10. Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel: the land is not able to bear all his words.

10. Et misit Amazias sacerdos Bethel ad Jeroboam regem Israel, dicendo, Con-

spiravit contra te Amos in medio domus Israel: non poterit terra sustinere omnes ejus sermones.

11. For thus Amos saith, Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of their own land.

11. Quia sic dicit Amos, Gladio morientur Jeroboam; et Israel migrando migrabit e terra sua.

12. Also Amaziah said unto Amos, O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there:

12. Et dixit Amazias ad Amos, Videns, vade, fuge (tibi, est supervacuum) in terram Jehudah; et comede illic panem et illic propheta:

13. But prophesy not again any more at Bethel: for it is the king's chapel, and it is the king's court.

13. Et in Bethel ne adjicias amplius prophetare, quia sanctuarium regis est, et domus regni est.

The Prophet here relates the device by which Satan attempted to depress his mind, that he might not go on in the discharge of his prophetic office. He says, that Amaziah had sent to the king to induce him to adopt some severe measure; for he pretended that as Amos scattered words full of sedition, and made turbulent speeches, the affairs of the king could not be carried on, except the king in due time prevented him: and besides, the same Amaziah said, that nothing could be better for the Prophet than to flee into the land of Judah, as he might live in safety there; for he had incurred great danger in having dared to prophesy against the king. It hence appears that Amaziah was a perfidious and cunning man, but not so bloody as to attempt openly anything serious against the Prophet's life; unless perhaps he thought that this could not be done, and gave this advice, not so much through his kindness, as that the thing was impracticable: and this second supposition is probable from the words of the passage.

For, in the first place the Prophet says, that Amaziah had sent to the king He then tried whether he could excite the king's mind to persecute Amos. It may be that his design did succeed: hence he undertook what in the second place is related, that is, he called the Prophet to himself, and tried to frighten him, and drive him by fear from the land of Israel, that he might no longer be troublesome to them. But we must, in the first place, notice the motive by which this Amaziah was influenced, when he endeavored so much, by any means possible, to banish the Prophet from the kingdom of Israel. It is certainly not credible that he was influenced by what he pretended to the king, that there was a danger of sedition; but it was a pretense cunningly made. Amaziah then had a care for his own advantage, as we see to be the case in our day with cardinals and milted bishops who frequent the courts of princes, and do not honestly profess what their designs are; for they see that their tyranny cannot stand unless the gospel be abolished; they see that our doctrine threatens to become a cold and even an ice to their kitchens; and then they see that they can be of no account in the world, except they crush us. And what do they at the same time pretend? that our doctrine cannot be received without producing a change in the whole world, without ruin to the whole civil order, without depriving

kings of their power and dignity. It is then by these malicious artifices that they gain favor to themselves. Such was the device of Amaziah, and such was his manoeuvre in opposing the Prophet Amos.

Behold, he says to the king, he has conspired against thee {קשר}, kosher, is to bind, but, by a metaphor, it signifies to conspire: Conspired then has Amos against thee. But who speaks? Amaziah; and the Prophet omits not the title of Amaziah; for he says that he was the priest of Bethel He might have only said, ``Amaziah sent to king Jeroboam'', but by mentioning that he was a priest, the Prophet shows that Amaziah did not strive for the peace of the public, as he pretended; and that this was therefore a fallacious pretense, for he fought for his own Helen, that is, he fought for his own kitchen, in short, for his living: for he would have been deprived, with disgrace, of his priesthood, and then reduced to penury and want, except he had driven away the Prophet Amos. Since then he saw that such and so great an evil was nigh him except Amos was banished, he had this object in view, and pretended another thing, and sent to the king and said, Amos has conspired; and he enhances the crime, In the midst of the house of Israel. ``This is not done,'' he says ``in a corners or in some obscure place; but his doctrine is heard on all the public roads, whole cities are filled with it; in short, it burns like fire in the very bosom, in the very midst of the kingdom; and thou wilt soon find thy own house to be all in a flame, unless thou applies a remedy, yea, except thou extinguishest it.'' We hence see how Amaziah acted, and the reason why he so earnestly persuaded the king to give liberty no longer to the Prophet Amos.

With regard to what follows, --- that the land could no longer bear his words, the sentence admits of two probable meanings. The first is, that he said, that the people, being offended with his turbulent doctrine, did now of themselves hate and detest the Prophet Amos, as a seditious man. Kings are in our day stirred on in like manner, --- ``Why do you delay? Your subjects desire nothing so much as to extinguish this evil, and all of them will eagerly assist you: ye are in the meantime idle, and your people complain of your tardiness. They think the princes in power are unworthy of their station, since they thus suffer the ancient rites and ordinances of holy Mother Church to fall into decay.'' So they speak: and we may imagine the words of Amaziah to have been in the same strain, --- that he stimulated the king by this artifice --- that the people were prepared to do their part. The other meaning is this, The land cannot bear his words; that is, ``If he goes on here with full liberty to raise tumults, as he has begun, the whole kingdom will be on the verge of ruin, for many will follow him; and when an open sedition will arise, it cannot be checked without great difficulty. We must therefore make every haste, lest Amos should get the upper hand; for there is already the greatest danger.'' As the Pharisees held a consultation, and said,

`Lest the Romans come and take away our place and nation,'
(John 11:48)

so also Amaziah might have excited the king by causing him to fear, that the land, the country, or its inhabitants, had been disturbed by the words of Amos, and that therefore it was time to put a stop to him. Such was the message of Amaziah to the king.

Now our Prophet is wholly silent as to the answer of the king: it is therefore probable, either that the king was not much excited, --- or that he dared not openly to take away the life of Amos; for he had probably obtained some authority among the people; and though he was hated, yet his name as a Prophet and his office were had in reverence, --- or that the matter was by agreement arranged between the two enemies of sound doctrine, as flatterers often gratify kings by putting themselves in their place, and by bearing all the ill will. However this might have been, it is certainly a probable conjecture, that the king did not interfere, because he was so persuaded by the priest Amaziah, or because he feared the people, or because religion restrained him, as even the ungodly are sometimes wont to contain themselves within the bounds of moderation; not that they are touched by real fear towards God, or that they desire to embrace his true worship: they wish God to be thrust down from heaven, they wish all knowledge of religion to be obliterated; but yet they dare not pour forth their fury. Such fear then might have seized the mind of Jeroboam, that he did not tyrannically rage against the Prophet Amos. But if we regard the tendency of the words of Amaziah, he certainly wished the Prophet Amos to be immediately visited with capital punishment; for conspiracy is a crime worthy of death; and then, fear might have impelled the king to put the holy Prophet immediately to death. Amaziah therefore expected more than what he attained: and then appeared his vulpine wiliness, for he sent for the Prophet and advised him to withdraw to the land of Judah. Hence, as I said at the beginning, it is very probable that Jeroboam was not excited according to the expectation of the ungodly priest of Bethel, who at first was a cruel wild beast; but when he could not proceed openly to destroy Amos, he put on a new character; he became a fox, because he could do nothing as a raging lion. Hence follows his second attempt, And Amaziah said to Amos, etc.

I have passed over one clause in the last verse: Amos says, By the sword shall Jeroboam die, and Israel, by migrating, shall migrate from their own land. These, in short, are two heads of accusation. Some interpreters think that Amaziah had slanderously perverted the words of the Prophet Amos; for he did not denounce death on king Jeroboam, but only on his people and posterity: but I do not insist on this. It might then be, that Amaziah did not designedly pervert the words of Amos, but only wished to excite the ill will of the king. Die then shall Jeroboam or his posterity with the sword, and Israel also, by migrating, shall migrate from their own land. We hence learn, that Amaziah was not impelled only by the last address of the Prophet Amos, but that he then discovered the hatred which he had long harbored. Amaziah therefore had been, no doubt, on his watch, and had heard what Amos daily taught, and when he thought the matter ripe, he sent to the king. Having tried this way, and found that it did not answer, he came to his second attempt, which we are now to consider.

Amaziah then said to Amos, --- that is, after his first proceeding disappointed him; for he did not obtain from king Jeroboam what he expected, --- then Amaziah said to Amos, Seer, go, flee to the land of Judah! By saying Go, he intimates that he was at liberty to depart, as though he said, ``Why wouldest thou willfully perish among us?'' At the same time, the two clauses ought to be joined together. He says first,

Go, and then, flee When he says Go, he reminds him, as I have already said, that if he wished, he might go away, as no one prevented his departure: ``Go, then, for the way is open to you.'' But when he says, flee, he means that he could not long remain safe there: ``Except thou provident for thy life, it is all over with you: flee then quickly away from us, else thou art lost.'' We hence see how cunningly Amaziah assailed God's Prophet. He proposed to him an easy way of saving his life; at the same time he urged him with the fear of danger, and declared that he could not remain safe, except he immediately fled. These then were the two reasons which he used as mighty engines to depress the heart of the holy Prophet.

He afterwards subjoins, And eat there thy bread This is the third argument. He might be allowed to live in his own country, and be supplied there with sustenance; for Amos was, as we have said, one of the shepherds of Tekoa. He must then have arisen from the tribe of Judah, and he had his habitation and his relations in that kingdom. Besides, Azariah was not an ungodly king: though not one of the most perfect, he yet respected and honored the servants of God. Hence, by saying, Eat there thy bread, Amaziah means that there was a safe residence for the Prophets in the kingdom of Judah, and that they were there esteemed both by the king and by the people, and that they might live there. This is the third argument.

Now follows the fourth: ``If thou dost object to me, and say that thou art a Prophet, and that it is neither lawful nor right in thee to be silent, be a prophet there. Thou knowest that prophets are attended to in the kingdom of Judah; thou mayest then perform thine office there, and live at liberty, and without fear.'' We hence see four of the reasons by which Amaziah attempted to persuade the Prophet Amos to leave the people of Israel, and to go to his own kindred.

But there follows a fifth reason: But in Bethel prophesy no more; for the sanctuary of the king it is, and his court. Here Amaziah annoys the Prophet by another pretense, or he tries, at least, to shake his courage, by intimating that it was unbecoming to raise commotions in the kingdom of Israel, and also that, by so doing, he offended God, because Jeroboam was a divinely appointed king, and endued with the chief authority. Since then the king could, by his own right, institute new modes of worship, Amaziah here argues that it is not in the power of any one who pleased to pull down those rites which had been universally received, and then confirmed by a royal edict, but that they ought to be received without any dispute. We then perceive now the import of the whole.

But it must be noticed in this place, that we must be watchful, not only against the open violence and cruelty of enemies, but also against their intrigues; for as Satan is a murderer, and has been so from the beginning, so he is also the father of lies. Whosoever then wishes strenuously and constantly to spend his labors for the Church and for God, must prepare himself for a contest with both: he must resist all fears and all intrigues. We see some not so fearful, though a hundred deaths were denounced upon them, who are yet not sufficiently cautious when enemies craftily insinuate themselves. I have not, therefore, said without reason, that God's servants have need of being fortified against both; that they ought to be prepared against the fear of death, and remain intrepid, though they must die, and that they ought to lay

down their necks, if needs be, while performing their office, and to seal their doctrine with their own blood; --- and that, on the other hand, their ought to be prudent; for oftentimes the enemies of the truth assail them by flatteries; and the experience of our own times sufficiently proves this. More danger, I know, has ever been from this quarter; that is, when enemies attempt to terrify by such objections as these, ``What is your purpose? See, the whole world must necessarily at length be consumed by calamities. What else do you seek, but that religion should everywhere flourish, that sound learning should be valued, that peace should prevail everywhere? But we see that the fiercest war is at hand: if once it should arise, all places would be full of calamities, savage barbarity, and cruelty, would follow, and religion would perish: all this ye will effect by your pertinacity.'' These things have often been said to us. When therefore we read this passage, we ought to notice the arts by which Satan has been trying to undermine the efforts of the godly, and the constancy of God's servants.

As to the first argument, there is no need much of dwelling longer upon it; for every one can of himself perceive the design of all this crafty proceeding. He says first, Seer, go. Amaziah addresses Amos in a respectful way: he does not reproachfully call him, either an exile, or a seditious man, or one unlearned, or a cowherd, or a person unworthy of his office. He does not use any such language, but calls him a seer; he concedes to him the honorable title of a Prophet; for by the word {חזה}, chese, he means this ``I confess thee to be God's Prophet: I grant that thou art a Prophet, but not our Prophet; Seer, then, go.'' We hence see that he left to him untouched the honor of being a Prophet, that he might more easily creep into his favor, lest by raising a dispute at first, there should be between them a violent contest: he therefore avoided all occasions of contention.

It might however have been asked him, Why he was blind? For the office of a priest was to watch; and the Prophets were in such a manner joined to the priests, that when God substituted Prophets in their place, he indirectly charged them with idleness and indifference. For why were the priests appointed? That they might be the messengers of the Lord of hosts, as it is said by Malachi,

`The people shall seek from the mouth of the priest my law, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts,' (Malachai 2:7)

Amaziah then ought especially to have performed himself the Prophet's office, for he was a priest. He was indeed, I allow, a spurious priest; but having claimed so honorable a name, he ought to have discharged its duties: this he did note and conceded that title to the Prophet. So now our milted bishops are very liberal in conceding titles, ``O, Mr. Teacher, ye can indeed see and understand many things: but yet ye ought, at the same time, to consult the peace of the community.'' They call those teachers who have been invested with no public office, but are yet under the necessity of undertaking the duties of others, for they see that these milted bishops are dumb dogs. In a like manner, also, did Amaziah act towards the Prophet Amos; for he was content with his own splendor and great pomp, and with his own riches; he lived sumptuously, and enjoyed a rich booty, and superstitions well warmed his kitchen. He therefore easily surrendered to others the title of a Prophet: in the

meantime, he prided himself on his priesthood.

But as to the second argument, there was a sharper sting in it, Flee, he says. By flight he intimates, that it was necessary for the Prophet to depart, though he wished to remain. So this second reason was borrowed from necessity; for the Prophet could no longer be borne with, if he proceeded in the free discharge of his office. Flee then to the land of Judah, and there eat bread

With regard to this third reason, he seems to imply that the Prophet Amos would be too pertinacious and too much wedded to his own opinion, if he preferred not to live safely and quietly in his own country, rather than to endanger his life in another land. Go then. Where would he send him? To his own country. Why? ``Thou art here a foreigner, and sees thyself to be hated; why then dost thou not rather return to thine own country, where thy religion prevails?'' Amaziah did not indeed address the Prophet Amos, as man of profane men do at this day, who are less like Epicureans than they are to swine and filthy dogs; for they object and say, ``Thou mayest return to thine own country; why hast thou come to us?'' They send us away to our own country, when they know that there is there no safe place for us. But at that time pure religion flourished in the land of Judah: hence Amaziah says, ``Why dost thou not live with thy own countrymen? for there are many there who will supply thee with sustenance; the king himself will be thy friend, and the whole people will also help thee.''

As to the fourth argument, we see what a crafty sophist is the devil, Be a Prophet there Who speaks? Amaziah, who perfectly hated the temple at Jerusalem, who would have gladly with his own hands set it on fire, who would have gladly put to death all the pious priests; and yet he allows to holy Amos a free liberty to prophesy, and he allows this, because he could not immediately in an open manner stop the holy Prophet in his course: he therefore sends him away to a distance. We hence see that Satan, by various arts and means, tempts the servants of God, and has wonderful turnings and windings, and sometimes transforms himself into an angel of light, as it is said by Paul, (2 Corinthians 11:14) and in this place we have a remarkable instance of this. Is not Amaziah an angel of light, when he advises the Prophet Amos to serve God freely in his own country, and to prophesy there, and to open his mouth in defense of God's worship and of pure religion? provided he did not do all this in the land of Israel. We have then in this chapter, as I have said, a remarkable instance of the wiliness of Satan.

Now as to the fifth argument, it is especially needful to dwell on it. In Bethel, he says, add no more to prophesy, for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is the house of the kingdom Here only Amaziah shows what he wished, even to retain possession of his priesthood; which he could not have done without banishing the Prophet: for he could not contend with him in arguments. He consulted then his own advantage by getting rid of the Prophet. Whatever various characters therefore he assumed in the last verse, and notwithstanding the many coverings by which he concealed himself, the ape now, as they say, appears as the ape. Amaziah then shows what he had in views even that he might remain quiet in the possession of his own tyrannical powers and that Amos should no more molest him, and pull up by the roots

the prevailing superstitions: for Amaziah was a priest, and Amos could not perform his office without crying out daily against the temple of Bethel; for it was a brothel, inasmuch as God was there robbed of his own honor; and we also know that superstitions are everywhere compared to fornication. Amaziah then now betrays his wicked intention, In Bethel prophesy not; he would retain his quiet state, and wished not the word of God to be heard there. His desire was, as we have already said, to extinguish everywhere the light of heavenly truth; but as he could not do this, he wished to continue at least in his own station without any disputes, as we see the case to be in our time with the Pope and his milted bishops. They became quite mad when they heard that many cities and some princes made commotions in Germany, and departed from their submission to them; but as they could not subdue them by force, they said, ``Let us leave to themselves these barbarians; why, more evil than good has hitherto proceeded from them; it is a barren and dry country: provided we have Spain, France, and Italy, secured to us, we have enough; for we have probably lost more than what we have gained by Germany. Let them then have their liberty, or rather licentiousness; they will again some time return, and come under our authority: let us not in the meantime be over-anxious about them. But let not this contagion penetrate into France, for one of our arms has been already cut off; nor let Spain nor Italy be touched by it; for this would be to aim at our life.'' Such also was this Amaziah, as it evidently appears, --- Prophesy not then in Bethel.

And he spoke cunningly when he said, Add no more to prophecy; for it was the same as though he pardoned him. ``See, though thou hast hitherto been offending the king and the common feeling of the people, I will not yet treat you with strict justice, I will forgive thee all, let what thou hast done amiss remain buried, provided thou `addest no more' in future.'' We hence see that there is emphasis in the expression, when he says, Proceed not, or, add not; as though he had said, that he would not inquire into the past, nor would accuse Amos of having been seditious: provided he abstained for the future, Amaziah was satisfied, as we may gather from his words, Add then no more to prophesy.

And why? Because it is the king's sanctuary This was one thing. Amaziah wished here to prove by the king's authority that the received worship at Bethel was legitimate. How so? ``The king has established it; it is not then lawful for any one to say a word to the contrary; the king could do this by his own right; for his majesty is sacred.'' We see the object in view. And how many are there at this day under the Papacy, who accumulate on kings all the authority and power they can, in order that no dispute may be made about religion; but power is to be vested in one king to determine according to his own will whatever he pleases, and this is to remain fixed without any dispute. They who at first extolled Henry, King of England, were certainly inconsiderate men; they gave him the supreme power in all things: and this always vexed me grievously; for they were guilty of blasphemy (erant blasphemi) when they called him the chief Head of the Church under Christ. This was certainly too much: but it ought however to remain buried, as they sinned through inconsiderate zeal. But when that impostor, who afterwards became the chancellor of that

Proserpina, [57] who, at this day, surpasses all devils in that kingdom --- when he was at Ratisbon, he contended not by using any reasons, (I speak of the last chancellor, who was the Bishop of Winchester, [58]) and as I have just said, he cared not much about the testimonies of Scripture, but said that it was in the power of the king to abrogate statutes and to institute new rites, --- that as to fasting, the king could forbid or command the people to eat flesh on this or that days that it was lawful for the king to prohibit priests from marrying, that it was lawful for the king to interdict to the people the use of the cup in the Supper, that it was lawful for the king to appoint this or that thing in his own kingdom. How so? because supreme power is vested in the king. The same was the gloss of this Amaziah of whom the Prophet now speaks: It is the sanctuary of the king.

But he adds afterwards a second thing, It is the house of the kingdom [59] These words of Amaziah ought to be well considered. He says first, It is the king's sanctuary, and then, It is the house of the kingdom. Hence he ascribes to the king a twofold office, --- that it was in his power to change religion in any way he pleased, --- and then, that Amos disturbed the peace of the community, and thus did wrong to the king by derogating from his authority. With regard to the first clause, it is indeed certain that kings, when they rightly discharge their duty, become patrons of religion and supporters (nutricios --- nursers) of the Church, as Isaiah calls them, (Isaiah 49:23) What then is chiefly required of kings, is this --- to use the swords with which they are invested, to render free (asserendum) the worship of God. But still they are inconsiderate men, who give them too much power in spiritual things; (qui faciunt illos nimis spirituales---who make them too spiritual) and this evil is everywhere dominant in Germany; and in these regions it prevails too much. And we now find what fruit is produced by this root, which is this, --- that princes, and those who are in power, think themselves so spiritual, that there is no longer any church discipline; and this sacrilege greatly prevails among us; for they limit not their office by fixed and legitimate boundaries, but think that they cannot rule, except they abolish every authority in the Church and become chief judges as well in doctrine as in all spiritual government. The devil then suggested at that time this sentiment to Amaziah, --- that the king appointed the temple: hence, since it was the king's sanctuary, it was not lawful for a private man, it was not even lawful for any one, to deny that religion to be of authority, which had been once approved of, and pleased the king. And princes listen to a sweet song, when impostors lead them astray; and they desire nothing more than that all things without any difference or distinction should be referred to themselves. They then gladly interfere, and at first show some zeal, but mere ambition impels them, as they so carefully appropriate every thing to themselves. Moderation ought then to be observed; for this evil has ever been dominant in princes --- to wish to change religion according to their will and fancy, and at the same time for their own advantage; for they regard what is of advantage to themselves, as they are not for the most part guided by the Spirit of God, but

[57] The fabled queen of hell. — Ed.

[58] This was probably Gardiner. — Ed.

[59] So it is literally {{בית {ממלכה}. Newcome renders it, ``The temple of the kingdom.'' Henderson, ``The royal residence.'' Grotius, Sedes imperii, ``The seat of the empire.'' --- Ed.

impelled by their own ambition. Since then we see that Satan by these hidden arts formerly contended against God's prophets, we ought to bewail and lament our own courses. But whosoever desires to conduct himself as it behaves him, let him watch against this evil.

It now follows, And it is the house of the kingdom Amaziah contends here no more for the royal prerogative, with regard to spiritual power. ``Be it, that the king ought not to have appointed new worship, thou hast yet offended against the peace of the community.'' The greater part of the princes [60] at this day seek nothing so much as that they might enjoy their own quietness. They ever declare that they would he courageous enough even to death in the defense of their first confession; but yet what are the teachers they seek for themselves? Even those who avoid the cross and who, to gratify the Papists, or to render them at least somewhat milder, change according to their wishes: for we see at this day that the minds of princes are inflamed by these fanners, not to spare the sacramentarians, nor allow to be called into question what is asserted, not less grossly than foolishly and falsely, respecting the presence of Christ's body, or his body being included under the bread. ``When we show that we contend against them, and that we are separated from them, nay, that we will be their mortal enemies, we in this agree with the Papists; there will then be some access to them, at least their great fury will cease, the Papists will become gentle: they will no more be so incensed against us; we shall hereafter obtain some middle course.'' So things are at this day carried on in the world; and nothing is more useful than to compare the state of our time with this example of the Prophet, so that we may go on in our works employing the same weapons with which he contended and not be moved by these diabolical arts; for we have no enemies more hostile and open than these domestic traitors.

It is then the house of the kingdom He now speaks of the secular arm, as they say, and shows that though religion were to perish a hundred times, yet care was to be taken, lest Amos should pull up by the roots the kingdom of Jeroboam, and the customs of the people. It now follows ---

Amos 7:14-15

14. Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was an herdman, and a gatherer of sycomore fruit:

14. Et respondit Amos, et dixit ad Amaziam, Non sum Propheta ego, neque ego sum filius Prophetae; quia pecuarius sum ego et colligens (vel, quaerens) sicomoros:

15. And the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel.

15. Et sustulit me Jehova a tergo ovium (quum sequerer oves meas; de post oves, ad verbum,) et dixit mihi Jehova, Vade, propheta ad populum meam Israel.

The Prophet Amos first pleads for himself, that he was not at liberty to obey the counsel of Amaziah, because he could not renounce a calling to which he was appointed. As then he had been sent by God, he proves that he was bound by necessity to prophesy in the land of Israel. In the first place, he indeed modestly says, that he was not a prophet, nor the son of a prophet: why did he say this? To render him-

[60] He refers evidently to the Protestant princes. — Ed.

self contemptible? By no means, though the words apparently have this tendency; but it was to gain for himself more authority; for his extraordinary call gave him greater weight than if he had been brought up from his childhood in the schools of the prophets. He then shows that he became a prophet by a miraculous interposition, and that the office was not committed to him by human authority, and in the usual way; but that he had been led to it as it were by force, so that he could not cast aside the office of teaching, without openly shaking off the yoke laid upon him by God.

This account then which Amos gives of himself ought to be noticed, I was not a Prophet, nor the son of a Prophet Had he said simply that he was not a Prophet, he might have been accused of presumption: how so? No one takes to himself this honor in the Church of God; a call is necessary; Were an angel to descend from heaven, he ought not to subvert public order; (Galatians 1:8) for all things, as Paul reminds us, ought to be done decently and in lawful order in the Church; for the God of peace presides over us. Had Amos then positively denied that he was a Prophet, he might on this account have been thrust away from his office of teaching, for he wanted a call. But he means that he was not a Prophet who had been from his childhood instructed in God's law, to be an interpreter of Scripture: and for the same reason he says that he was not the son of a Prophet; for there were then, we know, colleges for Prophets; and this is sufficiently evident from sacred history. As then these colleges were instituted for this end --- that there might be always seminaries for the Church of God, so that it might not be destitute of good and faithful teachers, Amos says that he was not of that class. He indeed honestly confesses that he was an illiterate man: but by this as I have already said, he gained to himself more authority inasmuch as the Lord had seized on him as it were by force, and set him over the people to teach them: ``See, thou shalt be my Prophet, and though thou hast not been taught from thy youth for this office, I will yet in an instant make thee a Prophet.'' It was a greater miracle, that Christ chose rude and ignorant men as his apostles, than if he had at first chosen Paul or men like him who were skillful in the law. If then Christ had at the beginning selected such disciples, their authority would have appeared less: but as he had prepared by his Spirit those who were before unlearned, it appeared more evident that they were sent from above. And to this refers the expression the Prophet uses, when he says, Jehovah took me away: for it intimates that his calls as we have said, was extraordinary. The rest we shall defer till to-morrow.

Prayer.

Grant, Almighty God, that inasmuch as thou permittest reins so loose to Satan, that he attempts, in all manner of ways, to subvert thy servants, --- O grant, that they who have been sent and moved by thee, and at the same time furnished with the invincible strength of thy Spirit, may go on perseveringly to the last in the discharge of their office: and whether their adversaries assails them by crafts, or oppose them by open violence, may they not desist from their course, but devote themselves wholly to thee, with prudence as well as with courage, that they may thus persevere in continual obedience: and do thou also dissipate all the mists and all the crafts

which Satan spreads to deceive the inexperienced, until at length the truth emerge, which is the conqueror of the devil and of the whole world, and until thy Son, the Sun of Righteousness, appear, that he may gather the whole world, that in thy rest we may enjoy the victory, which is to be daily obtained by us in our constant struggles with the enemies of the same, thine only Son. Amen.

Lecture Sixty-fifth

Amos 7:16

16. Now therefore hear thou the word of the Lord: Thou sayest Prophesy not against Israel, and drop not thy word against the house of Isaac.

16. Et nunc audi verbum Jehova tu, qui dicis, Ne prophetes super Israel, et ne stilles (vel, loquaris) super domum Isaac.

17. Therefore thus saith the Lord: Thy wife shall be an harlot in the city, and thy sons and thy daughters shall fall by the sword, and thy land shall be divided by line; and thou shalt die in a polluted land: and Israel shall surely go into captivity forth of his land.

17. Propterea sic dicit Jehova, Uxor tua in urbe prostituetur, et filii tui et filiae tuae gladio cadent, et terra tua funiculo devidetur, et tu in terra polluta morieris: et Israel migrando migrabit e terra sua (ad verbum est, de super terram suam.)

Amos having shown that he must obey God, who had committed to him the office of teaching, now turns his discourse to Amaziah, and points out what he would gain by his insolence in daring to forbid a Prophet, an ambassador of the God of heaven, to proclaim what he had in command. As, then, Amaziah had proceeded into such a degree of rashness or rather of madness Amos now assails him and says, Hear then now the word of Jehovah He sets here the word or the decree of God in opposition to the prohibition of Amaziah: for the ungodly priest had forbidden God's servant to proclaim his words any more in the land of Israel: ``Who art thou? Thou indeed thus speakest; but God will also speak in his turn.'' He shows, at the same time, the difference between the speech of Amaziah and the word of God: the impostor had indeed attempted to terrify the holy man so as to makehim to desist from his office, though the attempt was vain; but Amos shows that God's word would not be without effect: ``Whether I hold my peace or speak,'' he seems to say, ``this vengeance is suspended over thee.'' But he, at the same time, connects God's vengeance with his doctrine; for this was also necessary, that the ungodly priest might know that he gained nothing else, by attempting to do everything, than that he had doubly increased the vengeance of God.

There is, therefore, great emphasis in these words, Now hear the word of Jehovah thou who sayest, Prophesy not. Amaziah was indeed worthy of being destroyed by God a hundred times, together with all his offspring: but Amos intimates that God's wrath was especially kindled by this madness, --- that Amaziah dared to put a restraint on God, and to forbid his Spirit freely to reprove the sins of the whole people. Since, then, he proceeded so far, Amos shows that he would have justly to suffer the punishment due to his presumption, yea, to his furious and sacrilegious audacity, inasmuch as he set himself up against God, and sought to take from him his supreme authority, for nothing belongs more peculiarly to God than the of-

fice of judging the world; and this he does by his word and his Prophets. As, then, Amaziah had attempted to rob God of his own right and authority, the Prophet shows that vengeance had been thereby increased: Thou then, who sayest, Prophesy not against Israel, and speak not, hear the word of Jehovah

Remarkable is this passage, and from it we learn that nothing is better for us, when God rebukes us, than to descend into our own consciences, and to submit to the sentence which proceeds from his mouth, and humbly to entreat pardon as soon as he condemns us: for if we be refractory, God will not cease to speak, though we a hundred times forbid him; he will therefore go on notwithstanding our unwillingness. Further, we may vomit forth many blasphemies; but what can our clamorous words do? The Lord will, at the same time, speak with effect; he will not scatter his threatening in the air, but will really fulfill what proceeds from his mouth; and for this reason Paul compares heavenly truth to a sword, for vengeance is prepared for despisers. We ought therefore to take notice of this in the Prophet's words, --- that when profane men attempt to repel every tenth and all threatening, they gain nothing by their perverseness; for the lord will exercise his own right; and he will also join to his word, as they say, its execution. Thou then who sayest, Prophesy not, hear the word of Jehovah; though thou mayest growl, yet God will not be hindered by these thy commands; but he will ever continue complete in his own authority.'' And he mentions word, as we have already said, to show that the truth, with which the ungodly contend, is connected with the power of God. God might indeed destroy all the unbelieving in silence, without uttering his voice; but he will have his Word honored, that the ungodly may know that they contend in vain, while they vomit forth their rage against his word, for they will at length find that in his word is included their condemnation.

Now, when he says, Prophecy not against Israel, and speak not against the house of Isaac, we may learn again from these words, that the word Isaac is used by the Prophet by way of concession; for the people of Israel were then wont to adduce the example of this holy patriarch. Thus superstitious men, neglecting the law of God, the common rule, ever turn aside to the examples of the saints; and they do this without any discrimination; nay, as their minds are perverted, when anything has been wrongfully done by the fathers, they instantly lay hold on it: and then, when there is anything peculiar, which God had approved in the fathers but wished not to be drawn, as they commonly say, into a precedent, the superstitious think that they have the best reason in their favor, when they can set up such a shield against God. As, then, the Israelites had at that time the name of their father Isaac in their mouths while they were foolishly worshipping God in Bethel and in other places, contrary to what the law prescribed, the Prophet Amos designedly repeats here again the name of Isaac, expressing it probably in imitation of what had been said by Amaziah.

Now follows a denunciation, Therefore thus saith Jehovah This {לכן}, lacen, therefore, shows that Amaziah suffered punishment, not only because he had corrupted God's worship, because he had deceived the people by his impostures and because he had made gain by the disguise of religion; but because he had insolently dared to oppose the authority of God, and to turn aside the Prophet from his office, both

by hidden crafts and by open violence. Inasmuch then as he had attempted to do this, Amos now declares that punishment awaited him. We hence see that destruction is doubly increased, when we set up a hard and iron neck against God, who would have us to be pliant, and when he reproves us, requires from us at least this modesty --- that we confess that we have sinned. But when we evade, or when we proceed still outward, this issue will at last follow --- that God will execute double vengeance on account of our obstinacy. Therefore then Jehovah saith: and O! that this were deeply engraven on the hearts of men; there would not then be so much rebellion at this day prevailing in the world. But we see how daring men are; for as soon as the Lord severely reproves them, they murmur; and then, if they have any authority they stretch every nerve to take away from God his own rights, and from his servants their liberty. At the same time, when we observe the ungodly to be so blind, that they perceive not the vengeance, such as the Prophet here denounces, to be nigh them, and dread it not, it behooves us duly to weigh what the Prophet here declares and that is, that perverse men, as I have already said, do gain this only by their obstinacy --- that they more and more inflame God's displeasure.

With respect to the kind of punishment he was to suffer, it is said, Thy wife in the city shall be wanton: it is so literally; but the Prophet speaks not here of voluntary wantonness. He then intimates that Amaziah could not escape punishment, but that his wife would be made a prostitute, when the enemies occupied the land of Israel. We indeed know that it was a common thing for conquerors to abuse women: and well would it be, were the practice abolished at this day. Besides, it was deemed lawful in that age for the conqueror to take to himself not only the daughter but also the wife of another. This then is the reason why the Prophet says, Thy wife shall be a prostitute. But he says, in the city; which was far more grievous, than if the wife of Amaziah had been led to a distance, and suffered that reproach in an unknown country: it would have less wounded the mind of Amaziah, if the enemies had taken away his wife, and this disgrace had continued unknown to him, it being done in a distant land. But when his wife was publicly and before the eyes of all constrained to submit to this baseness and turpitude, it was much more hard to be endured, and occasioned much greater grief. We hence see that the punishment was much increased by this circumstance, which the Prophet states when he says, Thy wife shall in the city be a prostitute.

Then it follows, Thy sons and thy daughters shall by the sword fall It is a second punishment, when he declares, that the sons and also the daughters of the ungodly priest would be slain by the enemies. It was indeed probable, that some also of the common people had suffered the same evils; but God no doubt punished the willfulness and madness of Amaziah for having dared to resist admonitions as well as threatening.

But he also adds, Thy land shall be divided by a line He means by this statement, that there should be none to succeed Amaziah; but that whatever land he possessed should become a prey to the enemies. Thy land then shall be divided by a line. It may at the same time be, that Amos speaks here generally of the land of Israel; and this seems to me probable. I indeed allow that neither by Amaziah nor by the

other priests was the law of God kept; but we yet know that there was some affinity between the lawful priesthood, and the spurious priesthood which the first Jeroboam had introduced. Hence I conjecture that Amaziah had no possessions, it being lawful for priests to have only gardens and pastures for their cattle; but they cultivated no lands. I am therefore disposed to extend to the whole people what is said of the land of one man; and this opinion is confirmed by what immediately follows.

But thou shalt die in a polluted land. He called that the land of Amaziah in which he and the rest of the people dwelt; but he calls the land into which he, with all the rest, were to be driven, a polluted land. If any one objects and says that this punishment did not apply to one man, the ready answer is this, --- that God meant that an especial mark should be imprinted on his common judgment, that Amaziah might know, that he had as it were accelerated God's vengeance, which yet he intended to turn aside, when he sent away, as we have seen, the Prophet Amos into the land of Judah.

It follows at last, Israel by migrating shall migrate from his own land We here see that the Prophet proclaimed no private threatening, either to Amaziah himself or to his wife or to his children, but extended his discourse to the whole people: the fact at the same time remains unchanged that God intended to punish the perverseness of that ungodly man, while executing his vengeance on the whole people. Now follows ---

Chapter 8.

Amos 8

Amos 8:1-2

1. Thus hath the Lord God shewed unto me: and behold a basket of summer fruit.

1. Sic ostendit mihi Dominus Jehova; et ecce corbis fructus aestivi (vel, canistrum.) Et dixit, Quid tu vides, Amos?

2. And he said, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A basket of summer fruit. Then said the Lord unto me, The end is come upon my people of Israel; I will not again pass by them any more.

2. Et dixit, Corbem (vel, canistrum) fructus aestivi: et dixit Jehova mihi, Venit finis super populum meum Israel; non adjiciam amplius transire in eo.

By these words or by this vision the Prophet confirms what we have already observed --- that paternal chastisements would no longer be exercised towards the people of Israel. God indeed, as it is well known, had so treated that people, that he ever spared them even in their greatest calamities. It was with a suspended hand that God ever struck that people, until after many trials they at length seemed so refractory, as not to be benefited by such remedies. This subject then Amos now pursues: but a vision was shown to him to confirm more fully God's judgment, or at least to produce a greater impression on the minds of the people.

God showed to him a Basket full of summer-fruit. By summer-fruit, I doubt not, he means a ripe punishment, as though he said, that the vices of the people had ripened, that vengeance could no longer be deferred: for an exposition of the vision immediately follows, when he says, that the end of the people had come, etc.; and this we have already explained in the third vision. But there is a similarity in the Hebrew words, which cannot be expressed either in Greek or Latin. {קיץ}, kits means a summer-fruit, {קץ}, kots, signifies an end: one letter only is inserted in the word, summer-fruit, which God showed in a basket; and then he adds that {קץ}, kots, the end had come. But as to the main point, we see that there is nothing ambiguous. We will now return to the first thing.

Thus God showed to me. There is no need of repeating what I have already discussed. The Prophet here prefaces, that he adduced nothing without authority, but only faithfully related what had been commanded him from above. And this ought to be carefully observed; for God ever so employed his Prophets, that he yet reserved for himself entire the right of teaching, and never transferred his own office to men, that is, as to the authority. Then he says, The Lord Jehovah showed to me, and, lo, a basket of summer-fruit. We may understand cherries by summer-fruit, and those fruits which have no solid vigor to continue long; but this is too refined. I take the simple meaning, that punishment had now become ripe; for the people had not repented, though they had been so often warned; it was then as it were summer. He showed to me a basket of summer-fruit. But as to God asking his Prophet what he saw, we have already explained the reason why it was done: it behaved the Prophet to be at first filled with astonishment, that the people might be made more attentive; for when we hear of a conference between God and the Prophet, our minds are awakened; inasmuch as it must immediately occur to us, that there is something worthy of being remembered. God then rouses in this manner the minds of his people. So we see there is nothing superfluous in this repetition.

Now follows the exposition of the vision, Jehovah said to me, Come has the end on my people Israel We perceive, then, the meaning of the Prophet to be, --- that the people had hitherto been warned by moderate punishments; but that as they had become hardened, extreme vengeance was nigh at hand, when God would no longer perform the part of a father or of a physician, but would utterly destroy those whom he had long borne with. We indeed know that most grievous calamities had happened to the people of Israel, even before this time; but whenever God showed forbearance, he ever allured them to true penitence. Lest, then, they should promise such a treatment to themselves hereafter, and by self flatteries protract time, as hypocrites are wont to do, the Prophet declares here expressly, that the end had come; as though he said, ``Your iniquity is ripe: now then gather the fruit; for ye cannot proceed farther, no, not even for one day. Fruit will indeed come to you of itself.'' The end then is come, and I will no more add to pass by them. To pass by, as we have already explained, is to be referred to punishment. For why does God chastise his people, except that he is solicitous for their salvation? He says, then, that he would make an end, that he would not spend labor hereafter in correcting the people, for he saw that nothing availed. Hence, I will not pass by them, that is, I will execute my extreme vengeance: Il n'y faudra plus retourner, as we commonly say. It follows ---

Amos 8:3-4

3. And the songs of the temple shall be howlings in that day, saith the Lord God: there shall be many dead bodies in every place; they shall cast them forth with silence.

3. Et ululabunt cantica templi die illo, dicit Dominus Jehova: multum cadaver (hoc est, multa cadavera) in omni loco prosternentur cum silentio.

4. Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail,

4. Audite hoc qui absorbetis pauperem et exterminatis inopes terrae.

The Prophet touches the Israelites here, in an indirect way, for taking such delight in their superstitions as to sing in their prosperity, as though God was favorable to them; for the unbelieving are wont to misconstrue both the hatred and the favor of God by the present appearance of things. When the Turks enjoy prosperity, they boast that God is on their side: we see also that the Papists draw the same conclusion. It is the disposition of men not to look so much on themselves as on external circumstances. When, therefore, God indulges them for a time, though they be more than usually wicked, they yet doubt not but that God is favorable to them. So the Sodomites, to the very time in which they were overwhelmed by sudden destruction, thought that they had peace with heaven, (Genesis 19:14): this also is the reason why Isaiah says, that the ungodly had made, as it were, a covenant with hell and death, (Isaiah 28:15) and we know what Christ says of the time of Noah, that they then heedlessly feasted and built sumptuous houses, (Matthew 24:38) Such carnal security has prevailed almost in all ages. But a special vice is here noticed by the Prophet, namely, that the people of Israel sang songs in their temples, as though they meant designedly to mock God: for the voices of the Prophets resounded daily, and uttered grievous and terrible threatening; but the people in the meantime sang in their temples. In the same way the Papists act in the present day; while they bellow and chant, they think that God is twice or three times pacified; and they also congratulate themselves in their temples, when they have everything prosperous. This abuse, then, is what the Prophet refers to when he says, Howlings shall be the songs of the temple For melody he mentions howling, as though he said, ``God will turn your songs to lamentations, though they be now full of joy.''

He afterwards adds, For many a carcass shall be cast down in every place: but I prefer to render the word passively, ``Cast down everywhere with silence shall be many carcases'' [61] . By these words he intimates that there would be such a slaughter as would prevent them from burying the dead bodies. We have said in another place that the right of burial is commonly observed even by enemies; for it is more than hostility to rage against the dead: and all who wish not to be deemed wholly barbarous either bury their dead enemies, or permit them to be buried; and there is a sort of an understanding on this point among enemies, and the right of burial has been usually observed in all ages, and held sacred among all nations. When therefore dead bodies are thrown down in silence, it is an evidence of a most grievous calamity. We hence see why the Prophet distinctly expresses here, that many a dead body would be cast down in every place in silence, that is, that there would be no burying of the dead. But as we see men, though a hundred times proved guilty, yet quarreling with God, when he executes rather a grievous punishment, the Prophet now contends with the Israelites, and again repeats what we have before noticed, --- that God did not deal cruelly with them, and that though he should con-

[61] The literal rendering of the verse seems to be this — And they shall howl the songs of the temple: Many a dead body shall be in every place; — "Cast it away, be silent." The expressions are abrupt, but very striking. What would be commonly said is mentioned, "Cast it away," etc. Newcome translates as follows: — "There shall be many dead bodies in every place: And men shall say, Cast forth, be silent." Very tame is this, compared with the original literally rendered. To introduce, And men shall say, lessens the force of the sentence. — Ed.

sume and obliterate the whole people, it would yet be for just reasons, inasmuch as they had reached the very extremities of wickedness.

And he assails by name the princes of the people, Hear this, he says, ye who tread upon or swallow up the poor The Prophets, as we have already stated, did not without reason direct their discourses to the chief men, though the common people were nearly as much involved in the same guilt. It is certain that the state of the people of Israel was then so corrupt, that all, from the highest to the lowest, were become degenerated and none were free from blame. But as more guilt belongs always to leaders, this is the reason why the Prophets treated them with more sharpness and severity: for many of the common people go astray through thoughtlessness or ignorances or are led on by others, but they who govern, pervert what is just and right, and then become the originators of all kinds of licentiousness. It is no wonder then that the Lord by his Prophets inveighed so sharply against them; and this is now the object of the Prophet in saying, Hear this: for there is an emphasis in the expression, when he bids them to hear; it was either because they did not sufficiently observe their sins, and were wholly deaf, or because they in vain contended with God; for hypocrites think that by evasion they can escape judgment. Hear, he says, ye who devour the miserable, and destroy the poor of the land. We see here some difference marked, and that the Prophet does not generally and indiscriminately summon the common people and the princes to God's tribunal; but turns his discourse to the princes only. It now follows ---

Amos 8:5

5. Saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit?

5. Dicendo, Quando transibit mensis, ut vendamus frumentum? et sabbathum, ut aperiamus (hoc est, depromamus) triticum, et attenuemus ephah? (hoc est, mensuram minuemus; scimus enim ephah fuisse communem mensuram: quando ergo minuemus mensuram,) et augemus {שקל}, siclum, et pervertamus stateras dolosas?

The Prophet goes on here with the same subject; for this could not apply to the whole people, but only to the plunderers who were able to oppress the miserable and the poor among the common people, and who had a great abundance of corn: the same we see at this day, --- a few men in time of want have provisions hoarded up, so that they as it were put to death miserable men by reducing them to want. Since then the few rich held the whole people in a state of famine, the Prophet says here, ``Do you think that God deals too rigidly or too cruelly with your inasmuch as ye have hitherto been killing men with misery and want?'' Were any one to object, and say, that the slaughter which the Prophet has already threatened was to be common to the whole people, and that therefore it is now improperly stated, that the wrongs done to the people were brought on them by a few men: to this I answer, that there were other vices among the people which required to be corrected, and this we have already seen, and shall see again in other parts; but it was necessary to make a beginning with the proud men, who, relying on their own dignity, thought themselves exempt and free from the common lot. Hence it was necessary to close

their mouths: and further, the Prophet did not spare others in their turn. But we see to what extent of mad folly haughty men, and such as possess worldly riches and powers would run, were not the Lord to restrain and check them. This is the reason why the Prophet now especially addresses them.

Ye therefore say, When will pass the month, that we may sell corn? Some take {חדש}, chedash, month, for the new-moon; and it is sometimes so taken and this interpretation is probable; for immediately follows the word, Sabbath. When then will pass the month, and when will pass Sabbath, that we may be able to sell our corn? As it was not lawful to carry on business either on the Sabbath or on the new-moon, whenever they rested but one day, they thought that so much time was lost to them; for we see that the avaricious grow weary, as their cupidity ever excites them, for they are like an oven: and since they are thus hot, if an hour is lost they think that a whole year has passed away; they calculate the very moments of time. ``How is it,'' they say, ``there is no merchant coming? I have now rested one day, and I have not gained a farthing.'' As then the avaricious are so extremely careful, it is probable that the Prophet here refers to this disease of the mind, as though he said, ``You have no rest, no relaxation. God has commanded his people to rest on every new-moon; and his will also is, that you should abstain from every work on the seventh day: ye think it is time as lost, for ye get no gain.'' But another exposition is equally probable, which is this, --- that they expected corn to be every month dearer; as those robbers in our day gape for gain, who from every quarter heap together corn, and thus reduce us to want; they look forward, month after month, and think that some calamity may happen to increase the price of corn; frost or rain may come, some disaster may take place; when the spring passes away, there may come some hail or mildew; in short, they are, as it were, laying in wait for some evil. This meaning does not ill suit this place; at the same time they refer it to the intercalary month, which being an addition, prolongs time, so that the year becomes longer: and what follows, respecting the Sabbath corresponds well with this view; as the word is to be taken in another sense than of the seventh day, for we know that on every seventh year there was no sloughing, no cultivation of the land, among the Jews; and the corn was then dearer, when there was no crop. Thus then there was a prey as it were provided for the avaricious and the extortioners.

When then will pass the Sabbath, that we may open our storehouses? They closed their storehouses, until the whole year, without cultivation or produce or harvest, had passed away; and then they opened their storehouses, or at least it was the time when they in a great measure opened them. Since then they so cruelly dealt with the people, the Prophet justly reproves them, and shows that God did not too rigidly treat theme but recompensed them with such a reward as they merited. Other matters we shall defer to the next Lecture.

Prayer.

Grant, Almighty, that as thou ceases not daily to warn us in time to repent and anticipate thy judgment, --- O grant, that we may not be so deaf and slow, as to delay until our vices be ripened, lest no remedy should remain for us; but, on the contrary, that being tamed and subdued by thy threatening, we may flee to thy mercy, and

so consider thy judgments while at a distance, that we may not provoke thy wrath by our perverseness, but rather dispose thee to pardon by striving to be reconciled to thee in the name of Christ thy Son, and by doing this not only with the mouth and tongue, or by any other outward means, but also with a real feeling of heart and a life corresponding thereto, so that we may present ourselves in uprightness and sincerity, as thy children, that thou mayest also show thyself as a Father to us in the same Christ, thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

Lecture Sixty-sixth

In my last Lecture I was under the necessity of breaking off the subject: the sixth verse, with the two preceding ones, must be connected together. The Prophet says

Amos 8:6

6. That we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes; yea, and sell the refuse of the wheat?

6. Ut emamus argento pauperes et inopem pro calceamentis, et quisquilias frumenti vendamus.

Here still he speaks of the avarice of the rich, who in time of scarcity held the poor subject to themselves and reduced them to slavery. He had spoken before of the Sabbaths, and he had spoken of deceitful balances; he now adds another kind of fraud, --- that by selling the refuse of wheat, they bought for themselves the poor. We indeed know what is the influence of poverty and pressing want, when men are oppressed with famine; they would rather a hundred times sell their life, than not to rescue themselves even by an invaluable price: for what else is food but the support of life? Men therefore will ever value their life more than all other things. Hence the Prophet condemns this iniquity --- that the rich gaped for such an opportunity. They saw that corn was high in price; ``Now is the time for the poor to come into our possession, for we hold them as though they were ensnared; so then we can buy them for a pair of shoes.'' But the other circumstance increases this iniquity, --- that they sold the refuse of the wheat; and when they reduced to bondage the poor, they did not feed them; they mingled filth and offscourings with the wheat, as it is wont to be done; for we know that such robbers usually do this, when want presses upon the common people; they sell barley for wheat, and for barley they sell chaff and refuse. This kind of wrong is not new or unusual, as we learn from this passage. Now follows a denunciation of punishment ---

Amos 8:7

7. The Lord hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, Surely I will never forget any of their works.

7. Juravit Jehova per excellentiam Jacob, Si obliviscar unquam omnia opera eorum.

God, having made known the vices of the rich, now shows that he would be their judge and avenger: for were they only reproved, they would not have cared much, like the usurer mentioned by Horace, who said, ``The people may hiss me, but I felicitate myself.'' So also these robbers were wont to do, when they were filled: though the whole people exclaimed against them, though God thundered from heaven, they laughed everything to scorn; for they were utterly destitute of every shame; and they

were also become hardened; and insatiable cupidity had so blinded and demented them, that they had cast aside every care for what was right and becoming. Since it was so, God now declares that they could not escape punishment; and that this threatening might more effectually penetrate into their hearts, the Prophet makes use of an oath in the name of God, Jehovah, he says, hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob

An old interpreter has rendered the words, ``He has sworn against the pride of Jacob:'' but he did not sufficiently consider the design of the Prophet; for he speaks not here of vice, but of that dignity which the Lord had conferred on the posterity of Abraham; for we have before seen this expression, `I abhor the excellency of Jacob.' Some give this rendering, ``I abhor the pride of Jacob,'' as though God were speaking there of perverse haughtiness. But he, on the contrary, means, that the Israelites were deceived, for they thought themselves safe and secure, because they were introduced into great favor by a singular privilege. ``This,'' the Lord says, ``will profit them nothing: I have hitherto been kind and bountiful to the children of Abraham; but I now abhor this whole dignity.'' So also he says now in this place, Jehovah hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob. They were proud of their dignity which yet was the free gift of God, hence God interposes a form of oath, the fittest to reprove their presumption. Some at the same time give this translation, ``By myself, (at least they give this explanation,) by myself have I sworn:'' for God was the glory of Jacob. Others think that by this word, {גאון}, gaun, is designated the sanctuary; for this was the excellency of Jacob, because God had chosen it as a habitation for himself in the midst of his people: hence, also, He is often said to dwell between the cherubim; not that he was inclosed in the sanctuary, but because the people perceived there his presence, his favor, and his power. But I rather understand by the term, excellency, in this place, the adoption, by which God had separated for himself that people from the rest of the world. Sworn then hath Jehovah. How? By the excellency of Jacob: and thus he glances in a severe manner at the ingratitude of the people, as they did not own themselves to be in every respect bound to God; for they had been peculiarly chosen, when yet other nations in many things excelled them. It was doubtless an invaluable favor for that ignoble people to have been chosen to be God's peculiar possession and heritage. Hence the Prophet now rightly introduces God as being angry; and the form of the oath is suited to set forth the people's ingratitude: ``What! do ye now rise up against me, and elevate your horns? By what right? Under what pretext? Who are ye? I chose you, and ye truly repay me with this reward, --- that though ye owe me all things, ye seek to defraud me of my right. I therefore swear by the excellency of Jacob, --- I swear by the benefits which I conferred on you, --- that I will not allow that which is justly precious in my sight to be disgracefully profaned. Whatever then I have hitherto bestowed on you, I will return on your own heads, and, as ye deserve, ye shall miserably perish.'' This is the meaning.

We hence see that the oath which the Prophet uses, ought to be applied to the present case. He says, I shall never forget all your works, that is, none of your works shall be passed by unpunished. For though conscience sometimes disturbs

hypocrites yet they think that many things may be concealed; and if the hundredth part, or at farthest the tenth, must be accounted for, they think this to be quite enough: ``Why! God may perhaps observe this or that, but many faults will escape him.'' Since then hypocrites thus heedlessly deceive themselves, the Prophet says, ``Nothing can ever be hid from my sight; nay, as I now know all their works, I will show that all their sins are recorded in my books, in my memory, so that all things shall at last be called to an account.'' It now follows ---

Amos 8:8

8. Shall not the land tremble for this, and every one mourn that dwelleth therein? and it shall rise up wholly as a flood; and it shall be cast out and drowned, as by the flood of Egypt.

8. Annon super hoc tumultuabitur terra, et lugebit quicunque habitat in ea? Et ascendet quasi flumen tota (vel, elevabitur,) et profligabitur et submergetur quasi a fluvio AEgypti.

He confirms what the last verse contains in other words: and the question is emphatical, for it is a double affirmation. A question, we know, is usually put, when there is no measure of doubt on the subject. God then asks here as of a thing certain, how they could remain in safety, who had so perverted every thing right and just, who had violated all equity, who were influenced by no feelings of humanity, --- how could such continue safe? It was impossible. We hence see why the Prophet here uses a question; it was, that he might more fully confirm what he declares.

Shall not the land, he says, make a tumult? [62] when these disturb all order, when they mingle, as the proverb is, heaven and earth together, can the earth remain quiet under such a violent confusion? when all reason and equity is confounded, how, he says, can the land do otherwise than make a tumult? And though the Prophet ascribes not here either clamor or speech to the land; it is yet a sort of personification, when he says that the earth must necessarily make a tumult, while it sustains such inhabitants; for between them there was no agreement. Since then their way of living was extremely turbulent, the land itself must necessarily be agitated.

He afterwards adds, And mourn shall every one who dwells in it He now shows that the inhabitants of the earth shall feel that commotion of which he predicts: for the earth, ceasing to fulfill its offices, constrains its inhabitants to lament and mourn. And then there is another metaphor which sets forth the moving of the earth, that it will rise as a river to destroy men with a deluge. Many render what follows, ``It shall be driven away and closed up like the river of Egypt.'' But after the Prophet has spoken of inundation of the earth, he turns his discourse to the men whom this inundation would drown and swallow up. Hence, the real sense is, that their habitations would be destroyed, as by a deep gulf, in a way similar to the Nile, which, by overflowing the whole country, seems to make a sea of what had been inhabited. As the Prophet's words lead us as by the hand, I wonder how those skillful in the Hebrew language could have blended things so different, for they give this explanation, ``The land shall be raised up, as a river, and then it shall be

[62] Shake or move is the most current meaning of the word, and the most suitable to this place. Newcome renders it, “be shaken;” Henderson, “tremble;” and Grotius, “be moved.” — Ed.

destroyed and driven away;'' and they refer this to the land; and then, ``it shall be sunk down:'' this also they apply to the land; except that some give this rendering, ``It shall discharge itself like the river of Egypt.'' But I translate otherwise, ``It shall heave up whole as a river, and shall be driven away, and shall be immersed as by the river of Egypt.'' It shall heave up, he says, that is, the land as a river; so that there will be no habitation for men: ``I have given this land to my people that they might live in it; but the land itself shall heave up as a river; there shall be an inundation of the whole land.'' And then when he says, It shall be driven away and sunk, this ought not to be referred to the land itself, but to the inhabitants or to the people. [63]

He had said before, {כאר}, kar, as a river; but now he says, {כיאור}, kiaur, which I explain as meaning, as by the river of Egypt. The Nile, we know, overflows annually and covers the whole plain of Egypt. The Prophet therefore borrowed a similitude from the Nile; and he says, that such would be God's vengeance, that the land would be like a river, and its dwellings would be immersed and carried away, or annihilated: for when there is no surface of land, it seems to have been cleared away. So then he says now, It shall be driven away, It shall be sunk. This is the simple explanation; and {ע}, oin, is to be understood; for {שקּע}, shiko, is to sink or to cover. Here, {ה}, he is only put, but {ע}, oin, is to be understood, and there is also a double reading pointed out. [64] We now then perceive the Prophet's meaning. But it follows ---

Amos 8:9

9. And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord GOD, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day:

9. Et accidet die illa, inquit Dominus Jehova, ut occumbere faciam (vel, descendere faciam) solem in meridie, et obtenebrescere faciam terram in die lucido.

The Prophet speaks here metaphorically of the punishments which were then to the people nigh at hand: and as prosperity and success deceived the Israelites, the Prophet makes use of this significative mode of speaking: ``Ye congratulate yourselves on account of your wealth and other things which delight you, as though God could not turn light into darkness; and as God spares you, ye think that it will ever be the same with you; but God can, he says, turn light into darkness: a dark night therefore will overtake you even at mid-day.'' We now understand why the Prophet employed this figurative expression, --- that God would obscure the sun, or cause it to go down, and would on a clear day send darkness to obscure the earth. It was not, it is certain, the eclipse of the sun; and the Prophet did not mean this. But these figurative expressions must be first noticed, and then we must see what they import.

[63] A different view is given by Newcome and also by Henderson. Newcome translates thus, — And shall not all of it rise up as the river, And be driven out of its place and sunk down as the river of Egypt? Henderson renders the lines in the same sense, though in different words, — Shall not all of it rise like the river? Shall it not be driven and subside Like the river of Egypt? The question is unnecessarily retained, borrowed from the first line of the verse. It is seldom, if ever, that this is the case in Hebrew; it is not consistent with the simplicity of the language. It is evidently the earthquake that is here compared to the rising and subsiding of a river. I would therefore render the whole verse thus, — Shall not for this the land shake, And every inhabitant in it mourn? For heave up as a river shall the whole of it, And it shall be agitated and subside like the river of Egypt. Here is the heaving, the agitation, and the subsidence of the earth in an earthquake. — Ed.

[64] He means evidently the Keri, the marginal reading. — Ed.

Were any one disposed to lay-hold on what is literal and to cleave to it, his notions would be gross and insipid, not only with regard to the writings of the Prophets, but also with regard to all other writings; for there is no language which has not its figurative expressions. There is then in this passage a remarkably significative mode of speaking, --- that God would make the sun to go down or to become cloudy at mid-day. But we must especially notice the design of the Prophet, which was to show, that the Israelites trusting in their prosperity, thought themselves to be beyond the reach of danger; hence their security and hence their torpor, and at length their perverseness and their contempt of God: since then the Prophet saw that they abused the benefits of God, he says, ``What! the Lord indeed has caused your sun to rise; but cannot he make it to set, yea, even at mid-day? Ye now exult in its light; but God will suddenly and unexpectedly send darkness to cover your heads.'' There is then no reason for hypocrites to flatter themselves, when God smiles on them and treats them indulgently; for in this manner he invites them to repentance by the sweetness of his goodness, as Paul says in the second chapter to the Romans. But when he sees them stubbornly wanton, then he turns his benefits into punishments. This then is what the Prophet means: ``God,'' he says, ``will make the sun to set at mid-day, and will darken the clear day.'' Let us go on ---

Amos 8:10

10. And I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; and I will bring up sackcloth upon all loins, and baldness upon every head; and I will make it as the mourning of an only son, and the end thereof as a bitter day.

10. Et convertam dies festos vestros in luctum, et omnia cantica vestra in lamentum; et ascendere faciam super omnia dorsa (vel, super omnes lumbos) saccum, et super omne caput calvitium; et ponam eam quasi luctum (vel potius, quasi in luctu) unigeniti, et posteritatem ejus quasi in die amaritudinis.

The Prophet pursues the same subject; but he omits the figurative mode which he had before adopted. He therefore denounces vengeance more openly, --- that God would turn their festal-days into mourning, and their songs into lamentation. This was designedly mentioned; for the Israelites, we know, flattered themselves on account of their ceremonies by which at the same time they more and more provoked God's displeasure: for the worship of God, which they pretended to perform, was mere superstition, and was therefore a profanation of true religion. Though then they thus brought on themselves God's judgment by their wicked ceremonies, they yet thought that they were sufficiently disguised; for as Jeremiah says, ceremonies are to hypocrites the dens of robbers, (Jeremiah 7:10,11.) So here the Prophet speaks expressly of festal-days and of songs, --- ``Think ye that I am pacified on your feast-days, when ye offer sacrifices to me, or rather to idols under my name; and think ye that I am delighted with your songs? these things are so regarded by me, that they the more excite my wrath. Your festal-days then will I turn to mourning, and your songs to lamentation. At the same time, the Prophet threatens generally what we have before noticed, --- that there would be mourning among the whole people for having too long abused the forbearance of God; I will then turn your joy into mourning. This is the sum of the whole. We have already shown why he names

feast-days and songs, and that is, because they thought them to be expiations to turn aside God's vengeance, when yet they were fans by which they kindled more and more the fire of his displeasure.

He afterwards adds, I will make to come up on all backs the sackcloth, and on every head baldness. These are various modes of speaking, which refer to the same thing: for they were wont to put on sackcloth and they were wont to shave their heads when in grief and mourning. The Prophet then means, that there would be extreme sorrow among the people, that having cast away all delights, they would be constrained to give up themselves entirely to weeping, lamentation, and grief. I will then make to come up on all loins the sackcloth, that is, I will make each one to put off all valuable and soft clothing and to put on sackcloth; and also to shave their heads, and even to tear off their hair, as they were wont to do. We indeed know that the orientals were more disposed to adopt external tokens of sorrow than we are. It was in truth the levity of that country that accounts for their playing the part of actors in mourning; and from this practice of mourning our Prophet borrowed his mode of speaking.

He afterwards subjoins, I will set her (he speaks of the Israelites under the name of land) in mourning as for an only begotten This similitude occurs also in another place, `They shall mourn as for an only-begotten,' says Zechariah 12; so also in other places; so that there is no need of a long explanation. For when one has many children and one dies, he patiently bears his death; but when any one is bereaved of an only-begotten, there is no end nor moderation to his grief; for there is no comfort remaining. This is the reason why the Prophet says, that there would be grief, such as that which is felt for an only-begotten.

And he shows that these calamities would not be for a short time only, Her posterity, he says, shall be as in the day of bitterness [65] For hypocrites drive away, or at least moderate, their fear of punishment by imagining that God will not be so severe and rigid but for a short time, --- ``O! it cannot be God will for long punish our sins; but it will be like mist which soon passes away.'' Thus hypocrites felicitate themselves. Then the Prophet does not without reason subjoin this second clause, that their posterity shall be as in the day of bitterness. Hence when they shall think themselves freed from all evils, then new ones shall succeed, so that their posterity shall even doubly grieve; for they shall feel more bitterness than their fathers. It now follows ---

Amos 8:11-12

11. Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord:

11. Ecce dies veniunt, dicit Jehova, quibus mittam famem in terram, non famem

[65] Both this and the former line are rendered differently by Newcome, more consistently with the words of the original — And I will make it as a mourning for an only son, And the end thereof as a day of bitterness. The pronoun “it,” and also “thereof,” is the feminine {:{ה Newcome refers it to ,{הדברה} this matter, or this event, understood: or in case ,{ארץ} land, be the antecedent, he thinks that ,{כאבל} ``as a mourning,'' should be rendered participially, as ``one who mourns.'' Either of these constructions may suit the original; but another seems preferable. The antecedent to ``it appears to be ,{אבל} ``mourning,'' in the first line of the verse. Our own version is no doubt the correct one, and not that which Calvin adopts; only the last line may be better rendered thus, as Junius and Tremelius do --- ``And the end of it as that of the bitterest day.'' --- Ed.

panis, neque sitim aquarum, sed audiendi verba Jehovae:

12. And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it

12. Et errabunt a mari usque ad mare, et a septentrione usque ad orientem discurrent ad quaerendum verbum Jehova, et non invenient.

Here now the Prophet fulminates, for he denounces not temporal punishments, but final destruction, and what proves to be an evidence of reprobation, and that is, that God would deprive the Israelites of every light of truth, so that they would wander as the blind in the dark. It is indeed certain, that they had been before this time bereaved of sound doctrine; for falsehoods and superstitions prevailed among them; and we have seen that in the land of Israel the true and faithful servants of God suffered cruel tyranny. But yet God restrained the people, as it were, against their will; when they fled away from him, and withdrew themselves from under his government, he still goaded them, and tried as by force to restore them to the way of safety. God thus contended with the wickedness of the people for many years, to the time of our Prophet, yea, until the ten tribes were banished; for these, we know, were led to exile first, and at length the kingdom of Israel was abolished; but the Lord ceased not to stretch forth his hand. Now when he saw that the labor of his servants was vain and useless, when he saw that no fruit proceeded from his word, when he saw that his name was profaned and his kindness trodden under foot, he denounced final vengeance, as though he said, ``I am now broken down with weariness, I have hitherto borne with your cries, and though by many kinds of punishment I have endeavored to restore you, I have yet observed a moderate course, that there might not be wanting some remedy for you. It has not, therefore, been my fault that your diseases have not been healed; for I have often sent Prophets to draw you to repentance, but without any success. I will now then take away my word from you.'' But as celestial doctrine is the spiritual food of the soul, the Prophet rightly adopts this metaphor, that the Lord would send a famine. This figure, then is borrowed from the efficacy and nature of God's word: for to what purpose does God send to us Prophets and teachers, but to feed us with spiritual food? As he sustains our bodies by bread and water, or wine, and other aliments, so also he nourishes our souls and sustains our spiritual life by his word. Since, then, spiritual doctrine is our spiritual aliment, the Prophet very properly says, that there would come a famine.

I will then send a famine, not of bread or of water, but of hearing the word of God. The antithesis amplifies or exaggerates the severity of the punishment, as though he had said, that it would be endurable to wander in hunger and thirst, and to seek roots on mountains, and to seek water in distant rivers: but a bodily famine, he says, is not what shall be grievous to them, --- what then? They shall be in hunger and thirst, and shall seek the word of God, and nowhere find it. But that we may better understand the meaning of the Prophet, we must notice what Paul says, --- that we are fed by the Lord as by the head of a family, when the word is offered to us, (Titus 1:3) for teachers go not forth of themselves, but when they are sent from above. As then the head of a family provides meat and sustenance for his children and servants, so also the Lord supplies us daily with spiritual food by true and faithful teachers, for

they are as it were his hands. Whenever then pure doctrine is offered to us, let us know that the teachers who speak and instruct us by their ministrations are, as it were, the hand of God, who sets food before us, as the head of a family is wont to do to his children: this is one thing. And certainly since the Lord cares for our bodies, we must also know that our souls are not neglected by him: and further, since the earth produces not corn and other things of itself, but God's blessing is the source of all fruitfulness and abundance, is not his word a much more precious food? Shall we then say that it comes to us by chance? It is hence no wonder that the Prophet sets here the deprivation of sound doctrine among God's judgments; as though he said, ``Whenever men are faithfully taught, it is a proof of God's singular kindness, and a testimony of his paternal care. As God then has hitherto discharged towards you the office of the kindest father of a family, so now he will deprive you of meat and drink, that is, those which are spiritual.'' Now, in the second place, we must observe, that when we abuse God's bounty, our ingratitude deserves this recompense, that want should teach us that God ought not to have been despised in his benefits. This is generally true: for when we intemperately indulge in luxury when God gives us abundance of bread and wine, we fully deserve that this intemperance and excess should be cured by famine and want. But bread and wine are of no great value, and soon pass away: when therefore we abuse celestial doctrine, which is far more precious than all earthly things, what punishment does not such willfulness deserve? It is therefore no wonder that God should take away his word from all ungrateful and profane men, when he sees it treated with mockery or disdain: and this truth ought to be carefully considered by us at this day; for we see with how little reverence the greater part of men receive the celestial doctrine, which at this time is so bountifully offered to us. God has indeed in our age opened the wonderful treasures of his paternal bounty in restoring to us the light of truth. What fear there is now? What religion? Some scoff, some disdain, some indeed profess to receive what is said, but they pass it by negligently, being occupied with the cares and concerns of this world, and some furiously oppose, as the Papists do. Since then the perverseness or the wickedness, or the carelessness of the world, is so great, what can we expect, but that the Lord will send a much thicker darkness than that in which we have been before immersed, and suffer us to go astray and wander here and there in hunger and thirst? If then we fear God, this punishment, or rather the denunciation of this punishment, ought ever to be before our eyes. And the antithesis also, as it is very important should be carefully considered; for the Prophet by the comparison increases the punishment: it shall not, he says, be the want of meat and drink, for such a divine visitation would be more tolerable; but it shall be a spiritual famine. Inasmuch then as we are too much entangled by our flesh, these words ought to arouse us, that we may more attentively reflect on this dreadful punishment, and learn to fear the famine or want of the soul more than that of our bodies. When the sterility of the land threatens us with famine, we are all anxiety, and no day passes, in which this anxious question does not ten times occur to us, --- ``What will become of us? We now suffer from famine and want, and we are, as yet, distant from the harvest three or four months.'' All feel anxious, and in the meantime we are not

touched by any concern when the Lord threatens us with spiritual want. Since then we are so disposed to be overanxious for this frail life, it is the more necessary for us to take notice at the comparison mentioned by our Prophet.

But it may be here asked, Why does he say that they should be so famished as to run here and there, and wander from sea to sea, from the south even to the east, since this ought to be counted as one of God's favors; for what more grievous thing can happen to us, than that the Lord should render us stupid and unconcerned? But when we are touched with some desire for sound doctrine, it evidently appears that there is some religion in us; we are not destitute of the Spirit of God, though destitute of the outward medium: and then comes what Christ says,

`Knock, and it shall be opened to you; seek, and ye shall find,' (Matthew 7:7)

Therefore this denunciation of the Prophet seems not, it is said, so severe and dreadful. But we must observe, that the Prophet does not speak here strictly of famine, as though he said, that the Israelites would feel the want of God's word, that they would really look for it, that they would sincerely seek it, but that they would perceive by the punishment itself, that nothing is more to be dreaded than to be deprived of the spiritual food of the soul. An example of this is found in Esau: when he saw that he had lost his birth-right, he cried and howled. He did not do this either from a right feeling, or because he had returned to a sound mind; but he was urged on by despair only: and then he sent forth lamentations and howlings, as though he were a wild beast. An anxiety like this is what the Prophet describes here. We hence learn, that the reprobate, when they see themselves deprived of God's favors, are not really moved, so that they repent, but only feel strong agonies, so that they torment themselves without any benefit, and do not turn themselves to God.

What then is this to seek? We must notice what he said before --- that they shall wander from sea to sea, and then, that they shall run here and there. When the faithful perceive any token of God's wrath, they immediately conclude and clearly see, that there is no remedy but to retake themselves directly to God: but the ungodly, what do they do? They disquiet themselves, and make a great noise. It is then this empty and false feeling of which the Prophet speaks. Now then the question is answered. But we must at the same time observe, what the best way is to recover the favor of God, when we are deprived of it; and it is this, --- to consider our state, and to return to him under a due consciousness of God's judgment, and to seek to be reconciled to him. Thus will he restore what he has taken away. But if our obstinacy be like that of the Israelites, God will deprive us of his benefits, and not only those which are necessary to support our present life, but also of the spiritual food of the soul: then in vain will our howlings rend the air, for he will not give us an upright spirit to return to him; but we shall in vain bite the bridle, we shall in vain torment ourselves: for he will not suffer us to come where we ought, that is, he will not lead us to true repentance nor to a genuine calling on him, but we shall pine away in our evils without any remedy.

Prayer.

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou continues to recall us to thyself, and though thou sees us to be alienated from thee, thou yet dost extend thy hand to us, and often

exhort and stimulate us by holy admonitions, and even frighten us by punishments, that we may not run headlong to our own ruin, --- O grant, that we may not be deaf to admonitions so holy and gracious, nor be hardened against thy threatening, but that we may become instantly submissive, and also return to the right way and constantly proceed in it, and follow one vocation through our whole life, as long as thou continues it to us, until we at length reach the mark which is set before us, even until we be gathered into thy celestial kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lecture Sixty-seventh

Amos 8:13-14

13. In that day shall the fair virgins and young men faint for thirst.

13. In die illa deficient virgines decorae et adolescentes prae siti.

14. They that swear by the sin of Samaria, and say, Thy god, O Dan, liveth; and, The manner of Beersheba liveth; even they shall fall, and never rise up again.

14. Jurantes in peccato Samariae, et qui dicunt, Vivet via Barsaba; et cadent et non resurgent amplius.

The Prophet, having threatened spiritual famine, now adds, that the people would in every respect be barren and destitute of every good: for I take not thirst here in the same sense as before; but that they should be dried up through the want of all things. It is indeed the worst deprivation when men are parched up with thirst; and this is what the Prophet threatens here. A country may suffer from want of provision, while there is water enough to drink; but when not even this remains, it is an evidence of a heavier and of almost the extreme curse of God. We now perceive what the Prophet meant, which was this, --- that when God should take away his word, by which the souls of men are nourished up to eternal life, the Israelites would be then in want also of all blessings, so that they would not only be without bread, but also without water; and he mentions a circumstance which would greatly aggravate the evil, Faint, he says, shall the fair virgins and the youth in their vigor It seems unnatural, that those who are vigorous, and can run to get supply for their wants, should faint: but the Prophet, as I have said, wished to show that there would be no escape, but that God would distress the strongest, when he sent such a famine, and with it the want also of drink.

He afterwards mentions the reason why the Lord would inflict such punishments on his people; it was, because they had prostituted themselves to wicked superstitions; They swear, he says, by the sin of Samaria; they say, Live does thy God, Dan; Live does the way of Beersheba Some understand ``sin'' here metaphorically, (as it is taken also in many other places,) as meaning sin-offerings, which are called by the Hebrews {אשמות}, ashimut, and by the Latins piacula --- expiations: but this exposition is too refined. The Prophet then speaks only of the idols of Israelites: and they are called wickedness or sin, because superstitious men, we know, delight in their own devices. He therefore calls an idol sin by way of reproach, though they gave it the honorable name of a god. They swear, he says, in or by the sin of Samaria He calls it the sin of Samaria, for thence arose all their corruptions, it being the royal residence and the chief city of the whole country. Since then superstition proceeded

from thence, the Prophet does not without reason say that all the idolatry, throughout the whole land, was the sin of Samaria; for he regarded the source where impiety originated.

And he afterwards explains himself by saying, Live does thy God, Dan; and, Live does the way of Beersheba: for we know that temples were raised both in Dan and in Beersheba. He then subjoins two forms of an oath, but for this end, --- to show the character of the sin of Samaria, which he mentions. They swear then by the gods of Samaria, who were really detestable; for there is no greater atrocity in the sight of God than idolatry: but he afterwards adds, that they were gods who were worshipped at Dan and at Beersheba. What some say of the word {דרך}, darek, that it means pilgrimage or the way that leads there, is frivolous and puerile; for the Prophet, no doubt, used a common expression. He therefore calls custom ``the way of Beersheba'', such as then was by common consent receded and approved. They then who swear by these fictitious forms of worship shall be parched, or pine away, with thirst

He then adds, They shall fall, and rise again no more; that is, their stroke shall be incurable, for God has hitherto employed moderate punishments, which could not heal them, as they had been obdurate in their evils. The Prophet then declares now that there would be no more any prospect of a remedy for them, and that the wound which God would inflict would be fatal, without any hope of being healed. This is the meaning. Let us now proceed ---

Chapter 9

Amos 9

Amos 9:1

1. I saw the Lord standing upon the altar: and he said, Smite the lintel of the door, that the posts may shake: and cut them in the head, all of them; and I will slay the last of them with the sword: he that fleeth of them shall not flee away, and he that escapeth of them shall not be delivered.

1. Vidi Dominum stantem super altare, et dixit, Percute superliminare et coommovebunter postes, et affliget (vel, afflige, in modo imperativo) in capite omnes, et novissimum ipsorum (vel, posteritatem) gladio occidam; non effuget ex ipsis fugiens, neque evadet ex ipsis qui evadit.

The Prophet confirms the threatening which we have already explained; for he says that the people would be soon removed, as there was now no hope of repentance. But it must first be observed, that he speaks not here of the profane temples which Jeroboam the first had built in Dan and in Bethel, but of the true and lawful temple; for it would not have been befitting that this vision should have been made to the Prophet in one of those profane temples, from which, we know, God was far away. Had God appeared in Dan or Bethel, it would have been an indirect approbation of superstition. They are then mistaken who think that the vision was given to the Prophet in any other place than on mount Zion, as we have shown in other places. For the Prophets say not, that God had spoken either in Dan or in Bethel, nor had there been any oracle announced from these places; for God designed in every way to show that he had nothing to do with those profane rites and abominations. It is then certain that God appeared to his Prophet on mount Zion, and on the lawful altar. [66]

Let us now see the design of the vision. The greater part of interpreters think that

[66] Calvin is not without many expounders, who agree with him in this view; yet the reasons assigned do not apply. "Though the true God," as Dr. Henderson justly observes, "was seen beside the idolatrous altar, it was not for the purpose of receiving homage, but of commanding that the whole of the erection and worship at Bethel should be destroyed." — Ed.

the destruction of the kingdom and of the priesthood is predicted here, at the time when Zedekiah was taken and led ignominiously into exile, and when his children were killed, and when afterwards the temple was erased and the city demolished. But this prediction, I doubt not, ought to be extended much farther, even to the many calamities which immediately followed, by which at length the whole people were destroyed. I therefore do not confine what is here said to the demolition of the city and of the temple. But the meaning of the Prophet is the same as though he had said, that the Israelites as well as the Jews in vain boasted of their descent and of other privileges with which they had been honored: for the Lord had resolved to destroy them, and also the temple, which they employed as a cloak to cover their iniquities. We now then understand the intention of the Prophet. But this also must be noticed, --- that if the Lord spared not his own temple, which he had commanded to be built, and in which he had chosen a habitation for himself, those profane temples, which he had ever despised, could not possibly escape destruction. We now see the design of this prophecy, which is the last, with the exception of the promise that is given, of which we shall speak in its proper place.

He says then that he saw God standing on the altar. The Prophet might have heard what follows without a vision; but God then, we know, was wont to sanction his predictions by visions, as we find in the twelfth chapter of Numbers. God then not only intended to commit to his Prophet what he was to proclaim, but also to add authority to his doctrine; and the vision was as it were the seal, which the Israelites as well as the Jews knew to be a proof, that what the Prophet declared by his mouth proceeded from heaven.

It now follows, Smite the lintel {כפתור}, caphtur, is, I think, called the cover which is on the top of the posts of the temple; for the Hebrews call {כפתורים}, caphturim, apples. As then they painted there pomegranates and flowers, the Hebrew doctors think that the part which is above the two posts of the temple is called {כפתור}, caphtur. But that part of the entrance might have taken its name from its round form. However this may be, they called the highest part of the porch of the temple {כפתוד}, caphtur. Now the posts sustained that which they commonly called the lintel. God then says, Strike the lintel, and let the posts be moved, or let them shake, let the whole gate of the temple shake. Then he adds, And strike and break all on the head, or on the head of all. This verb is differently read by interpreters. Correctly, according to the rule of grammar, it ought to be read in the third person, and it will dash to the ground But some however, render it thus, ``and dash to the ground'', or break, because he had said before, Smite. As to the meaning, it matters not much for an explanation immediately follows. Now as to what he says, ``on the head'', and as to the word {אחריתם}, achritam, which follows, some by the head understand the priests and the rulers of the people, which view I am inclined to embrace; but when they explain {אחרית}, achrit, to mean posterity or children, it does not seem to suit this place; for it ought rather as I think, to he referred to the common people. As then the Prophet had spoken of the head, he now adds the people in general. The Hebrews call whatever follows or comes after by {אחרית}, achrit. They indeed understand posterity by it, but it is a word that has variety of meaning: for it is taken

for end, for a footstep, in short, for anything that comes after. [67]

It is easy now to gather the meaning of the Prophet: A vision was exhibited to him which showed that it was decreed by God himself to smite both the chiefs and the common people: and since God begins with his temple, how can profane men hope for pardon, who had deserted the true and pure worship of God? They were all apostates: how then could they have hoped that God would be placable to them, inasmuch as he had broken down his own temple?

He now adds, I will slay with the sword, etc. We see then that this vision is to be referred to the stroke which was shortly after to be inflicted. I will slay then with the sword whatever follows, that is, the common people.

He afterwards says, Flee away from them shall not he who fleeth, nor shall he escape from them who escapeth; that is though they may think that flight is possible, their expectation will deceive them, for I shall catch them. Had the Prophet said that there would be to them no means of fleeing away, he would not have spoken with so much severity; but when he says, that when they fled, he would catch them, that when they thought that they had escaped, there would be no safety to them, he says what is much more grievous. In short, he cuts off all hope from the Israelites, that they might understand that they were certain to perish, because God had hitherto tried in vain to restore them to the right way. Inasmuch then as they had been wholly incurable, they now hear that no hope remained for them.

And since the Prophet denounces such and so dreadful a destruction of an elect people, and since the vision was exhibited to him in the temples there is no reason for us to trust in our outward profession, and to wait till God's judgments come, as we see many are doing in our day, who are wholly careless, because they think that no evil can happen to them, inasmuch as they bear the name of God. But the Prophet here shows, that God sits in his temple, not only to protect those whom he has adopted as his people and peculiar possession, but also to vindicate his own honor, because the Israelites had corrupted his worship; and the Jews also had departed from true religion. Since then impiety everywhere prevailed, he now shows that God sits there as the punisher of sins, that his people may know that they are not to tolerate those evils, which for a time he does not punish, as though he had forgotten

[67] These two lines are variously explained. The words can hardly admit the meaning here given to them. The scene was in the temple, and worshippers were present. The command was to strike the lintel; the fall of the pillars or posts was the consequence: many were destroyed, and those who remained were to be killed by the sword, and not one was to escape. There seems to be here an allusion to two previous events — the shaking and pulling down of the pillars of the house of Dagon by Sampson, — and the slaughter of the priests of Baal by Jehu. I render the verse thus: — I saw the Lord standing on the altar, and he said, — "Strike the lintel, that the pillars may shake, And break them down on the head of them all; And the remainder of them with the sword will I slay; Flee away from them shall not he who fleeth, And escape from them shall not he who escapeth." Junius and Tremelius, as well as Dathius, render the third and fourth lines, where the difficulty alone exists, according to the version given above; and Henderson renders the third line materially the same, — And break them in pieces on the heads of them all. But he retains "posterity" in the fourth line, which seems not consistent with the tenor of the passage. The version of Junius and Tremelius is this, — Et divide ipsos in capite ipsorum omnium, Quod autem post ipsos est gladio interrficam. Dathius is more paraphrastic, and gives the same sense, — Eosque diffinde ut ruant in caput omnium qui adsunt, Reliquos vero gladio interficam Newcome, who is too fond of emendations, folllows Houbigant, who, for no reason that appears, turns the verb into the first person; and he gives this rendering of the third line, — For I will wound them in the head, even all of them: But this evidently does not comport with the context. — Ed.

his office, or that he designs his favor to be the cover of their iniquity; but because he designs by degrees to draw to repentance those, who are healable, and at the same time to take away every excuse frown the reprobate. Let us proceed ---

Amos 9:2-4

2. Though they dig into hell, thence shall mine hand take them; though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down:

2. Si foderint ad sepulchrum (vel, ad infernum,) inde manus mea educet vos; et si ascenderint in coelos, inde detraham eos;

3. And though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence; and though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them:

3. Et si occultaverint se in fastigio (vel, culmine) Carmeli, inde scrutabor et extraham eos; et si absconditi fuerint ab oculis meis (ad verbum, e regione oculorum meorum) in profundo (vel, pavimento, in fundo ipso) maris, inde mandabo serpenti ut mordeat eos:

4. And though they go into captivity before their enemies, thence will I command the sword, and it shall slay them: and I will set mine eyes upon them for evil, and not for good.

4. Et si profecti fuerint in captivitatem coram inimicis suis, inde mandabo gladio ut occidat eos; et ponam oculum meum super eos in malum et non in bonum.

Here the Prophet denounces horrible punishments; but not without reason, for there was astonishing torpidity in that people, as there is usually in all hypocrites when they have any shadow of excuse. They were then the only elect people in the whole world. When, therefore, they thought that they excelled others and that they were endued with singular privileges beyond all other nations, this glory inebriated them, and they imagined that God was in a manner bound to them, as we have seen in other places. This, then, was the reason why the Prophet in so many ways enlarged on the judgment of God on hypocrites; it was, that they might be terrified by the vehemence and severity of his words.

Hence he says, If they dig for themselves passages to hell, that is, to the center of the earth, for {שאול}, shaul, is here put for the center; thence shall my hand draw them forth; and then, If they ascend to heaven, thence I will draw them down, saith the Lord; If they hide themselves in deserts, if they flee to the top of Carmel, I will trace them out: in short, they shall find no corner either in heaven, or on the earth, or in the sea, where they can be hid from my sight. There is no need here to understand by heavens high citadels, as the Chaldean paraphraser explains it: it is a frigid paraphrase. But the Prophet speaks in an hyperbolical language of the center of the earth, of the heavens, and of the deep of the sea; as though he had said, ``Should all the elements open themselves for hiding-places, yet the Israelites shall in vain try to escape, for I will follow them when sunk in the depth of the sea, I will draw them down from heaven itself; there shall, in a word, be no hiding-place for them either above or below.''

We now understand the Prophet's meaning; and an useful warning may be hence gathered, --- that when God threatens us, we in vain seek subterfuges, as his hand

extends itself to the lowest deep as well as to heaven; as it is said in Psalm 139:7-9,

`Where shall I flee from thy presence, O Lord?
If I ascend into heaven, thou art there;
if I descend to the grave, thou art present;
if I take the wings of the dawn, (or, of the morning star,)
and dwell in the extremities of the sea,
there also shall thy hand lead me.'

The Prophet speaks not in that psalm, as some have very absurdly philosophized, of the unlimited essence of God; but he rather shows, that we are always in his sight. So then we ought to feel assured that we cannot escape, whenever God designs to make a scrutiny as to our sins, and to summon us to his tribunal.

But we must at the same time remember, that the Prophet has not employed a superfluous heap of words; there is not here one syllable which is not important though at the first view it seems to be otherwise. But the Holy Spirit, as I have already reminded you, knowing our heedlessness, does here shake off all our self-flatteries. There is in us, we know, an innate torpor by nature, so that we despise all threatenings, or at least we are not duly moved by them. As the Lord sees us to be so careless, he rouses us by his goads. Whenever then Scripture denounces punishment on us, let us at the same time learn to join with it what the Prophet here relates; ``Thou hast to do with God, what can't thou effect now by evasions? though thou climbest to heaven, the Lord can draw thee down; though thou descendent to the abyss, God's hand will thence draw thee forth; if thou seekest a hiding-place in the lowest depths, he will thence also bring thee forth to the light; and if thou hidest thyself in the deep sea, he will there find thee out; in a word, wherever thou betakest thyself, thou canst not withdraw thyself from the presence and from the hand of God.'' We hence see the design of all these expressions, and that is, that we may not think of God as of ourselves, but that we may know that his power extends to all hiding-places. But these words ought to be subjects at meditations though it be sufficient for our purpose to include in few words what the Prophet had in view. But as we are so entangled in our vain confidences, the Prophet, as I have said, has not in vain used so many words.

Now as to what he says, I will command the serpent to bite them, some understand by {נחש}, nuchesh, not a serpent on hand, but the whale, or some other marine animal, as the leviathan, which is mentioned in Scripture; and we may learn from other parts of Scripture that ``nachash'' means not only a serpent, but also a whale or some animal living in the sea. In a word, God intimates, that he would be armed everywhere, whenever he should resolve to punish his adversaries, and that in all elements are means in readiness, by which he can destroy the wicked, who seek to escape from his hand.

Now when he says, If they go into captivity among their enemies, I will there command the sword to slay them, some interpreters confine this part to that foolish flight, when a certain number of the people sought to provide for their safety by going down into Egypt. Johanan followed them, and a few escaped, (Jeremiah 43:2) but according to what Jeremiah had foretold, when he said, `Bend your necks to the king

of Babylon, and the Lord will bless you; whosoever will flee to Egypt shall perish;' so it happened: they found this to be really true, though they had ever refused to believe the prediction. Jeremiah was drawn there contrary to the wish of his own mind: he had, however, pronounced a curse on all who thought that it would be an asylum to them. But the Lord permitted him to be drawn there, that he might to his last breath pronounce the Woe, which they had before heard from his mouth. But I hardly dare thus to restrict these expressions of the Prophet: I therefore explain them generally, as meaning, that exile, which is commonly said to be a civil death, would not be the end of evils to the Israelites and to the Jews; for even when they surrendered themselves to their enemies, and suffered themselves to be led and drawn away wherever their enemies pleased, they could not yet even in this way preserve their life, because the Lord would command the sword to pursue them even when exiles. This, in my view, is the real meaning of the Prophet.

He at last subjoins, I will set my eyes on them for evil, and not for good. There is a contrast to be understood in this clause: for the Lord had promised to be a guardian to his people, according to what is said in Psalm 121:4,

`Behold, he who guards Israel neither sleeps nor slumbers.'

As hypocrites ever lay hold on the promises of God without repentance and faith, without any religious feeling, and afterwards turn them to support their vain boasting, the Prophet therefore says here, that the eye of God would be upon them, not indeed in his wonted manner to protect them, as he had done from the beginning, but, on the contrary, to accumulate punishment on punishment: it was the same thing as though he said, ``As I have hitherto watched over the safety of this people, whom I have chosen for myself, so I will hereafter most sedulously watch, that I may omit no kind of punishment, until they be utterly destroyed.''

And this sentence deserves to be specially noticed; for we are reminded, that though the Lord does not indeed spare unbelievers, he yet more closely observes us, and that he will punish us more severely, if he sees us to be obstinate and incurable to the last. Why so? Because we have come nearer to him, and he looks on us as his family, placed under his eyes; not that anything is hid or concealed from him, but the Scripture speaks after the manner of men. While God then favors his people with a gracious look, he yet cannot endure hypocrites; for he minutely observes their vices, that he may the more severely punish them. This then is the substance of the whole. It follows ---

Amos 9:5

5. And the Lord God of hosts is he that toucheth the land, and it shall melt, and all that dwell therein shall mourn: and it shall rise up wholly like a flood; and shall be drowned, as by the flood of Egypt.

5. Et Dominus Jehova exercituum percutiet terram, et contremiscet; et lugebunt omnes habitantes in ea, et ascendet sicut fluvius tota, et submergetur sicut a fluvio Egypti.

The Prophet repeats here nearly the same words with those we explained yesterday: he used then the similitude of a flood, which he again mentions here. But as the first clause is capable of various explanations, I will refer to what others think,

and then to what I deem the most correct view. This sentence, that the earth trembles, when it is smitten by God, is usually regarded as a general declaration; and the Prophets do often exalt the power of God in order to fill us with fear, and of this we shall see an instance in the next verse. Yet I doubt not but that this is a special threatening. The Lord Jehovah, then, he says, will smite the land, and it will tremble.

Then follows the similitude of which we spoke yesterday, Mourn shall all who dwell in it; and then, It will altogether ascend as a river Here he intimates that there would be a deluge, so that the face of the earth would not appear. Ascend then shall the land as a river. The ascent of the earth would be nothing else but inundation, which would cover its surface. He afterwards adds, ``and it shall be sunk''; that is, every convenience for dwelling: this is not to be understood strictly, as I have said, of the land, but is rather to be referred to men, or to the use which men make of the earth. Sunk then shall it be as by the river of Egypt We have said that Egypt loses yearly its surface, when the Nile inundates it. But as the inundation of the river is given to the Egyptians for fertilizing the land and of rendering its produce more abundant, so the Prophet here declares that the land would be like the sea, so that there would no longer be any habitation. It now follows ---

Amos 9:6

6. It is he that buildeth his stories in the heaven, and hath founded his troop in the earth; he that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The LORD is his name.

6. AEdificans in coelis ascensiones suas, et coagmentationem suam super terram fundans (qui fundat,) qui vocat aquas maris et effundit eas super faciem terrae, Jehova nomen ejus. [68]

The Prophet describes now in general terms the power of God, that he might the more impress his hearers, and that they might not heedlessly reject what he had previously threatened respecting their approaching ruin; for he had said, `Lo, God will smite the land, and it shall tremble.' This was special. Now as men received with deaf ears those threatening, and thought that God in a manner trifled with them, the Prophet added, by way of confirmation, a striking description of the power of God; as though he said, ``Ye do hear what God denounces: now, as he has clothed me with his own authority, and commanded me to terrify you by setting before you your punishment, know ye that you have to do with God himself, whose majesty ought to make you all, and all that you are, to tremble: for what sort of Being is this God, whose word is regarded by you with contempt? God is he who builds for himself chambers [69] in the heavens, who founds his jointings [70] (some render it bundles) in

[68] This verse and the preceding are connected together, and form but one period, as it evidently appears from the construction of the words in Hebrew. The following may be considered a literal version: — 5. And the Lord, Jehovah of hosts, — Who touches the earth and it melts, And mourn do all who dwell on it, And it heaves up as a river, the whole of it, And sinks down as the river of Egypt, — 6. Who builds in the heavens his ascents, And fixes on the earth his station, Who calls the waters of the sea, And pours them forth on the face of the earth, — Jehovah is his name. — Ed.

[69] Caenacula, in other places, ascensiones, and more correctly; for {מעלות is properly ascents, steps to ascend, stairs; and hence, the places ascended to, chambers.

[70] Coagmentationes suas — his joinings, cementings; but {אגדתו is in the singular number. It is difficult to ascertain its meaning. It occurs not as a verb, but from its application, its ideal meaning seems to be, to join or bind together, so as to form a compact body. It is applied in 2 Samuel 2:25, to designate a troop, a compact body of men. It signifies in Exodus

the earth, who calls the waters of the sea, and pours them on the face of the earth''; in a word, He is Jehovah, whose being is in himself alone: and ye exist only through his powers and whenever he pleases, he can with-draw his Spirits and then vanish must this whole world, of which ye are but the smallest particles. Since then He alone is God, and there is in you but a momentary strength, and since this great power of God, the evidences of which he affords you through the whole order of nature, is so conspicuous to you, how is it that ye are so heedless?'' We now perceive why the Prophet exalts in so striking a manner the power of God.

First, in saying that God builds for himself his ascendings (ascensiones) in the heavens, he alludes no doubt, to the very structure of the heavens; for the element of air, we know, rises upwards, on account of its being light; and then the element of fire comes nearer to what heaven is; then follow the spheres as then the whole world above the earth is much more favorable to motion, this is the reason why the Prophet says that God has his ascents in the heavens. God indeed stands in no need of the heavens or of the air as an habitation, for he is contained in no place, being one who cannot be contained: but it is said, for the sake of men, that God is above all heavens: he is then located in his own elevated throne. But he says that he founds for himself his jointing on the earth, for this part of the world is more solid, the element of earth being grosser and denser, and therefore more firm. So also the waters, though lighter than the earth, approach it nearest. God then builds in the heavens. It is a mechanism which is in itself wonderful: when one raises to heaven his eyes, and then looks on the earth, is he not constrained to stand amazed? The Prophet then exhibits here before our eyes the inconceivable power of God, that we may be impressed by his words, and know with whom we have to do, when he denounces punishment.

He further says, Who calls the waters of the sea, and pours them on the face of the earth This change is in itself astonishing; God in a short time covers the whole heaven: there is a clear brightness, in a moment clouds supervene, which darken the whole heaven, and thick waters are suspended over our heads. Who could say that the whole sky could be so suddenly changed? God by his own command and bidding does all this alone. He calls then the waters of the sea, and pours them down Though rains, we know, are formed in great measure by vapors from the earth, yet we also know that these vapors arise from the sea, and that the sea chiefly supplies the dense abundance of moisture. The Prophet then, by taking a part for the whole, includes here all the vapors, by which rain is formed. He calls them the waters of the sea; God by his own power alone creates the rain, by raising vapors from the waters; and then he causes them to descend on the whole face of the earth. Since then the Lord works so wonderfully through the whole order of nature, what do we think will take place, when he puts forth the infinite power of his hand to destroy men, having

12:22, a bundle of hyssop. Newcome renders it a storehouse, deriving its meaning from the Chaldee; and Henderson renders it vault, tracing it from the Arabic, and says that it signifies the vault or arch of heaven, the hemispheric expanse, which apparently to the eye is founded on the earth; but a band or troop has been its most common acceptation. It must be borne in mind, that it must be something on earth that corresponds or forms a contrast with ascents in the heavens. God has his ascendings, or as it were, his steps or stairs in the heavens, along which, speaking after the manner of men, he ascends: then what has he on earth? It seems to me that something firm, solid, compacted, is intended; and the earth is said to be his footstool. Hence a firm footing, standing, or station, appears to be the meaning of the word. The French translation is --- Qui fonde son batiment sur la terre --- ``Who founds his building on the earth.'' --- Ed.

resolved to execute the extreme judgment which he has decreed?

Prayer.

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast showed to us by evidences so remarkable that all things are under thy command, and that we, who live in this world through thy favor, are as nothing, for thou couldest reduce us to nothing in a moment, --- O grant, that being conscious of thy power, we may reverently fear thy hand, and be wholly devoted to thy glory; and as thou kindly offerest thyself to us as a Father, may we be drawn by this kindness, and surrender ourselves wholly to thee by a willing obedience, and never labor for any thing through life but to glorify thy name, as thou hast redeemed us through thy only begotten Son, that so we may also enjoy through him that eternal inheritance which is laid up for us in heaven. Amen.

Lecture Sixty-eighth

Amos 9:7

7. Are ye not as children of the Ethiopians unto me, O children of Israel? saith the Lord. Have not I brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt? and the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Syrians from Kir?

7. Annon sicut filii AEthiopum vos mihi, filii Israel, dicet Jehova? Annon Israel ascendere feci e terra AEgypti? Et Philistim ex Cappadocia? Et Syrios e Kir?

The Prophet shows here to the Israelites that their dignity would be no defense to them, as they expected. We have indeed seen in many places how foolish was the boasting of that people. Though they were more bound to God than other nations, they yet heedlessly boasted that they were a holy nation, as if indeed they had something of their own, but as Paul says, they were nothing. God had conferred on them singular benefits; but they were adorned with the plumes of another. Foolish then and absurd was their glorying, when they thought themselves to be of more worth in the sight of God than other nations. But as this foolish conceit had blinded them, the Prophet says now, ``Whom do you think yourselves to be? Ye are to me as the children of the Ethiopians I indeed once delivered you, not that I should be bound to you, but rather that I should have you bound to me, for ye have been redeemed through my kindness.'' Some think that the Israelites are compared to the Ethiopians, as they had not changed their skin, that is, their disposition; but this view I reject as strained. For the Prophet speaks here more simply, namely, that their condition differed nothing from that of the common class of men: ``Ye do excel, but ye have nothing apart from me; if I take away from you what is mine, what will you have then remaining?'' The emphasis is on the word, to me, What are ye to me? For certainly they excelled among men; but before God they could bring nothing, since they had nothing of their own: nay, the more splendidly God adorned them, the more modestly and humbly they ought to have conducted themselves, seeing that they were bound to him for so many of his favors. But as they had forgotten their own condition, despised all the Prophets and felicitated themselves in their vices, he says, Are ye not to me as the children of the Ethiopians, as foreign and the most alien nations? for what that is worthy of praise can I find in you? If then I look on you, what are ye? I certainly see no reason to prefer you even to the most obscure nations.''

He afterwards adds, Have I not made to ascend, or brought, Israel from the land of Egypt? Here the Prophet reminds them of their origin. Though they had indeed proceeded from Abraham, who had been chosen by God four hundred years before their redemption; yet, if we consider how cruelly they were treated in Egypt, that tyrannical servitude must certainly appear to have been like the grave. They then began to be a people, and to attain some name, when the Lord delivered them from Egypt. The Prophet's language is the same as though he had said, ``Look whence the Lord has brought you out; for ye were as a dead carcass, and of no account: for the Egyptians treated your fathers as the vilest slaves: God brought you thence; then you have no nobility or excellency of your own, but the beginning of your dignity has proceeded from the gratuitous kindness of God. Yet ye think now that ye excel others, because ye have been redeemed: God has also redeemed the Philistines, when they were the servants of the Cappadocians; and besides, he redeemed the Syrians when they were servants to other nations.''

Some take {קיר}, kir, to mean Cyrene; but as this is uncertain, I pass it by as doubtful. Whatever it was, there is no ground of dispute about the subject itself; for it is certain that the Israelites are here compared with the Philistines as well as with the Syrians, inasmuch as all had been alike redeemed by the Lord, and this favor was common to all of whom he speaks. As God then pitied in former ages other nations, it was certainly not peculiar to the race of Abraham, that they had been freed by God, and by means of extraordinary miracles: ``Even the Philistine will say the same, and the Syrians will say the same; but yet ye say that they are profane nations. Since it is so, ye are now divested of all excellency, that is, there is nothing of your own in you, that ye should exalt yourselves above other nations.'' This is the meaning. It now follows ---

Amos 9:8-9

8. Behold, the eyes of the Lord GOD are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth; saving that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, saith the Lord

8. Ecce oculi Domini Jehovae ad reguum sceleratum, et delebo illud a superficie terrae, praeterquam quod non delendo delebo domum Jacob, dicit Jehova.

9. For, lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth.

9. Quia ecce ego praecipiam, et agitabo inter cunctas gentes domum Israel, quemadmodum agitatur (subaudiendum est nomen tritici, agitatur triticum) in cribo, et non cadet lapis (id est, granum) in terram.

Here the Prophet concludes that God would take vengeance on the Israelites as on other nations, without any difference; for they could not set up anything to prevent his judgment. It was indeed an extraordinary blindness in the Israelites, who were doubly guilty of ingratitude, to set up as their shield the benefits with which they had been favored. Though then the name of God had been wickedly and shamefully profaned by them, they yet thought that they were safe, because they had been once adopted. This presumption Amos now beats down. Behold, he says, the eyes of the Lord Jehovah are upon all the wicked Some restrict this to the kingdom of

Israel, but, in my opinion, such a view militates against the design of the Prophet. He speaks indefinitely of all kingdoms as though he had said, that God would be the judge of the whole world, that he would spare no kingdoms or countries. God then will show himself everywhere to be the punisher of vices, and will summon all kingdoms before his tribunal, By destroying I will destroy from the face of the earth all the ungodly and the wicked.

Now the second clause I understand otherwise than most do: for they think it contains a mitigation of punishment, as the Prophets are wont to blend promises of favor with threatening, and as our Prophet does in this chapter. But it seems not to me that anything is promised to the Israelites: nay, if I am not much mistaken, it is an ironical mode of speaking; for Amos obliquely glances here at that infatuated presumption, of which we have spoken, that the Israelites thought that they were safe through some peculiar privilege, and that they were to be exempt from all punishment: ``I will not spare unbelievers,'' he says, ``who excuse themselves by comparing themselves with you. Shall I tolerate your sins and not dare to touch you, seeing that you know yourselves to be doubly wicked?'' We must indeed notice in what other nations differed from the Israelites; for the more the children of Abraham had been raised, the more they increased their guilt when they despised God, the author of so many blessings, and became basely wanton by shaking off, as it were, the yoke. Since then they so ungratefully abused God's blessings, God might then have spared other nations: it was therefore necessary to bring them to punishment, for they were wholly inexcusable. As then they exceeded all other nations in impiety, the Prophet very properly reasons here from the greater to the less: ``I take an account,'' he says, ``of all the sins which are in the world, and no nations shall escape my hand: how then can the Israelites escape? For other nations can plead some ignorance, as they have never been taught; and that they go astray in darkness is no matter of wonder. But ye, to whom I have given light, and whom I have daily exhorted to repent, --- shall ye be unpunished? How could this be? I should not then be the judge of the world.'' We now then perceive the real meaning of the Prophet: ``Lo,'' he says ``the eyes of Jehovah are upon every sinful kingdom; I will destroy all the nations who have sinned from the face of the earth, though they have the pretense of ignorance for their sins; shall I not now, forsooth, destroy the house of Israel?'' Here then the Prophet speaks ironically, Except that I shall not destroy by destroying the house of Israel; that is, ``Do you wish me to be subservient to you, as though my hands were tied, that I could not take vengeance on you? what right have you to do this? and what can hinder me from punishing ingratitude so great and so shameful?''

He afterwards adds, For, lo, I will command, etc. The Prophet here confirms the former sentence; and hence I conclude that the second part of the preceding verse is ironically expressed; for if he had promised pardon to the Israelites, he would have gone on with the same subject; but, on the contrary, he proceeds in another direction, and says, that God would justly punish the Israelites; for the event would at length make it known, that among them not even a grain would be found, but that all would be like chaff or refuse: Lo, he says, I will shake among the nations the

Israelites as corn is shaken in a sieve: a grain, he says, shall not fall on the earth; as though he said, ``Though I shall scatter the Israelites through various places that they may be dispersed here and there, yet this exile shall ever be like a sieve: they now contend with me, when any grain has fallen. The event then shall show, that there is in them nothing but chaff and filth; for I will by sieving cleanse my whole floor, and nothing shall be found to remain on it.'' If one objects and says, that there were some godly persons in that nation, though very small in number. This I admit to be true: but the Prophet speaks here, as in many other places, of the whole nation; he refers not to individuals. It was then true, with regard to the body of the people of Israel, that there was not one among them who could be compared to grain, for all had become empty through their iniquities; and hence they necessarily disappeared in the sieve, and were like chaff or refuse.

But it must be observed, that God here cuts off the handle for evasion, for hypocrites ever contend with him; and although they cannot wholly clear themselves, they yet extenuate their sins, and accuse God of too much severity. The Prophet then anticipates such objections, ``I will command,'' he says, ``and will shake the house of Israel as corn is shaken.'' It was a very hard lot, when the people were thus driven into different parts of the world; it was indeed a dreadful tearing. The Israelites might have complained that they were too severely treated; but God by this similitude obviates this calumny, ``They are indeed scattered in their exile, yet they remain in a sieve; I will shake them, he says, among the nations: but not otherwise than corn when shaken in a sieve: and it is allowed by the consent of all that corn ought to be cleansed. Though the greater part disappears when the corn, threshed on the floor, is afterwards subjected to the fan; yet there is no one but sees that this is necessary and reasonable: no one complains that the chaff thus perishes. Why so? Because it is useless. God then shows that he is not cruel, nor exceeds moderation, though he may scatter his people through the remote regions of the earth, for he ever keeps them in a sieve.

He afterwards adds, And fall shall not a grain on the earth They translate {צרור}, tsarur, a stone, but {צרר}, tsarer is to tie, and hence this word means what is collected or, binding, as when the children of Jacob had their money tied in their sacks, they said, `Behold my binding;' so also now it is taken for the solid grain. God then intimates that he would not be so rigid as not to moderate his punishment, so as to spare the innocent. I have already said that though there would be still a remnant among the people, yet what the Prophet says is true as to the whole body; for it had nothing either sound or pure. But this objection might be made: It is certain that many faithful worshipers of God were taken away into exile with the wicked; they then fell on the earth as useless chaff or refuse; but God denies that this would be the case. To this I answer, that though the Lord involves his servants with the ungodly when he executes temporal punishment, he is yet ever propitious to them; and it is certain, that however hardly they may be dealt with, they yet do not expostulate; they groan, indeed, but at the same time they acknowledge that they are mercifully treated by the Lord.

But another thing must also be remembered, --- that though the Lord would not

have dealt so severely with his people, had they been like the few who were good, yet not one of them was without some fault. Jeremiah, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego, were indeed like angels among men; and it was indeed a miracle, that they stood upright in the midst of so much impiety; they were yet led into captivity. When they approached God, they could not object, that they were punished beyond what they deserved. Worthy, indeed, was Jeremiah of heavier punishment; and so was Daniel, though an example of the highest and even of angelic integrity. God then could have cast them away as refuse: it is nevertheless certain that they were wheat; and the Lord shook them in the sieve like the chaff, yet so as ever to keep them gathered under his protection; but at the same time in a hidden manner: as, for instance, the wheat on the floor is beaten together with the chaff, this is common to both; no difference can be observed in the threshing. True is this, and the case is the same when the wheat is being winnowed. When therefore the wheat is gathered, it is, together with the chaff, to be sifted by the fan, without any difference; but the wheat remains. So also it happened to the pious worshipers of God; the Lord kept them collected in the sieve. But here he speaks of the people in general; and he says that the whole people were like refuse and filth, and that they vanished, because there was no solidity in them, no use to be made of them, so that no one remained in the sieve. That God then preserved his servants, was an instance of his wonderful working. But the denunciation of punishment, here spoken of, belonged to the outward dealings of God. As then the people were like refuse or chaff shaken and driven to various places, this happened to them justly, because nothing solid was found in them. It now follows ---

Amos 9:10

10. All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, which say, The evil shall not overtake nor prevent us.

10. Gladio morientur omnes scelerati populi mei, qui dicunt, Non accedet et non antevertet proper nos malum.

Amos goes on with the same subject, --- that God without any measure of cruelty would execute extreme vengeance on a reprobate people: Die, he says, by the sword all the wicked of my people. In naming the wicked of the people, he meant no doubt to include the whole people; though if any one thinks that the elect are by implication excepted, who were mixed with the ungodly, I do not object: this is probable; but yet the Prophet speaks here of the people generally. He says that the wicked of the people would perish by the sword: for it was not the sin of a few that Amos here refers to, but the sin which prevailed among the whole nation. Then all the wicked of my people shall die by the sword. He points out what sort of people they were, or at least he mentions the chief mark by which their impiety might be discovered, --- they obstinately despised all the judgments of God, They say, It will not draw near; nor lay hold on our account, the evil.

Security then, which of itself ever generates a contempt of God, is here mentioned as the principal mark of impiety. And doubtless the vices of men reach a point that is past hope, when they are touched neither by fear nor shame, but expect God's judgments without any concern or anxiety. Since then they thus drove far away

from themselves all threatening, while at the same time they were ill at ease with themselves, and as it were burying themselves in deep caverns, and seeking false peace to their consciences, they were in a torpor, or rather stupor, incapable of any remedy. It is, therefore, no wonder that the Prophet lays down here this mark of security, when he is showing that there was no remnant of a sound mind in this people. Die then shall all the wicked by the sword, even those who say, It will not draw near; nor anticipate us, on our account, the evil: for we can not explain the word {הקדים}, ekodim, in any other way than by referring it to the threatening. For the Prophets, we know, commonly declared that the day of the Lord was at hand, that his hand was already armed, that it had already seized the sword. As then the Prophets, in order to smite despisers with fear, were wont to threaten a near punishment; so the Prophet does here; wishing to expose the impious stupor of the people, he says, ``You think that there will not be such haste as is foretold to you by the Prophets; but this sheer perverseness will be the cause of your ruin.''

As to the expression, It will not come on our account, from a regard to us, it deserves to be noticed. Though hypocrites confess in general, that they cannot escape the hand of God, yet they still separate themselves from the common class, as if they are secured by some peculiar privilege. They therefore set up something in opposition to God, that they may not be blended with others. This folly the Prophet indirectly condemns by saying, that hypocrites are in a quiet and tranquil state, because they think that there will be to them no evil in common with the rest, as also they say in Isaiah 28:15, `The scourge, if it passes, will not yet reach us.' We now then see what the Prophet has hitherto taught, and the meaning of these four verses which we have just explained. Now follows the promise ---

Amos 9:11

11. In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old:

11. In die illa erigam tabernaculum David, quod cecidit, et sepiam rupturas ejus, et subversiones ejus erigam, et aedificabo illud, sicuti diebus antiquis (seculi, ad verbum.)

Here now the Prophet begins to set forth the consolation, which alone could support the minds of the godly under afflictions so severe. Threatening alone might have cast the strongest into despair; but the event itself must have overwhelmed whatever hope there might have been. Hence the Prophet now applies comfort by saying, that God would punish the sins of the people of Israel in such a way as to remember still his own promise. We know, that whenever the Prophets designed to give some hope to a distressed people, they set forth the Messiah, for in him all the promises of God, as Paul says, are Yea and Amen, (2 Corinthians 1:20) and there was no other remedy for the dispersion than for God to gather all the scattered members under one head. Hence, when the head is taken away, the Church has no head; especially when it is scattered and torn, as was the case after the time of Amos. It is no wonder then that the Prophets, after having prophesied of the destruction of the people, such as happened after the two kingdoms were abolished, should recall the

minds of the faithful to the Messiah; for except God had gathered the Church under one head, there would have been no hope. This is, therefore, the order which Amos now observes.

In that day, he says, will I raise up the tabernacle of David: as though he had said, that the only hope would be, when the redeemers who had been promised would appear. This is the import of the whole. After having shown then that the people had no hope from themselves, for God had tried all means, but in vain and after having denounced their final ruin, he now subjoins, ``The Lord will yet have mercy on his people, for he will remember his covenant.'' How will this be? ``The Redeemer shall come.'' We now then understand the design of the Prophet and the meaning of the verse.

But when he speaks of the tabernacle of David, he refers, I doubt not, to the decayed state of things; for a tabernacle does notcomport with royal dignity. It is the same as though Amos had said, ``Though the house of David is destitute of all excellency, and is like a mean cottage, yet the Lord will perform what he has promised; he will raise up again his kingdom, and restore to him all the power which has been lost.'' The Prophet then had regard to that intervening time, when the house of David was deprived of all splendor and entirely thrown down. I will then raise up the tabernacle of David: he might have said the tabernacle of Jesse; but he seems to have designedly mentioned the name of David, that he might the more fully strengthen the minds of the godly in their dreadful desolation, so that they might with more alacrity flee to the promise: for the name of Jesse was more remote. As then the name of David was in repute, and as this oracle,

`Of the fruit of thy loins I will set on thy throne,'

(Psalm 132:11)

was commonly known, the Prophet brings forward here the house of David, in order that the faithful might remember that God had not in vain made a covenant with David: The tabernacle then of David will I then raise up, and will fence in its breaches, and its ruins will I raise up; and I will build it as in the days of old Thus the Prophet intimates that not only the throne of David would be overthrown but also that nothing would remain entire in his mean booth, for it would decay into ruins and all things would be subverted. In short, he intimates that mournful devastation would happen to the whole family of David. He speaks, as it is well understood, metaphorically of the tabernacle: but the sense is clear, and that is, that God would restore the royal dignity, as in former times, to the throne of David.

This is a remarkable prediction, and deserves to be carefully weighed by us. It is certain that the Prophet here refers to the advent of Christ; and of this there is no dispute, for even the Jews are of this opinion, at least the more moderate of them. There are indeed those of a shameless front, who pervert all Scripture without any distinction: these and their barking we may pass by. It is however agreed that this passage of the Prophet cannot be otherwise explained than of the Messiah: for the restitution of David's family was not to be expected before his time; and this may easily be learnt from the testimonies of other Prophets. As then the Prophet here declares, that a Redeemer would come, who would renew the whole state of

the kingdom, we see that the faith of the Fathers was ever fixed on Christ; for in the whole world it is he alone who has reconciled us to God: so also, the fallen Church could not have been restored otherwise than under one head, as we have already often stated. If then at this day we desire to raise up our minds to God, Christ must immediately become a Mediator between us; for when he is taken away, despair will ever overwhelm us, nor can we attain any sure hope. We may indeed be raised up by some wind or another; but our empty confidence will shortly come to nothing, except we have a confidence founded on Christ alone. This is one thing. We must secondly observe, that the interruption, when God overthrew the kingdom, I mean, the kingdom of Judah, is not inconsistent with the prediction of Jacob and other similar predictions. Jacob indeed had said,

`Taken away shall not be the scepter from Judah,
nor a lawgiver from his bosom, or from his feet,
until he shall come, the Shiloh,'
(Genesis 49:10)

Afterwards followed this memorable promise,

`Sit of thy progeny on thy throne shall he,
who shall call me his Father,
and in return I will call him my Son,
and his throne shall perpetually remain,'
(Psalm 132:11,12)

Here is promised the eternity of the kingdom; and yet we see that this kingdom was diminished under Rehoboam, we see that it was distressed with many evils through its whole progress, and at length it was miserably destroyed, and almost extinguished; nay, it had hardly the name of a kingdom, it had no splendor, no throne, no dignity, no scepter, no crown. It then follows, that there seems to be an inconsistency between these events and the promises of God. But the Prophets easily reconcile these apparent contrarieties; for they say, that for a time there would be no kingdom, or at least that it would be disturbed by many calamities, so that there would appear no outward form of a kingdom, and no visible glory. As then they say this, and at the same time add, that there would come a restoration, that God would establish this kingdom by the power of his Christ, --- as then the Prophets say this, they show that its perpetuity would really appear and be exhibited in Christ. Though then the kingdom had for some time fallen, this does not militate against the other predictions. This then is the right view of the subject: for Christ at length appeared, on whose head rests the true diadem or crown, and who has been elected by Gods and is the legitimate king, and who, having risen from the dead, reigns and now sits at the Father's right hand, and his throne shall not fail to the end of the world; nay, the world shall be renovated, and Christ's kingdom shall continue, though in another form, after the resurrection, as Paul shows to us; and yet Christ shall be really a king for ever.

And the Prophet, by saying, as in ancient days, confirms this truth, that the dignity of the kingdom would not continue uniform, but that the restoration would yet be such as to make it clearly evident that God had not in vain promised an eternal

kingdom to David. Flourish then shall the kingdom of David for ever. But this has not been the case; for when the people returned from exile, Zerobabel, it is true, and also many others, obtained kingly power; yet what was it but precarious? They became even tributaries to the kings of the Persian and of the Medes. It then follows, that the kingdom of Israel never flourished, nor had there existed among the people anything but a limited power; we must, therefore, necessarily come to Christ and his kingdom. We hence see that the words of the Prophet cannot be otherwise understood than of Christ. It follows ---

Amos 9:12

12. That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, saith the Lord that doeth this. [71]

12. Ut possideant reliquias Edom et omnes gentes, super quas (alii vertunt, super quos) invocatum est nomen meum, dicit Jehova hoc faciens.

By these words the Prophet shows that the kingdom under Christ would be more renowned and larger than it had ever been under David. Since then the kingdom had been greatest in dignity, and wealth, and power, in the age of David, the Prophet here says, that its borders would be enlarged; for then he says, Possess shall the Israelites the remnant of Edom He speaks here in common of the Israelites and of the Jews, as before, at the beginning of the last chapter, he threatened both. But we now apprehend what he means, --- that Edom shall come under the yoke.

And it is sufficiently evident why he mentions here especially the Idumeans, and that is because they had been most inveterate enemies; and vicinity gave them greater opportunity for doing harm. As then the Idumeans harassed the miserable Jews, and gave them no respite, this is the reason why the Prophet says that they would come under the power of his elect people. He afterwards adds, that all nations would come also to the Jews. He speaks first of the Idumeans, but he also adds all other nations. I cannot finish today.

Prayer.

Grant, Almighty God, that as we see everywhere so many evident tokens of thy displeasure, and more grievous ones are impeding, if we indeed duly consider how grievously we have provoked thy wrath, and how wickedly also the whole world at this day rages against thee and at the same time abuses thy many and excellent benefits, --- O grant, that we may ever remember thy covenant and entertain a perpetual confidence in thy only-begotten Son, that whenever it may please thee to sift us, thou mayest keep us in safety, until we come, not into any earthly storehouse but into thy celestial kingdom, where we may become partakers of that glory which thy Son has obtained for us, who has once for all redeemed us that we may ever remain under his guardianship and protection. Amen.

Lecture Sixty-ninth

[71] {{עשה ,{זאת} ``who will do these things.'' It appears that {זאת} is a pronoun which is plural as well as singular: and the Welsh hyn is exactly the same; it will admit thing or things to be added to it --- y peth hyn---y pethan hyn When it is put by itself, hyn it conveys the idea of one particular thing, or of several things, according to the context. The relative pronoun, ,{אשר} who, whom, is of the same character; it is both singular and plural, as whom also is in the English language, and sawl in Welsh. {עשה} is considered a participle, and the participle in Hebrew may often be rendered as a personal noun, and in this instance the doer. It is the {ὁ} {ποιων} of the Greek. But if the verbal form be retained, the auxiliary verb must be in the same tense with the leading verb in the context, ``who will do these things.''---Ed.

In yesterday's Lecture, we could not finish the verse in which Amos says, that the Idumeans and other nations would come under the power of the people of God. As to the first clause there is no ambiguity, but the latter admits of two meanings. Some take its sense to be this, ``Other nations on whom my name is called:'' and others refer this to the children of Abraham in this way, ``That possess the remnants of Edom and all nations they may, upon whom,'' etc.; that is, that they on whom my name is called, even the descendants of Abraham, may possess the Idumeans and all other nations. If we choose the reference to be made to the chosen people, the order of the words seems to be somewhat broken; and yet this sense is very suitable, --- that possess their enemies the faithful may, on whom my name is called; for the reason appears to be here expressed by the Prophet, why he promised a large kingdom to the Israelites, and that is, because they were enrolled in God's name, the Lord owned them as his people, inasmuch as he had chosen and adopted them in the person of their father Abraham. But if the other view be more approved, then the particle {אשר}, asher, is not, as I think, a pronoun relative, but an adverb expressing a cause, ``That they may possess the remnants of Edom and all nations, for my name shall have been, or shall be, called on them:'' [72] for who can have possession of this right or title but those who, having been aliens, shall pass over into the family of Abraham? Israel is indeed said to possess whatever comes from another quarter, and is incorporated into the body of the Church.

But on this point I will not contend; for this main thing is evident to us, --- that the extension of the kingdom under Christ is here promised as though he had said that the Jews were included within narrow bounds, even when the kingdom of David especially flourished, but that God would under Christ extend their borders, and cause them to rule far and wide. What it is to call God's name on a people, we have elsewhere stated. Let us now go on with the context.

Amos 9:13

13. Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt.

13. Ecce dies veniunt, dicit Jehova, et occurret arator messori, et calcator uvarum efferenti semen; et stillabunt montes dulcem liquorem, et omnes colles liquefient (nempe ut lacte diffluant.)

Here the Prophet describes the felicity which shall be under the reign of Christ: and we know that whenever the Prophets set forth promises of a happy and prosperous state to God's people, they adopt metaphorical expressions, and say, that abundance of all good things shall flow, that there shall be the most fruitful produce, that provisions shall be bountifully supplied; for they accommodated their mode of

[72] This sentence is an instance, common in Hebrew, of the use of two pronouns, —a relative and a personal pronoun; to the latter of which is prefixed the preposition. It has already been noticed, that in Welsh the same idiom exists; in that language this line is rendered word for word like the Hebrew: and the true rendering is no doubt that which is mentioned last by Calvin. The Hebrew literally is this, — Whom shall be called my name upon them. The same line in Welsh, without any change even in the order of the words, — Y rhai y gelwir vy enw arnyt. Another peculiarity is, that the preposition is prefixed and joined to the personal pronoun in Welsh as well as in Hebrew; and a third is, that the relative y rhai (the whom) in Welsh, like {אשר in Hebrew, admits of no case. It is the same when a nominative to a verb, or when an accusative governed by it. --- Ed.

speaking to the notions of that ancient people; it is therefore no wonders if they sometimes speak to them as to children. At the same time, the Spirit under these figurative expressions declares, that the kingdom of Christ shall in every way be happy and blessed, or that the Church of God, which means the same thing, shall be blessed, when Christ shall begin to reign.

Hence he says, Coming are the days, saith Jehovah, and the plowman shall draw nigh, or meet, the reaper The Prophet no doubt refers to the blessing mentioned by Moses in Leviticus 26:5 for the Prophets borrowed thence their mode of speaking, to add more credit and authority to what they taught. And Moses uses nearly the same words, --- that the vintage shall meet the harvest, and also that sowing shall meet the plowing: and this is the case, when God supplies abundance of corn and wine, and when the season is pleasant and favorable. We then see what the Prophet means, that is, that God would so bless his people, that he would suffer no lack of good things.

The plowman then shall come nigh the reaper; and the treader of grapes, the bearer of seed. When they shall finish the harvest, they shall begin to plow, for the season will be most favorable; and then when they shall complete their vintage, they shall sow. Thus the fruitfulness, as I have said, of all produce is mentioned.

The Prophet now speaks in a hyperbolical language, and says, Mountains shall drop sweetness, and all the hills shall melt, that is, milk shall flow down. We indeed know that this has never happened; but this manner of speaking is common and often occurs in Scripture. The sum of the whole is, that there will be no common or ordinary abundance of blessings, but what will exceed belief, and even the course of nature, as the very mountains shall as it were flow down. It now follows ---

Amos 9:14

14. And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them.

14. Et reducam captivitatem populi mei Israel; et aedificabunt urbes dirutas, et habitabunt illic; plantabunt vites, et bibunt vinum earum; facient hortos, et comedent fructus ipsorum.

As the prophecy we have noticed was one difficult to be believed, especially when the people were led away into exile, the Prophet comes to the help of this lack of faith, and shows that this would be no hindrance to God to lead his people to the felicity of which he speaks. These things seem indeed to be quite contrary, the one to the other, --- that the people, spoiled of all dignity, should be driven to a far country to live in miserable exile, and that they should also be scattered into various parts and oppressed by base tyranny; --- and that at the same time a most flourishing condition should be promised them, and that such an extension of their kingdom should be promised them, as had never been previously witnessed. Lest then their present calamities should fill their minds with fear and bind them fast in despair; he says that the Israelites shall return from exile, not indeed all; but as we have already seen, this promise is addressed to the elect alone: at the same time he speaks here simply of the people. But, this prophecy is connected with other prophecies: it ought

not therefore to be extended except to that remnant seed, of whom we have before taken notice.

Restore then will I the captivity of my people Israel; and then, They shall build nested cities and dwell there; they shall plant vineyards, and their wine shall they drink; they shall make gardens, and shall eat their fruit. He reminds the people here of the blessings mentioned in the Law. They must indeed have known that the hand of the Lord was opposed to them in their exile. Hence the Prophet now shows, that as soon as the Lord would again begin to be propitious to them, there would be a new state of things; for when God shows his smiling countenance, prosperity follows and a blessed success in all things. This then is what the Prophet now intends to show, that the miserable exiles might not faint in despair, when the Lord chastised them. It follows at last ---

Amos 9:15

15. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God.

15. Et plantabo eos super terram suam, (in terra sua,) et non evellentur amplius a terra sua, quam dedi illis, inquit Jehova Deus tuus.

The Prophet further mentions here a quiet dwellings in the land, for it was not enough for the people to be restored to their country, except they lived there in safety and quietness; for they might soon afterwards have been removed again. It would have been better for them to pine away in exile, than to be restored for the sake, as it were, of sporting with them, and in a short time to be again conquered by their enemies, and to be led away into another country. Therefore the Prophet says, that the people, when restored, would be in a state of tranquillity.

And he uses a most suitable comparison, when he says, I will plant them in their own land, nor shall they be pulled up any more: for how can we have a settled place to dwell in, except the Lord locates us somewhere? We are indeed as it were flitting beings on the earth, and we may at any moment be tossed here and there as the chaff. We have therefore no settled dwelling, except as far as we are planted by the hand of God, or as far as God assigns to us a certain habitation, and is pleased to make us rest in quietness. This is what the Prophet means by saying, I will plant them in their own land, nor shall they any more be pulled up How so? ``Because, he says, I have given to them the land''. He had indeed given it to them before, but he suffered them to be pulled up when they had polluted the land. But now God declares that his grace would outweigh the sins of the people; as though he said, ``However unworthy the people are, who dwell in this land, my gift will yet be effectual: for I will not regard what they deserve at my hands, but as I have given them this land, they shall obtain it.'' We now apprehend the meaning of the Prophet.

Now, if we look on what afterwards happened, it may appear that this prophecy has never been fulfilled. The Jews indeed returned to their own country, but it was only a small number: and besides, it was so far from being the case, that they ruled over neighboring nations, that they became on the contrary tributaries to them: and further still, the limits of their rule were ever narrow, even when they were able to shake off the yoke. In what sense then has God promised what we have just

explained? We see this when we come to Christ; for it will then be evident that nothing has been in vain foretold: though the Jews have not ruled as to the outward appearance, yet the kingdom of God was then propagated among all nations, from the rising to the setting of the sun; and then, as we have said in other places, the Jews reigned.

Further, what is here said of the abundance of corn and wine, must be explained with reference to the nature of Christ's kingdom. As then the kingdom of Christ is spiritual, it is enough for us, that it abounds in spiritual blessings: and the Jews, whom God reserved for himself as a remnant, were satisfied with this spiritual abundance.

If any one objects and says, that the Prophet does not speak here allegorically; the answer is ready at hand, even this, --- that it is a manner of speaking everywhere found in Scripture, that a happy state is painted as it were before our eyes, by setting before us the conveniences of the present life and earthly blessings: this may especially be observed in the Prophets, for they accommodated their style, as we have already stated, to the capacities of a rude and weak people. But as this subject has been discussed elsewhere more at large, I only touch on it now as in passing and lightly. Now follows the Prophecy of Obadiah, who is commonly called Abdiah. [73]

End of the Commentaries on Amos.

[73] There is no Prayer here, for the Lecture is not completed: it includes a portion of the Book of Obadiah. — Ed.

Commentary on Obadiah

Commentary on Obadiah

Calvin's Preface

To

Obadiah

This Prophecy does not consist of many oracles, nor of many sermons, as other prophecies; but it only denounces on the Idumeans a near destruction, and then promises a restoration to the chosen people of God. But it threatens the Idumeans for the sake of administering consolation to the chosen people; for it was a grievous and hard trial for the children of Jacob, an elect people, to see the posterity of Esau, who had been rejected by God, flourishing both in wealth and power.

As then the children of Israel were miserable in comparison with their own kindred, the adoption of God might have appeared worthless; and this was in great measure the reason why the Israelites preferred the lot of other is observed by us, our sorrow is enhanced and our weariness is increased. When therefore the Israelites saw the Idumeans living at ease and beyond the reach of danger, and when they also saw them in the enjoyment of every abundance, while they themselves were exposed as a prey to their enemies, and were continually expecting new calamities, it could not have been, but that their faith must have utterly failed, or at least become much weakened. For this reason the Prophet here shows, that though the Idumeans now lived happily, yet in a short time they would be destroyed, for they were hated by God; and he shows that this would be the case, as we shall see from the contents of this Book, for the sake of the chosen people.

We now then perceive the design of the Prophet: as adversity might have weakened the Israelites, and even utterly broken them down, the Prophet here applies comfort and props up their dejected minds, for the Lord would shortly look on them and take due vengeance on their enemies.

And the reason why this prophecy is levelled against the Idumeans only is this, --- that they, as we know, raged more cruelly than any others against the Israelites:

for it is not said without a cause in Psalm 137:7,

`Remember the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem, who said, Make bare, make bare even to the very foundations.'

Now at what time Obadiah prophesied, it does not appear [74] except that it is probable that this prophecy was announced, when the Idumeans rose up against the Israelites and distressed them by many annoyances: for they seem to be mistaken who think that Obadiah lived before the time of Isaiah. It appears that Jeremiah (Jeremiah 49:7-22) and this Prophet made use of the same thoughts and nearly of the same words, as we shall hereafter see. The Holy Spirit could, no doubt, have expressed the same things in different words; but he was pleased to join together these two testimonies, that they might obtain more credit. [75] I know not whether Obadiah and Jeremiah were contemporaries, and on this subject we need not bestow much labor. It is sufficient for us to know, that this prophecy was added to other prophecies, that the Israelites might feel assured, that though their kindred the Idumeans might prosper for a time, yet they could not escape the hand of God, but would shortly be constrained to give an account of their cruelty, inasmuch as they had without cause been all in a flame against the distressed and afflicted people of God.

Now our Prophet shows at the end that God would become the avenger of this cruelty, which the Idumeans had exercised; for though he chastised his own people, he did not yet forget his gratuitous covenant. Let us now come to the words.

Commentaries on
the Prophet Obadiah

[74] Newcome supposes that he prophesied between the taking of Jerusalem in 587 before Christ and the destruction of Idumea, a few years later, by Nebuchadnezzar. Usher, as quoted by Newcome, places the destruction of Jerusalem in 588 b.c.; and the siege of Tyre by the Babylonians three years later, that is, in 585; and it was during this siege, which lasted thirteen years, that the Idumeans, as well as the Sidonians, the Moabites, and the Ammonites, were subdued by the Babylonian power: so that the threatenings contained in this prophecy were soon executed. — Ed.

[75] Expositors are divided in their opinions as to the priority of the two Prophets, and consequently as to whom of the two was the copyist. As the time cannot be ascertained, our only mode of ascertaining this, are the passages themselves as given by each. It is said that Jeremiah has not presented them in so perfect a form as Obadiah, and that in the latter they appear as the naturally connected parts of his subject, and accordant in style and character with the rest of the prophecy. But the matter is of no great importance, and to discuss it can bring no benefit. — Ed.

Obadiah 1

Obadiah 1:1

1. The vision of Obadiah. Thus saith the Lord God concerning Edom; [76] We have heard a rumour from the Lord, and an ambassador is sent among the heathen, Arise ye, and let us rise up against her in battle.

1. Visio Obadiae. Sic Dominus Jehova contra Edom, Rumorem audivimus a Jehova, et legatus ad gentes missus est, Surgite et surgamus contra eam ad proelium.

Obadiah's preface is, that he brought nothing human, but only declared the vision presented to him from above. We indeed know that it was God alone that was ever to be heard in the Church, as even now he demands to be heard: but yet he sent his prophets, as afterwards the apostles; yea, as he sent his only begotten Son, whom he has set over us to be our only and sovereign Teacher. Obadiah then by saying that it was a vision, said the same, as though he declared, that he did not presumptuously bring forward his own dreams, or what he conjectured, or discovered by human reason, but that he adduced only a celestial oracle: for {חזון}, chezun, as we have observed in other places, was a vision, by which God revealed himself to his Prophets.

He then adds, Thus saith Jehovah. Here is a fuller expression of the same declaration. We thus see that the Prophet, in order that the doctrine he brought forward might not be suspected, made God the author; for what faith can be put in men, whom we know to be vain and false, except as far as they are ruled by the Spirit of God and sent by Him? Seeing then that the Prophet so carefully teaches us, that what he declared was delivered to him by God, we may hence learn what I have lately referred to, --- that the Prophets formerly so spoke, that God alone might be

[76] The Septuagint renders the words, "to Edom" — {Ταδε} {λεγει} {κυριος} {ὁ} {Θεὸς} {τη} {Ιδουμαία} ---"Thus saith the Lord God to Idumea;" which is an exact rendering of the original, for it is, to"---{לאדום} Edom." It was a message from God to that people. May we not hence conclude that this prophecy was sent to them by Obadiah? They are often personally addressed: and this seems to favor such a supposition. It is indeed true that {ל} prefixed to a word after the verb, to say or to speak, is often rendered, of, or, concerning; but it is also rendered by, to, meaning that the address is made to the person. --- Ed.

heard among the people.

He says afterwards, A rumor have we heard. Some render it, a word, or a doctrine. {שמועה}, shimuoe, is properly a hearing, and is derived from the verb the Prophet subjoins. A hearing then have we heard; so it is translated literally. But some think that what was taught is pointed out, as though he said, ``The Lord has revealed this to me and to other Prophets;'' according to what Isaiah says, Isaiah 53:1, `Who has believed our hearing?' It is the same word, and he speaks of God's word or doctrine. But it is probable that he refers here to those tumultuous rumors, which commonly precede wars and calamities. We have then heard a rumor The verb in Jeremiah is not in the plural number, {שמענו} shimonu, but {שמעתי} {שמועה} shimoti shimunoe, `I have heard,' says Jeremiah, `a hearing.' But our Prophet uses the plural number, `We have heard a hearing.' The sense however is the same; for Jeremiah says that he had heard rumors; and the Prophet here adds others to himself, as though he said, ``This rumor is spread abroad, but it is from the Lord: it is certain that this rumor has been heard even by the profane and the despisers of God.'' But the Prophet shows that wars are not stirred up at random, but by the secret influence of God; as though he said, ``When a tumult arises, let us not think that its beginning is from the earth, but God himself is the mover.'' We now then apprehend the design of the Prophet: though he speaks of the rumor of wars, he yet shows that chance or accident does not rule in such commotions, but the hidden influence of God.

We have heard, he says from Jehovah, and a messenger, or, an ambassador, to the nations has been sent [77] , Arise ye, and we will arise against her to battle. In Jeremiah, it is, `Assemble ye, come and arise against her to battle.' The Prophet here shows, I have no doubt, whence the rumor came, which he had just mentioned; for they were now indeed stirring up one another to destroy that land. If any one had formed a judgment according to human wisdom, he would have said that the Assyrians were the cause why war was brought on the Idumeans, because they had found them either inconstant or even perfidious, or because they had feigned a pretense when there was no just reason for making war. But the Prophet here raises his mind upwards and acknowledges God to be the mover of this war, because he intended to punish the cruelty of that people, which they had exercised toward their own kindred, the Israelites; and at the same time he encourages others also, that they might understand that it was altogether directed by the hidden counsel of God, that the Assyrians, from being friends, became of a sudden enemies, that a war was all in a flame against the Idumeans at a time when they were at ease, without any fear, without any apprehension of danger. It follows ---

Obadiah 2-4

2 Behold, I have made thee small among the heathen: thou art greatly despised.

2 Ecce parvum posui te inter gentes, contemptus tu valde.

3 The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of

[77] Or the two lines may thus be rendered,— A rumor have we heard from Jehovah, And a messenger to the nations hath he sent. The verb, to send, is here active; and so it is rendered in the Septuagint. It is indeed passive in the corresponding passage in Jeremiah; but there are several other instances of variety in the expressions used by the two Prophets, though there be in sense a material agreement. — Ed.

the rock, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground?

3 Superbia cordis tui decepit te, qui habitas in scissuras petrae (vel, rupis;) excelsa habitatio ejus, dicens in corde suo, Quis detrahet me in terram?

4 Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the LORD.

4 Si exaltaveris quasi aquila, etsi inter nubes posueris nidum suum, inde ego detraham te, dicit Jehova.

Jeremiah uses nearly the same words; but the sense of the expression is ambiguous, when he says, `Lo, little have I set thee.' To me it appears probable, that the Prophet reproves the Idumeans, because they became arrogant, as it were, against the will of God, and in opposition to it, when, at the same time, they were confined to the narrow passes of mountains. It is said elsewhere, (Malachi 1:2,) `Jacob and Esau, were they not brethren?' ``But I have given to you the inheritance promised to your father Abraham; I have transferred the Idumeans to mount Seir.'' Now it is less bearable, if any one be elated with pride, when his condition is not so honorable. I therefore think that the Idumeans are here condemned because they vaunted so much, and arrogated to themselves more than what was right, when they yet were contemptible, when their condition was mean and obscure, for they dwelt on mount Seir. But others think that the punishment, which was impending over them, is here denounced, Lo, little have I made thee among the nations, and Jeremiah says, `and contemptible among men'; he omits the two words, thou and exceedingly; he says only, `and contemptible among men'. But as to the substance, there is hardly any difference. If then we understand that that nation was proud without reason, the sense is evident, that is, that they, like the giants, carried on war against God, that they vaunted themselves, though confined to the narrow passes of mountains. Though I leave to others their own free opinion, I am yet inclined to the former view, while the latter has been adopted nearly by the consent of all; and that is, that God was resolved forcibly to constrain to order those ferocious men, who, for no reason, and even in opposition to nature, are become insolent. But if a different interpretation be more approved, we may say, that the Prophet begins with a threatening, and then subjoins a reason why God determined to diminish and even to destroy them: for though they dwelt on mountains, it was yet a fertile region; and further, they had gathered in course of long time much wealth, when they attained security, when no enemy disturbed them. This then is the reasoning, Lo, I have made thee small and contemptible in the mountain, --- and why? because the pride of thy heart has deceived thee; and Jeremiah adds, terror, [78] although some render {תפלצתך} taphlatastae, image; but this seems not appropriate. Jeremiah then, I doubt not, mentions terror in the first place; for it almost ever happens, that the proud strike others with fear: such then were the Idumeans.

[78] Blayney, for very satisfactory reasons, transfers this word to the preceding verse, and then the passage will be almost literally the same with this of Obadiah. The 15th, and the beginning of the 16th in Jeremiah 49 may be thus rendered, — 15. For, behold, small have I made thee among the nations, Contemptible among the men of thy terror, (that is, such as thou didst fear.) 16. Deceived thee has the pride of thy heart; etc. — Ed.

Now if we follow the first meaning I explained, the two verses may be read as connected, Lo, I have made thee small and contemptible among the nations; [79] but the pride of thy heart has deceived thee; some render it, has raised thee up, deriving it from {נשא} nusha: but they read {ש} shin, pointed on the left side; for if {נשא} nusha has the point in the branch of the shin, on the right hand, it means to deceive, but if on the left, it signifies to raise up. Then they give this translations ``The pride of thine heart has raised thee up:'' but we clearly learn from Jeremiah, that it ought, as almost all interpreters agree, to be rendered thus, ``The pride of thine heart has deceived thee:'' for he says not {השיאך} eshiac but {אותך} {השיא} eshia autea, that is, it was to thee the cause of error and of madness. Of the sense then of this verb there can be no doubt.

The Prophet now laughs to scorn the Idumeans, because they relied on their own fortresses, and thought themselves, according to the common saying, to be beyond the reach of darts; and hence they petulantly insulted the Israelites and despised God himself. The Prophet therefore says, that the Idumeans in vain felicitated themselves, for he shows that all they promised to themselves were mere delusions. The import of what is said then is, ``Whence is this your security, that ye think that enemies can do you no harm? Yea, ye despise God as well as men; whence is this haughtiness? whence also is the great confidence with which ye are puffed up? Verily, it comes only from mere delusions. The pride of thine heart has deceived thee.''

And yet there was not wanting a reason why the Idumeans were thus insolent, as the Prophet also states: but he at the same time shows that they had deceived themselves; for God cared not for their fortresses; nay, he counted them as nothing. Thou dwellest, he says, (this is to be regarded as a concession,) in the clefts of the stone; some read, ``between the windings of the rock;'' [80] though others think {סלע} Salo to be the name of a city. But though I should allow that the Prophet alludes to the name of a city, I yet do not see how can that stand which they hold; for clefts comfort not with a city situated on a plain, though within the ranges of mountains. I do not then doubt but that {סלע} Salo here means mount Seir. As then the Idumeans had fortresses amidst rocks, they thought that all enemies could easily be kept out.

And hence it follows, The height is his habitation, that is, he dwells in lofty places; and hence he says in his heart, Who shall draw me down to the ground? He afterwards subjoins what I have already stated, --- that though their region was exceedingly well fortified, yet the Idumeans were greatly deceived, and indulged themselves in vain delusions, ``If thou shouldest raise up thy seat, he says, like the eagle'', --- literally, `If thou shouldest rise as the eagle,' --- ``and if thou shouldest

[79] It is evidently of the past, and not of the future, that this verse speaks. The corresponding passage in Jeremiah is, in our version, rendered in the future tense, but Blayney renders it, as it is, in the past tense. Our version here adopts the past tense in the first line, "I have made," etc., and the present in the second, "Thou art," etc., contrary to the rule, that when the auxiliary verb is not expressed in the original, the tense of the verbs expressed is to be observed. The two lines should therefore be thus translated, — Behold, small have I made thee among the nations; Despised wert thou exceedingly. The reference is, no doubt, as Calvin says, to the poor inheritance assigned to the Edomites, and to the low station they occupied among other nations; and hence their pride and insolence appeared more evident and unreasonable. — Ed.

[80] Blayney renders the same words in Jeremiah 49:16, "the encirclings of the rock:" but Parkhurst renders them "the cracks, or fissures of the rock." — Ed.

among the clouds [81] set and nest, I will thence draw thee down, saith Jehovah''. We now see that the Prophet did not without reason deride the confidence with which the Idumeans were inflated, by setting up their fortresses in opposition to God: for it is the greatest madness for men to rely on their own power and to despise God himself. At the same time he could, as it were, easily dissipate by one blast every idea of defense or of power that is in us; but this subject will be more fully handled by us tomorrow.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou seest us to be on every side at this day beset by so many enemies, even by those who constantly devise means to destroy us, while we are so very weak and feeble, --- O grant, that we may learn to look up to thee, and that our trust may so recumb on thee, that however exposed we may be to all kinds of danger according to what appears to the flesh, we may not yet doubt but that thou art ever armed with sufficient power to terrify our enemies, so that we may quietly live even amidst all dangers, and never cease to call on thy name, as thou hast promised to be the sure and faithful defender of our safety in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Lecture Seventieth

We observed in our yesterday's Lecture, that it nothing avails the ungodly, when they set up their fortresses against the judgment of God, as though they could escape safe from his hand; for as God has heaven and earth under his control, he can, whenever it pleases him, draw down all who now despise his power, and, therefore, deride his Prophets, or regard as nothing their threatening. This passage then ought to be carefully noticed; for God declares that it is in his power to draw down from the very clouds those who so raise themselves up, as to think themselves to be elevated above all dangers. The Prophet now says ---

Obadiah 5

5. If thieves came to thee, if robbers by night, (how art thou cut off!) would they not have stolen till they had enough? if the grapegatherers came to thee, would they not leave some grapes?

5. An fures venerunt ad te? An praedones nocturni? Quomodo in silentium redactus es? (vel, quomodo consumptus es?) annon furati essent sufficientiam suam? An vindemiatores ad te venerunt? Annon reliquissent racemos?

The Prophet shows in this verse that the calamity with which God was resolved to afflict the Idumeans would not be slight, for nothing would be left among them; and he amplifies what he says by a comparison. When one is plundered of his property by thieves, he grieves, that what he had acquired by much labor through life, has been in one moment taken from him: and when any one has spent labor and expense in cultivating his vineyard, and another takes away its fruit, he complains of his great misfortune, that he had lost his property and big labor in the cultivation of his vineyard, while another devours its fruit. But the Prophet intimates that God would not be content with such kind of punishment as to the Idumeans.

Hence he says, Have night thieves or robbers come to thee? They must doubtless

[81] Literally it is, "among the stars," {{כוכבים}. בין} --- Ed.

have stolen, and have taken away what they thought sufficient for them; but now nothing shall be left to thee. In short, the Prophet intimates that the Assyrians would not be like thieves or night robbers, who stealthily and privately take away what comes to their hands; but he means, that the Idumeans would be so plundered, that their houses would be left wholly empty, and he declares that the Assyrians would thus spoil them like night thieves or robbers, who are wont to proceed with unbridled liberty; for none dares to resist them, or even to say a word against them. This plundering then will not be, says the Prophet, of an ordinary kind; but the enemies will make thee entirely empty.

The same is the object in view when he says, Have vintagers come to thee? To be sure, they commonly leave some clusters; but the Assyrians will leave, no, not one: they shall depart so laden with plunders, that thou shalt be left empty.

But all this, as we have reminded you, was said in order to alleviate or to mitigate the grief of the faithful, who then deemed themselves very miserable, as they were alone plundered by enemies; for they saw that their neighbors were dwelling in safety, and even becoming partakers of the spoil. Their condition therefore was very miserable and degraded. Hence the Prophet, that he might moderate this bitter grief, says, that the Idumeans would in no common way be plundered, for not a hair could be left them. This is the import of the passage.

But some regard the verb {נדמיתה} nudamite as signifying, ``Thou art reduced to silence;'' for the verb {דום} dum or {דמה} dame means to be silent: and they give this exposition, ``How dost thou not endeavor at least to meet thine enemies?'' for they take ``to be silent'' in the sense of being still, as {דמה} dame is often so taken in Scripture, ``How then have they been silent?'' but he speaks of the future in the past tense, as though God had already inflicted punishment on the Idumeans, that faith in the prediction might be made more certain: thou hast been reduced to silence, that is, how couldest thou remain quiet on seeing thine enemies plundering with so much violence --- how then hast thou been reduced to silence? Others say, How hast thou been consumed? for {דמה} dame often means to destroy. But to this point belongs no great importance; for the Prophet means, that it could not be ascribed to chance, that enemies would destroy the whole land of Edom, for the cruel assault would by no means be of an ordinary kind: and then as the Idumeans thought that an entrance to their enemies was on every side closed up, as they inhabited the summits of mountains, according to what I have already said, and that they were most safe in their recesses and lofty rocks, the Prophet here sets it forth as a wonderful thing that God's judgment would yet reach them. Let us proceed ---

Obadiah 6

6. How are the things of Esau searched out! how are his hidden things sought up!

6. Quomodo quaesita sunt Esau, pervestigata abscondita ejus?

He confirms the former sentence, --- that the Idumeans in vain trusted that their riches would be safe, because they had hidden and deep recesses. Even when a country is plundered by enemies, the conquerors dare not to come to places of danger; when there are narrow passes, they avoid them, for they think that there is

there some evil design. Hence conquerors, fearing hidden places, plunder only those which are open, and always consider well whether their advance is safe: but Idumea, as we have said, had hidden recesses, for its rocks were almost inaccessible, and there were many conveniences there for hiding and concealing its riches. But the Prophet says, that all this would be useless: and that he might more effectually rouse them, he speaks with astonishment, as of something incredible. How have been sought the things of Esau, and thoroughly searched his hidden places! Who could have thought this? for they might have concealed their treasures in rocks and caverns, and thence repelled their enemies. But in vain would be all their attempts: how could this possibly be? Here then he awakens the minds of men, that they might acknowledge the judgment of God; and at the same time he laughs to scorn the vain confidence with which the Idumeans were inflated; and besides, he strengthens the minds of the godly, that they might not doubt but that God would perform what he declares, for he can indeed penetrate even to the lowest deep.

In short, the Prophet intimates that the faithful did not act wisely, if they measured God's vengeance, which was impending on the Idumeans, by their own understanding or by what usually happens; for the Lord would make a thorough search, so that no hiding-places would escape his sight; and then all their treasures would be exposed as a prey to their enemies. We hence learn, that as men in vain seek hiding places for themselves that they may be safe from dangers; so in vain they conceal their riches; for the hand of God can penetrate beyond the sea, land, heaven, and the lowest deep. Nothing then remains for us but ever to offer ourselves and all our things to God. If he protects us under his wings, we shall be safe in the midst of innumerable dangers; but if we think that subterfuges will be of any avail to us, we deceive ourselves. The Prophet now adds ---

Obadiah 7-8

7. All the men of thy confederacy have brought thee even to the border: the men that were at peace with thee have deceived thee, and prevailed against thee; they that eat thy bread have laid a wound under thee: there is none understanding in him.

7. Usque ad terminum expulerunt te omnes viri foederis tui; deceperunt te, praevaluerunt tibi, viri pacifici tui (viri pacis tuae;) viri panis tui posuerunt vulnus sub te: nulla est intelligentia in eo.

8. Shall I not in that day, saith the Lord, even destroy the wise men out of Edom, and understanding out of the mount of Esau?

8. Annon in die illa, dicit Jehova, perdam sapientes ex Edom? Et intelligentiam e monte Esau? (hoc est, e monte Seir.)

Here the Prophet expresses the manner in which God would punish the Idumeans: trusting in their confederacies, they despised God, as we have already had to observe. The Prophet now shows that it is in the power of God to change the minds of men, so that they who were their friends being suddenly inflamed with rage, would go forth to destroy the Idumeans. Seeing then that they regarded the Assyrians not only as a shield to them, but also as a defense against God himself, the Prophet here declares that when it would be God's purpose to punish them, there would be no

need to send to a distance for agents or instruments to execute his vengeance; for he would arm the Assyrians themselves and the Chaldeans, inasmuch as he could turn the hearts of men as he pleased. We now see the Prophet's meaning; for he here takes away and shakes off the vain confidence of the Idumeans, that they might not harden themselves for being fortified by confederacies and for having powerful friends, for the Lord would turn friends into enemies. To thy border, he says, have they driven thee {שלח} shilach is properly to send forth or to throw away; some render it, they have followed; as though the Prophet here spoke of the neighboring nations, and according to their view the meaning is, ``However much thy neighbors may love thee, yet nothing will they show of this love, except that they will follow thee with feigned tears, when thine enemies shall lead thee away captive.'' But this is a strained exposition, and corresponds not with the context. The Prophet then describes here, I doubt not, the change, such as would take place, that the Idumeans might know, that they trusted in vain in their power and defenses. The men of thy covenant, he says, have driven thee away; as though he said, ``See what thou gainest in anxiously seeking the friendship of those who will yet be thy enemies; hadst thou remained quiet in thy clefts, it would have been much better for thee: but now thou runnest to Assyria and Chaldea, and this will be the cause of thy ruin. Hence the men of thy covenant shall banish thee to the border: but if thou hadst had no friendship nor commerce with them, thou mightest have lived safely in thy recesses, no one would have driven thee out: just, then, has been the reward of thy ambition, for having thus resorted to the Assyrians and Chaldeans.''

Continuing the same subject, the Prophet says, Deceived thee have the men of thy peace --- friends and confederates; for the Hebrews call those men of peace, who are connected together by any kind of alliance. The men then of thy peace, that is those whom thou thoughtest thou mightest trust, and on whom thou midst rely; --- these have deceived thee, even these have prevailed against thee, and oppressed thee through craft and treachery. The men of thy bread have placed under thee a wound: the men of bread were those who were guests or friends. Some give this rendering, ``Who eat thy bread;'' and it is an admissible interpretation, for the Assyrians and Chaldeans, as they were insatiable, had taken booty from the Idumeans; for whosoever then hunted for their friendship, must have brought them some gifts. Since then they thus sold their friendship, the Prophet rightly calls them the men of bread with regard to those whose substance and wealth they devoured. If then we take the men of bread in this sense, there is a probability in the meaning. But we may give another interpretation, as though he had said that they were guests and friends: these then have fixed under thee a wound, that is, they have been thy destruction, and that through guile and hidden artifices. When one attacks another openly, he who is attacked can avoid the stroke; but the Prophet says, that the Assyrians and Chaldeans would be perfidious to the Idumeans, so as to conquer them through treachery. Fix then shall they a wound under thee, as when one hides a dagger between the bed and the sheet, when a person intends to go to sleep. So also he says that a wound is placed underneath, when a feigned friend hides himself, that he may more easily hurt him whom he assails deceitfully and craftily.

He at length thus concludes, There is no intelligence in him. Here the Prophet no doubt derides in an indirect way the foolish confidence with which the Idumeans were blinded; for they thought themselves to be in a superlative degree wary, so that they had no reason to fear, as they could see afar off, and arrange their concerns with the utmost prudence. Since then they thought that they excelled in wisdom, and could not be surprised by any craft, the Prophet says here, that there would be in them no understanding.

But he immediately subjoins the reason, ``Shall I not in that day, saith Jehovah, destroy, or extinguish, the wise from Edom?'' While the Idumeans were prosperous, because they acted wisely, it was incredible that they could thus in a moment be overthrown: but the Prophet says, that even this was in the hand and power of God; ``Can I not,'' he says, ``put an end to whatever there is of wisdom in the Idumeans? Cannot I destroy all their prudent men? This will I do.'' We now then perceive the import of the words.

But this place deserves notice: the Prophet upbraids the Idumeans, and says, that their confederates and friends would prove their ruin, because they had conspired among themselves beyond what was just and right. When men thus mutually join together, there are none of them who do not greedily seek their own advantage; in the meantime, both sides are deceived; for God disconcerts their counsels, and blasts the issue, because they regard not the right end. And when the wicked seek friendships, they ever blend something that is wrong; they either try to injure the innocent, or they seek some advantage. All the compacts then which the ungodly and the despisers of God make with one another, have always something vicious intermixed; it is therefore no wonder that the Lord disappoints them of their hope, and curses their counsels. This is then the reason why the Prophet declares to the Idumeans, that those, whom they thought to be their best and most faithful friends, would be their ruin.

But here it may be objected and said, that the same thing happens to the children of God. For David, though he acted towards all with the utmost faithfulness and the greatest sincerity, yet complains, that the man of his peace and a friend had contrived against him many frauds,

`Raised up his heel against me,' he says,
`has the man of my peace;
eat bread together did I with him, and he with me,'
(Psalm 41:9)

It was necessary also that this should have been the case with Christ himself. Now, if the children of God must be conformed to the image of Christ, what the Prophet says is no more than what applies to the whole Church, and to every member of it. This may appear strange at the first view; but a solution may be easily given: for while we strive to maintain peace with all men, though they may perfidiously, through treachery, oppress us, yet the Lord himself will succor us; and in the meantime, however hard may this trial be, we yet know that our patience is tried by God, that he may at last deliver us, so that we may confidently flee to him and testify our sincerity. But while the ungodly mutually cheat one another, while with

wicked and sideway artifices they oppress and circumvent each other, while they cast forth their hidden virulence, while they turn peace into war, they know that their recompense is just and merited: they cannot flee to God, for their conscience restrains them. They indeed understand that they have deserved what the Lord has justly repaid them. It is then no wonder that the conspiracy in which the Idumeans trusted, when they made the Chaldeans their friends, should have been accursed; for the Lord turned to their ruin whatever they thought useful to themselves.

This then is the import of the whole, --- that if we wish not to be deceived, we must not attempt anything without an upright heart. Provided then we exceed not the limits of our calling, let us cultivate peace with all men, let us endeavor to do good to all men, that the Lord may bless us; but if it be his purpose to try our patience, he will be still present with us, though false friends try us by their treacheries, though we be led into danger by their malice, and be for a time trodden under their feet; if, on the contrary, we act with bad faith, and think that we have fortunate alliances, which have been obtained by wicked and nefarious artifices, the Lord will turn for our destruction whatever we think to be for our safety.

We must now notice what the Prophet says, Shall I not in that day destroy the wise from Edom? Though men be in many respects blind, whom God guides not by his Spirit, and on whom he shines not with his word, yet the worst blindness is, when men become inebriated with the false conceit of wisdom. When therefore any one thinks himself endued with understanding, so that he can perceive whatever is needful, and that he cannot be circumvented, his wisdom is insanity and extreme madness: it would indeed be better for us to be idiots and fools than to be thus inebriated. Since then the wise of this world are insane, the Lord declares that they will have no wisdom when the time of trial comes. God indeed permits the ungodly for a long time to felicitate themselves on account of their own acumen and counsels, as he suffered the Idumeans to go on prosperously. And there are also many at this day who felicitate themselves on their successes, and almost adore their own cunning. Who indeed can persuade the Venetians that there is anywhere consummate wisdom but among themselves, by which, forsooth, they surpass all others in deception? For no other reason do they, amidst many agitations, retain their own position, except that they seem to see farther into what is for their own advantages; nay, that kings in general stand, and continue safe amidst so many shakings, this they ascribe to their own wisdom: ``Except I had looked well in this respect to my own affairs, except I had anticipated danger, and except I had foreseen it, it would have been all over as to my condition.'' Thus they think within themselves: but the Lord at length infatuates them, that it may be evident, that this was not formerly said in vain to the Idumeans, Shall I not in that day, saith Jehovah, etc. and it was emphatically added, in that day: for the Prophet means, that it was no wonder that the Idumeans had been hitherto wary and adopted the best counsel; for it was not the Lord's purpose to deprive them of wisdom; but when the suitable time of vengeance came, he instantly took away whatever prudence there was in them; for it is indeed in God's hand to take away whatever there is either of understanding or of acuteness in men.

But we are warned by these words, that if we excel in understanding, we are not

to abuse this singular gift of God, as we see the case to be with the ungodly, who turn to cunning whatever wisdom the Lord has bestowed on them. There is hardly one in a hundred to be found, who does not seek to be crafty and deceitful, if he excels in understanding. This is a very wretched thing. What a great treasure is wisdom? Yet we see that the world perverts this excellent gift of God; the more reason there is for us to labor, that our wisdom should be founded in true simplicity. This is one thing. Then we must also beware of trusting in our own understanding, and of despising our enemies, and of thinking that we can ward off any evil that may impend over us; but let us ever seek from the Lord, that we may be favored at all times with the spirit of wisdom, that it may guide us to the end of life: for he can at any moment take from us whatever he has given us, and thus expose us to shame and reproach.

When he says, from mount Esau, he means mount Seir, as I have already reminded you. But he meant to point out their whole country; for they were almost surrounded by mountains, and dwelt, as it is well known, in that Arabia which is called Patraea. It follows ---

Obadiah 9

9 And thy mighty men, O Teman, shall be dismayed, to the end that every one of the mount of Esau may be cut off by slaughter.

9 Et deficient (vel, frangentur) fortes tui, Theman, ut excidatur vir e monte Esau prae occisione (vel, quia excidetur; {למען} enim postest duobus modis exponi.)

The Prophet, after having spoken of one kind of God's vengeance, adds another, --- that he would break whatever there was of strength in Idumea: and thus he shows that the courage and strength of men, no less than their understanding, are in the hand of God. As then God dissipates and destroys, whenever it pleases him, whatever wisdom there may be in men, so also he enervates and breaks down their hearts: in a word, he deprives them of all strength, so that they fail and come to nothing of themselves. Were they who are proud of their strength and counsels rightly to consider this, they would at length learn to submit themselves in true humility to God. But this truth is what the world cannot be made to believe: yet God shows to us here, as in a picture, that however men may flourish for a time, they would immediately vanish, were not he to sustain them, and to support his gifts in them, and keep them entire; and, especially, that empty smoke is everything, that seems to be understanding and strength in men; for the Lord can easily take away both, whensoever it may please him.

We ought therefore carefully to observe what he says here, Broken down shall be thy brave men, O Teman. Some think that a particular country is here pointed out; for Teman is the south, that is, with regard to Judea. But as Teman, we know, was one of the grandsons of Esau, (Genesis 36:15,) and as a part of Arabia was called by this name, it is the more probable, that the Prophet turns here his discourse to Idumea. But as to the word Teman, it is, a part taken for the whole.

For cut off, he says, shall be man: by saying, cut off shall man, he means, that all to a man would be destroyed. How? ``by slaughter'' [82] . But {קתל} kothel means a

[82] This word has been by some critics removed to the beginning of the next verse, but as it appears for no sufficient reasons, while indeed there is nothing in the context that requires such a change. — Ed.

slaughter in which no one remains alive. We hence see what the Prophet means, --- that all the Idumeans would be so broken down, that all would fall, for there would be no heart nor strength to resist. It now follows ---

Obadiah 10-11

10. For thy violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever.

10. Propter oppressionem fratris tui Jacob, operiet te opprobrium, et excideris in perpetuum.

11. In the day that thou stoodest on the other side, in the day that the strangers carried away captive his forces, and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou wast as one of them.

11. Die quo stabas ex opposito, die quo alieni auferebant substantiam ejus, et extranei ingressi sunt portas ejus, et super Jerusalem miserunt sortem, etiam tu quasi unus ex illis.

The Prophet here sets forth the reason why God would deal so severely and dreadfully with the Idumeans. Had he simply prophesied of their destruction, it would have been an important matter; for the Jews might have thereby known that their ruin was not chance, but the scourge of God; they might have known that they themselves were with others chastised by God, and this would have been a useful instruction to them: but what brought them the chief consolation was to hear, that they were so dear to God that he would undertake the defense of their wrongs and avenge them, that he would have a regard for their safety. Hence, when they heard that God, because he loved them, would punish the Idumeans, it was doubtless an invaluable comfort to them in their calamities. To this subject the Prophet now comes.

For the unjust oppression of thy brother Jacob, etc. The word {חמס} chemes, violence, is to be taken passively; as though he said, ``See, how thou hast acted towards thy brother Jacob.'' And he calls him his brother, not for honor's sake, but, on the contrary, for the purpose of showing forth more fully the cruelty of the Idumeans; for consanguinity had had no effect in preventing them from raging against their own brethren, and as it were against their own bowels. It was therefore a proof of barbarous inhumanity, that the Idumeans, forgetting their common nature, had been so inflamed with hatred against their own brethren: for, as it is well known, they had descended from the same common father, Abraham, and also from Isaac, and had the symbol of circumcision. The Idumeans indeed professed that they were the descendants of Abraham, and were God's peculiar people. Since then God had made his covenant with their common father Isaac, and since they had equally retained circumcision, which was the seal of that covenant, how did it happen, that the Idumeans conducted themselves so cruelly towards their brethren? We hence see, that the name of brother in this clause --- for the oppression of thy brother Jacob, is mentioned for the purpose of enhancing their crime.

As then, he says, thou hast been so violent against thy brother, cover thee shall reproach, and forever shalt thou be cut off. He intimates that the calamity would not be only for a time as in the case of Israel, but that the Lord would execute such a punishment as would prove that the Idumeans were aliens to him; for God in chastising

his Church ever observes certain limits, as he never forgets his covenant. He proves indeed that the Idumeans were not his people, however much they might falsely boast that they were the children of Abraham, and make claim to the sign of circumcision; for they were professedly enemies, and had entirely departed from all godliness: it was then no wonder that their circumcision, which they had impiously profaned, was made no account of. But he afterwards more fully and largely unfolds the same thing.

In the day, he says, in which thou didst stand on the opposite side''. But the Idumeans might have made this objection, ``Why dost thou accuse us for having violently oppressed our brother? for we were not the cause why they were destroyed: they had a quarrel with the Assyrians, we labored to protect our own interest in the midst of these disturbances; we sought peace with the Assyrians, and if necessity so compelled us, that ought not to be ascribed to us as a crime or blame.'' In this way the Idumeans might have made a defense: but the Prophet dissipates all such pretenses by saying, In the day in which thou didst stand on the opposite side, in the day in which strangers took away his substance, and aliens entered his gates, and cast lots on Jerusalem --- were not thou there? Even thou were as one of them. Now this is emphatically introduced --- Even thou or, thou also; (Tu etiam) for the Prophet exhibits it here as a hateful omen: ``It was no wonder that the Assyrians and Chaldeans shed the blood of thy brethren, for they were enemies, they were foreigners, they were a very distant people: but thou, who were of the same blood, thou, whom the bond of religion ought to have restrained, and further, even thou, who oughtest by the very claims of vicinity either to have helped thy brethren, or at least to have condoled with them --- yea, thou were so cruel as to have been as one of his enemies: this surely can by no means be endured.''

We now perceive what the Prophet meant by saying, In the day in which thou didst stand on the opposite side: it is then as it were, an explanation of the former sentence, lest the Idumeans should make a false excuse by objecting that they had not been violent against their brethren. It was indeed the worst oppression, when they stood over against them; though they were not armed they yet took pleasure in a spectacle so mournful; besides they not only were idle spectators of the calamity of their brethren but were also as it were a part of their enemies. ``Hast thou then not been as one of them?'' I shall not proceed farther now.

Prayer

Grant Almighty God, that as thou hast once received us under thy protection, and hast promised that our salvation would be so much cared for by thee, that whatever Satan and the whole world may contrive, thou wilt yet keep us safe and secure, --- O grant, that being endued with perseverance, we may remain within our borders, and be not carried away here and there either by craft or by wicked counsels; but be thou pleased to keep us in genuine integrity, that being protected by thy help, we may, by experience, find that true which thou declarest in thy word, that they who call on thee in truth shall ever know thee to be propitious to them: and since thou hast already made open to us an access to thee in the person of thy only --- begotten Son, O grant, that we the sheep, may rely on him as our shepherd, and resignedly

abide under his protection until we be removed from all dangers into that eternal rest, which has been obtained for us by the blood of thy Son Jesus Christ. Amen.

Lecture Seventy-first.

Obadiah 12-14

12. But thou shouldest not have looked on the day of thy brother in the day that he became a stranger; neither shouldest thou have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; neither shouldest thou have spoken proudly in the day of distress.

12. Et non aspicias in die fratris tui, in die alientationis ejus, et ne gaudeas super filiis Jehudah die exitii corum, et ne magnifices os tuum in die afflictionis (hoc est, ne magnifice loquaris.)

13. Thou shouldest not have entered into the gate of my people in the day of their calamity; yea, thou shouldest not have looked on their affliction in the day of their calamity, nor have laid hands on their substance in the day of their calamity;

13. Ne intres in portam populi mei die exitii eorum, ne aspicias etiam tu in afflictione ejus, (in malo ejus,) in die exitii ejus, et ne extendas (manum subaudiendum est) in substantiam ejus in die exitii ejus;

14. Neither shouldest thou have stood in the crossway, to cut off those of his that did escape; neither shouldest thou have delivered up those of his that did remain in the day of distress.

14. Et ne stes super exitum (vel, lacerationem, confractionem,) ad perdendum eos qui evaserint, et ne tradas (vel, concludas) residuos ejus in dic afflictionis.

The Prophet enumerates here the kinds of cruelty which the Idumeans exercised towards the Church of God, the children of Abraham, their own kindred. But he speaks by way of prohibition; it is then a personification, by which the Prophet introduces God as the speaker, as though he taught and admonished them on the duties of human kindness. Engraven, indeed, on their hearts ought all these to have been, on account of which he now reproaches them; for by forgetting humanity they had departed from everything right which nature requires. God indeed did not commence by instructing or teaching the Idumeans what were their duties; but the Prophet reminds them of things which must have been well known to them, and were beyond all dispute true.

Hence he says, Thou shouldest not look on in the day of thy brother, in the day of his alienation. The day of Judah he calls that in which God visited him: so the day of Jerusalem is called the day of calamity. Thou shouldest not then look on: we know in what sense this verb, to look on, is usually taken in Scripture; it is applied to men, when they lie in wait, or very anxiously desire anything, or rejoice at what they witness. The Prophet no doubt takes it metaphorically for taking delight in the misery of the chosen people; for, shortly after, he repeats the same word. Thou shouldest not then look on in the day of thy brother, even in the day of his alienation Some take another sense; but I approve of their opinion, who regard this alienation as meaning exile; at the same time, they give not the reason for this metaphor, which is this, --- that such a change then took place in the people, that they put on a new appearance. It was then alienation, when God wholly abolished the glory of

the kingdom of Judah, and when he took away all his favors, so that the appearance of the people became deformed. In the day then of his alienation, that is, when the Lord stripped him of his ancient dignity.

Thou shouldest not rejoice, he says, over the children of Judah, in the day of their destruction, that is of their ruin; ``thou shouldest not make thy mouth great in the day of affliction''. We now perceive what the Prophet means. Though indeed he seems here to show to the Idumeans their duty, he yet reproves them for having neglected all the laws of humanity, and of having been carried away by their own pride and cruelty. It hence follows that they were worthy of that dreadful vengeance which he has already mentioned. In case then the Idumeans complained that God dealt too severely with them, the Prophet here reminds them, that they in many ways sought such a ruin for themselves, --- How so? ``Were not thou delighted with the calamity of thy brother? Didst not thou laugh when Judah was distressed? And didst not thou speak loftily in ridicule? Was this outrageousness to be endured? Can the Lord now spare thee, as thou hast been so cruel towards thy brother?'' And he repeats the name of brother, for the crime was the more atrocious, as it has been already said, as they showed no regard for those of their own blood. But the Prophet often mentions either affliction, or ruin, or calamity, or evils, or adversity; for it is a feeling naturally implanted in us, that when one is distressed, we are touched with pity; even when we see our enemies lie prostrate on the ground, our hatred and anger are extinguished, or at least are abated: and all who see even their enemies ill-treated, become, as it were, other men, that is, they put off the anger with which they were previously inflamed. As then this is what is common almost to all men, it appears that the Idumeans must have been doubly and treble barbarous, when they rejoiced at the calamity of their brethren, and took pleasure in a spectacle so sad and mournful, and even spoke proudly, and jeered the miserable Jews; for this, as we have said, is the meaning of the words, to make great the mouth.

It follows, Thou shouldest not enter the gates of my people in the day of their destruction, nor shouldest thou look on in their calamity. Probably the Idumeans had made an irruption in company with the Assyrians and Chaldeans, when they ought to have remained at home, and there to lament the slaughter of their brethren. For if I cannot save my friend from death or from a calamity, I shall yet withdraw myself, for I could not bear to look on: but were I constrained to look on my friend, and be not able to succor him in his necessity, I should rather close my eyes; for there is in the eyes, we know, the tenderest sympathy. As then the Idumeans willingly went forth and entered Jerusalem with the enemies, it was hence evident that they were no better than wild beasts. Thou shouldest not then, he says, enter the gates of my people in the day of slaughter, nor shouldest thou especially then, look on. He again repeats {אתה} {גם} gam ate, thou also, or, especially thou: ``If other neighbors do this, yet thou shouldest abstain, for thou art of the same blood; if thou can't not bring help, show at least some token of grief and of sympathy: but as thou willingly and gladly lookest on their calamities, it is quite evident that there is not in thee a particle of right feeling.''

He afterwards adds, Thou shouldest not stretch forth thy hand to his substance.

Here he accuses the Idumeans of having been implicated in taking the spoils with other enemies, as though he said, ``Ye have not only suffered your brethren to be pillaged, but ye became robbers yourselves. Ye ought to have felt sorrow in seeing them distressed by foreign enemies; but ye have plundered with them, and enriched yourselves with spoils; this certainly is by no means to be endured.''

It follows, And thou shouldest not stand on the going forth. The word {פרק} perek signifies to break, to dissipate, to rend; hence {פרק} perek, as a noun, in Hebrew means rending and breaking. Therefore some take it metaphorically for a place where two ways meet, when one road is cut or divided into two. When the two meet then there is a going forth by two ways; hence they take {פרק}, perek, for such a place. But we may simply take it for the rending of the people. Though I am certainly pleased with the first explanation, yet I do not confine the word to that meaning; and I prefer the idea of going forth, as it harmonizes better with the context: Thou hast stood then on the going forth; and for what purpose? To destroy those who had escaped, and to stop or to deliver up his remaining captives in the day of affliction. In short, the Prophet means that the Idumeans occupied all the ways, to intercept the miserable exiles, to whom flight was the only way of safety.

As then the miserable Jews tried by winding outlets to provide for their own safety, the Prophet says that they were intercepted by the Idumeans, lest any of them should escape, and that they were stopped, that afterwards they might be slain by their enemies. Inasmuch as the Assyrians and the Chaldeans were a people far remote from Judea, it is probable that the roads were unknown to them, and that they were afraid of being entrapped; but the Idumeans, who were familiarly acquainted with all their roads, could stand at all the outlets. Some give the following explanation, but it is too frigid: Thou shouldest not stand for the rending of thy brethren, that is, thou should not stand still, but strive to extend a helping hand to the distressed: but this, as I have said, is too frigid and strained. Thou shouldest not then stand on the going forth of the roads to destroy We now see what the Prophet had in view; to destroy, he says, and whom did they destroy? Even those who had already escaped. Expressly then is pointed out here the cruelty to which I have referred, that the Idumeans were not contented with the ruin of the city, and the great slaughter which had been made; but in case any had stealthily escaped, they occupied the outlets of the roads, that they might not flee away: and the same thing is meant when he adds, that all were betrayed or stopped who had remained alive in the day of affliction.

We now understand the Prophet's meaning; --- that the Idumeans could not complain that God was too severe with them, when he reduced them to nothing, because they had given examples of extreme cruelty towards their own brethren, and at a time when their calamities ought to have obliterated all hatred and old enmities, as it is usually the case even with men the most alienated from one another. Let us proceed ---

Obadiah 15

15. For the day of the Lord is near upon all the heathen: as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head.

15. Quia propinquus dies Jehovae super omnes gentes; sicut fecisti fiet tibi; mer-

ces tua revertetur in caput tuum.

By saying that the day of Jehovah was nigh upon all nations, the Prophet may be regarded as reasoning from the greater to the less: ``If God will not spare other nations, how canst thou escape his hand?'' In a like manner does Jeremiah speak in chapter 49, (Jeremiah 49:12) he addresses the Idumeans in these words, 'Behold, they shall drink of the cup, who have not been by judgment condemned to drink; and shalt thou not taste? by drinking thou shalt drink to the very dregs. He shows then that the Idumeans deserved a double vengeance; for if indeed they were compared with the Assyrians and Chaldeans, the fault of the latter would appear small: the Chaldeans might pretend some causes for the war, they were aliens, they were, in short, professed enemies; but the Idumeans were neighbors and kindred. The same thing might be also said of other nations. But the words may be explained in a simpler manner; and that is, that God would not only take vengeance on one or two nations, but on all. ``See,'' he says, ``a change will take place not only in one corner, but in the whole world. The Lord will thus show that he is the judge of the whole earth. Hence it follows, that the Idumeans also must render an account, for God has resolved to execute judgment on all nations; no one whatever shall be passed by.''

Behold, then, nigh is the day of Jehovah. We have said that the time in which Obadiah prophesied is unknown to us. But it is no matter of wonder that he declares that nigh is the day of Jehovah; for the Lord hastens not after the manner of men; but, at the same time, he knows his own seasons; and this is ever accomplished, that when the ungodly think themselves to be at rest, then sudden destruction overtakes them.

He draws this conclusion, As thou hast done, so shall it be done to thee. There seems, however, to be here an implied comparison between the chastisement of the chosen people and the punishment which shall be inflicted on other nations. When the Idumeans saw that the kingdom of Israel and of Judah was trodden under foot, they thought that the children of Abraham were thus punished because they had despised their own Prophets, because they had become immoral and perverse in the extreme. Thus they exempted themselves and others from punishment. Now the Prophet declares that God had been the judge of his people, but that he is also the judge of the whole world, and that this would quickly be made evident. When, therefore, he says, that nigh was the day of Jehovah, he had, I have no doubt, a regard, as I have already said, to the chastisement of the Church; as though he said, ``As God has proved himself to be one who justly punishes sins with respect to Israel and Judah; so also at length he will ascend his tribunal to judge all the nations; no one, therefore, shall escape punishment. All then in their different conditions shall be constrained to give an account of their actions, for the Lord will spare none: and though he has begun with his Church and his own house, yet there will come afterwards the suitable time to take vengeance, when he will extend his hand to punish all heathen nations.'' This, seems to me to be the real meaning.

Rightly then does he conclude, As then thou hast done, it shall be done to thee: ``Think not that thou shalt be unpunished for having gone against thy brother. It was

God's purpose to exhibit an example of his severity towards others, while he spared thee; but thou hast abused his forbearance; for thou mightest have remained quiet at home: the Lord will then repay thee.'' And then he subjoins, Thy reward shall recoil, or return, on thine own head Here the Prophet announces what Christ also says

`With what measure any one measures, it shall be repaid to him,' (Matthew 7:2.)

This sentence is worthy of being noticed: for when God leaves the innocent to the will of the ungodly, they think that they may do whatever they please with impunity, as though they were the executioners of God. As then they become thus insolent when the Lord spares them, let us take notice of what the Prophet says here, --- that a reward is prepared for every one, and that whatever cruelty the ungodly may exercise, it shall be returned on their own heads. It follows ---

Obadiah 16

16. For as ye have drunk upon my holy mountain, so shall all the heathen drink continually, yea, they shall drink, and they shall swallow down, and they shall be as though they had not been.

16. Quia sicuti bibistis super montem sanctum meum, bibent omnes gentes jugiter, bibent (inquam) et sorbebunt; et erunt quasi non sint.

Here Obadiah proceeds farther and says, that God would revenge the wrongs done to his Church. The declaration in the last verse was general, ``Behold, on all the nations the day of Jehovah is nigh; as then thou hast done, God will repay thee:'' but now he shows that this would be, because God purposed to defend his own servants, (clientes --- clients;) and as they had been cruelly treated, he would become the avenger of their wrongs; As then ye have drunk on my holy mountain, etc. The Prophet, I have no doubt, taking a part for the whole, included in the word drink their triumphs and rejoicings. As then ye have rejoiced on my holy mountain, so also all the nations shall drink and continue their excess; they shall drink up, so that ye shall utterly perish. But the Prophet appears to me evidently to add here a proof of their avariciousness. He had shortly before accused the Idumeans of having taken away a part of the spoil, together with the foreign nations, when the miserable Jews were plundered. So also, he says now, Ye have drunk, in token of triumph and rejoicing.

Ye have then drunk wine on my holy mountain: now drink shall all the nations This latter drinking is to be taken in a sense different from the former. What then? Drink they shall, and drink up, that is, ``They shall consume all your substance.'' And he afterwards adds, And drink they shall continually; and they shall be as though they had not been, that is they shall not cease to eat and to drink until they shall consume whatever is among you. He then intimates that the Idumeans, who had enriched themselves with the spoils of their brethren, and who had also kept feastings in token of their joy on the holy mountain, would hereafter be the food of others, for all the nations would drink, and drink them up To drink then here is the same as to consume. It follows, (for I am under the necessity of finishing this prophecy today, and time, I hope, will allow me) ---

Obadiah 17

17. But upon mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions.

17. Et in monte Sion erit evasio, et erit sanctitas (nempe mons ipse;) et possidebit domus Jacob possessiones suas (alii vertunt, eos a quibus possidebantur.

Here the Prophet promises deliverance to the Jews; for other consolations would have been of no great moment, had they, who then were perishing, no hope of being some time restored to safety. The Jews might indeed have objected, and said, ``What is it to us, though the Lord may avenge our wrongs? Should the Idumeans be destroyed for our sake, what profit will that be to us? We are in the meantime destroyed and have no hope of deliverance.'' The Prophet here meets this objection, and says, In mount Zion shall be escape Though then the Idumeans had attempted to intercept all outlets, as it has been before mentioned, yet God promises here that there would be an escape in mount Zion: he says not, from mount Zion, but in the very mountain. What does this mean? even that God would restore those who might seem then to be lost. Then Obadiah clearly promises that there would be a restoration of the Church.

But we are taught in this place, that the punishment, by which the Lord chastises his people for their sins, is ever for a time. Whenever then God inflicts wounds on his Church, prepared at the same time is the remedy; for God designs not, nor does he suffer, that his own people should be wholly lost. This we may learn from the Prophet's words, when he says, that there would be escape in Zion. And it was no ordinary comfort for the Jews to know, that even in their extreme decay, there remained for them some hope of deliverance, and that the people, who might appear at the time to be extinct, would yet be saved, and preserved alive, as though they arose from the dead.

He says that mount Zion would be holiness or holy, by which he means that God would be mindful of his covenant. As then he had chosen mount Zion where he would be worshipped, the Prophet intimates that God's name was not there involved presumptuously or in vain. Inasmuch as God had chosen this mount for himself, it was holy; for God is said to have profaned the land and the temple, when he forsook them and delivered them up into the hands of enemies. So also now when the Prophet says, that mount Zion would be holy, it is the same as though he had said, that God would have a care for this mountain, because he had once consecrated it to himself, and designed it to be his own habitation. The cause then is put here for its effect. He had said, that the Jews would survive, how much soever like the lost and the dead they might for a time be, --- How could such a thing be? The reason is this, --- mount Zion shall be holy: it was a dreadful profanation of mount Zion when the temple was destroyed, when the holy vessels were taken away by the Babylonians, when, in short, the enemies showed there every kind of insolence. But when the Lord restored his people, when the altar was built again, and sacrifices were offered, then mount Zion recovered its holiness, that is, God manifested that the grace of his election had not been abolished, for he had again sanctified mount Zion, and thus designed it to be preserved safe. Holy then shall be mount Zion Were any one disposed to refine more on the Prophet's words, he might say, that it is evidently the

manner of our salvation that is intended, when God is said to sanctify or govern us by his Spirit: but the Prophet, I have no doubt, has regard here simply to the election of God.

And the house of Jacob shall again possess his own possessions, that is whatever God has given as an heritage to the children of Abraham, he will restore to them when they return from exile. If any one prefers to take possessions to be those of Edom, I do not object. But yet I think that the real meaning of the Prophet is, that when the children of Israel should return from exile, God would restore to them their ancient country, that they might possess whatever had been promised to their father Abraham. He means then, by their possessions, the whole land, which came by lot into the possession of the chosen people, as it had been promised to Abraham. It follows ---

Obadiah 18

18. And the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau for stubble, and they shall kindle in them, and devour them; and there shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau; for the Lord hath spoken it

18. Et erit domus Jacob ignis, et domus Joseph in flammam (flamma, ut respondeat,) et domus Esau erit palea; et ardebunt in ipsis et consument (vorabunt) eos; et non erit quidquam residuum domui Esau, quia Jehova loquutus est.

Here again the Prophet meets a doubt, which might come into the mind of each of them; for the Idumeans were flourishing, and their condition was independent, when the Israelites as well as the Jews were led into exile, and Jerusalem with its temple was destroyed. They might under such circumstances despair; but the Prophet shows, that though for a time the house of Jacob seemed to be dead, yet a fire would be kindled, which would consume the Idumeans, though they were then proud of their power and their wealth, and also of the prosperous issue of the victory over the Jews, for they had been enriched, and well as the Assyrians, by the overthrow of their brethren. A similar mode of speaking Isaiah also adopts; though he directs his discourse, not to the Idumeans, but to others, yet his manner of speaking is the same when he says, that God, the light of Israel, would be a fire and a flame to consume the wicked, (Isaiah 29:6.)

But this was fulfilled, when the Lord avenged the cruelty of Edom, though the Jews were then in exile and could not move a finger, when they were without arms, yea, when they were miserable slaves: the Idumeans were even then consumed, by what fire? how was this burning kindled? Even then the house of Jacob and the house of Joseph were like a fire and a flame The cause of this ruin, it is true, did not immediately appear to the Idumeans: but we must here look to the purpose of God. Why did God with so much severity punish the Idemeans? Because he intended by this example to show how much he loved his Church. Since then their cruelty was the cause of ruin to the Idumeans, rightly does the prophet say, that the house of Jacob and the house of Joseph would be like a fire and a flame to consume the Idumeans. And it was not a small solace to the miserable exiles, when they understood, that they were still regarded by God in their depressed condition. Inasmuch then as they were exposed to the reproach and ridicule of all, it pleased God to testify that they were

the objects of his care, and that he would, for their sake, destroy whole nations even those who then gloried in their power. We now then see why the Prophet adopted this figurative language. By the house of Joseph, he means as we have said elsewhere the kingdom of Israel; he mentions a part for the whole. It follows ---

Obadiah 19-20

19. And they of the south shall possess the mount of Esau; and they of the plain the Philistines: and they shall possess the fields of Ephraim, and the fields of Samaria: and Benjamin shall possess Gilead

19..Et possidebunt meridiem montis Esau, et planietiem Philistim, et possidebunt agros Ephraim et agros Samariae; et Benjamin possidebit Gilead.

20. And the captivity of this host of the children of Israel shall possess that of the Canaanites, even unto Zarephath; and the captivity of Jerusalem, which is in Sepharad, shall possess the cities of the south.

20. Et migratio exercitus hujus filiorum Israel, quod Chananaeorum fuit usque ad Zerphath (vel, qui sunt in Chananaeis,) et migratio Jerusalem, quod in Sepharad, possidebunt (in quam) urbes Australes (vel, meridionales.) [83]

The Prophet proceeds with the same subject, --- that God would not only gather the remnants of his people from the Babylonian exile, but would restore the exiles, that they might rule far and wide, and that their condition might be better than it was before: for the Prophet, as I think, directs the attention to the first blessing of God, which had been deposited in the hand of Abraham. God had promised to the posterity of Abraham the whole land from Euphrates to the sea. Now this land had never been possessed by the children of Abraham. This happened, as it is well known, through their sloth and ingratitude. David in his time enlarged the borders; but yet he only made those tributaries whom God had commanded to be destroyed. So this blessing had never been fulfilled, because the people put a hindrance in the way. The Prophet now, speaking of the restoration of the Church, tells the people, who would return from exile, that they were to occupy the country which had been promised to their fathers as though he said, ``There will come to you a full and complete inheritance.''

Now it is certain that this prophecy has never been completed: we know that but a small portion of the land was possessed by the Jews. What then are we to understand

[83] The rendering of the first of these two verses is materially different from our version. There are difficulties here which are considerable. Our version in the first part follows Septuagint; and others have followed the same, such as Newcome and Henderson, though Junius and Tremulius and Dathius have rendered it materially the same with Calvin, and certainly more in consistency with the Hebrew text. The following may be considered as a literal version of the whole verse: — 19. And they shall inherit the south, the mount of Esau, And the plain, even that of the Philistines, And they shall inherit the field of Ephraim and the field of Samaria, And of Benjamin, even Gilead. The word "to possess" does not convey the meaning of {,{ירש which means to inherit, or to possess by inheritance, as Junius and Tremelius render it --- haereditario jure possidebunt --- ``They shall possess by an hereditary right.'' And this exactly corresponds with Calvin's explanation. Though our version follows the Septuagint in the two first lines, it yet departs from it the two last. But the 20th verse is the most difficult. ``Captivity'' is more properly ``migration'' or transmigration, as Calvin renders it. Then follow the words, {החל}-{חזה} {לבני} ,{ישראל} literally, in my view, ``the beginning, this, to the children of Israel.'' So the Septuagint takes the word ,{החל} as meaning ``beginning,'' and not ``host:'' it wants the {ו} except in three copies, and it always has this, when it means a host. I propose the following translation: --- And the migration, which commenced with the children of Israel, Shall inherit what the Canaanites had as far as Sarephath; And the migration from Jerusalem, which are in Saphrad, The cities of the south. The latter verse is a fuller explanation of the former; and, as is the case commonly in Hebrew, when two things previously mentioned are referred to, the order is reversed, the last particular is mentioned first, so it is here. The verb ``inherit'' is in the last clause in Hebrew; but the idiom of our language requires it to be in the first. --- Ed.

by this prophecy? It does unquestionably appear that the Prophet speaks here of the kingdom of Christ; and we know that the Church was then really restored, and that the Jews not only recovered their former state from which they had fallen, but that their kingdom was increased: for how great became the splendor of the kingdom and of the temple under Christ? This then is what the Prophet now means, when he promises to the Jews the heritage which they had lost; yea, God then enlarged the borders of Judea. Hence he shows that they should not only be restored to their former condition, but that the kingdom would be increased in splendor and wealth, when Christ should come. Let us now run over the words.

Possess then shall they the south of the mount of Esau. The space was no doubt great: even when David reigned, the Jews did not possess that part or south portion of mount Seir. Then the Prophet, as I have said, shows that the borders of the kingdom would be more extensive than they had been. And the plain, he says, of the Philistines On that side also the Lord would cause that the Jews would extend farther than their kingdom. And possess they shall the fields of Ephraim Here I will not spend much labor in describing the land: but it is enough for us to understand that the design of the Prophet was to show, that the state of the people after their exile would be far more splendid than it had been before, even under the reign of David. What he means by Gilead is not very clear: but it is not probable that mount Gilead is referred to here, which was not far distant from the tribe of Benjamin, but rather that a town or some place distant from that part, and not included in their portion, is pointed out.

He afterwards adds, And the migrations of this host of the children of Israel, etc. There is here an obscurity in the words. The Hebrews by Canaan mean the Illyrians as well as Germans, and also the Gauls: for they say, that the migration, which shall be dispersed in Gaul, and in Germany, and in these far regions, shall possess the southern cities. Now by Zarephath they understand Spain. But we know, as we have elsewhere said, that the Jews are very bold in their glosses: for they are not ashamed to trifle and to blend frivolous things; and they assert this as though it were evident from history, and easily found out. Thus they prattle about things unknown to them, and this they do without any reason or discrimination. The Prophet, I doubt not, means here that all those territories, which had been formerly promised to the children of Abraham, would come into their possession when the Lord would send his Christ, not only to restore what had fallen, but also to render the state of the people in every way blessed. The import of the whole then is, that the Jews shall not only recover what they had lost, but what had not hitherto been given them to possess: all this the Lord would bestow on them when Christ came. It follows ---

Obadiah 21

21. And saviours shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the Lord's.

21. Et ascendent servatores in montem Sion, ad judicandum montem Esau; et erit Jehovae regnum.

Here the Prophet says, that there are in God's hand ministers, the labor of whom he employs to preserve his own people. He alludes here, I have no doubt, to the his-

tory of the judges. We indeed know that the people of Israel were often so distressed, that their deliverance was almost incredible; and that yet they were also delivered in such a way as to have made it evident that the hand of God had appeared from heaven. Since this then was well known to the Jews, the Prophet here reminds them that God had still in his hand redeemers, whenever it might please him to gather his people. God then shall send preservers, even as he did send them formerly to your fathers. They had indeed found true by experience what the Prophet says here, not only once, but more than ten times. This then ought to have served much to confirm this prophecy.

Ascend then shall they who will judge the mount of Esau, --- who, being endued with the power of God and his authority, will execute judgment on mount Seir and on the whole nation, and will avenge the cruelty which Edom had exercised towards the children of Abraham.

But this passage shows, that Christ came not to be the minister of our deliverance and salvation in an ordinary way, but that he became our savior in a special manner; so that he stands alone in that capacity: and this is a very strong argument against the Jews. They confess that the Messiah would be the Redeemer of his people, but they ascribe this office to him in a general way, as they do to David and other kings. But it certainly appears from this passage, that the Messiah would not be of the common class, for saviors would be under him as his ministers. This the Jews dare not to deny, though they grumble: for it would be absurd that he should be one of their number. Since then he was sent to be a Redeemer and Savior in a way different from others, it follows that he is not man only, but that he is the Author of salvation. It would indeed be easy to reply, ``Why do you speak to us of many redeemers? Do you not hope for one Savior? If God will commit this office to many in an equal degree, why are there so many glorious promises respecting the Messiah? Why are we ever reminded of him alone? Why is he alone set forth to us as the ground of our salvation?'' It hence certainly appears that Christ is to be distinguished from all others, and that others are saviors under his authority; and such were the apostles, and such are all at this day, the labor and ministry of whom God employs to defend and support his Church.

Now he adds, Jehovah's shall be the kingdom. But as it is certain, that it was God's purpose to rule among his people after having restored them, in no other way than by the power of Christ, the Prophet, by saying that the kingdom of Christ would be Jehovah's, means, that it would be really divine, and more illustrious than if he had employed the labor of men. But two things must be here observed by us, --- that God himself really rules in the person of Christ, --- and that it is the legitimate mode of ruling the Church, that God alone should preside, and hold alone the chief power. Hence it follows, that when God does not appear as the only King, all things are in confusion, without any order. Now God is not called a King by way of an empty distinction: but then only is he regarded a King in reality, when all submit themselves to him, when they are ruled by his word; in short, when all creatures become silent in his presence. To God then belongs the kingdom. We hence see that the Church has no existence, where the word of God does not so prevail in its authority, as to

keep down whatever height there is in men, and to bring them under the yoke, so that all may depend on God alone, that all may look up to him, and that he may have all in subjection to himself.

Prayer.

Grant, Almighty God, that as we are so scattered in our pilgrimage in this world, that even a dreadful spectacle is presented to our eyes, when we see thy Church so miserably rent asunder, O grant, that being endued with the real power of thy Spirit, and gathered into one, we may so cultivate brotherly kindness among ourselves, that each may strive to help another, and at the same time keep our eyes fixed on Christ Jesus; and though hard contests may await us, may we yet be under his care and protection, and so exercise patience, that having finished our warfare, we may at last enjoy that blessed rest, which thou hast promised to us, and which is laid up for us in heaven, and which has also been purchased for us by the blood of Christ thy Son, one Lord. Amen.

End of the Commentaries on Obadiah.

Commentary on Jonah

Commentary on Jonah

Preface by the Author

At what time Jonah discharged the office of a Teacher, we may in some measure learn from 2 Kings 14:1 for it is certain that he is the person there mentioned in Sacred history, as he is expressly called the son of Amittai [84] . It is said there that Jeroboam, the son of Joash, had enlarged the borders of his kingdom, from the entrance into Hamath to the sea of the desert, according to the word of Jonah, the servant of God, the son of Amittai, who came from Gath. It was then at that time, or shortly before, that Jonah prophesied. And it is certain that he was not only sent to the Ninevites, but that he also was counted a Teacher among the people of Israel. And the beginning also of his Book seems to intimate what I have said, --- that he was an ordinary Prophet among the people of Israel, for it begins with a copulative, And the Word of the Lord came to Jonah. Though the Holy Spirit does in other places speak sometimes in this manner, yet I doubt not but that Jonah intimates that he was recalled from the discharge of his ordinary office, a

nd had a new charge committed to him, --- to denounce, as we shall see, on the Ninevites a near destruction.

We must now then understand, that Jonah taught among the people of Israel, but that he received a command to go to the Ninevites. Of this command we shall take notice in its proper place; but it is right that we should know that he was not then only made a Prophet, when he was given as a Teacher to the Ninevites, but that he was sent to the Ninevites after having for some time employed his labors for God and his Church.

This Book is partly historical and partly didactic. For Jonah relates what happened to him after he had attempted to avoid the call of God, and what was the issue of his

[84] He was of Gath-hepher, in the tribe of Zebulun, a part of lower Galilee, Joshua 19:13. He prophesied in the reign of Jeroboam the second, king of Israel, who began to reign 823 before Christ, and reigned in Samaria 41 years. See 2 Kings 14:23-25." — Newcome.

prophecy: this is one thing. But at the same time he mentions the kind of doctrine which he was commanded to proclaim, and he also writes a Song of Thanksgiving. This last part contains doctrines and is not a mere narrative.

I come now to the words.

Commentaries on the Prophet Jonah

Chapter 1.

Lecture Seventy-second.

Jonah 1

Jonah 1:1-2

J

1. Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,

1. Et fuit sermo Jehovae ad Ionam, filium Amittai, dicendo,

2. Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.

2. Surge, vade Niniveh, ad urbem magnam, et clama contra eam; quia ascendit malitia eorum coram facie mea.

As I have before observed, Jonah seems here indirectly to intimate, [85] that he had been previously called to the office of a teacher; for it is the same as though he had said, that he framed this history as a part of his ordinary function. The word of God then was not for the first time communicated to Jonah, when he was sent to Nineveh; but it pleased God, when he was already a Prophet, to employ him among other nations. It might have been then, that he was sent to Nineveh, that the Lord, being wearied with the obstinacy of his own people, might afford an example of pious docility on the part of a heathen and uncircumcised nation, in order to render the Israelites more inexcusable. They made a profession of true religion, they boasted that they were a holy people; circumcision was also to them a symbol and a pledge of God's covenant; yet they despised all the Prophets, so that their teaching among them was wholly useless. It is then probable that this Prophet was taken away from them, that the Ninevites by their example might increase the sin of Israel, for in

[85] Calvin lays no great stress on the circumstance of the Book commencing with a {,{ו but states what he thinks as its probable import. The fact that other Books, such as Joshua, Judges, 1 Samuel, Ezekiel, and other books, begin thus, is no proof that the copulative here does not intimate what is here stated. Marckius and Cocceius think that it imports a connection between the different Books of Scripture; and if so, why may it not intimate a connection between this Book and the former Prophecy of Jonah? Junius and Tremelius render the {ו} ``when,'' and connect it with ``then'' at the beginning of the third verse; and it may be so construed at the beginning of most of the other Books. Adopting this rendering, we may translate thus, --- 1. When the word of Jehovah came to Johah, the son of Amittai, saying 2. Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against her, for there wickedness has ascended before me. 3. Then Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish, from the presence of Jehovah, and went down to Joppa,'' etc. This reads connected, and the passage admits of this construction, for the copulative {ו} in Hebrew, when repeated, may very frequently be thus rendered, the first by ``when,'' and the second by ``then.'' --- Ed.

three days they turned to God, after Jonah had preached to them: but among the Israelites and their kindred he had, during a long time, effected nothing, when yet his authority had been sufficiently ratified, and thus, as we have already said, in their favor: for Jonah had predicted, that the kingdom of Israel would as yet stand; and however much they deserved to perish, yet the Lord fulfilled what he had promised by the mouth at his servant. They ought then to have embraced his doctrine, not only because it was divine, but especially because the Lord had been pleased to show his love to them.

I do not indeed doubt, but that the ingratitude of the people was in this manner arraigned, since the Ninevites repented at the preaching of Jonah, and that for a short time, while the Israelites ever hardened themselves in their obstinacy. And hence some have refinedly expounded that passage in Matthew 12:39-41, `This perverse generation seeketh a sign, and a sign shall not be given to it, except the sign of Jonah the Prophet,' as though this intimated, that the Gospel was to be preached to the Gentiles, inasmuch as Jonah was taken away from his own nation, and was given as a teacher to foreign and heathen nations. They therefore suppose, that we are to understand this as a prophecy respecting the future call of the Gentiles, as though Christ had said, that he would hereafter go to the Gentiles, after having found the wickedness of the chosen people past recovery. But as Christ expressly applies this comparison, we ought not to draw his words here and there. [86] He indeed confines the similitude to one particular thing, that is, ``As Jonah had been three days in the whale's bowels, so also he would be three days in the bowels of the earth;'' as though he had said, that in this he would be like to Jonah, for he would be a Prophet brought to life again. And this was said designedly by Christ, because he saw that he was despised by the Jews, and that his labors were in vain: ``Since ye now hear me not, and regard me as nothing, know that I shall be hereafter a new Prophet, even after my resurrection; so at length I shall begin to speak more effectually both to the Jews and to the Gentiles, as Jonah converted Nineveh, after having returned again to life.'' This then is the simple meaning of the passage. Hence Jonah was not a type of Christ, because he was sent away unto the Gentiles, but because he returned to life again, after having for some time exercised his office as a Prophet among the people of Israel. They then who say that his going forth was a token of the call of the Gentiles, adduce indeed what is plausible, but it seems to be supported by no solid reason; for it was in fact an extraordinary thing. God, then, had not as yet openly showed what he would do at the coming of Christ. When Naaman the Syrian was converted to the faith, (2 Kings 5:15) and a few others, God changed nothing in his ordinary proceedings: for there ever existed the special call of the race of Abraham, and religion was ever confined within the ancient limits; and it remained ever true, that God had not done to other nations as he had to the Jews, for he had revealed to them his judgments, (Psalm 147:20.) It was therefore God's will that the adoption of the race of Abraham should continue unaltered to the coming of Christ, so that the Jews might excel all other nations, and differ from them through a gratuitous

[86] Marckius wisely says on another subject, but on a similar occasion, “Extra Scripturam autem audacter hic sapiat nemo;” — “but let no one be here rashly wise beyond Scripture.” — Ed.

privilege, as the holy and elect people of God.

Those who adopt the contrary opinion say, that the Ninevites were converted to the Lord without circumcision. This is true; but I know not whether that was a true and legitimate conversion, which is hereafter mentioned; and of this, the Lord being willing, I shall again speak more fully: but it seems more probable, that they were induced by the reproofs and threatening of the Prophet, suppliantly to deprecate the impending wrath of God: hence God once forgave them; what took place afterwards does not clearly appear. It is certainly not probable that the whole city was converted to the Lord: for soon after that city became exceedingly hostile both to the Israelites and the Jews; and the Church of God was by the Ninevites continually harassed with slaughters. Since it was so, there is certainly no reason to think, that they had really and from the heart repented. But I put off a full discussion of this subject until we come to another passage. Let us go on now with our text.

Arise, go to Nineveh, to that great city. Nineveh is called a great city, and not without reason; for it was in circumference, as heathen writers say, 400 stadia: and we shall see that Jonah was three whole days in going through the squares and streets of the city [87] . It hence follows, that it was a very large city, and this all allow. Profane writers call it Ninus, and say that it is a name derived from its founder; for it was Ninus, the son of Betas, who built it. But more correct is their opinion, who think that {נינוה} Ninue, is a Hebrew word: and hence what Herodotus and Diodorus, and others of the same class, say, is certainly fabulous, both as to the origin of the city and as to the whole progress of the kingdom, and their legends can easily be disproved by testimonies from holy Scripture. It is at the same time admitted by all, that Nineveh was a very large and a well fortified city. Babylon was afterwards built by Semiramis, who had been the wife of Betas: after her husband's death she wished to show that she also excelled in mind and industry, and that she had wisdom above her sex. But with regard to the founder of Nineveh, it is certain that the city was first built by Asshur: whether it was enlarged by Ninus, I know not: this, then, I leave as uncertain; for I wish not to contend about what is doubtful. But it is certain, from what Moses has said, that the founder of this city was Asshur, (Genesis 10:11.)

As to the largeness of the city, even if profane writers had not said a word, the testimony of Jonah ought to be sufficient to us. Now, since he is bidden to go and proceed to Nineveh, the Lord gives him some hope of success. He indeed wrought effectually by the hand of his servant, Nahum; who, though he continued at home, yet prophesied against the Ninevites; but with a different view, and for another end.

[87] There is some difference in the account given. Diodorus Siculus, as quoted by Marckius, says, that if it was in form oblong; one side was 150 stadia, the other 90; so that its circumference must have been 480 stadia. A stadium is nearly equal to a furlong, eight of which make a mile. It must then have been in circuit about 60 miles. Its walls are reported to have been 100 feet high — 33 yards and 1 foot, and so broad that three chariots might run abreast, and adorned by 1,500 towers, the height of which were 200 feet. From the circumstance of having in it 120,000 not knowing the right hand from the left, supposed to be infants, some think that its population must have been above two million. It was situated on the river Tigris on the eastern side, not far from the present Mosul. In building this city, as reported by Bochart, there were no less than 140 myriads of men for eight years. A myriad being ten thousand, the number must have been one million, four hundred thousand. Such a city none has ever built since, was the declaration of Diodorus: and there has not probably on record an account of such a city. That it had large gardens, and even fields, within its walls, there can be no doubt. — Ed.

For as the people were then miserably distressed, and saw the kingdom or monarchy of Assyria in a flourishing state, they must have despaired, had not some solace been afforded them. Hence Nahum showed that God would be a judge against the Ninevites; that though he for a time favored and spared them, there was yet impending over them the dreadful judgment of which he speaks. Nahum, then, was not given as a teacher to the Ninevites, but was only a proclaimer, that the Jews might strengthen their faith by this comfort --- that they were not wholly rejected by the Lord, as he would some time avenge their wrongs. The case with Jonah was different: for he was sent to the city itself, to exhort the Ninevites to repent. Now the Lord, by speaking expressly of the largeness of the city, intended thus to prepare him with firmness, lest he should be frightened by the splendor, wealth, and power of that city: for we know how difficult it is to take in hand great and arduous undertakings, especially when we feel ourselves destitute of strength. When we have to do with many and powerful adversaries, we are not only debilitated, but our courage wholly vanishes away. Lest, then, the greatness of Nineveh should fill Jonah with terror, he is here prepared and armed with firmness. ``Go then to Nineveh, and let not the power of that monarchy prevent thee to fulfill what I command thee; which is, to show to the Ninevites their sins, and to denounce on them destruction, if they repent not.''

We now then understand why Nineveh was called a great city: for had it not been for the reason just stated, it would not have been necessary that this should have been said to Jonah. The Israelites, I doubt not, knew well that it was a large city, and also possessed of strength and of a large number of men: but the Lord intended to set before his servant what might have been a hindrance to him in the discharge of his office; Go then to this great city. In short, God designed in this way to try Jonah, whether he would prefer his command to all the hindrances of this world. And it is a genuine proof of obedience when we simply obey God, however numerous the obstacles which may meet us and may be suggested to our minds, and though no escape may appear to us; yea, when we follow God, as it were with closed eyes, wherever he may lead us, and doubt not but that he will add strength to us, and stretch forth also his hand, whenever need may require, to remove all our difficulties. It was then the Lord's purpose to deal thus with Jonah; as though he had said to him, ``remember who I am, and be content with my authority; for I have ready at hand all resources; when any thing stands in your way, rely on my power, and execute what I command thee.'' This is the import of the passage. Whenever then God demands any service from us, and we at the same time see that what the discharge of our duty demands is either difficult or apparently impossible, let this come to our minds, --- that there is not anything in the whole world which ought not to give way to God's command: we shall then gather courage and confidence, nor will anything be able to call us away from our duty and a right course, though the whole world were fighting against God.

It now follows, Cry against her; for ascended has their wickedness before my presence. Cry, he says, against her: it was an unpleasant undertaking to cry out against her immediately at the beginning. We indeed know that men take pride in

their power: and as there was then but one monarchy in the world, the seat of which was at Nineveh, a teacher could hardly expect to obtain a patient hearing, though he excelled in gracefulness of manner, and had acquired reputation, and brought an agreeable message. But Jonah was a foreigner, one unknown, and destitute of authority; and still more, he was immediately to denounce destruction on the Ninevites, to cry aloud, to reprove, to make a vehement proclamation, to threaten. How difficult was all this? We hence see how hard a command it was when God charged his Prophet to cry against Nineveh.

It is now added, For their wickedness has ascended to me. By this clause God strengthens his servant Jonah; as though he said, ``Thou wilt not, as an individual, have to contend with them, but I constitute thee as my herald, to summon them to my tribunal.'' And no doubt it must have served much to animate Jonah, that he had not to deal with the Ninevites as an individual, but as the messenger of God: and it might also have had an influence on their minds, to know, that though no mortal inflicted punishment for their crimes, they yet could not escape the vengeance of God. This then is the reason why the Lord here declares that he would be the judge of Nineveh. And at the same time he reminds us, that though the Ninevites felicitated themselves, and also gained the plaudits of the whole world on account of their power, yet all this was of no moment, because their wickedness and iniquity had ascended into heaven. When therefore we are reproved, there is no reason that we should turn our eyes here and there towards men; we ought instantly to present ourselves to the scrutiny of God; nay, we ought ourselves to take in hand that voluntary examination which God requires. By so doing, we shall not feed our vices by foolishly deceiving ourselves, as hypocrites do, who ever look around them to the right hand and to the left, and never raise up their thoughts to heaven. Let us go on

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Jonah 1:3

3. But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.

3. Et surrexit Jonas ad fugendum (ut fugeret) Tharsis a facie Jehovae, et descendit Japho, et invenit navem, quae transibat Tharsis, et dedit mercedem (hoc est, naulum pretium vecturae,) et descendit in eam, ut iret cum ipsis (nempe cum mercatoribus vel nautis) in Tharsis a conspectu Jehovae.

Jonah now relates how he sought hiding-places, that he might withdraw himself from the service of God; not that he deceived himself with such a gross notion, as that he would be no longer under the power of God, after having passed over the sea; but he intended to shun, as it were, the light of the present life, by proceeding to a foreign country. He was, no doubt, not only in a disturbed state of mind, when he formed such a purpose, but was utterly confused.

It may be asked, why Jonah thus avoided the command of God. The Jews, indulging in frigid trifles in divine things, say that he feared lest, when he came to Nineveh, he should be deprived of the prophetic spirit, as though he were not in the same danger by passing over the sea: this is very frivolous and puerile. And

further, they blend things of no weight, when reasons sufficiently important present themselves to us.

It was first a new and unusual thing for Prophets to be drawn away from the chosen people, and sent to heathen nations. When Peter was sent to Cornelius, (Acts 10:17,) though he had been instructed as to the future call of the Gentiles, he yet doubted, he hesitated until he was driven as it were forcibly by a vision. What then must have come to the mind of Jonah? If only on account of one man the mind of Peter was disquieted, so as to think it an illusion, when he was sent a teacher to Cornelius, what must Jonah have thought, when he was sent to a city so populous? Hence novelty, doubtless, must have violently shaken the courage of the holy Prophet, and induced him to retake himself elsewhere, as one destitute of understanding. Again, doubt might have had an influence on him: for how could he have hoped that a people, who were notorious for their licentiousness, would be converted? He had indeed before an experience of the hardness of the chosen people. He had been faithfully engaged in his office, he had omitted nothing to confirm the worship of God and true religion among the people of Israel: but he had effected but little; and yet the Jews had been called from the womb. What then could he hope, when the Lord removed him to Nineveh? for unbridled licentiousness ruled there; there was also there extreme blindness, they had no knowledge of divine worship; in a word, they were sunk in extreme darkness, and the devil in every way reigned there. Doubt then must have broken down the spirit of Jonah, so that he disobeyed the command of God. Still further, the weakness of the flesh must have hindered him from following his legitimate call: ``What then? even this, --- I must go to the chief city of that monarchy, which at this day treads under its feet the whole earth; I must go there, a man obscure and despised; and then I must proclaim a message that will excite the greatest hatred, and instantly kindle the minds of men into rage; and what must I say to the Ninevites? `Ye are wicked men, God can no longer endure your impiety; there is, therefore, a dreadful vengeance near at hand.' How shall I be received?'' Jonah then, being still surrounded by the infirmities of the flesh, must have given way to fear, which dislodged the love of obedience.

And I have no doubt, in my own mind, but that Jonah discussed these things within himself, for he was not a log of wood. And doubtless it was not to no purpose, as I have already said, that he mentions that the city was great. God indeed sought to remove what might prove an hindrance, but Jonah, on the other hand, reasoned thus, --- ``I see that I am to have a fierce contest; nay, that such a number of people will fall on me, enough to overwhelm me a hundred times, as the Lord has not in vain foretold me that the city is great.'' And though he might have had some hope, if they had been chastised, that they would give God his due honor; yet he confesses, that this hindrance came to his mind, which prevented him to proceed in the course of his calling. Hence doubt, as well as the fear of the flesh made Jonah to stumble, and novelty also, as I have already said, must have perplexed him; so that he preferred to go down, as it were, to the grave, than to undertake an office which apparently had no reason in its favor. For why were the Prophets sent, except to effect something by their labor, and to bring forth some fruit? but of this Jonah had no hope. Some

authority was also allowed the Prophets, at least they were allowed the liberty of teaching; but Jonah thought that all entrance was closed up against him: and still more, Jonah thought that he was opposing the covenant of the Lord, who had chosen one people only; and he also thought that he was, as it were, fixed to his own land, when he was appointed a Teacher in his own country; he therefore could not remove elsewhere without feeling a great repugnance.

I hence think, that Jonah disobeyed the command of God, partly because the weakness of the flesh was an hindrance, partly because of the novelty of the message, and partly because he despaired of fruit, or of success to his teaching.

But he doubtless grievously transgressed: for the first rule, as to all our actions, is to follow the call of God. Though one may excel in heroic virtues, yet all his virtues are mere fumes, which shine before the eyes of men, except the object be to obey God. The call of God then, as I have said, holds the first place as to the conduct of men; and unless we lay this foundation, we do like him who would build a house in the air. Disordered then will be the whole course of our life, except God presides over and guides us, and raises up over us, as it were, his own banners. As then Jonah subverted the first and the only firm foundation of a right conduct, what could have remained for him? There is then no reason for us to extenuate his fault, for he could not have sinned more grievously than by forsaking God, in having refused to obey his call: it was, as it were to shake off the yoke; and this he confesses himself.

They therefore very childishly write who wish to be his apologists, since he twice condemns himself --- Jonah rose up to flee from the presence of Jehovah --- to go unto Tarshish from the presence of Jehovah. Why does he the second time repeat, from the presence of Jehovah? He meant, no doubt, to express here more distinctly his fault: and the repetition is indeed very emphatical: and it also proves clearly that it was not a slight offense, when Jonah retook himself elsewhere when he was sent to Nineveh. He could not indeed have departed from the Lord, for God fills heaven and earth; and, as I have said already, he was not fascinated by so gross an error as to think, that when he became a fugitive, he was beyond the reach of God's hand. What then is to flee from the face of Jehovah, except it be that which he here confesses, that he fled from the presence of God, as though he wished, like runaway servants, to reject the government of God? Since then Jonah was carried away by this violent temptation, there is no reason why we should now try, by some vain and frivolous pretenses, to excuse his sin. This is one thing.

With regard to the word Tharsis, or Tharsisa, I doubt not but that it means Cilicia. There are those who think that it is the city Tarsus; but they are mistaken, for it is the name of a country. They are also mistaken who translate it, Sea; for Jonah intended not only to go to sea, but also to pass over into Cilicia, which is opposite to the Syrian Sea. But the Jews called that the Sea of Tarshish, as it appears from many passages, because there was very frequent sailing to that place. As then that transmarine country was more known to them than any other, and as they carried there their merchandise, and in their turn purchased their goods, they called that the Sea of Tarshish, as it is well known, as being near it.

Jonah then intended to flee into Cilicia, when the Lord would have sent him to

Nineveh. It is said that he rose up to flee, and then, that he went down to Joppa, that he found there a ship, which was passing over to Tarshish, that he paid the fare, that he went down into the ship, to go with them into Cilicia: [88] now by all those expressions Jonah intimates that he was wholly fixed in his purpose, and that it was necessary that he should have been brought back by a strong hand; for he was touched by no repentance during his journey. Many things may indeed come to our minds when the call of God appears to us too burdensome. There is none of us, when service is to be performed to God, who does not roll this and that in his mind: ``What will be the issue? how wilt thou reach the place where thou expectest to be? See what dangers await thee.'' For Satan always comes forth, whenever we resolve to obey God; but we are to struggle in this case, and then repel what we see to be contrary to our calling. But Jonah shows that he was obstinately fixed in his purpose of fleeing: for he not only intended to go into Tarshish, but he actually went down to the city Joppa, which was nigh to Judea; and, therefore some think that Tarshish was Africa; but this is strained. Others divine it to be Thunetus or Carthage, as though indeed these cities were built at that time; but men are very bold in dreaming. But what need of giving a new meaning to this word against the most common usage of Scriptures when it is evident enough that Tarshish is Cilicia?

Now, when Jonah went down to Joppa, it was evident that he intended immediately to migrate from the land of Judah, and to pass over the sea: but by saying that he paid the fare, that he went down into the ship, that he might go, --- by this gradual progress, he sets before us, as I have said, more fully his own perverseness; so that he admits that he not only resolutely purposed to reject the call of God, but that he also confirmed himself in it: and though there were many things to be done, which might have sometimes forced him to stand still, he yet constantly followed where his perverse and blind impulse led him. There is no doubt then, but that Jonah, in these distinct words sets himself forth as a fugitive, not only by one act, but by many acts.

Now, as to his flight, we must bear in mind what I have before said --- that all flee away from the presence of God, who do not willingly obey his commandments; not that they can depart farther from him, but they seek, as far as they can, to confine God within narrow limits, and to exempt themselves from being subject to his power. No one indeed openly confesses this; yet the fact itself shows, that no one withdraws himself from obedience to God's commands without seeking to diminish and, as it were, to take from him his power, so that he may no longer rule. Whosoever, then, do not willingly subject themselves to God, it is the same as though they would turn their backs on him and reject his authority that they may no more be under his power and dominion.

It is deserving of notice, that as Jonah represents himself as guilty before the

[88] On this success of Jonah in meeting with a ship, etc., Marckius has these appropriate remarks — "God sometimes not only suffers the wicked to advance prosperously in their sins, but does not immediately restore the godly in their declensions; nay, he gives them every facility for a time in their downward course, in order that they may know themselves more, and that the glory of God may become thereby more manifest. Foolish then is the sinner, who, having begun life prosperously, concludes that the end will be equally happy." Matthew Henry's remarks are of the same import, but still more striking — "Providence seemed to favor his design, and gave him an opportunity to escape: we may be out of the way of duty, and yet may meet with favorable gale. The ready way is not always the right way."

whole world, so he intended by his example to show how great and detestable a sin it is, not to submit to the commands of God, and not to undertake whatever he enjoins, but to evade his authority. That he might then enhance the atrocity of his sin, he shows by his own example that we cannot rebel against God, without seeking, under some pretense or another to thrust him from his throne, and, at the same time, to confine him within certain limits that he may not include heaven and earth within his empire.

Prayer.

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast not sent a Jonah to us, when alienated from every hope of salvation, but hast given thy Son to be our Teacher, clearly to show to us the way of salvation, and not only to call us to repentance by threatening and terrors, but also kindly to allure us to the hope of eternal life, and to be a pledge of thy paternal love, --- O grant, that we may not reject so remarkable a favor offered to us, but willingly and from the heart obey thee; and though the condition which thou settest before us in thy Gospel may seem hard, and though the bearing of the cross is bitter to our flesh, yet may we never shun to obey thee, but present ourselves to thee as a sacrifice; and having overcome all the hindrances of this world, may we thus proceed in the course of our holy calling, until we be at length gathered into thy celestial kingdom, under the guidance of Christ thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

Lecture Seventy-third

Jonah 1:4

4.. But the Lord sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken.

4. Et Jehova emisit ventum magnum super mare, et facta est tempestas magna in mari, et navis cogitabit frangi.

Jonah declares here how he had been, as it were, by force brought back by the Lord, when he tried to flee away from his presence. He then says that a tempest arose in the sea; but he at the same time tells us, that this tempest did not arise by chance, as ungodly men are wont to say, who ascribe everything that happens to fortune. God, he says, sent a strong wind on the sea. Some give this renderings God raised up, deriving the verb from {נטל}, nuthel; but others derive it more correctly from {טול}, tul [89] , and we shall presently meet with the same word in the fifth verse. Now as to what took place, he says that there was so great a tempest, that the ship was not far from being broken. When he says, 'The ship thought to be broken [90] the expression corresponds with the idiom of our language, la navire cuidoit perir But some take the ship for the passengers or the sailors; but this is strained; and we know that our common language agrees in many of its phrases with the Hebrew.

Jonah then meant, that a tempest arose, not by chance, but by the certain purpose

[89] This is no doubt its root. It is used when Saul is said to cast a javelin at David, 1 Samuel 18:11, and when the Lord threatens to cast out the people from his land, Jeremiah 16:13. It implies force and power. Coverdale's rendering, as quoted by Henderson, strikingly conveys its meaning, "But the Lord hurled a great wynde into the sea." — Ed.

[90] This perhaps can hardly be said to be a Hebrew idiom. Marckius, and also Henderson, think it to be a metonymy, the ship is mentioned, instead of the mariners: there is in Luke 8:23 an opposite metonymy, the sailors are taken for the ship. Newcome renders the sentence, "and it was thought that the ship would be broken in pieces." If the metonymy be admitted, the rendering would be, "and the mariners thought that they should be shipwrecked." — Ed.

of God, so that being overtaken on the sea, he acknowledged that he had been deceived when he thought that he could flee away from God's presence by passing over the sea. Though indeed the Prophet speaks here only of one tempest, we may yet hence generally gather, that no storms, nor any changes in the air, which produce rain or stir up tempests on the sea, happen by chance, but that heaven and earth are so regulated by a Divine power, that nothing takes place without being foreseen and decreed. But if any one objects, and says that it does not harmonize with reason, that, for the fault of one man, so many suffered shipwreck, or were tossed here and there by the storm: the ready answer to this is, --- that though God had a regard only, in a special manner, to the case of Jonah, yet there were hidden reasons why he night justly involve others in the same danger. It is probable that many were then sailing; it was not one ship only that was on that sea, since there were so many harbors and so many islands. But though the Lord may involve many men in the same punishment, when he especially intends to pursue only one man, yet there is never wanting a reason why he might not call before his tribunal any one of us, even such as appear the most innocent. And the Lord works wonderfully, while ruling over men. It would be therefore preposterous to measure his operations by our wisdom; for God can so punish one man, as to humble some at the same time, and to chastise others for their various sins, and also to try their patience. Thus then is the mouth of ungodly men stopped, that they may not clamor against God, when he so executes his judgments as not to comport with the judgment of our flesh. But this point I shall presently discuss more at large: there are indeed everywhere in Scripture, instances in which God inflicted punishment on a whole people, when yet one man only had sinned. But when some murmur and plead that they are innocent, there is ever to be found a reason why God cannot be viewed as dealing cruelly with them; nay, were he pleased, he might justly treat them with much greater severity: in a word, though God may appear to deal severely with men, he yet really spares them, and treats them with indulgence. Let us now proceed ---

Jonah 1:5

5. Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them. But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep.

5. Et timuerunt nautae et vociferati sunt quisque ad deum suum; et projecerunt vasa, quae erant in navi, in mare, ut levaretur ab illis: Jonas autem descenderat in latera navis, et jacebat et dormiebat.

This narrative, in which Jonah relates in order so many circumstances, is not without its use; for, as we shall presently see, he intended to set forth his own insensibility, and to lay it before us as painted before our eyes: and the comparison, which is implied in the circumstances, greatly illustrates the supine and almost brutal security of Jonah.

He says first that the mariners [91] were afraid, and then, that each cried, that is, to his god and that they cast out into the sea the lading of the ship. As then they

[91] {,{מלחים from ,{מלה} salt, ``salt-men;'' so ``mariners,'' in our language, from mare, are literally sea-men; and sailors are sail-men. Nautae, in Latin, and {ναυται} in Greek, being from navis and {ναυς}, are properly, ship-men. --- Ed.

were all so concerned, was it not marvelous that Jonah, on whose account the sea was stormy, was asleep? Others were busy, they ran here and there in the ship, and spoiled themselves of their goods, that they might reach the shore in safety: they indeed chose to strip themselves of all they had rather than to perish; they also cried to their gods. Jonah cared for nothing, nay, he lay asleep: but whence came such a carelessness as this, except that he was not only become torpid, but that he seemed also to have been deprived of all reason and common feeling? There is no doubt then but that Jonah, in order to show this to have been the case, has here enumerated so many circumstances.

He says that the mariners were afraid. We indeed know that sailors are not usually frightened by small or common storms; for they are a hardy race of men, and they are the less afraid, because they daily see various commotions in the air. When, therefore, he says that the sailors were afraid, we hence gather that it was not a moderate tempest, for such does not thus terrify men accustomed by long expert once to all sorts of storms: they, then, who had been previously hardened, were disquieted with fear. He afterwards adds, that they cried, each of them to his god. Jonah certainly ought not to have slept so soundly, but that he might rouse himself at almost any moment, for he carried in his heart his own executioner, as he knew that he was a fugitive: for we have said before, that it was not a slight offense for Jonah to withdraw himself from the presence of God; he despised his call, and, as far as he could, cast off the yoke, so as not to obey God. Seeing, then, that Jonah was ill at ease with himself, ought he not to have trembled, even while asleep? But while others cried to their false gods, he either despised, or at least neglected the true God, to whom he knew he was disobedient, and against whom he rebelled. This is the point of the comparison, or of the antithesis. But we at the same time see, how in dangers men are constrained to call on God. Though, indeed, there is a certain impression by nature on the hearts of men as to God, so that every one, willing or unwilling, is conscious that there is some Supreme Being; we yet by our wickedness smother this light, which ought to shine within us. We indeed gladly cast away all cares and anxieties; for we wish to live at ease, and tranquillity is the chief good of men. Hence it comes, that all desire to live without fear and without care; and hence we all naturally seek quietness. Yet this quietness generates contempt. Hence then it is, that hardly any religion appears in the world, when God leaves us in an undisturbed condition. Fear constrains us, however unwilling, to come to God. False indeed is what is said, that fear is the cause of religion, and that it was the first reason why men thought that there were gods: this notion is indeed wholly inconsistent with common sense and experience. But religion, which has become nearly extinct, or at least covered over in the hearts of men, is stirred up by dangers. Of this Jonah gives a remarkable instance, when he says that the sailors cried, each of them to his god We know how barbarous is this race of men; they are disposed to shake off every sense of religion; they indeed drive away every fear, and deride God himself as long as they may. Hence that they cried to God, it was no doubt what necessity forced them to do. And here we may learn, how useful it is for us to be disquieted by fear; for while we are safe, torpidity, as it is well known, soon creeps over us.

Since, then, hardly any one of himself comes to God, we have need of goads; and God sharply pricks us, when he brings any danger, so as to constrain us to tremble. But in this way, as I have already said, he stimulates us; for we see that all would go astray, and even perish in their thoughtlessness, were he not to draw them back, even against their own will.

But Jonah does not simply say, that each cried to God, but he adds, to his own god. As, then, this passage teaches, that men are constrained by necessity to seek God, we also, on the other hand, it shows, that men go astray in seeking God, except they are directed by celestial truth, and also by the Spirit of God. There is then some right desire in men, but it goes astray; for none will keep the right way except the Lord directs them, as it has been said, both by his word and his Spirit. Both these particulars we learn from the words of the Prophet: The sailors feared; men hardy and almost iron-hearted, who, like the Cyclops, despised God, --- these, he says, were afraid; and they also cried to God; but they did not cry by the guidance of faith; hence it was, that every one cried to his own god.

When we read this, let it first come to our minds that there is no hope until God constrains us, as it were, by force; but we ought to anticipate extreme necessity by seeking him willingly. For what did it avail the sailors and other passengers, to call once on God? It is indeed probable that, shortly after, they relapsed into their former ungodly indifference; after having been freed from their danger, they probably despised God, and all religion was regarded by them with contempt. And so it commonly happens as to ungodly men, who never obey God except when they are constrained. Let therefore every one of us offer himself willingly to God, even now when we are in no danger, and enjoy full quietness. For if we think, that any pretext for thoughtlessness, or for error, or for ignorance, will serve as an excuse, we are greatly deceived; for no excuse can be admitted, since experience teaches us, that there is naturally implanted in all some knowledge of God, and that these truths are engraven on our hearts, that God governs our life, --- that he alone can remove us by death, --- that it is his peculiar office to aid and help us. For how was it that these sailors cried? Had they any new teacher who preached to them about religion, and who regularly taught them that God was the deliverer of mankind? By no means: but these truths, as I have said, had been by nature impressed on their hearts. While the sea was tranquil, none of them called on their god; but danger roused them from their drowsiness. But it is hence sufficiently evident, that whatever excuses they may pretend, who ascribe not to God his glory, they are all frivolous; for there is no need of any law, there is no need of any Scripture, in short, there is no need of any teaching, to enable men to know, that this life is in the hand of God, that deliverance is to be sought from him alone, and that nothing, as we have said, ought to be looked for from any other quarter: for invocation proves that men have this conviction respecting God; and invocation comes from nothing else but from some hidden instinct, and indeed from the guidance and teaching of nature, (duce ac magistra natura) This is one thing.

But let us also learn from this passage, that when God is sought by us, we ought not to trust to our own understanding; for we shall in that case immediately go

astray. God then must be supplicated to guide us by his word, otherwise every one will fall off into his own superstitions; as we here see, that each cried to his own god. The Prophet also reminds us that multiplicity of gods is no modern invention; for mankind, since the fall of Adam, have ever been prone to falsehood and vanity. We know how much corruption must occupy our minds, when every one invents for himself hideous and monstrous things. Since it is so, there is no wonder that superstitions have ever prevailed in the world; for the wit of man is the workshop of all errors. (quia ingenium hominis officina est omnium errorum) And hence also we may learn what I have lately touched upon, --- that nothing is worse for us than to follow the impulses of our flesh; for every one of himself advances in the way of error, even without being pushed on by another; and at the same time, as is commonly the case, men draw on one another.

He now adds, that the wares were cast out, that is, the lading of the ship; and we know that this is the last resource in shipwrecks; for men, to save their lives, will deprive themselves willingly of all their goods. We hence see how precious is life to man; for he will not hesitate to strip himself of all he has, that he may not lose his life. We indeed shun want, and many seek death because extreme poverty is intolerable to them; but when they come to some great danger, men ever prefer their life to all their possessions; for what are the good things of this world, but certain additions to our life? But Jonah tells us for another purpose that the ship was lightened, even for this, --- that we may know that the tempest was no ordinary commotion, but that the sailors, apprehensive of approaching death, adopted this as the last resource.

Another clause follows: Jonah had gone down into the sides [92] , or the side, of the ship. Jonah no doubt sought a retreat before the storm arose. As soon then as they sailed from the harbor, Jonah withdrew to some remote corner, that he might sleep there. But this was no excusable insensibility on his part, as he knew that he was a fugitive from the presence of God: he ought then to have been agitated by unceasing terrors; nay, he ought to have been to himself the taxer (exactor) of anxiety. But it often so happens, that when any one has sought hiding-places, he brings on himself a stupor almost brutal; he thinks of nothing, he cares for nothing, he is anxious for nothing. Such then was the insensibility which possessed the soul of Jonah, when he went down to some recess in the ship, that he might there indulge himself in sleep. Since it thus happened to the holy Prophet, who of us ought not to fear for himself? Let us hence learn to remind ourselves often of God's tribunal; and when our minds are seized with torpor, let us learn to stimulate and examine ourselves, lest God's judgment overwhelm us while asleep. For what prevented ruin from wholly swallowing up Jonah, except the mercy of God, who pitied his servant, and watched for his safety even while he was asleep? Had not the Lord then exercised such care over Jonah, he must have perished. [93]

We hence see that the Lord often cares for his people when they care not for

[92] "Sides," {,ירכתי mean no doubt the lower parts. Jerome renders it, ad interiora navis; the Septuagint, {εις} {την} {κοίλην} {του} {πλοίου} --- to the belly cavity of the ship. --- Ed.

[93] "We see in this instance the great danger in which unconscious sinners are often involved, that the solace sought by them departs from them, that a dead sleep remains, and even increases under God's judgment, and that in the performance of duty the godly are sometimes more slothful than the ungodly." — Ed.

themselves, and that he watches while they are asleep: but this ought not to serve to nourish our self-indulgence; for every one of us is already more indulgent to himself than he ought to be: but, on the contrary, this example of Jonah, whom we see to have been so near destruction, ought to excite and urge us, that when any of us has gone astray from his calling he may not lie secure in that state, but, on the contrary, run back immediately to God. And if God be not able to draw us back to himself without some violent means, let us at least follow in this respect the example of Jonah, which we shall in its own place notice. It follows ---

Jonah 1:6

6. So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not.

6. Et accessit ad eum magister funis, et dixit ei, Quid tibi, sopite? Surge, clama ad Deum tuum, si forte serenum se exhibeat Deus nobis (alii vertunt, cogitet de nobis, vel gratificetur nobis,) et non pereamus.

Jonah relates here how he was reproved by the pilot or master of the ship [94], inasmuch as he alone slept, while all the rest were in anxiety and fear. ``What meanest thou, fast sleeper?'' The pilot no doubt upbraids Jonah for his sleepiness, and reproves him for being almost void of all thought and reflection. What meanest thou, fast sleeper [95], he says; when thou sees all the rest smitten with alarm, how canst thou sleep? Is not this unnatural? Rise, then, and call on thy God

We see that where there is no rule of faith a liberty is commonly taken, so that every one goes astray here and there. Whence was it, that the pilot said to Jonah, Call on thy God, and that he did not confine him to any certain rule? Because it had been customary in all ages for men to be satisfied with some general apprehension of God; and then every one according to his own fancy formed a god for himself: nor could it have been otherwise, as I have said, while men were not restrained by any sacred bond. All agree as to this truth, that there is some God, and also that no dead idol can do anything, but that the world is governed by the providence and power of God, and further, that safety is to be sought from him. All this, has been received by the common consent of all; but when we come to particulars, then every one is in the dark; how God is to be sought they know not. Hence every one takes his own liberty: ``For the sake of appeasing God I will then try this; this shall be my mode of securing his favor; the Lord will regard this service acceptable; in this way shall all my iniquity be expiated, that I may obtain favor with God.'' Thus each invents for themselves some tortuous way to come to God; and then every one forms a god peculiar to himself. There can therefore be no stability nor consistency in men, unless they are joined together by some bond, even by some certain rule of religion, so that they may not vacillate, and not be in doubt as to what is right to be done,

[94] {{רב ,{החבל} the master of the rope or roping: {ὁ} {πρωρευς}, the prowman, the boatswain. --- Sept. Nauclerus, pilot, is the word used by Calvin. --- Ed.

[95] {{מדרנ ,{הם}-{רל} ``{τί} {σὺ} {ρεγχεις} --- why dost thou snore?'' --- Sept. ``Quid tu sopore deprimeris --- why art thou oppressed with deep sleep?'' --- Jerome. ``Quid dormis --- why sleepest thou?'' --- Dathius. ``How is it, thou art fast asleep?'' --- Henderson. ``What ails thee? Sleeping!'' --- Benjoin. The first pare is well rendered by the last author, but not the other; for ,{מדרנ} only found as a verb in Niphal, ever means a deep sleep. It is applied to Sisera, in Jael's tent, Judges 4:21, and to the sleep of death, Psalm 76:6. The rendering then ought to be, ``What ails thee? Being fast asleep.'' --- Ed.

but be assured and certainly persuaded, that there is but one true God, and know what sort of God he is, and then understand the way by which he is to be sought.

We then learn from this passage, that there is an awful license taken in fictitious religions, and that all who are carried away by their fancy are involved in a labyrinth, so that men do nothing but weary and torment themselves in vain, when they seek God without understanding the right way. They indeed run with all their might, but they go farther and farther from God. But that they, at the same time, form in their minds an idea of some God, and that they agree on this great principle, is sufficiently evident from the second clause of this verse, If so be that God will be Propitious to us. Here the pilot confines not his discourse to the God of Jonah, but speaks simply of a God; for though the world by their differences divide God, and Jonah worshipped a God different from the rest, and, in short, there was almost an endless number of gods among the passengers, yet the pilot says, If so be that God, etc.: now then he acknowledges some Supreme God, though each of them had his own god. We hence see that what I have said is most true, --- that this general truth has ever been received with the consent of all, --- that the world is preserved by the providence of God, and hence that the life and safety of men are in his hand. But as they are very far removed from God, and not only creep slowly, but are also more inclined to turn to the earth than to look up to heaven, and are uncertain and ever change, so they seek gods which are nigh to them, and when they find none, they hesitate not to invent them.

We have elsewhere seen that the Holy Spirit uses this form of speaking, If so be, when no doubt, but difficulty alone is intended. It is however probable, that the pilot in this case was perplexed and doubtful, as it is usual with ungodly men, and that he could determine nothing certain as to any help from God; and as his mind was thus doubtful, he says, that every means of relief were to be tried. And here, as in a mirror, we may see how miserable is the condition of all those who call not on God in pure faith: they indeed cry to God, for the impulse of nature thus leads them; but they know not whether they will obtain any thing by their cries: they repeat their prayers; but they know not whether they pass off into air or really come to God. The pilot owns, that his mind was thus doubtful, If so be that God will be propitious to us, call thou also on thy God. Had he been so surely convinced, as to call on the true God, he would have certainly found it to have been no doubtful relief. However, that nothing might be left untried, he exhorted Jonah, that if he had a God, to call upon him. We hence see, that there are strange windings, when we do not understand the right way. Men would rather run here and there, a hundred times, through earth and heaven, than come to God, except where his word shines. How so? because when they make the attempt, an insane impulse drives them in different ways; and thus they are led here and there: ``It may be, that this may be useful to me; as that way has not succeeded, I will try another.'' God then thus punishes all the unbelieving, who obey not his word; for to the right way they do not keep: He indeed shows how great a madness it is, when men give loose reins to their imaginations, and do not submit to celestial truth.

As to the words, interpreters translate them in different ways. Some say, ``If so

be that God will think of us;'' others ``If so be that God will favor us. {עשת}, oshit, is properly to shine; but when put as here in the conjugation Hithpael, it means to render one's self clear or bright: and it is a metaphor very common in Scriptures that the face of God is cloudy or dark, when he is not propitious to us; and again, God is said to make bright his face and to appear serene to us, when he really shows himself kind and gracious to us. As then this mode of speaking altogether suits this place, I wonder that some seek extraneous interpretations. [96]

He afterwards adds, Lest we perish. Here the pilot clearly owns, that he thought the life of man to be in the power of God; for he concluded, that they must perish unless the Lord brought aid. Imprinted then in the minds of all is this notion or {προληψις}, that is, preconception, that when God is angry or adverse, we are miserable, and that near destruction impends over us; and another conviction is found to be in the hearts of men, --- that as soon as the Lord looks on us, his favor and goodwill brings to us immediate safety. The Holy Spirit does not speak here, but a heathen, and we know too how great is the impiety of sailors, and yet he declares this by the impulse of nature, and there is here no feigning; for God, as I have already said, extorts by necessity a confession from the unbelieving, which they would gladly avoid.

Now what excuse can we have, if we think our safety to be in our own hands, if we depend not wholly on God, and if we neglect him in prosperity, as though we could be safe without his help? These words then, spoken by the sailor, ought to be weighed by us, 'If so be that God's face may appear bright to us, and that we perish not. [97] It now follows ---

Jonah 1:7

7. And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah.

7. Et dixit vir (hoc est, quisque) ad socium suum, Venite et jaciamus sortes, ut sciamus ob quam causam [98] malum hoc nobis: et jecerunt sortes, et cecidit sors super Jonam.

Jonah did not without reason mention this, --- that the passengers consulted together about casting lots; for we hence learn, that it was no ordinary tempest: it

[96] Calvin is quite right here. The verb {תשעת occurs only here in Hithpael; and once as a verb in Kal, Jeremiah 5:28, ,{ותשע} they ``shine,'' applied to fat men, and once as a participle, applied to iron, {חושע} ,{לזרב} ``bright iron,'' or iron brightened, or made to shine, Ezekiel 27:19. It occurs as a noun in three other places, ,{תשע} Canticles 5:14, {תוחשע} in Job 12:5, and {תוחשע} in Psalm 146:4. The idea of shining, brightness, or splendor, comports better with the context than that of thought, as given in our version in the two last places. It occurs once in its Chaldec form in Daniel 6:3, and there, no doubt, it means thought, or intention, or design. Following the usual import of the Hithpael conjugation, we may render the word here, ``It may be, that God will himself shine upon us;'' which means ``will show himself gracious to us.'' The Septuagint gives the sense, but not the ideal meaning of the verb, {διασωση}, may save, and so does Pagininus, placeatur --- may be pacified. Both Newcome and Henderson are wrong here: they follow our common version. Dathius retains the right idea, ``se nobis clementem exhibeat.'' --- Ed.

[97] "The servants of God are sometimes surpassed, reproved, and stimulated, by those far below them, yea, even by brute animals: a salutary admonition, from whatever quarter it may come, ought never be despised." — Marckius. "If the professors of religion do an ill thing, they must expect to hear of it from those who make no such profession." — M. Henry.

[98] {,{בשלמי this is a singular combination, two relatives with two prepositions --- ``through what --- for what.'' It is in a more complete form in the next verse, {באשר} ;{למי} {ש} in the first instance stands for ,{אשר} what. The first may be rendered consistently with the context, ``through whom --- for whom:'' but the context in the eight verse requires it to be ``through what --- for what.'' --- Ed.

appeared then to be a token of God's wrath. For, if strong wind arose, it would not have been so strange, for such had been often the case; and if a tempest followed, it would not have been a thing unusual. It must then have been something more dreadful, as it filled men's minds with alarms so that they were conscious that God was present as an avenger: and we know, that it is not common with ungodly men to recognize the vengeance of Gods except in extreme dangers; but when God executes punishment on sins in an unusual manner, then men begin to acknowledge God's vengeance.

This very thing, Jonah now bears witness to, They said then each to his friend, Come, let us cast lots. Was it not an accustomed thing for them to cast lots whenever a tempest arose? By no means. They had recourse, no doubt, to this expedient, because they knew, that God had not raised up that tempest without some very great and very serious cause. This is one thing: but I cannot now pursue the subjects, I must therefore defer it until tomorrow.

Prayer.

Grant, Almighty God, that though we are here disquieted in the midst of so many tossings, we may yet learn with tranquil minds to recumb on thy grace and promise, by which thou testifiest that thou wilt be ever near us, and not wait until by a strong hand thou drawest us to thyself, but that we may be, on the contrary, ever attentive to thy providence: may we know that our life not only depends on a thread, but also vanishes like the smoke, unless thou protectest it, so that we may recumb wholly on thy power; and may we also, while in a cheerful and quiet state, so call on thee, that relying on thy protection we may live in safety, and at the same time be careful, lest torpor, which draws away our minds and thoughts from meditating on the divine life, should creep over us, but may we, on the contrary, so earnestly seek thee, morning and evening, and at all times, that we may through life advance towards the mark thou hast set before us, until we at length reach that heavenly kingdom, which Christ thy Son has obtained for us by his own blood. Amen

Lecture Seventy-fourth.

We said in yesterday's lecture, that it was a proof of extreme fear, that the sailors and the rest cast lots; for this is not usually done, except men see themselves to be destitute of judgment and counsel.

But it must at the same time be observed, that through error they cast lots: for they did not know, that if God intended to punish each of them, they were worthy even of heavier punishment. They would not indeed have thrown the blame on one man, if each had well considered what he deserved before God. When a calamity happens, it is the duty of every one to examine himself and his whole life before God: then every one, from the first to the last, must confess that he bears a just judgment. But when all demand together who is guilty before God, they thus exonerate themselves, as though they were innocent. And it is an evil that prevails at this day in the world, that every one is disposed to cast the blame on others and all would have themselves to be innocent before God; not that they can clear themselves of every fault, but they extenuate their sins, as though God could not justly pursue them with so much severity. As for instance, when any one perceives that he had in various

ways done wrong, he will indeed confess in words that he is a sinner; but were any person to enumerate and bring forward each of his sins he would say, ``This is a light offense, that is a venal sin; and the Lord deals not with us with so much strict justice, that he means to bring on us instantly extreme punishment.'' When there is a slight offense, it is immediately referred to by every one. Thus acted the sailors, of whom Jonah now speaks. Had any one asked, whether they were wholly without fault, every one, no doubt, would have confessed that he was a sinner before God; but yet they cast lots as though one only was exposed to God's judgment. How so? because they did not think that their own sins deserved so heavy a punishment. How much soever they might have offended, --- and this they really felt and were convinced of, --- they yet did not make so much of their sins as to think that they deserved any such judgment. This then is the reason why they come to the lot; it was, because every one seemed to himself to be blameless when he came to examine himself.

This passage, then, shows what is even well known by common experience, --- that men, though they know themselves to be guilty before God, yet extenuate their sins and promise themselves pardon, as though they could make an agreement with God, that he should not treat them with strict justice, but deal with them indulgently. Hence, then, is the hope of impunity, because we make light offenses of the most grievous sins. Thus we find under the Papacy, that various modes are devised, by which they absolve themselves before God and wipe away their stains: the sprinkling of holy water cleanses almost all sins; except a man be either an adulterer, or a murderer, or a sorcerer, or ten times perjured, he hardly thinks himself to be guilty of any crime. Then the expiations which they use, avail, as they think, to obliterate all iniquities. Whence is this error? Even because they consider God to be like themselves, and think not their sins to be so great abominations before God. But this is no new thing; for we see what happened in the time of Jonah; and from profane histories also we may learn, that this error possessed everywhere the minds of all. They had then daily expiations, as the Papists have their masses, their pilgrimages, their sprinklings of holy water, and similar playthings (nugas --- trifles, fopperies): but as under the Papacy there are reserved cases, so also in former times, when any one had killed a father or mother, when any one had committed incest, he stood in need of some extraordinary expiation; and if there was any one of great renown on the earth, they applied to him, that he might find out some new kind of expiation. An example of this error is set before us here, when they said, let us cast lots. For except they thought that one only was guilty, and not and every one would have publicly confessed his sins, and would then have acknowledged that such was the mass of them as to be enough to fill heaven and earth; but this they did not. One man must have been the offender; but no one came forward with such a confession: hence they cast lots.

It may now be inquired, whether this mode of seeking out the truth was lawful; as they knew not through whose fault the tempest arose, was it right to have recourse to lots? Some have been too superstitious in condemning lots; for they have plainly said, that all lots are wicked. Hence has come the name, lot-drawers; (sortilegi) and they have thought that lot-drawers differ nothing from magicians and enchanters.

This has proceeded from ignorance, for we know that the casting of lots has been sometimes allowed. And Solomon certainly speaks, as of a common rule, when he says of lots being cast into the bosom, and of the issue being from Jehovah (Proverbs 16:33.) Solomon speaks not there of the arts of magic but says that when lots are cast, the event is not by chance but by God's providence. And when Matthias was chosen in the place of Judas, it was done by lot, (Acts 1:26.) Did the Apostles use this mode presumptuously? No, the Holy Spirit presided over this election. There is then no doubt but that God approved of that casting of lots. So also Joshua had recourse to the lot when the cause of God's displeasure was unknown, though it was evident that God was angry with the people. Joshua, being perplexed by what was unknown, did cast lots; and so Achan was discovered and his sacrilege. That lot no one will dare condemn. Then what I have said is clear enough, that those have been too superstitious who have condemned all casting of lots without exception. But we must yet remember that lots are not to be used indiscriminately. It is a part of the civil law, that when a common inheritance is divided, it is allowed to cast lots: as it belongs not to this or that person to choose, each must take the part which the lot determines. So again it is lawful to cast lot in great undertakings, when men are anywhere sent: and when there is a division of labor, to prevent jealousy when one wishes to choose a certain part for himself, the lot will remove all contentions. A lot of this kind is allowed both by the word of God, and by civil laws. But when any one adopts the lot without any reason, he is no doubt superstitious, and differs not much from the magician or the enchanter. As for instance, when one intends to go a journey, or to take anything in hand, if he throws into his hat a white and a black lot, and says, ``I will see whether my going out today will be prosperous;'' now this is of the devil; for Satan by such arts deludes wretched men. If then any one makes use of the lot without any just reason, he is, as I have said without excuse.

But as to the other lots, such as we have now noticed, they ought not to be viewed as precedents. For though Joshua used the lot to bring to light the cause for which God was angry with his people, it is not yet right for us to imitate what he did; for Joshua was no doubt led by some peculiar influence to adopt this measure. So also as to Saul, when he cast lots, and his son Jonathan was discovered as the one who had tasted honey, it was an especial example. The same thing must be also said of the lot mentioned here; for as the sailors were trembling, and knew not the cause why the tempest arose, and the fear of shipwreck seized them, they had recourse to the lot. Were we continually to imitate such examples, such a liberty would not certainly be pleasing, to God, nor consistent with his word. We must therefore bear in mind, that there were some peculiar influences, whenever God's servants used the lot in doubtful and extreme cases [99] . This then is shortly the answer to the question --- Was it lawful for the sailors to cast lots, that they might find out the person on account of whom they were in so much danger? I now proceed to what follows ---

Jonah 1:8-10

[99] Similar is the view given by Jerome. “We ought not, for this example, to put implicit confidence in lots, nor to connect with it the instance recorded in the Acts, when Matthias was chosen an Apostle by lot, since privileges granted to individuals cannot make a common rule, (cum privilegia singulorum non possint legem facere communem.”)

8. Then said they unto him, Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil is upon us; What is thine occupation? and whence comest thou? what is thy country? and of what people art thou?

8. Et dixerunt ei, Narra nunc nobis quare malum hoc nobis contingerit, quodnam opus tuum et unde venias, quae sit patria tua, et ex quo populosis?

9. And he said unto them, I am an Hebrew; and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land

9. Et dixit ad eos Hebraeus ego sum, et Jehovam Deum coelorum ego timeo, qui fecit mare et aridam.

10. Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, Why hast thou done this? For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them.

10. Et timuerunt viri timore magno, et dixerunt ei, Quare hoc fecisti? Quia noverant viri quod a facie Jehovae ipse fugeret; nam ipsis narraverat.

After the lot fell on Jonah, they doubted not but that he was the guilty person, any more than if he had been a hundred times proved to be so: for why did they cast lots, except that they were persuaded that all doubt could thus be removed, and that what was hid could thus be brought to the light? As then this persuasion was fixed in their minds, that the truth was elicited, and was in a manner drawn out of darkness by the lot, they now inquire of Jonah what he had done: for they took this as allowed, that they had to endure the tempest on his account, and also, that he, by some detestable crime, had merited such a vengeance at Gods hand. We hence see that they cast lots, because they fully believed that they could not otherwise find out the crime on account of which they suffered, and also, that lots were directed by the hidden purpose of God: for how could a certain judgment be found by lot, except God directed it according to his own purpose, and overruled what seemed to be especially fortuitous? These principles then were held as certain in a manner by men who were heathens, --- that God can draw out the truth, and bring it to the light, --- and also, that he presides over lots, however fortuitous they may be thought to be.

This was the reason why they now asked what Jonah had done. Tell us, then, why has this evil happened to us, what is thy work? etc. By work here I do not mean what is wrong, but a kind of life, or, as they say, a manner of living. They then asked how Jonah had hitherto employed himself, and what sort of life he followed. For it afterwards follows, Tell us, whence comest thou, what is thy country, and from what people art thou? They made inquiries, no doubt, on each particular in due order; but Jonah here briefly records the questions.

I now come to his answer, He said to them, I am an Hebrew; and I fear Jehovah the God of heaven, Who has created the sea and the dry land [100] Here Jonah seemed as

[100] This answer reverses the order of the questions. He answers the last question first. "Whence comest thou, and what is thy country?" The answer is, "I am Hebrew." The previous question was, "What is thy work," or occupation? To this he answers, "I fear Jehovah," etc. This was his calling, his work, his occupation. "Fear," of course, includes worship and service. This ought to be the work and occupation of all. But to the first question, as to what evil he had done, he gives no answer. Calvin supposes that the whole is not here related, but is to be gathered from what follows. It is, however, probable that he had previously told them, that

yet to evade, yea, to disown his crime, for he professed himself to be the worshipper of the true God. Who would not have said, but that he wished here to escape by a subterfuge, as he set up his own piety to cover the crime before-mentioned? But all things are not here in the first verse related; for shortly after, it follows, that the sailors knew of Jonah's flight; and that he had himself told them, that he had disobeyed God's call and command. There is then no doubt but that Jonah honestly confessed his own sin, though he does not say so. But we know, that it is a mode of speaking common among the Hebrews to add in the last place what had been first said; and grammarians say, that it is {ὕστερον} {προτερον}, (last first,) when anything is left out in its proper place and then added as an explanation. When therefore Jonah says that he was an Hebrew, and worshipper of the true God, --- this tended to aggravate his fault or crime rather than to excuse it: for had he said only, that he was conscious of having done wrong in disobeying God, his crime would not have appeared so atrocious; but when he begins by sayings that known to him was the true God, the framer of heaven and earth, the God of Israel, who had made himself known by a law given and published, --- when Jonah made this introduction, he thereby removed from himself all pretenses as to ignorance and misconception. He had been educated in the law, and had, from childhood, been taught who the true God was. He could not then have fallen through ignorance; and further, he did not, as the others, worship fictitious gods; he was an Israelite. As then he had been brought up in true religion, his sin was the more atrocious, inasmuch as he had fallen away from God, having despised his command, and, as it were, shaken off the yoke, and had become a fugitive.

We now then perceive the reason why Jonah called himself here an Hebrew, and testified that he was the worshipper of the true God. First, by saying that he was an Hebrew, he distinguished the God of Abraham from the idols of the Gentiles: for the religion of the chosen people was well known in all places, though disapproved by universal consent; at the same time, the Cilicians and other Asiatics, and also the Grecians, and the Syrians in another quarter, --- all these knew what the Israelites gloried in, --- that the true God had appeared to their father Abraham, and then made with him a gratuitous covenant, and also had given the law by Moses; --- all this was sufficiently known by report. Hence Jonah says now, that he was an Hebrew, as though he had said, that he had no concern with any fictitious god, but with the God of Abraham, who had formerly appeared to the holy Fathers, and who had also given a perpetual testimony of his will by Moses. We see then how emphatically he declared, that he was an Hebrew: secondly, he adds, I fear Jehovah the God of heaven. By the word fear is meant worship: for it is not to be taken here as often in other places, that is, in its strict meaning; but fear is to be understood for worship: ``I am not given'', he says, ``to various superstitions, but I have been taught in true

is, before the storm arose, that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord: he therefore left them to conclude what evil it was which he had done. It may be inquired why he said that he was “Hebrew,” and not that he was an Israelite, as the case really was, for he belonged to the ten tribes, and not to the kingdom of Judah; and Israelites, and not Hebrews seem to have been then the common name of the ten tribes. The reason may be, that as the Israelites were then for the most part idolatrous, he wished to show that he was a true descendant of the patriarchs, who were God’s faithful servants, real Hebrews, passengers, sojourners, and pilgrims, as the word imparts, on the earth. — Ed.

religion; God has made himself known to me from my childhood: I therefore do not worship any idol, as almost all other people, who invent gods for themselves; but I worship God, the creator of heaven and earth.'' He calls him the God of heaven, that is, who dwells alone as God in heaven. While the others thought heaven to be filled with a great number of gods, Jonah here sets up against them the one true God, as though he said, ``Invent according to your own fancy innumerable gods, there is yet but one, who possesses the highest authority in heaven; for it is he who made the sea and the dry land. [101] ''

We now then apprehend what Jonah meant by these words: he shows here that it was no wonder that God pursued him with so much severity; for he had not committed a slight offense, but a fatal sin. We now see how much Jonah had profited since the Lord had begun severely to deal with him: for inasmuch as he was asleep yea, and insensible in his sin, he would have never repented had it not been for this violent remedy. But when the Lord roused him by his severity, he then not only confessed that he was guilty, or owned his guilt in a formal manner, (defunctorie --- as ridding one's self of a business, carelessly;) but also willingly testified, as we see, before men who were heathens, that he was the guilty man, who had forsaken the true God, in whose worship he had been well instructed. This was the fruit of true penitence, and it was also the fruit of the chastisement which God had inflicted on him. If then we wish God to approve of our repentance, let us not seek evasions, as for the most part is the case; nor let us extenuate our sins, but by a free confession testify before the whole world what we have deserved.

It then follows, that the men feared with great fear, and said, Why hast thou done this? [102] for they knew that he had fled from the presence of Jehovah, for he had told them. And this is not unimportant --- that the sailors feared with great fear: for Jonah means that they were not only moved by what he said, but also terrified, so that they gave to the true God his glory. We indeed know that superstitious men almost trifle with their own idols. They often entertain, it is true, strange fears, but afterwards they flatter themselves, and in a manner cajole their own hearts, so that they can pleasantly and sweetly smile at their own fancies. But Jonah, by saying here that they feared with great fear, means that they were so smitten, that they really perceived that the God of Israel was a righteous judge, and that he was not such as other nations fancied him to be, but that he was capable of affording dreadful examples whenever he intended to execute his vengeance. We hence see what Jonah means, when he speaks of great fear. At the same time, two things ought to be noticed, --- that they feared, because it was easy for them to conclude from the Prophet's words, that the God of Israel was the only creator of heaven and earth, --- and then, that it was a great fear, which, as I have said, must be considered as serious dread, since the fear which the unbelieving have soon vanishes.

[101] "Non Deos quos invocatis, et qui salvare non possunt, sed Deum coeli qui mare fecit et aridam, mare in quo fugio, aridam de qua fugio," etc. — Jerome.

[102] {{זאת}-{מה ,{עשית} --- ``What this thou hast done?'' ``{τί} {τουτο} {εποίησας} --- what this thou hast done?'' --- Sept. ``Quid (i.e., cur) hoc fecisti --- why hast thou done this?'' --- Marckius; so Jerome, and Drusius, and Dathius. ``What is this thou hast done?'' --- Henderson. It is not a question, requiring a reason for what he had done, but rather an exclamation --- ``What an evil is this which thou has done!'' They judged of it by the effects; for they knew before that he had fled from the presence of the Lord; and now they perceived how great an evil it was. --- Ed.

But with regard to the reproof which the sailors and other passengers gave to Jonah, the Lord returned to him this as a reward which he had deserved. He had fled from the presence of God; he had thus, as we have said taken away from God his supreme power: for what becomes of God's authority when any one of us rejects his commands and flees away from his presence? Since Jonah then sought to shun God, he was now placed before men. There were present heathens, and even barbarians, who rebuked him for his sin, who were his censors and judges. And the same thing we see happening often. For they who do not willingly obey God and his word, afterwards abandon themselves to many flagrant sins, and their baseness becomes evident to all. As, then, they cannot bear God to be their Master and Teacher, they are constrained to bear innumerable censors; for they are branded by the reproaches of the vulgar, they are pointed at every where by the finger, at length they are conducted to the gallows, and the executioner becomes their chief teacher. The case was similar, as we see, with Jonah: the pilot had before reproved his torpor, when he said, Do thou also call on thy God; what meanest thou, O sleeper? thou liest down here like a log of wood, and yet thou sees us perplexed and in extreme danger. As, then, the pilot first so sharply inveighed against Jonah, and then all reproved him with one mouth, we certainly find that he was made subject to the condemnation of all, because he tried to deprive God of his supreme power. If at any time the same thing should happen to us, if God should subject us to the reproaches of men when we seek to avoid his judgment, let us not wonder. But as Jonah here calmly answers, and raises no clamor, and shows no bitterness, so let every one of us, in the true spirit of meekness, acknowledge our own sins; when charged with them, were even children our condemners, or were even the most contemptible of the people to rise up against us, let us patiently bear all this; and let us know that these kinds of censors befall us through the providence of God. It now follows ---

Jonah 1:11-12

11. Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous.

11. Et dixerunt ad eum, Quid faciemus tibi ut resideat mare a nobis? Quia mare ibat (id est, commovebatur,) et erat tempestuosum.

12. And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you.

12. Et dixit illis, Tollite me, et projicite me in mare, et residebit mare a vobis; quia novi ego, quod propter me tempestas magna haec contingerit super vos (hoc est, sit super vos.)

The sailors asked counsel of Jonah; and hence it appears that they were touched with so much fear as not to dare to do any thing to him. We hence see how much they had improved almost in an instant, since they spared an Israelite, because they acknowledged that among that people the true God was worshipped, the supreme King of heaven and earth: for, without a doubt, it was this fear that restrained them from throwing Jonah immediately into the sea. For since it was certain that through his fault God was displeased with them all, why was it that they did not save them-

selves by such an expiation? That they then delayed in so great a danger, and dared not to lay hold instantly on Jonah, was an evident proof that they were restrained, as I have said, by the fear of God.

They therefore inquire what was to be done, What shall we do to thee, that the sea may be still to us? [103] for the sea was going, etc. By going Jonah means, that the sea was turbulent: for the sea is said to rest when it is calm, but when it is turbulent, then it is going, and has various movements and tossings. The sea, then, was going and very tempestuous [104] We hence see that God was not satisfied with the disgrace of Jonah, but he purposed to punish his offense still more. It was necessary that Jonah should be led to the punishment which he deserved, though afterwards, he was miraculously delivered from death, as we shall see in its proper place.

Jonah then answers, Take me, and throw me into the sea, and it will be still to you. It may be asked whether Jonah ought to have of his own accord offered himself to die; for it seemed to be an evidence of desperation. He might, indeed, have surrendered himself to their will; but here he did, as it were, stimulate them, ``Throw me into the sea,'' he says; ``for ye cannot otherwise pacify God than by punishing me.'' He seemed like a man in despair, when he would thus advance to death of his own accord. But Jonah no doubt knew that he was doomed to punishment by God. It is uncertain whether he then entertained a hope of deliverance, that is, whether he confidently relied at this time on the grace of God. But, however it may have been, we may yet conclude, that he gave himself up to death, because he knew and was fully persuaded that he was in a manner summoned by the evident voice of God. And thus there is no doubt but that he patiently submitted to the judgment which the Lord had allotted to him. Take me, then, and throw me into the sea

Then he adds, The sea will be to you still Here Jonah not only declares that God would be pacified by his death, because the lot had fallen upon him, but he also acknowledges that his death would suffice as an expiation, so that the tempest would subside: and then the reason follows --- I know, he says, that on my account is this great tempest come upon you. When he says that he knew this, he could not refer to the lot, for that knowledge was common to them all. But Jonah speaks here by the prophetic spirit: and he no doubt confirms what I have before referred to, --- that the God of Israel was the supreme and only King of heaven and earth. This certainty of knowledge, then, of which Jonah speaks, must be referred to his own consciences and to the teaching of that religion in which he had been instructed.

And now we may learn from these words a most useful instruction: Jonah does not here expostulate with God, nor contumeliously complain that God punished him

[103] Literally, "that the sea may cease from upon us." The waves were rolling over them; hence {,מעלינו from upon us. That the sea may be calm around us, is to give a meaning to the word which it never has. --- Ed.

[104] {כי {הים {הולך ,{ומער {``{δτι} {η} {θαλασσα} {επορευετο} {και} {εξηγειρε} {μαλλον} {κλυδωνα} --- for the sea went and more raised the swell.'' --- Sept. ``Quia mare ibat et intumescebat; --- for the sea did go and swell.'' --- Jerome, Grotius, and the Vulgate. ``For the sea grew more and more tempestuous.'' --- Newcome. The verb ,{הולך} connected as here with another verb, does not always mean increase, but continuance. See Genesis 8:3; Esther 9:4. Literally it is, ``For the sea was going on, and was tempestuous,'' that is, it continued to be tempestuous. An increase of violence seemed not to have been hardly possible, for a shipwreck was previously dreaded. Jerome, in a strain rather imaginary, but striking, says, ``For the sea went and did swell, --- it went, as it had been commanded, --- it went, to manifest the vengeance of its Lord, --- it went, to prosecute a runaway Prophet; and it swelled at every moment, and rose, as it were, in larger billows, while the mariners were delaying, to show that they could not put off the vengeance of its Creator.'' --- Ed.

too severely, but he willingly bears his charged guilt and his punishment, as he did before when he said, ``I am the worshipper of the true God.'' How could he confess the true God, whose great displeasure he was then experiencing? But Jonah, we see, was so subdued, that he failed not to ascribe to God his just honor; though death was before his eyes, though God's wrath was burning, we yet see, that he gave to God, as we have said, the honor due to him. So the same thing is repeated in this place, Behold, he says, I know that on my account has this great tempest happened He who takes to himself all the blame, does not certainly murmur against God. It is then a true confession of repentance, when we acknowledge God, and willingly testify before men that he is just, though, according to the judgment of our flesh, he may deal violently with us. When however we give to him the praise due to his justice, we then really show our penitence; for unless God's wrath brings us down to this humble state of mind, we shall be always full of bitterness; and, however silent we may be for a time, our heart will be still perverse and rebellious. This humility, then, always follows repentance, --- the sinner prostrates himself before God, and willingly admits his own sin, and tries not to escape by subterfuges.

And it was no wonder that Jonah thus humbled himself; for we see that the sailors did the same: when they said that lots were to be cast, they added at the same time, ``Come ye and let us cast lots, that we may know why this evil has happened to us.'' They did not accuse God, but constituted him the Judge; and thus they acknowledged that he inflicted a just punishment. And yet every one thought himself to have been innocent; for however conscience might have bitten them, still no one considered himself to have been guilty of so great a wickedness as to subject him to God's vengeance. Though, then, the sailors thought themselves exempt from any great sin, they yet did not contend with God, but allowed him to be their Judge. Since then they, who were so barbarous, confined themselves within these bounds of modesty, it was no wonder that Jonah, especially when he was roused and began to feel his guilt, and was also powerfully restrained by God's hand, --- it was no wonder that he now confessed that he was guilty before God, and that he justly suffered a punishment so heavy and severe. We ought then to take special notice of this, --- that he knew that on his account the storm happened or that the sea was so tempestuous against them all. The rest we defer until tomorrow.

Prayer.

Grant, Almighty God that as thou urgest us daily to repentance and each of us is also stung with the consciousness of his own sins, --- grant, that we may not grow stupid in our vices, nor deceive ourselves with empty flatteries, but that each of us may, on the contrary carefully examine his own life and then with one mouth and heart confess that we are all guilty not only of light offenses, but of such as deserve eternal death, and that no other relief remains for us but thine infinite mercy and that we may so seek to become partakers of that grace which has been once offered to us by thy Son, and is daily offered to us by his Gospel, that, relying on him as our Mediator, we may not cease to entertain hope even in the midst of thousand deaths, until we be gathered into that blessed life, which has been procured for us by the blood of thy only Son. Amen.

Lecture Seventy-fifth

Jonah 1:13-14

13. Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring it to the land; but they could not: for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous against them.

13. Et quaerebant (vel, moliebantur, proprie est fodiebant) viri ut reducerent navem, et non poterant; quia mare ibat et turbulentum erat super eos.

14. Wherefore they cried unto the Lord, and said, We beseech thee, O Lord, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for thou, O Lord, hast done as it pleased thee.

14. Et clamaverunt ad Jehovam, et dixerunt, Obsecro, Jehova, ne quaeso, pereamus propter animam viri hujus, et ne des super nos (hoc est, ne ponas) sanguinem innocentem; quia, tu Jehova, sicuti placitum tibi est, fecisti.

This verse shows that the sailors and the rest were more inclined to mercy, when they saw that the holy Prophet was willing to undergo the punishment which he had deserved. When therefore, he confessed that he was guilty, and refused not to be punished, they became anxious to spare his life, though they were heathens, and also for the most part barbarians: and as each of them could not but be frightened with his immediate danger, the wonder is increased, that they had such regard for the life of one who alone was in fault, and who had now freely confessed this. But the Lord so turned their hearts, that they now saw more clearly how grievous a sin it was to flee away from the call of God, and not to yield obedience, as we have before observed, to his command. Many think that this is a light offense, and readily indulge themselves in it: but it is not in the power of men to weigh sins; the balance is deceitful when men estimate their sins according to their own judgment. Let us then learn to ascribe to God his own honor, --- that he alone is Judge, and is far above us, and can alone determine how grievous or how slight any sin is. But common sense, except when men willfully deceive themselves by vain flatteries, clearly teaches this, --- that it is no light offense when we evade the command of God; for, as we have stated, men do thus take away from God his supreme authority; and what is left to God, when he governs not the creatures whom he has formed, and whom he sustains by his power? The Lord, then, designed to show here, that his displeasure could not be otherwise pacified than by drowning Jonah in the sea; though, as we shall presently see, he had something greater in view. But, in the meantime, this is worthy of being observed, --- that the Lord intended to make Jonah an example, that all may now know that he is not to be trifled with, but that he ought to be obeyed as soon as he commands any thing.

The word which the Prophet uses has been variously explained by interpreters. {חתר}, chetar, is properly, to dig; so that some think it to be a metaphorical expression, as rowers seem to dig the sea; and this sense is not unsuitable. Others carry the metaphor still higher, --- that the sailors searched out or sought means by which they might drive the ship to land. But the other metaphor, as being less remote, is more to be approved. The Latins call it to toil, (moliri) when the rowers not only apply gently their oars, but when they make a greater effort. The sailors, then, toiled to

bring back the ship [105] But for what purpose? To spare the life of the man who had already confessed that he was guilty before God, and that the storm, which threatened them all with a shipwreck, had arisen through his fault: but he says that they could not, for the sea was tempestuous, as we have already seen in our yesterday's lecture.

I come now to the second verse. They cried, he says, to Jehovah and said, We beseech [106] , Jehovah, let us not perish, we pray, on account of the life of this man, and give not, that is, lay not, innocent blood upon us [107] The Prophet now expresses more fully why the sailors toiled so much to return to port, or to reach some shore, --- they were already persuaded that Jonah was a worshipper of the true God, and not only this, but that he was a Prophet, inasmuch as he had told them, as we have seen, that he had fled from the presence of God, because he feared to execute the command which we have noticed. It was therefore pious (reverentia) fear that restrained the sailors, knowing, as they did, that Jonah was the servant of the true God. They, at the same time, saw, that Jonah was already standing for his sin before God's tribunal, and that punishment was demanded. This they saw; but yet they wished to preserve his life.

Now this place shows, that there is by nature implanted in all an abhorrence of cruelty; for however brutal and sanguinary many men may be, they yet cannot divest themselves of this feeling, --- that the effusion of human blood is hateful. Many, at the same time, harden themselves; but they apply a searing iron: they cannot shake off horror, nay, they feel that they are detested by God and by men, when they thus shed innocent blood. Hence it was that the sailors, who in other respects hardly retained a drop of humanity, fled as suppliants to God, when the case was about the death of man; and they said, {יהוה} {אנה}, ane Ieve, `We beseech Jehovah:' and the expression is repeated; which shows that the sailors earnestly prayed that the Lord would not impute this as a sin to them.

We hence see that though these men had never known the doctrine of the law, they were yet so taught by nature that they knew that the blood of man is dear and precious in the sight of God. And as to us, we ought not only to imitate these sailors, but to go far beyond them: for not only ought the law of nature to prevail among us, but also the law of God; for we hear what God had formerly pronounced with his own mouth,

`Whosoever sheddeth man's blood, shed shall his blood be,' (Genesis 9:6.)

And we know also the reason why God undertakes to protect the life of men, and that is, because they have been created in his image. Whosoever then uses violence against the life of man, destroys, as far as he can the image of the eternal God. Since it is so, ought not violence and cruelty to be regarded by us with double horror? We

[105] Literally, "and the men labored to return to dry land." The ideal meaning of {חתר is to dig, or to dig through, Job 24:16; Ezekiel 12:7: but it is here in its secondary sense of laboring or toiling. ,{להשיב} to return, must be taken here intransitively, though generally it bears in Hiphil a transitive sense. ``{Καί} {παρεβιαζοντο} {οι} {ανδρες} {του} {επιστρεψαι} {προς} {την} {γην} --- And the men strove to return to land.'' --- Sept. And the men rowed hard to regain the land.'' --- Henderson. --- Ed.

[106] {{אנה and {נא} are particles of entreaty or exclamation, and may be rendered, ``I, or, we pray,'' according to the context. Here they should be, ``We pray.'' They are sometimes rendered, Oh! Alas! Now. --- Ed.

[107] "Hoc est, ne nobis imputes caedem viri justi — Impute not unto us the slaughter of a just man." — Marckius. See Judges 9:24; Matthew 27:24. — Ed.

ought also to learn another thing from this doctrine: God proves by this remarkable testimony what paternal feeling he manifests towards us by taking our life under his own guardianship and protection; and he even proves that we are really the objects of his care, inasmuch as he will execute punishment and vengeance when any one unjustly injures us. We then see that this doctrine on the one side restrains us, that we may not attempt anything against the lives of our brethren; and, on the other side, it assures us of the paternal love of God, so that being allured by his kindness we may learn to deliver up ourselves wholly to his protection.

I now come to the last clause of the verse, For thou, Jehovah, hast done as it has pleased thee. The sailors clearly prove here that they did not willingly shed innocent blood. How then can these two things agree, --- that the blood was innocent, and that they were blameless? They adopted this excuse, --- that they obeyed God's decree, that they did nothing rashly or according to their own inclinations, but followed what the Lord had prescribed: though, indeed, God had not spoken, yet what he required was really evident; for as God demanded an expiation by the death of Jonah, so he designed to continue the tempest until he was thrown into the deep. These things the sailors now put forward. But we must notice, that they did not cast the blame on God, as blasphemers are wont to do, who, while they seek to exempt themselves from blame, find fault with God, or at least put him in their own place: ``Why then,'' they say, ``does he sit as a judge to condemn us for that of which he is himself the author, since he has so decreed?'' At this day there are many fanatics who thus speak, who obliterate all the difference between good and evil, as if lust were to them the law. They at the same time make a covert of God's providence. Jonah wished not that such a thing should be thought of the sailors; but as they well understood that God governed the world justly, though his counsels be secret and cannot be comprehended by us, --- as, then, they were thus convinced, they thus strengthened themselves; and though they gave to God the praise due to his justice, they at the same time trembled lest they should be guilty of innocent blood.

We now then see how reverently these men spoke of God, and that so much religious fear possessed them, that they did not rob God of his praise, Thou Jehovah, they said, hast done as it has pleased thee [108] Do they here accuse God of tyranny, as though he confounded all things without any cause or reason? By no means. They took this principle as granted, --- that the will of God is right and just, yea, that whatever God has decreed is beyond doubt just. Being then thus persuaded, they took the will of God as the rule for acting rightly: ``As thou, Jehovah, hast done as

[108] Some render this sentence in the present tense, as Marckius, “Tu enim Jehovah sicut vis facis — for thou, Jehovah, doest as thou willest.” The verbs are in the past tense, but this tense in Hebrew includes often both times, — “Thou hast done and doest, as thou hast willed and willest:” and this seems to be the full import of the passage. Mercerius, quoted by Poole, gives this paraphrase, — “All these things have taken place through thine appointment, — that Jonah came to the ship, that a storm has been raised, that the lot has fallen on Jonah, and that he has confessed his sin: we unwillingly do this dreadful deed, but this is understood to be thy will.” Drusius took the words as referring to the time then present, for he expresses the meaning thus: “Tu vis ut in mare dejeciatur: fiat igitur quod vis; nam voluntati tuae quis resistat? Thou willest that he should be cast into the sea: be then that done which thou willest; for who can resist thy will?” According to this view, it is an expression of acquiescence in God’s will respecting Jonah. But both Newcome and Henderson retain our common version. Dathius reads, “Tu enim, O Jova, pro arbitratu tuo agis. — For thou, O Jehovah, doest according to thine own will.” — Ed.

it seemed good to thee, so we are blameless.'' But at the same time it is proper also to add, that the sailors do not vainly talk here of the secret providence of God in order to impute murder to him, as ungodly men and profane cavilers do at this day: but as the Lord made known his purpose to them, they show that the storm and the tempest could not be otherwise calmed and quieted than by drowning Jonah: they therefore took this knowledge of God's purpose as a certain rule to follow. At the same time they fled, as I have said, to God, and supplicated his mercy, lest in a matter so perplexed and difficult he should involve them in the same punishment, as they were constrained to shed innocent blood. We now then apprehend the meaning of this passage. Now it follows ---

Jonah 1:15

15. So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging.

15. Et sustulerunt Jonam, et projecerunt in mare; et stetit mare a fervore suo.

Jonah shows here that the tempest arose through his fault; for the issue proved this with certainty. The sailors had not only cast lots, but after Jonah was thrown into the sea the storm calmed, and the sea became still, --- this sudden change sufficiently proved that Jonah was the only cause why they were so nearly shipwrecked. For if the sea had not calmed immediately, but after some interval of time, it might have been ascribed to chance: but as the sea instantly rested, it could not be otherwise said than that Jonah was condemned by the judgment of God. He was indeed cast into the sea by the hands of men; but God so presided, that nothing could be ascribed to men, but that they executed the judgment which the Lord had openly demanded and required from them. This, then, is the import of this verse. He now adds ---

Jonah 1:16

16. Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the Lord, and made vows.

16. Et imuerunt viri timore magno Jehovam, et sacrificarunt sacrificium Jehovae, et voverunt vota.

Jonah now declares what fruit followed; and first, he says, that the sailors feared the true God. He uses here the proper name of God, Jehovah; for, as we have already seen, they were addicted to their own superstitions, as each of them cried to his own god: but it was a false notion; for they went astray after their own superstitions. The Prophet now points out the difference, --- that they began to fear the true God. At the same time it may have been, that they afterwards relapsed into their own errors; yet it ought not to be overlooked that the Lord constrained them to entertain such a fear. The Hebrews, as it has been already said, sometimes take fear in a general sense, as meaning worship. It is said in 2 Kings 17:32,33, of the new inhabitants of the land of Canaan, who had been removed from Persia, that they ``feared God,'' that is, that they imitated the legal rite in sacrifices while worshipping God. But there is an addition in this place, which shows that the meaning is more restricted, for it is said to have been a great fear. Then Jonah means that the sailors and the passengers were not only touched with the fear of God, but that they also had the

impression that the God of Israel was the supreme King of heaven and earth, that he held all things under his hand and government. This fear no doubt led them to true knowledge so as to know that they were previously deluded, and that whatever the world had invented was mere delusion, and that the gods devised by the fancies of men were nothing else but mere idols. We now then perceive what Jonah means.

But we must here say somewhat more at large of the fear of God. When the Scripture speaks of the fear of God, it sometimes means the outward worship, and sometimes true piety. When it designates the outward worship, it is no great thing; for hypocrites usually perform their ceremonies, and thus testify that they worship God: but yet, as they obey not God with sincerity of heart, nor bring faith and repentance, they do nothing but trifle. But the fear of God is often taken for true piety; and then it is called the beginning or the chief point of wisdom, or even wisdom itself, as it is in Job 28:28. The fear of God, then, or that pious regard (reventia) by which the faithful willingly submit themselves to God, is the chief part of wisdom.

But it also often happens that men are touched by servile fear, so as to have a desire to satisfy God, while, at the same time, they have even a wish to draw him down from his throne. This servile fear is full of perverseness; for they, at the same time, champ the bridle, as they cannot exempt themselves from his power and authority. Such was this fear of which Jonah speaks; for all those whom he mentions were not suddenly so changed as to devote themselves to the true God: they had not indeed made such a progress as this; it was not such real and thorough conversion of the soul as changed them into new men. How, then, is it said that they feared? even because the Lord extorted from them a confession at the time: it may have been that some of them afterwards made a greater progress; but I speak now generally of the whole. Because then it is said that they feared God, we are not hence to conclude that they really repented, so as to become wholly devoted to the God of Israel. But yet they were constrained to know and to confess that the God of Israel was the only and the true God. How so? because that dreadful judgment filled them with terror, so that they perceived that he alone was God who had heaven and earth under his command.

We now then see how that fear is to be viewed, of which Jonah speaks. If they afterwards made no farther progress, it only served to condemn them, that these sailors, having perceived by a sure evidence who the only true God was, mingled with the worship of him their wicked and ungodly superstitions, as many do even in our day. The Papists hold this truth in common with us, --- that there is one true God, the framer of heaven and earth, yea, they come still nearer, and say that the only-begotten Son of God is our Redeemer; but yet we see how they contaminate the whole worship of God, and turn his truth to a lie; for they blend the worship of God with that of idols, so that there is nothing pure among them. But this main truth is however of great service, when the Lord stretches forth his hand to miserable men; for if there was no conviction of this under the Papacy that the word of God is to be believed, and that Christ the Son of God is the King and Head of the Church, we must have had to employ against them a long circuitous argument; but now an access to them is easy: when we bring against them the Law, and the Prophets,

and the Gospel, they are restrained by some measure of reverence, and dare not to reject the authority of the Supreme God. We then see, that this fear is in itself of no great value, if men remain fixed in their own mire; but when it is the Lords purpose afterwards to call them, this fear opens for them the door to true godliness. So it may have been, as I have said, that some of these sailors and passengers had afterwards made better progress. But this fear of itself could have done nothing more than to convict them, so that no excuse could avail them before God's tribunal; for a proof had been given them, by which they might know that there was no other God than He who was then worshipped by the chosen people.

He afterwards adds that they sacrificed a sacrifice to Jehovah [109] They were accustomed before to offer sacrifices to their idols; but now they testified that they worshipped the God of Israel; for this is what sacrifices signify. But it must at the same time be observed that they thereby expressed this confession, that God confirmed the truth of his word. When, therefore, they perceived that this whole affair was ordered by the will of God, they were constrained to bear witness that he was the true God: this was the end and design of sacrifices.

It may, however, be inquired, whether that sacrifice pleased God. It is certain that whenever men bring forward their own devices, whatever is otherwise worthy of approbation in what they do, it cannot but be corrupted and vitiated by such a mixture; for God, as it is well known, allows of no associate. And we must remember that which is said in Ezekiel, `Go ye, sacrifice to the devil, and not to me!' God there repudiates all the sacrifices which were wont to be offered by the people of Israel, because superstitions were blended with them. God then shows that such a mixture is so disapproved by him, that he chooses rather that the superstitious should wholly give themselves up to the devils than that his holy name should be thus profaned. Hence this sacrifice of itself was not lawful, nor could it have pleased God; but it was, so to speak, by accident and extrinsically that this sacrifice pleased God, --- because he designed thus to make known his glory. Though, then, he repudiated the sailors themselves, yet it was his will that this act should bear a testimony to his glory: as, for instance, a deed is often vicious with regard to men, and yet in an accidental way it tends to set forth the glory of God.

And this ought to be carefully borne in mind: there is at this day a dispute, yea a fierce contest, about good works: and the Sophists ever deceive themselves by false reasoning; ({παραλογισμῶ} --- sophistry) for they suppose that works morally good are either preparatory to the obtaining of grace, or meritorious towards attaining eternal life. When they speak of works morally good, they refer only to the outward deeds; they regard not the fountain or motive, nor even the end. When the heart

[109] "The first," says Adam Clarke, "that perhaps was ever offered on board a vessel, since the ark floated on the waters of the great deluge." How uselessly have learned men often employed their talents, trying to improve what is simply and plainly related. Jerome allegorizes this act of the mariners, and says that their sacrifice was that of praise. A Jewish Rabbi, Jonathan, makes an addition to the sentence — that they said that they would sacrifice to Jehovah; and Grotius adopts his addition. Another Rabbi, Elieser, has fabricated a fine tale, that they returned immediately to Joppa, went up to Jerusalem, and were circumcised! The fact alone is stated here, as to when and where we know nothing, and it signifies nothing to us; only that the most obvious import of the narrative is, that they did offer a sacrifice on board the vessel, immediately after the storm ceased. — Ed.

of man is impure, unquestionably the work which thence flows is also ever impure, and is an abomination before God. When the end also is wrong, when it is not man's purpose to worship God in sincerity of heart, the deed, however splendid it may appear, is filth in the presence of God. Hence the Sophists are greatly deceived, and are very childish, when they say, that works morally good please God, and are preparatory to grace and meritorious of salvation. But can this be, that a work does not please God, and yet avails to set forth his glory? I answer, that these two things are perfectly consistent, and are in no way so contrary that they cannot be easily reconciled. For God by accident, as I have said, accommodates to his own glory what is in itself vicious; I say, in itself, that is, with respect to men. Thus even under the Papacy the Christian name serves to the glory of God, for there ever remains some remnant. And how has it happened, that at this time the light of the Gospel has shone forth, and that true religion has been restored at least in many places? Even because the Lord has never suffered true religion to be extinguished, though it has been corrupted: for baptism under the Papacy, the very name of Christ as well as of the Church, and the very form of religion --- all these have become wholly useless; but they have accidentally, as I have said, been of great service. When, therefore, we regard the priests (sacrificos --- the sacrificers) as well as the people, we find nothing but a perverted worship of God; they presumptuously and indiscriminately add their own superstitions and devices to the word of God, and there is nothing pure among them. Since then they thus blend together heaven and earth, they do nothing but provoke God's wrath against themselves.

We now then understand why Jonah says that the sailors and passengers offered sacrifices. We must, at the same time, remember what I have lately said, that sacrifice was, as it were, a symbol of Divine worship: for even from the beginning this notion prevailed among all, that sacrifices were to be offered to none but to God; and heathens in all ages had no other opinion of sacrifices, but that they thus manifested their piety towards their gods. Since then sacrifices have been from the beginning offered to God alone, it follows, that they at this day are wholly inexcusable who join associates to God, and offer their sacrifices to mortals or to angels. How can this be borne in Christians, since heathens have ever confessed that they regarded those as gods to whom they were wont to offer their sacrifices? Now then, since God declares that the chief sacrifice to him is invocations as we read in Psalm 1:1, the whole of religion under the Papacy must be perverted, as they pray not only to God but even to creatures: for they hesitate not to flee to Peter or to Paul, yea, to their own saints, real and fictitious, in the same manner as to the only true God. Inasmuch, then, as they rob God of this chief right, we see that they tread under foot the whole of religion by this sacrilege. Since, then, heathen men testified that they worshipped Jehovah, the God of Israel, by their external sacrifice, let us learn at this day not to transfer the rightful honor of God to creatures; but let this honor of being alone prayed to, be wholly and entirely reserved for him; for this, as we have said is the chief and the most valuable sacrifice which he demands and approves.

But Jonah also adds, that the sailors vowed vows to God This is a part of thanksgiving; for we know that the object, not only of the holy fathers, but also of the

superstitious, in making vows, has ever been this --- to bind themselves to God, and also to express their gratitude, and to make it evident, that they owed to him both their life and every favor bestowed on them. This then has in all ages been the reason for making, vows. When, therefore the sailors vowed a vow to God, they renounced their own idols. They cried before to their gods; but now they understand that they had cried in vain, and without any benefit, as they had to no purpose uttered their cries in the air. Now then they made their vows to the only true God; for they knew that their lives were in his hand.

And here we may easily learn how foolishly the Sophists of our day heap together all passages of Scripture which make any mention of vows; for they think that we are to be overwhelmed by that term alone, when we condemn their false vows. But no one of us has ever denied or does deny, that it is lawful to vows provided it be done according to what the Law and the Gospel prescribes. What we hold is, --- that men are not thoughtlessly to obtrude on God what comes uppermost, but that they are to vow what he approves, and also, that they regard a right and just end in vowing, even to testify their gratitude to God. But in common vows which are made, there are the grossest errors, as also in the whole of the Papal worship; for they vow this and that to God indiscriminately, and regard not what the Lord requires or approves: one, on certain days, abstains from meat; another combs not his head: and a third trots away on some pilgrimage. All these things, we know, are rejected by God. And further, when they vow nothing but what God approves, it is yet done for a wrong purpose: for they seek in this way to bind God to themselves, and the diabolical conceit of merits ever possesses their minds. And, lastly, they consider not what they can do; they vow perpetual celibacy when at the same time incontinence burns them; and thus we see that, like the giants, they fight with God himself; and, in the meantime, they allow themselves an unbridled liberty as to whatever they vow.

Let us then know, that whenever the Scripture speaks of vows, we are to take for granted these two principles, --- that vows as they appertain to the worship of God, ought not to be taken without any discretion, according to men's fancy, but ought to be regulated and guided by God's rule, so that men may bring nothing to God, except what they know to be approved by his word, --- and then, that they are to keep in view the right end, even to show by this symbol their gratitude to God, to testify that they are preserved by his kindness, as was the case with these sailors, who made a vow because they thought that none but God was their deliverer; and so they testified, that when they came safe to shore, they would make it known that the God of Israel had showed mercy to them. It follows ---

Jonah 1:17

17. Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

17. Et paravit Jehova piscem magnum ad vorandum Jonam; et fuit Jonas in visceribus piscis tribus diebus et tribus noctibus.

What the Prophet here briefly relates ought to be carefully weighed by us. It is easily passed over, when we read in a few words that Jonah was swallowed up by a fish, and that he was there three days and three nights: but though Jonah neither

amplified or illustrated in a rhetorical manner what is overlooked by us, nor adopted any display of words, but spoke of the event as though it were an ordinary thing, we yet see what the event itself really was: Jonah was cast into the sea. He had been previously not only a worshipper of the true God, but also a Prophet, and had no doubt faithfully discharged his office; for God would not have resolved to send him to Nineveh, had he not conferred on him suitable gifts; and he knew him to be qualified for undertaking a burden so great and so important. As Jonah then had faithfully endeavored to serve God, and to devote himself to him through the whole of his past life, now that he is cast into the sea as one unworthy of the common light, that he is cut off from the society of men, and that he seems unworthy of undergoing a common or an ordinary punishment, but is exiled, as it were, from the world, so as to be deprived of light and air, as parricides, to whom formerly, as it is well-known, this punishment was allotted --- as then Jonah saw that he was thus dealt with, what must have been the state of his mind?

Now that he tells us that he was three whole days in the inside of the fish, it is certain that the Lord had so awakened him that he must have endured continual uneasiness. He was asleep before he was swallowed by the fish; but the Lord drew him, as it were, by force to his tribunal, and he must have suffered a continual execution. He must have every moment entertained such thoughts as these, ``Why does he now thus deal with thee? God does not indeed slay thee at once, but intends to expose thee to innumerable deaths.'' We see what Job says, that when he died he would be at rest and free from all evils, (Job 14:6.) Jonah no doubt continually boiled with grief, because he knew that God was opposed to and displeased with him: he doubtless said to himself, ``Thou hast to do, not with men, but with God himself, who now pursues thee, because thou hast become a fugitive from his presence.'' As Jonah then must have necessarily thus thought within himself of God's wrath, his case must have been harder than hundred deaths, as it had been with Job and with many others, who made it their chief petition that they might die. Now as he was not slain but languished in continual torments, it is certain that no one of us can comprehend, much less convey in words what must have come into the mind of Jonah during these three days. But I cannot now discuss what remains; I must therefore defer it to the next lecture.

Prayer.

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou settest before us this day thy holy Prophet as an awful example of thy wrath against all who are rebellious and disobedient to thee, --- O grant, that we may learn so to subject all our thoughts and affections to thy word, that we may not reject any thing that pleases thee, but so learn both to live and to die to thee, that we may ever regard thy will, and undertake nothing but what thou hast testified is approved by thee, so that we may fight under thy banners, and through life obey thy word, until at length we reach that blessed rest which has been obtained for us by the blood of thy only begotten Son, and is laid up for us in heaven through the hope of his Gospel. Amen.

lecture Seventy-sixth

In yesterday's lecture we began to explain the last verse of the first chapter, in

which Jonah said, that a fish was prepared by the Lord We stated that it could not have been otherwise but that Jonah, when he was in the inside of the fish, must have felt the most grievous agonies, as though he had been doomed to perpetual death, as long as he was deprived of the enjoyment of God's favor: and this fact will be further explained when his song comes under our consideration.

But now there is a question to be considered and that is whether God created a fish to receive Jonah. The expression, that God prepared a fish [110] seems indeed to mean this; for if the fish had already been swimming in the sea, the Prophet might have adopted another mode of speaking and said, that the Lord caused the fish to meet him or that God had sent a fish; for so the Scripture usually speaks: but a fish is said to have been prepared. This doubt may be thus removed, --- that though God may not have created the fish, he had yet prepared him for this purpose; for we know that it was not according to the course of nature that the fish swallowed Jonah, and also, that he was preserved uninjured in his inside for three days and three nights. I therefore refer what is said here, that a fish was prepared, to the preservation of Jonah: for it is certain that there are some fishes which can swallow men whole and entire. And William Rondelet, who has written a book on the fishes of the sea, concludes that in all probability it must have been the Lamia. He himself saw that fish, and he says that it has a belly so capacious and, mouth so wide, that it can easily swallow up a man; and he says that a man in armor has sometimes been found in the inside of the Lamia. Therefore, as I have said, either a whale, or a Lamia, or a fish unknown to us, may be able to swallow up a man whole and entire; but he who is thus devoured cannot live in the inside of a fish. Hence Jonah, that he might mark it out as a miracle, says that the fish was prepared by the Lord; for he was received into the inside of the fish as though it were into an hospital; and though he had no rest there, yet he was as safe as to his body, as though he were walking on land. Since then the Lord, contrary to the order of nature, preserved there his Prophet, it is no wonder that he says that the fish was prepared by the Lord. I come now to the second chapter.

Chapter 2.

[110] The verb {{מנה does not necessarily include the idea of creation, but its meaning is, to distribute, to arrange, to order, to provide, to prepare; and yet this preparation may involve the exercise of a creative power, as in the case of the gourd mentioned in the fourth chapter, for it is the same verb. Though it might be an indigenous plant, yet to provide it so quickly in one night was the act of Divine power. So also as to this fish, it might or it might not have been one usually found in that part of the sea. To provide it, but bringing it to the spot, was as much a miracle as to provide it by a new act of creation. To allow the one and to deny the other, is wholly unreasonable. The whole was clearly miraculous: and the discovery of any such fish now does not in the least render the transaction less miraculous. Every part of it must be ascribed to a Divine interposition; and let those stumble who are resolved to stumble. It has been supposed to have been the ``whale,'' because the word {κητος} is used in the reference made to Jonah in Matthew 12:40: but that word is a general term applied to a large fish, and does not necessarily mean the whale. {κητος}, says Ribera, in his comment on Jonah, non certae speciei, sed generis nomen est, et piscem quemvis magnum significat. --- Ed.

Jonah 2

Jonah 2:1-2

1. Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish's belly,

1. Et oravit Jonas ad Jehovam Deum suum e ventre piscis;

2. And said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice.

2. Et dixit clamavi in angustia mea ad Jehovam, et exaudit me (vel, respondit mihi;) e ventre sepulchri vociferatus sum, audivisti vocem meam. [111]

When Jonah says that he prayed from the bowels of the fish, he shows first with what courage of mind he was endued. He had then put on a new heart; for when he was at liberty he thought that he could in a manner escape from God, he became a fugitive from the Lord: but now while inclosed within narrow bounds, he begins to pray, and of his own accord sets himself in God's presence.

This is a change worthy of being noticed: and hence we may learn how much it profits us to be drawn back often as it were by cords, or to be held tied up with fetters because when we are free we go astray here and there beyond all limits. Jonah, when he was at liberty, became, as we have seen, wanton; but now finding himself restrained by the mighty hand of God, he receives a new mind, and prays from the bowels of the fish [112] . But how was it that he directed his petitions then

[111] It is remarkable that several sentences in this prayer, as it has been observed by Marchius and Henderson, are exactly the same, not only in sense, but also, in most instances, in words, with passages in the Psalms. The first clause of this verse is found in Psalm 120:1, only the words are differently arranged. The last clause of the third verse, both in words and order, is the same with a distich in Psalm 42:7. The beginning of the fourth verse agrees nearly with Psalm 31:22; and so does the fifth verse with a line in Psalm 69:1, one word being different. The first clause of the seventh verse is found in the very same words in Psalm 142:3; and the first line in the eighth verse is Psalm 31:6, with the exception of one letter; and the last words of the ninth verse are to be met within Psalm 3:8, only the order is reversed. "On the supposition," says Henderson, "that Jonah was familiar with the Psalms, it was very natural for him to incorporate sentences taken from them with his own language." — Ed.

[112] "No place amiss for prayer, I will that men pray everywhere; where ever God casts us we may find a way open heavenwards, if it be now our own fault. Jonah was now in the bottom

to God, by whose hand he saw that he was so heavily pressed? For God most rigidly handled him; Jonah was in a manner doomed to eternal ruin; the bowels of the fish, as we shall hereafter see, were indeed to him as it were hell or the grave. But in this state of despair Jonah even gathered courage, and was able to retake himself directly to God. It was a wonderful and almost incredible example of faith. Let us then learn to weigh well what is here said; for when the Lord heavily afflicts us, it is then a legitimate and seasonable time for prayer. But we know that the greater part despond, and do not usually offer their prayers freely to God, except their minds be in a calm state; and yet God then especially invites us to himself when we are reduced to extremities. Let this, then, which Jonah declares of himself, come to our minds, --- that he cried to God from hell itself: and, at the same time, he assures us that his prayer proceeded from true faith; for he does not simply say that he prayed to Jehovah, but he adds that he was his God; and he speaks with a serious and deeply-reflective mind. Though Jonah then was not only like one dead, but also on the confines of perdition, he yet believed that God would be merciful if he fled to him. We hence see that Jonah prayed not at random, as hypocrites are wont to take God's name in their mouths when they are in distress, but he prayed in earnest; for he was persuaded that God would be propitious to him.

But we must remember that his prayer was not composed in the words which are here related; but Jonah, while in the bowels of the fish, dwelt on these thoughts in his mind. Hence he relates in this song how he thought and felt; and we shall see that he was then in a state of distraction, as our minds must necessarily be tossed here and there by temptations. For the servants of God do not gain the victory without great struggle. We must fight, and indeed strenuously, that we may conquer. Jonah then in this song shows that he was agitated with great trouble and hard contests: yet this conviction was firmly fixed in his heart, --- that God was to be sought, and would not be sought in vain, as he is ever ready to bring help to his people whenever they cry to him.

Then he says, I cried, when I had trouble, to Jehovah, and he answered me. Jonah no doubt relates now, after having come forth from the bowels of the fish, what had happened to him, and he gives thanks to the Lord. [113] This verse then contains

of the sea, yet out of the depths he cries to God." — M. Henry. "It may be asked, How could Jonah either pray or breathe in the stomach of a fish? Very easily, if God so willed it. And let the reader keep this constantly in view: the whole is a miracle, from Jonah's being swallowed by the fish, till he was cast ashore by the same animal. It was God that had prepared the great fish; it was the Lord that spake to the fish, and caused it to vomit Jonah on the dry land. All is miracle." — Adam Clarke. — Ed.

[113] He relates here, as it appears from the preceding, "and he said," the prayer he offered when in the fish's bowels, and not a prayer offered after his deliverance. Some have entertained the latter opinion, because some of the verbs here are in the past tense: but this circumstance only shows that he continued to pray from the time when he was swallowed by the fish to the time when he was delivered. It was a continued act. It is the same as though he said, "I have called, and do call on Jehovah." Marckius, and also Dathius, render the verbs in the present tense, "I call," etc. The following is a translation according to the view of this prayer, — 3. I call in my distress on Jehovah, and he will answer me; From the belly of the grave I cry, — thou hearest my voice. 4. When thou didst send me to the deep, into the midst of the waters, And the flood surrounded me, — Thy billows and waves over me passed; 5. Then I said, I am banished from the sight of thine eyes; — Yet I will again look towards the temple of thy holiness. 6. Encompass me do the waters to the soul, The deep surrounds me, The sedge is wrapped around my head: 7. To the cuttings off of the mountains have I descended; The earth! Its bars are continually around me: But thou wilt bring from destruction my life, O Jehovah,

two parts, --- that Jonah in his trouble fled to God, --- and the latter part contains thanksgiving for having been miraculously delivered beyond what flesh could have thought. I cried, he says, in my distress, to Jehovah; I cried out from the bowels of hell, thou hast heard my voice. Jonah, as we shall hereafter see, directed his prayers to God not without great struggle; he contended with many difficulties; but however great the impediments in his way, he still persevered and ceased not from praying. He now tells us that he had not prayed in vain; and, that he might amplify the grace of God, he says, from the bowels of the grave He mentioned distress (angustiam --- straitness) in the first clause; but here he more clearly expresses how remarkable and extraordinary had been the kindness of God, that he came forth safe from the bowels of the fish, which were like the bowels of the grave. {שאול}, shaul, derived from corruption, is called the grave by the Hebrews, and the Latin translator has almost everywhere rendered it hell, (infernum;) and {שאול}, shaul, is also sometimes taken for hell, that is, the state of the reprobate, because they know that they are condemned by God: it is, however, taken more frequently for the grave; and I am disposed to retain this sense, --- that the fish was like the grave. But he means that he was so shut up in the grave, that there was no escape open to him.

What are the bowels of the grave? Even the inside or the recess of the grave itself. When Jonah was in this state, he says, that he was heard by the Lord. It may be proper to repeat again what I have already slightly touched, --- that Jonah was not so oppressed, though under the heaviest trial, but that his petitions came forth to God. He prayed as it were from hell, and not simply prayed, for he, at the same time, sets forth his vehemence and ardor by saying, that he cried and cried aloud. Distress, no doubt, extorted from Jonah these urgent entreaties. However this might have been, he did not howl, as the unbelieving are wont to do, who feel their own evils and bitterly complain; and yet they pour forth vain howlings. Jonah here shows himself to be different from them by saying, that he cried and cried aloud to God. It now follows ---

Jonah 2:3

3. For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about: all thy billows and thy waves passed over me.

3. Atqui projeceras me in profundum, in cor marium, et fluvius circumdedit me; omnes conflictus tui (sed hac voce intelligit undas quae inter se confligunt; scimus enim esse varias collisiones, ideo vertunt aliqui, contritiones tui, nam {שחר} significat proprie confligere et frangere; perinde est igitur ac si diceret, omnes fracturae tuae et collisiones super me transierunt, et explicat quid velit, quum dicit) fluctus tui super me transierunt.

In this verse are set forth his difficulties: for Jonah, for the sake of amplifying, refers to his condition. It was a great thing that he cried to God from the bowels of

my God. 8. When overwhelmed within me was my soul, Jehovah did I remember; And come to thee shall my prayer — To the temple of thy holiness. 9. They who regard idols of vanity, Their own mercy forsake: 10. But I, with the voice of praise, will sacrifice to thee, What I have vowed will I fulfill: Salvation belongs to Jehovah. “The cuttings off,” in verse 7, says Parkhurst, were those parts which were cut off from the mountains at the deluge. The Septuagint has {σχισμας} --- rents-clefts. Roots, bottoms, foundations, have been adopted by some, but not consistently with the meaning of the original word, --- ``The bars or bolts'' of the earth convey the idea of impediments in his way to return to the earth. They were ``around'' him, or literally ``upon'' him, ,{בעדו} that is, they were, as it were, closed upon him. --- Ed.

the fish; but it was far more difficult for him to raise up his mind in prayer, when he knew or thought God to be angry with him: for had he been thrown into extreme evils, he might yet call upon God; but as it came to his mind that all the evil he suffered was inflicted by God, because he tried to shun his call, how was it possible for him to penetrate into heaven when such an obstacle stood in his way? We hence see the design of these words, But thou hadst cast me into the gulf, into the heart of the sea; the flood surrounded me, all thy billows and waves passed over me.

In short, Jonah shows here what dreadful temptations presented themselves to him while he was endeavoring to offer up prayers. It came first to his mind that God was his most inveterate enemy. For Jonah did not then think of the sailors and the rest who had cast him into the sea; but his mind was fixed on God: this is the reason why he says, Thou, Lord, hadst cast me into the deep, into the heart of the sea; and then, Thy billows, Thy waves [114] He does not here regard the nature of the sea; but he bestows, as I have already said, all his thoughts on God, and acknowledges that he had to do with him; as though he said, ``Thou Lord, in pursuing me, drivest me away; but to thee do I come: thou showest by dreadful proofs that thou art offended with me, but yet I seek thee; so far is it that these terrors drive me to a distance from thee, that now, being subdued as it were by thy goads, I come willingly to thee; for nowhere else is there for me any hope of deliverance.'' We now then see how much avails the contrast, when Jonah sets the terrible punishment which he endured in opposition to his prayer. Let us now proceed ---

Jonah 2:4

4. Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple.

4. Tunc ego dixi, (nam copula resolvi debet in adverbium temporis,) Expulsus sum a conspectu oculorum tuorum; verum adjiciam aspicere ad templum sanctitatis tuae.

In the first clause of this verse Jonah confirms again what I have said, --- that when he sought to pray, not only the door was closed against him, but there were mountains, as it were, intervening, so that he could not breathe a prayer to God: for he did not so much think of the state in which he was; nay, but he chiefly considered his own case, how he had provoked the wrath of God. Hence he says, I have said, I am cast away from the sight of thine eyes. Some give this frigid exposition, that he had been only expelled from his own country, that he might not behold the temple. But I have no doubt but that Jonah tells us here that he suffered extreme agonies, as though every hope of pardon had been cut off from him: ``What! shall I yet hope that God will be propitious? It is not to be hoped.'' This then is the casting away of which he speaks: for it is said that God casts us away, when he allows us no access to him. Hence Jonah thought that he was wholly alienated from God. Were any to object and say, that then his faith must have been extinct; the obvious answer is,

[114] "He calls them God's billows and his waves, not because he made and rules them, but because he had now commissioned them against Jonah, and ordered them to afflict and terrify, but not to destroy him. These words are plainly quoted by Jonah from Psalm 42:7. What David spoke figuratively and metaphorically, Jonah applies to himself as literally fulfilled." — M. Henry.

--- that in the struggle of faith there are internal conflicts; one thought is suggested, and then another of an opposite character meets it; there would indeed be no trial of our faith, except there were such internal conflicts; for when, with appeased minds, we can feel assured that God is propitious to us, what is the trial of faith? But when the flesh tells us that God is opposed to us, and that there is no more hope of pardon, faith at length sets up its shield, and repels this onset of temptation, and entertains hope of pardon: whenever God for a time appears implacable, then faith indeed is tried. Such then was the condition of Jonah; for, according to the judgment of the flesh, he thought that he was utterly cast away by God, so that he came to him in vain. Jonah, then, having not yet put off flesh and blood, could not immediately lay hold on the grace of God, but difficulties met him in his course.

The latter clause is differently explained by interpreters. Some take it negatively, ``I shall no more look towards the temple of thy holiness:'' but the words admit not of this explanation. {אך}, ak, means in Hebrew, truly, nevertheless; and it means also, certainly; and sometimes it is taken dubitatively, perhaps. The greater part of expounders render the clause thus, ``But I shall see the temple of thy holiness;'' as though Jonah here reproved his own distrust, which he had just expressed, as the case is with the faithful, who immediately check themselves, when they are tempted to entertain any doubt: ``What! dost thou then cast away hope, when yet God will be reconciled to thee if thou wilt come to him?'' Hence interpreters think that it is a sort of correction, as though Jonah here changed his mind, and retracted what he had previously taken up, as a false principle derived from the judgment of the flesh. He had said then that he had been cast away from the presence of the Lord; but now, according to these expositors, he repels that temptation, But I shall see thy holy temple; though I seem now to be rejected by thee, thou wilt at last receive me into favor. We may, however, explain this clause, consistently with the former, in this way, At least, or, but, I would again see, etc., as an expression of a wish. The future then may be taken for the optative mood, as we know that the Hebrews are wont thus to use the future tense, either when they pray or express a wish. This meaning then best agrees with the passage, that Jonah as yet doubtingly prays, At least, or, but, I would again, O Lord, see the temple of thy holiness. But since the former explanation which I have mentioned is probable, I do not contend for this. However this may be, we find that Jonah did not wholly despair, though the judgment of the flesh would drive him to despair; for he immediately turned his address to God. For they who murmur against God, on the contrary, speak in the third person, turning themselves, as it were, away from him: but Jonah here sets God before his eyes, I have been cast away, he says, from the sight of thine eyes He does not remonstrate here with God, but shows that he was seeking God still, though he thought that he was cast far away.

Then he adds, I would at least see again the temple of thy holiness. And by speaking of the temple, he no doubt set the temple before him as an encouragement to his faith. As then he had been cast away, he gathers everything that might avail to raise up and confirm his hope. He had indeed been circumcised, he had been a worshipper of God from his childhood, he had been educated in the Law, he had

exercised himself in offering sacrifices: under the name of temple he now includes briefly all these things. We hence see that he thus encouraged himself to entertain good hope in his extreme necessity. And this is a useful admonition; for when every access to God seems closed up against us, nothing is more useful than to recall to mind, that he has adopted us from our very infancy, that he has also testified his favor by many tokens, especially that he has called us by his Gospel into a fellowship with his only-begotten Son, who is life and salvation; and then, that he has confirmed his favor both by Baptism and the Supper. When, therefore, these things come to our minds, we may be able by faith to break through all impediments. Let us go on ---

Jonah 2:5-6

5. The waters compassed me about, even to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head.

5. Obsederunt me aquae usque ad animam, abyssus undique circumdedit me, juncus alligatus fuit capite meo:

6. I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O Lord my God.

6. Ad radices (proprie, excisuras; nam {קצב} significat excidere; alii vertunt, ad fines extremos; ad radices igitur) montium descendi; terra cum vectibus suis circum me in seculum: et ascendere fecisti vitam meam e sepulchro (est aliud nomen quam {שאול}, nempe, {שהת}; alii vertunt, a corruptione, vel, interitu,) Jehova, Deus mi.

Here in many words Jonah relates how many things had happened to him, which were calculated to overwhelm his mind with terror and to drive him far from God, and to take away every desire for prayer. But we must ever bear in mind what we have already stated, --- that he had to do with God: and this ought to be well considered by us. The case was the same with David, when he says in Psalm 39:9, `Thou hast yet done it;' for, after having complained of his enemies, he turned his mind to God: ``What then do I? what do I gain by these complaints? for men alone do not vex me; thou, God, he says, hast done this.'' So it was with Jonah; he ever set before him the wrath of God, for he knew that such a calamity had not happened to him but on account of his sins.

He therefore says that he was by waters beset, and then, that he was surrounded by the deep; but at length he adds, that God made his life to ascend, etc. All these circumstances tend to show that Jonah could not have raised up his mind to God except through an extraordinary miracle, as his life was in so many ways oppressed. When he says that he was beset with waters even to the soul, I understand it to have been to the peril of his life; for other explanations seem frigid and strained. And the Hebrews says that to be pressed to the soul, is to be in danger of one's life; as the Latins, meaning the same thing, say that the heart, or the inside, or the bowels, are wounded. So also in this place the same thing is meant, `The waters beset me even to the soul,' and then, `the abyss surrounds me.' Some render {סוף}, suph, sedge; others sea-weed; others bulrush: but the sense amounts to the same thing. No doubt {סוף}, suph, is a species of sedge; and some think that the Red Sea was thus called, because it is full of sedges or bulrushes. They think also that bulrushes are

thus called, because they soon putrefy. But what Jonah means is certain and that is, that weed enveloped his head, or that weed grew around his head: but to refer this to the head of the fish, as some do, is improper: Jonah speaks metaphorically when he says that he was entangled in the sedge, inasmuch as there is no hope when any one is rolled in the sedge at the bottom of the sea. How, indeed, can he escape from drowning who is thus held, as it were, tied up? It is then to be understood metaphorically; for Jonah meant that he was so sunk that he could not swim, except through the ineffable power of God.

According to the same sense he says, I descended to the roots of the mountains. But he speaks of promontories, which were nigh the sea; as though he had said, that he was not cast into the midst of the sea, but that he had so sunk as to be fixed in the deep under the roots of mountains. All these things have the same designs which was to show that no deliverance could be hoped for, except God stretched forth his hand from heaven, and indeed in a manner new and incredible.

He says that the earth with its bars was around him. He means by this kind of speaking, that he was so shut up, as if the whole earth had been like a door. We know what sort of bars are those of the earth, when we ascribe bars to it: for when any door is fastened with bolts, we know how small a portion it is. But when we suppose the earth itself to be like a door, what kind of things must the bolts be? It is the same thing then as though Jonah had said, that he was so hindered from the vital light, as if the earth had been set against him to prevent his coming forth to behold the sun: the earth, then, was set against me, and that for ever

He afterwards comes to thanksgiving, And thou Jehovah, my God, hast made my life to ascend from the grave. Jonah, after having given a long description, for the purpose of showing that he was not once put to death, but that he had been overwhelmed with many and various deaths, now adds his gratitude to the Lord for having delivered him, Thou, he says, hast made my life to ascend from the grave, O Jehovah. He again confirms what I have once said, --- that he did not pour forth empty prayers, but that he prayed with an earnest feeling, and in faith: for he would not have called him his God, except he was persuaded of his paternal love, so as to be able to expect from him a certain salvation. Thou, then, Jehovah, my God, he says; he does not say, Thou hast delivered me, but, Thou hast brought forth my life from the grave. Then Jonah, brought to life again, testifies here that he was not only delivered by God's aid from the greatest danger, but that he had, by a certain kind of resurrection, been raised from the dead. This is the meaning of this mode of speaking, when he says that his life had been brought forth from the grave, or from corruption itself. It follows ---

Jonah 2:7

7. When my soul fainted within me I remembered the LORD: and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple.

7. Quum deficeret in me anima mea (vel, dum se convolveret supra me anima mea,) Jehovae recordatus sum, et ingressa est oratio mea ad templum sanctitatis tuae.

Here Jonah comprehends in one verse what he had previously said, --- that he

had been distressed with the heaviest troubles, but that he had not yet been so cast down in his mind, as that he had no prospect of God's favor to encourage him to pray. He indeed first confesses that he had suffered some kind of fainting, and that he had been harassed by anxious and perplexing thoughts, so as not to be able by his own efforts to disengage himself.

As to the word {עטף}, otheph, it means in Hebrew to hide, to cover; but in Niphal and Hithpael (in which conjugation it is found here) it signifies to fail: but its former meaning might still be suitably retained here; then it would be, `My soul hid or rolled up itself,' as it is in Psalm 102:1, `The prayer of the afflicted, when he rolled up himself in his distress.' They who render it, he multiplied prayers, have no reason to support them. I therefore doubt not but that Jonah here means, either that he had been overcome by a swoon, or that he had been so perplexed as not to be able without a violent struggle to raise up his mind to God. However it may have been, he intended by this word to express the anxiety of his mind. While then we are tossed about by divers thoughts, and remain, as it were, bound up in a hopeless condition, then our soul may be said to roll or to fold up itself within us. When therefore the soul rolls up itself, all the thoughts of man in perplexity recoil on himself. We may indeed seek to disburden ourselves while we toss about various purposes, but whatever we strive to turn away from us, soon comes back on our own head; thus our soul recoils upon us. We now perceive what Jonah meant by this clause, When my soul infolded itself, or failed within me, I remembered, he says, Jehovah. We hence learn that Jonah became not a conqueror without the greatest difficulties, not until his soul, as we have said, had fainted: this is one thing. Then we learn, also, that he was not so oppressed with distresses but that he at length sought God by prayer. Jonah therefore retained this truth, that God was to be sought, however severely and sharply he treated him for a time; for the remembering, of which he speaks, proceeded from faith. The ungodly also remember Jehovah, but they dread him, for they look on him as a judge; and whenever a mention is made of God, they expect nothing but destruction: but Jonah applied the remembrance of God to another purpose, even as a solace to ease his cares and his anxieties.

For it immediately follows, that his prayer had penetrated unto God, or entered before him. [115] We then see that Jonah so remembered his God, that by faith he knew that he would be propitious to him; and hence was his disposition to pray. But by saying that his prayer entered into his temple, he no doubt alludes to a custom under the law; for the Jews were wont to turn themselves towards the temple whenever they prayed: nor was this a superstitious ceremony; for we know that they were instructed in the doctrine which invited them to the sanctuary and the ark of the covenant. Since then this was the custom under the law, Jonah says that his prayer entered into the temple of God; for that was a visible symbol, through which the Jews might understand that God was near to them; not that they by a false imagination bound God to external signs, but because they knew that these helps Had not in vain been given to them. So then Jonah not only remembered his God, but

[115] "Here prayer is personified, and is represented as a messenger going from the distressed and entering into the temple of God, and standing before him. This is a very fine and delicate image." — Adam Clarke.

called also to mind the signs and symbols in which he had exercised his faith, as we have just said through the whole course of his life; for they who view him as referring to heaven, depart wholly from what the Prophet meant. We indeed know that the temple sometimes means heaven; but this sense suits not this place. Then Jonah meant that though he was far away from the temple, God was yet near to him; for he had not ceased to pray to that God who had revealed himself by the law which he gave, and who had expressed his will to be worshipped at Jerusalem, and also had been pleased to appoint the ark as the symbol of his presence, that the Jews might, with an assured faith, call upon him, and that they might not doubt but that he dwelt in the midst of them, inasmuch as he had there his visible habitation.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast once given us such an evidence of thy infinite power in thy servant Jonah, whose mind, when he was almost sunk down into hell, thou hadst yet raised up to thyself, and hadst so supported with firm constancy, that he ceased not to pray and to call on thee, --- O grant, that in the trials by which we must be daily exercised, we may raise upwards our minds to thee, and never cease to think that thou art near us; and that when the signs of thy wrath appear, and when our sins thrust themselves before our eyes, to drive us to despair, may we still constantly struggle, and never surrender the hope of thy mercy, until having finished all our contests, we may at length freely and fully give thanks to thee, and praise thy infinite goodness, such as we daily experience that being conducted through continual trials, we may at last come into that blessed rest which is laid up for us in heaven, through Christ one Lord. Amen.

Lecture Seventy-seventh

Jonah 2:8-9

8. They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy.

8. Qui observant vanitates mendaces, misericordiam suam (vel, clementiam) derelinquent (hoc est, derelinquunt.)

9. But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord

9. Ego autem in voce laudis sacrificabo tibi, quae vovi reddam: salus est Jehovae.

Here Jonah says first, that men miserably go astray, when they turn aside to vain superstitions, for they rob themselves of the chief good: for he calls whatever help or aid that is necessary for salvation, the mercy of men. The sense then is that as soon as men depart from God, they depart from life and salvation, and that nothing is retained by them, for they willfully cast aside whatever good that can be hoped and desired. Some elicit a contrary meaning, that the superstitious, when they return to a sound mind, relinquish their own reproach; for {חסד}, chesad, sometimes means reproach. They then think that the way of true penitence is here described, --- that when God restores men from their straying to the right way, he gives them at the same time a sound mind, so that they rid themselves from all their vices. This is indeed true, but it is too strained a meaning. Others confine this to the sailors who vowed sacrifices to God; as though Jonah had said, that they would soon relapse to their own follies, and bid adieu to God, who in his mercy had delivered them from

shipwreck; so they explain their mercy to be God; but this is also too forced an explanation.

I doubt not, therefore, but that Jonah here sets his own religion in opposition to his false intentions of men; for it immediately follows, But I with the voice of praise will sacrifice to thee. Jonah, then, having before confessed that he would be thankful to God, now pours contempt on all those inventions which men foolishly contrive for themselves, and through which they withdraw themselves from the only true God, and from the sincere worship of him. For he calls all those devices, by which men deceive themselves, the vanities of falsehood; [116] for it is certain that they are mere fallacies which men invent for themselves without the authority of God's Word; for truth is one and simple, which God has revealed to us in his world. Whosoever then turns aside the least, either on this or on that side, seeks, as it were designedly, some imposture or another, by which he ruins himself. They then who follow such vanities, says Jonah, forsake their own mercy, [117] that is they reject all happiness: for no aid and no help can be expected from any other quarter than from the only true God.

But this passage deserves a careful notice; for we hence learn what value to attach to all superstitions, to all those opinions of men, when they attempt to set up religion according to their own will: for Jonah calls them lying or fallacious vanities. There is then but one true religion, the religion which God has taught us in his word. We must also notice, that men in vain weary themselves when they follow their own inventions; for the more strenuously they run, the farther they recede from the right way, as Augustine has well observed. But Jonah here adopts a higher principle, --- that God alone possesses in himself all fullness of blessings: whosoever then truly and sincerely seeks God, will find in him whatever can be wished for salvation. But God is not to be sought but by obedience and faith: whosoever then dare to give themselves loose reins, so as to follow this or that without the warrant of God's word, recede from God, and, at the same time, deprive themselves of all good things. The superstitious do indeed think that they gain much when they toil in their own inventions; but we see what the Holy Spirit declares by the mouth of Jonah. The Lord says the same by Jeremiah

``They have forsaken me, the fountain of living water, and cisterns have they digged for themselves,'' (Jeremiah 2:13.)

[116] {,{שוא}-{הבלי} ``Idols of vanity or falsehood,'' i.e., false, or deceitful, or vain idols. {הבל} means vapor, smoke, breath, vanity, inanity: but in the plural number it is applied for the most part to idols. See Deuteronomy 32:21; 1 Kings 16:13, 26 {שוא} is a lie, which is vain --- useless, and false --- deceptive. Marckius renders the words, ``Vanitates inanitatis --- vanities of inanity'' Junius and Tremelius, ``Vanitates mendaces --- mendacious vanities;'' Septuagint, ``{ματαια} {και} {Ψευδη} --- vain and false things.'' ``He thus calls idols,'' says an author in Poole's Syn., ``and all those things in which any one, excluding God, trusts; which are nothing, and can do nothing, and which deceive their worshippers.'' This is true, that is, that all other things, as well as idols, are, apart from God, vain, and worthless, and deceptive; but the reference here no doubt is to idols. They are not only empty, but deceptive. --- Ed.

[117] {{חסדם, {יעזבו} ``Their mercy or goodness they forsake,'' that is, the mercy exhibited and offered to them by God; or, if we render it goodness, it means their chief good, which is God. The Psalmist calls God his goodness in Psalm 144:2, ,{חסדי} ``my goodness,'' the giver of all his goodness, or his chief good. Dathius gives very correctly the meaning of the two lines in these words --- ``Qui vana idola colunt, Felicitatis suae auctorem deserunt --- They who worship vain idols, Desert the author of their own happiness.'' More literally --- ``They who attend on the idols of vanity, Their own goodness forsake.'' There is a contrast between vain idols and their own goodness, that is, the goodness received by them from God. Grotius gives this paraphrase, ``They who worship idols are vain; for they forsake their own mercy, that is, God, who is able to help them in their distress.'' Henry suggests another view, ``They who follow their own inventions, as Jonah had done, when he fled from the presence of the lord to go to Tarshish, forsake their own mercy, that mercy which they may find in God.'' --- Ed.

There the Lord complains of his chosen people, who had gone astray after wicked superstitions. Hence, when men wander beyond the word of God, they in a manner renounce God, or say adieu to him; and thus they deprive themselves of all good things; for without God there is no salvation and no help to be found.

Jonah therefore rightly adds, But I, with the voice of praise, will sacrifice to thee; as though he said While men as it were banish themselves from God, by giving themselves up to errors, I will sacrifice to thee and to thee alone, O Lord. And this ought to be observed by us; for as our minds are prone to falsehood and vanity, any new superstition will easily lay hold so us, except we be restrained by this bond, except we be fully persuaded, --- that true salvation dwells in God alone, and every aid and help that can be expected by us: but when this conviction is really and thoroughly fixed in our hearts, then true religion cannot be easily lost by us: though Satan should on every side spread his allurements, we shall yet continue in the true and right worship of God. And the more carefully it behaves us to consider this passage, because Jonah no doubt meant here to strengthen himself in the right path of religion; for he knew that like all mortals he was prone to what was false; he therefore encouraged himself to persevere: and this he does, when he declares that whatever superstition men devise, is a deprivation of the chief good, even of life and salvation. It will hence follow, that we shall abominate every error when we are fully persuaded that we forsake the true God whenever we obey not his word, and that we at the same time cast away salvation, and every thing good that can be desired. Then Jonah says, I will sacrifice to thee with the voice of praise.

It must be noticed here farther, that the worship of God especially consists in praises, as it is said in Psalm 1:1: for there God shows that he regards as nothing all sacrifices, except they answer this end --- to set forth the praise of his name. It was indeed his will that sacrifices should be offered to him under the law; but it was for the end just stated: for God cares not for calves and oxen, for goats and lambs; but his will was that he should be acknowledged as the Giver of all blessings. Hence he says there, `Sacrifice to me the sacrifice of praise.' So also Jonah now says, I will offer to thee the sacrifice of praise, and he might have said with still more simplicity, ``Lord, I ascribe to thee my preserved life.'' But if this was the case under the shadows of the law, how much more ought we to attend to this, that is, --- to strive to worship God, not in a gross manner, but spiritually, and to testify that our life proceeds from him, that it is in his hand, that we owe all things to him, and, in a word, that he is the Source and Author of salvation, and not only of salvation, but also of wisdom, of righteousness, of power?

And he afterwards mentions his vows, I will pay, he says, my vows. We have stated elsewhere in what light we are to consider vows. The holy Fathers did not vow to God, as the Papists of this day are wont to do, who seek to pacify God by their frivolous practices; one abstains for a certain time from meat, another puts on sackcloth, another undertakes a pilgrimage, and another obtrudes on God some new ceremony. There was nothing of this kind in the vows of the holy Fathers; but a vow was the mere act of thanksgiving, or a testimony of gratitude: and so Jonah joins his vows here with the sacrifice of praise. We hence learn that they were not

two different things; but he repeats the same thing twice. Jonah, then, had declared his vow to God for no other purpose but to testify his gratitude.

And hence he adds, To Jehovah is, or belongs, salvation; that is, to save is the prerogative of God alone; Jehovah is here in the dative case, for prefixed to it is {ל}, lamed. It is then to Jehovah that salvation belongs; the work of saving appertains to no other but to the Supreme God. Since it is so, we see how absurd and insane men are, when they transfer praises to another, as every one does who invents an idol for himself. As, then, there is but the one true God who saves, it behaves us to ascribe to him alone all our praises, that we may not deprive him of his right. This is the import of the whole. It follows ---

Jonah 2:10

10. And the Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land

10. Et dixit Jehovah pisci (hoc est, praecepit;) et evomuit Jonam super aridam.

The deliverance of Jonah is here in few words described; but how attentively ought we to consider the event? It was an incredible miracle, that Jonah should have continued alive and safe in the bowels of the fish for three days. For how was it that he was not a thousand times smothered or drowned by waters? We know that fish continually draw in water: Jonah could not certainly respire while in the fish; and the life of man without breathing can hardly continue for a minute. Jonah, then, must have been preserved beyond the power of nature. Then how could it have been that the fish should cast forth Jonah on the shore, except God by his unsearchable power had drawn the fish there? Again, who could have supernaturally opened its bowels and its mouth? His coming forth, then, was in every way miraculous, yea, it was attended with many miracles.

But Jonah, that he might the more extol the infinite power of God, adopted the word said. Hence we learn that nothing is hard to God, for he could by a nod only effect so great a thing as surpasses all our conceptions. If Jonah had said that he was delivered by God's kindness and favor, it would have been much less emphatical, than when he adopts a word which expresses a command, And Jehovah spake, or said, to the fish.

But as this deliverance of Jonah is an image of the resurrection, this is an extraordinary passage, and worthy of being especially noticed; for the Holy Spirit carries our minds to that power by which the world was formed and is still wonderfully preserved. That we may then, without hesitation and doubt, be convinced of the restoration which God promises to us, let us remember that the world was by him created out of nothing by his word and bidding, and is still thus sustained. But if this general truth is not sufficient, let this history of Jonah come to our minds, --- that God commanded a fish to cast forth Jonah: for how was it that Jonah escaped safe and was delivered? Even because it so pleased God, because the Lord commanded; and this word at this day retains the same efficacy. By that power then, by which he works all things, we also shall one day be raised up from the dead. Now follows ---

Chapter 3.

Jonah 3

Jonah 3:1-2

1. And the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time, saying,

1. Et factum fuit verbum Jehovae ad Jonam secundo, dicendo, ---

2. Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee.

2. Surge, proficiscere Nineven in urbem magnam, et praedica ad eam praedicationem quam ego mando tibi.

There is here set before us a remarkable proof of God's grace, --- that he was pleased to bestow on Jonah his former dignity and honor. He was indeed unworthy of the common light, but God not only restored him to life, but favored him again with the office and honor of a prophet. This, as I have said, Jonah obtained through the wonderful and singular favor of God. As he had previously fled, and by disobedience deprived himself in a manner of all God's favor, the recovery of his prophetic office was certainly not obtained through his own merit.

It must, in the first place, be observed, that this phrase, The word of Jehovah came the second time, ought to be noticed; for the word of God comes to men in different ways. God indeed addresses each of us individually; but he spoke to his Prophets in a special manner; for he designed them to be witnesses and heralds of his will. Hence, whenever God sets a man in some peculiar office, his word is said to come to him: as the word of God is addressed to magistrates because they are commanded to exercise the power committed to them; so also the word of God ever came to the Prophets, because it was not lawful for them to thrust in themselves without being called.

The command now follows, Arise, go to Nineveh, to that great city, and preach there the preaching which I command thee. [118] God again repeats what we have

[118] Literally, "And proclaim to or against her the proclamation which I declare to thee." The Septuagint is, "{Και} {κηρυξον} {εν} {αυτη} {κατα} {το} {κηρυγμα} {το} {εμπροσθεν} {ὁ} {εγω} {ελαλησα} {προς}

observed at the be ginning, --- that Nineveh was a great city, that Jonah might provide himself with an invincible courage of mind, and come there well prepared: for it often happens, that many boldly undertake an office, but soon fail, because difficulties had not been sufficiently foreseen by them. Hence, when men find more hardships than they thought of at the beginning, they nearly faint, at least they despond. The Lord, therefore, expressly foretold Jonah how difficult would be his employment; as though he said, ``I send thee, a man unknown, and of no rank, and a stranger, to denounce ruin on men, not a few in number, but on a vast multitude, and to carry on a contest with the noblest city, and so populous, that it may seem to be a region of itself.''

We now then understand why this character of the city was added; it was, that Jonah might gird up himself for the contest, that he might not afterwards fail in the middle of his course. This fear indeed frightened him at the beginning, so that he shunned the call of God; but he is not now moved in any degree by the greatness of the city, but resolutely follows where the Lord leads. We hence see, that faith, when once it gains the ascendancy in our hearts, surmounts all obstacles and despises all the greatness of the world; for it is immediately added ---

Jonah 3:3

3. So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days' journey.

3. Et surrexit Jonah et profectus est Nineven, secundum mandatum Jehovae: Nineveh autem erat urbs magna Dei (Deo, ad verbum) itinere trium dierum.

Jonah, by saying that he went to Nineveh according to God's command, proves in the first place, as I have said, how great was the power and energy of his faith; for though Jonah had considered the greatness and pride of the city, he seems to have forgotten that he was an obscure man, alone, and unarmed; but he had laid hold on weapons capable of destroying all the power of the world, for he knew that he was sent from above. His conviction was, that God was on his side; and he knew that God had called him. Hence then it was, that with a high and intrepid mind he looked down on all the splendor of the city Nineveh. Hence John does not without reason say, that the victory, by which we overcome the world, proceeds from faith, (1 John 5:4.) Jonah also proves, at the same time, how much he had improved under God's scourges. He had been severely chastised; but we know that most of the unbelieving grow hardened under the rod, and vomit forth their rage against God; Jonah, on the contrary, shows here that chastisement had been useful to him for he was subdued and led to obey God.

He went, then, according to the command of Jehovah; that is, nothing else did

{σε} --- And preach in it the former preaching which I have spoken to thee.'' {עליה} in five MSS., as in chapter 1:2, ``against her,'' and not ,{אליה} ``to her.'' {אשר} {אנכי} {דבר} ,{אליד} ``which I am speaking or declaring to thee.'' {דבר} is a participle; being preceded by a nominative, it will admit of an auxiliary verb either in the past, present or future tense, according to the context; though it is often used to express the present time. Newcome renders the sentence thus --- ``And cry unto her in the words which I shall speak unto thee;'' Henderson more paraphrastically thus --- ``And make the proclamation to it which I order thee;'' and adds the following remarks, --- ``Be my herald, and faithfully deliver my message. The word {κηρυξ} in Greek answers to the Hebrew ,{קורא} kore, both signifying a crier, a herald, a preacher; one that makes proclamation with a loud and earnest cry. Such was John Baptist, Isaiah 40:3; such was Jesus Christ, John 7:18-37; and such were all his apostles. And such earnestness becomes a ministry that has to do with immortal souls, asleep and dead in sin, hanging on the brink of perdition, and insensible of their state. The soft speaking, gentle toned, unmoved preacher, is never likely to awaken souls.'' Henry considers that the commission was not specifically explained to him then. ``Jonah must go,'' he says, ``with implicit faith: he shall not know till he comes thither what message he must deliver.'' --- Ed.

he regard but to render obedience to God, and to suffer himself to be wholly ruled by him. We hence learn how well God provides for us and for our salvation, when he corrects our perverseness; though sharp may be our chastisements, yet as this benefit follows we know that nothing is better for us than to be humbled under God's hand, as David says in Psalm 119:1. This change then, he went, is to us a remarkable example; and this is what the Lord has ever in view whenever he roughly handles us; for he cannot otherwise subdue either the haughtiness or the rebellion, or the slowness and indolence of our flesh. We must now also take notice how Jonah attained so much strength; it was, because he had found by experience in the bowels of the fish, that even amidst thousand deaths there is enough in God's protection to secure our safety. As then he had by experience known that the issues of death are at the will and in the hand of God, he is not now touched with fear so as to shun God's command, even were the whole world to rise up against him. Hence the more any one has found the kindness of God, the more courageously he ought to proceed in the discharge of his office, and confidently to commit to God his life and his safety, and resolutely to surmount all the perils of the world.

He then says, that Nineveh was a great city [119] , even a journey of three days. Some toil much in untying a knot, which at last is no knot at all; for it seems to them strange that one city should be in compass about thirty leagues according to our measure. When they conceive this as being impossible, then they invent some means to avoid the difficulty, --- that no one could visit the whole city so as to go through all the alleys, all the streets, and all the public places, except in three days; nay, they add, that this is not to be understood as though one ran or quickly passed through the city, but as though he walked leisurely and made a stay in public places: but these are mere puerilities. And if we believe profane writers, Nineveh must have been a great city, as Jonah declares here: for they say that its area was about four hundred stadia; and we know what space four hundred stadia include. A stadium is one hundred and twenty-five paces; hence eight stadia make a mile. Now if any one will count he will find that there are twelve miles in a hundred stadia; there will then be in four hundred stadia forty-eight miles. This account well agrees with the testimony of Jonah. And then Diodorus and Herodotus say that there were 1500 towers around the city. Since it was so, it could not certainly be a smaller city than what it is represented here by Jonah. Though these things may seem to exceed what is commonly believed, writers have not yet reported them without some foundation: for however false are found to be many things in Diodorus and Herodotus, yet as to Babylon and Nineveh they could not have dared to say what was untrue; for the first was then standing and known to many; and the ruins of the other were still existing, though it had been for some time destroyed. We shall farther see about the end of the book that this city was large, and so populous, that there were there

[119] The original is, "And Nineveh was a city great to God" — {עיר}-{גדולה}. לאלהים{ The remark of Henry is, ``So the Hebrew phrase is, meaning no more than as we render it, exceeding great; this honor that language doth to the great God, that great things derive their denomination from him'' Though the form of the expression here is different from what we find in other places, when God is taken in this sense, as in Psalm 80:10, ,{אל}-{ארזי} cedars of God, that is, tall or great cedars, --- yet there is no other sense that comports with this place. This is the view of Dathius, Drusius, Newcome, and many others. Some render it, great through God, and Grotius seems to have taken it in this sense, for he explains it by ``Deo eam augente --- God having increased it.'' Henderson considers {ל} here in the sense of ,{לפני} before, and refers to Genesis 10:9. But this has hardly a meaning in this connection. --- Ed..

120,000 children. If any one receives not this testimony, let him feed on the lies of the devil. But since there were so many children there, what else can we say but that the circumference of the city was very great?

But this seems inconsistent with what immediately follows; for Jonah says, that when he entered the city, he performed a journey in the city for one day and preached. The answer is this, --- that as soon as he entered the city, and began to proclaim the command of God, some conversions immediately followed: so Jonah does not mean that he went through the city in one day. He then in the first day converted a part of the city; he afterwards continued to exhort each one to repentance: thus the conversion of the whole city followed; but not in the second or the third day, as it may be easily gathered. Let us now proceed to what remains ---

Jonah 3:4

4. And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.

4. Et coepit Jonah ingredi in urbem itinere diei unius, et clamavit et dixit, Adhuc quadraginta dies et Nineveh subversa.

Jonah here relates what had briefly been said before, --- that he went to Nineveh according to the command of God. He shows then how faithfully he executed the duty enjoined on him, and thus obeyed the word of God. Hence Jonah came and began to enter the city and to preach on the first day. This promptness proves clearly how tractable Jonah had become, and how much he endeavored to obey God in discharging his office: for had there been still a timidity in his heart, he would have inspected the city, as careful and timid men are wont to do, who inquire what is the condition of the place, what are the dispositions of the people, and which is the easiest access to them, and what is the best way, and where is the least danger. If Jonah then had been still entangled by carnal thoughts he would have waited two or three days, and then have began to exercise his office as a Prophet. This he did not, but entered the city and I cried. We now then see how prompt he was in his obedience, who had before attempted to pass over the sea: he now takes hardly a moment to breathe, but he begins at the very entrance to testify that he had come in obedience to God.

We hence see with what emphasis these words ought to be read. The narrative is indeed very simple; Jonah uses here no rhetorical ornaments, nor does he set forth his entrance with any fine display of words. Jonah, he says, entered into the city He who is not well versed in Scripture might say that this is frigid: but when we weigh the circumstances, we see that this simple way of speaking possesses more force and power than all the displays of orators.

He entered then the city a day's journey, and cried and said, etc. By saying that he cried, he again proves the courage of his soul; for he did not creep in privately, as men are wont to do, advancing cautiously when dangers are apprehended. He says that he cried: then this freedom shows that Jonah was divested of all fear, and endued with such boldness of spirit, that he raised himself up above all the hindrances of the world. And we ought, in the meantime, to remember how disliked must have been his message: for he did not gently lead the Ninevites to God, but threatened

them with destruction, and seemed to have given them no hope of pardon. Jonah might have thought that his voice, as one says, would have to return to his own throat, ``Can I denounce ruin on this populous city, without being instantly crushed? Will not the first man that meets me stone me to death?'' Thus might Jonah have thought within himself. No fear was, however, able to prevent him from doing his duty as a faithful servant, for he had been evidently strengthened by the Lord. But it will be better to join the following verse ---

Jonah 3:5

5. So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them.

5. Et crediderunt viri Ninevae Deo, et indixerunt jejunium, et induerunt saccos a magno eorum usque ad parvum eorum.

One thing, escaped me in the third verse: Jonah said that Nineveh was a city great to God. This form of speech is common in Scripture: for the Hebrews call that Divine, whatever it be, that is superior or excellent: so they say, the cedars of God, the mountains of God, the fields of God, when they are superior in height or in any other respect. Hence a city is called the city of God, when it is beyond others renowned. I wished briefly to allude to this subject, because some, with too much refinement and even puerility says that it was called the city of God, because it was the object of God's care, and in which he intended to exhibit a remarkable instance of conversion. But, as I have said, this is to be taken as the usual mode of speaking in similar cases.

I now return to the text: Jonah says, that the citizens of Nineveh believed God [120] . We hence gather that the preaching of Jonah was not so concise but that he introduced his discourse by declaring that he was God's Prophet, and that he did not proclaim these commands without authority; and we also gather that Jonah so denounced ruin, that at the same time he showed God to be the avenger of sins that he reproved the Ninevites, and, as it were, summoned them to God's tribunal, making known to them their guilt; for had he spoken only of punishment, it could not certainly have been otherwise, but that the Ninevites must have rebelled furiously against God; but by showing to them their guilt, he led them to acknowledge that the threatened punishment was just, and thus he prepared them for humility and penitence. Both these things may be collected from this expression of Jonah, that the Ninevites believed God; for were they not persuaded that the command came from heaven, what was their faith? Let us then know, that Jonah had so spoken of

[120] {ויאמינו, {באלהים} ``And they believed in God. The verb {אמן} in Hiphil is ever followed by {ב} or ,{ל} except in one instance by {את} in Judges 11:20. When followed by {ב} it seems to mean, to give credit to what is said, to believe one's testimony, or the truth of what is referred to. To believe then in God is to believe the truth of what he declares, to believe his word. Hence in 2 Chronicles 20:20, Jehosophat said to the people, ``Believe in the Lord your God,'' {האמינו} {ביהוה} ;{אלהיכם} and he adds, ``Believe [in] his Prophets,'' {האמינו} .{בנביאיו} It is the word of God, and the word of the Prophets, which was the same, or the truth or veracity of God and of his Prophets, that they For I have believed [in] thy commandments,'' ,{במצותיך} that is, in the truth of thy commandments. --- When the verb in Hiphil is followed by ,{ל} the idea of reliance or dependance is more especially conveyed, though in many instances there is hardly a difference tobe recognized, except the context be minutely observed. Among other passages, the verb in its Hiphil form is followed by ,{ב} in Genesis 15:6, Exodus 14:31, Numbers 20:12, 2 Kings 17:14, Proverbs 26:25, Jeremiah 12:6; --- and by {ל} in Exodus 4:1-8, Deuteronomy 9:23, 1 Kings 10:7, Psalm 106:24, Isaiah 43:10, Jeremiah 40:14 The Septuagint renders believing in God by {επίστευσαν} {τω} {θεω}: so does Paul in Romans 4:3, Galatians 3:6; but he retains the Hebrew form in Romans 4:5, {πιστευοντι} {επι} {τον}, etc. Calvin here conveys the same meaning by ``crediderunt Deo --- believed God:'' that is, the Ninevites gave credit to what God declared by Jonah, they believed God's word. --- Ed.

his vocation, that the Ninevites felt assured that he was a celestial herald: hence was their faith: and further, the Ninevites would never have so believed as to put on sackcloth, had they not been reminded of their sins. There is, therefore, no doubt but that Jonah, while crying against Nineveh, at the same time made known how wickedly the men lived, and how grievous were their offenses against God. Hence then it was that they put on sackcloth, and suppliantly fled to God's mercy: they understood that they were deservedly summoned to judgment on account of their wicked lives.

But it may be asked, how came the Ninevites to believe God, as no hope of salvation was given them? for there can be no faith without an acquaintance with the paternal kindness of God; whosoever regards God as angry with him must necessarily despair. Since then Jonah gave them no knowledge of God's mercy, he must have greatly terrified the Ninevites, and not have called them to faith. The answer is, that the expression is to be taken as including a part for the whole; for there is no perfect faith when men, being called to repentance, do suppliantly humble themselves before God; but yet it is a part of faith; for the Apostle says, in Hebrew 11:7, that Noah through faith feared; he deduces the fear which Noah entertained on account of the oracular word he received, from faith, showing thereby that it was faith in part, and pointing out the source from which it proceeded. At the same time, the mind of the holy Patriarch must have been moved by other things besides threatening, when he built an ark for himself, as the means of safety. We may thus, by taking a part for the whole, explain this, place, --- that the Ninevites believed God; for as they knew that God required the deserved punishment, they submitted to him, and, at the same time, solicited pardon: but the Ninevites, no doubt, derived from the words of Jonah something more than mere terror: for had they only apprehended this --- that they were guilty before God, and were justly summoned to punishment, they would have been confounded and stunned with dread, and could never have been encouraged to seek forgiveness. Inasmuch then as they suppliantly prostrated themselves before God, they must certainly have conceived some hope of grace. They were not, therefore, so touched with penitence and the fear of God, but that they had some knowledge of divine grace: thus they believed God; for though they were aware that they were most worthy of death, they yet despaired not, but retook themselves to prayer. Since then we see that the Ninevites sought this, remedy, we must feel assured that they derived more advantage from the preaching of Jonah than the mere knowledge that they were guilty before God: this ought certainly to be understood. But we shall speak more on the subject in our next lecture.

Prayer.

Grant, Almighty God, that as there is so much timidity in us, that none of us is prepared to follow where thou mayest call us, we may be so instructed by the example of thy servant Jonah, as to obey thee in every thing, and that though Satan and the world may oppose us with all their terrors, we may yet be strengthened by a reliance on thy power and protection, which thou hast promised to us, and may go on in the course of our vocation, and never turn aside, but thus contend against all the hindrances of this world, until we reach that celestial kingdom, where we shall enjoy

thee and Christ thy only begotten Son, who is our strength and our salvation: and may thy Spirit quicken us, and strengthen all our faculties, that we may obey thee, and that at length thy name may be glorified in us, and that we may finally become partakers of that glory to which thou invites us through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lecture Seventy-eighth

Jonah 3:6-8

6. For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.

6. Et pervenit verbum (sermo, vel, res) ad regem Nineveh; et surrexit e solio suo, et abjecit splendidam suam vestem a seipso, et induit saccum, et sedit super pulverem:

7. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water:

7. Et promulgavit ac dixit per Nineveh ex consilio regis et magnatum ejus, dicendo, Homo et jumentum (vel, bestia,) bos et ovis, ne gustent quidpiam, ne pascantur, et ne aquas bibant;

8. But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands.

8. Et induantur saccis homo et bestia, et clament ad Deum in fortitudine; et revertatur quisque a via sua mala, et a rapacitate quae est in manibus eorum.

It is uncertain whether Jonah had preached for some days in the city before it was known to the king. This is indeed the common opinion; for interpreters so expound the verse, which says that word was brought to the king, as though the king himself knew, that the whole city was in commotion through the preaching of Jonah: but the words admit of a different sense, that is that the preaching of Jonah immediately reached the king; and I am disposed to take this view, as Jonah seems here to explain how the Ninevites were led to put on sackcloth. He had before spoken briefly on the subject, but he now explains what took place more fully; and we know that it was commonly the manner of the Hebrews --- to relate the chief points in few words, and then to add an explanation. As then Jonah had said in the last verse that the Ninevites had put on sackcloth, and proclaimed a fast, so he now seems to express more distinctly how this happened, that is, through the royal edict. And it is by no means probable that a fast was proclaimed in the royal city by the mere consent of the people, as the king and his counselors were there present. Inasmuch then as it appears more reasonable that the edict respecting the fast had proceeded from the king, I am therefore inclined so to connect the two verses, as that the first briefly mentions the fruit which followed the preaching of Jonah, and that the second is added as an explanation, for it gives a fuller account of what took place.

Jonah then now says, that a fast was proclaimed by the Ninevites, for the king and his council had so appointed: and I regard the verb {ויגע}, uigo, as being in the pluperfect tense, When word had come to the king; [121] for Jonah now states

[121] Grotius, as well as Junius and Tremelius, had the same view of the verse, by rendering the

the reason why the Ninevites proclaimed a fast; it was because the king had been apprised of the preaching of Jonah, and had called together his counselors. It was then a public edict, and not any movement among the people, capriciously made, as it sometimes happens. He says, that it was an edict published by the authority of the king and his council, or his nobles. At the same time, some take {טעם}, thom, as meaning reason or approbation. {טעם}, thom, means to taste, and Jonah afterwards uses the verb in this sense; but it is to be taken here in a metaphorical sense for counsel; And I think this meaning is more suitable to this passage. I come now to the subject.

It is worthy of being noticed, that the king of so splendid a city [122] , nay, at that time the greatest monarch, should have rendered himself so submissive to the exhortation of Jonah: for we see how proud kings are; as they think themselves exempt from the common lot of men, so they carry themselves above all laws. Hence it comes, that they will have all things to be lawful for them; and while they give loose reins to their lusts they cannot bear to be admonished, even by their equals. But Jonah was a stranger and of a humble condition: that he therefore so touched the heart of the king, must be ascribed to the hidden power of God, which he puts forth through his word whenever he pleases. God does not indeed work alike by the preaching of his word, he does not always keep to the same course; but, when he pleases, he so efficaciously touches the hearts of men, that the success of his word exceeds all expectation, as in the memorable example presented to us here. Who could have said that a heathen king, who had ever lived according to his own will, who had no feeling as to true and genuine religion, would have been thus in an instant subdued? For he put aside his royal dress, laid himself in the dust, and clothed himself in sackcloth. We hence see that God not only spoke by the mouth of Jonah, but added power to his word.

We must also bear in mind what Christ says, that the men of Nineveh would rise up in judgment against that generation, as they had repented at the preaching of Jonah; and ``Behold,'' he said, ``a greater than Jonah is here,'' (Matthew 12:41.) Christ, at this day, proclaims the voice of his Gospel; for though he is not here in a visible form among us, he yet speaks by his ministers. If we despise his doctrine, how can our obstinacy and hardness be excused, since the Ninevites, who had no knowledge of the true doctrine of religion, who were imbued with no religious principles, were so suddenly converted by the preaching of Jonah? And that their repentance was sincere we may conclude from this circumstance --- that the preaching of Jonah was severe, for he denounced destruction on a most powerful city; this might have instantly inflamed the king's mind with rage and fury; and that he was calmly hum-

verb in the tense here proposed. Quia pervenerat is the version of the former; and the version of the latter is, Quu enim pervenisset Our own version and that of Newcome seem also to favor this view, by rendering {ו ``for,'' as giving a reason for what is said in the preceding verse: but Henderson has ``and,'' and Marckius the same, and also the Septuagint. What Calvin states as to the manner of speaking often adopted in Hebre, is no doubt true. But Henry thinks that the people ``led the way,'' and that what they commenced was afterwards enforced and made general by the order of the king and his nobles. --- Ed.

[122] Who this king was is a matter of conjecture. “About thirteen years,” says Newcome, “after the death of Jeroboam II., king of Israel, Pul, king of Assyria, invaded Israel. So that Pul, or his predecessor, may have been the king here mentioned.” Others think that he was Sardanapalus, a character notorious in history for his luxurious, effeminate, and debauched life. — Ed.

bled, was certainly a proof of no common change. We have then here a remarkable instance of penitence, --- that the king should have so forgotten himself and his dignity, as to throw aside his splendid dress, to put on sackcloth, and to lie down on ashes.

But as to fasting and sackcloth, it is very true, as we have observed in our remarks on Joel, that repentance consists not in these external things: for God cares not for outward rites, and all those things which are resplendent in the sight of men are worthless before him; what indeed he requires, is sincerity of heart. Hence what Jonah here says of fasting, and other outward performances, ought to be referred to their legitimate end, --- that the Ninevites intended thus to show that they were justly summoned as guilty before God's tribunal, and also, that they humbly deprecated the wrath of their judge. Fasting then and sackcloth were only an external profession of repentance. Were any one to fast all his life, and to put on sackcloth, and to scatter dust on himself, and not to connect with all this a sincerity of heart, he would do nothing but mock God. [123] Hence these outward performances are, in themselves, of small or of no value, except when preceded by an interior feeling of heart, and men be on this account led to manifest such outward evidences. Whenever then Scripture mentions fasting, and ashes, and sackcloth, we must bear in mind that these things are set before us as the outward signs of repentance which when not genuine do nothing else but provoke the wrath of God; but when true, they are approved of God on account of the end in view, and not that they avail, of themselves, to pacify his wrath, or to expiate sins.

If now any one asks whether penitence is always to be accompanied with fasting, ashes, and sackcloth, the answer is at hand, --- that the faithful ought through their whole life to repent: for except everyone of us continually strives to renounce himself and his former life, he has not yet learned what it is to serve God; for we must ever contend with the flesh. But though there is a continual exercise of repentance, yet fasting is not required of us always. It then follows that fasting is a public and solemn testimony of repentance, when there appears to be some extraordinary evidence of God's wrath. Thus have we seen that the Jews were by Joel called to lie in ashes, and to put on sackcloth because God had come forth, as it were, armed against them; and all the Prophets had declared that destruction was nigh the people. In the same manner the Ninevites, when terrified by this dreadful edict, put on sackcloth proclaimed a fasts because this was usually done in extremities. We now then perceive why the king, having himself put on sackcloth, enjoined on the whole people both fasting and other tokens of repentance.

But it seems strange, and even ridiculous, that the king should bid animals, as well as men, to make a confession of repentance; for penitence is a change in man, when he returns to God after having been alienated from him: this cannot comport with the character of brute animals. Then the king of Nineveh acted foolishly and contrary

[123] {Ου} {τη} {νηστεια} {προοσεσχεν}, {αλλα} {τη} {αποχη} {των} {κακων} --- ``He [God] did not regard fasting, but abstinence from evils.'' --- Theodoret. ``It is not enough,'' says Henry, ``to fast for sin, but we must fast from sin, and in order to the success of our prayers, must no more regard iniquity in our hearts... The work of a fast-day is not done with the day; no, then the hardest and most needful part of the work begins, which is to turn from sin, and to live a new life, and not to return with the dog to his vomit.'' --- Ed.

to all reason in connecting animals with men when he spoke of repentance. But, in answer to this, we must bear in mind what I have before said --- that destruction had been denounced, not only on men, but also on the whole city, even on the buildings: for as God created the whole world for the sake of men, so also his wrath, when excited against men, includes the beasts, and trees, and every thing in heaven and on earth. But the question is not yet solved; for though God may punish animals on account of men's sins, yet neither oxen nor sheep can pacify the wrath of God. To this I answer --- that this was done for the sake of men: for it would have been ridiculous in the king to prohibit food and drink to animals, except he had a regard to men themselves. But his object was to set before the Ninevites, as in a mirror or picture, what they deserved. The same was done under the law; for, whenever they slew victims, they were reminded of their own sins; for it ought to have come to their minds, that the sheep or any other animal sacrificed was innocent, and that it stood at the altar in his stead who had sinned. They therefore saw in the ox, or the lamb, or the goat, a striking emblem of their own condemnation. So also the Ninevites, when they constrained the oxen, the asses and other animals, to fast, were reminded of what grievous and severe punishment they were worthy: inasmuch as innocent animals suffered punishment together with them. We hence see that no expiation was sought for by the king, when he enjoined a fast on brute animals, but that, on the contrary, men were roused by such means seriously to acknowledge the wrath of God, and to entertain greater fear, that they might be more truly humbled before him, and be displeased with themselves, and be thus more disposed and better prepared and moulded to seek pardon.

We now then see that this must be considered as intended to terrify the consciences of men, that they, who had long flattered themselves, might by such a remedy be roused from their insensibility. The same was the intention of different washings under the law, the cleansing of garments and of vessels; it was, that the people might know that every thing they touched was polluted by their filth. And this ought to be especially observed; for the Papists, wedded as they are to external rites, lay hold on anything said in Scripture about fasting, and ashes, and sackcloth, and think that the whole of religion consists in these outward observances: but bodily exercise, as Paul says, profiteth but littler (1 Timothy 4:8.) Therefore this rule ought ever to be our guide --- that fasting and such things are in themselves of no value, but must be estimated only by the end in view. So then, when the animals were constrained by the Ninevites to suffer want, the men themselves, being reminded of their guilt, learned what it was to dread God's wrath; and on this account it was that fasting was approved by God.

Now, if any one objects and says that nothing ought to be done in the worship of God beyond what his word warrants, the answer is --- that the king of Nineveh had not appointed any kind of expiation, neither did he intend that they should thus worship God, but regarded only the end which I have mentioned; and that end fully harmonizes with the word of God and his command. Hence the king of Nineveh attempted nothing that was inconsistent with the word of God, since he had in every thing this in view --- that he and his people might go humbly before God's tribunal, and with

real penitential feelings solicit his forgiveness. This then is an answer sufficiently plain.

When therefore Jonah afterwards subjoins, [124] that the king commanded both the people and the beasts to put on sackcloth, let us know, that if any one now were to take this as an example, he would be nothing else but a mountebank; for this reason ought ever to be remembered, --- that the king sought aids by which he might lead himself and his people to true repentance. But the disposition of man is prone to imitate what is evil: for we are all very like apes; we ought therefore always to consider by what spirit those were actuated whom we wish to imitate, lest we should be contented with the outward form and neglect the main things.

Jonah afterwards adds, And they cried mightily [125] to God This must be confined to men; for it could not have been applied to brute animals. Men then, as well as the beasts, abstained from meat and drink, and they cried to God. This crying could not have proceeded except from fear and a religious feeling: hence, as I have said, this cannot be applied indiscriminately to the beasts as well as to men. [126] But it deserves to be noticed, that the king of Nineveh commanded the people to cry mightily to God; for we hence learn that they were really frightened, inasmuch as he speaks not here of ordinary crying, but he adds mightily, as when we say, with all our power, or as we say in French, A force, or, fort et ferme. Jonah then expresses something uncommon and extraordinary, when he tells us that it was contained in the king's edict, that men should cry mightily to God; for it was the same as though he said, ``Let all men now awake and shake off their indifference; for every one of us have hitherto greatly indulged ourselves in our vices: it is now time that fear should possess our minds, and also constrain us to deprecate the wrath of God.'' And it is also worthy of being observed, that the king proposes no other remedy, but that the people should have recourse to prayer. It might indeed have been, that Jonah exhorted the Ninevites to resort to this duty of religion, etc. We may, however, undeniably conclude that it is a feeling implanted in us by nature, that when we are pressed by adversities, we implore the favor of God. This then is the only remedy in afflictions and distresses, to pray to God. But when we, taught by the Law and by the Gospel, use not this remedy, whenever God warns us and exhorts us to repentance, what shadow of excuse can we have, since heathens, even those who understood not a syllable of true religion, yet prayed to God, and the king himself commanded this with the consent of his nobles? Hence this edict of the king ought to fill us with more shame than if one adduced the same doctrine only from the word of God: for

[124] Calvin has omitted to notice the words at the beginning of the seventh verse. His version is, Et promulgavit ac dixit, etc., but this rendering comports not with what follows. The verbs are evidently in future Niphal, preceded by a {ו conversive, and ought to be rendered impersonally, ``And it was proclaimed and published,'' etc. And so Newcome renders them; and this is in conformity with the Septuagint, {Και} {εκηρυχθη} {και} {ερρεθη} {εν} {τη} {Νινευη} --- ``And it was proclaimed and published in Nineveh.'' Henderson gives a paraphrase, ``And a proclamation was made through Nineveh.'' --- Ed.

[125] {בחזקה with vigor. ``{Εκτεςῶς} --- intensely, earnestly.'' --- Sept. Vehementer --- vehemently.'' --- Grotius. ``Totis viribus --- with all their powers.'' --- Mercerius. ``Cum intensione valida --- with strong intensity'' --- Marckius. ``In prayer,'' says Henry, ``we must cry mightily, with a fixedness of thought, firmness of faith, and fervor of pious and devout affections. --- Ed.

[126] Yet Henry does in a manner apply this mighty crying to the beasts. “Let even the brute creatures do it according to their capacity; let their cries and moans for want of food be graciously construed as cries to God; as the cries of young ravens are, Job 38:41; and of the young lions, Psalm 104:21.” — Ed.

though the authority of that king is not the same with that of God, yet when that miserable and blind prince acknowledged through the dictates of nature, that God is to be pacified by prayer, what excuse, as I have said, can remain for us?

But Jonah shows more clearly afterwards, that it was no feigned repentance when the Ninevites put on sackcloth, and abstained also from meat and drink; for it follows in the kings edict, And let every one turn from his own wicked ways and from the plunder which is in their hands Here the heathen king shows for what purpose and with what design he had given orders respecting fasting and other things; it was done that the Ninevites might thus more effectually stimulate themselves to fear God; for he here exhorts them to turn from their evil way. By ``way'' the Scripture usually means the whole course or manner of man's life; it was as though he said, ``Let every one of you change his disposition and his conduct; let us all become new creatures.'' And this is true penitence, the conversion of man to God; and this the heathen king meant. The more shameful then is their dullness who seek to pacify God by frivolous devices, as the Papists do; for while they obtrude on God trifles, I know not what, they think that these are so many expiations, and they tenaciously contend for them. They need no other judge than this heathen king, who shows that true penitence is wholly different, that it then only takes place when men become changed in mind and heart, and wholly turn to a better course of life.

Let every one then turn, he says, from his evil way, and from the plunder [127] which is in their hand. One kind of evil is here subjoined, a part being stated for the whole, for plunders were not the only things which stood in need of amendment among the Ninevites, as it is probable that they were polluted by other vices and corruptions. In a city so large, drunkenness probably prevailed, as well as luxury, and pride, and ambition, and also lusts. It cannot indeed be doubted, but that Nineveh was filled with innumerable vices: but the king, by mentioning a part for the whole, points out here the principal vice, when he says, Let every one turn from his evil way, and from his rapacity. It was the same as though he had said that the principal virtue is equity or justice, that is, when men deal with one another without doing any hurt or injury: and well would it be were this doctrine to prevail at this day among all those who falsely assume the Christian name. For the Papists, though they accumulate expiations, pass by charity; and in the whole course of life equity has hardly any place. Let them then learn, from the mouth of a heathen king, what God principally requires from men, and approves of in their life, even to abstain from plunder and from the doing of any injury. We now then perceive why rapacity was especially mentioned. But we must bear in mind that the king, as yet a novice, and hardly in a slight degree imbued with the elements of religion, through hearing what Jonah preached, gave orders to his people according to the measure of his faith and knowledge: but if he made such progress in so short a time, what excuse can we

[127] A rapacite, from robbery, extortion, plunder {,{חמס}-{מ from violence, outrage, or injustice done by force or violence: it means tyrannical injustice. ``{Απο} {της} {αδικιας} --- from injustice,'' wrong, iniquity. --- Sept. But as it is said to be in their hand, it means, by a metonymy, the plunder got by injustice, exercised tyrannically. Marckius observes that the similitude here is first taken from the feet, and then taken from the hands. The feet are no to go in the evil way, nor the hands employed in doing what is unjust. Henry explains the passage very fully and yet concisely, ``let them turn every one from his evil way --- the evil way of his heart --- and the evil way of his conversation; and particularly from the violence that is in their hands, --- let them restore what they have unjustly taken, and make reparation for the wrong they have done, --- and let them not any more oppress those they have power over, or defraud those they have dealings with.'' --- Ed.

pretend, whose ears have been stunned by continual preaching for twenty or thirty years, if we yet come short of the novitiate of this king? These circumstances ought then to be carefully observed by us. Let us now proceed ---

Jonah 3:9

9. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?

9. Quis novit an convertatur et poenitentia ducatur Deus, et revertatur a furore irae suae, ut non pereamus?

The mind and design of the king are here more distinctly stated, --- that he thus endeavored to reconcile himself and the people to God. Some give a rendering somewhat different, ``He who knows will turn and be led by penitence,'' etc.; they read not interrogatively; but this rendering cannot stand. There is in the meaning of the Prophet nothing ambiguous, for he introduces the king here as expressing a doubt, Who knows whether God will be reconciled to us? We hence see that the king was not overwhelmed with despair for he still thought of a remedy; and this is the purport of the verse.

But this may seem contrary to the nature of faith; and then if it be opposed to faith, it follows that it must be inconsistent with repentance; for faith and repentance are connected together, as we have observed in other places; as no one can willingly submit to God, except he has previously known his goodness, and entertained a hope of salvation; for he who is touched only with fear avoids God's presence; and then despair prevails, and perverseness follows. How then was it that the king of Nineveh had seriously and undissemblingly repented, while yet he spoke doubtfully of the favor of God? To this I answer, that it was a measure of doubt, which was yet connected with faith, even that which does not directly reject the promise of God, but has other hindrances: as for instance, when any ones cast down with fear, afterwards receives courage from the hope of pardon and salvation set before him, he is not yet immediately freed from all fear; for as long as he looks on his sins, and is entangled by various thoughts, he vacillates, he fluctuates. There is, therefore, no doubt but that the king of Nineveh entertained hope of deliverance; but at the same time his mind was perplexed, both on account of the sermon of Jonah and on account of the consciousness of his own sins: there were then two obstacles, which deprived the king's mind of certainty, or at least prevented him from apprehending immediately the mercy of God, and from perceiving with a calm mind that God would be gracious to him. The first obstacle was the awful message, --- that Nineveh would be destroyed in forty days. For though Jonah, as we have said, might have added something more, yet the denunciation was distinct and express, and tended to cast down the minds of all. The king then had to struggle, in order to overcome this obstacle, and to resist this declaration of Jonah as far as it was found to be without any comfort. And then the king, while considering his own sins, could not but vacillate for some time. But yet we see that he strove to emerge, though he had these obstacles before his eyes, for he says, Who knows whether God will turn from the fury of his wrath, and repent? We hence see that the king was in a hard struggle; for though Jonah seemed to have closed the door and to shut out the king from any hope of

deliverance, and though his own conscience held him fast bound, he yet perseveres and encourages himself; in short, he aspires to the hope of pardon.

And it must be further noticed, that this form of expression expresses a difficulty rather than a mistrust. The king then here asks, as it were doubtingly, Who knows whether God will turn? for it was a difficult thing to be believed, that God, after a long forbearance, would spare the wicked city. Hence the king expresses it as a difficulty; and such an interrogation was no proof of the absence of faith. A similar expression is found in Joel, ``Who knows,'' etc.? We then stated several things in explaining that passage: but it is enough here briefly to state, that the king here does not betray a mistrust, but sets forth a difficulty. And it was an evidence of humility that he acknowledged himself and his people to be sunk as it were, in the lowest hell, and yet ceased not to entertain some hope: for it is a strong proof of hope, when we still entertain it, though this be contrary to the whole order of nature, and wholly inconsistent with human reason. We now then see the meaning of the words. Of the repentance of God we shall speak hereafter, either to-morrow or the day after.

Lest we perish, he says. We see how a heathen king thought of redeeming himself from destruction' it was by having God pacified. As soon then as any danger threatens us, let us bear this in mind, that no deliverance can be found except the Lord receives us into favor; such was the conviction of the king of Nineveh, for he concluded that all things would be well as soon as God should be propitious. We hence see how much this new and untrained disciple had improved; for he understood that men cannot escape miseries until God be pacified towards them, and that when men return into favor with him, though they ought to have perished a hundred times before, they yet shall be delivered and made safe; for the grace or the favor of God is the fountain of life and salvation, and of all blessings. It afterwards follows ---

Jonah 3:10

10. And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not.

10. Et vidit Deus opera eorum, quod conversi essent a via sua mala; et poenituit Deum super malo, quod pronuntiaverat se facturum illis, et non fecit.

Jonah now says, that the Ninevites obtained pardon through their repentance: and this is an example worthy of being observed; for we hence learn for what purpose God daily urges us to repentance, and that is, because he desires to be reconciled to us, and that we should be reconciled to him. The reason then why so many reproofs and threatening resound in our ears, whenever we come to hear the word of God, is this, --- that as God seeks to recover us from destruction he speaks sharply to us: in short, whatever the Scripture contains on repentance and the judgment of God ought to be wholly applied for this purpose --- to induce us to return into favor with him; for he is ready to be reconciled, and is ever prepared to embrace those who without dissimulation turn to him. We then understand by this example that God has no other object in view, whenever he sharply constrains us, than that he may be reconciled to us, provided only we be our own judges, and thus anticipate his wrath by genuine sorrow of heart, provided we solicit the pardon of our guilt and sin, and

loathe ourselves, and confess that we are worthy of perdition.

But Jonah seems to ascribe their deliverance to their repentance, and also to their works: for he says that the Ninevites obtained pardon, because God looked on their works.

We must first see what works he means, that no one may snatch at a single word, as hypocrites are wont to do; and this, as we have said, is very commonly the case under the Papacy. God had respect to their works --- what works? not sackcloth, not ashes, not fasting; for Jonah does not now mention these; but he had respect to their works --- because they turned from their evil way. We hence see that God was not pacified by outward rites only, by the external profession of repentance, but that he rather looked on the true and important change which had taken place in the Ninevites, for they had become renewed. These then were their works, even the fruits of repentance. And such a change of life could not have taken place, had not the Ninevites been really moved by a sense of God's wrath. The fear of God then had preceded; and this fear could not have been without faith. We hence see that he chiefly speaks here not of external works, but of the renovation of men.

But if any one objects and says that still this view does not prevent us from thinking that good works reconcile us to God, and that they thus procure our salvation: to this I answer --- that the question here is not about the procuring cause of forgiveness. It is certain that God was freely pacified towards the Ninevites, as he freely restores his favor daily to us. Jonah then did not mean that satisfactions availed before God, as though the Ninevites made compensations for their former sins. The words mean no such thing; but he shows it as a fact which followed, that God was pacified, because the Ninevites repented. But we are to learn from other parts of Scripture how God becomes gracious to us, and how we obtain pardon with him, and whether this comes to us for our merits and repentance or whether God himself forgives us freely. Since the whole Scripture testifies that pardon is gratuitously given us, and that God cannot be otherwise propitious to us than by not imputing sins, there is no need, with regard to the present passage, anxiously to inquire why God looked on the works of the Ninevites, so as not to destroy them: for this is said merely as a consequence. Jonah then does not here point out the cause, but only declares that God was pacified towards the Ninevites, as soon as they repented. But we shall speak more on this subject.

Prayer.

Grant, Almighty God, that as we are loaded with so many vices, and so many sins, yea, and scandalous crimes break out daily among us, --- O grant, that we may not be hardened against so many exhortations, by which thou invites us to thyself, but that being made contrite in spirit, whenever thou denounces on us thy wrath, we may be really humbled, and so place ourselves before thy tribunal, that we may, by a true confession and genuine fear, anticipate the judgment which would otherwise have been prepared for us; and that in the meantime relying on Christ our Mediator, we may entertain such a hope of pardon as may raise us up to thee, and not doubt but that thou art ready to embrace us, when we shall be moved by a true and real feeling of fear and penitence, since it is a proof of thy favor, when thou art pleased

to anticipate us, and by thy Spirit testifies that thou art a Father to us; and, in a word, may we be so cast down in ourselves, as to raise up our hope even to heaven, through Jesus Christ one Lord. Amen.

Lecture Seventy-ninth

We stated yesterday how God remitted to the Ninevites the punishment which he had threatened by the mouth of Jonah, and that the remission both of the punishment and of the guilt was gratuitous. For whenever God sets forth pardon to sinners, the condition of repentance is at the same time added: it does not yet follow that repentance is the procuring cause of obtaining pardon; for God offers it freely, nor is he otherwise induced than by his own mere bounty. But as he would not have men to abuse his indulgence and forbearance, he lays down this condition, --- that they must repent of their former life and change for the better. So then he regards the works of those who testify that they hate sin, and who, with a sincere and real desire, flee to His mercy; and no man from the heart desires God to be propitious to him, but he who loathes himself on account of his sin. This is the reason why Isaiah also says, that God would be merciful to the remnants of his people, even because every one would turn away from his iniquity. God does not certainly mean by these words that repentance, as already stated, is the cause of our salvation; but he requires a change for the better, for no one will really seek grace, except he loathes himself on account of his sins.

Now as to what Jonah adds, that God was led to repent, it is a mode of speaking that ought to be sufficiently known to us. Strictly speaking, no repentance can belong to God: and it ought not to be ascribed to his secret and hidden counsel. God then is in himself ever the same, and consistent with himself; but he is said to repent, when a regard is had to the comprehension of men: for as we conceive God to be angry, whenever he summons us to his tribunal, and shows to us our sins; so also we conceive him to be placable, when he offers the hope of pardon. But it is according to our perceptions that there is any change, when God forgets his wrath, as though he had put on a new character. As then we cannot otherwise be terrified, that we may be humbled before God and repent, except he sets forth before us his wrath, the Scripture accommodates itself to the grossness of our understanding. But, on the other hand, we cannot confidently call on God, unless we feel assured that he is placable. We hence see that some kind of change appears to us, whenever God either threatens or gives hope of pardon and reconciliation: and to this must be referred this mode of speaking which Jonah adopts, when he says that God repented.

We hence see that there is a twofold view of God, --- as he sets himself forth in his word, --- and as he is as to his hidden counsel. With regard to his secret counsel, I have already said that God is always like himself, and is subject to none of our feelings: but with regard to the teaching of his word, it is accommodated to our capacities. God is now angry with us, and then, as though he were pacified, he offers pardon, and is propitious to us. Such is the repentance of God.

Let us then remember that it proceeds from his word, that God is said to repent; for the Ninevites could form no other opinion but that it was God's decree that they were to be destroyed, --- how so? because he had so testified by his word. But when

they rose up to an assurance of deliverance, they then found that a change had taken place, that is, according to the knowledge of their own faith: and the feelings both of fear and of joy proceeded from the word: for when God denounced his wrath, it was necessary for the wretched men to be terrified; but when he invited them to a state of safety by proposing reconciliation to them, he then put on a new character; and thus they ascribed a new feeling to God. This is the meaning. Let us now proceed ---

Chapter 4.

Jonah 4

J

Jonah 4:1

1. But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry.

1. Et displicuit Jonae dolore magno, et succensuit apud se. [128]

Jerome commends this grief of Jonah, and compares it to the holy zeal of Paul when he wished himself to be an anathema for his brethren, (Romans 9:3:) for he denies that he grieved because God had showed mercy to so illustrious a city; but because the conversion of the Gentiles was a certain presage of the destruction of the chosen people. As then Jonah perceived as in a mirror the near ruin of Israel, he on this account grieved, if we believe Jerome: but this notion is extremely frivolous; for, immediately after, God reproved Jonah. What then will the foolish and puerile apology of Jerome avail the Prophet, since God has declared that he acted perversely in grieving? Nay, the dullness of Jerome is thus become evident; (thus indeed do I speak of a man, who, though learned and laborious, has yet deprived himself of that praise, which otherwise he might have justly earned.) His wayward disposition everywhere betrayed itself; and he is evidently disproved in this very context, where Jonah shows clearly that the cause of his grief was another, even this, --- that he was

[128] The two verbs used here are evidently to be construed as impersonals. The most literal rendering would be thus, — "And it was an evil to Jonah, a great evil; and wrath was to him," or, "he was wroth." Evil means often grief or distress, and so it is here: but the verb {חרה}, properly rendered in our version, ``very angry,'' seldom if ever, means grief. It is sometimes rendered ``grieved'' in our version; but in every instance that I can find, it means the grief of anger or displeasure. It occurs twice in Genesis 4, in exactly similar form as we find it here, followed by the preposition {ל} {לקין} {ויחר} {מאד}, ``and Cain was very wroth,'' or literally, ``and there was wrath to Cain very much,'' version 5. And then in the following verse we have the like form, {למה} {חרה} {לך}, ``Why are thou wroth?'' or, ``Why is wrath to thee?'' The phrase here is, {לו} {ויחר}, ``and wrath was to him.'' What seems to have made some commentators to change wrath or anger to grief, as has been a desire to screen the guilt of Jonah. But the whole narrative clearly shows that he was so displeased as to be angry. His pettish request to die is a sufficient proof of this. Calvin was not a man to trifle with the word of God for this purpose, or for any other: nor was he at a loss to account for the sin of Jonah, without denying his piety. It is only shallow Christians, and such as have only the outward shell of religion, who are reduced to this dilemma. Marckius very justly observes, ``That though all the works of God are altogether blameless (irreprehensibilia,) yet there is hardly anything which is not sometimes blamed by our most foolish flesh (carne insipientissima.) Thus not only the world, God's enemy, sins against him; but even his own people, who honor him, openly show, one while, that his severity, and at another time that his kindness, displease them, as though they were not befitting.'' --- Ed.

unwilling to be deemed a false or a lying prophet: hence was his great grief and his bitterness. And this we see, had God not expressed his mind, was unjust and inconsistent with every reason.

We may then conclude that Jonah was influenced by false zeal when he could not with resignation bear that the city of Nineveh should have been delivered from destruction: and he also himself amplifies the greatness of his sin. He might have said, in one word, that it displeased Jonah; but not satisfied with this simple form, he adds, that he felt great displeasure or grief; and he afterwards adds, that he was very angry. Though the beginning may not have been wrong, yet excess was sinful. But he confesses that there was excess, and want of moderation in his grief: since then he accuses himself in plain words what good is it, by false and invented pretenses, to cover what we clearly see cannot be excused? But that it may be more evident why the deliverance of the city of Nineveh displeased Jonah, let us go on with the context ---

Jonah 4:2

2. And he prayed unto the Lord, and said, I pray thee, O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.

2. Et oravit ad Jehovam et dixit, Obsecro Jehova, an non hic sermo meus, quum adhuc essem in terra mea? Propterea festinavi fugere in Tharsis, quia noveram quod tu sis Deus propitius (vel, plenus gratiae,) et misericors, tardus ad iram, multus clementia, et qui poenitentia duceris super malo.

It seems by no means befitting that Jonah should have said here that he prayed; for prayer ought to be calm; but he confesses that his mind was in a state of excitement. As then anger was burning within the Prophet, how could he come before God and utter a suitable prayer? And further, what is the end of praying, but to confess that whatever good is to be obtained resides in God, and is to be sought humbly from him? But Jonah here, on the contrary, expostulates and clamors against God; for he seems in a manner to be contending that he had a just reason for his flight, and also that God ought not to have pardoned the Ninevites. He then accuses God, that he might free himself from every blame. But all this is foreign and remote from what is required in prayer. How then must we understand this passage, in which he says that he prayed? My answer is --- that the faithful often in a disturbed state of mind approach God with a desire to pray, and that their prayers are not wholly rejected, though they are not altogether approved and accepted. And hence also it appears more evident how the works of the godly are regarded by God, though they are sprinkled with many stains. Whenever the Papists read that any work has pleased God, they imagine that all was perfection and cleanness: but there is no work which is not infected with some pollution, unless it be purified by a free pardon. This I say is evident to us in this prayer, which was not so rejected by God, as though it retained not the character of prayer: and yet it is certain that Jonah was by no means rightly influenced when he prayed so clamorously, finding fault, as it were, with God, and retaining still some portion of his own obstinacy; for he boasted of his flight. But this

flight, as we have stated, was a proof of manifest rebellion, since, by shaking off the yoke, he despised the call of God.

We must therefore acknowledge that there was some piety in this prayer of Jonah, as well as many faults. It was an act of piety that he addressed his complaints to God. For though hypocrites may pray to God, they yet are wholly averse to him, and freely give vent to their bitterness against God: but Jonah, while he here complains, and observes no moderation, but is carried away by a blind and perverse impulse, is yet prepared to submit to God, as we shall hereafter see. This is the reason why he says that he prayed: for he would not have been ashamed to confess any grievous sin of which he might have been conscious. He did not then extenuate his fault by using the word prayer as hypocrites are wont to do, who ever set up some pretenses or veils when they seek to cover their own baseness: such was not the object of Jonah. When therefore he says that he prayed, he declares generally that he did not so speak against God, but that he still retained some seed of piety and obedience in his heart. Jonah then prayed. Hence it follows, as I have before stated, that many of the prayers of the saints are sinful, (vitiosas --- faulty) which, when tried by the right rule, deserve to be rejected. But the Lord, according to his own mercy, pardons their defects so that these confused and turbulent prayers yet retain their title and honor.

Now he says, I pray thee, Jehovah is not this what I said? Here Jonah openly declares why he bore so ill the deliverance of Nineveh from destruction, because he was thus found to have been false and lying. But it may seem strange that the Prophet had more regard for his own reputation than for the glory of God; for in this especially shines forth the glory of God, that he is reconcilable as soon as men return to the right way, and that he offers himself to them as a father. Ought then Jonah to have preferred his own honor to the glory of God? I answer, --- that the Prophet was not so devoted to himself, but that a concern for the glory of God held the first place in his soul; this is certain. For he connected, and justly so, his own ministry with the glory of God; as it proceeded from his authority. When Jonah entered Nineveh, he cried not as a private man, but avowed that he was sent by God. Now if the preaching of Jonah is found to be false, reproach will recoil on the author of his call, even on God. Jonah then no doubt could not bear that the name of God should be exposed to the reproaches of the Gentiles, as though he had spoken dissemblingly, now opening hell, then heaven: and there is nothing so contrary to the glory of God as such a dissimulation. We hence see why Jonah was seized with so much grief; he did not regard himself; but as he saw that an occasion would be given to ungodly blasphemers, if God changed his purpose, or if he did not appear consistent with his word, he felt much grieved.

But however specious this reason may be, we yet learn of how much avail are good intentions with God. Whatever good intention can be imagined, it was certainly a good intention in Jonah, worthy of some praise, that he preferred dying a hundred times rather than to hear these reproachful blasphemies --- that the word of God was a mere sport, that his threatening were no better than fables, that God made this and that pretense, and transformed himself into various characters. This was certainly the very best intention, if it be estimated by our judgment. But we shall

presently see that it was condemned by the mouth of God himself. Let us hence learn not to arrogate to ourselves judgment in matters which exceed our capacities, but to subject our minds to God, and to seek of him the spirit of wisdom. For whence was it that Jonah so fretted against God, except that he burned with a desire for his glory? But his zeal was inconsiderate, for he would be himself the judge and arbitrator, while, on the contrary, he ought to have subjected himself altogether to God. And the same rule ought to be observed also by us. When we see many things happening through a Divine interposition, that is, through the secret providence of God, and things which expose his name to the blasphemies of the ungodly, we ought indeed to feel grief; but in the meantime let us ask of the Lord to turn at length these shameful reproaches to his own glory; and let us by no means raise an uproar, as many do, who immediately begin to contend with God, when things are otherwise ordered than what they wish or think to be useful. Let us learn by the example of Jonah not to measure God's judgments by our own wisdom, but to wait until he turns darkness into light. And at the same time let us learn to obey his commands, to follow his call without any disputing: though heaven and earth oppose us, though many things occur which may tend to avert us from the right course, let us yet continue in this resolution, --- that nothing is better for us than to obey God, and to go on in the way which he points out to us.

But by saying that he hastened to go to Tarshish, he does not altogether excuse his flight; but he now more clearly explains, that he did not shun trouble or labor, that he did not run away from a contest or danger, but that he only avoided his call, because he felt a concern for the glory of God. The import, then, of Jonah's words is, --- that he makes God here, as it were, his witness and judge, that he did not withdraw himself from obedience to God through fear of danger, or through idleness, or through a rebellious spirit, or through any other evil motive, but only because he was unwilling that his holy name should be profaned, and would not of his own accord be the minister of that preaching, which would be the occasion of opening the mouth of ungodly and profane men, and of making them to laugh at God himself. Since then I cannot hope, he says, for any other issue to my preaching than to make the Gentiles to deride God, yea, and to revile his holy name, as though he were false and deceitful, I chose rather to flee to Tarshish. Then Jonah does not here altogether clear himself; for otherwise that chastisement, by which he ought to have been thoroughly subdued, must have failed in its effect. He had been lately restored from the deep, and shall we say that he now so extols himself against God, that he wishes to appear wholly free from every blame? This certainly would be very strange: but, as I have said, he declares to God, that he fled at the beginning for no other reason, but because he did not expect any good fruit from his preaching, but, on the contrary, feared what now seemed to take place, --- that God's name would be ridiculed.

For he immediately adds, For I know that thou art a God full of grace, and merciful, slow to wrath, etc. It is a wonder that Jonah withdrew from his lawful call; for he knew that God was merciful, and there is no stronger stimulant than this to stir us on, when God is pleased to use our labor: and we know that no one can with alacrity render

service to God except he be allured by his paternal kindness. Hence no one will be a willing Prophet or Teacher, except he is persuaded that God is merciful. Jonah then seems here to reason very absurdly when he says, that he withdrew himself from his office, because he knew that God was merciful. But how did he know this? By the law of God; for the passage is taken from Exodus 33:1, where is described that remarkable and memorable vision, in which God offered to Moses a view of himself: and there was then exhibited to the holy Prophet, as it were, a living representation of God, and there is no passage in the law which expresses God's nature more to the life; for God was then pleased to make himself known in a familiar way to his servant.

As then Jonah had been instructed in the doctrine of the law, how could he discharge the office of a Prophet among his own people? And why did not this knowledge discourage his mind, when he was called to the office of a Teacher? It is then certain that this ought to be confined to the sort of preaching, such as we have before explained. Jonah would not have shrunk from God's command, had he been sent to the Ninevites to teach what he had been ordered to do among the chosen people. Had then a message been committed to Jonah, to set forth a gracious and merciful God to the Ninevites, he would not have hesitated a moment to offer his service. But as this express threatening, Nineveh shall be destroyed, was given him in charge, he became confounded, and sought at length to flee away rather than to execute such a command. Why so? Because he thus reasoned with himself, ``I am to denounce a near ruin on the Ninevites; why does God command me to do this, except to invite these wretched men to repentance? Now if they repent, will not God be instantly ready to forgive them? He would otherwise deny his own nature: God cannot be unlike himself, he cannot put off that disposition of which he has once testified to Moses. Since God, then, is reconcilable, if the Ninevites will return to the right way and flee to him, he will instantly embrace them: thus I shall be found to be false in my preaching.''

We now then perceive how this passage of Jonah is to be understood, when he says that he fled beyond the sea, at least that he attempted to do so, because he knew that God was gracious; for he would not have deprived God of his service, had not this contrariety disturbed and discouraged his mind, ``What! I shall go there as God's ambassador, in a short time I shall be discovered to be a liar: will not this reproach be cast on the name of God himself? It is therefore better for me to be silent, than that God, the founder of my call, should be ridiculed.'' We see that Jonah had a distinct regard to that sort of preaching which we have already referred to. And it hence appears that Jonah gave to the Ninevites more than he thought; for he supposed that he was sent by God, only that the Ninevites might know that they were to be destroyed: but he brought deliverance to them; and this indeed he partly suspected or knew before; for he retained this truth --- that God cannot divest himself of his mercy, for he remains ever the same. But when he went forth to execute the duty enjoined on him he certainly had nothing to expect but the entire ruin of the city Nineveh. God in the meantime employed his ministry for a better end and purpose. There is indeed no doubt but that he exhorted the Ninevites to repentance; but his

own heart was as it were closed up, so that he could not allow them the mercy of God. We hence see that Jonah was seized with perplexities, so that he could not offer deliverance to the Ninevites, and it was yet offered them by God through his instrumentality.

We now then understand how God often works by his servants; for he leads them as the blind by his own hand where they think not. Thus, when he stirs up any one of us, we are sometimes {ὀλιγόπίστοι} --- very weak in faith; we think that our labor will be useless and without any fruit, or at least attended with small success. But the Lord will let us see what we could not have expected. Such was the case with Jonah; for when he came to Nineveh, he had no other object but to testify respecting the destruction of the city; but the Lord was pleased to make him the minister of salvation. God then honored with remarkable success the teaching of Jonah, while he was unworthy of so great an honor; for, as we have already said, he closed up in a manner every access to the blessing of God. We now then apprehend the meaning of this passage, in which Jonah says that he fled from the call of God, because he knew that God was ready to be gracious and merciful.

I come now to the great things which are said of God. {חנון}, chenun, properly means a disposition to show favor, as though it was said that God is gratuitously benevolent; we express the same in our language by the terms, benin, gratieux, debonnaire. God then assumes to himself this character; and then he says, merciful; and he adds this that we may know that he is always ready to receive us, if indeed we come to him as to the fountain of goodness and mercy. But the words which follow express more clearly his mercy, and show how God is merciful, --- even because he is abundant in compassion and slow to wrath. God then is inclined to kindness; and though men on whom he looks are unworthy, he is yet merciful; and this he expresses by the word {רחום}, rechum

It is at the same time necessary to add these two sentences that he is abundant in compassion and slow to wrath, --- why so? For we ever seek in ourselves some cause for God's favor; when we desire God to be kind to us, we inquire in ourselves why he ought to favor us: and when we find nothing, all the faith we before had respecting God's grace at once vanishes. The Lord therefore does here recall us to himself, and testifies that he is kind and merciful, inasmuch as he is abundant in compassion; as though he said, ``I have in myself a sufficient reason, why I should be accessible to you, and why I should receive you and show you favor.'' Hence the goodness of God alone ought to be regarded by us, when we desire his mercy, and when we have need of pardon. It is as though he had said, that he is not influenced by any regard for our worthiness, and that it is not for merits that he is disposed to mercy when we have sinned, and that he receives us into favor; but that he does all this because his goodness is infinite and inexhaustible. And it is also added, that he is slow to wrath This slowness to wrath proves that God provides for the salvation of mankind, even when he is provoked by their sins. Though miserable men provoke God daily against themselves, he yet continues to have a regard for their salvation. He is therefore slow to wrath, which means, that the Lord does not immediately execute such punishment as they deserve who thus provoke him. We now then see

what is the import of these words.

Let us now return to this --- that Jonah thrust himself from his office, because he knew that God was slow to wrath, and merciful, and full of grace: he even had recourse to this reasoning, ``Either God will change his nature, or spare the Ninevites if they repent: and it may be that they will repent; and then my preaching will be found to be false; for God will not deny himself, but will afford an example of his goodness and mercy in forgiving this people.'' We may again remark, that we act perversely, when we follow without discrimination our own zeal: it is indeed a blind fervor which then hurries us on. Though then a thousand inconsistencies meet us when God commands any thing, our eyes ought to be closed to them, and we ought ever to follow the course of our calling; for he will so regulate all events, that all things shall redound to his glory. It is not for us in such a case to be over-wise; but the best way is, to leave in God's hand the issue of things. It becomes us indeed to fear and to feel concerned; but our anxiety ought, at the same time, to be in submission to God, so that it is enough for us to pray. This is the import of the whole.

Now as to what he says that God repents of the evil, we have already explained this: it means, that though God has already raised his hand, he will yet withdraw it, as soon as he sees any repentance in men; for evil here is to be taken for punishment. The Lord then, though he might justly inflict extreme punishment on men, yet suspends his judgment, and when they come to him in true penitence he is instantly pacified. This is God's repentance; he is said to repent when he freely forgives whatever punishment or evil men have deserved whenever they loathe themselves. [129] It now follows ---

Jonah 4:3

3. Therefore now, O LORD, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live.

3. Et tu Jehova, tolle, quaeso, animam meam a me; quia melius mori meum quam vivere.

We here see how angry Jonah was in his zeal: for this prayer cannot certainly be ascribed to his faith, as some think, who say that Jonah took a flight as it were in his soul to heaven, when he made this prayer, as though he dreaded not death, but having been divested of all fear, being free and disengaged, he presented himself to God. I do not think that the mind of Jonah was so heroic. There is indeed no doubt,

[129] Added here shall be Marckius' excellent explanation of this passate, as given in Joel 2:13. It corresponds materially with that of Calvin, — "Ipse est {,{חנון gratiosus, apud LXX., et Hieronymum, {ελεημων}, benignus, h. e. ut voces junctas sic distinguamus commodé, in creaturas praeter omne earum meritum benefictus; deinde ,{רחום} misericors, apud LXX., {οικτίρμων}, h.e. tenerrimo amore motus in miseros ad illus succurrendum et indulgendum; tum {ארך} {אפים} longanumis, apud LXX., et Hieronymum, {μακροθυμος}, patiens, h.e. tardus ad iram, seu judicia sua satis facilé et satis diu differens; adhuc ,{חסד}-{רב} amplus benignitate, apud LXX., et hieronymum, {πολυελεος}, multae misericordiae, h.e. bonitatem demonstrans intensissime, latissime et diutissime, inter homines; tandem quod aliis vocibus in Exodo exprimitur, {נחם} {על} ,{הרעת} non consolabilis, sed poenitens super malo, apud LXX., {μετανοων} {επὶ} {ταις} {κακιαις}, apud Hieronymum, praestabilis super malitia, sive poenitens, --- h.e. malum non culpae ab hominibus commissum, sed poenae, seu afflictionis, juxta Hieronymum, coll Matthew 6:34, à se immittendum aut immissum homini, ad hujus resipiscentiam facilé arcens vel auferens, adeoque placabilis, juxta propositum suum immutabile et promissa generalia, Jeremiah 18:7, 8; 26:3, etc., et finem judicii omnis, qui est, malum peccati dedocere. Quomodo poenitentia Deo, respectu mutati operis sui, et verbi sui absque explicita conditione antea propositi, saepe tribuitur, Genesis 6:6; Exodus 32:14; 1 Samuel 15:11 etc.; alias respectu decreti longissimi ab eo arcenda, Numbers 23:19; 1 Samuel 15:29; Jac. 1:17, etc.; notante dudum Theodoreto, et praeunte Jonathane, apud quem dicitur, revocens verbum suam ab inducendo malo. Ita haec bonitatis nomina Deo, per Scripturae testimonia et clarissima rerum documenta, verissimé competunt.'' --- Ed.

as I have already said, but that he still retained some seed of piety; and this, I said, is sufficiently proved by the word prayer; for if Jonah had burst out in the strain of one in despair, it would not have been a prayer. Since then he prayed by thus speaking, it follows that it was not the cry of despair, but of too much displeasure, which Jonah did not restrain. In short, this prayer proceeded from a pious and holy zeal; but Jonah sinned as to its measure or excess; for he had in a manner forgotten himself, when he preferred death to life

Thou Jehovah, he says, take me away. He was first not free from blame in hastily wishing to die; for it is not in our power to quit this world; but we ought with submissive minds to continue in it as long as God keeps us in the station in which we are placed. whosoever, then, hastens to death with so great an ardor no doubt offends God. Paul knew that death was desirable in his case, (Philippians 1:22;) but when he understood that his labor would be useful to the Church, he was contented with his lot, and preferred the will of God to his own will; and thus he was prepared both to live and to die, as it seemed good to God. It was otherwise with Jonah, ``Now,'' he says, ``take away my life.'' This was one fault; but the other was, --- that he wished to die, because God spared the Ninevites. Though he was touched with some grief, he ought not yet to have gone so far as this, or rather to rush on, so as to desire death on account of the weariness of his life.

But we hence learn to what extremes men are carried, when once they give loose reins to inconsiderate zeal. The holy Prophet Jonah, who had been lately tamed and subdued by so heavy a chastisements is now seized and carried away by a desire to die, --- and why? because he thought that it was hard that he denounced destruction on the Ninevites, and that still their city remained safe. This example ought to check us, that we express not too boldly our opinion respecting the doings of God, but, on the contrary, hold our thoughts captive, lest any presumption of this kind be manifested by us; for there is none of us who does not condemn Jonah, as also he condemned himself; for he does not here narrate his own praise, but means to show how foolishly he had judged of God's work. Jonah then confesses his own folly; and therefore his experience is to us an evidence that there is nothing more preposterous than for us to settle this or that according to our own wisdom, since this is alone true wisdom, to submit ourselves wholly to the will of God.

Now if any one raises a question here, --- whether it is lawful to desire death; the answer may be briefly this, --- that death is not to be desired on account of the weariness of life; this is one thing: and by the weariness of life I understand that state of mind, when either poverty, or want, or disgrace, or any such thing, renders life hateful to us: but if any, through weariness on account of his sins and hatred to them, regrets his delay on earth, and can adopt the language of Paul,

``Miserable am I, who will free me from the body of this death!'' (Romans 7:24,)

--- he entertains a holy and pious wish, provided the submission, to which I have referred, be added so that this feeling may not break forth in opposition to the will of God; but that he who has such a desire may still suffer himself to be detained by his hand as long as he pleases. And further, when any one wishes to die, because he fears for himself as to the future, or dreads to undergo any evil, he also struggles

against God; and such was the fault of Jonah; for he says that death was better to him than life, --- and why? because the Lord had spared the Ninevites. We hence see how he was blinded, yea, carried away by a mad impulse to desire death.

Let us then learn so to love this life as to be prepared to lay it down whenever the Lord pleases: let us also learn to desire death, but so as to live to the Lord, and to proceed in the race set before use until he himself lead us to its end. Now follows the reproof of God ---

Jonah 4:4

4. Then said the LORD, Doest thou well to be angry?

4. Et dixit Jehova, An bene facis excandescendo apud te? [130]

There is no doubt but that God by thus reproving Jonah condemns his intemperate warmth. But since God alone is a fit judge of man's conduct, there is no reason for us to boast that we are influenced by good intentions; for there is nothing more fallacious than our own balances. When therefore we weigh facts, deeds, and thoughts by our own judgment, we deceive ourselves. Were any disposed rhetorically to defend the conduct of Jonah, he might certainly muster up many specious pretenses; and were any one inclined to adduce excuses for Jonah, he might be made to appear to us altogether innocent: but though the whole world absolved him, what would it avail, since he was condemned by the mouth of God himself, who alone, as I have already stated, is the judge? We ought then to feel assured, that Jonah had done foolishly, even if no reason was apparent to us; for the authority of the Supreme Judge ought to be more than sufficient.

Now God expressly condemns his wrath. Had Jonah modestly expostulated, and unburdened his griefs into the bosom of God, it would have been excusable; though his ardor would not have been free from blame, it might yet have been borne with. But now, when he is angry, it is past endurance; for wrath, as one says, is but short madness; and then it blinds the perceptions of men, it disturbs all the faculties of the soul. God then does not here in a slight manner condemn Jonah, but he shows how grievously he had fallen by allowing himself to become thus angry. We must at the same time remember, that Jonah had sinned not only by giving way to anger; he might have sinned, as we have said, without being angry. But God by this circumstance --- that he thus became turbulent, enhances his sin. And it is certainly a most

[130] This clause has been variously rendered. The original words are these, {היטב הזה} {לך}. It is not to the point to say, as Dr. Henderson does, that the first word is sometimes rendered adverbially, as meaning ``greatly,'' etc.; for in other places it is rendered as a verb, ``to be good,'' or ``to do good.'' It depends wholly on the form of the sentence what rendering is the most suitable. Both the construction of the words and the connection of the passage seem to favor the literal rendering. The first {ה} is the an of the Latin, whether, it is an interrogation. Then the rendering is, ``Whether it is good,'' or, ``Is that good?'' Jonah had said before that it was ``good'' for him to die rather than to live; for it is the same word in a different form --- {כי} {טוב} {מותי} {ממיי}, ``for good my death rather than my life.'' Then the question to him is, ``Is it good that thou art wrathful,'' or literally, ``that wrath is to thee?'' the verb {חרה}, as in the first verse, is to be construed impersonally. The rendering, ``Art thou much vexed?'' is pointless and vapid. It is indeed countenanced by the Septuagint; but we must remember that on some points there is a wrong leaning in that version, and this is one of those points. As in the case of Jerome and the early Fathers, there was a disposition and an attempt to lessen and even to obliterate all the faults and defects of the ancient saints, so it was evidently with the authors of this version. Superstition and Pharisaism must have all their saints perfect, while the word of God represents all true saints as imperfect in the present state, but aiming at, and longing for, perfection, and fully expecting to enjoy it hereafter. The version of Newcome is, ``Doest thou well that thine anger is kindled?'' Kindling or heat, that is, of anger or wrath, is the ideal meaning of the verb. Junius and Tremelius, as well as Dathius, consider that anger, and not grief is meant. Dr. Adam Clarke's version is this, ``Is anger good for thee?'' which is certainly very literal; or, as the verb is in the causative mood, it might be rendered, ``Can anger do good to thee?'' It may be doubted whether here, and in the ninth verse, where the same phrase twice occurs, this rendering is the most obvious and natural. --- Ed.

unseemly thing, when a mean creature rises up against God, and in a boisterous spirit contends with him: this is monstrous; and Jonah was in this state of mind.

We hence see why an express mention is made of his anger, --- God thus intended to bring conviction home to Jonah, that he might no more seek evasions. Had he simply said, ``Why! how is it that thou dost not leave to me the supreme right of judging? If such is my will, why dost not thou submissively acknowledge that what I do is rightly done? Is it thy privilege to be so wise, as to dictate laws to me, or to correct my decisions?'' --- had the Lord thus spoken, there might have remained still some excuse; Jonah might have said, ``Lord, I cannot restrain my grief, when I see thy name so profaned by unseemly reproaches; can I witness this with a calm mind?'' He might thus have still sought some coverings for his grief; but when the Lord brought forward his anger, he must have been necessarily silenced; for what could be found to excuse Jonah, when he thus perversely rebelled, as I have said, against God, his Judge and Maker? We now then understand why God expressly declares that Jonah did not do well in being thus angry.

But I wonder how it came into Jerome's mind to say that Jonah is not here reproved by the Lord, but that something of an indifferent kind is mentioned. He was indeed a person who was by nature a sophister, (cavillator --- a caviler;) and thus he wantonly trifled with the work of falsifying Scripture; he made no conscience of perverting passages of holy writ. As, for instance, when he writes about marriage, he says that they do not ill who marry, and yet that they do not well. What a sophistry is this, and how vapid! So also on this place, ``God,'' he says, ``does not condemn Jonah, neither did he intend to reprove his sin; but, on the contrary, Jonah brings before us here the person of Christ, who sought death that the whole world might be saved; for when alive he could not do good to his own nation, he could not save his own kindred; he therefore preferred to devote himself and his life for the redemption of the world.'' These are mere puerilities; and thus the whole meaning of this passage, as we clearly see, is distorted. But the question is more emphatical than if God had simply said, ``Thou hast sinned by being thus angry;'' for an affirmative sentence has not so much force as that which is in the form of a question.

God then not only declares as a Judge that Jonah had not done well, but he also draws from him his own confession, as though he said, ``Though thou art a judge in thine own cause, thou can't not yet make a cover for thy passion, for thou art beyond measure angry.'' For when he says {לך}, lak, with, or, in thyself, he reminds Jonah to examine his own heart, as though he said, ``Look on thyself as in a mirror: thou wilt see what a boisterous sea is thy soul, being seized as thou art by so mad a rage.'' We now then perceive not only the plain sense of the passage, but also the emphasis, which is contained in the questions which Jerome has turned to a meaning wholly contrary. I will not proceed farther; [131] for what remains will be sufficient for to-morrow's lecture.

Prayer.

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou sees us implicated in so many errors, that we

[131] Appended here is this note in the margin, — “Putavit, cessante horologio, se ante tempus finire;” — “He thought that, through the clock stopping, he had finished before the time.” — Ed.

often fall through want of thought, and as thou also sees that the violent emotions of our flesh wholly blind whatever reason and judgment there is in us, --- O grant, that we may learn to give up ourselves altogether to obey thee, and so honor thy wisdom as never to contend with thee, though all things may happen contrary to our wishes, but patiently to wait for such an issue as it may please thee to grant; and may we never be disturbed by any of the hindrances which Satan may throw in our way, but ever go on towards the mark which thou hast set before us, and never turn aside from thee, until, having gone through all dangers and overcome all impediments, we shall at length reach that blessed rest, which has been obtained for us by the blood of thy Son. Amen.

Lecture Eightieth

Jonah 4:5

5. So Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city.

5. Et egressus est Jonas ex urbe, et sedit ab oriente contra urbem, et fecit sibi illic tabernaculum, et sedit sub eo in umbra, quousque videret quid fieret in urbe.

It may be here doubted whether Jonah had waited till the forty days had passed, and whether that time had arrived; for if we say that he went out of the city before the fortieth day, another question arises, how could he have known what would be? for we have not yet found that he had been informed by any oracular communication. But the words which we have noticed intimate that it was then known by the event itself, that God had spared the city from destruction; for in the last lecture it was said, that God had repented of the evil he had declared and had not done it. It hence appears that Jonah had not gone out of the city until the forty days had passed. But there comes again another question, what need had he to sit near the city, for it was evident enough that the purpose of God had changed, or at least that the sentence Jonah had pronounced was changed? he ought not then to have seated himself near the city as though he was doubtful.

But I am inclined to adopt the conjecture, that Jonah went out after the fortieth day, for the words seem to countenance it. With regard to the question, why he yet doubted the event, when time seemed to have proved it, the answer may be readily given: though indeed the forty days had passed, yet Jonah stood as it were perplexed, because he could not as yet feel assured that what he had before proclaimed according to God's command would be without its effect. I therefore doubt not but that Jonah was held perplexed by this thought, ``Thou hast declared nothing rashly; how can it then be, that what God wished to be proclaimed by his own command and in his own name, should be now in vain, with no corresponding effect?'' Since then Jonah had respect to God's command, he could not immediately extricate himself from his doubts. This then was the cause why he sat waiting: it was, because he thought that though God's vengeance was suspended, his preaching would not yet be in vain, but that the ruin of the city was at hand. This therefore was the reason why he still waited after the prefixed time, as though the event was still doubtful.

Now that this may be more evident, let us bear in mind that the purpose of God

was hidden, so that Jonah understood not all the parts of his vocation. God, then, when he threatened ruin to the Ninevites, designed to speak conditionally: for what could have been the benefit of the word, unless this condition was added, --- that the Ninevites, if they repented, should be saved? There would otherwise have been no need of a Prophet; the Lord might have executed the judgment which the Ninevites deserved, had he not intended to regard their salvation. If any one objects by saying that a preacher was sent to render them inexcusable, --- this would have been unusual; for God had executed all his other judgments without any previous denunciation, I mean, with regard to heathen nations: it was the peculiar privilege of the Church that the Prophets ever denounced the punishments which were at hand; but to other nations God made it known that he was their Judge, though he did not send Prophets to warn them. There was then included a condition, with regard to God's purpose, when he commanded the Ninevites to be terrified by so express a declaration. But Jonah was, so to speak, too literal a teacher; for he did not include what he ought to have done, --- that there was room for repentance, and that the city would be saved, if the Ninevites repented of their wickedness. Since then Jonah had learned only one half of his office, it is no wonder that his mind was still in doubt, and could not feel assured as to the issue; for he had nothing but the event, God had not yet made known to him what he would do. Let us now proceed ---

Jonah 4:6-8

6. And the Lord God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd.

6. Et paravit Jehova Deus cucurbitam (vel, hederam,) et ascendere fecit ad Jonam, ut esset umbra super caput ejus, atque liberaret eum a molestia sua; et gavisus est Jonas super hedera (vel, cucurbita) gaudio magno.

7. But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered.

7. Et paravit Deus vermem quum ascenderet aurora postridie, qui percussit hederam et exaruit.

8. And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live.

8. Et accidit, quum exoriretur sol, ut pararet Deus ventum impetuosum (qui obsurdescere facit homines; {חרש} significat obsurdescere; alii vertunt, ventum arationis, quia verbum illud etiam significat arare; et intelligunt, ventum siccum et frigidum, qualis grassari solet arationis tempore,) et percussit sol super caput Jonae, et defecit; et optavit pro anima sua, ut moreretur; et dixit, Melior mors mea quam vita.

Before I proceed to treat on the contents of these verses, I will say a few things on the word {קיקיון}, kikiun; for there were formerly some disputes respecting this word. Some render it, a gourd; (eucurbitam) others think it to have been a cucumber. Free conjectures are commonly made respecting obscure and unknown things. However, the first rendering has been the received one: and Augustine says, that a tumult arose in some church, when the Bishop rend the new interpretation of Jerome, who

said that it was the ivy. Those men were certainly thoughtless and foolish who were so offended for a matter so trifling; for they ought to have more carefully inquired which version was the best and most correct. And Augustine did not act so very wisely in this affair; for superstition so possessed him, that he was unwilling that the received version of the Old Testament should be changed. He indeed willingly allowed Jerome to translate the New Testament from the Greek original; but he would not have the Old Testament to be touched; for he entertained a suspicion of the Jews, --- that as they were the most inveterate enemies of the faith, they would have tried to falsify the Law and the Prophets. As then Augustine had this suspicion, he preferred retaining the common version. And Jerome relates that he was traduced at Rome, because he had rendered it ivy instead of gourd; but he answered Augustine in a very severe and almost an angry manner; and he inveighed in high displeasure against some Cornelius and another by the name of Asinius Polio, who had accused him at Rome as one guilty of sacrilege, because he had changed this word. I cannot allege in excuse, that they peevishly rejected what was probable. But as to the thing itself, I would rather retain in this place the word gourd, or cucumber, than to cause any disturbance by a thing of no moment. Jerome himself confesses, that it was not ivy; for he says, that it was a kind of a shrub, and that it grows everywhere in Syria; he says that it was a shrub supported by its own stem, which is not the case with ivy; for the ivy, except it cleaves to a wall or to a tree, creeps on the ground. It could not then have been the ivy; and he ought not to have so translated it. He excuses himself and says, that if he had put down the Hebrew word, many would have dreamt it to have been a beast or a serpent. He therefore wished to put down something that was known. But he might also have caused many doubts: ``Why! ivy is said to have ascended over the head of Jonah, and to have afforded him a shade; how could this have been?'' Now I wonder why Jerome says in one place that the shrub was called in his time Cicion in the Syrian language; and he says in another place in his Commentaries, that it was called in the same language Elkeroa; which we see to be wholly different from the word {קיקיון}, kikiun. Now when he answered Augustine I doubt not but that he dissembled; for he knew that Augustine did not understand Hebrew: he therefore trifled with him as with a child, because he was ignorant. It seems to have been a new gloss, I know not what, invented at the time for his own convenience: I doubt not but that he at the moment formed the word, as there is some affinity between {קיקיון}, kikiun, and cicion. However it may have been, whether it was a gourd or a shrub, it is not necessary to dispute much how it could have grown so soon into so great a size. Jerome says, that it was a shrub with many leaves, and that it grew to the size of a vine. Be it so; but this shrub grows not in one day, nor in two, nor in three days.

It must have therefore been something extraordinary. Neither the ivy, nor the gourd, nor any shrub, nor any tree, could have grown so quickly as to afford a cover to the head of Jonah: nor did this shrub alone give shelter to Jonah's head; for it is more probable, that it was derived also from the booth which he had made for himself. Jonah then not only sheltered himself under the shrub, but had the booth as an additional cover, when he was not sufficiently defended from the heat of the

sun. Hence God added this shrub to the shade afforded by the booth: for in those regions, as we know, the sun is very hot; and further, it was, as we shall see, an extraordinary heat.

I wished to say thus much of the word ivy; and I have spoken more than I intended; but as there have been contentions formerly on the subject, I wished to notice what may be satisfactory even to curious readers. I come now to what is contained in this passage.

Jonah tells us that a gourds or a cucumber, or an ivy, was prepared by the Lord. There is no doubt but that this shrub grew in a manner unusual, that it might be a cover to the booth of Jonah. So I view the passage. But God, we know, approaches nature, whenever he does anything beyond what nature is: this is not indeed always the case; but we generally find that God so works, as that he exceeds the course of nature, and yet from nature he does not wholly depart. For when in the desert he intended to collect together a great quantity of quails, that he might give meat to the people, he raised wind from the east, (Numbers 11:31.) How often the winds blew without bringing such an abundance of birds? It was therefore a miracle: but yet God did not wholly cast aside the assistance of nature; hence he made use of the wind; and yet the wind could not of itself bring these birds. So also in this place, God had chosen, I have no doubt, a herb, which soon ascended to a great height, and yet far surpassed the usual course of nature. In this sense, then, it is that God is said to have prepared the {קיקיון}, kikiun, [132] and to have made it to ascend over Jonah's head, that it might be for a shade to his head and free him from his distress.

But it is said afterwards that a worm was prepared. We see here also, that what seemed to happen by chance was yet directed by the hidden providence of God. Should any one say, that what is here narrated does not commonly happen, but what once happened; to this I answer, --- that though God then designed to exhibit a wonderful example, worthy of being remembered, it is yet ever true that the gnawing even of worms are directed by the counsel of God, so that neither a herb nor a tree withers independently of his purpose. The same truth is declared by Christ when he says, that without the Father's appointment the sparrows fall not on the ground, (Matthew 10:29.) Thus much as to the worm.

It is now added, that when the sun arose the day following, a wind was prepared. We here learn the same thing, --- that winds do not of themselves rise, or by chance, but are stirred up by a Divine power. There may indeed be found causes in nature why now the air is tranquil, and then it is disturbed by winds; but God's purpose regulates all these intermediate causes; so that this is ever true --- that nature is not some blind impulse, but a law settled by the will of God. God then ever regulates by his own counsel and hand whatever happens. The only difference is, that his works which flow in the usual course have the name of nature; and they are miracles

[132] Much has been written on the character of this plant. Modern critics have pretended to determine that it was the Ricinus, commonly called Palma Christi. It matters not what it was: its growth was doubtless miraculous. It may have been an indigenous plant, it may have been such a plant as never grew before or after. Two things are evident — God prepared it, and prepared it to shelter Jonah. In a translation it would have been better either to retain the original name, or to give it the general name of a plant or shrub. To call it a gourd, an ivy, or a cucumber, is to convey an incorrect idea. — Ed.

and retain not the name of nature, when God changes their wonted course; but yet they all proceed from God as their author. Therefore with regard to this wind, we must understand that it was not usual or common; and yet that winds are daily no less stirred up by God's providence than this wind of which Jonah speaks. But God wrought then, so to speak, beyond the usual course of nature, though he daily preserves the regular order of nature itself.

Let us now see why this whole narrative has been set down. Jonah confesses that he rejoiced with great joy, when he was sheltered from the extreme heat of the sun: but when the shrub withered, he was touched with so much grief that he wished to die. There is nothing superfluous here; for Jonah shows, with regard to his joy and his grief, how tender he was and how susceptible of both. Jonah here confesses his own sensibility, first by saying that he greatly rejoiced, and then by saying that he was so much grieved for the withered shrub, that through weariness of life he instantly desired death. There is then here an ingenuous confession of weakness; for Jonah in a very simple manner has mentioned both his joy and his grief. But he has distinctly expressed the vehemence of both feelings, that we might know that he was led away by his strong emotions, so that in the least things he was either inflamed with anger, or elated with joy beyond any bounds. This then was the case with him in his grief as well as in his joy. But he does not say that he prayed as before; but he adopts the word {שאל}, shal, which signifies to desire or wish. He desired, it is said, for his soul that he might die. It is hence probable that Jonah was so overwhelmed with grief that he did not lift up his heart to God; and yet we see that he was not neglected by God: for it immediately follows ---

Jonah 4:9

9. And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death.

9. Et dixit Deus ad Jonam, An bene facis excandescendo apud te super cucurbitam? Et dixit, Bene facio irascendo apud me usque ad mortem.

We see here that God had concealed himself for a time, but did not yet forsake his servant. He often looks on us from behind; that is, though we think that he has forgotten us, he yet observes how we go on, that he may in due time afford help: and hence it is that he recovers and raises up the falling, before we perceive that he is near. This was his manner with Jonah, when he began to address him: for, as we have said, grief had so oppressed the mind of the holy Prophets that it could no longer be raised up to God. Hence he desired to die; and still God did not forsake him. This was no common example of the invaluable mercy of God, with which he favors his own people, even when they precipitate themselves into ruin: such was the case with Jonah, who rushed headlong into a state of despair, and cared not for any remedy. God then did not wait until he was sought, but anticipated miserable Jonah, who was now seeking destruction to himself.

He says, Doest thou well that thou art thus angry for the gourd? As though he had said, that he was too violently disturbed for a matter so trifling. And we must ever bear that in mind, of which we spoke more fully yesterday, --- that God did not merely reprove his servant, because he did not patiently bear the withering of

the gourd --- what then? but because he became angry; for in anger there is ever an excess. Since then Jonah was thus grieved beyond measure, and without any restraint, it was justly condemned by God as a fault. I will now not repeat what I said yesterday respecting the enhancing of the crime, inasmuch as Jonah not only murmured on account of the withering of the shrub, but also disregarded himself, and boiled over with displeasure beyond all due limits.

And the answer of Jonah confirms this, I do well, he says, in being angry even to death. We here see how obstinately the holy Prophet repelled the admonition of God, by which he ought to have been restored to a right mind. He was not ignorant that God spoke. Why then was he not smitten with shame? Why was he not moved by the authority of the speaker, so as immediately to repress the fierceness of his mind? But thus it commonly happens, when the minds of men are once blinded by some wrong feeling; though the Lord may thunder and fulminate from heaven, they will not hear, at least they will not cease violently to resist, as Jonah does here. Since then we find such an example of perverseness in this holy man, how much more ought every one of us to fear? Let us hence learn to repress in time our feelings, and instantly at the beginning to bridle them, lest if they should burst forth to a greater extent, we become at last altogether obstinate. I do well, he says, in being angry even to death. God charged his servant Jonah with the vice of anger; Jonah now indulges himself in his own madness, so that he says that desperation is not a vice: I do not sin, he says, though I am despairing; though I abandon myself to death as with mad fury, I do not yet sin.

Who could have thought that the holy Prophet could have been brought into this state of mind? But let us be reminded, as I have already said, by this remarkable example, how furious and unreasonable are the passions of our flesh. There is, therefore, nothing better than to restrain them, before they gather more strength than they ought; for when any one feeds his vices, this obstinacy and hardness always follow. But to be angry, or to be in a fume even to death, is to feel such a weariness of life, as to give ourselves up of our own accord to death. It was not indeed the design of Jonah to lay violent hands on himself; but though he abstained from violence, he yet, as to the purpose of his mind, procured death to himself; for he submitted not to God, but was carried away by a blind impulse, so that he wished to throw away his life. It now follows ---

Jonah 4:10-11

10. Then said the Lord, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night:

10. Et dixit Jehova, Tu pepercisti cucurbitae, in qua non laborasti, et quam non extulisti; filia noctis fuit, et filia noctis transiit (hoc est nata fuit, vel, exorta una nocte, et nocte etiam una emarcuit.)

11. And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?

11. Et ego non parcerem Nineveh urbi magnae, in qua sunt duodecies decem

millia hominum, quorum quisque non novit inter dexteram suam et sinistram suam, et animalia etiam multa?

Here God explains the design he had in suddenly raising up the gourd, and then in causing it to perish or wither through the gnawing of a worm; it was to teach Jonah that misconduct towards the Ninevites was very inhuman. Though we find that the holy Prophet had become a prey to dreadful feelings, yet God, by this exhibition, does in a manner remind him of his folly; for, under the representation of a gourd, he shows how unkindly he desired the destruction of so populous a city as Nineveh.

Yet this comparison may appear ill suited for the purpose. Jonah felt sorry for the gourd, but he only regarded himself: hence he was displeased, because the relief with which he was pleased was taken away from him. As then this inconvenience had driven Jonah to anger, the similitude may not seem appropriate when God thus reasons, Thou wouldest spare the gourd, should I not spare this great city? Nay, but he was not concerned for the gourd itself: if all the gourds of the world withered, he would not have been touched with any grief; but as he felt the greatest danger being scorched by the extreme heat of the sun, it was on this account that he was angry. To this I answer, --- that though Jonah consulted his own advantage, yet this similitude is most suitable: for God preserves men for the purpose for which he has designed them. Jonah grieved for the withering of the gourd, because he was deprived of its shade: and God does not create men in vain; it is then no wonder that he wishes them to be saved. We hence see that Jonah was not unsuitably taught by this representation, how inhumanely he conducted himself towards the Ninevites. He was certainly but one individual; since then he made such an account of himself and the gourd only, how was it that he cast aside all care for so great and so populous a city? Ought not this to have come to his mind, that it was no wonder that God, the Creator and Father, had a care for so many thousands of men? Though indeed the Ninevites were alienated from God, yet as they were men, God, as he is the Father of the whole human race, acknowledged them as his own, at least to such an extent as to give them the common light of day, and other blessings of earthly life. We now then understand the import of this comparison: ``Thou wouldest spare,'' he says, ``the gourd, and should I not spare this great city?''

It hence appears how frivolous is the gloss of Jerome, --- that Jonah was not angry on account of the deliverance of the city, but because he saw that his own nation would, through its means, be destroyed: for God repeats again that Jonah's feeling was quite different, --- that he bore with indignity the deliverance of the city from ruin. And less to be endured it is still, that Jerome excuses Jonah by saying that he nobly and courageously answered God, that he had not sinned in being angry even to death. That man dared, without any shame or discernment, to invent a pretense that he might excuse so disgraceful an obstinacy. But it is enough for us to understand the real meaning of the Prophet. Here then he shows, according to God's representation, that his cruelty was justly condemned for having anxiously desired the destruction of a populous city.

But we ought to notice all the parts of the similitudes when he says, Thou wouldest have spared, etc. There is an emphasis in the pronoun {אתה}, ate, for God compares

himself with Jonah; ``Who art thou? Doubtless a mortal man is not so inclined to mercy as I am. But thou takest to thyself this right --- to desire to spare the gourd, even thou who art made of clay. Now this gourd is not thy work, thou hast not labored for it, it has not proceeded from thy culture or toil; and further, thou hast not raised it up, and further still, it was the daughter of a night, and in one night it perished; it was an evanescent shrub or herb. If then thou regardest the nature of the gourd, if thou regardest thyself, and joinest together all the other circumstances, thou wilt find no reason for thy hot displeasure. But should not I, who am God, in whose hand are all things, whose prerogative and whose constant practice it is mercifully to bear with men --- should not I spare them, though they were worthy of destruction? and should not I spare a great city? The matter here is not concerning a little plant, but a large number of people. And, in the last place, it is a city, in which there are a hundred and twenty thousand men who know not how to distinguish between their right hand and the left.''

We now then see how emphatical are all the parts of this comparison. And though God's design was to reprove the foolish and sinful grief of Jonah, we may yet further collect a general instruction by reasoning in this manner, ``We feel for one another, and so nature inclines us, and yet we are wicked and cruel. If then men are inclined to mercy through some hidden impulse of nature, what may not be hoped from the inconceivable goodness of God, who is the Creator of the whole world, and the Father of us all? and will not he, who is the fountain of all goodness and mercy spare us?''

Now as to the number, Jonah mentions here twelve times ten thousand men, and that is as we have said, one hundred and twenty thousand. God shows here how paternally he cares for mankind. Every one of us is cherished by him with singular care: but yet he records here a large number, that it might be more manifest that he so much regards mankind that he will not inconsiderately fulminate against any one nation. And what he adds, that they could not distinguish between the right hand and the left, is to be referred, I have no doubt, to their age; and this opinion has been almost universally received. Some one, however has expressed a fear lest the city should be made too large by allowing such a number of men: he has, therefore, promiscuously included the old, as well as those of middle age and infants. He says that these could not distinguish between the right hand and the left, because they had not been taught in the school of God, nor understood the difference between right and wrong; for the unbelieving, as we know, went astray in their errors. But this view is too strained; and besides, there is no reason for this comment; for that city, we know, was not only like some great cities, many of which are at this day in Europe, but it surpassed most of the principal cities at this day. We know that in Paris there are more than four hundred thousand souls: the same is the case with other cities. I therefore reject this comment, as though Jonah was here speaking of all the Ninevites. But God, on the contrary, intended to show, that though there was the justest reason for destroying entirely the whole city, there were yet other reasons which justified the suspension of so dreadful a vengeance; for many infants were there who had not, by their own transgressions, deserved such a destruction.

God then shows here to Jonah that he had been carried away by his own merciless

zeal. Though his zeal, as it has been said, arose from a good principle, yet Jonah was influenced by a feeling far too vehement. This God proved, by sparing so many infants hitherto innocent. And to infants he adds the brute animals. Oxen were certainly superior to shrubs. If Jonah justly grieved for one withering shrub, it was far more deplorable and cruel for so many innocent animals to perish. We hence see how apposite are all the parts of this similitude, to make Jonah to loathe his folly, and to be ashamed of it; for he had attempted to frustrate the secret purpose of God, and in a manner to overrule it by his own will, so that the Ninevites might not be spared, who yet labored by true repentance to anticipate the divine judgment.

Prayer.

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast, in various ways, testified, and daily continues to testify, how dear and precious to thee are mankind, and as we enjoy daily so many and so remarkable proofs of thy goodness and favor, --- O grant, that we may learn to rely wholly on thy goodness, many examples of which thou settest before us, and which thou wouldest have us continually to experience, that we may not only pass through our earthly course, but also confidently aspire to the hope of that blessed and celestial life which is laid up for us in heaven, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

End of the commentaries on Jonah.

Commentary on Micah

Commentary on Micah

Calvin's Preface to Micah

Among the Minor Prophets, Micah comes next, who is commonly called Micaiah. [133] But he was the second, as they say, of this name; for the first was the Micaiah who had a contest with the wicked king Ahab; and he then exercised his Prophetic office. But the second was in the same age with Isaiah, perhaps a little later: at least Isaiah had been performing his office some years before Micah had been called. It appears then that he was added to Isaiah, that he might confirm his doctrine; for that holy man had to do with ungodly men, with men of a hardened neck, yea, and so wicked, that they were wholly irreclaimable. That their doctrine therefore might be more entitled to credit, it pleased God that Isaiah and Micah should deliver their message at the same time, as it were, with one mouth, and avow their consent, that all the disobedient might be proved guilty.

But I will now come to his words: for the contents of this Book suggest what is useful for our instruction. [134]

Chapter 1

Lecture Eighty-first

[133] The confusion of the name has been through the Septuagint, in which Michaiah, the son of Imlah, about a hundred years before, is rendered {Μιχαιας}, as well as this Prophet. The son of Imlah in Hebrew is ,{מיכיה} while our Prophet is .{מיכה} --- Ed.

[134] "This Book," says Henderson, "may be divided into two parts; the first consisting of chapters 1-5; and the second, the two remaining chapters, which are more general and didactic in their character."

Micah 1

Micah 1:1

1. The word of the LORD that came to Micah the Morasthite in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.

1. Sermo Jehovae qui factus est (vel, directus) ad Michah Morasthitem, diebus Jotham, Achaz, Jehizkiae, regum Judae, quem vidit super Samariam et Jerusalem.

This inscription, in the first place, shows the time in which Micah lived, and during which God employed his labors. And this deserves to be noticed: for at this day his sermons would be useless, or at least frigid, except his time were known to us, and we be thereby enabled to compare what is alike and what is different in the men of his age, and in those of our own: for when we understand that Micah condemned this or that vice, as we may also learn from the other Prophets and from sacred history, we are able to apply more easily to ourselves what he then said, inasmuch as we can view our own life as it were in a mirror. This is the reason why the Prophets are wont to mention the time in which they executed their office.

But how long Micah followed the course of his vocation we cannot with certainty determine. It is, however, probable that he discharged his office as a Prophet for thirty years: it may be that he exceeded forty years; for he names here three kings, the first of whom, that is Jotham, reigned sixteen years; and he was followed by Ahab, who also reigned as many years. If then Micah was called at the beginning of the first reign, he must have prophesied for thirty-two years, the time of the two kings. Then the reign of Hezekiah followed, which continued to the twenty-ninth year: and it may be, that the Prophet served God to the death, or even beyond the death, of Hezekiah. [135] We hence see that the number of his years cannot with certainty be known; though it be sufficiently evident that he taught not for a few years, but that

[135] It is probable that the greater part of his Prophecy was written in the days of this king; for a portion of what is contained in the third chapter is referred to in Jeremiah 26:18, 19, as having been delivered "in the days of Hezekiah."—Ed.

he so discharged his office, that for thirty years he was not wearied, but constantly persevered in executing the command of God.

I have said that he was contemporary with Isaiah: but as Isaiah began his office under Uzziah, we conclude that he was older. Why then was Micah joined to him? That the Lord might thus break down the stubbornness of the people. It was indeed enough that one man was sent by God to bear witness to the truth; but it pleased God that a testimony should be borne by the mouth of two, and that holy Isaiah should be assisted by this friend and, as it were, his colleague. And we shall hereafter find that they adopted the very same words; but there was no emulation between them, so that one accused the other of theft, when he repeated what had been said. Nothing was more gratifying to each of them than to receive a testimony from his colleague; and what was committed to them by God they declared not only in the same sense and meaning, but also in the same words, and, as it were, with one mouth.

Of the expression, that the word was sent to him, we have elsewhere reminded you, that it ought not to be understood of private teaching, as when the word of God is addressed to individuals; but the word was given to Micah, that he might be God's ambassador to us. It means then that he came furnished with commands, as one sustaining the person of God himself; for he brought nothing of his own, but what the Lord commanded him to proclaim. But as I have elsewhere enlarged on this subject, I now only touch on it briefly.

This vision, he says, was given him against two cities Samaria and Jerusalem [136] It is certain that the Prophet was specifically sent to the Jews; and Maresah, from which he arose, as it appears from the inscription, was in the tribe of Judah: for Morasthite was an appellative, derived from the place Maresah. [137] But it may be asked, why does he say that visions had been given him against Samaria? We have said elsewhere, that though Hosea was specifically and in a peculiar manner destined for the kingdom of Israel, he yet by the way mingled sometimes those things which referred to the tribe or kingdom of Judah: and such was also the case with our Prophet; he had a regard chiefly to his own kindred, for he knew that he was appointed for them; but, at the same time, he overlooked not wholly the other part of the people; for the kingdom of Israel was not so divided from the tribe of Judah that no connection remained: for God was unwilling that his covenant should be abolished by their defection from the kingdom of David. We hence see, that though Micah spent chiefly his labors in behalf of the Jews, he yet did not overlook or entirely neglect the Israelites.

But the title must be restricted to one part of the book; for threatenings only form the discourse here. But we shall find that promises, full of joy, are also introduced. The inscription then does not include all the contents of the book; but as his purpose

[136] "He mentions Samaria first," says Marckius, "not because it was superior to Jerusalem, or more regarded by the Prophet, but because it would be first in undergoing judgment, as it had been first in transgression." The preposition {{על is rendered by some, ``against,'' and not ``concerning.'' Calvin renders it in his version super, and in his comment, contra --- Ed.

[137] It was a village, according to Eusebius and Jerome, west of Jerusalem, near Eleutheropolis, not far from the borders of the Philistines. See Joshua 15:44; 1 Chronicles 4:21; 2 Chronicles 9:8; 14:10. There is another circumstance, besides that of his birth in the land of Judah, which tends to prove his special mission to the Jews, — he mentions in the first verse only the kings of Judah. — Ed.

was to begin with threatenings, and to terrify the Jews by setting before them the punishment that was at hand, this inscription was designedly given. There is, at the same time, no doubt but that the Prophet was ill received by the Jews on this account; for they deemed it a great indignity, and by no means to be endured, to be tied up in the same bundle with the Israelites; for Samaria was an abomination to the kingdom of Judah; and yet the Prophet here makes no difference between Samaria and Jerusalem. This was then an exasperating sentence: but we see how boldly the Prophet performs the office committed to him; for he regarded not what would be agreeable to men, nor endeavored to draw them by smooth things: though his message was disliked, he yet proclaimed it, for he was so commanded, nor could he shake off the yoke of his vocation. Let us now proceed ---

Micah 1:2

2. Hear, all ye people; hearken, O earth, and all that therein is: and let the Lord GOD be witness against you, the Lord from his holy temple.

2. Audite populi omnes, ausculta terra et plenitudo ejus, et sit Dominus Jehova vobis (vel, inter vos, vel, contra vos, potius) in testem, et Dominus e palatio (vel, templo) sanctitatis suae.

The Prophet here rises into an elevated style, being not content with a simple and calm manner of speaking. We hence may learn, that having previously tried the disposition of the people, he knew the stubbornness of almost all classes: for except he was persuaded that the people would be rebellious and obstinate, he would certainly have used some mildness, or have at least endeavored to lead them of their own accord rather than to drive them thus violently. There is then no doubt but that the obstinacy of the people and their wickedness were already fully known to him, even before he began to address one word to them. But this difficulty did not prevent him from obeying God's command. He found it necessary in the meantime to add vehemence to his teaching; for he saw that he addressed the deaf, yea, stupid men, who were destitute of every sense of religion, and who had hardened themselves against God, and had not only fallen away through want of thought, but had also become immersed in their sins, and were wickedly and abominably obstinate in them. Since then the Prophet saw this, he makes here a bold beginning, and addresses not only his own nation, for whom he was appointed a Teacher; but he speaks to the whole world.

For what purpose does he say, Hear, all ye people? [138] It was not certainly his object to proclaim indiscriminately to all the truth of God for the same end: but he summons here all nations as witnesses or judges, that the Jews might understand that their impiety would be made evident to all, except they repented, and that

[138] {שמעו {עמים} ,{כלם} ``Hear, ye peoples, all of them.'' Were it not for a similar anomaly as to number in the following line, ``Give ear, thou earth, and its fullness,'' we might think that {כלן} is here a mistake for ,{כלכם} as it is evidently the case in 1 Samuel 6:4, and Job 17:10; for in these two places there are several MSS. Which have ,{כלכם} though here there is no variety. Some, to get rid of the difficulty, have suggested that {כלם} here is to be construed as an adverb, ``universally,'' regarding it as assuming the same form with ,{חנם} ``gratuitously,'' and ,{ריקם} ``vainly.'' But such irregularity is common in Hebrew; there is therefore no need of having recourse to such expedients. The word ,{עמים} peoples, may be rendered nations: for, notwithstanding the dissent of Drusius, what Horsley says seems to be correct, that {עם} in the plural number designates the heathen nations, as distinguished from the people of Israel. The verse literally is this, --- Hear, ye nations, --- all of them; Give ear, thou earth, --- even its fullness; And the Lord Jehovah shall be against you a witness The Lord from the temple of his holiness. --- Ed.

there was no reason for them to hope that they could conceal their baseness, for God would expose their hidden crimes as it were on an open stage. We hence see how emphatical are the words, when the Prophet calls on all nations and would have them to be witnesses of the judgment which God had resolved to bring on his people.

He afterwards adds, Let also the earth give ear and its fullness We may take the earth, by metonymy, for its inhabitants; but as it is added, and its fullness, the Prophet, I doubt not, meant here to address the very earth itself, though it be without reason. He means that so dreadful would be the judgment of God, as to shake created things which are void of sense; and thus he more severely upbraids the Jews with their stupor, that they heedlessly neglected the word of God, which yet would shake all the elements by its power.

He then immediately turns his discourse to the Jews: after having erected God's tribunal and summoned all the nations, that they might form as it were a circle of a solemn company, he says, There will be for me the Lord Jehovah against you for a witness --- the Lord from the temple of his holiness. By saying that God would be as a witness for him, he not only affirms that he was sent by God, but being as it were inflamed with zeal, he appeals here to God, and desires him to be present, that the wickedness and obstinacy of the people might not be unpunished; as though he said, ``Let God, whose minister I am, be with me, and punish your impiety; let him prove that he is the author of this doctrine, which I declare from his mouth and by his command; let him not suffer you to escape unpunished, if ye do not repent.''

We now then perceive the meaning of the Prophet, when he says that God would be for him a witness; as though he had said, that there was no room here to trifle; for if the Jews thought to elude God's judgment they greatly deceived themselves; inasmuch as when he has given a command to his servants to treat with his people, he is at the same time present as a judge, and will not suffer his word to be rejected without immediately undertaking his own cause.

Nor is this addition superfluous, The Lord from the temple of his holiness: for we know how thoughtlessly the Jews were wont to boast that God dwelt in the midst of them. And this presumption so blinded them that they despised all the Prophets; for they thought it unlawful that any thing should be said to their disgrace, because they were the holy people of God, his holy heritage and chosen nation. Inasmuch then as the Lord had adopted them, they falsely boasted of his favors. Since then the Prophet knew that the people insolently gloried in those privileges, with which they had been honored by God, he now declares that God would be the avenger of impiety from his temple; as though he said, Ye boast that God is bound to you, and that he has so bound up his faith to you as to render his name to you a sport: he indeed dwells in his temple; but from thence he will manifest himself as an avenger, as he sees that you are perverse in your wickedness. We hence see that the Prophet beats down that foolish arrogance, by which the Jews were inflated; yea, he turns back on their own heads what they were wont boastingly to bring forward. After having made this introduction, to awaken slumbering men with as much vehemence as he could, he subjoins ---

Micah 1:3-4

3. For, behold, the Lord cometh forth out of his place, and will come down, and tread upon the high places of the earth.

3. Quia ecce Jehova egreditur e loco suo, et descendet, et calcabit super excelsa terrae:

4. And the mountains shall be molten under him, and the valleys shall be cleft, as wax before the fire, and as the waters that are poured down a steep place.

4. Et liquefient montes sub eo, et solventur (vel, dehiscent) valles; sicut cera a conspectu ignis, sicut aquae in locum inferiorem actae.

The Prophet pursues the same subject; and he dwells especially on this --- that God would be a witness against his people from his sanctuary. He therefore confirms this, when he says that God would come from his place Some interpreters do at the same time take this view --- that the temple would hereafter be deprived of God's presence, and would hence become profane, according to what Ezekiel declares. For as the Jews imagined that God was connected with them as long as the temple stood, and this false imagination proved to them an allurement, as it were, to sin, as on this account they took to themselves greater liberty, --- this was the reason why the Prophet Ezekiel declares that God was no longer in the temple; and the Lord had shown to him by a vision that he had left his temple, so that he would no longer dwell there. Some, as I have said, give a similar explanation of this passage; but this sense does not seem to suit the context. I therefore take another view of this sentence --- that God would go forth from his place. But yet it is doubted what place the Prophet refers to: for many take it to be heaven, and this seems probable, for immediately after he adds, Descend shall God, and he will tread on the high places of the earth This descent seems indeed to point out a higher place: but as the temple, we know, was situated on a high and elevated spot, on mount Zion, there is nothing inconsistent in saying that God descended from his temple to chastise the whole of Judea as it deserved. Then the going forth of God is by no means ambiguous in its meaning, for he means that God would at length go forth, as it were, in a visible form. With regard then to the place, I am inclined to refer it to the temple; and this clause, I have no doubt, has proceeded from the last verse.

But why is going forth here ascribed to God? Because the Jews had abused the forbearance of God in worshipping him with vain ceremonies in the temple; and at the same time they thought that they had escaped from his hand. As long then as God spared them, they thought that he was, as it were, bound to them, because he dwelt among them. Besides, as the legal and shadowy worship prevailed among them, they imagined that God rested in their temple. But now the Prophet says, ``He will go forth: ye have wished hitherto to confine God to the tabernacle, and ye have attempted to pacify him with your frivolous puerilities: but ye shall know that his hand and his power extend much farther: he shall therefore come and show what that majesty is which has been hitherto a derision to you.'' For when hypocrites set to sale their ceremonies to God, do they not openly trifle with him, as though he were a child? and do they not thus rob him of his power and authority? Such was the senselessness of that people. The Prophet therefore does not say without reason that God would go forth, that he might prove to the Jews that they were deluded by

their own vain imaginations, when they thus took away from God what necessarily belonged to him, and confined him to a corner in Judea and fixed him there, as though he rested and dwelt there like a dead idol.

The particle, Behold, is emphatical: for the Prophet intended here to shake off from the Jews their torpidity, inasmuch as nothing was more difficult to them than to be persuaded and to believe that punishment was nigh at hand, when they flattered themselves that God was propitious to them. Hence that they might no longer cherish this willfulness, he says, Behold, come shall the Lord, forth shall he go from his place Isaiah has a passage like this in an address to the people, Isaiah 26; but the object of it is different; for Isaiah intended to threaten the enemies of the Church and heathen nations: but here Micah denounces war on the chosen people, and shows that God thus dwelt in his temple, that the Jews might perceive that his hand was opposed to them, as they had so shamefully despised him, and, by their false imaginations reduced, as it were, to nothing his power.

He shall tread, he says, on the high places of the earth. By the high places of the earth I do not understand superstitious places, but those well fortified. We know that fortresses were then fixed, for the most part, on elevated situations. The Prophet then intimates, that there would be no place into which God's vengeance would not penetrate, however well fortified it might be: ``No enclosures,'' he says, ``shall hinder God from penetrating into the inmost parts of your fortresses; he shall tread on the high places of the earth.'' At the same time, I doubt not but that he alludes, by this kind of metaphor, to the chief men, who thought themselves exempted from the common lot of mankind; for they excelled so much in power, riches, and authority, that they would not be classed with the common people. The Prophet then intimates, that those, who were become proud through a notion of their own superiority would not be exempt from punishment.

And he afterwards adds, that this going forth of God would be terrible, Melt, he says, shall the mountains under him It hence appears, that the Prophet did not speak in the last verse of the departure of God, as though he was going to forsake his own temple, but that he, on the contrary, described his going forth from the temple, that he might ascend his tribunal and execute punishment on the whole people, and thus, in reality, prove that he would be a judge, because he had been very daringly despised. Hence he says, Melt shall the mountains under him, the valleys shall be rent, or cleave, as wax before the fire, as waters rolling into a lower place [139] The

[139] These two similes, as observed by Marckius and others, refer not to the same thing, but to the two things previously mentioned,—the wax, to the mountains,—and the waters, to the valleys. This kind of order, in a sentence, is common in Hebrew. The Septuagint presents an instance, not uncommon, of an attempt to reconcile what, from not apprehending the sense, appeared incongruous; for motion is ascribed to the mountains— {σαλευθησεται} {τα} {ορη}, and melting to the valleys---{τακησονται}, quite contrary to the meaning of the words in Hebrew. Newcome renders the last line thus, --- ``As waters poured down a steep place.'' Henderson renders the last word, ``a precipice;'' and Marckius, decline---''a declivity.'' I would give this version of the whole verse, --- For, behold, Jehovah shall go forth from his place; Yea, he shall descend and tread on the high places of the land; And dissolve shall the mountains under him, And the valleys shall burst forth; Like the wax before the fire, Like waters rolling down a declivity. The verb {בקע} is applied to express the bursting out of waters from a fountain, of the young when emerging from the egg, and of light dispelling darkness. It is here in Hithpael, and only in one other place, Joshua 9:13; where it means the bursting of wine bottles, made of leather. The word {מורד} is going down, descent, declivity, {καταβασις}, Sept. See Joshua 10:11; Jeremiah 48:5 ``Do men trust to the height and strength of mountains, as if they were sufficient to bear up their hopes and bear off their fears? They shall be molten under him. --- Do they trust to the fruitfulness of the valleys and their products? They shall be cleft, or rent, --- and be wasted away as the ground is by the waters that are

Prophets do not often describe God in a manner so awful; but this representation is to be referred to the circumstance of this passage, for he sets forth God here as the judge of the people: it was therefore necessary that he should be exhibited as furnished and armed with powers that he might stake such vengeance on the Jews as they deserved. And other similar passages we shall hereafter meet with, and like to those which we found in Hosea. God then is said to melt the mountains, and he is said to strike the valleys with such terror that they cleave under him; in short, he is said so to terrify all elements, that the very mountains, however stony they may be, melt like wax or like waters which flow, --- because he could not otherwise produce a real impression on a people so obstinate, and who, as it has been said, so flattered themselves even in their vices.

We may further easily learn what application to make of this truth in our day. We find the Papists boasting of the title Church, and, in a manner, with vain confidence, binding God to themselves, because they have baptism, though they have adulterated it with their superstitions; and then, they think that they have Christ, because they still retain the name of a Church. Had the Lord promised that his dwelling would be at Rome, we yet see how foolish and frivolous would be such boasting: for though the temple was at Jerusalem, yet the Lord went forth thence to punish the sins of the people, yea, even of the chosen people. We further know, that it is folly to bind God now to one place, for it is his will that his name should be celebrated without any difference through the whole world. Wheresoever, then, the voice of the Gospel sounds, God would have us to know that he is present there. What the Papists then proudly boast of --- that Christ is joined to them --- will turn out to their own condemnation; --- why so? Because the Lord will prove that he is the avenger of so impious and shameful a profanation, as they not only presumptuously lay claim to his name, but also tear it in pieces, and contaminate it with their sacrilegious abominations.

Again, since God is said to melt the mountains with his presence, let us hence learn to rouse up all our feelings whenever God comes forth not that we may flee to a distance from him, but that we may reverently receive his word, so that he may afterwards appear to us a kind and reconciled Father. For when we become humble, and the pride and height of our flesh is subdued, he then immediately receives us, as it were, into his gentle bosom, and gives us an easy access to him, yea, he invites us to himself with all possible kindness. That the Lord then may thus kindly receive us, let us learn to fear as soon as he utters his voice: but let not this fear make us to flee away but only humble us, so that we may render true obedience to the word of the Lord. It follows ---

Micah 1:5

5. For the transgression of Jacob is all this, and for the sins of the house of Israel. What is the transgression of Jacob? is it not Samaria? and what are the high places of Judah? are they not Jerusalem?

5. Propter scelus [140] Jacob totum hoc, et propter transgressiones domus Israel:

poured down a steep place.'' --- Henry.

[140] {,{פשע rendered scelus wickedness, by Calvin, means evidently defectio --- defection --- apostacy, as rendered by Junius and Tremelius. ,{חטאות} transgressiones --- transgressions, rather, sins. Several MSS. And the Septuagint have ,{חטאת} sin; but the plural is more suitable to this place, to correspond with the high places at the end of the verse. It is evident, from the context

quod scelus Jacob? Annon Samaria? Et quae excelsa Jehudah? Annon Jerusalem?

The Prophet teaches, in this verse, that God is not angry for nothing; though when he appears rigid, men expostulate with him, and clamor as though he were cruel. That men may, therefore, acknowledge that God is a just judge, and that he never exceeds moderation in punishments, the Prophet here distinctly states that there was a just cause, why God denounced so dreadful a judgment on his chosen people, --- even because not only a part of the people, but the whole body had, through their impiety, fallen away; for by the house of Jacob, and by the house of Israel, he means that impiety had everywhere prevailed, so that no part was untainted. The meaning then is, --- that the contagion of sin had spread through all Israel, that no portion of the country was free from iniquity, that no corner of the land could bring an excuse for its defection; the Lord therefore shows that he would be the judge of them all, and would spare neither small nor great.

We now then understand the Prophet's object in this verse: As he had before taught how dreadful would be God's vengeance against all the ungodly, so now he mentions their crimes, that they might not complain that they were unjustly treated, or that God employed too much severity. The Prophet then testifies that the punishment, then near at hand, would be just.

He now adds, What is the wickedness of Jacob? The Prophet, no doubt, indirectly reproves here the hypocrisy which ruled dominant among the people. For he asks not for his own satisfaction or in his own person; but, on the contrary, he relates, by way of imitation, ({μιμητικῶς}, --- imitatively) what he knew to be ever on their lips, ``Oh! what sort of thing is this sin? Why! thou assumest here a false principle, --- that we are wicked men, ungodly and perfidious: thou does us a grievous wrong.'' Inasmuch, then, as hypocrites thought themselves pure, having wiped, as it were, their mouths, whenever they eluded reproofs by their sophistries, the Prophet borrows a question, as it were, from their own lips, ``Of what kind is this wickedness? Of what sort is that transgression?'' As though he said, ``I know what ye are wont to do, when any one of the Prophets severely reproves you; ye instantly contend with him, and are ready with your objections: but what do you gain? If you wish to know what your wickedness is, it is Samaria; and where your high places are, they are at Jerusalem.'' It is the same as if he had said, ``I do not here contend with the common people, but I attack the first men: my contest then is with the princes themselves, who surpass others in dignity, and are, therefore, unwilling to be touched.''

But it sometimes happens that the common people become degenerated, while some integrity remains among the higher orders: but the Prophet shows that the diseases among the people belonged to the principal men; and hence he names the

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that Jacob means Samaria or the ten tribes, and that the house, or family of Israel, means what is not usual, the tribe of Judah. (See 2 Chronicles 28:19.) Israel seems here to be taken as a special distinction of God's people. Judah was still in the name of the true Israel, while the ten tribes were apostates from the faith. It is better to adopt the future tense in this verse, that it may correspond with the preceding. When the auxiliary verb is supplied, it must ever be regulated as to its tense by the context. Then the first line should be, --- For the defection of Jacob shall all this be. Or it may be rendered, ``shall all these things be,'' ;{זאת}-{כל} for {זאת} is plural as well as singular; and {παντα} {ταυτα} is the rendering of the Septuagint. Grotius and some others give this version of the four last lines,--- What is the origin of the defection of Jacob? Is it not Samaria? What is the origin of the high places of Judah? Is it not Jerusalem? Who or what is the defection of Jacob? No doubt means, Who is the author, or what is the cause or origin of his defection? It is the same form of expression, as when it is said, that God is our salvation, that is, the author of it. --- Ed.

two chief cities, Jerusalem and Samaria, as he had said before, in the first verse, that he proclaimed predictions against these: and yet it is certain, that the punishment was to be in common to the whole people. But as they thought that Jerusalem and Samaria would be safe, though the whole country were destroyed, the Prophet threatens them by name: for, relying first on their strength, they thought themselves unassailable; and then, the eyes of nearly all, we know, were dazzled with empty splendor, powers and dignity: thus the ungodly wholly forget that they are men, and what they owe to God, when elevated in the world. So great an arrogance could not be subdued, except by sharp and severe words, such as the Prophet, as we see, here employs. He then says, that the wickedness of Israel was Samaria; the fountain of all iniquities was the royal city, which yet ought to have ruled the whole land with wisdom and justice: but what any more remains, when kings and their counselors tread under foot all regard for what is just and right, and having cast away every shame, rise up in rebellion against God and men? When therefore kings thus fall from their dignity, an awful ruin must follow.

This is the reason why the Prophet says that the wickedness of Israel was Samaria, that thence arose all iniquities. But we must at the same time bear in mind, that the Prophet speaks not here of gross crimes; but, on the contrary, he directs his reproof against ungodly and perverted forms of worship; and this appears more evident from the second clause, in which he mentions transgressions in connection with the high places. We hence see, that all sins in general are not here reproved, but their vicious modes of worship, by which religion had been polluted among the Jews as well as the Israelites. But it might seem very unjust, that the Prophet should charge with sin those forms of worship in which the Jews laboriously exercised themselves with the object of pacifying God. But we see how God regards as nothing whatever men blend with his worship out of their own heads. And this is our principal contest at this day with the Papists; we call their perverted and spurious modes of worship abominations: they think that what is heavenly is to be blended with what is earthly. We diligently labor, they say, for this end --- that God may be worshipped. True; but, at the same time, ye profane his worship by your inventions; and it is therefore an abomination. We now then see how foolish and frivolous are those delusions, when men follow their own wisdom in the duty of worshipping God: for the Prophet here, in the name of God, fulminates, as it were, from heaven against all superstitions, and shows that no sin is more detestable, than that preposterous caprice with which idolaters are inflamed, when they observe such forms of worship as they have themselves invented.

Now with regard to the high places, we must notice, that there was a great difference between the Jews and the Israelites at that time as to idolatry. The Israelites had so fallen, that they were altogether degenerated; nothing could be seen among them that had an affinity to the true and legitimate worship of God: but the Jews had retained some form of religion, they had not thus abandoned themselves; but yet they had a mixture of superstitions; such as one would find, were he to compare the gross Popery of this day with that middle course which those men invent, who seem to themselves to be very wise, fearing, forsooth, as they do, the offenses of

the world; and hence they form for us a mixture, I know not what, from the superstitions of the Papacy and from the Reformation, as they call it. Something like this was the mixture at Jerusalem. We however see, that the Prophet pronounces the same sentence against the Jews and the Israelites and that is, that God will allow nothing that proceeds from the inventions of men to be joined to his word. Since then God allows no such mixtures, the Prophet here says that there was no less sin on the high places of Judea, than there was in those filthy abominations which were then dominant among the people of Israel. But the remainder we must defer until to-morrow.

Prayer.

Grant, Almighty God, that, since to a perverse, and in every way a rebellious people, thou didst formerly show so much grace, as to exhort them continually to repentance, and to stretch forth thy hand to them by thy Prophets, --- O grant, that the same word may sound in our ears; and when we do not immediately profit by thy teaching, O cast us not away, but, by thy Spirit, so subdue all our thoughts and affections, that we, being humbled, may give glory to thy majesty, such as is due to thee, and that, being allured by thy paternal favor, we may submit ourselves to thee, and, at the same time, embrace that mercy which thou offerest and presentest to us in Christ, that we may not doubt but thou wilt be a Father to us, until we shall at length enjoy that eternal inheritance, which has been obtained for us by the, blood of thine only-begotten Son. Amen.

Lecture Eighty-second

Micah 1:6

6. Therefore I will make Samaria as an heap of the field, and as plantings of a vineyard: and I will pour down the stones thereof into the valley, and I will discover the foundations thereof.

6. Et ponam Samariam (hoc est, ideo; enim hic sumitur pro illativa particula; ponam igitur Samariam) in acervum agri, in plantationes vinae; et devolvam in vallem lapides ejus, et fundamenta ejus retegam.

Though Micah intended especially to devote his services to the Jews, as we have said yesterday, he yet, in the first place, passes judgment on Samaria; for it was his purpose afterwards to speak more fully against Jerusalem and the whole of Judea. And this state of the case ought to be borne in mind; for the Prophet does not begin with the Israelites, because he directs his discourse peculiarly to them; but his purpose was briefly to reprove them, and then to address more especially his own people, for it was for this purpose that he was called. Now, as he threatens destruction to Samaria and the whole kingdom of Israel on account of their corrupted forms of worship, we may hence learn how displeasing to God is superstition, and that he regards nothing so much as the true worship of his name. There is no reason here for men to advance this position --- that they do not designedly sin; for God shows how he is to be worshipped by us. Whenever, then, we deviate in any thing from the rule which he has prescribed, we manifest, in that particular, our rebellion and obstinacy. Hence the superstitious ever act like fools with regard to God, for they will not submit to his word, so as to be thereby alone made wise.

And he says, I will set Samaria as an heap of the field, that is, such shall be the ruins that they shall differ nothing from the heaps of the fields: for husband men, we know, when they find stones in their fields, throw them into some corner, that they may not be in the way of the slough. Like such heaps then, as are seen in the fields, Samaria would be, according to what God declared. He then says, that the place would be empty, so that vines would be planted there; and, in the third place, that its stones would be scattered through the valley; as when one casts stones where there is a wide plain, they run and roll far and wide; so would be the scattering of Samaria according to what the Prophet says, it was to be like the rolling of stones in a wide field. He adds, in the fourth place, I will uncover her foundations, that is, I will entirely demolish it, so that a stone, as Christ says, may not remain on a stone, (Matthew 24:2.) We now perceive the import of the words; and we also perceive that the reason why the Prophet denounces on Samaria so severe a judgment was, because it had corrupted the legitimate worship of God with its own inventions; for it had devised, as we well know, many idols, so that the whole authority of the law had been abolished among the Israelites. It now follows ---

Micah 1:7

7. And all the graven images thereof shall be beaten to pieces, and all the hires thereof shall be burned with the fire, and all the idols thereof will I lay desolate: for she gathered it of the hire of an harlot, and they shall return to the hire of an harlot.

7. Et omnia sculptilia [141] ejus diruentur, et omnes mercedes ejus exurentur igne (alii transferunt, donaria,) et omnia idola ejus ponam in vastitatem; quia e mercede meretricis congregavit, et ad mercedem meretricis revertentur.

The Prophet goes on with the same subject, and says, that the ruin of Samaria was at hand, so that its idols would be broken, and also, that its wealth would be destroyed which she had gathered by illegitimate means, and which she thought to be the reward of her idolatry. But God mentions idols here expressly by his Prophet, in order to confirm what we noticed yesterday --- that the cause of vengeance was, because Samaria had abandoned itself to ungodly forms of worship, and had departed from the Law. That the Israelites might then understand the cause for which God would so severely punish them, the Prophet here makes express mention of their graven images and idols. God is not indeed angry with stones and wood; but he observes the abuse and the perversion of them, when men pollute themselves by wickedly worshipping such things. This is the reason why God says here that the graven images of Samaria would be broken in pieces, and that its idols would be destroyed.

With regard to the wages, the Prophet no doubt designed to stamp with disgrace all the wealth of Samaria. {אתנן}, atanen, is properly a gift or a present. But as

[141] {פסילים from ,{פסל} to chip or cut with a tool. They were graven or carved images, made of wood, and overlaid with gold or silver. ``The graven image,'' says Bishop Horsley, ``Was not a thing wrought in metal by the tool of the workman we should now call an engraver; nor was the molten image an image made of metal. In fact, the graven image and the molten image are the same thing under different names. The images of the ancient idolaters were first cut out of wood by the carpenter, as is very evident from the Prophet Isaiah. This figure of wood was overlaid with plates, either of gold or of silver, or, sometimes perhaps, of an inferior metal. And, in this finished state, it was called a graven image, i.e., a carved image, in reference to the inner solid figure of wood, and a molten, i.e., an overlaid or covered image, in reference to the outward metalline case or covering: and sometimes both epithets are applied to it at once, `I will cut off the graven and molten image,' Nahum 1:14.'' See also Deuteronomy 7:25; Isaiah 30:22. --- Ed.

he twice repeats it, and says, that what Samaria possessed was the reward of an harlot, and then, that it would return to the reward of an harlot, he, in the first place, I have no doubt, upbraids the Israelites, because they, after the manner of harlots and strumpets, had heaped together their great riches: and this was done by Jeroboam, who constructed a new form of worship, in order to secure his own kingdom. The Israelites then began to flourish; and we also know how wealthy that kingdom became, and how proud they were on account of their riches. As, then, the Israelites despised the kingdom of Judah, and thought themselves in every way happy, and as they ascribed all this, as we have seen in Hosea, to their superstitions, Micah speaks here according to their view of things, when he says, Idolatry has been gainful to you, this splendor dazzles your eyes; but your rewards I have already doomed to the burning: they shall then be burnt, and thus perish. Hosea also, as we have seen, made use of the same comparison, --- that the children of Israel felicitated themselves in their impiety, like a harlot, who, while she gains many presents from those who admire her beauty, seems not conscious of her turpitude and baseness: such were the Israelites. The Prophets therefore does not say, without reason, Behold, your rewards, by burning, shall perish, or, be consumed with fire. Why so? Because ye have gathered them, he says, from the reward of an harlot, and all this shall return to the reward of an harlot.

This last clause ought to be restricted to the gifts or wealth of Samaria; for it cannot properly be applied to idols or graven images. The import of the whole then is that God would be the avenger of idolatry with regard to the city of Samaria and the whole kingdom of Israel. Besides, as the Israelites boasted that their ungodly forms of worship turned out to their happiness and prosperity, God declares that the whole of this success would be evanescent, like that of the harlot, who amasses great wealth, which soon vanishes away: and we see that thus it commonly happens.

Some explain the passage thus, --- that the gifts, with which the Israelites adorned their temples, would return to be the reward of an harlot, that is, would he transferred to Chaldea, and that the Babylonians would, in their turn, adorn with them their idols. But this view is not suitable to the place; for the Prophet does not say that what Samaria had gathered would be a prey or a spoil to enemies but that it would perish by fire. [142] He speaks therefore, proverbially when he says that the produce, from the reward of an harlot, would return to be the reward of an harlot, that is, that it would become nothing; for the Lord sets a curse on such riches as strumpets gain by their baseness, while they prostitute themselves. Since, then, the whole of such wealth is under the curse of God, it must necessarily soon pass away like smoke: and this, in my view, is the real meaning of the Prophet. It now follows ---

Micah 1:8-9

8. Therefore I will wail and howl, I will go stripped and naked: I will make a wailing

[142] The view given above is the one embraced by Henderson; but the reason given here is improbable. Newcome mentions the above, and also the following, "She imputed her wealth to her spiritual idolatry, and her conquerors shall distribute it as the reward of harlots in the literal sense." But inasmuch as it is said, that her rewards would be burnt, it is more consistent to take the last clause as a proverbial expression, signifying the destruction of all the wealth that was ascribed to idolatry as its source. "It is common," says Henry, "that what is squeezed out by one lust, is squandered away by another." — Ed.

like the dragons, and mourning as the owls.

8. Super hoc plangam et ululabo; incedam spoliatus et nudus; faciam planctum tanquam draconum, et luctum tanquam filiarum struthionis: [143]

9. For her wound is incurable; for it is come unto Judah; he is come unto the gate of my people, even to Jerusalem.

9. Quia acerbae sunt plagae ejus (est mutatio numeri;) quia venit usque ad Jehudam; accessit ad portam populi mei, ad Jerusalem.

The Prophet here assumes the character of a mourner, that he might more deeply impress the Israelites; for we have seen that they were almost insensible in their torpidity. It was therefore necessary that they should be brought to view the scene itself, that, seeing their destruction before their eyes they might be touched both with grief and fear. Lamentations of this kind are everywhere to be met with in the Prophets, and they ought to be carefully noticed; for we hence gather how great was the torpor of men, inasmuch as it was necessary to awaken them, by this form of speech, in order to convince them that they had to do with God: they would have otherwise continued to flatter themselves with delusions. Though indeed the Prophet here addresses the Israelites, we ought yet to apply this to ourselves; for we are not much unlike the ancient people: for however God may terrify us with dreadful threatening, we still remain quiet in our filth. It is therefore needful that we should be severely treated, for we are almost void of feeling.

But the Prophets sometimes assumed mourning, and sometimes they were touched with real grief: for when they spoke of aliens and also of the enemies of the Church, they introduce these lamentations. When a mention is made of Babylon or of Egypt, they sometimes say, Behold, I will mourn, and my bowels shall be as a timbrel. The Prophets did not then really grieve; but, as I have said, they transferred to themselves the sorrows of others, and ever with this object, that they might persuade men that God's threatenings were not vain, and that God did not trifle with men when he declared that he was angry with them. But when the discourse was respecting the Church and the faithful, then the Prophets did not put on grief. The representation here is then to be taken in such a way as that we may understand that the Prophet was in real mourning, when he saw that a dreadful ruin was impending over the whole kingdom of Israel. For though they had perfidiously departed from the Law, they were yet a part of the holy race, they were the children of Abraham, whom God had received into favor. The Prophet, therefore, could not

[143] All the verbs in this verse are in the Septuagint in the third person, {κοψεται}---"she will mourn," etc. The whole is applied to Samaria. The Hebrew will admit of this sense, if the verbs be considered to be, as they may be, in Hiphil, the omission of the {ו} is not uncommon. Then the rendering of the two verses will be the following:--- 8. I will therefore make her to moan and howl, I will cause her to go stripped and naked; I will make her to moan like the whales, And to wail like the ostriches: 9. For grievous will be her stroke; Yea it will come even to Judah, Reaching to the gate of my people---to Jerusalem. ,{תנים} rendered ``dragons'' in our common version, and by Calvin, and by many others, is rendered ``foxes'' by Newcome, ``wolves'' by Henderson, but by Bochart, ``whales,'' or those species called ``dolphins;'' and Professor Lee, in his Notes on Job 41:1, seems to be of the same opinion. The mournful groans of the dolphins, when taken, are said to be extremely distressing; their doleful moanings, too, in the night, when at liberty, have been testified by historians. --- {בכית} ,{יענה} ``owls'' in our version, is rendered both by Calvin and Newcome, ``daughters of the ostrich,'' and by Henderson, ``ostriches.'' The Septuagint has {θυγατερων} {σειρηνων} --- ``the daughters of sea-monsters:'' {στρουθοκαμηλων} --- ``camel-sparrows --- ostriches,'' is the rendering of Aquila and Symmachus. The literal expression is, ``the daughters of the ostrich,'' meaning evidently the females. Dr. Shaw, as quoted by Newcome, says, ``During the lonesome part of the night, they often make a very doleful and hideous noise. I have often heard them groan, as if they were in the greatest of agonies; an action beautifully alluded to by the Prophet Micah.'' --- Ed.

refrain from mourning unfeignedly for them. And the Prophet does here these two things, --- he shows the fraternal love which he entertained for the children of Israel, as they were his kindred, and a part of the chosen people, --- and he also discharges his own duty; for this lamentation was, as it were, the mirror in which he sets before them the vengeance of God towards men so extremely torpid. He therefore exhibits to them this representation, that they might perceive that God was by no means trifling with men, when he thus denounced punishment on the wicked and such as were apostates.

Moreover, he speaks not of a common lamentation, but says, I will wail and howl, and then, I will go spoiled The word {אנושה}, shulal, some take as meaning one out of his mind or insane, as though he said, ``I shall be now as one not possessed of a sound mind.'' But as this metaphor is rather unnatural, I prefer the sense of being spoiled; for it was the custom with mourners, as it is well known, to tear and to throw away their garments from them. I will then go spoiled and naked; and also, I will make wailing, not like that of men, but like the wailing of dragons: I will mourn, he says, as the ostriches are wont to do. In short, the Prophet by these forms of speech intimates, that the coming evil would by no means be of an ordinary kind: for if he adopted the usual manner of men, he could not have set forth the dreadfulness of God's vengeance that was impending.

He afterwards subjoins, that the wounds vault be grievous; but he speaks as of what was present, Grievous, he says, are the wounds Grievous means properly full of grief; others render it desperate or incurable, but it is a meaning which suits not this place; for {אנושה}, anushe, means what we express in French by douloureuse. The wounds, then, are full of grief: for it came, (something is understood; it may suitably be referred to the enemy, or, what is more approved, to the slaughter) --- It came then, that is, the slaughter, [144] to Judah; it has reached to the gate of my people, even to Jerusalem itself. He says first, to Judah, speaking of the land; and then he confines it to the cities; for when the gates are closed up against enemies, they are forced to stop. But the Prophet says, that the cities would be no hindrance to the enemies to approach the very gates and even the chief city of Judah, that is, Jerusalem; and this, we know, was fulfilled. It is the same then as though he said that the whole kingdom of Israel would be so laid waste, that their enemies would not he content with victory, but would proceed farther and besiege the holy city: and this Sennacherib did. For after having subverted the kingdom of Israel, as though it was not enough to draw the ten tribes into exile, he resolved to take possession of the kingdom of Judah; and Jerusalem, as Isaiah says, was left as a tent. We hence see that the threatening of the Prophet Micah were not in vain. It now follows ---

Micah 1:10

10. Declare ye it not at Gath, weep ye not at all: in the house of Aphrah roll thyself in the dust.

[144] Or rather the stroke before mentioned; for the true reading is no doubt {,{מכתה her wound or her stroke, in the singular. Though there are but two MSS. which have this reading, yet the previous participle noun, ,{אנושה} being singular, and the following verbs or participles being in the same number, favor this supposition. The corresponding word in the Septuagint is also in the singular number --- {ἡ} {πληγη} {ἀυτης}, her stroke, stripe or scourge. --- Ed.

10. In Gath ne annuntietis, flendo ne fleatis; [145] propter domum Aphrah pulvere te involve (vel, voluta te in pulvere.)

The Prophet seems here to be inconsistent with himself: for he first describes the calamity that was to be evident to all; but now he commands silence, lest the report should reach the enemies. But there is here nothing contradictory; for the evil itself could not be hid, since the whole kingdom of Israel would be desolated, the cities demolished or burnt, the whole country spoiled and laid waste, and then the enemies would enter the borders of Judah: and when Jerusalem should have been nearly taken how could it have been concealed? No, this could not have been. There is no wonder then that the Prophet had referred here to a solemn mourning. But he now speaks of the feeling of those who were desirous of hiding their own disgrace, especially from their enemies and aliens: for it is an indignity which greatly vexes us, when enemies taunt us, and upbraid us in our misfortunes; when no hope remains, we at least wish to perish in secret, so that no reproach and disgrace should accompany our death; for dishonor is often harder to be borne, and wounds us more grievously, than any other evil. The Prophet then means that the Israelites would not only be miserable, but would also be subject to the reproaches and taunts of their enemies. We indeed know that the Philistine were inveterate in their hatred to the people of God; and we know that they ever took occasion to upbraid them with their evils and calamities.

This then is the meaning of the Prophet, when he says, In Gath declare it not, by weeping weep not; as though he said, ``Though extreme evils shall come upon you, yet seek to perish in silence; for you will find that your enemies will gape for the opportunity to cut you with their taunts, when they shall see you thus miserable. He then forbids the people's calamities to be told in Gath; for the Philistine usually desired nothing more than the opportunity to torment the people of God with reproaches.

It now follows, In the house of Aphrah, in dust roll thyself There is here an alliteration which cannot be conveyed in Latin: for {עפרה}, ophre, means dusty, and {עפר}, opher, is dust. That city attained its name from its situation, because the country where it was, was full of dust; as if a city were called Lutosa, muddy or full of clay; and indeed many think that Lutetia (Paris) had hence derived its name. And he says, Roll thyself in dust, in the house full of dust; as though he had said that the name would be now most suitable, for the ruin of the city would constrain all neighboring cities to be in mourning to cast themselves in the dust; So great would be the extremity of their evils.

But we must ever bear in mind the object of the Prophet: for he here rouses the Israelites as it were with the sharpest goads, who entertained no just idea of the dreadfulness of God's vengeance, but were ever deaf to all threatening. The Prophet then shows that the execution of this vengeance which he denounced was ready at hand; and he himself not only mourned, but called others also to mourning. He speaks of the whole country, as we shall see by what follows. I shall quickly run over the whole of this chapter; for there is no need of long explanation, as you will

[145] Henderson renders this clause, "weep not in Acco," and mentions Gesenius and others, who consider that {בכו is put here for ,{בעכו and Ocu or Acco was a town in the tribe of Asher; see Judges 1:31. The Septuagint favors this rendering, at least in one copy, for it has {εν} {ακείμ}, though in Judges the name is {Ακχω}. --- Ed.

find.

Micah 1:11

11. Pass ye away, thou inhabitant of Saphir, having thy shame naked: the inhabitant of Zaanan came not forth in the mourning of Bethezel; he shall receive of you his standing.

11. Transi pariter (ad verbum, transi vobis [146] habitatrix Saphir, nuda probrose; non egredietur habitatrix Zaanan in luctu Beth-Aezel, sumet a vobis stationem suam (alii vertunt, substantiam; sed male, meo judicio.)

The Prophet here addresses the cities which were on the borders of the kingdom of Israel, and through which the enemy would pass in entering the kingdom of Judah. He therefore bids the inhabitants of the city Saphir to pass over, and says, that the city would be ashamed or in a shameful manner naked. The word {שפיר}, shaphir, means splendid. He then says, ``Thou art now beautiful, but the Lord will discover thy shame, so that thy nakedness shall be a shame to all, and the greatest disgrace to thyself.'' There is a correspondence in the words, though not an alliteration. Hence the Prophet says, that though the city was called splendid, it would yet be deformed, so that no one would deign to look on it, at least without feeling shame. There is the same correspondence in the word Zaanan; for {צעה}, tsoe, means to transfer, as {צען}, tson, is to migrate. Hence the Prophet says, Go forth shall not the inhabitant of Zaanan for the mourning of Beth-Aezel; that is, he will remain quiet at home: this he will do contrary to what will be natural; for whence is the name of the city? even from removing, for it was a place of much traffic. But he will remain, he says, at home: though he may see his neighbors dragged into exile, he will not dare to move from his place.

He now adds, Take will the enemy from you his station. The verb {עמד}, omad, means to stand; nor is there a doubt but that when the Prophet says, He will take from you his standing, he speaks of the standing or station of the enemy: but interpreters however vary here. Some understand, that when the enemy had continued long in the land, they would not depart before they possessed the supreme power; as though he said, ``Ye will think that your enemy can be wearied out with delay and tediousness, when not able soon to conquer your cities: this, he says, will not be the case; for he will resolutely persevere, and his expectation will not disappoint him; for he will receive the reward of his station, that is, of his delay.'' But some say, He will receive his station from you. They explain the verb {לקח}, lakech, metaphorically, as meaning to receive instruction from hand to hand; as though the Prophet had said, Some, that is, your neighbors, will learn their own position from you. What does this mean? Zaanan will not go forth on account of the mourning of its neighboring city Aezel: others will afterwards follow this example. How so? For Zaanan will be, as it were, the teacher to other cities; as it will not dare to show any sign of grief for

[146] {{עברי ,{לכם} pass over or migrate, as to you. One MS. Has ,{לך} as to thee; but the anomaly of number is common through all the Prophets. ``The inhabitant'' here is a poetical noun of number, including the whole people. What usage has thus sanctioned in one language, cannot at all times be retained in another. We must in the present instance make ``Inhabitant'' in our language plural, or ,{לכם} ``as to you, or yea, you,'' singular. The latter is the best mode. Then as to the peculiar form of {לכם} or {לך} after an imperative, we have similar instances; see Genesis 12:1; Jeremiah 5:5; Hosea 7:12. It is an emphatic mode of speaking. The sentence here may be thus expressed, ``Pass thou over, yea, thou, O inhabitant of Saphir.'' Amaziah said to Amos, {ברח} ,{לך} ``Flee, yea, thou,'' etc. Or to give to {ל} its most usual meaning, we may suppose ``I say'' to be understood; then it would be, ``Flee, I say, to thee.'' --- Ed.

its neighbors, being not able to succor them; so also, when it shall be taken in its turn into exile, that is, its citizens and inhabitants, its neighbors will remain quiet, as though the condition of the miserable city was no object of their care. They shall then learn from you their standing; that is, Ye will remain quiet and still, when your neighbors will be destroyed; the same thing will afterwards happen to you. But as this bears but little on the main subjects we may take either of these views. [147] It afterwards follows ---

Micah 1:12

12. For the inhabitant of Maroth waited carefully for good: but evil came down from the LORD unto the gate of Jerusalem.

12. Quia doluit propter bonum (alii, expectavit ad bonum; alii, infirmata est) habitatrix Maroth; quia descendit malum a Jehova ad portam Jerusalem.

The Prophet joins here another city even Maroth, and others also in the following verses. But in this verse he says, that Maroth would be in sorrow for a lost good. The verb {חול}, chul, means to grieve; and it has this sense here; for the Marothites, that is, the inhabitants of that city, would have to grieve for losing their property and their former happy condition. But as the verb means also to expect, some approve of a different exposition, that is, --- that the inhabitants of the city Maroth would in vain depend on an empty and fallacious expectation, for they were doomed to utter destruction. In vain then will the inhabitant of Maroth expect or entertain hope; for an evil descends from Jehovah to the gate of the city. This view is very suitable, that is, that its hope will disappoint Maroth, since even the city of Jerusalem shall not be exempted. For though God had then by a miracle delivered the chief city, and its siege was raised through the intervention of an angel, when a dreadful slaughter, as sacred history records, took place; yet the city Maroth was not then able to escape vengeance. We now see the reason why this circumstance was added. Some give a harsher explanation, --- that the citizens of Maroth were to be debilitated, or, as it were, demented. As this metaphor is too strained, I embrace the other, --- that the citizens of Maroth would grieve for the loss of good, [148] or that they would vainly

[147] This verse is variously rendered; by Newcome thus,— Pass on, thou inhabitress of Saphir, naked and in confusion. The inhabitants of Zanan went not forth to wailing. O Beth-Ezel, he shall receive of you the reward of his station against you. By Henderson thus,— Pass on, thou inhabitant of Shaphir, naked and ashamed; The inhabitant of Zanan goeth not forth; The wailing of Beth-Ezel will take away continuance from you. It seems more consistent to take all the verbs in this and the preceding verse as imperatives, though they be not in the same person. Those in the second are evidently so; and I would render such as are in the third person as imperatives too. That Saphir, Zaanan, etc, as well as those which follow, are not appellatives, but proper names of places within or on the borders of Judah, is what is allowed by most, though not by all, especially by some of the ancient commentators, at least with regard to some of the names. I offer the following version of the tenth and eleventh verses, — 10. In Gath declare ye it not, in Acco weep not; In Beth-Ophrah, roll thyself in dust: 11. Pass thou over, yea, thou, O inhabitant of Saphir, Naked and in shame; Let not the inhabitant of Zaanan go forth wailing; Let Beth-Azel take from you its position; that is, follow your example. The last word, {,{עמדתו presents the greatest difficulty. It is found here alone in this form. It occurs as ,{עמד} a pillar, a station, ,{עמוד} a stand, stage, and as ,{מעמד} a standing, and also a state, Isaiah 22:19 Buxtorf gives the same meaning to the last with the one in the text, constitutio, constitution, a fixed order of things. The verb {עמד} signifies to stand, to stand erect, to remain the same, either in motion or at rest, to continue. Hence it may rightly signify a position, a standing, that is taken and maintained.

[148] Grieving is the idea commonly given to the verb here used. “Dolebit, will grieve,” Grotius, — “Parturit, travails,” Marckius,—”Pineth,” Henderson. Newcome, following the mere conjecture of Houbigant changes the original, and substitutes {{למות for ,{לטוב} and gives this version, --- ``is sick unto death.'' Not only is this wholly unwarranted, but it destroys the evident contrast there is in the verse --- the good and the evil. --- Ed.

expect or hope, since they were already doomed to utter ruin, without any hope of deliverance.

But we must notice, that evil was nigh at hand from Jehovah, for he reminds them, that though the whole country would be desolated by the Assyrians, yet God would be the chief leader, since he would employ the work of all those who would afflict the people of Israel. That the Jews then, as well as the Israelites might know, that they had to do, not with men only, but also with God, the celestial Judge, the Prophet distinctly expresses that all this would proceed from Jehovah. He afterwards adds ---

Micah 1:13

13. O thou inhabitant of Lachish, bind the chariot to the swift beast: she is the beginning of the sin to the daughter of Zion: for the transgressions of Israel were found in thee.

13. Alliga currum ad camelum (vel, dromedarium; alii vertunt, equos celeres) habitatrix Lachis: principium sceleris ipsa est filiae Zion; quia in te inventae sunt transgressiones Israel.

By bidding the citizens of Lachish to tie their chariots to dromedaries he intimates that it would not be not safe for them to remain in their city, and that nothing would be better for them than to flee elsewhere and to carry away their substance. ``Think,'' he says, ``of flight, and of the quickest flight.'' The word {רכש}, recash, which I render dromedary or camel, is of an uncertain meaning among the Hebrews; some render it swift horses: but we understand the Prophet's meaning; for he intimates that there would be no time for flight, except they made great haste, for the enemies would come upon them quickly.

And he then subjoins that that city had been the beginning of sin to the Jews; for though he names here the daughter of Zion, he still includes, by taking a part for it the whole, all the Jews. And why he says that Lachish had been the beginning of sin to the citizens of Jerusalem, we may collect from the next clauses, In thee, he says, were found the transgressions of Israel. The citizens of Lachish were then, no doubt, the first who had embraced the corruptions of Jeroboam, and had thus departed from the pure worship of God. When, therefore, contagion had entered that city, it crept, by degrees, into neighboring places, until at length, as we find, the whole kingdom of Judah had become corrupt: and this is what the Prophet repeats more fully in other places. It was not then without reason that he denounces desolation here on the citizens of Lachish; for they had been the authors of sin to their own kindred. However alienated the ten tribes had become from pure faith and pure worship, the kingdom of Judah remained still upright, until Lachish opened the door to ungodly superstitions; and then its superstitions spread through the whole of Judea. She therefore suffered the punishment which she deserved, when she was drawn away into distant exile, or, at least, when she could not otherwise escape from danger, than by fleeing into some fear country, and that very swiftly. She is the beginning, he says, of sin to the daughter of Zion How so? For in thee --- (it is more emphatical when the Prophet turns his discourse to Lachish itself) --- in thee, he says, were found the transgressions of Israel. It follows ---

Micah 1:14

14. Therefore shalt thou give presents to Moreshethgath: the houses of Achzib shall be a lie to the kings of Israel.

14. Propterea mittes dona super Moreseth (vel, propter Moreseth-) Gath, filiis Achzib in mendacium regibus Israel.

Here the Prophet alludes to another thing, --- that they would attempt to pacify their enemies with gifts, and would try to redeem themselves and their neighbors. But the Prophet expressly mentions this, that the event might teach them that nothing happens without a design; for it ought to work a greater conviction in blind and obstinate men, when they see that they really find that to be true which had been long before predicted. This, then, is the reason why the Prophet enumerates here various particulars; it was, that the hand of God might be more evident and conspicuous when he would begin, in an especial manner, to fulfill all the things which he now in words foretells, Thou, he says, wilt send a gift for Moreseth-gath; that is, for a neighboring city. And he calls it Moreseth-gath, to distinguish it from another city of the same name. Thou wilt then send gifts for Moreseth-gath, to the sons of Achzib for a lie {אכזיב}, aczib, is a word derived from one which means a lie. There is, therefore, a striking alliteration, when he says, Thou wilt send gifts to the sons of {אכזיב}, Aczib, for a lie, {לאכזב}, laaczeb; that is Thou wilt send gifts to the sons of a lie, for a lie. The city had obtained its name from its fallacies or guiles. And he says, for a lie to the kings of Israel; because it profited the children of Israel nothing to pacify them with gifts or to attempt to draw them to their side, as they hired the services of one another. So then he says, that they would be for a lie to the kings of Israel, for they would gain nothing by having many auxiliaries. Some take the words actively, --- that the kings of Israel had first deceived the citizens of Achzib: but this view is less probable; I am therefore disposed to adopt the other, --- that though the citizens of Lachish tried to conciliate their neighbors with a great sum of money, especially the people of Achzib, this would be yet to no purpose; for it would be a lie to the people of Israel: or, it may be, that the Prophet's meaning is this, --- that the citizens of Achzib had already wished to bring aid, but in vain to the kings of Israel; for Lachish was one of the first cities which the Assyrians conquered; but it was within the kingdom of Judah, or on its borders. It is then probable that the kings of Israel had recourse to the aid of this people, and were not assisted. Now, as the citizens of Lachish also endeavored to extricate themselves from the hand of their enemies by such aid, the prophet derides such a folly, inasmuch as they did not become wise by experience, having seen with their own eyes, that such an help had been useless and deceptive to the kings of Israel: they ought then to have tried some other means rather than to expose themselves to the same deceptions. [149] I cannot finish the chapter to-day.

Prayer.

Grant, Almighty God, that, being warned by so many examples, the record of

[149] The two lines of this verse are improperly connected, and the word "sons" is substituted for "houses," {,{בתי and there are no various readings, and the Septuagint has ``houses.'' The literal rendering is this, --- Therefore thou wilt send presents to Moresheth-gath: The houses of Achzib will be a lie (i.e., false) to the kings of Israel. Henderson, after Cocceius, gives a different meaning to ``presents,'' ;{שלוחים} and he renders it ``divorce,'' and says that it signifies letters of repudiation, and that it is to be taken here metaphorically for the breaking up of connection. The word only occurs in two other places, that is, in Exodus 18:2, and in 1 Kings 9:16; and in neither does it mean what is alleged. --- Ed.

which thou hast designed to continue to the end of the world, that we may learn how dreadful a judge thou art to the perverse, --- O grant, that we may not, at this day, be deaf to thy teaching, which is conveyed to us by the mouth of thy Prophet, but that we may strive to be so reconciled to thee, that, passing by all men, we may present ourselves unreservedly to thee, so that, relying on thy mercy alone which thou hast promised to us in Christ, we may not doubt but thou wilt be propitious to us, and be so touched with the spirit of true penitence, that, if we have been to others a bad example and an offense, we may lead others to the right way of salvation, and each of us may so endeavor to assist our neighbors in a holy life, that we may together attain that blessed and celestial life, which thine only-begotten Son has procured for us by his own blood. Amen.

Lecture Eighty-third

Micah 1:15

15. Yet will I bring an heir unto thee, O inhabitant of Mareshah: he shall come unto Adullam the glory of Israel.

15. Adhuc possessorem mittam, [150] tibi habitatrix Maresah; usque ad Adullam veniet gloria Israel.

The Prophet here threatens his own birth place, as he had done other cities; for, as we have stated, he sprung from this city. He does not now spare his own kindred: for as God is no respecter of persons, so also God's servants ought, as with closed eyes, to deal impartially with all, so as not to be turned here and there either by favor or by hatred, but to follows without any change, whatever the Lord commands them. We see that Micah was endued with this spirit, for he reproved his own kindred, as he had hitherto reproved others.

There is a peculiar meaning in the word, Mareshah, for it is derived from {ירש}, iresh, and it means possession. The Prophet now says, I will send to thee {הורש}, euresh, a possessor; the word is from the same root. [151] But he means that the Morasthites would come into the power of their enemies no less than their neighbors, of whom he had spoken before. He says, to Adullam This was also a city in the tribe of Judah, as it is well known. But some would have ``enemy'' to be here understood and they put {כבוד}, cabud, in the genitive case: The enemy of the glory of Israel shall come to Adullam; but this is strained. Others understand the passage thus that the glory of Israel would come to disgrace; for Adullam, we know, was a cave. Since then it an obscure place, the Prophet here, as they think, declares that the whole glory of Israel would be covered with dishonor, because the dignity and wealth, in which they gloried would lose their pristine fixate, so that they would differ nothing from an ignoble cave. If any approve of this meaning, I will not oppose them. Yet others think that the Prophet speaks ironically and that the Assyrian is thus called because the whole glory and dignity of Israel would by him be taken away. But there is no need of confining this to enemies; we may then take a simpler view, and yet regard

[150] {,אבי{ there is {א} left out, which is supplied in several MSS. It ought to be {אביא} which means, I will bring, rather than, I will send.

[151] The instances of paranomasia or alliteration in this passage, including this line and the five preceding verses, are unparalleled in any other parts of the Prophets; and when there is no coincidence of sound in the words, there is sometimes a direct contrast in the ideas, as good and evil in verse12. — Ed.

the expression as ironical, --- that the glory, that is, the disgrace or the devastation of Israel, would come to Adullam. But what if we read it, in apposition, He shall come to Adullam, the glory of Israel? For Adullam was not obscure, as those interpreters imagine, whom I have mentioned, but it is named among the most celebrated cities after the return and restoration of the people. When, therefore, the whole country was laid waste, this city, with a few others, remained, as we read in the Nehemiah 11. It might then be, that the Prophet called Adullam the glory of Israel; for it was situated in a safe place, and the inhabitants thought that they were fortified by a strong defense, and thus were not open to the violence of enemies. This meaning also may be probable; but still, as the glory of Israel may be taken ironically for calamity or reproach if any one approves more of this interpretation, it may be followed. I am, however, inclined to another, --- that the Prophet say, that the enemy would come to Adullam, which was the glory of Israel, [152] because that city was as it were in the recesses of Judea, so that an access to it by enemies was difficult. It may be also that some may think, that the recollection of its ancient history is here revived; for David concealed himself in its cave, and had it as his fortress. The place no doubt had, from that time, attained some fame; then this celebrity, as I have said, may be alluded to, when Adullam is said to be the glory of Israel. It follows ---

Micah 1:16

16. Make thee bald, and poll thee for thy delicate children; enlarge thy baldness as the eagle; for they are gone into captivity from thee.

16. Decalvare et tondeas te super filiis delitiarum tuarum; dilata calvitium sicut aquila, quoniam migrarunt abs te.

The Prophet at length concludes that nothing remained for the people but lamentation; for the Lord had resolved to desolate and destroy the whole country. Now they were wont in mourning, as we have seen in other places, to shave and even tear off their hair: and some think that the verb {קרחי}, korechi, implies as much as though the Prophet said ``Pluck, tear, pull off your hair.'' When afterwards he adds {רגזי}, regizi, they refer it to shavings which is done by a razor. However this may be, the Prophet here means that the condition of the people would be so calamitous that nothing would be seen anywhere but mourning.

Make bald, he says, for the children of thy delicacies [153] The Prophet here indirectly upbraids those perverse men, who after so many warnings had not repented, with the neglect of God's forbearance: for whence did those delicacies proceed, except from the extreme kindness of God in long sparing the Israelites, notwithstanding their disobedience? The Prophet then shows here that they had very long abused the patience of God, while they each immersed themselves in their delicacies. Now, he says, Enlarge thy baldness as the eagle Eagles are wont to cast off their feathers;

[152] Of all the various renderings of this clause, this is the most satisfactory, which is that of our own version. The substitution of "honor" for "glory," on the mere authority of the Targum, as is done by Newcome, is wholly indefensible. {Εως} {Οδαλαμ} {ἥξει} {την} {δοξην} {Ισραηλ}, Symmachus. At the same time, the most obvious and natural construction of the clause is the following, though its meaning is obscure; To Adullam shall come the glory of Israel. --- Ed.

[153] Or, "children of thy indulgences or luxuries," i.e., luxurious children, rather than "darling children," as rendered by Henderson. The Septuagint has {τα} {τεκνα} {τα} {τρυφερα} {σου} ---"thy voluptuous children.'' The version of Newcome is, ``thy delicate children.'' What seems to be intended is, their indulgence in pleasures and luxuries. --- Ed.

and hence he compares here bald men to eagles, as though he called them, Hairless. As then the eagles are for a certain time without feathers until they recover them; so also you shall be hairless, even on account of your mourning. He says, For they have migrated from thee He intimates that the Israelites would become exiles, that the land might remain desolate. Now follows ---

Chapter 2

Micah 2

Micah 2:1

1. Woe to them that devise iniquity, and work evil upon their beds! when the morning is light, they practice it, because it is in the power of their hand.

1. Vae cogitantibus iniquitatem et fabricantibus malitiam super cubilibus suis! Quum illuxerit mane, exequentur eam, quia est ad potentiam manus ipsorum.

The Prophet does not here speak only against the Israelites, as some think, who have incorrectly confined this part of his teaching to the ten tribes; but he, on the contrary, (in discharging his office, addresses also the Jews. He refers not here to idolatry, as in the last chapter; but inveighs against sins condemned in the second table. As then the Jews had not only polluted the worship of God, but also gave loose reins to many iniquities, so that they dealt wrongfully with their neighbors, and there was among them no attention to justice and equity, so the prophet inveighs here as we shall see, against avarice, robberies, and cruelty: and his discourse is full of vehemence; for there was no doubt such licentiousness then prevailing among the people, that there was need of severe and sharp reproofs. It is at the same time easy to perceive that his discourse is mainly directed against the chief men, who exercised authority, and turned it to wrong purposes.

Woe, he says, to those who meditate on iniquity, and devise [154] evil on their beds, that, when the morning shines, they may execute it Here the Prophet describes to the life the character and manners of those who were given to gain, and were intent only on raising themselves. He says, that in their beds they were meditating on iniquity, and devising wickedness. Doubtless the time of night has been given to

[154] Literally, work; but {פעל means to work not only with the hands, but also with the mind; and hence, to contrive, to devise, to machinate. Henderson has ``fabricate,'' while Newcome, less suitably, retains the word, ``work.'' Marckius justly observes, that the working here is not external but internal, the framing, the setting in order, the preparation of evil in the mind. The Prophet points out here that source from which outward evils proceed. What numberless schemes, both good and evil, are concocted and arranged by men on their beds! ``They set their wits on work to invent ways of accomplishing their desire. They devise iniquity with a great deal of cursed art and policy; they plot how to do it effectually, and yet so as not to expose themselves. This is called working evil; they are working it in their heads.'' --- Henry.

men entirely for rest; but they ought also to use this kindness of God for the purpose of restraining themselves from what is wicked: for he who refreshes his strength by nightly rest, ought to think within himself, that it is an unbecoming thing and even monstrous, that he should in the meantime devise frauds, and guiles, and iniquities. For why does the Lord intend that we should rest, except that all evil things should rest also? Hence the Prophet shows here, by implication, that those who are intent on devising frauds, while they ought to rest, subvert as it were the course of nature; for they have no regard for that rest, which has been granted to men for this end, --- that they may not trouble and annoy one another.

He afterwards shows how great was their desire to do mischief, When it shines in the morning, he says, they execute it He might have said only, They do in the daytime what they contrive in the night: but he says, In the morning; as though he had said, that they were so heated by avarice, that they rested not a moment; as soon as it shone, they were immediately ready to perpetrate the frauds they had thought of in the night. We now then apprehend the import of the Prophet's meaning.

He now subjoins, For according to their power is their hand As {אל}, al, means God, an old interpreter has given this rendering, Against God is their hand: but this does not suit the passage. Others have explained it thus, For strength is in their hand: and almost all those well-skilled in Hebrew agree in this explanation. Those who had power, they think, are here pointed out by the Prophet, --- that as they had strength, they dared to do whatever they pleased. But the Hebrew phrase is not translated by them; and I greatly wonder that they have mistaken in a thing so clear: for it is not, There is power in their hand; but their hand is to power. The same mode of speaking is found in Proverbs 3, and there also many interpreters are wrong; for Solomon there forbids us to withhold from our neighbor his right, When thine hand, he says, is for power; some say, When there is power to help the miserable. But Solomon means no such thing; for he on the contrary means this, When thine hand is ready to execute any evil, abstain. So also the Lord says in Deuteronomy 28,

``When the enemy shall take away thy spoils,
thy hand will not be for power;''

that is, ``Thou wilt not dare to move a finger to restrain thy enemies; when they will plunder thee and rob thee of thy substance, thou wilt stand in dread, for thy hand will be as though it were dead.'' I come now to the present passage, Their hand is for power: [155] the Prophet means, that they dared to try what they could, and that therefore their hand was always ready; whenever there was hope of lucre or gains the hand was immediately prepared. How so? Because they were restrained neither by the fear of God nor by any regard for justice; but their hand was for power, that is, what they could, they dared to do. We now then see what the Prophet means as far as I can judge. He afterwards adds ---

Micah 2:2

[155] The original is, {{כי {לאל}-{יש} {ידם} Marckius after having referred to Calvin's version, says, that he prefers that of Junius and Tremelius which is as follows: ``Quum est in potestate manus ipsoram --- When it is in the power of their hand,'' {כי} is taken as an adverb of time. The phrase is found in four other places, --- Genesis 31:29; Deuteronomy 28:32; Nehemiah 5:5; and Proverbs 3:27. So that to render {אל} here ``God,'' as it is done by the Septuagint, Theodoret, and Jerome, and some others, must be wrong. {כי} is rendered ``because'' both by Newcome and Henderson, but not so suitably as to the sense. --- Ed.

2. And they covet fields, and take them by violence; and houses, and take them away: so they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage.

2. Et concupiverunt agros et rapiunt; et domos, et auferunt; et vexant virum et domum ejus, virum et haereditatem ejus.

Micah confirms here what is contained in the former verse; for he sets forth the alacrity with which the avaricious were led to commit plunder; nay, how unbridled was their cupidity to do evil. As soon as they have coveted any thing, he says, they take it by force. And hence we gather, that the Prophet, in the last verse, connected wicked counsels with the attempt of effecting them; as though he had said, that they indeed carefully contrived their frauds, but that as they were skillful in their contrivances, so they were not less bold and daring in executing then.

The same thing he now repeats in other words for a further confirmation, As soon as they have coveted fields, they seize them by force; as soon as they have coveted houses they take them away; they oppress a man and his house together; [156] that is, nothing escaped them: for as their wickedness in frauds was great, so their disposition to attempt whatever they wished was furious. And well would it be were there no such cruel avarice at this day; but it exists every where, so that we may see, as in a mirror, an example of what is here said. But it behaves us carefully to consider how greatly displeasing to God are frauds and plunders, so that each of us may keep himself from doing any wrong, and be so ruled by a desire of what is right, that every one of us may act in good faith towards his neighbors, seek nothing that is unjust, and bridle his own desires: and whenever Satan attempts to allure us, let what is here taught be to us as a bridle to restrain us. It follows ---

Micah 2:3

3. Therefore thus saith the Lord; Behold, against this family do I devise an evil, from which ye shall not remove your necks; neither shall ye go haughtily: for this time is evil.

3. Propterea sic dicit Jehova, Ecce ego cogitans super familiam hanc malum, quod non submovebitis ab illo (sic est ab verbum; a quo submovebitis) colla vestra, et non ambulabitis in altitudine; quia tempus malum hoc.

The Prophet shows now that the avaricious were in vain elevated by their frauds and rapacity, because their hope would be disappointed; for God in heaven was waiting his time to appear against them. Though they had anxiously heaped together much wealth, yet God would justly dissipate it altogether. This is what he now declares.

Behold, he says, thus saith Jehovah, I am meditating evil against this family [157] There is here a striking contrast between God and the Jews, between their wicked

[156] This verse presents an instance of parallelism not uncommon, in which the first and the last line correspond, and the second and the third; as will be seen in the following version: — And they covet fields and forcibly seize them, And houses, and they take them away; Yea, they oppress the young man and his house, And the old man and his inheritance. There must be some distinction between {,{גבר which I render, ``the young man,'' and ,{אישׁ} rendered above, ``the old man.'' The first means, robust, strong; and the second is a common term for man, but sometimes signifies a husband, and also a man in years. We may, indeed in harmony with the passage, consider the first as meaning a householder, and the latter as signifying a husbandman. The fields in the first line are the same with the inheritance in the last: and houses and a house are mentioned in the two intervening lines. --- Ed.

[157] The word {,{משׁפחה family, no doubt designates the people of Israel, so called, either for their descent from the same father, or for their adoption by God as his people, designed to live in subjection to him as a family to its head. --- Ed.

intentions and the intentions of God, which in themselves were not evil, and yet would bring evil on them. God, he says, thus speaks, Behold, I am purposing; as though he said, ``While ye are thus busying yourselves on your beds, while ye are revolving many designs while ye are contriving many artifices, ye think me to be asleep, ye think that I am all the while meditating nothing; nay, I have my thoughts too, and those different from yours; for while ye are awake to devise wickedness I am awake to contrive judgment.'' We now then perceive the import of these words: it is God that declares that he meditates evil, and it is not the Prophet that speaks to these avaricious and rapacious men; and the evil is that of punishment, inasmuch as it is the peculiar office of God to repay to all what they deserve, and to render to each the measure of evil they have brought on others.

Ye shall not, he says, remove your necks from under it. Since hypocrites always promise to themselves impunity, and lay hold on subterfuges, whenever God threatens them, the Prophet here affirms, that though they sought every escape, they would yet be held bound by God's hand, so that they could not by any means shake off the burden designed for them. And this was a reward most fully deserved by those who had withdrawn their necks when God called them to obedience. They then who refuse to obey God, when he requires from them a voluntary service, will at length be drawn by force, not to undergo the yoke, but the burden which will altogether overwhelm them. Whosoever then will not willingly submit to God's yoke, must at length undergo the great and dreadful burden prepared for the unnamable.

Ye will not then be able to withdraw your necks, and ye shall not walk in your height. He expresses still more clearly what I have referred to, --- that they were so elated with pride, that they despised all threatening and all instruction: and this presumption became the cause of perverseness; for were it not that a notion of security deceived men, they would presently bend, when God threatens them. This then is the reason why the Prophet joins this sentence, ye shall no more walk in your height; that is, your haughtiness shall then surely be made to succumb; for it will be a time of evil He means, as I have said, that those who retain a stir and unbending neck towards God, when he would lay on them his yoke, shall at length be made by force to yield, however rebellious they may be. How so? For they shall be broken down, inasmuch as they will not be corrected. The Prophet then adds ---

Micah 2:4

4. In that day shall one take up a parable against you, and lament with a doleful lamentation, and say, We be utterly spoiled: he hath changed the portion of my people: how hath he removed it from me! turning away he hath divided our fields.

4. In die illo tollent super eos parabolam, et lugebunt (sunt quidem verba singularis numeri, {ישא} et {נהה}; caeterum indefinita est locutio; nam qui subau diunt conductios homines, quibus solebat injungi haec provincia, ut lugubres cantus conciperent ad cladem aliquam, nescio an assecuti sint mentem Prophetae: tamen hoc relinquo in medio, quia alibi vidimus fuisse tunc cantores in luctu, quemadmodum etiam alibi erunt Praeficae, hoc est, mulieres lamentatrices; caeterum malo indefinite accipere; Tollent igitur super vos parabolam et lugebunt) luctu lamentabili (vel, lamento lamenti,) dicendo, Vastando vastati sumus; partem populi mei mutavit;

quomodo tollent a nobis ad restituendum? Agros nostros dividet.

The verse is in broken sentences; and hence interpreters vary. But the meaning of the Prophet appears to me to be simply this, In that day they shall take up a proverb against you; that is, it will not be an ordinary calamity, but the report concerning it will go forth every where so that the Jews will become to all a common proverb. This is one thing. As to the word {משל}, meshil, it is taken, we know, for a weighty saying, and in the plural, weighty sayings, called by the Latins, sentences (sententias) or sayings, (dicta,) and by the Greeks, apophthegmata. {αποφθεγματα}, But these sayings were thus called weighty by the Hebrews, because he who elevated his style, made use especially of figurative expressions, to render his discourse nobler and more splendid. [158] Hence many render this word, enigmas. It accords well with the Prophet's meaning, to suppose, that proverbial sayings would spread every where respecting the Jews, especially as calamities were usually described in a plaintive song. They shall then mourn over you with lamentable mourning. But this ought to be referred to the fact, --- that the calamity would be every where known. It yet seems that this sentence is applied afterwards to the Jews themselves, and not unsuitably. But it is an indefinite mode of speaking, since the Prophet speaks not of one or two men, but of the whole people.

They shall then mourn in this manner, Wasted, we have been wasted: the portion of my people has he changed --- (it is the future instead of the past) --- He has then changed the portion of my people This may be applied to God as well as to the Assyrians; for God was the principal author of this calamity; he it was who changed the portion of the people: for as by his blessing he had long cherished that people, so afterwards he changed their lot. But as the Assyrians were the ministers of God's vengeance, the expression cannot be unsuitably applied to them. The Assyrian then has taken away the portion of my people And then he says, How has he made to depart, or has taken away, or removed from me, (literally, to me,) to restore, --- though {שבב}, shibeb, may be from the root {שוב}, shub, it yet means the same, --- How then has he taken away from us to restore our fields he divides, that is, which he has divided; for the relative {אשר}, asher, is understood and there is also a change of time. Now as the discourse, as I have said, is in broken sentences, there are various interpretations. I however think that the Prophet simply means this --- How as to restoring has he taken away our fields, which he hath divided? that is, How far off are we from restitution? for every hope is far removed, since the Lord himself has divided among strangers our land and possession; or since the enemies have divided it among themselves; for it is usual after victory, for every one to seize on his own portion. Whether then this be understood of the Assyrians, or rather be referred to God, the meaning of the Prophet seems clearly to be this, --- that the Jews were not only expelled from their country but that every hope of return was also taken away, since the enemies had parted among themselves their inheritance,

[158] Very similar is the description of {משל} by Lowth in his Praelections; he describes it as that style which is sententius, figurative, and sublime --- Sententiosum, figuratum, et sublime docendi genus He says also that the word means often a saying, anaxiom, a short sentence compactly formed --- est quoevis sententia sive axioma scite graviterque dictum, paucis concinnatum, et ad {γνωμων} firmam compositum, 1 Samuel 24:14, Prael. 4. And this is evidently its meaning here, --- a common saying, everywhere known. --- Ed.

so that they who had been driven out, now in vain thought of a restitution. [159] But I read this in the present time; for the Prophet introduces here the Jews as uttering this lamentation, --- ``It is now all over with us, and there is no remedy for this evil; for not only are we stripped of all our property and ejected from our country, but what has been taken away by our enemies cannot be restored to us, inasmuch as they have already parted our possessions among themselves, and every one occupies his own portion and his own place, as though it were his own inheritance. We have therefore to do, not only with the Assyrians in general, but also with every individual; for what every one now occupies and possesses he will defend, as his rightful and hereditary possession.''

Some conjecture from this verse, that the discourse belongs rather to the Israelites, who were banished without any hope of return; but no necessity constrains us to explain this of the Israelites; for the Prophet does not declare here what God would do, but what would be the calamity when considered in itself. We have indeed said already in many places, that the Prophets, while threatening, speak only of calamities, desolations, deaths, and destructions, but that they afterwards add promises for consolation. But their teaching is discriminative: when the Prophets intend to terrify hypocrites and perverse men, they set forth the wrath of God only, and leave no hope; but when they would inspire with hope those who are by this means humbled, they draw forth comfort to them even from the goodness of God. What is here said then may fitly and really be applied to the Jews. It follows ---

Micah 2:5

5. Therefore thou shalt have none that shall cast a cord by lot in the congregation of the LORD.

5. Itaque non erit tibi projiciens funiculum ad sortem in coetu Jehovae.

Here the Prophet concludes his discourse respecting God's design to cleanse Judea from its perverse and wicked inhabitants, that it might no longer be the inheritance of one people. For the land, we know, had been given to the posterity of Abraham, on the condition, that it was to be held by them as an heritage: and we also know, that a line was determined by lot whenever the year of Jubilee returned, that every one might regain his own possession. The Prophet now testifies that this advantage would be taken away from the Jews, and that they would hereafter possess the land by no hereditary right; for God, who had given it, would now take it

[159] Most commentators agree as to the general meaning of this verse, which is clearly stated here: but their versions differ. Newcome, following the Septuagint, renders the verbs in the first and second lines in a passive sense, but Henderson gives them an active meaning, supplying "one" as the nominative case, i.e., the person, who utters the lamentation afterwards mentioned. The two last lines are the most difficult. Marckius has this version, — Quomodo subtraxit mihi! Avertenti agros nostros distribuit! That of Junius and Tremelius is essentially the same, only the verbs are put in the present tense. Newcome's rendering is this, — How hath he withdrawn it form me! To an apostate he hath divided our fields! To call the king of Babylon an apostate, seems incongruous, as it cannot be applied to any one but who has turned away from true religion. The most obvious and literal rendering is that given by Marckius, with the exception of the tense. I offer the following version of the whole verse, with no alteration in the text, except the supplying of a {ו before {אמר} which is found in several MSS., --- In that day shall be taken up concerning you a proverb, And lament a lamentation will the oppressed, And say will the desolate, --- ``We are destroyed, The portion of my people he changes; How he takes away from me! To the alienator of my fields he divides them! It is a proverb, a common saying, and a lament, that would be uttered, as the Prophet foretells, at the time of the expulsion of the people from the land, when it would be taken possession of by their enemies. --- Ed.

away.

There shall not then be one to cast a line by lot in the assembly of Jehovah. And he seems here to touch the Jews, by calling them the assembly of Jehovah. He indeed adopted them, they were the people of God: but he intimates that they were repudiated, because they had rendered themselves unworthy of his favor. He therefore, by calling them ironically the assembly of Jehovah, denies that they rightly retained this name, inasmuch as they had deprived themselves of this honor and dignity. It now follows ---

Micah 2:6

6. Prophesy ye not, say they to them that prophesy: they shall not prophesy to them, that they shall not take shame.

6. Ne stilletis; stillabunt; non stillabunt illis (hoc est, super eos;) non apprehendet ignominias (sic est ad verbum.)

Here the conciseness of the expressions has made interpreters to differ in their views. Some read thus, Distill ye not, --- they will distill; that is, the Jews speak against the prophets, and with threats forbid them, as with authority, to address them. The Hebrew word, distill, means the same as to speak; though at the same time it is applied more commonly to weighty addresses than to such as are common and ordinary. If any understands, they will distill, or speak, of the Jews, then the Prophet points out their arrogance in daring to contend with God's prophets, and in trying to silence and force them to submission. We indeed find that ungodly men act thus, when they wish to take away the liberty of teaching from God's prophets; for they resist as though they themselves were doubly and treble prophets. So also in this place, Distill ye not, that is, the Jews say, Let not the servants of God prophesy. But some think that a relative is understood, Distill ye not for them who distill; as though he had said, that ungodly men would not bear God's prophets and thus would prevent and restrain them, as much as they could, from speaking. Others make this distinction, Distill ye not, --- they shall distill; as though the Jews said the first, and God the second. Distill ye not, --- this was the voice of the ungodly and rebellious people, who would cast away from them and reject every instruction: but God on the other side opposed them and said, Nay, they shall distill; ye forbid, but it is not in your power; I have sent them: though ye may rage and glamour a hundred times, it is my will that they should proceed in their course.

We hence see how various are the explanations: and even in the other part of the verse there is no more agreement between interpreters: They shall not distill; respecting this clause, it is sufficiently evident, that God here intimates that there would be now an end to all prophecies. How so? Because he would not render his servants a sport, and subject them to reproach. This is the true meaning: and yet some take another view, as though the Prophet continued his sentence, They shall not distill, lest the people should receive reproaches; for the ungodly think, that if they close the mouths of the prophets, all things would be lawful to them, and that their crimes would be hid, in short, that their vices would not be called to an account; as though their wickedness was not in itself sufficiently reproachful, were God to send no prophets, and no reproof given. No doubt, profane men are so stupid

as to think themselves free from every reproach, when God is silent, and when they put away from themselves every instruction. Hence some think, that this passage is to be understood in this sense. But I consider the meaning to be that which I have stated; for he had before said, Distill ye not who distill; that is, Ye prophets, be no longer troublesome to us; why do you stem our ears? We can no longer bear your boldness; be then silent. Thus he expressly introduced the Jews as speaking with authority, as though it was in their power to restrain the prophets from doing their duty. Now follows, as I think, the answer of God, They shall not distill, that he may not get reproaches: Since I see that my doctrine is intolerable to you, since I find a loathing so great and so shameful, I will take away my prophets from you: I will therefore rest, and be hereafter silent. --- Why? ``Because I effect nothing; nay, I subject my prophets to reproaches; for they lose their labor in speaking, they pour forth words which produce no fruit; for ye are altogether irreclaimable. Nay, as they are reproachfully treated by you, their condition is worse than if they were covered with all the disgrace of having been criminal. Since then I subject my prophets to reproach I will not allow them to be thus mocked by you. They shall therefore give over, they shall prophesy no longer. [160]''

But the Lord could not have threatened the Jews with any thing worse or more dreadful than with this immunity, --- that they should no more hear anything which might disturb them: for it is an extreme curse, when God gives us loose reins, and suffers us, with unbridled liberty, to rush as it were headlong into evils, as though he had delivered us up to Satan to be his slaves. Since it is so, let us be assured that it is an awful threatening, when he says, They shall not distill, lest they should hereafter become objects of reproach.

Prayer.

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou art pleased to try our patience by requiring mutual justice and the offices of love and benevolence, --- O grant, that we may not be wolves one to another, but show ourselves to be really thy children, by observing

[160] Newcome, apparently on the authority of the Septuagint, joins a part of the last verse to this, and gives this rendering,— In the congregation of Jehovah prophesy not, O ye that prophesy: They shall not prophesy to these: For he shall remove from himself reproaches. The last line he applies to the true prophet, that he would not subject himself to disgrace by exercising his office. Henderson's version is the following: — Prophesy not; those shall prophesy Who will not prophesy of these things: Reproaches are incessant. This is viewed as being altogether the language of the people, interdicting the true prophets, specifying those whom they approved, and deprecating the reproaches cast upon them by the true prophets. Another version, which is materially adopted by Calvin, is admitted by our Author as not unsuitable, but he prefers the one given above. The main objection is to the last line, which in the original is this, — {לא {יג {כלמות} The last word is plural, and means reproaches; and the verb {יסג} is in the third person of the future tense, and may be derived either from ,{סוג} to recede, to depart, or from ,{נסג} to remove, both in a transitive and intransitive sense. Having an objective case, it cannot be the first verb, and must be the second in its transitive meaning. Then the rendering is, He will not, or let him not, or let none remove reproaches. This being the literal rendering of this sentence, we must now consider what version of the former part will correspond best with it. It is that no doubt adopted by Calvin, though the last clause cannot admit of the meaning he attaches to it. The people say, ``Prophesy ye not who prophesy;'' God answers, ``They shall not prophesy to these;'' and then the Prophet adds, speaking of God, ``He will not remove reproaches;'' that is, he will not remove them by his prophets with the view of amending their reproachful conduct. The last clause is evidently viewed as an anomalous construction by Henderson; for he renders it as though the plural noun were the nominative case to the verb in the singular number, and this because the latter precedes the former. There may be instances of this in Hebrew, but it is by no means a common usage; though it be so in the Welsh language, which in so many of its peculiarities is very much like Hebrew. This sort of construction is the ordinary one in that language: a plural noun has commonly a verb in the singular number, when placed before it. This sentence in Welsh would be exactly the same as in Hebrew---Nid ymadawa gwaradwyddiadau The noun in the plural number is the nominative case to the preceding verb, which is in the singular number, and the verb too is in the future tense, and is yet understood as having the meaning of the present tense. --- Ed.

all those duties of justice and kindness which thou commandest, and thus follow what is right and just through the whole course of our life, that we may at length enjoy that blessedness which is laid up for us in heaven, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lecture Eighty-fourth

Micah 2:7

7. O thou that art named the house of Jacob, is the spirit of the Lord straitened? are these his doings? do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly?

7. Qui diceris domus Jacob, an reductus est in angustias Spiritus Jehova? (alii vertunt, an imminutus est Spiritus Jehovae; {קצר} significat coarctare, significat etiam imminuere apud Hebraeos; sed melius quadrat sensus ille quem reddidi.) An haec sunt opera ejus? Annon verba mea bona sunt cum eo (hoc est, apud cum) qui rectus ambulat?

The Prophet now reproves the Israelites with greater severity, because they attempted to impose a law on God and on his prophets and would not endure the free course of instruction. He told us in the last verse, that the Israelites were inflated with so much presumption, that they wished to make terms with God: ``Let him not prophesy'' they said, as though it were in the power of man to rule God: and the Prophet now repeats, Is the Spirit of Jehovah straitened? as though he said, Ye see the intent of your presumption, and how far it proceeds; for ye wish to subject God's Spirit to yourselves and to your own pleasure. The prophets doubtless did not speak of themselves, but by the bidding and command of God. Since then the prophets were the organs of the Holy Spirit, whosoever attempted to silence them, usurped to himself an authority over God himself, and in a manner tried to make captive his Spirit: for what power can belong to the Spirit, except he be at liberty to reprove the vices of men, and condemn whatever is opposed to God's justice? When this is taken away, there is no more any jurisdiction left to the Holy Spirit. We now then see what the Prophet means in this place: he shows how mad a presumption it was in the Israelites to attempt to impose silence on the prophets, as though they had a right to rule the Spirit of God, and to force him to submission.

Is the Spirit of Jehovah straitened? And this mode of speaking ought to be noticed, for it possesses no ordinary emphasis; inasmuch as the Prophets by this reproof; recalls the attention of these perverse men to the author of his teaching; as though he had said, that the wrong was not done to men, that war was not carried on with them, when instruction is prohibited, but that God is robbed of his own rights and that his liberty is taken away, so that he is not allowed to execute his judgment in the world by the power of his Spirit.

And farther, the Prophet here ironically reproves the Israelites, when he says, O thou who art called the house of Jacob, is the Spirit of Jehovah reduced to straits? For if heathens, who have never known the teaching of religion, and to whom no heavenly mysteries have been revealed, had said, that they would have nothing to do with the prophets, it would have been much more endurable; for what wonder would it be for ignorant men to repudiate all instruction? But it was monstrous for the Israelites, who gloried in the name of God, to dare to rise up so rebelliously against

the prophets: they always boasted of their own race, as though they surpassed all the rest of the world, and were a holy nations separated from all others. Hence the Prophet says, ``Ye wish to be called the house of Jacob; what is your excellency and dignity, except that you have been chosen by God to be his peculiar people? If then you have been habituated to the teaching of God, what fury and madness it is, that you cannot bear his prophets, but wish to close their mouths?'' We now then see the point of this irony, when the Prophet says that they were called the house of Jacob He seems at the same time to intimate, in an indirect way, that they were a spurious race. As they were called by other prophets, Amorites and Sodomites: even so in this place the Prophet says, ``Ye are indeed the house of Jacob, but it is only as to the name.'' They were in reality so degenerated, that they falsely pretended the name of the holy patriarch; yea, they falsely and mendaciously boasted of their descent from holy men, though they were nothing else but as it were rotten members. Inasmuch then as they had so departed from the religion of Abraham and of other fathers, the Prophet says, ``Thou art indeed called what thou art not.''

He afterwards adds, Are these his works? Here he brings the Israelites to the proof, as though he said, How comes it, that the prophets are so troublesome and grievous to you, except that they sharply reprove you, and denounce on you the judgment of God? But God is in a manner forced, except he was to change his nature, to treat you thus sharply and severely. Ye boast that you are his people, but how do you live? Are these his works? that is, do you lead a life, and form your conduct according to the law laid down by him? But as your life does not in any degree correspond with what God requires, it is no wonder that the prophets handle you so roughly. For God remains the same, ever like himself; but ye are perfidious, and have wholly repudiated the covenant he has made with you. Then this asperity, of which ye are wont to complain, ought not to be deemed unjust to you.

He then subjoins, Are not my words good to him who walks uprightly? Here the Prophet more distinctly shows, why he had before asked, Whether their works were those of the Lord; for he compares their life with the doctrine, which on account of its severity displeased them; they said that the words of the prophets were too rigid. God here answers, that his words were gentle and kind, and therefore pleasant, that is, to the pious and good; and that hence the fault was in them, when he treated them less kindly than they wished. The import of the whole then is, that the word of God, as it brings life and salvation to man, is in its own nature gracious, and cannot be either bitter, or hard, or grievous to the pious and the good, for God unfolds in it the riches of his goodness.

We hence see that God here repudiates the impious calumny that was cast on his word; as though he had said, that the complaints which prevailed among the people were false; for they transferred the blame of their own wickedness to the word of God. They said that God was too severe: but God here declares that he was gentle and kind, and that the character of his word was the same, provided men were tractable, and did not, through their perverseness, extort from him anything else than what he of himself wished. And the same thing David means in Psalm 18, when he says that God is perverse with the perverse: for in that passage he intimates, that he

had experienced the greatest goodness from God, inasmuch as he had rendered himself docile and obedient to him. On the contrary, he says, God is perverse with the perverse; that is, when he sees men obstinately resisting and hardening their necks, he then puts on as it were a new character, and deals perversely with them, that is, severely, as their stubbornness deserves; as for a hard knot, according to a common proverb, a hard wedge is necessary. We now then perceive the meaning of this passage, that God's words are good to those who walk uprightly; that is they breathe the sweetest odour, and bring nothing else but true and real joy: for when can there be complete happiness, except when God embraces us in the bosom of his love? But the testimony respecting this love is brought to us by his word. The fault then is in us, and ought to be imputed to us, if the word of God is not delightful to us.

Some expound this whole passage differently, as though the Prophet relates here what was usually at that time the boast of the Israelites. They hence think that it is a narrative in which he represents their sentiments; (narrationem esse mimiticam;) as though the Prophet introduced here the ungodly and the rebellious animating one another in their contempt of God's word, O thou who art called the house of Jacob, is the Spirit of Jehovah straitened? Hypocrites, we know, are so blind and intoxicated by a false confidence, that they hesitate not heedlessly to abuse all the favors of God. As then God had conferred a great excellency on his people, they thus emboldened one another, --- ``Are we not the children and posterity of Abraham? What will it avail us to be a holy and chosen race, and the peculiar people of God, and a royal priesthood, if we are to be thus unkindly treated? We find that these prophets shamefully reprove us: where is our dignity, except we show that we have more privileges than other nations?'' These interpreters therefore think the meaning to be this, --- that they make a show of their own privileges, that they might with more liberty reject every instruction, and shake off every yoke. And when it is said, Is the Spirit of God diminished? these interpreters regard this as meaning, that they were satisfied with the solemn promise of God, and that as they were a holy race, they now superciliously despised all the prophets, --- ``Is the Spirit of God dead, who was formerly the interpreter of the everlasting covenant, which God made with us? Has he not testified that we should be to him a holy and elect people? Why then do ye now attempt to reduce to nothing this sacred declaration of the Holy Spirit, which is inviolable?'' It is then added, Are these his works? ``Ye talk of nothing but of threats and destruction; ye denounce on us numberless calamities: but God is beneficent and kind in his nature, patient and merciful; and ye represent him to us as a tyrant; but this view is wholly inconsistent with the nature of God.'' And, in the last place, God subjoins, as these interpreters think, an exception, --- ``All these are indeed true, if faithfulness exists among you, and the authority of my word continues; for my words are good, but not to all without any difference: be upright and sincere, and ye shall find me dealing kindly, gently, tenderly, and pleasantly with you: then my rigor will cease, which now through my word so much offends and exasperates you.''

This meaning may in some measure be admitted; but as it is hard to be under-

stood, we ought to retain the former, it being more easy and flowing. There is nothing strained in the view, that the Prophet derides the foolish arrogance of the people, who thought that they were sheltered by this privilege, that they were the holy seed of Abraham. The Prophet answers that this titular superiority did not deprive God of his right, and prevent him to exercise his power by the Spirit. ``O thou then who art called the house of Jacob; but only as far as the title goes: the Spirit of God is not reduced to straits. But if thou boastest thyself to be the peculiar people of God, are these thy works the works of God? Does thy life correspond with what he requires? There is no wonder then that God chastises you so severely by his word, for there is not in you the spirit of docility, which allows the exercise of his kindness.'' [161]

But though the Prophet here upbraids the ancient people with ingratitude, yet this truth is especially useful to us, which God declares, when he says that his word is good and sweet to all the godly. Let us then learn to become submissive to God, and then he will convey to us by his word nothing but sweetness, nothing but delights; we shall then find nothing more desirable than to be fed by this spiritual food; and it will ever be a real joy to us, whenever the Lord will open his mouth to teach us. But when at any time the word of the Lord goads and wounds, and thus exasperates us, let us know that it is through our own fault. It follows ---

Micah 2:8

8. Even of late my people is risen up as an enemy: ye pull off the robe with the garment from them that pass by securely as men averse from war.

8. Et qui antehac populus meus, quasi in hostem surrexit ex adverso; vestem decoris (alii vertunt, pallium et tunicam; sed nulla est copula, et {אדר} significat decorem, ideo possumus vertere vestem decoris) praedati estis a transeuntibus cum fiducia, perinde ac si reverterentur a praelio.

As the words of the Prophet are concise, they contain some obscurity. Hence interpreters differ. First, as to the word {אתמיל}, atmul, some think it to be one word, others divide it into {את}, at and {מול}, mul, which means, over against, opposite; and they regard it of the same import with {ממול}, which immediately follows. But as the repetition would be frigid, the Prophet no doubt intended that it should be taken here in its proper sense, and its meaning is yesterday. But this time is not strictly taken by the Hebrews, for they take yesterday as meaning the past time, even when many years have elapsed. I have therefore rendered it formerly, which suits this place. There is also another difference as to the sense of the text, for some think that this {אתמול}, atmul, is to be joined to the verb {קומם}, kumum; but it is rather to be connected with the word {עמי}, omi, My people formerly There is another diversity, that is, as to the term {אויב}, avib, for some apply it to God, and others to the people; that they rose up or stood one against another. For this verb is

[161] Newcome, adopting {,{האמר as found in four MSS., renders the first part of the verse as the language of the people, though not in the sense of those referred to by Calvin. His version is as follows: --- Doth the house of Israel [Jacob] say, ``Is the Spirit of Jehovah straightened? Are these his doings?'' ``Straightened,'' i.e., confined to a few, such as Micah. And by ``doings,'' he means the judgments before announced. Henderson regards the ``doings,'' or, as he renders them, ``operations,'' in the same light, though he views the words as spoken by the Prophet, and renders the first line thus, --- What language, O house of Jacob! The first word, ,{האמור} as it is in our text, is viewed by Henderson, as well as by Marckius, as a passive participle, signifying what is said or spoken, and the {ה} prefixed is considered as a note of exclamation. But the objection made to our common version is not valid, that {אמר} in Niphael, when it means being called or named, has uniformly an {ל} after it, for we have an instance to the contrary in Jeremiah 7:32, {עוד} {התפת} ,{יאמר}-{ולא} ``and it shall no more be called Tophet.'' --- Ed.

explained in two ways: some view it as a verb neuter, They stand against the enemy; and others render it, They rise up against the enemy; and this second meaning is most approved, and harmonizes best with the context.

I will now refer to what I consider to be the real meaning. The Prophet, in the first place, says, that the people were formerly under the power and government of God, but that now they were become wholly alienated from him. Formerly, then, it was my people, as though God now renounced all friendship with them. ``I have hitherto owned you as my people, but hereafter I shall have nothing to do with you, for the whole authority of my word is by you entirely abolished; ye have violated your faith: in short, as you have destroyed my covenant, ye have ceased to be my people; for whatever favor I have conferred on you, you have deprived yourselves of it by your wickedness; and though I have adopted you, yet your wickedness now strips you of this privilege.'' This is one thing.

It then follows, They have risen up as against an enemy. I consider a note of likeness to be here understood. The Prophet says simply, Against an enemy have they risen up; but I regard the meaning to be, that they had risen up as against an enemy; that is that they had made God, their best father, their enemy, inasmuch as they had by their crimes provoked his displeasure. [162] He then confirms this truth by saying, that they practiced robberies among themselves. We indeed know that hypocrites ever hide themselves under their religious rites, and spread them forth as their shield whenever they are reproved. Hence the Prophet says, that they were not to be deemed the people of God for spending their labors on sacrifices, for they were at the same time robbers, and plundered innocent men.

The garment of comeliness, he says, or, the garment and the cloak, (about such words I do not labor much,) they take away from those who pass by securely; [163] that is from all who are peaceable. For when there is a suspicion of war, or when a traveler does any mischief, he rightly deserves to be punished. But the Prophet says here, that they were robbed, who passed by securely as though they were in a safe country. ``When travelers fear nothing, ye strip them of their garments, as though they were returning from war: as they are wont, when war is over, to seize on spoils wherever found, and no one can keep his own; so now, during peace, ye take to yourselves the same liberty, as though all things were exposed to plunder, and ye were in a hostile country, lately the scene of warfare.''

We now then perceive the meaning of the Prophet. He first intimates that the people were now rejected by God, for they had rendered themselves, by their most abandoned life, wholly unworthy of his benefits; and at the same time he reproves their ingratitude that having been the people of God, they choose to make war with

[162] Newcome gives the same meaning to this part of the line, though another to the former part,— But of old my people hath risen up as an enemy. Henderson's version is the same. The word rendered "of old" means "yesterday," and expresses often past time indefinitely. It is once rendered "of old," Isaiah 30:33; but in other places, "heretofore," "in times past;" but "formerly," or "of late," would be the most suitable expression in this passage. — Ed.

[163] The literal rendering of these two lines may be given thus:— From off the garment the mantle ye shall strip From those who pass by securely, returning from war. Or the last words, {{שובי ,מלחמה} ``averters of war,'' may designate people of a peaceable disposition, and ``war'' may be taken for strife or contention; then the rendering would be, ``who turn away from contention.'' Newcome, on the authority of one MS., which has ,{שבי} gives this version, ``captives of war,'' which seems unsuitable to this passage. Marckius renders the phrase thus, aversi belli, seu, a bello, ``turning away from war,'' or, ``shy of war.'' This view evidently comports best with the context. --- Ed.

him rather than to observe the covenant which he had made for their safety; for it was a most shameful wickedness in them, since they had been chosen from the whole world to be a peculiar people, to prefer going to war with God rather than to live quietly under his protection. And that they did rise up against God he proves, for they gave themselves up to robberies; they plundered, even during times of peace, which circumstance greatly aggravated their wickedness. It now follows ---

Micah 2:9

9. The women of my people have ye cast out from their pleasant houses; from their children have ye taken away my glory for ever.

9. Mulieres populi mei expulistis e domo delectationum ipsarum, (est quidem mutatio numeri, sed hoc nihil ad rem;) a parvulis earum abstulistis decus (vel, ornamentum) meum perpetuo.

He proceeds with the same subject, that they refrained from no acts of injustice. It was indeed a proof of extreme barbarity not to spare women and children, for they are both weak and helpless. Their sex exempts women from violence, and their age, children. [164] Even in wars, women, and also children, escape in safety. We hence see that the Prophet, by stating a part for the whole, proves here that the people had addicted themselves to cruelty really barbarous; they were not restrained from exercising it, no, not even on women and children. Since it was so, it follows, that their boast of being the chosen people was vain and fallacious.

House of delights he ascribes to the women who, being the weaker sex, prefer being at home and in the shade, rather than going abroad. The more necessary it was that their recesses should remain safe to them. Now, what was taken away from the children, God calls it his ornament; for his blessing, poured forth on children, is the mirror of his glory: he therefore condemns this plunder as a sacrilege. The word {לעולם}, laoulam, designates the continuance of their crimes, as though he had said, that they were cruel without ever showing any repentance. Now it follows ---

Micah 2:10

10. Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest: because it is polluted, it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction.

10. Surgite, abite, quia non est haec requies; quoniam polluta est; dissipavit dissipatione violenta (interponitur copula, et dissipatione; ideo poterimus commode vertere, dissipavit et quidem dissipatione violenta, (vel, roborata; id enim significat verbum {נמרץ}.)

Here again the Prophet checks the foolish confidence of the people. The land of Canaan, we know, had been honored by God with the distinction of being a rest; yea God called it, not only the rest of the people, but also his own rest,

`I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest,'
(Psalm 95:11.)

[164] This verse presents several anomalies. We have “women” and the verbs in the plural, and then “house,” “her delights,” and “her children.” It may be thus rendered, — The women of my people ye drive away, Each from the house of her delights; From off her children ye take away my ornament forever. The word rendered in our version “flory,” is {,הדר which means ornament, beauty. Piscator says, pulchras vestes quas Deus illis donavit --- ``the beautiful garments which God gave them.'' God claimed the land of Canaan and all its blessings as his own. They took these away without restoring them according to the law. Henderson justly observes, that ``ornament'' is to be taken ``collectively for the ornamental clothes which they wore, and with which they had been provided by Jehovah.'' --- Ed.

The land of Canaan then was a sort of rest, hidden under the wings of God; for the Lord had assigned it as an inheritance to his chosen people. As God then dwelt in that land, and had also given it to the children of Abraham, that they might rest there in safety, and as this was also one of the blessings contained in the Law, hypocrites said, pursuing their usual course of falsely and groundlessly claiming to themselves the favors of God, that they could not be thence expelled, and that those Prophets were falsifiers who dared to change any thing in God's covenant. This is the reason why the Prophet now says,

Arise, depart; this is not your rest. ``False confidence,'' he says, ``deceives you, as ye think that ye are inseparably fixed in your habitation. God indeed has made such a promise, but this condition was added, --- If ye will stand faithful to his covenant. Now ye are become covenant-breakers: ye think that he is fast bound to you; all the cords are loosened; for as ye have perfidiously departed from the Law of God, there is now no reason for you to think that he is under any obligation to you. There is then no ground for you to boast of being a holy people; you have indeed the name, but the reality has ceased to be: therefore arise and depart: but to sit still securely and proudly will avail you nothing, for God will now drive you afar off: and I now declare to you that you must arise and depart, for ye cannot rest in this land against the will of God: and God will now thrust you out of it.'' We now perceive the real meaning of the Prophet.

He afterwards adds, For it is polluted; he will scatter you with violent scattering [165] Here again he vindicates God from their calumny and ungodly murmurings. We indeed know how difficult it was to bring down that people, who were steeped in so great a perverseness. And we find that the Prophet had a hard contest with the hypocrites, for the multitude had ever this language in their mouths, --- What! is it of no moment that God has favored us with so many and so remarkable promises? Is our adoption nothing but a mockery? Has he in vain given us this land by an hereditary right? Since then hypocrites thus brought forward their privileges in opposition to God, and yet abused them, it was necessary to convince them to the contrary, and this is what the Prophet does here, --- ``Ye call,'' he says, ``this land your rest, but how do you rest in it? God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath, for he dwells among you to sanctify you: but ye live disorderly, and carry on war with God himself: have not your pollutions obliterated that holy rest, which has been enjoined on you by God? Ye then see that this change has happened through your fault, that is, that God has ceased to call this land, as he was wont formerly to do, your and his own rest. It is not then your rest; he will therefore scatter you with violent or strong scattering: Ye in vain promise to yourselves rest in this land, since ye carry on war with God, and cease not to provoke his wrath against you.'' It follows ---

[165] The original is {{נמרף} ,{וחבל} תחבל which, according to Parkhurst, is, ``It is bound;'' that is, bound over to punishment, ``and the bond is grievous;'' or, as it may be rendered, strong; which is only found in Niphal in two other places, 1 Kings 2:8; Job 6:25. In the first it is rendered, grievous, --- ``a grievous crime,'' and in the second, forcible, --- ``How forcible are the right words!'' But most others attach the idea of corruption and destruction to :{חבל} and Newcome takes the verb here in a passive sense, and gives this rendering of the distich, --- ``Because it is polluted, it shall be destroyed, And the destruction shall be great.'' Some render the verb actively, ``It,'' i.e. the land, ``shall destroy you,'' a reference being made, as it is thought, to what is said in Leviticus 18:25. The version of Marckius is this, --- ``Quando quidem impuritas corrumpet, Et corruptio acris.'' --- Seeing that impurity will destroy it, And a violent destruction. The previous word {טמאה} is here taken as a noun. But the most literal, and the most satisfactory, is the rendering of Newcome. --- Ed.

Micah 2:11

11. If a man walking in the spirit and falsehood do lie, saying, I will prophesy unto thee of wine and of strong drink; he shall even be the prophet of this people.

11. Si vir ambulans in spiritu et fallaciter mantiens, stillem tibi pro vino et pro sicera, tunc erit stillans populi hujus (hoc est, hic demum erit Propheta populi hujus: sicut etiam priore membro proprie vertendum est, si prophetem.)

The Prophet points out here another vice by which the people were infected --- that they wished to be soothed with flatteries: for all the ungodly think that they are in a manner exempt from God's judgment, when they hear no reproof; yea they think themselves happy, when they get flatterers, who are indulgent to their vices. This is now the disease which the Prophet discovers as prevailing among the people. Jerome sought out a meaning quite different here, as in the former verses; but I will not stop to refute him, for it is enough to give the real meaning of the Prophet. But as before he rendered women, princes, and thus perverted entirely the meaning, so he says here, I would I were a vain Prophet, that is, walking in vanity, and mendacious; as though Micah said ``I wish I were false in denouncing on you the calamities of which I speak; for I would rather announce to you something joyful and favorable: but I cannot do this, for the Lord commands what is different.'' But there is nothing of this kind in the words of the Prophet. Let us then return to the text.

If a man walks in the spirit, and deceitfully lies, [166] etc. Almost all interpreters agree in this, --- that to walk in the spirit, is to announce any thing proudly and presumptuously; and they take spirit for wind or for deceits. But I doubt not, but that to walk in the spirit was then a common mode of speaking, to set forth the exercise of the prophetic office. When therefore any one was a Prophet, or one who discharged that office, or sustained the character of a teacher, he professed himself to have been sent from above. The Prophets were indeed formerly called the men of the spirit, and for this reason, because they adduced nothing from themselves or from their own heads; but only delivered faithfully, as from hand to hand, what they had received from God. To walk in the spirit then means, in my view, the same thing as to profess the office of a teacher. When therefore any one professed the office of a teacher, what was he to do? ``If I,'' says Micah, ``being endued with the Spirit, and called to teach, wished to ingratiate myself with you, and preached that there would be an abundant increase of wine and strong drink, all would applaud me; for if any one promises these things, he becomes the prophet of this people.''

In short, Micah intimates that the Israelites rejected all sound doctrine, for they sought nothing but flatteries, and wished to be cherished in their vices; yea, they desired to be deceived by false adulation to their own ruin. It hence appears that they were not the people they wished to be deemed, that is, the people of God: for the first condition in God's covenant was, --- that he should rule among his people.

[166] Perhaps a more literal rendering would be thus,— If a man, the follower of the spirit and of deception, Speaks falsely, "I will prophesy to thee of wine and of strong drink," He then becomes the prophet of this people. To walk after, or to follow, "the wind," as some render {,רוח seems by no means proper. The phrase means the same as ``the man of the spirit'' in Hosea 9:7 Newcome changes the whole form of the passage, though not the meaning, except in one instance. Guided by the Syriac version, Houbigant and the Septuagint, without the sanction of any MS., he gives this version, --- If a man, walking in the spirit of falsehood and lies, Prophesy unto thee for wine and for strong drink, He shall be the prophet of this people. He puts ``for wine,'' etc., and not ``of wine:'' but the latter rendering is much more suitable to the context. --- Ed.

Inasmuch then as these men would not endure to be governed by Divine power, and wished to have full and unbridled liberty, it was the same as though they had banished God far from them. Hence, by this proof, the Prophet shows that they had wholly departed from God, and had no intercourse with him. If there be then any man walking in the spirit, let him, he says, keep far from the truth; for he will not otherwise be borne by this people. --- How so? Because they will not have honest and faithful teachers. What is then to be done? Let flatterers come, and promise them plenty of wine and strong drink, and they will be their best teachers, and be received with great applause: in short, the suitable teachers of that people were the ungodly; the people could no longer bear the true Prophets; their desire was to have flatterers who were indulgent to all their corruptions.

Prayer.

Grant, Almighty God, that since we cannot otherwise really profit by thy word, than by having all our thoughts and affections subjected to thee, and offered to thee as a sacrifice, --- O grant, that we maysuffer thee, by the sound of thy word, so to pierce through everything within us, that being dead in ourselves, we may live to thee, and never suffer flatteries to become our ruin but that we may, on the contrary, patiently endure reproofs, however bitter they may be, only let them serve to us as medicine, by which our inward vices may be cleansed, until at length being thoroughly cleansed and formed into new creatures, we may, by a pious and holy life, really glorify thy name, and be received into that celestial glory, which has been purchased for us by the blood of thy only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Lecture Eighty-fifth

Micah 2:12-13

12. I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee; I will surely gather the remnant of Israel; I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah, as the flock in the midst of their fold: they shall make great noise by reason of the multitude of men.

12. Congregans congregabo te totum Jacob; colligens colligam residuum Israel; simul ponam eum tanquam oves Bosra, tanquam gregem in medio ovilis sui; tumultuabuntur prae hominibus (id est, propter hominum multitudinem.)

13. The breaker is come up before them: they have broken up, and have passed through the gate, and are gone out by it: and their king shall pass before them, and the LORD on the head of them.

13. Ascendet effractor coram ipsis; frangent et transibunt portam, et egredientur per ipsam; et transibit rex ipsorum coram ipsis; et Jehova in capite ipsorum.

The exposition of this passage is twofold. The greater part of interpreters incline to this view, --- that God here promises some alleviation to the Israelites, after having sharply reproved them, and threatened them with utter ruin. They therefore apply this passage to the kingdom of Christ, as though God gave hope of a future restoration. But when I narrowly weigh every thing, I am, on the contrary, forced to regard these two verses as a commination, that is, that the Prophet here denounces God's future vengeance on the people. As, however, the former opinion is almost universally received, I will briefly mention what has been adduced in its favor, and then I shall return to state the other meaning, which I prefer.

It is suitable to the kingdom of Christ to say, that a people who had been dispersed should be gathered under one head. We indeed know how miserable a dispersion there is in the world without him, and that whenever the Prophets speak of the renovation of the Church, they commonly make use of this form of expression, that is, that the Lord will gather the dispersed and unite them together under one head. If then the passage be referred to the kingdom of Christ, it is altogether proper to say, that God by gathering will gather the whole of Jacob. But a restriction is afterwards added, that no one may extend this restoration to the whole race of Abraham, or to all those who, according to the flesh, derived their descent from Abraham as their father: hence the word {שארית}, sharit, is laid down. Then the whole of Jacob is not that multitude, which, according to the flesh, traced their origin from the holy Patriarchs, but only their residue. It then follows, I will set them together as the sheep of Bozrah, that is, I will make them to increase into a large, yea, into an immense number; for they shall make a tumult, that is, a great noise will be made by them, as though the place could not contain so large a number. And they explain the next verse thus, --- A breaker shall go before them, that is, there shall be those who, with a hand, strong and armed, will make a way open for them; inasmuch as Christ says that the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, (Matthew 11:12) they then mean that the people will have courageous leaders, whom nothing will stop from breaking through, and that they will also lead the whole people with them. They shall therefore go forth through the gate, and their king shall pass through. This also well agrees with the kingdom of Christ. For whenever God declares that he will be propitious to his Church, he at the same time adds, that he will give a king to his people; for their safety had been placed in that kingdom, which had been erected by the authority and command of God himself. It is therefore a common thing, and what occurs everywhere in the Prophets, that God would give a king from the seed of David to his people, when it would be his will to favor them with complete happiness. Thus they understand that a king shall pass on before them, which is the office of a leader, to show them the way. And Jehovah shall be at their head; that is, God himself will show himself to be the chief king of his people, and will ever defend by his help and grace those whom he adopts as his people.

But I have already said that I more approve of another. exposition: for I see not how the Prophet could pass so suddenly into a different strain. He had said in the last verse that the people could endure no admonitions, for they only desired flatteries and adulation. He now joins what I have lately referred to respecting the near judgment of God, and proceeds, as we shall see, in the same strain to the end of the third chapter: but we know that the chapters were not divided by the Prophets themselves. We have therefore a discourse continued by the Prophet to the third chapter; not that he spoke all these things in one day; but he wished to collect together what he had said of the vices of the people; and this will be more evident as we proceed. I will now come to the words.

Gathering, I will gather thee, the whole of Jacob; collecting, I will collect the remnant of Israel. God has two modes of gathering; for he sometimes gathers his people from dispersion, which is a singular proof of his favor and love. But he is said also

to gather, when he assembles them together to devote and give them up to destruction, as we say in French, Trousser; and this verb is taken elsewhere in the same sense, and we have already met with an instance in Hosea. So, in the present passage, God declares that there would be a gathering of the people, --- for what purpose? Not that being united together they might enjoy the blessings of God, but that they might be destroyed. As then the people had united together in all kinds of wickedness, so God now declares, that they should be gathered together, that the one and the same destruction might be to them all. And he adds, the remnant of Israel; as though he said, ``Whatever shall remain from slaughters in wars and from all other calamities, such as famine and pestilence, this I will collect, that it may be wholly destroyed.'' He mentions the remnant, because the Israelites had been worn out by many evils, before the Lord stretched forth his hand at last to destroy them.

He afterwards subjoins, I will set them together as the sheep of Bozrah; that is, I will cast them into one heap. Bozrah was a city or a country of Idumea; and it was a very fruitful place, and had the richest pastures: hence Isaiah 34, in denouncing vengeance on the Idumeans, alludes at the same time to their pastures, and says, ``God will choose for himself fat lambs and whatever is well fed, and will also collect fatness, for the Lord has a sacrifice in Bozrah.'' So also, in this place, the Prophet says, that the Jews, when collected together as it were into a bundle, shall be like the sheep of Bozrah. And he further adds, as the sheep in the middle of the sheepfolds, though some render it, leading: {דבר}, daber, sometimes means to lead; but I see no reason why it should be drawn so far from its meaning in this connection. I take it as signifying a sheepfold, because sheep are there collected together. Some interpreters consider that a siege is referred to here, that is, that God would confine the whole people within cities, that they might not be open to the incursions of enemies; but I extend the meaning much wider, namely, that God would gather the people, in order at last to disperse them. I will then gather them, as I have already said, Je vous trousserai; as the sheep of Bozrah in the middle of the sheep fold; and there shall be a noise on account of their number; that is, ``Though ye now glory in your number, this will avail you nothing; for I shall be able to reduce you all to strait, so that you may, as ye deserve, perish together.''

It follows, Ascend shall a breaker before them; that is, they shall be led in confusion; and the gate shall also be broken, that they may go forth together; for the passage would not be large enough, were they, as is usually done, to go forth in regular order; but the gates of cities shall be broken, that they may pass through in great numbers and in confusion. By these words the Prophet intimates, that all would be quickly taken away into exile. And they shall go forth, he says through the gate, and their king shall pass on before if them The Prophet means here, that the king would be made captive; and this was the saddest spectacle: for some hope remained, when the dregs of the people had been led into Chaldea; but when the king himself was led away a captive, and cast into prison, and his eyes pulled out, and his children slain, it was the greatest of misery. They were wont to take pride in their king, for they thought that their kingdom could not but continue perpetually, since God had so promised. But God might for a time overturn that kingdom, that

he might afterwards raise it anew, according to what has been done by Christ, and according to what had been also predicted by the Prophets. ``Crosswise, crosswise, crosswise, (transversa) let the crown be, until its lawful possessor comes.'' We then see that this, which the Prophet mentions respecting their king, has been added for the sake of amplifying.

He afterwards adds, Jehovah shall be at the head of them; that is, He will be nigh them, to oppress and wholly to overwhelm them. Some consider something to be understood, and of this kind, that Jehovah was wont formerly to rule over them, but that now he would cease to do so: but this is too strained; and the meaning which I have stated seems sufficiently clear, and that is, --- that God himself would be the doer, when they should be driven into exile, and that he would add courage to tyrants and their attendants, in pursuing the accursed people, in order to urge on more and more and aggravate their calamities and thus to show that their destruction vault happen through his righteous judgment. We now then understand the real meaning of the Prophet. [167] Now follows ---

Chapter 3

[167] Calvin is not singular in his view of this passage. Scott takes the same view, while Henry regards the passage as containing a promise, and so do Marckius, Newcome, and Henderson. But some have considered the words as those of the false prophets, referred to in the eleventh verse, and that Micah answers them in the next chapter. There is no sufficient ground for this opinion. Of those who regard the passage as including a promise, some apply it to the restoration from the Babylonian captivity, and others to spiritual restoration by the gospel. But the passage, viewed by itself, and in its connection with the next chapter, bears evidently the appearance of a commination: there are especially two words which manifestly favor this view, — {{תהימנה and ;{הפרץ} both are taken generally, if not uniformly, in a bad sense. The first means to tumultuate, to be turbulent and riotous, to be clamorous and noisy; the second signifies to demolish, to break through, to destroy, and in every instance in which it is found as a personal noun, it means a destroyer or a robber. --- See Psalm 17:4; Ezekiel 18:10; Daniel 11:14. The first is a verb in the second person plural of the future tense, and in the feminine gender, because of the comparison made in the former lines to sheep and a flock. The verbs in the 12th verse are all in the future tense, and the two first in the 13th are in the past, according to what is common in prophecies, but must be rendered as futures. I propose the following version of the passage, --- 12. Gathering, I will gather Jacob, the whole of thee; Assembling, I will assemble the residue of Israel; Together will I set them as the sheep of Bozrah, As a flock in the midst of its fold; --- Ye shall be more noisy than men. 13. Ascend shall the breaker in the sight of them, --- they shall break through, And pass the gate, yea, they shall go forth through it, And pass shall their king before them, And Jehovah shall be at their head, or, for their leader. --- Ed.

Micah 3

Micah 3:1-3

1. And I said, Hear, I pray you, O heads of Jacob, and ye princes of the house of Israel; Is it not for you to know judgment?

1. Et dixi, Audite quaeso principes Jacob et gubernatores domus Israel; annon vestrum est (vel, ad vos spectat) scire judicium?

2. Who hate the good, and love the evil; who pluck off their skin from off them, and their flesh from off their bones;

2. Atqui oderunt bonum et dilligunt malum, rapiunt pellem ab ipsis, et carnem ab ossibus eorum;

3. Who also eat the flesh of my people, and flay their skin from off them; and they break their bones, and chop them in pieces, as for the pot, and as flesh within the caldron.

3. Et tunc vorant carnem populi mei, et pellem ipsorum ab ipsis excoriant; et ossa eorum frangunt, et comminuunt; sicuti ad ollam (vel, ac si destinata essent ollae,) et carnem eorum in medio aheni.

The Prophet in this chapter assails and severely reproves the chief men as well as the teachers; for both were given to avarice and cruelty, to plunder, and, in short, to all other vices. And he begins with the magistrates, who exercised authority among the people; and briefly relates the words in which he inveighed against them. We have said elsewhere, that the Prophets did not record all that they had spoken, but only touched shortly on the heads or chief points: and this was done by Micah, that we might know what he did for forty or more years, in which he executed his office. He could have related, no doubt, in half-an-hour, all that exists of his writings: but from this small book, however small it is, we may learn what was the Prophet's manner of teaching, and on what things he chiefly dwelt. I will now return to his words.

He says that the chief men of the kingdom had been reproved by him. It is prob-

able, that these words were addressed to the Jews; for though at the beginning he includes the Israelites, we yet know that he was given as a teacher to the Jews, and not to the kingdom of Israel. It was as it were accidental, that he sometimes introduces the ten tribes together with the Jews. This address then was made, as I think, to the king as well as to his counselors and other judges, who then ruled over the people of Judah.

Hear this, I pray, he says. Such a preface betokens carelessness in the judges; for why does he demand a hearing from them, except that they had become so torpid in their vices, that they would attend to nothing? Inasmuch then as so brutal a stupor had seized on them, he says, Hear now ye chiefs, or heads, of Jacob, and ye rulers [168] of the house of Israel But why does he still speak of the house of Israel? Because that name was especially known and celebrated, whenever a mention was made of the posterity of Abraham: and the other Prophets, even while speaking of the kingdom of Judah, often make use of this title, ``ye who are called by the name of Israel;'' and they did this, on account of the dignity of the holy Patriarch; and the meaning of the word itself was no ordinary testimonial of excellency as to his whole race. And this is what is frequently done by Isaiah. But the name of Israel is not put here, as elsewhere, as a title of distinction: on the contrary, the Prophet here amplifies their sin, because they were so corrupt, though they were the chief men among the chosen race, being those whom God had honored with so much dignity, as to set them over his Church and elect people. It was then an ingratitude, not to be endured to abuse that high and sacred authority, which had been conferred on them by God.

Does it not belong to you, he says, to know judgment? Here he intimates that rectitude ought to have a place among the chief men, in a manner more especial than among the common people; for it behoves them to excel others in the knowledge of what is just and right: for though the difference between good and evil be engraven on the hearts of all, yet they, who hold supremacy among the people, and excel in power, are as it were the eyes of the community; as the eyes direct the whole body, so also they, who are placed in any situation of honor, are thus made eminent, that they may show the right way to others. Hence by the word, to know, the Prophet intimates that they wickedly subverted the whole order of nature, for they were blind, while they ought to have been the luminaries of the whole people. Is it not for you, he says, to know judgment and equity? But why was this said, especially to the chief men? Because they, though they of themselves knew what was right, having the law engraven within ought yet as leaders to have possessed superior knowledge, so as to outshine others. It is therefore your duty to know judgment. We hence learn that it is not enough for princes and magistrates to be well disposed and upright; but it is required of them to know judgment and wisdom that they may discern matters above the common people. But if they are not thus endued with the gift of understanding and wisdom let them ask of the Lord. We indeed know, that without the Spirit of God, the acutest men are wholly unfit to rule; nor is it in vain, that the free Spirit of God

[168] {,{קצינים from ,{קצה} to cut off to sever, to separate: they were those who were separated from others, as leaders of an army, rendered in our version, captains, rulers, Joshua 10:24; Isaiah 22:3. --- Ed.

is set forth, as holding the supreme power in the world; for we are thus reminded, that even they who are endued with the chief gifts are wholly incapable of governing except the Spirit of God be with them. This passage then shows that an upright mind is not a sufficient qualification in princes; they must also excel in wisdom, that they may be, as we have already said, as the eyes are to the body. In this sense it is that Micah now says that it belonged to the leaders of the people to know judgment and justice. [169]

He afterwards subjoins, But they hate good, and love evil, and pull off the skin [170] from my people, the flesh from their bones; that is, they leave nothing, he says, sound and safe, their rapacity being so furious. The Prophet conveys first a general reproof, --- that they not only perverted justice, but were also given to wickedness and hated good. He means then that they were openly wicked and ungodly, and also that they with a fixed purpose carried on war against every thing just and right. We hence learn how great and how abominable was the corruption of the people, when they were still the peculiar possession and heritage of God. Inasmuch then as the state of this ancient people had become so degenerated, let us learn to walk in solicitude and fear, while the Lord governs us by pious magistrates and faithful pastors: for what happened to the Jews might soon happen to us, so that wolves might bear rule over us, as indeed experience has proved even in this our city. The Prophet afterwards adds the kinds of cruelty which prevailed; of which he speaks in hyperbolical terms, though no doubt he sets before our eyes the state of things as it was. He compares the judges to wolves or to lions, or to other savage beasts. He says not that they sought the property of the people, or pillaged their houses; but he says that they devoured their flesh even to the very bones; he says that they pulled off their skin: and this he confirms in the next verse.

They devour, he says, the flesh of my people, and their skin they strip off from them, and their bones they break in pieces and make small, as that which into the pot is thrown, and which is in the midst of the caldron [171] For when any one throws meat into the pot, he does not take the whole ox, but cuts it into pieces, and having broken it, he then fills with these pieces his pot or his caldron. The Prophet then enhances the cruelty of the princes; they were not content with one kind of oppression, but exercised every species of barbarous cruelty towards the people, and were in every

[169] Some, such as Marckius, and also Grotius, take another view of this sentence: Is it not for you, who judge and punish others, to know the judgment of God, which awaits you? But most agree in the view given here. — Ed.

[170] Their skin, literally. The antecedent (which is not unusual in Hebrew) is mentioned afterwards: it is the word, people, which follows. The idea of sheep or flock, to which the people are compared in the last chapter, is still retained here. Adam Clarke quotes from Suetonius a striking answer of Tiberius, the Emperor, to some governors, who solicited him to increase the taxes, — "It is the property of a good shepherd to shear his sheep, not to skin them" — Boni pastoris esse tondere pectus, non deglubere To "hate good, and to love evil," in the former sentence, betokens a character dreadful in the extreme; for good here, {{טוב means kindness, benevolence, the doing of good to others; this they hated: and evil, ,{רעה means wrong, mischief, injury, the doing of harm, of wrong, and of injustice to others; and this they loved. How transmuted they were in their spirit into that of very fiends! ``They hate to do good, hate to have any good done, and hate those that are good; and they love the evil, delight in mischief, and in those that do mischief.'' These words of Henry, no doubt, convey a correct view of the sentence. It might therefore be rendered, ``Haters of benevolence, and lovers of mischief.'' --- Ed.

[171] "Under the similitude of butchers the Prophet sets forth their savage cruelty: 1. They take off the skin; 2. They eat the flesh; 3. They break the bones, to pick out the marrow. The insatiable avarice of the princes is described." — Cocceius.

respect like bears, or wolves, or lions, or some other savage beasts, and that they were also like gluttons. We now then perceive the Prophet's meaning.

Now this passage teaches us what God requires mainly from those in power, --- that they abstain from doing injustice: for as they are armed with power, so they ought to be a law to themselves. They assume authority over others; let them then begin with themselves, and restrain themselves from doing evil. For when a private man is disposed to do harm, he is restrained at least by fear of the laws, and dares not to do any thing at his pleasure; but in princes there is a greater boldness; and they are able to do greater injustice: and this is the reason why they ought to observe more forbearance and humanity. Hence levity and paternal kindness especially become princes and those in power. But the Prophet here condemns the princes of his age for what deserved the highest reprehension; and their chief crime was cruelty or inhumanity, inasmuch as they spared not their own subjects.

We now see that the Prophet in no degree flattered the great, though they took great pride in their own dignity. But when he saw that they wickedly and basely abused the power committed to them, he boldly resisted them, and exercised the full boldness of the Spirit. He therefore not only calls them robbers or plunderers of the people; but he says, that they were cruel wild beasts; he says, that they devoured the flesh, tore and pulled it in pieces, and made it small; and he says all this, that he might convey an idea of the various kinds of cruelty which they practiced. Now follow threatenings ---

Micah 3:4

4. Then shall they cry unto the LORD, but he will not hear them: he will even hide his face from them at that time, as they have behaved themselves ill in their doings.

4. Tunc clamabunt ad Jehovam, et non respondebit illis; sed abscondet faciem suam ab ipsis tempore illo, quemadmodum perverse egerunt in factis suis.

Micah now denounces judgment on the chief men, such as they deserved. He says, They shall cry then to Jehovah The adverb {אז}, az, is often put indefinitely in Hebrew, and has the force of a demonstrative, and may be taken as pointing out a thing, ({δεικτικως} --- demonstratively,) then, or there, as though the Prophet pointed out by his finger things which could be seen, though they were far away from the sight of men. But in this place, the Prophet seems rather to pursue the subject to which I have already referred: for he had before stated that God would take vengeance on that people. This adverb of time then is connected with the other combinations, which have been already explained. [172] If, however, any one prefer a different meaning, namely that the Prophet meant here to hold them in suspense, as to the nearness of God's vengeance, I do not oppose him, for this sense is not unsuitable. However this may be, the Prophet here testifies that the crimes of the chief men would not go unpunished, though they did not think themselves to be subject either to laws or to punishment. As then the princes and magistrates

[172] There is nothing in the context to which {אז then, or at that time, can be referred, except to the two concluding verses of the last chapter, which ought not to have been separated from this. And this connection confirms the view, that these two verses contain not a promise but a threatening. The same time is meant by {אז} as by {בעת} {ההיא} in the following part of the verse; for it is usual with the Prophets to express generally or indefinitely at first what they afterwards more distinctly specify. --- Ed.

regarded themselves as exempt, by some imaginary privilege, from the lot of other people, the Prophet declares here expressly, that a distress was nigh at hand, which would extort a cry from them: for by the word, cry, he means the miseries which were nigh at hand. They shall then cry in their distress. I have now explained the design of the Prophet.

We indeed see how at this day those who are in high stations swell with arrogance; for as they abound in wealth, and as honor is as it were an elevated degree, so that being propped up by the shoulders of others they seem eminent, and as they are also feared by the rest of the people, they are on these accounts led to think that no adversity can happen to them. But the Prophet says, that such would be their distress, that it would draw a cry from them.

They shall then cry, but Jehovah will not hear; that is, they shall be miserable and without any remedy. Jehovah will not answer them, but will hide from them his face, as they have done perversely; that is, God will not hear their complaints; for he will return on their own heads all the injuries with which he now sees his own people to be afflicted. And thus God will show that he was not asleep, while they were with so much effrontery practicing all kinds of wrong.

It may however be asked here, how it is that God rejects the prayers and entreaties of those who cry to him? It must first be observed, that the reprobate, though they rend the air with their cries, do not yet direct their prayers to God; but if they address God himself, they do this clamorously; for they expostulate with him, and contend with him, yea, they vomit out their blasphemies, or at least they murmur and complain of their evils. The ungodly then cry, but not to the Lord; or if they address their cries to God, they are, as it has been said, full of glamour. Hence, except one is guided by the Spirit of God, he cannot pray from the heart. And we know that it is the peculiar office of the Spirit to raise up our hearts to heaven: for in vain we pray, except we bring faith and repentance: and who is the author of these but the Holy Spirit? It appears then that the ungodly so cry, that they only violently contend with God: but this is not the right way of praying. It is therefore no wonder that God rejects their clamors. The ungodly do indeed at times pour forth a flood of prayers and call on God's name with the mouth; but at the same time they are, as we have said, full of perverseness, and they never really humble themselves before God. Since then they pour forth their prayers from a bitter and a proud heart, this is the reason why the Prophet says now, that the Lord would not then hear, but hide his face from them at that time, inasmuch as they acted perversely [173]

He shows here that God would not be reconciled to men wholly irreclaimable, who could not be restored by any means to the right way. But when any one falls [and repents] he will ever find God propitious to him, as soon as he cries to him; but when with obstinate minds we pursue our own course, and give no place to repentance, we close up the door of mercy against ourselves; and so what the Prophet teaches here necessarily takes place, --- the Lord hides his face in the day of distress. And we

[173] Literally, "As they have rendered evil their deeds," or, to coin a corresponding word, As they have evilized their deeds. To render their deeds evil was to render them afflictive, injurious, and oppressive to others, according to what has been previously described. Hence the following version of Henderson is incorrect, — Because they have corrupted their doings. — Ed.

also hear what the Scripture says, --- that judgment will be without mercy to those who are not merciful, (James 2:11.) Hence if any one be inexorable to his brethren, (as we see at this day many tyrants to be, and we also see many in the middle class to be of the same tyrannical and wholly sanguinary disposition,) he will at length, whoever he may be, meet with that judgment which Micah here denounces. The sentence then is not to be taken in a general sense, as though he had said, that the Lord would not be reconciled to the wicked; but he points out especially those irreclaimable men, who had wholly hardened themselves, so that they had become, as we have already seen, altogether inflexible. The Prophet now comes to his second reproof.

Micah 3:5

5. Thus saith the Lord concerning the prophets that make my people err, that bite with their teeth, and cry, Peace; and he that putteth not into their mouths, they even prepare war against him.

5. sic dicit Jehova super (vel, ad) prophetas, qui decipiunt populum meum, et mordent dentibus suis, et clamant, Paz; et si quis non dederit in os ipsorum, edicunt contra eum proelium:

Micah accuses here the Prophets, in the first place, of avarice and of a desire for filthy lucre. But he begins by saying that he spoke by God's command, and as it were from his mouth, in order that his combination might have more weight and power. Thus then saith Jehovah against the Prophets: and he calls them the deceivers of the people: but at the same time he points out the source of the evil, that is, why or by what passion they were instigated to deceive, and that was, because the desire of gain had wholly possessed them, so that they made no difference between what was true and what was false, but only sought to please for the sake of gain. And he shows also, on the other hand, that they were so covetous of gain, that they declared war, if any one did not feed them. And God repeats again the name of his people: this had escaped my notice lately in observing on the words of Micah, that the princes devoured the flesh of God's people; for the indignity was increased when this wrong, was done to the people of God. Had the Assyrians, or the Ethiopians, or the Egyptians, been pillaged by their princes, it would have been more tolerable; but when the very people of God were thus devoured, it was, as I have said, less to be borne. So when the people of God were deceived, and the truth was turned to a lie, it was a sacrilege the more hateful.

This then was the reason why he said, Who deceive my people [174] ``This people is sacred to me, for I have chosen them for myself; as then they are destroyed by frauds and deceptions, is not my majesty in a manner dishonored --- is not my authority lessened?'' We now then see the reason why the Prophet says, They deceive my people. It is indeed certain, that the Jews were worthy of such deceptions; and God elsewhere declares, that whenever he permitted false prophets to come among them, it was to try them to see what sort of people they were, (Deuteronomy 13.) It

[174] "Who deceive my people," is better than, "Who cause my people to err," according to Newcome and Henderson; for what is referred to is the "peace," promised by the false prophets. Marckius' version is, "Who seduce my people," and he makes this remark, —that the people had three seducers, — the devil, their own deceitful hearts, and the false prophets. — Ed.

was then their just reward, when liberty was given to Satan to prevent sound doctrine among the people. And no one is ever deceived, except through his own will. Though their own simplicity seems to draw many to destruction, yet there is ever in them some hypocrisy. But it does not extenuate the sin of false teachers, that the people deserve such a punishment: and hence the Prophet still goes on with his reproof and says, that they were the people of God, --- in what respect? By adoption. Though then the Jews had rendered themselves unworthy of such an honor, yet God counts them his people, that he might punish the wickedness of the false teachers, of which he now accuses them. It now follows, that they did bite with their teeth But I cannot finish today.

Prayer.

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou wouldest have the image of thy justice to shine in princes, and whom thou arrest with the sword, that they might rule in thy name, and be really thy ministers, --- O grant, that this thy blessing may openly appear among us, and that by this evidence thou mayest testify that thou art not only propitious to us, but hadst also a care for our safety, and watches over our welfare and well-being: and do thou so shine by thy word, that it may never be obscured or clouded among us through any depraved cupidity, but ever retain its own clear purity, so that we may proceed in the right path of salvation, which thou hast discovered and prescribed, until we be at length gathered into thy celestial kingdom, to enjoy that eternal inheritance, which has been procured for us by the blood of thy only-begotten Son. Amen.

Lecture Eighty-sixth

Let us proceed to explain that sentence of the Prophet, in which he shows the cause why the teachers deceived the people and turned the truth of God to a lie; and this was, because they were greedy of gains and were wholly given to avarice. We hence see, according to the testimony of Paul, that avarice affords a cause to all evils, (1 Timothy 6:10;) and that wherever this contagion comes, all things necessarily fall into decay: for when avarice reigns in the hearts of men, the truth of God especially is ever adulterated.

But Micah adduces two evidences of avarice, --- that they cried, Peace, when well fed and filled, --- and that they proclaimed war, when they were hungry. Then as to the first points he says, {שלום} {וקראו} {בשניהם} {הנשכים}, that is, ``who bite with their teeth, [175] and cry, Peace.'' But the sentence is to be so understood, that when they did bite well, they announced peace with full confidence: for by the

[175] The expression, "to bite with the teeth," is singular, when understood to signify voraciousness, as evidently it does here; for the corresponding words in the next distich, "who put not into their mouth," seem to require this meaning. Almost all critics, except some of the Greek Fathers, who followed the Septuagint, agree in attaching to this import to the sentence. The paraphrase of Rabbi Jonathan is, "To him who offers to them a feast of meat, they prophesy peace." Jerome's view is the same. Dathias gives this paraphrase, dum illis datur quod edunt — "While is given them something to eat." Henry's comment is much to the purpose, — "They will flatter and compliment those who will feed them with good bits, will give them something to eat; but as for those who put not into their mouths, who are not continually cramming them, they look upon them as their enemies; to them they do not cry, Peace, but even prepare war against them; against them they denounce the judgments of God: they preach either comfort or terror to men, not according as they are to God, but as they are to them; as the crafty priests of the Church of Rome, in some places, make their image either to smile or to frown upon the offerer, according as his offering is." — Ed.

word, bite, the Prophet means their gormandizing; for they who, under the guise of God's name, sought only their own advantage, were not satisfied with a moderate support, inasmuch as they were like hungry dogs. They therefore devoured, and gorged themselves, without any limits or moderation. This is the reason why he says that they did bite: for he compares them either to lions or to bears; and we know that wild beasts are not satiated with a small quantity of food, but that they gnash as it were their teeth except they are always pampered. So also Micah says, that the false teachers of his age were voracious men, who demanded a large proportion of food. We see the same thing in our day as to the monks under the Papacy, especially those who, under the name of mendacity, devour the substance of all people. Except they are pampered, they always murmur; nay, they are not content with murmurs, they proclaim war, as the Prophet says here. We indeed see at the same time, that they are insatiable; for when they come to tables well furnished, no one would say that they are men, but beasts, for they devour every thing. We now then understand the Prophet's meaning.

But it is not voracity alone that is reprehended: he says, that they sold their blessings. when they were well filled and had their stomach well supplied. In the same manner the monks also are wont to pronounce peace when they are well fed, --- ``O! ye do good, when ye take care of the brethren; for they are careful of you: when ye sleep in your beds, they watch, and their prayers make you rich; for how could the world stand, were it not that the brethren make amends for it? As then ye are so kind to our community, all things shall turn out well and prosperously to you, and God also will bless you.'' This then is the practice of those who for reward sell their blessings; they cry, Peace, that is, they confidently declare that all things shall be well, they make God propitious, provided such liberality towards their order be ever continued.

But, on the other hand, he also says, If any one gives not to their mouth, they instantly sanctify war against you [176] : but I give a different rendering, as the passage requires, --- that they reclaim war; though the word is literally to sanctify. But we have seen in Joel 2, that the word is used to designate any solemn proclamation, --- ``Sanctify a fast'', that is, Proclaim a fast. So also in this place, They sanctify war, that is, they proclaim war, when any one does not feed them, nor satisfy their gormandizing; for they could not bear want. In short, the Prophet shows, that these false teachers were so blinded by avarice, that they discerned not the difference between right and wrong; but only praised those who fed them: and, on the other hand, when they found that they and their stomach were not cared for nor satisfied, they cursed, fulminated, and uttered nothing but anathemas; as we see to be done at this day by the monks under the Papacy. The Prophet now says ---

Micah 3:6-7

6. Therefore night shall be unto you, that ye shall not have a vision; and it shall be dark unto you, that ye shall not divine; and the sun shall go down over the prophets, and the day shall be dark over them.

[176] The original may be thus rendered,— But whosoever will not put into their mouth, Even against him they will proclaim war. — Ed.

6. Propterea nox vobis erit a visione (vel, pro visione, vel propter visionem; dicemus postea de sensu,) et tenebrae vobis a divinatione (vel, propter divinationem,) et occumbet sol super prophetas, et obtenebrabitur super eos dies;

7. Then shall the seers be ashamed, and the diviners confounded: yea, they shall all cover their lips; for there is no answer of God.

7. Et pudefient videntes (hoc est, prophetae,) et erubescent divini, et velabunt (hoc est, velum opponent) super labium suum omnes; quia non erit responsum Dei.

God declares here to the false teachers by the mouth of Micah, that he would inflict punishment on them, so that they should be exposed to the reproach of all. Hence the kind of punishment of which the Prophet speaks is --- that he would strip the false teachers of all their dignity, so that they should hereafter in vain put on an appearance, and claim the honorable name which they had so long abused. We indeed know, when ungodly and profane men clothe themselves with the dignified titles of being the princes, or bishops, or prelates of the Church, how audaciously they pervert every thing, and do so with impunity. There is then no other remedy, except God pulls off the mask from them, and openly discovers to all their baseness. Of this punishment Micah now speaks.

There shall be to you a night from vision; so is the phrase literally, but the particle {מ}, mem, means often, for, or, on account of; and we can easily see that the Prophet represents night as the reward for visions and darkness for divination. ``As then my people have been deceived by your fallacies, for your visions and divinations have been nothing but lies and deceits, I will repay you with the reward which you have deserved: for instead of a vision you shall have night, and instead of divination you shall have thick darkness.'' [177] It is indeed certain, that the false teachers, even when they were, as they say, in great reputation, that is, when they retained the honor and the title of their office, were blind and wholly destitute of all light: but the Prophet here declares, that as their baseness did not appear to the common people, God would cause it to be made at length fully evident. As for instance, there is nothing at this day more stupid and senseless than the bishops of the Papacy: for when any one draws from them any expression about religion, they instantly betray not only their ignorance, but also their shameful stupidity. With regard to the monks, though they be the most audacious kind of animals, (audacissimum animalium genus,) yet we know how unlearned and ignorant they are. Therefore at this time the night has not yet passed away, nor the darkness, of which Micah speaks here.

We now then understand what the Holy Spirit teaches here, and that is, --- that God would at length strip those false teachers of that imaginary dignity, on account of which no one dared to speak against them, but received as an oracle whatever they uttered. Night, then, shall be to you instead of a vision; that is, ``The whole

[177] That this is the meaning is evident from the two last lines of the verse. It is a kind of parallelism, in which the four lines contain the same idea or ideas, announced in the two first lines in one form, and in the two last another, with more clearness, and sometimes with something additional. The preposition {{מ has sometimes the meaning of rather than, but here, instead of. I would render the verse thus, --- Therefore night shall be to you instead of vision, And darkness shall be to you instead of divination: Yea, set shall the sun upon the Prophets, And darken upon them shall the day. Piscator gives the sense when he says, Visio vestra mutabitur in noctem --- ``Your vision shall be changed into night.'' --- Ed.

world shall understand that you are not what you boast yourselves to be: for I will show that there is not in you, no, not a particle of the prophetic spirit, but that ye are men as dark as night, and darkness shall be to you instead of divination. Ye boast of great acuteness and great perspicuity of mind; but I will discover your baseness, so that the very children may know that you are not endued with the spirit.''

To the same purpose is what he adds, Go down shall the sun upon you, and darkened over you shall be the day; that is, such will be that darkness, that even at noon they will see nothing; the sun will shine on all, but they shall grope as in the dark; so that Gods vengeance would be made so manifest, that it might be noticed by all, from the least to the greatest.

He confirms the same thing in the next verse, And ashamed shall be the seers and confounded the diviners, [178] and they shall cover their lip; that is they will put veils on their mouths. In short, he means, that they would become a reproach to all, so that they would be ashamed of themselves, and no more dare to boast with so much confidence of their name and of the prophetic office.

As to this form of expression, {שפם}-{על} {ועטו}, uothu ol shephim, some think that the practice of mourners is referred to; but this interpretation is frigid. I have therefore no doubt but that Micah intimates that the mouths of the false teachers would be closed. There is nearly the same denunciation mentioned by Zechariah; for speaking of the restoration of the Church, he says, --- They who before went about boasting greatly, and gloried in the name of Prophets, shall cast away their mantle, and will no longer dare to show themselves; yea, when they shall come abroad, they shall be as it were herdsman or private persons, and shall say, ``I am not a prophet, nor the son of a prophet, I am chastised by my father;'' that is, they shall profess themselves unworthy of being called prophets; but that they are scholars under discipline, (Zechariah 13:5.) So also in this place, ``They deceive at this day my people,'' saith the Lord; ``I will reward them as they deserve; I will fill them with disgrace and contempt. They shall not then dare hereafter to show themselves as they have been wont to do; they shall not presume boastingly to profess themselves to be the pillars of the Church, that the whole world may be made subject to them; they shall not dare with tyrannical force to oppress the common and ignorant portions of society Veil, then, shall they their mouth; that is, ``I will cause their mouth to be closed, so that they shall not dare hereafter to utter even a word.'' [179]

It follows, For there will be no answer from God. Some so explain this sentence, as though the Prophet upbraided them with their old deceits, which they boasted were the words of God: as then they were not faithful to God, but lied to miserable men, when they said, that they were sent from above, and brought messages from heaven, while they only uttered their own inventions or fables, they should on these accounts be constrained to cover their mouth. But different is the meaning of the Prophet,

[178] {,{רסמים {μαντεις}, Sept. fatidici, sootsayers, diviners. It is used generally in a bad sense, while ,{חזים} seers is commonly used in a good sense; but here both words denote pretenders, the false prophets. --- Ed.

[179] The version of Newcome is, “They shall cover the mouth;” that is, as he adds in a note, “with part of the long eastern vesture. This action was a sign of being put to silence, of disgrace and dejection, Leviticus 13:45; Ezekiel 24:17, 22.” There is no reason to render mouth, beard, as some have done. — Ed.

and it is this, --- that they were to be deprived of any answer, so that their want of knowledge might be easily perceived even by the most ignorant: for false teachers, though they possess nothing certain, yet deceive the simple with disguises, and render plausible their absurdities, that they may seem to be the interpreters of God; and they further add great confidence: and then the stupidity of the people concedes to them such great power, according to what is said by Jeremiah 5 where he says that the priests received gifts and that for gifts the Prophets divined, and that the people loved such deprivations. But Micah declares here that such delusions would no longer be allowed, for God would dissipate them. It will then be made evident, that you have no answer from God; that is, ``All will perceive that you are void and destitute of every celestial truth, and that you were formerly but gross cheats, when ye passed yourselves as God's servants, though you had no ground for doing so.''

We now perceive what the Prophet means. But this punishment might have then contributed to the benefit of the people: for as it is a cause of ruin to the world, when there is no difference made between light and darkness; so when the baseness of those is discovered, who abuse God's name and adulterate his pure truth, there is then a door open to repentance. Rightly then is this combination addressed to false prophets. It now follows ---

Micah 3:8

8. But truly I am full of power by the spirit of the Lord, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin.

8. Atqui vere ego repletus sum virtute a Spiritu Jehovae, et judicio, et fortitudine, ad annuntiandum Jacob scelus suum, et Israeli peccatum suum.

Here Micah, in a courageous spirit, stands up alone against all the false teachers even when he saw that they were a large number, and that they appealed to their number, according to their usual practice, as their shield. Hence he says, I am filled with power by the Spirit of Jehovah [180] This confidence is what all God's servants should possess, that they may not succumb to the empty and vain boastings of those who subvert the whole order of the Church. Whenever then, God permits his pure truth to be corrupted by false teachers, and them to be popular among those high in honor, as well as the multitude, let this striking example be remembered by us, lest we be discouraged, lest the firmness and invincible power of the Holy Spirit be weakened in our hearts, but that we may proceed in the course of our calling, and learn to oppose the name of God to all the deceptions of men, if indeed we are convinced that our service is approved by him, as being faithful. Since, then, Micah says, that he was filled with power, he no doubt stood, as it were, in the presence of the whole people, and alone pitched his camp against the whole multitude; for there were then false teachers going about every where, as the devil sows always seed enough, whenever God lets loose the reins. Though then their number was not small, yet Micah hesitated not to go forth among them: I, he says; there is stress

[180] Jerome renders “the Spirit of Jehovah” in the genitive case, which in meaning amounts to the same thing; but Newcome puts the words in apposition with “power.” The {{את before Spirit seems to betoken a difference in its connection with ``filled.'' It appears to be here a preposition, ab, by. The ``power,'' {כח,} is the {δυναμις} of the New Testament; and ``judgment,'' {משפט,} is discernment or discrimination; and ``might'' or courage, {גבורה,} is ``an intrepid firmness of mind,'' as Marckius observes, ``against all opposing evils and hindrances.'' --- Ed.

to be laid on the pronoun {אנכי}, anki, --- Ye despise me, being one man, and ye despise a few men; ye may think that I alone serve the Lord; but I am a match for a thousand, yea, for an innumerable multitude; for God is on my side, and he approves of my ministry as it is. from him, nor do I bring any thing to you but what he has commanded: It is then I.

He further expresses a fuller confidence by using the word {אולם}, aulam [181] ; Verily, he says, I am filled with power. This ``verily'' or truly is opposed to those lofty boastings by which the false prophets were ever wont to attain a name and honor among the people. But Micah intimates that all that they uttered was only evanescent: ``Ye are,'' he says, ``wonderful prophets; nay, ye are superior to the angels, if you are to be believed; but show that you are so in reality; let there be some proof by which your calling can be confirmed. There is no proof. It then follows, that ye are only men of wind, and not really spiritual: but there is really in me what ye boast of with your mouths.'' And he says, that he was filled, that he might not be thought one of the common sort: and Micah no doubt shows here, on account of the necessity of the occasion, that he was not supplied with ordinary or usual power; for, according as God employs the labors of his servants, so is he present with them, and furnishes them with suitable protection. When any one is not exercised with great difficulties in discharging his office of teaching, a common measure of the Spirit is only necessary for the performance of his duties; but when any one is drawn into arduous and difficult struggles, he is at the same time especially strengthened by the Lord: and we see daily examples of this; for many simple men, who have never been trained up in learning, have yet been so endued by the celestial Spirit, when they came to great trials, that they have closed the mouths of great doctors, who seemed to understand all oracles. By such evidences God openly proves at this day, that he is the same now as when he formerly endued his servant Micah with a power so rare and so extraordinary. This then is the reason why he says, that he was filled with power.

He afterwards adds, By the Spirit of Jehovah Here the Prophet casts aside every suspicious token of arrogance; lest he should seem to claim anything as his own, he says, that this power was conferred on him from above: and this circumstance ought to be particularly noticed. Though Micah rightly and justly claimed to himself the name of a teacher, he yet had nothing different from others before the world; for all his opponents discharged the same office, and obtained the same honor: the office was common to both parties. Micah was either alone, or connected with Isaiah and a few others. Since then he here dares to set up himself, we see that his call alone must be regarded; for we know how great is the propensity of Satan to oppose the kingdom of Christ, and also how proud and fierce are false teachers. Since then the rage of Satan is well known and the presumption of false teachers, there is no reason why the faithful should make much of mere naked titles: and when they, who lived at that time, declared, as Papists do at this day, that they had no discrimination nor judgment to know, whether of them ought to have been deemed impostors or

[181] Marckius renders it the same, verè, and says, that it is of the same import with Amen, Amen, so often used by our Savior. Truly is adopted by Newcome and Henderson. — Ed.

the ministers of God, inasmuch as Micah was alone and they were many, and also that the others were prophets that at least they had the name and repute of being so, --- what was to be done? This was the reason why I have said that this circumstance was worthy of special notice, --- that though their vocation was common, yet as they had acted perfidiously, and Micah alone, or with few others, had faithfully performed what the Lord had commanded, he alone is to be deemed a Prophet and a teacher: in short, there is no reason for false prophets to set up against us a mere coveting, when they cannot prove that they are endued with the Spirit of God. Whosoever then desires to be deemed a servant of God, and a teacher in his Church, must have this seal which Micah here adduces; he must be endued with the Spirit of God; honor then will be given to God. But if any one brings nothing but the name, we see how vain before God it is.

He afterwards subjoins With judgment and courage. (fortitudine) By judgment, I have no doubt, he understands discernment, as this is also the common meaning of the word. He then adds courage These two things are especially necessary for all ministers of the word, --- that is, to excel in wisdom, to understand what is true and right, and to be also endued with inflexible firmness, by which they may overcome both Satan and the whole world, and never turn aside from their course, though the devil may in all ways assail them. We hence see what these two words import. He had put {כח}, kech, first, power; but now he mentions {גבורה}, gebure, courage or magnanimity. By the term, power, he meant generally all the endowments, with which all who take upon them the office of teaching ought to be adorned. This qualification is then first required, and it is a general one: but Micah divides this power of the prophets into two kinds, even into wisdom or judgment, and into courage; and he did this, that they might understand what God intended: Let them excel in doctrine; and then that they may be confirmed, let them not yield to any gales that may blow, nor be overcome by threats and terrors; let them not bend here and there to please the world; in a word, let them not succumb to any corruptions: it is therefore necessary to add courage to judgment.

He then adds, To declare to Jacob his wickedness, [182] and to Israel his sin. We here see that the Prophet did not hunt for the favor of the people. Had he courted their approbation, he must have soothed with flatteries those who sought flatteries; and were already seized with such hatred and malignant feelings, that they had rejected Micah. He must then have spoken softly to them, to please them; but this he did not do. ``On the one hand,'' he says, ``these men sell to you their blessings and deceive you with the hope of peace; and, on the other, they denounce war, except their voracity is satisfied; and thus it is that they please you; for so ye wish, and ye seek such teachers as will promise you wine and strong drink: but I am sent to you for another purpose; for the Lord has not deposited flatteries with me, such as may

[182] Scelus, {;{פשע it means defection, apostacy, rebellion, a willful transgression, and a proud contempt of divine law and institutions; it is {ανομια} --- lawlessness, as it is sometimes rendered by the Septuagint. But ``sin,'' ,{חטאה} is a deviation from what is right through delusion, mistaken views, error, ignorance, or infirmity. The first included idolatry and gross acts of imposture and oppression; the second, the superstition of the people, and their common vices. Muis, as quoted by Leigh, says that {פשע} is ``defection from God or rebellion, and prevarication towards God,'' --- defectio à Deo seu rebellio, ac praevaricatio in Deum And he quotes also Mollerius as describing {חטאה} as including not only sins of error, ignorance, and infirmity, but also those of omission, --- Ea potissimum peccata significat, quae vel errore, vel per ignorantiam, vel per infirmitatem carnis, committuntur; item peccata omissionis --- Ed.

be pleasant to you; but he has deposited reproofs and threatenings. I shall therefore uncover your crimes, and will not hesitate to condemn you before the whole world, for ye deserve to be thus treated.'' We now perceive why the Prophet says, that he was endued with power to declare his wickedness to Jacob, etc.

But we hence learn how necessary it is for us to be supported by celestial firmness, when we have to do with insincere and wicked men; and this is almost the common and uniform lot of all God's servants; for all who are sent to teach the word are sent to carry on a contest. It is therefore not enough to teach faithfully what God commands, except we also contend: and though the wicked may violently rise up against us, we must yet put on a brazen front, as it is said in Ezekiel 3:8, 9; nor must we yield to their fury, but preserve invincible firmness. Since then we have a contest with the devil, with the world, and with all the wicked, that we may faithfully execute our office, we must be furnished with this courage of which Micah speaks.

As I have already shown that God's servants ought courageously to break through all those obstacles by which Satan may attempt either to delay or to force them backward; so also the doctrine taught here ought to be applied to all the godly: they ought wisely to distinguish between the faithful servants of God and impostors who falsely pretend his name. Then no one, who desires truly and from the heart to obey God, will be deceived; for the Lord will ever give the spirit of judgment and discrimination. And the reason why at this day many miserable souls are led to endless ruin is, because they either shut their eyes, or willfully dissemble, or designedly involve themselves in such subterfuges as these, --- ``I cannot form any judgment; I see on both sides learned and celebrated men, at least those who are in some repute and esteem: some call me to the right hand, and others to the left, where am I to retake myself? I therefore prefer to close my mouth and my ears.'' Thus many, seeking a cloak for their sloth, often manifest their ignorance: for we see that the eyes must be opened when the Lord exercises and tries our faith: and he suffers discords and contentions to arise in the Church that some may choose this, and others that. Though God then relaxes the reins of Satan, that contests and turmoils of this kind may be excited in the Church, there is yet no excuse for us, if we follow not what the Lord prescribes; for he will ever guide us by his Spirit, provided we foster not our own slothfulness. It follows---

Micah 3:9-10

9. Hear this, I pray you, ye heads of the house of Jacob, and princes of the house of Israel, that abhor judgment, and pervert all equity.

9. Audite hoc, quaeso, principes domus Jacob, et gubernatores domus Israel, qui abominantur (est mutatio personae) judicium, et recitudinem omnem pervertunt;

10. They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity.

10. Qui aedificat [183] (nunc est mutatio numeri) Sionem in sanguinibus, et Jerusalem in iniquitate.

The Prophet begins really to prove what he had stated, --- that he was filled with the power of the Holy Spirit: and it was, as they say, an actual proof, when the

[183] It is {,{בנה in the singular number, with no variation as to number in the MSS. The Septuagint gives it a plural participle, {οἱοικοδομουντες}. It may be rendered as a participial noun, ``The building of Zion is by blood,'' etc., for ,{ה} when radical, does not always turn into ,{ת} when in regimine. --- Ed.

Prophet dreaded no worldly power, but boldly addressed the princes and provoked their rage against him, Hear, he says, ye heads, ye rulers of the house of Jacob, ye men who are cruel, bloody, and iniquitous. We then see that the Prophet had not boasted of what he did not without delay really confirm. But he began with saying, that he was filled with the Spirit of God, that he might more freely address them, and that he might check their insolence. We indeed know that the ungodly are so led on headlong by Satan, that they hesitate not to resist God himself: but yet the name of God is often to them a sort of a hidden chain. However much then the wicked may rage, they yet become less ferocious when the name of God is introduced. This is the reason why the Prophet had mentioned the Spirit of God; it was, that there might be a freer course to his doctrine.

When he now says, Ye heads of the house of Jacob, ye rulers of the house of Israel, it is by way of concession, as though he had said, that these were indeed splendid titles, and that he was not so absurd as not to acknowledge what had been given them by God, even that they were eminent, a chosen race, being the children of Abraham. The Prophet then concedes to the princes what belonged to them, as though he had said, that he was not a seditious man, who had no care nor consideration for civil order. And this defense was very necessary, for nothing is more common than for the ungodly to charge God's servants with sedition, whenever they use a freedom of speech as it becomes them. Hence all who govern the state, when they hear their corruptions reproved, or their avarice, or their cruelty, or any of their other crimes, immediately cry out, --- ``What! if we suffer these things, every thing will be upset: for when all respect is gone, what will follow but brutal outrage? for every one of the common people will rise up against the magistrates and the judges.'' Thus then the wicked ever say, that God's servants are seditious whenever they boldly reprove them. This is the reason why the Prophet concedes to the princes and judges of the people their honor; but a qualifying clause immediately follows, --- Ye are indeed the heads, ye are rulers; but yet they hate judgment:'' he does not think them worthy of being any longer addressed. He had indeed bidden them to hear as with authority; but having ordered them to hear, he now uncovers their wickedness, They hate, he says, judgments and all rectitude pervert: [184] each of them builds Zion by blood, and Jerusalem by iniquity; that is, they turn their pillages into buildings: ``This, forsooth, is the splendor of my holy city even of Zion! where I designed the ark of my covenant to be placed, as in my only habitation, even there buildings are seen constructed by blood and by plunder! See, he says, how wickedly these princes conduct themselves under the cover of their dignity!'' [185]

[184] It often happens, as in the present case, that the relative {,{ה in Hebrew, prefixed to a participle, has after it a verb in the future connected by ,{ו} and in person different from that to which the relative refers. The relative here refers to a noun in the second, and the verb connected with the participle is in the third person. It is an idiom, of which there are frequent instances. We find the same to be the case with the relative ,{אשר} in the third verse. It refers to the chiefs, who are addressed, and must therefore be viewed as in the second person, and all the verbs which follow it are in the third. Some render the participle, ``who hate,'' which is in Hiphil, in a causative sense. See Amos 5:7; 6:12. The distich may then be rendered thus, --- Who render judgment hateful, (or, abominable,) And distort everything that is right, or more literally, And make crooked everything that is straight. --- Ed.

[185] "They pretend," says Henry, "in justification of their extortion and oppressions, that they build up Zion and Jerusalem; they add new streets and squares to the holy cities and adorn them; they establish and advance the public interests both in church and state, and think therein they do God and Israel good service; but it is with blood and with iniquity, and therefore it

We now see that the word of God is not bound, but that it puts forth its power against the highest as well as the lowest; for it is the Spirit's office to arraign the whole world, and not a part only.

`When the Spirit shall come,' says Christ,
`it will convince the world,' (John 16:8.)

He speaks not there of the common people only, but of the whole world, of which princes and magistrates form a prominent part. Let us then know, that though we ought to show respect to judges, (as the Lord has honored them with dignified titles, calling them his vicegerents and also gods,) yet the mouths of Prophets ought not to be closed; but they ought, without making any difference, to correct whatever is deserving of reproof, and not to spare even the chief men themselves. This is what ought in the first place to be observed.

Then when he says, that Zion was built by blood, and Jerusalem by iniquity, it is the same as though the Prophet had said, that whatever the great men expended on their palaces had been procured, and, as it were, scraped together from blood and plunder. The judges could not have possibly seized on spoils on every side, without being bloody, that is, without pillaging the poor: for the judges were for the most part corrupted by the rich and the great; and then they destroyed the miserable and the innocent. He then who is corrupted by money will become at the same time a thief; and he will not only extort money, but will also shed blood. There is then no wonder that Micah says, that Zion was built by blood He afterwards extends wider his meaning and mentions iniquity, as he wished to cast off every excuse from hypocrites. The expression is indeed somewhat strong, when he says, that Zion was built by blood. They might have objected and said, that they were not so cruel, though they could not wholly clear themselves from the charge of avarice. ``When I speak of blood,'' says the Prophet, ``there is no reason that we should contend about a name; for all iniquity is blood before God: if then your houses have been built by plunder, your cruelty is sufficiently proved; it is as though miserable and innocent men had been slain by your own hands.'' The words, Zion and Jerusalem, enhance their sin; for they polluted the holy city and the mount on which the temple was built by the order and command of God.

Prayer.

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou wouldest have us to be ruled by the preaching of thy word, --- O grant, that those who have to discharge this office may be really endued with thy celestial power, that they may not attempt any thing of themselves, but with all devotedness spend all their labors for thee and for our benefit, that through them we may be thus edified, so that thou mayest ever dwell among us, and that we through our whole life may become the habitation of thy Majesty, and that finally we may come to thy heavenly sanctuary, where thou daily invites us, as an entrance there has been once for all opened to us by the blood of thy only-begotten Son. Amen.

cannot prosper; nor will their intentions of good to the city of God justify their contradictions to the law of God." A flaming zeal for a good cause can never consecrate extortion, injustice, and murder. It may be asked, What is the difference between Zion and Jerusalem? Zion was the church, Jerusalem was the state; or it may be, that, according to the usual style of the Prophets, the more limited idea is given first, and the more extensive one is added to it. — Ed.

Lecture Eighty-seventh

Micah 3:11-12

11. The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet will they lean upon the Lord, and say, Is not the Lord among us? none evil can come upon us.

11. Principes ejus pro munere judicant, et sacerdotes ejus mercede docent, et prophetae ejus pecunia divinant, et super Jehova nituntur, dicendo, Annon Jehova in medio nostri? Non veniet super nos malum.

12. Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest.

12. Itaque propter vos Sion ut ager arabitur, et Jerusalem acervus erit, et mons domus in excelsa sylvae. [186]

The Prophet shows here first, how gross and supine was the hypocrisy of princes as well as of the priests and prophets: and then he declares that they were greatly deceived in thus soothing themselves with vain flatteries; for the Lord would punish them for their sins since he had in his forbearance spared them, and found that they did not repent. But he does not address here the common people or the multitude, but he attacks the chief men: for he has previously told us, that he was endued with the spirit of courage. It was indeed necessary for the Prophet to be prepared with invincible firmness that he might freely and boldly declare the judgment of God, especially as he had to do with the great and the powerful, who, as it is well known, will not easily, or with unruffled minds, bear their crimes to be exposed; for they wish to be privileged above the ordinary class of men. But the Prophet not only does not spare them, but he even arraigns them alone, as though the blame of all evils lodged only with them, as indeed the contagion had proceeded from them; for though all orders were then corrupt, yet the cause and the beginning of all the evils could not have been ascribed to any but to the chief men themselves.

And he says, Princes for reward judge, priests teach for reward, [187] the prophets divine for money: as though he had said, that the ecclesiastical as well as the civil government was subject to all kinds of corruptions, for all things were made matters of sale. We know that what the Holy Spirit declares elsewhere is ever true, --- that by gifts or rewards the eyes of the wise are blinded and the hearts of the just are corrupted, (Ecclus. 20:29,) for as soon erg judges open a way for rewards, they

[186] "As the Masoretes, in their division of the Bible, reckon the Twelve Minor Prophets but as one Book, they mark this verse (twelfth of chapter 3) the middle verse of these Prophets." — Adam Clarke.

[187] Calvin has mercede in both instances. The first in Hebrew is {,{שחד a gift, a bribe; this was given to the princes: and the second is ,{מחיר} a commutation, barter, price, something in exchange; this was given to the priests: and then what was given to the prophets is literally silver, ;{כסף} but it often means money in general. The Septuagint renders the first, {μετα} {δωρων} --- for gifts; the second, {μετα} {μισθου} --- for reward; and the last, {μετα} {αργυριου} --- for money. The princes decided matters according to the bribes given them, the priests, not satisfied with the regular allowance given them according to the law, did not teach except they were paid, had something in exchange, a reward for their trouble. And while the true prophets, who were extraordinary teachers sent by God, delivered their messages freely, without any pay, as they received them; the false prophets, who pretended that they came from God, required money for performing their office; see Jeremiah 6:13. And notwithstanding all their gains, all things were done badly. Money was extracted for doing wrong. The princes determined cases unjustly, the priests taught erroneous doctrine, and the prophets prophesied falsely: and yet for all these evils, money was required! How ignorant and infatuated the people must have been! Cocceius enumerated six things as chargeable on the persons mentioned in this verse: 1. Avarice---the seeking of wealth instead of doing God's will; 2. A mercenary disposition, influenced by gain and not by sense of duty; 3. The exacting of unlawful reward; 4. The doing, even for reward, of what was evil and wicked; 5. A false pretense of trust in God; and, 6. The tying of God's favor to external privileges. --- Ed.

cannot preserve integrity, however much they may wish to do so. And the same is the case with the priests: for if any one is given to avarice, he will adulterate the pure truth: it cannot be, that a complete liberty in teaching should exist, except when the pastor is exempt from all desire of gain. It is not therefore without reason that Micah complains here, that the princes as well as the priests were hirelings in his day; and by this he means, that no integrity remained among them, for the one, as I have said, follows from the other. He does not say, that the princes were either cruel or perfidious, though he had before mentioned these crimes; but in this place he simply calls them mercenaries. But, as I have just said, the one vice cannot be separated from the other; for every one who is hired will pervert judgment, whether he be a teacher or a judge. Nothing then remains pure where avarice bears rule. It was therefore quite sufficient for the Prophet to condemn the judges and the prophets and the priests for avarice; for it is easy hence to conclude, that teaching was exposed to sale, and that judgments were bought, so that he who offered most money easily gained his cause. Princes then judge for reward, and priests also teach for reward

We can learn from this place the difference between prophets and priests. Micah ascribes here the office or the duty of teaching to the priests and leaves divination alone to the prophets. We have said elsewhere, that it happened through the idleness of the priests, that prophets were added to them; for prophesying belonged to them, until being content with the altar, they neglected the office of teaching: and the same thing, as we find, has taken place under the Papacy. For though it be quite evident for what reason pastors were appointed to preside over the Church, we yet see that all, who proudly call themselves pastors, are dumb dogs. Whence is this? Because they think that they discharge their duties, by being only attentive to ceremonies; and they have more than enough to occupy them: for the priestly office under the Papacy is laborious enough as to trifles and scenic performances: (ritus histrionicos --- stage-playing rites) but at the same time they neglect the principal thing --- to feed the Lord's flock with the doctrine of salvation. Thus degenerated had the priests become under the Law. What is said by Malachi ought to have been perpetuated, --- that the law should be in the mouth of the priest, that he should be the messenger and interpreter of the God of hosts, (Malachi 2:7;) but the priests cast from them this office: it became therefore necessary that prophets should be raised up, and as it were beyond the usual course of things while yet the regular course formally remained. But the priests taught in a cold manner; and the prophets divined, that is professed that oracles respecting future things were revealed to them.

This distinction is now observed by the Prophet, when he says, The priests teach for reward, that is, they were mercenaries, and hirelings in their office: and the prophets divined for money It then follows, that they yet leaned on Jehovah, and said, Is not Jehovah in the midst of us? Come then shall not evil upon us. The Prophet shows here, as I have said at the beginning, that these profane men trifled with God: for though they knew that they were extremely wicked, nay, their crimes were openly known to all; yet they were not ashamed to lay claim to the authority of God. And it has, we know, been a common wickedness almost in all ages, and it greatly prevails at this day, --- that men are satisfied with having only the outward

evidences of being the people of God. There was then indeed an altar erected by the command of God; there were sacrifices made according to the rule of the Law; and there were also great and illustrious promises respecting that kingdom. Since then the sacrifices were daily performed, and since the kingdom still retained its outward form, they thought that God was, in a manner, bound to them. The same is the case at this day with the great part of men; they presumptuously and absurdly boast of the external forms of religion. The Papists possess the name of a Church, with which they are extremely inflated; and then there is a great show and pomp in their ceremonies. The hypocrites also among us boast of Baptism, and the Lord's Supper, and the name of Reformation; while, at the same time, these are nothing but mockeries, by which the name of God and the whole of religion are profaned, when no real piety flourishes in the heart. This was the reason why Micah now expostulated with the prophets and the priests, and the king's counselors; it was, because they falsely pretended that they were the people of God. [188]

But by saying; that they relied on Jehovah, he did not condemn that confidence which really reposes on God; for, in this respect, we cannot exceed the bounds: as God's goodness is infinite, so we cannot trust in his word too much, if we embrace it in true faith. But the Prophet says, that hypocrites leaned on Jehovah, because they flattered themselves with that naked and empty distinction, that God had adopted them as his people. Hence the word, leaning or recumbing, is not to be applied to the real trust of the heart, but, on the contrary, to the presumption of men, who pretend the name of God, and so give way to their own will, that they shake off not only all fear of God, but also thought and reason. When, therefore, so great and so supine thoughtlessness occupies the minds of men, stupidity presently follows: and yet it is not without reason that Micah employs this expression, for hypocrites persuade themselves that all things will be well with them, as they think that they have God propitious to them. As then they feel no anxiety while they have the idea that God is altogether at peace with them, the Prophet declares, by way of irony, that they relied on Jehovah; as though he had said, that they made the name of God their support: but yet the Prophet speaks in words contrary to their obvious meaning, ({καταχρηστικῶς} loquitur --- speaks catachrestically;) for it is certain that no one relies on Jehovah except he is humbled in himself. It is penitence that leads us to God; for it is when we are cast down that we recumb on him; but he who is inflated with self-confidence flies in the air, and has nothing solid in him. And our Prophet, as I have said, intended indirectly to condemn the false security in which hypocrites sleep, while they think it enough that the Lord had once testified that they would be his people; but the condition is by them disregarded.

He now recites their words, Is not Jehovah in the midst of us? Come will not evil upon us This question is a proof of a haughty self-confidence; for they ask as of a thing indubitable, and it is an emphatic mode of speaking, by which they meant to

[188] In unison with the foregoing are these striking remarks of Henry,—"Many are rocked sleep in a fatal security by their church privileges, as if these would protect them in sin and shelter them from punishment, which are really, and will be, the greatest aggravations both of their sin and of their punishment. If men's having the Lord among them will not restrain them from doing evil, it can never secure them from suffering evil for so doing; and it is very absurd for sinners to think that their impudence will be their impunity." — Ed.

say, that Jehovah was among them. He who simply affirms a thing, does not show so much pride as these hypocrites when they set forth this question, ``Who shall deny that Jehovah dwells in the midst of us?'' God had indeed chosen an habitation among them for himself; but a condition was interposed, and yet they wished that he should be, as it were, tied to the temple, though they considered not what God required from them. They hence declared that Jehovah was in the midst of them; nay, they treated with disdain any one who dared to say a word to the contrary: nor is there a doubt but that they poured forth blasts of contempt on the Prophets. For whenever any one threatened what our Prophet immediately subjoins, such an answer as this was ever ready on their lips, --- ``What! will God then desert us and deny himself? Has he in vain commanded the temple to be built among us? Has he falsely promised that we should be a priestly kingdom? Dost thou not make God a covenant-breaker, by representing him as approving of the terrors of thy discourse? But he cannot deny himself:'' We hence see why the Prophet had thus spoken; it was to show that hypocrites boasted so to speaks of their proud confidence, because they thought that God could not be separated from them.

Now this passage teaches us how preposterous it is thus to abuse the name of God. There is indeed a reason why the Lord calls us to himself, for without him we are miserable; he also promises to be propitious to us, though, in many respects, we are guilty before him: he yet, at the same time, calls us to repentance. Whosoever, then, indulges himself and continues sunk in his vices, he is greatly deceived, if he applies to himself the promises of God; for, as it has been said, the one cannot be separated from the other. [189] But when God is propitious to them, they rightly conclude, that all things will be well with them, for we know that the paternal favor of God is a fountain of all felicity. But in this there was a vicious reasoning, --- that they promised to themselves the favor of God through a false imagination of the flesh, and not through his word. Thus we see that there is ever in hypocrisy some imitation of piety: but there is a sophistry (paralogismus) either in the principle itself or in the argument.

Now follows a threatening, Therefore, on your account, Zion as a field shall be plowed, and Jerusalem a heap shall be, and the mount of the house as the high places of a forest We here see how intolerable to God hypocrites are; for it was no ordinary proof of a dreadful vengeance, that the Lord should expose to reproach the holy city, and mount Zion, and his own temple. This revenge, then, being so severe, shows that to God there is nothing less tolerable than that false confidence with which hypocrites swell, for it brings dishonor on God himself; for they could not boast that they were God's people without aspersing him with many reproaches. What then is the meaning of this, ``God is in the midst of us,'' except that they thereby declared that they were the representatives (vicarios) of God, that the kingdom was sacred and also the priesthood? Since then they boasted that they did not presumptuously claim either the priesthood or the regal power, but that they were divinely appointed, we hence see that their profanation of God's name was most shameful. It is then no wonder that God was so exceedingly displeased with them:

[189] That is, the promise from repentance. — Ed.

and hence the Prophet says, For you shall Zion as a field be plowed; as though he said, ``This is like something monstrous, that the temple should be subverted, that the holy mount and the whole city should be entirely demolished, and that nothing should remain but a horrible desolation, --- who can believe all this? It shall however, take place, and it shall take place on your account; you will have to bear the blame of this so monstrous a change.'' For it was as though God had thrown heaven and earth into confusion; inasmuch as he himself was the founder of the temple; and we know with what high encomiums the place was honored. Since then the temple was built, as it were, by the hand of God, how could it be otherwise, but that, when destroyed, the waste and desolate place should be regarded as a memorable proof of vengeance? There is therefore no doubt but that Micah intended to mark out the atrocity of their guilt, when he says, For you shall Zion as a field be plowed, Jerusalem shall become a heap of stones; that is, it shall be so desolated, that no vestige of a city, well formed and regularly built, shall remain.

And the mount of the house, etc. He again mentions Zion, and not without reason: for the Jews thought that they were protected by the city Jerusalem; the whole country rested under its shadow, because it was the holy habitation of God. And again, the city itself depended on the temple, and it was supposed, that it was safe under this protection, and that it could hardly be demolished without overthrowing the throne of God himself: for as God dwelt between the cherubim, it was regarded by the people as a fortress incapable of being assailed. As then the holiness of the mount deceived them, it was necessary to repeat what was then almost incredible, at least difficult of being believed. He therefore adds, The mount of the house shall be as the high places of a forest; that is, trees shall grow there.

Why does he again declare what had been before expressed with sufficient clearness? Because it was not only a thing difficult to be believed, but also wholly inconsistent with reason, when what the Lord had said was considered, and that overlooked which hypocrites ever forget. God had indeed made a covenant with the people; but hypocrites wished to have God, as it were, bound to them, and, at the same time, to remain themselves free, yea, to have a full liberty to lead a wicked life. Since then the Jews were fixed in this false opinion, --- that God could not be disunited from his people, the Prophet confirms the same truth, that the mount of the house would be as the high places of a forest. And, by way of concession, he calls it the mount of the house, that is, of the temple; as though he said, ``Though God had chosen to himself a habitation, in which to dwell, yet this favor shall not keep the temple from being deserted and laid waste; for it has been profaned by your wickedness.''

Let us now see at what time Micah delivered this prophecy. This we learn from Jeremiah 26; for when Jeremiah prophesied against the temple, he was immediately seized and cast into prison; a tumultuous council was held, and he was well nigh being brought forth unto execution. All the princes condemned him; and when now he had no hope of deliverance, he wished, not so much to plead his own cause, as to denounce a threatening on them, that they might know that they could effect no good by condemning an innocent man. ``Micah, the Morasthite,'' he said, ``prophesied in the days of Hezekiah, and said thus, `Zion as a field shall be plowed, Jerusalem shall

be a heap, and the mount of the house as the high placers of a forest.'" Did the king and the people, he said, consult together to kill him? Nay, but the king turned, and so God repented; that is, the Lord deferred his vengeance; for king Hezekiah humbly deprecated the punishment which had been denounced. We now then know with certainty the time.

But it was strange that under such a holy king so many and so shameful corruptions prevailed, for he no doubt tried all he could to exercise authority over the people, and by his own example taught the judges faithfully and uprightly to discharge their office; but he was not able, with all his efforts, to prevent the Priests, and the Judges, and the Prophets, from being mercenaries. We hence learn how sedulously pious magistrates ought to labor, lest the state of the Church should degenerate; for however vigilant they may be, they can yet hardly, even with the greatest care, keep things (as mankind are so full of vices) from becoming very soon worse. This is one thing. And now the circumstance of the time ought to be noticed for another purpose: Micah hesitated not to threaten with such a judgment the temple and the city, though he saw that the king was endued with singular virtues. He might have thought thus with himself, ``King Hezekiah labored strenuously in the execution of his high office: now if a reproof so sharp and so severe will reach his ears, he will either despond, or think me to be a man extremely rigid, or, it may be, he will become exasperated against sound doctrine.'' The Prophet might have weighed these things in his mind; but, nevertheless, he followed his true course in teaching, and there is no doubt but that his severity pleased the king, for we know that he was oppressed with great cares and anxieties, because he could not, by all his striving, keep within proper bounds his counselors, the priests and the prophets. He therefore wished to have God's servants as his helpers. And this is what pious magistrates always desire, that their toils may in some measure be alleviated by the aid of the ministers of the word; for when the ministers of the word only teach in a cold manner, and are not intent on reproving vices, the severity of the magistrates will be hated by the people. ``Why, see, the ministers say nothing, and we hence conclude that they do not perceive so great evils; and yet the magistrates with the drawn sword inflict new punishments daily.'' When, therefore, teachers are thus silent, a greater odium no doubt is incurred by the magistrates: it is hence, as I have said, a desirable thing for them, that the free reproofs of teachers should be added to the punishments and judgments of the law.

We further see how calm and meek was the spirit of the king, that he could bear the great severity of the Prophet: Behold, he said, on your accounts etc.: ``Thou oughtest at least to have excepted'' me.'' For the king was not himself guilty. Why then did he connect him with the rest? Because the whole body was infected with contagion, and he spoke generally; and the good king did not retort nor even murmur, but, as we have recited from Jeremiah, he humbly deprecated the wrath of God, as though a part of the guilt belonged to him. Now follows ---

Chapter 4

Micah 4

Micah 4:1-2

1. But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it.

1. Accidet ultimis diebus, ut sit mons domus Jehovae dispositus in capite montium, et extollentur ipse prae sublimitatibus; et venient ad eum populi:

2. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

2. Et proficiscentur gentes multae et dicent, Venite, et ascendemus ad montem Jehovae, et ad domum Dei Jacob; et docebit nos de viis suis, et ambulabimus in semitis ejus; quia ex Sion prodibit lex, et verbum Jehovae ex Jerusalem.

Here Micah begins his address to the faithful, who were a remnant among that people; for though the infection had nearly extended over the whole body, there were yet a few, we know, who sincerely worshipped God. Hence Micah, that he might not dishearten God's children by extreme terror, reasonably adds what we have now heard, --- that though for a time the temple would be demolished and laid waste, it would yet be only for a season, for the Lord would be again mindful of his covenant. When, therefore, the Prophet had hitherto spoken of God's dreadful vengeance, he directed his discourse to the whole people and to the princess; but now, especially, and as it were apart, addresses the pious and sincere servants of God; as though he said, ``There is now a reason why I should speak to the few: I have hitherto spoken of the near judgment of God on the king's counselors, the priests and the prophets; in short, on the whole community, because they are all become wicked and ungodly; a contempt of God and an irreclaimable obstinacy have pervaded the whole body. Let them therefore have what they have deserved. But now I address the children

of God by themselves, for I have something to say to them.''

For though the Prophet publicly proclaimed this promise, there is yet no doubt but that he had regard only to the children of God, for others were not capable of receiving this consolation; nay, he had shortly before condemned the extreme security of hypocrites, inasmuch as they leaned upon God; that is, relied on a false pretense of religion, in thinking that they were redeemed by a lawful price when they had offered their sacrifices. And we know that we meet with the same thing in the writings of the Prophets, and that it is a practice common among them to add consolations to threatening, not for the sake of the whole people, but to sustain the faithful in their hope, who would have despaired, had not a helping hand been stretched forth to them: for the faithful, we know, tremble, as soon as God manifests any token of wrath; for the more any one is touched with the fear of God, the more he dreads his judgment, and fears on account of his threatening. We hence see how necessary it is to moderate threatenings and terrors, when prophets and teachers have a regard to the children of God; for, as I have said, they are without these fearful enough. Let us then know that Micah has hitherto directed his discourse to the wicked despisers of God, who yet put on the cloak of religion; but now he turns his address to the true and pious worshipers of God. And he further so addresses the faithful of his age, that his doctrine especially belongs to us now; for how has it been, that the kingdom of God has been propagated through all parts of the earth? How has it been, that the truth of the gospel has come to us, and that we are made partakers with the ancient people of the same adoption, except that this prophecy has been fulfilled? Then the calling of the Gentiles, and consequently our salvation, is included in this prophecy.

But the Prophet says, And it shall be in the extremity of days, [190] that the mount of the house of Jehovah shall be set in order [191] on the top of mountains The extremity of days the Prophet no doubt calls the coming of Christ, for then it was that the Church of God was built anew; in short, since it was Christ that introduced the renovation of the world, his advent is rightly called a new age; and hence it is also said to be the extremity of days: and this mode of expression very frequently occurs in Scripture; and we know that the time of the gospel is expressly called the last days and the last time by John, (John 2:18,) as well as by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, (Hebrews 1:2,) and also by Paul, (2 Timothy 3:1;) and this way of speaking they borrowed from the prophets. On this subject some remarks were made on Joel 2. Paul gives us the reason for this mode of speaking in 1 Corinthians 10:11: ``Upon whom,'' he says, ``the ends of the world are come.'' As Christ then brought in the completion of all things at his coming, the Prophet rightly says that it would be the last days when God would restore his Church by the hand of the Redeemer. At the

[190] In extremitate dierum, {{באחרית ,{הימים} in the posteriority or postremity of the days; {επ} {εσχατων} {των} {ημερων}, in the last days.---Sept. ``In the latter days,'' or, ``in the end of days.''---Newcome. ``In the last of the days.''---Henderson. See Jeremiah 23:20; 30:24; Ezekiel 38:8; Daniel 10:14; Hosea 3:5 Kimchi, as quoted by Lowth, says, ``Whenever the latter days are mentioned in Scripture, the days of the Messiah are always meant.'' --- Ed.

[191] Dispositus, {---{נכון constitus, constituted --- praeparatus, prepared--- firmatus, made firm --- are the words by which the term is commonly expressed. It comes from ,{כון} which Leigh justly says, means ``aptly and timely to frame, and likewise to make firm and sure;'' and he adds, ``The word noteth the ordering, perfecting, and fast establishing of anything.'' How suitably then it is here used: it is a mountain (which means evidently the Church) that is fitly framed, ordered, and firmly established. --- Ed.

same time, Micah no doubt intended to intimate that the time of God's wrath would not be short, but designed to show that its course would be for a long time.

It shall then be in the last of days; that is, when the Lord shall have executed his vengeance by demolishing the temple, by destroying the city, and by reducing the holy place into a solitude, this dreadful devastation shall continue, not for one year, nor for two; in a word, it will not remain only for forty or fifty years, but the Lord will let loose the reins of his wrath, that their minds may long languish, and that no restoration may be evident. We now then understand the Prophet's design as to the last days.

He calls the mount, the mount of the house of Jehovah, [192] in a sense different from what he did before; for then it was, as we have stated by way of concession; and now he sets forth the reason why God did not wish wholly to cast aside that mount; for he commanded his temple to be built there. It is the same, then, as though he said, --- ``This ought not to be ascribed to the holiness of the mountain, as if it excelled other mountains in dignity; but because there the temple was founded, not by the authority of men, but by a celestial oracle, as it is sufficiently known.''

The mount then of the house of Jehovah shall be set in order on the top of the mountains, that is it shall surpass in height all other mountains; and it shall be raised, he says, above the highest summits, and assemble [193] there shall all nations. It is certain, that by these words of the Prophet is to be understood no visible eminence of situation: for that mount was not increased at the coming of Christ; and they who lived in the time of the Prophet entertained no gross idea of this kind. But he speaks here of the eminence of dignity, --- that God would give to mount Zion a distinction so eminent, that all other mountains would yield to its honor. And how was this done? The explanation follows in the next verse. Lest, then, any one thought that there would be some visible change in mount Zion, that it would increase in size, the Prophet immediately explains what he meant and says, at the end of the verse, Come shall nations to God. It is now easy to see what its elevation was to be, --- that God

[192] Marckius adduces the opinions of the ancients as to the signification of this "mount." Some, such as Tertullian, Jerome, and Augustine, interpret it of Christ; while others, namely, Origen, the two Cyrils, and Chrysostom, regard it as signifying the Church; and with the latter most modern commentators agree. Here the consent of moderns exceeds that of the ancients; and it is no doubt sounder and wiser. — Ed.

[193] Convenient, {,{ונהרו literally, ``and flow;'' {σπευσουσι} --- hasten, Sept. It is flowing like that of a river, or of a strong current, and implies copiousness and spontaneity. ``There shall be,'' says Henry, ``a constant stream of believers flowing in from all parts into the Church, as the people of the Jews flowed into the temple, while it was standing, to worship there.'' Kimchi says, that this word means to ``run to what is pleasing or delightful,'' ---''currere ad beneplacitum, hoc est, ad id quod cupias An old author, quoted by Leigh, says, that it implies abundance and celerity --- affluentiam cum celeritate It is rendered ``flow together'' in Jeremiah 51:44. Instead of ``peoples,'' ,{עמים} Isaiah has {כל} ,{חגוים} ``all the nations.'' One MS. Has the same here, and three have {כל} before ,{עמים} and this seems to be the correct reading. ,{עם} in the plural number, is synonymous with ,{גוים} meaning nations. The rest of this verse is exactly the same in the two Prophets, except that ,{נכון} ``prepared,'' is differently placed, and ,{הוא} ``it,'' is added by Micah after ,{נשא} ``exalted.'' In the second verse, which is the third in Isaiah, there is a complete verbal identity, except that {גוים} and {עמים} are reversed, and that {ו} before {אל} is wanting in Isaiah; but it is supplied in several MSS. In the third, the fourth in Isaiah, there are verbal varieties in the two first lines, the four remaining are exactly the same with the exception of a paragogic ,{ן} nun, added to a verb by Micah, and the verb {ישאו} is singular in Isaiah. In the two lines referred to, there is also an addition of {עד} ,{רחוק} ``afar of,'' in Micah. Isaiah. {ושפט} {בין} {הגוים} 4. {והוכיחלעמים} {רבים} And he shall judge among the nation, And shall convince many peoples. Micah. whwkyx lgwyM eumyM ed rxwq wspj byN emyM rbyM And he shall judge among many peoples, And shall convince strong nations afar off. With this verse the passage ends in Isaiah; Micah adds another: and this, with the two other circumstances --- that the passage is fuller and more connected with the context here than in Isaiah, may seem to favor the opinion that Isaiah, and not Micah, was the copyist; but the words, with which the passage is introduced in Isaiah, forbid such a supposition. ``Bishop Lowth, on Isaiah 2:2, thinks that Micah took this passage from Isaiah. It is true that he has improved it after the manner of imitators. Or, the Spirit may have inspired both with this prediction: or both may have copied some common original, the words of a Prophet well known at the time. --- Newcome.

designed this mount to be, as it were, a royal seat. As under the monarchy of the king of Persia, the whole of the east, we know, was subject to one tower of the Persian; so also, when mount Zion became the seat of sovereign power, God designed to reign there, and there he designed that the whole world should be subject to him; and this is the reason and the Prophet said that it would be higher than all other mountains. Hence his meaning, in this expression, is sufficiently evident.

There follows, however, a fuller explanation, when he says, that many nations would come He said only before that nations would come: but as David, even in his age, made some nations tributary to himself, the Prophet here expresses something more, --- that many nations would come; as if he had said, ``Though David subjugated some people to himself, yet the borders of his kingdom were narrow and confined, compared with the largeness of that kingdom which the Lord will establish at the coming of his Messiah: for not a few nations but many shall assemble to serve him, and shall say,'' etc. The Prophet now shows that it would be a spiritual kingdom. When David subdued the Moabites and the Amorites, and others, he imposed a certain tribute to be paid annually but he was not able to establish among them the pure and legitimate worship of God, nor was he able to unite them in one faith. Then the Moabites and other nations, though they paid a tribute to David, did not yet worship the true God, but continued ever alienated from the Church. But our Prophet shows that the kingdom, which God would set up at the coming of the Messiah, would be spiritual.

For they shall say, [194] Let us you and ascend to the mount of Jehovah, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for, go [195] forth shall a law from Zion, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem Throughout this passage the Prophet teaches us, that people are not to be constrained by an armed force, or by the power of the sword, to submit to David's posterity, but that they are to be really and thoroughly reformed, so that they submit themselves to God, unite with the body of the Church, and become one people with the children of Abraham; for they will yield a voluntary service, and embracing the teaching of the Law, they will renounce their own superstitions. This then is the Prophet's meaning. But the remainder we shall defer till to-morrow.

Prayer.

Grant, Almighty God that as thou hast been pleased to erect the throne of thy Son among us, we may rely on his protection and learn to resign ourselves wholly to thee, and never turn aside here and there, but with tulle obedience so submit ourselves to the King who has been appointed by thee, that he may own us as his legitimate people, and so glorify thy name, that we may not at the same time profane it by an ungodly and wicked life, but testify by our works that we are really thy subjects. and

[194] Marckius says, “corde, ore, et opere — with the heart, mouth, and in deed.”

[195] {,כי ki, for, or because: what follows contains the reason for the preceding promise. How could it be, that the mount of the house of Jehovah should be firmly fixed on the top of mountains, etc.? The answer is here given, ``for go forth shall a law from Zion,'' etc. And this was literally fulfilled at the commencement of the Gospel; it was first preached at Jerusalem: in consequence of this, the mount of Jehovah's house, or the Church, was formed; and what is here predicted was in part fulfilled, and will no doubt be hereafter more completely fulfilled. It is said, ``on top of the mountains,'' not of a mountain. The Church was not to be confined to one place, but was to be preeminent throughout the earth. It was to be coextensive with the word that was to go forth from Zion. --- Ed.

that thou attains full authority over us, so that thy name may be sanctified and thy Spirit may really guide us, until at length thy Son, who has gathered us when we were awfully gone astray, gather us again to that kingdom, which he as purchased for us by his own blood. Amen.

Lecture Eighty-eighth

We began yesterday to explain the prophecy, in which Micah promises the restoration of the Church. We have said that this promise cannot be understood except of Christ's kingdom, for it refers to the last days. And it was also added, that the superiority and eminence of mount Zion, of which he speaks, cannot be otherwise understood than of God's spiritual kingdom; for the explanation follows, when he says, that many nations would come to be taught in the ways of the Lord. We hence see that an earthly empire is not what is here predicted, but what exists through the word and celestial doctrine. But each particular ought to be considered by us. We yesterday said, that in the distinct mention made of many nations, there is to be understood a contrast; for till that time God was only known by one people. Since God then had chosen the race of Abraham alone, there is here pointed out a future change, when he shall gather his Church from various nations, so as to do away with the difference between the Gentiles and the Jews.

It now follows, They shall say, Come, and let us ascend to the mount of Jehovah The Prophet shows in these words that not only each one would be obedient to God, when called, but that they would also encourage one another: and this ardor is what is justly required in the faithful; they ought to animate and stir on one another; for it is not enough for each of us himself to obey God, but this zeal ought to be added, by which we may strive to produce a mutual benefit. This concern then is what the Prophet now refers to, when he says, ``Come, that we may ascend to the mountain of the Lord.'' He might have said, that people would come, and there close his sentence; but he wished to join the two clauses, --- that they, who had before despised the God of Israel, would come from all parts, --- and also that they would become exhorters to one another. Come then that we may ascend. But the manner of the exhortation deserves to be noticed; for each one offers himself as a companion in the journey. We indeed see that many are prompt enough, when others are to be stimulated in their duty; but they at the same time lie still; their whole fervor is consumed in sending others, and they themselves move not, no, not a finger; so far are they from running with alacrity in company with others. The Prophet shows here, that the faithful will be so solicitous about the salvation of their brethren that they will strenuously run themselves, and that they will prescribe nothing to others but what they themselves perform. Come then that we may ascend; they say not, ``Go, ascend to the mount of Jehovah;'' but, Let us go together.'' It is then the right way of encouraging, when we really show that we require nothing from our brethren but what we desire to do ourselves.

The circumstance of time must now be noticed; for what the Prophet says respecting the nations coming into mount Zion, as it was to be reduced to a waste, might have appeared a fable; for what had he shortly before predicted? That Zion would be plowed as a field, and that trees would grow there, that it would become

a wild forest. How then could it be, that many nations would flow to it as to a most renowned place, as it was to be reduced to a dreadful desolation? But the Prophet here extols the wonderful power of God, --- that in this wild and desert place there would at length be raised a noble and a celebrated temple, where God would show mercy to his own people. Hence he promises what this mount of Jehovah would be, which was for a time to be forsaken; and that there would be, as formerly, a noble temple in the place, where desolation had for a season existed.

It afterwards follows, And he will teach us of his ways. [196] Here the Prophet in a few words defines the legitimate worship of God: for it would not be sufficient for the nations to come together into one place to profess the one true God, unless true obedience followed, which rests on faith, as faith does on the word. It ought then to be especially noticed, that the Prophet sets here the word of God before us, in order to show that true religion is founded on the obedience of faith, and that God cannot be truly worshipped, except when he himself teaches his people, and prescribes to them what is necessary to be done. Hence when the will of God is revealed to us, we then can truly worship him. When the word is again taken away, there will indeed be some form of divine worship; but there will be no genuine religion, such as is pleasing to God. And hence we also learn, that there is no other way of raising up the Church of God than by the light of the word, in which God himself, by his own voice, points out the way of salvation. Until then the truth shines, men cannot be united together, so as to form a true Church.

Since it is so, it follows, that where the truth is either corrupted or despised, there is no religion, at least such as is approved by God. Men may indeed boast of the name with their lips: but there is no true religion before God, except it be formed according to the rule of his word. It hence also follows, that there is no Church, except it be obedient to the word of God, and be guided by it: for the prophet defines here what true religion is, and also how God collects a Church for himself. He will then teach us of his ways And a third particular may be added, --- that God is robbed of his right and of his honor, when mortals assume to themselves the authority to teach; for it is to God alone that this office of teaching his people can strictly be ascribed. (proprie tribuitur.) There were then priests and prophets, yet Micah here brings them down to their proper state, and shows that the right and the office of teaching would be in the power of the only true God. We hence see that God claims this office for himself, that we may not be tossed to and fro, and led astray by various teachers, but continue in simple obedience to his word, so that he alone may be the Supreme. In short, God is not the God and Head of the Church, except he be the chief and the only Teacher.

Wheat he now says, ``He will teach us of his ways,'' ought to be thus understood. He will teach us what his ways are; as though the Prophet had said, that the perfect wisdom of men is to understand what pleases God, and what is his will: for there is nothing farther to be learnt.

It follows, And we will walk in his paths. By this clause we are reminded, that the

[196] Both Newcome and Henderson render the {,{ı vau, here, that, ``that he may teach us,'' etc.: but it is better to retrain the most common meaning as a simple copulative, as it is done in our version, and by Calvin, and by Lowth in Isaiah. The passage thus runs better, and more emphatically expresses the language of faith. --- Ed.

truth of God is not, as they say, speculative, but full of energizing power. God then not only speaks to the end that every one may acknowledge that to be true which proceeds from him, but at the same time he demands obedience. Hence we shall then only be the disciples of God, when we walk in his ways: for if we only nod with our ears, as asses are wont to do, and assent to what God says with our mouth and lips, it is extremely vain and absurd. It is therefore then only that men really profit under the teaching of God, when they form their life according to his doctrine, and be prepared with their feet to walk, and to follow whithersoever be may call them. We will then walk in his paths

Micah had hitherto related only what the faithful would do; he now himself confirms the same truth, For from Zion shall go forth a law, [197] and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem. Here is a reason given why many nations would come to the temple of the Lord; and that is, because a doctrine would be then promulgated, which had been before heard only in one place. We indeed know that the Jews came to the temple, not only to worship, but also to be instructed in the Law of God. The Law then had at that time, as it were, its habitation in Zion: there was the sanctuary of celestial wisdom. But what does our Prophet say? A law shall go forth from Zion, that is, it shall be proclaimed far and wide: the Lord will show, not only in one corner, what true religion is, and how he seeks to be worshipped, but he will send forth his voice to the extreme limits of the earth. A law then shall go forth from Zion, according to what is said in Psalm 110,

`the scepter of thy power the Lord will send forth from Zion.'

In that passage the doctrine of Christ is metaphorically called a scepter, or is compared to a royal scepter; for Christ does not otherwise rule among us, than by the doctrine of his Gospel: and there David declares, that this scepter would be sent far abroad by God the Father, that Christ might have under his rule all those nations which had been previously aliens. Such is the meaning in this place, A law from Zion shall go forth Then it follows, The word of Jehovah from Jerusalem This is a repetition of the same sentiment, which is often the case. Then by {תורה}, ture, the Prophet means no other thing than doctrine: but, by another term, he confirms the same thing, that is that God would be heard not only at Jerusalem and in Judea, but that he would make his word to be proclaimed everywhere. It now follows ---

Micah 4:3

3. And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

3. Et judicabit inter populos multos, et arguet (vel, corripiet) gentes robustos

[197] So Newcome renders it; Lowth and Henderson read the same with our version, "the law." The absence of the definite article is certainly no objection, as it is but seldom used in Hebrew. But "a law" is better except we render the copulative before "word," even; and then we shall destroy the distinct character of the line. It appears that, according to the usual style of the Prophets, what the first line states indefinitely, is in the second specified, as being the "word of Jehovah." The word {,{תורה law, in Hebrew, is more comprehensive than the word law, in our language. It is derived from the Hiphil of ,{ירה} which means to direct, to appoint, to instruct, to teach. Hence the noun, ,{תורה} may be rendered, directory, institution, law, teaching, or doctrine. ``It doth,'' says Leigh, ``not only signify strictly what is to be done, but it denoteth largely any heavenly doctrine, whether it be promise or precept.'' It means often the whole of God's revealed word, as in Psalm 1:2; Psalm 119:174, etc. See Joshua 1:8. --- Ed.

usque in longinquum, et concident gladios suos in vomeres, et lanceas suas in falces: non tollent gens contra gentem gladium, et non assuescent ultra praelio.

The Prophet here describes the fruit of Divine truth, --- that God would restore all nations to such gentleness, that they would study to cultivate fraternal peace among themselves, and that all would consult the good of others, having laid aside every desire for doing harm. As then he has lately showed, that the Church of God could not be otherwise formed than by the Word, and that the legitimate worship of God cannot be set up and continued, except where God is honored with the obedience of faith; so now he shows that Divine truth produces this effect, --- that they, who before lived in enmity towards one another and burned with the lust of doing harm, being full of cruelty and avarice, will now, having their disposition changed, devote themselves wholly to acts of kindness. But, before the Prophet comes to this subject, he says, ---

He will judge [198] among many people, and will reprove strong nations. The word judge, in Hebrew, means the same as to rule or govern. It is certain that God is spoken of here: it is then the same as though the Prophet had said that though the nations had not hitherto obeyed God, they would now own him as king and submit to his government. God has indeed ever governed the world by his hidden providence, as he does still govern it: for how much soever the devil and the ungodly may rage; nay, how ever much they may boil with unbridled fury, there is no doubt but that God restrains and checks their madness by his hidden bridle. But the Scripture speaks of God's kingdom in two respects. God does indeed govern the devil and all the wicked, but not by his word, nor by the sanctifying power of his Spirit: it is so done, that they obey God, not willingly, but against their will. The peculiar government of God is that of his Church only, where, by his word and Spirit, He bends the hearts of men to obedience, so that they follow him voluntarily and willingly, being taught inwardly and outwardly, --- inwardly by the influence of the Spirit, --- outwardly by the preaching of the word. Hence it is said in Psalm 110, `Thy willing people shall then assemble.' This is the government that is here described by the Prophet; God then shall judge; not as he judges the world, but he will, in a peculiar manner, make them obedient to himself so that they will look for nothing else than to be wholly devoted to him.

But as men must first be subdued before they render to God such obedience, the Prophet expressly adds, And he will reprove (corripiet) or convince (arguet) many people. And this sentence ought to be carefully noticed; for we hence learn, that such is our innate pride, that not one of us can become a fit disciple to God, except we be by force subdued. Truth then would of itself freeze amidst such corruption as we have, except the Lord proved us guilty, except he prepared us beforehand, as it were, by violent measures. We now then perceive the design of the Prophet in

[198] There is a difference of opinion as to the nominative case to the verb "judge;" whether it be Jehovah in the preceding line, or the word of Jehovah. The most natural construction is the last supposition. Jerome and Cyril, as quoted by Marckius, refer it to the word of Jehovah, taking the word for Christ: but this cannot be admitted, as the law and the word seem to mean the same thing, and must be considered as the word of the Gospel; and Justin Martyr and Irenaeus, when referring to this passage regard it as such. And this is the view which Marckius seems to prefer. The rendering then would be, — And it shall judge among many people, And convince strong nations afar off.

connecting reproof with the government of God: for the verb {יכח}, ikech, signifies sometimes to expostulate, to convince, and sometimes to correct or reprove. [199] In short, the wickedness and perversity of our flesh are here implied; for even the best of us would never offer themselves to God, without being first subdued, and that by God's powerful correction. This, then, is the beginning of the kingdom of Christ.

But when he says, that strong nations would be reproved, he hereby eulogizes and sets forth the character of the kingdom of which he speaks: and we hence learn the power of truth, --- that strong men, when thus reproved, shall offer themselves, without any resistance, to be ruled by God. Correction is indeed necessary, but God employs no external force, nor any armed power, when he makes the Church subject to himself: and yet he collects strong nations. Hence then is seen the power of truth: for where there is strength, there is confidence and arrogance, and also rebellious opposition. Since then the Lord, without any other helps, thus corrects the perverseness of men, we hence see with what inconceivable power God works, when he gathers his own Church. It is to be added, that there is not the least doubt, but that this is to be applied to the person of Christ. Micah speaks of God, without mentioning Christ by name; for he was not yet manifested in the flesh: but we know that in his person has this been fulfilled, --- that God has governed the universe, and subjected to himself the people of the whole world. We hence conclude that Christ is true God; for he is not only a minister to the Father, as Moses, or any one of the Prophets; but he is the supreme King of his Church.

Before I proceed to notice the fruit, the expression, {עד} {רחוק}, od rechuk, ``afar off'' must be observed. It may intimate a length of time as well as distance of place. Jonathan applies it to a long continuance of time, --- that God would convince men to the end of the world. But the Prophet, I doubt not, intended to include the most distant countries; as though he had said, that God would not be the king of one people only, or of Judea alone, but that his kingdom would be propagated to the extremities of the earth. He will then convince people afar off

He afterward adds, with respect to the fruit, They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks I have already briefly explained the meaning of the Prophet: he in fact shows that when the nations should be taught by the word of God, there would be such a change, that every one would study to do good, and to perform the duties of love towards his neighbors. But by speaking of swords and spears he briefly intimates, what men, until they are made gentle by the word of the Lord, are ever intent on iniquitous tyranny and oppression; nor can it be otherwise, while every one follows his own nature; for there are none who are not wedded to their own advantages, and the cupidity of men is insatiable. As then all are thus intent on gain, while every one is blinded by self-love, what but cruelty must ever break forth from this wicked principle? Hence then it is, that men cannot

[199] The two verbs here used are {שפט}, to judge, and {הוכיח}, in Hiphil, to reprove. The first is to decide what is right and wrong, and also to defend the right and to punish the wrong; hence it means to arbitrate, and also to vindicate as well as to punish. The first sense is most suitable to this place. --- The other verb does not occur in Kal, but in Hiphil, it means to make manifest, or show, by facts or by words, or by action; and hence it signifies to demonstrate, to convince, to reprove, to chastise. The Septuagint often renders it by {ελεγχειν}, which, Parkhurst says, means, in its primary sense, to demonstrate by convincing reasons or arguments. Lowth's version in Isaiah is, ``And shall work conviction,'' etc. Newcome renders it ``convince.'' The rendering of Henderson, ``give decision,'' is not to be approved. See John 16:8. --- Ed.

cultivate peace with one another; for every one seeks to be the first, and draws every thing to himself; no one will willingly give way: then dissensions arise, and from dissensions, fightings. This is what the Prophet intimates. And then he adds, that the fruit of the doctrine of Christ would however be such, that men, who were before like cruel wild beasts, would become gentle and meek. Forge then shall they their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks.

Raise, he says, shall not a nation a sword against a nation, and accustom themselves they shall no more to war He explains here more fully what I have before said, --- that the Gospel of Christ would be to the nations, as it were, a standard of peace: as when a banner is raised up, soldiers engage in battle, and their fury is kindled; so Micah ascribes a directly opposite office to the Gospel of Christ, --- that it will restore those to the cultivation of peace and concord, who before were given to acts of hostility. For when he says, `Raise a sword shall not a nation against nation,' he intimates, as I have already stated, that wherever Christ does not reign, men are wolves to men, for every one is disposed to devour all others. Hence as men are naturally impelled by so blind an impulse, the Prophet declares, that this madness cannot be corrected, that men will not cease from wars, that they will not abstain from hostilities, until Christ becomes their teacher: for by the word {למד}, lamed, he implies, that it is a practice which ever prevails among mankind, that they contend with one another, that they are ever prepared to do injuries and wrongs, except when they put off their natural disposition. But gentleness, whence does it proceed? Even from the teaching of the Gospel.

This passage ought to be remembered; for we here learn, that there is not growing among us the real fruit of the Gospel, unless we exercise mutual love and benevolence, and exert ourselves in doing good. Though the Gospel is at this day purely preached among us, when yet we consider how little progress we make in brotherly love, we ought justly to be ashamed of our indolence. God proclaims daily that he is reconciled to us in his Son; Christ testifies, that he is our peace with God, that he renders him propitious to us, for this end, that we may live as brethren together. We indeed wish to be deemed the children of God, and we wish to enjoy the reconciliation obtained for us by the blood of Christ; but in the meantime we tear one another, we sharpen our teeth, our dispositions are cruel. If then we desire really to prove ourselves to be the disciples of Christ, we must attend to this part of divine truth, each of us must strive to do good to his neighbors. But this cannot be done without being opposed by our flesh; for we have a strong propensity to self-love, and are inclined to seek too much our own advantages. We must therefore put off these inordinate and sinful affections, that brotherly kindness may succeed in their place.

We are also reminded that it is not enough for any one to refrain from doing harm, unless he be also occupied in doing good to his brethren. The Prophet might indeed have said only They shall break their swords and their spears; so that they shall hereafter abstain from doing any hurt to others: this only is not what he says; but, ``They shall forge,'' or beat,'' their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks;'' that is, when they shall abstain from all injuries they will seek to exercise themselves in the duties of love, consistently with what Paul says, when he

exhorts those who had stolen to steal no more, but to work with their own hands, that they might relieve others (Ephesians 4:28.) Except then we endeavor to relieve the necessities of our brethren, and to offer them assistance, there will not be in us but one part of true conversion, as the case is with many, who are not indeed inhuman, who commit no plunder, who give no occasion for complaint, but they live to themselves, and enjoy unprofitable leisure. This indolence the Prophet here indirectly condemns, when he speaks of the plowshares and the pruning hooks.

Again, a question may be here asked, --- Was this fulfilled at the coming of Christ? It seems that the Prophet does not describe here the state of the Church for a time, but shows what would be the kingdom of Christ to the end. But we see, that when the Gospel was at first preached, the whole world boiled with wars more than ever; and now, though the Gospel in many parts is clearly preached, yet discords and contentions do not cease; we also see that rapacity, ambition, and insatiable avarice, greatly prevail; and hence arise contentions and bloody wars. And at the same time it would have been inconsistent in the Prophet to have thus spoken of the kingdom of Christ, had not God really designed to perform what is here predicted. My answer to this is, --- that as the kingdom of Christ was only begun in the world, when God commanded the Gospel to be everywhere proclaimed, and as at this day its course is not as yet completed; so that which the Prophet says here has not hitherto taken place; but inasmuch as the number of the faithful is small, and the greater part despise and reject the Gospel, so it happens, that plunders and hostilities continue in the world. How so? Because the Prophet speaks here only of the disciples of Christ. He shows the fruit of his doctrine, that wherever it strikes a living root, it brings forth fruit: but the doctrine of the Gospel strikes roots hardly in one out of a hundred. [200] The measure also of its progress must be taken to the account; for so far as any one embraces the doctrine of the Gospel, so far he becomes gentle and seeks to do good to his neighbors. But as we as yet carry about us the relics of sin in our flesh, and as our knowledge of the Gospel is not yet perfect, it is no wonder, that not one of us has hitherto wholly laid aside the depraved and sinful affections of his flesh.

It is also easy hence to see, how foolish is the conceit of those, who seek to take away the use of the sword, on account of the Gospel. The Anabaptists, we know, have been turbulent, as though all civil order were inconsistent with the kingdom of Christ, as though the kingdom of Christ was made up of doctrine only, and that doctrine without any influence. We might indeed do without the sword, were we angels in this world; but the number of the godly, as I have already said, is small; it is therefore necessary that the rest of the people should be restrained by a strong bridle; for the children of God are found mixed together, either with cruel monsters or with wolves and rapacious men. Some are indeed openly rebellious, others are hypocrites. The use of the sword will therefore continue to the end of the world.

[200] "All these predictions must be confined to the nations converted by the word of Jehovah, and brought into Zion, that is, such as truly repent and believe, and must not be extended to all nations indiscriminately, or to all who embrace the Christian name, who are often as far as possible from the kingdom of Christ, inasmuch as they neither learn nor follow his doctrine. — Marckius.

We must now understand that at the time our Prophet delivered this discourse, Isaiah had used the very same words, (Isaiah 2:4:) and it is probable that Micah was a disciple of Isaiah. They, however, exercised at the same time the Prophetic office, though Isaiah was the oldest. But Micah was not ashamed to follow Isaiah and to borrow his words; for he was not given to self ostentation, as though he would not adduce any thing but what was his own; but he designedly adopted the expressions of Isaiah, and related verbally what he had said, to show that there was a perfect agreement between him and that illustrious minister of God, that his doctrine might obtain more credit. We hence see how great was the simplicity of our Prophet, and that he did not regard what malevolent and perverse men might say: ``What! he only repeats the words of another.'' Such a calumny he wholly disregarded; and he thought it enough to show that he faithfully declared what God had commanded. Though we have not the {רחיק} {עד}, od rechuk, in Isaiah, yet the meaning is the same: in all other things they agree. It now follows---

Micah 4:4

4. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it

4. Et sedebunt (hoc est, quiescent, vel, quieti habitabunt) quisque sub vite sua et sub ficn sua; et nemo erit qui exterreat; quia os Jehovae exercituum loquutum est.

Micah goes on here with the same subject, --- that when the minds of men shall be disposed to acts of kindness, every one shall enjoy God's blessing without being disturbed. There seems indeed to be two things here included, --- that acts of hostility shall cease, --- and that real happiness cannot exist among men, except Christ rules among them by the doctrine of his Gospel. And the same thing the prophets teach elsewhere, that is, that every one shall live without fear; and this they do, in order to show that men ever live in a miserable dread, except when they are safe under the protection of God. It is the same thing as though the Prophet had said, that the life of men is most miserable, where the doctrine of the Gospel is not had, inasmuch as when they are disturbed by continual disquietude, every one fears for himself, every one suffers constant terrors. There is nothing more miserable than such a state of things, for peace is the chief good.

We now then understand the meaning of the Prophet to be, --- that under the reign of Christ the faithful shall enjoy true and full happiness, as they shall be exempt from trembling and fear; hence he names the vine and the fig-tree. He might have said, ``Every one shall live securely at home;'' but he says, Every one shall rest under his own fig-tree and under his own vine; that is, though exposed to thieves, he shall yet fear no violence, no injury; for those who were thieves shall observe what is just and right; those who were bloody shall study to do good. Hence when no one closes the door of his house, yea, when he goes out into the fields and sleeps in the open air; he will still be safe and secure. We now then see why the Prophet mentions here the fig-tree and the vine, rather than the dwelling-house.

And there will be no one to terrify them. What the Prophet designed to express is here more clearly specified, --- that there would be no danger, and that there would therefore be no need of hiding-places or of any defenses. Why? Because the very

fields, he says, will be free from every thing that may hurt, as there will be none to cause fear. And the Prophet seems to allude to the blessing promised in the Law, for Moses used nearly the very same words: and the Prophets, we know, drew many things from the Law; for their design was to retain the people in its doctrine, and to render it as familiar as possible to them. As then Moses promised, among other things, this security,

`Ye shall sleep, and none shall terrify you,' (Leviticus 26:6;)

so the Prophet also, in speaking here of the kingdom of Christ, shows that this blessing would be then fully accomplished.

He now at last subjoins, The mouth of Jehovah hath thus spoken, that he might confirm what seemed incredible: for, as I have already said, since he had shortly before predicted the devastation of mount Zion and the ruin of the temple, it seemed very improbable that the nations would come there to worship God. But he declares that the mouth of God had thus spoken, that the faithful might overcome all obstacles and struggle against despair; though they saw the temple destroyed, the mount Zion desolated, though they saw a horrible waste and wild beasts occupying the place of men; they were yet to continue to entertain firm hope. --- How so? Because Jehovah has made a promise and he will fulfill it: for when mention is made of God's mouth, his omnipotence is to be understood by which will be executed whatever he has promised.

Prayer.

Grant, Almighty God, that since, at the coming of Christ thy Son, thou didst really perform what thy servants, the Prophets, had previously so much foretold, and since thou daily invites us to the unity of faith, that with united efforts we may truly serve thee, --- O grant, that we may not continue torn asunder, every one pursuing his own perverse inclinations, at a time when Christ is gathering us to thee; nor let us only profess with the mouth and in words, that we are under thy government, but prove that we thus feel in real sincerity and may we then add to the true and lawful worship of thy name brotherly love towards one another, that with united efforts we may promote each other's good, and that our adoption may thus be proved and be more and more confirmed, that we may ever be able with full confidence to call on thee as our Father through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lecture Eighty-ninth

Micah 4:5

5. For all people will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the LORD our God for ever and ever.

5. Quia omnes populi ambulabunt, quisque in nomine dei sui; nos autem ambulabimus in nomine Jehovae Dei nostri in seculum et usque.

Micah, after having spoken of the restoration of the Church, now confirms the same truth, and shows that the faithful would have reason enough to cleave constantly to their God, and to despise all the superstitions of the world, and that though they may be tossed here and there by contrary opinions, they will yet continue in true religion. This verse then is connected with the kingdom of Christ; for until we are gathered, and Christ shines among us and rules us by his word, there can be

in us no constancy, no firmness. But when under the auspices of Christ, we join together in one body the Church, such then becomes the constancy of our faith, that nothing can turn us from the right course, though new storms were at any time to arise, by which the whole world might be shaken, and though it were to happen that the universe should be agitated or pass away. We now understand what the Prophet means.

He therefore says, All nations shall walk every one in the name of his god. This sentence must be thus explained, --- ``Though nations be divided into various sects, and each be addicted to their own superstitions, yet we shall continue firm in the pure worship of God and in unity of faith.'' But this question occurs, how could the Prophet say that there would be such discords in the world, when he had shortly before spoken of the Church being gathered and united together? for he had said, Come shall all nations, and each will say, Come, let us ascend into the mount of Jehovah. There seems to be here some sort of inconsistency, --- that all nations would come to mount Zion, and yet that every people would have their own gods. But the solution is not difficult: the Prophet in this verse strengthens the faithful, until Christ should be revealed to the world: nor is there any doubt but the Prophet intended to sustain the confidence of the godly, who might have otherwise been overwhelmed a hundred times with despair. When the children of Israel were driven into exile, when their inheritance was taken away from them, when the temple had been demolished, when, in a word, no visible religion existed, they might, as I have said, have desponded, had not this promise come to their minds, --- that God would restore mount Zion, and gather a Church from the whole world. But there was also need of some confirmation, and this is what the Prophet now subjoins. Hence he says, ``Since the Lord gives you hope of so glorious a restoration, you ought to feel confidence. and, in reliance on his promise, to continue in his true worship, how much soever the Gentiles may serve their own idols, and boast that they have the true God. However, then, every one of the nations may take pride in their superstitions, you ought not to fluctuate, nor turn here and there, like reeds, which are tossed to and fro, as the wind changes; but ye shall continue firm and steady in your course; for ye know that God is true, who has once for all adopted you, and has promised that your salvation will be the object of his care, even when the world shall think you to be ruined and lost.''

We hence see that what the Prophet had in view was to raise up into confidence the minds of the godly in the midst not only of troubles, but of utter confusion. All nations then shall walk, that is, when the temple and the city shall be demolished, and the people be led into distant exile, the ungodly will, at the same time, triumph, every one will extol his own gods: though our God should not then appear, there will yet be no reason why we should be discouraged; but we ought to recomb on his word. We shall then walk in the name of our God, and that for ever and ever; that is, though it should happen that the world should a hundred times be turned and turned over again, there shall yet be no change in our minds: for as the truth of God is eternal, so also our faith ought to be constant and never to vary. Now the difficulty is removed, and we see how these two things agree, --- that all nations shall come

and with one consent worship God, and yet that to each of them there would be their own gods: for the diversity of time must be here regarded, when all nations would walk every one in the name of his god. [201]

By saying, {אלהיו} {בשם} {איש}, aish beshem Aleiu, he touches, in an indirect way, on that variety which exists among men. Though all of them pertinaciously follow and defend their own superstitions yet each one fabricates a goal for himself. Thus it happens, that nothing is certain, for they follow only their own inventions. But this the Prophet meant only to touch by the way. His main object was that which I have stated, --- that though the Church of God would be small, and should find a great multitude opposed to it, it ought not yet to succumb. We know how violent a thing is public consent; for when the majority conspire together, the small number, who entertain a different opinion, are, as it were instantly swallowed up. It is not then without reason that the Prophet exhorts the faithful here to an invincible firmness of mind, that they might triumph over all the nations. However small, then, might be the faithful in number, the Prophet wished them to look down, as it were from a higher place, not only on a large multitudes but on all mankind. Though then all nations walk, etc.: nor is the word {כל}, cal, all, superfluous, --- though all nations shall walk, etc. There was then but one nation, the offspring of Abraham, among whom true religion existed; and it was a dreadful devastation, when God suffered the royal city and the temple to be pulled down, and the whole body of the people to be torn asunder, to be driven away here and there, so that no kingdom and no kind of civil community remained. Hence the Prophet intimates here, that though the faithful should find that in number and dignity they were far surpassed by their enemies, they yet should not despair. ``Though then all the nations walked, every one in the name of their god, --- though every people set up their superstitions against you, and all conspired against you together, yet stand ye firm and proceed in your course, and this not for a short time, but for ever and ever.'' [202] Now this passage shows that faith depends not on the suffrages of men, and that we ought not to regard what any one may think, or what may be the consent of all; for the truth of God alone

[201] Marckius views this passage differently. He considers that the converted Gentiles are meant here, — that when turned from their idols and their superstitions, they shall profess the true God, as revealed in the Gospel, and that each nation will regard him as its own God: however various in outward circumstances, they shall yet acknowledge the God revealed in his Word as their own. This view most certainly harmonizes better with the context than that of Calvin, which is commonly adopted. There is another, which is the same nearly in meaning, but founded on a different rendering of the words. The Jewish commentator Abarbanel, as quoted by Marckius, gives this version: — "Nam omnes populi, qui ambulabant quisque in nomine dei sui, et now ambulabimus in nomine Jehovae Dei nostri." The words will no doubt admit of this construction; for it is often the case in Hebrew, that {אשר,} who, is understood before a verb in the future tense, especially when it has the meaning of the present, as here, for the preceding ``ambulabant,'' might be rendered ``ambulant,'' without any inconstancy in the meaning. I would therefore render the verse thus, --- For all the nations, Who walk each in the name of its god, And we ourselves, Shall walk in the name of Jehovah our God, For ever and ever. The nations were then walking in the name of their multiplied gods; but at the time alluded to, both Gentiles and Jews would walk together in the name of Jehovah. There is thus an entire correspondence between all the parts of this remarkable passage, which extends from the first verse to the seventh inclusive; a part of which, extending only to the end of the third verse, is to be found in Isaiah. --- Ed.

[202] {לעולם ,{ועד} ``for ages and perpetually.'' {עולם} means most commonly an indefinite, rather than an infinite time. The verb signifies to be hidden or concealed; and so the noun means an undefined and unknown period. ``For ages,'' would perhaps be its best version; whether these ages be limited or unlimited must depend on the context. Here {עד} is added to show that these ages would be endless, or to the end of time: for {עד} is ``still,'' unceasing futurity, that which is perpetual, still the same. The Levitical dispensation was {לעולם} ``for ages,'' but the new state of things promised here is to be, not only for ages, but also perpetually, that is to the end of time, while the world lasts. --- Ed.

ought to be deemed sufficient by us. How much soever, then, the whole world may oppose God, our faith ought not to be changeable, but remain firm on this strong foundation, --- that God, who cannot deceive, has spoken. This is one thing. Then, in the second place, it must be added, that this firmness ought to be perpetual. Though then Satan may excite against us new troubles, since we have hitherto stood firm as to our faith in God's word, let us proceed in the same course to the end. And the Prophet designedly added this verse; because he saw that the people would be subject to various and long-continued temptations. It was a long captivity: hence languor might have, as it were, wasted away all the confidence which the people then had. And further, after they returned from exile, we know how often and how grievously their faith was tried, when all their neighbors inimically assailed them, and when they were afterwards oppressed by cruel tyranny. This was the reason why the Prophet said that the children of God are to walk perpetually and to the end in his name

Though he gives the name of gods to the idols of the nations he yet shows that there is a great and striking difference; for the nations worship their own gods, which they had invented: or how did they derive their majesty and their power, except from the false imagination of men? But the Prophet says, We will walk in the name of Jehovah our God. He hence shows that the power and authority of God is not founded on any vain device of men, for he of himself exists, and will exist, though he were denied by the whole world. And this also confirms what I have already stated, --- that the faithful ought thus to embrace the word of God, as they know that they have not to do with men, the credit of whom is doubtful and inconstant, but with him who is the true God, who cannot lie, and whose truth is immutable. Let us proceed ---

Micah 4:6-7

6. In that day, saith the Lord, will I assemble her that halteth, and I will gather her that is driven out, and her that I have afflicted;

6. In die illa, inquit Jehova, colligam claudam, et ejectam congregabo, et quam malis afflixi;

7. And I will make her that halted a remnant, and her that was cast far off a strong nation: and the Lord shall reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth, even for ever.

7. Et ponam claudam in reliquias, et ultra ejectam in gentem robustam; regnabit Jehova super eos in monte Sion ex nunc usque in seculum.

The Prophet pursues the same subject. But we must ever remember what I have previously reminded you of, --- that the trials would be so grievous and violent that there would be need of strong and uncommon remedies; for the faithful might have been a hundred times sunk, as it were, in the deepest gulfs, except they had been supported by various means. This then is the reason why the Prophet confirms so fully the truth which we have noticed respecting the restoration of the Church.

In that day, he says, I will gather the halting This metaphor is not only found here; for David sage that his own affliction was like that of halting. The word {צלעה}, tsaloe, means the side: hence they metaphorically call those halters who walk only

on one side: it is the same as though he had said, that they were maimed or weak. [203] He then adds, I will assemble the ejected, whom I have afflicted. In the next verse he repeats the same, I will make the halting, he says, a remnant; that is, I will make her who is now halting to remain alive, and her who is cast afar off, a strong nation. Some explain {אנאלאה}, [204] enelae, in a more refined manner, and say that it means, She who is gone before; as though the Prophet said, God will sustain the halting, and to those who are lively he will add strength. But this exposition is too strained. We see that the context will not admit it; for the Prophet brings forward the Church here as afflicted by the hand of God, and nigh utter ruin: and then, on the other hand, he intimates, that it was to be restored by God's power, and that it would thereby gather new strength, and flourish as before: he therefore calls the Church as one cast far away, as in the previous verse; and the other verse clearly shows, that the Prophet's design was no other but to point out the twofold state of the Church.

Now, in the first place, we must observe, that the Prophet meets the trial then present, which must have otherwise depressed the hearts of the godly. He saw that they were in a manner broken down; and then their dispersion was as it were a symbol of final ruin. If then the faithful had their minds continually fixed on that spectacle, they might have a hundred times despaired. The Prophet therefore comes here seasonably to their help, and reminds them, that though they were now halting, there was yet in God new vigor; that though they were scattered, it was yet in God's power to gather those who had been driven afar off. The meaning briefly is, that though the Church differed nothing for a time from a dead man, or at least from one that is maimed, no despair ought to be entertained; for the Lord sometimes raises up his people, as though he raised the dead from the grave: and this fact ought to be carefully noticed, for as soon as the Church of God does not shine forth, we think that it is wholly extinct and destroyed. But the Church is so preserved in the world, that it sometimes rises again from death: in short, the preservation of the Church, almost every day, is accompanied with many miracles.

But we ought to bear in mind, that the life of the Church is not without a resurrection, nay, it is not without many resurrections, if the expression be allowed. This we learn from the words of the Prophet, when he says, `I will then gather the halting, and assemble the driven away;' and then he adds, `and her whom I have with evils afflicted.' And this has been expressly said, that the faithful may know, that God can bring out of the grave those whom he has delivered to death. For if the Jews had been destroyed at the pleasure of their enemies, they could not have hoped for so certain a remedy from God: but when they acknowledged that nothing happened to them except through the just judgment of God, they could entertain hope of restoration. How so? Because it is what is peculiar to God to bring forth the dead, as I have already said, from the grave; as it is also his work to kill. We then see that what

[203] It means, doubtless, no more here; some refer it to halting between two opinions, between idols and God: but such an idea is foreign to the drift of this passage. It is the depressed, weak, or afflicted and miserable state of the Church that is here set forth. — Ed.

[204] It is a Niphal participle from {,הלא and corresponds in meaning with ,{הנדחה} ``the ejected,'' in the last verse; only it is a stronger term, as it means one cast to a distance, while the latter signifies one cast or driven away. The first, as rendered by Junius and Tremelius, is procul disjecta, and the other is depulsa --- Ed.

the Prophet promised, respecting the restoration of the Church, is confirmed by this verse: I am he, says God, who has afflicted; cannot I again restore you to life? For as your death is in my hand, so also is your salvation. If the Assyrians or the Chaldeans had gained the victory over you against my will, there would be some difficulty in my purpose of gathering you; but as nothing has happened but by my command, and as I have proved that your salvation and your destruction is in my power, there is no reason for you to think that it is difficult for me to gather you, who have through my judgment been dispersed.

He then adds, I will make the halting a remnant By remnant he understands the surviving Church. Hence the metaphor, halting, is extended even to destruction; as though he said, ``Though the Jews for a time may differ nothing from dead men, I will yet cause them to rise again, that they may become again a new people.'' It was difficult to believe this at the time of exile: no wonder, then, that the Prophet here promises that a posterity would be born from a people that were dead. For though Babylon was to them like the grave, yet God was able to do such a thing as to bring them forth as new men, as it really happened.

He afterwards subjoins And the driven afar off, a strong nation When the Jews were scattered here and there, how was it possible that God should from this miserable devastation form for himself a new people, and also a strong people? But the Prophet has put the contrary clauses in opposition to one another, that the Jews, amazed at their own evils, and astonished, might not cast away every consolation. As then he had dispersed them, he would again gather them, and would not only do this, but also make them a strong nation.

He then adds, Reign shall Jehovah over them on mount Zion, henceforth and for ever The Prophet no doubt promises here the new restoration of that kingdom which God himself had erected; for the salvation of the people was grounded on this --- that the posterity of David should reign, as we shall hereafter see. And it is a common and usual thing with the prophets to set forth the kingdom of David, whenever they speak of the salvation of the Church. It was necessary then that the kingdom of David should be again established, in order that the Church might flourish and be secure. But Micah does not here name the posterity of David, but mentions Jehovah himself, not to exclude the kingdom of David, but to show that God would become openly the founder of that kingdom, yea, that he himself possessed the whole power. For though God governed the ancient people by the hand of David, by the hand of Josiah and of Hezekiah, there was yet, as it were, a shade intervening, so that God reigned not then visibly. The Prophet then mentions here some difference between that shadowy kingdom and the latter new kingdom, which, at the coming of the Messiah, God would openly set up. Jehovah himself shall then reign over them; as though he said, ``Hitherto indeed, when the posterity of David held the government, as God himself created both David and his sons, and as they were anointed by his authority and command, it could not have been thought but that the kingdom was his, though he governed his people by the ministry and agency of men: but now God himself will ascend the throne in a conspicuous manner, so that no one may doubt but that he is the king of his people.'' And this was really and actually fulfilled in the

person of Christ. Though Christ was indeed the true seed of David, he was yet at the same time Jehovah, even God manifested in the flesh. We hence see, that the Prophet here in lofty terms extols the glory of Christ's kingdom; as though he had said that it would not be a shadowy kingdom as it was under the Law. Jehovah then shall reign over you.

He then subjoins, on mount Zion. We know that the seat of the kingdom of Christ has not been continued on mount Zion; but this verse must be connected with the beginning of this chapter. The Prophet has previously said, From Zion shall go forth a law, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem. If then the interpretation of this place be asked, that is, how Jehovah showed himself the king of his people, and erected his throne on mount Zion, the answer is, that from thence the law went forth from that place, as from a fountain flowed the doctrine of salvation, to replenish the whole world. As then the Gospel, which God caused to be promulgated through the whole world, had its beginning on mount Zion, so the Prophet says that God would reign there. But we must at the same time observe, that through the defection and perfidy of the people it has happened that mount Zion is now only an insignificant corner of the earth, and not the most eminent in the world, as also the city Jerusalem, according to the prediction of Zechariah. Mount Zion then is now different from what it was formerly; for wherever the doctrine of the Gospel is preached, there is God really worshipped, there sacrifices are offered; in a word, there the spiritual temple exists. But yet the commencement of the Gospel must be taken to the account, if we would understand the real meaning of the Prophet, that is, that Christ, or God in the person of Christ, began to reign on mount Zion, when the doctrine of the Gospel from thence went forth to the extremities of the world. It now follows ---

Micah 4:8

8. And thou, O tower of the flock, the strong hold of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion; the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem.

8. Et tu turris gregis, arx filiae Sion, ad te veniet; perveniet principatus primus, regnum filiae Jerusalem.

Micah still continues the same subject, --- that the miserable calamities of the people, or even their ruin, will not prevent God to restore again his Church. Thou tower of the flock, he says, the fortress of the daughter of Zion, doubt not but that God will again restore to thee thy ancient kingdom and dignity from which thou seemest now to have entirely fallen. But interpreters take the tower of the flock in various senses. Some think that the devastation of the city Jerusalem is pointed out, because it became like a cottage, as it is said in Isaiah; and {עפל}, ophil, they render ``obscure,'' for its root is to cover. But another explanation is simpler, --- that the holy city is called the tower of the flock, because God had chosen it for himself, to gather his people thence; for we know that they had there their holy assemblies. Thou, then, the tower of the flock, and then, the fortress of the daughter of Zion, to thee shall come the former kingdom [205] If, however, the former sense be more approved,

[205] "I think the temple is meant, or Jerusalem; the place where the flock, the whole congregation of the people assembled to worship God. Newcome retains the Hebrew word {,עדר eder, a tower in or near Bethlehem, Genesis 35:21, or as some think, a tower near the sheep gate in Jerusalem. I believe Jerusalem,

I will not contend; that is, that Jerusalem is here called the tower of the flock on account of its devastation, as it was reduced as it were into a cottage. As to the main import of the passage, there is no ambiguity; for the Prophet here strengthens the minds of the godly: they were not to regard the length of time, nor to allow their thoughts, to be occupied with their present calamity, but to feel assured, that what God had promised was in his power, that he could, as it were, raise the dead, and thus restore the kingdom of David, which had been destroyed.

Do then, he says, firmly hope. --- Why? because come to thee, come to thee shall the former kingdom [206] Here the breaking off of the sentence is to be noticed, when the Prophet speaks of the ancient kingdom and dignity. It is not indeed to be doubted, but that the people of God had become objects of mockery, and that hypocrites and heathens thought that what David had testified respecting the perpetuity of his kingdom was a mere delusion.

`Behold thy kingdom,' he said, `shall continue as long as the sun and the moon,' (Psalm 72)

but soon after the death of Solomon, a small portion only was reserved for his posterity, and at length the kingdom itself and its dignity disappeared. This is the reason that the Prophet now says, that the former kingdom would come. Come, he says, to thee, daughter of Zion, come shall the former kingdom There is indeed no doubt, but that by the former kingdom he understands its most flourishing condition, recorded in Scripture, under David and Solomon.

The kingdom, he says, to the daughter of Jerusalem shall come He expressly mentions the daughter of Jerusalem, because the kingdom of Israel had obscured the glory of the true kingdom. Hence the Prophet testifies here that God was not unmindful of his promise, and that he would restore to Jerusalem the dignity which it had lost, and unite the whole people into one body, that they might be no more divided, but that one king would rule over the whole race of Abraham. But this was not fulfilled, we are certain, at the coming of Christ, in a manner visible to men: we must therefore bear in mind what Micah has previously taught, --- that this kingdom is spiritual; for he did not ascribe to Christ a golden scepter, but a doctrine, ``Come, and let us ascend unto the mount of Jehovah, and he will teach us of his ways; and then he added,'' From Zion shall go forth a law, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem. This, then, ought ever to be remembered, --- that God has not rendered Jerusalem glorious in the sight of men, as it was formerly, nor has he enriched it with influence and wealth and earthly power; but he has yet restored the sovereign authority; for he has not only subjected to himself the ten tribes which had formerly revolted, but also the whole world. Let us go on ---

Micah 4:9-10

9. Now why dost thou cry out aloud? is there no king in thee? is thy counsellor

or the temple, or both, are meant; for these were considered the stronghold of the daughter of Zion, the fortress of the Jewish people.''---Adam Clarke. What especially confirms this view is, that the two clauses are in apposition, the latter is explanatory of the former. --- Ed.

[206] Calvin observes the order of the original, which is not done in our version. The whole verse may be thus rendered, — And thou tower of the flock, The fortress of the daughter of Zion! To thee it shall return; Yea, come shall the former dominion, The kingdom to the daughter of Jerusalem. The verb {,{אתה which I render ``return,'' means mostly, to come, to come near, to approach, to happen. --- Ed.

perished? for pangs have taken thee as a woman in travail.

9. Nunc quare vociferaris vociferatione? Rex nullus in te? Au conciliarius tuus periit? Quia te occupavit dolor quasi parturientem.

10. Be in pain, and labour to bring forth, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in travail: for now shalt thou go forth out of the city, and thou shalt dwell in the field, and thou shalt go even to Babylon; there shalt thou be delivered; there the Lord shall redeem thee from the hand of thine enemies.

10. Dole et ignemisce, filia Sion, quasi parturiens; quia [207] exibis e civitate, et habitabis in ergo; et venies Babylonem usque; illic liberaberis, illic dedimet te Jehova e manu hostium tuorum.

The Prophet blends here things in their nature wholly contrary, --- that the Jews were for a time to be cut off, --- and that afterwards they were to recover their former state. Why, he says, dost thou cry out with crying? We must notice the Prophet's design. He did not intend to overturn what he had before stated; but as the minds of the godly might have fainted amidst so many changes, the Prophet here gives them support, that they might continue firm in their faith; and hence he says, Why dost thou cry aloud with loud crying? That is, ``I see that grievous troubles will arise capable of shaking even the stoutest hearts: time will be changeable; it will often be, that the faithful will be disturbed and degraded; but though various tumults may arise, and tempests throw all things into confusion, yet God will redeem his people.'' We now then see what the Prophet means by saying, Why dost thou now cry? Why dost thou make an uproar? for the verb here properly means, not only to cry out, but also to sound the trumpet; as though he said, Why do the Jews so much torment themselves? There is he says, no doubt, a good reason.

And he adds, Is there no king among thee? This was doubtless the reason why the Jews so much harassed themselves; it was, because God had deprived them of their kingdom and of counsel: and we know what Jeremiah has said, `Christ,' that is, the anointed of the Lord, `by whose life we breathe, is slain,' (Lamentations 4:20.) Since, then, the whole Church derived as it were its life from the safety of its king, the faithful could not be otherwise than filled with amazement when the kingdom was upset and abolished; for the hope of salvation was taken away Is there, then, not a king among thee? and have thy counselors perished? Some think that the unfaithfulness of the people is here indirectly reproved, because they thought themselves to be destitute of the help of God and of his Christ, as though he said, --- ``Have ye forgotten what God has promised to you, that he would be your king for ever, and would send the Messiah to rule over you? nay, has he not promised that the kingdom of David would be perpetual? Whence then, is this fear and trembling, as though God no longer reigned in the midst of you, and the throne of David were hopelessly overturned?'' These interpreters, in confirmation of this opinion, say, that Christ is here distinguished by the same title as in Isaiah 9:7; where he is called {יועץ}, ivots, a counselor. But as in this verse, it is the Prophet's design to terrify, and to reprove rather than to alleviate the grievousness of evils by consolation; it is more

[207] Tyne, {,{עתה is left out; nor is it restored in the comment. It should be, ``For now thou shalt go forth from the city.'' --- Ed.

probable, that their own destitution is set before the people; as though Micah said, ``What cause have you for trembling? Is it because your king and all his counselors have been taken away?'' But what immediately follows proves that this sorrow arose from a just cause; it was because they were stripped of all those things which had been till that time the evidences of God's favor.

Why then has pain laid hold on thee as on one in travail? Be in pain, he says, and groan; [208] that is, I will not prevent thee to grieve and to mourn; as though he said, ``Certainly even the strongest cannot look on calamities so dreadful, without suffering the heaviest sorrow; but though God may for a time subject his children to the greatest tortures, and expose them to the most grievous evils, he will yet restore them at length from their exile.'' Thou shalt depart, he says, from the city, and dwell in the field: thou shalt come even to Babylon; but there thou shalt be delivered; there shall Jehovah redeem thee from the hand of thy enemies The import of the whole is, that though God would have a care for his people, as he had promised, there was yet no cause for the faithful to flatter themselves, as though they were to be exempt from troubles; but the Prophet, on the contrary, exhorts them to prepare themselves to undergo calamities, as they were not only to be ejected from their country, and to wander in strange lands like vagrants, but were to be led away into Babylon as to their grave.

But to strengthen the minds of the faithful to bear the cross, he gives them a hope of deliverance, and says, that God would there deliver them, and there redeem them from the hand of their enemies. He repeats the adverb, {שם}, shem, there, twice, and not without cause: for the faithful might have excluded every hope of deliverance, as though the gate of God's power had been closed. And this is the reason why the Prophet repeats twice, there, there; even from the grave he will deliver and redeem thee: ``Extend then your hope, not only to a small measure of favor, as though God could deliver you only from a state of some small danger, but even to death itself. Though then ye lay, as it were, in your graves, yet doubt not but that God will stretch forth his hand to you, for he will be your deliverer. God then in whose power is victory, can overcome many and innumerable deaths.''

Prayer.

Grant, Almighty God, that since under the guidance of thy Son we have been united together in the body of thy Church, which has been so often scattered and torn asunder, --- O grant, that we may continue in the unity of faith, and perseveringly fight against all the temptations of this world, and never deviate from the right course, whatever new troubles may daily arise: and though we are exposed to many deaths, let us not yet be seized with fear, such as may extinguish in our hearts every hope; but may we, on the contrary, learn to raise up our eyes and minds, and all our thoughts, to thy great power, by which thou quickenest the dead, and raises from nothing things which are not, so that though we may be daily exposed to ruin, our souls may ever aspire to eternal salvation, until thou at length really slowest thyself to be the fountain of life, when we shall enjoy that endless felicity, which has beon

[208] Ingemisce, groan, mourn, or sigh and sob. {חיל} burst forth, or break out; that is, into tears or mourning. ``Bring forth,'' as it is rendered by Newcome and Henderson, seems not to be the import of the word here. It may be rendered, as Parkhurst proposes, ``labor and bring forth.'' --- Ed.

obtained for us by the blood of thy only-begotten Son our Lord. Amen.

Lecture Ninetieth

Micah 4:11-13

11. Now also many nations are gathered against thee, that say, Let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon Zion.

11. Et nunc congregatae sunt contra se gentes multae (vel, robustae,) dicentes Damnata erit; et aspiciet in Sion oculus noster.

12. But they know not the thoughts of the Lord, neither understand they his counsel: for he shall gather them as the sheaves into the floor.

12. Ipsi vero non noverunt cogitationes Jehovae, et non intellexerunt consilium ejus; quia congregabis eos quasi manipulum in aeream.

13. Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion: for I will make thine horn iron, and I will make thy hoofs brass: and thou shalt beat in pieces many people: and I will consecrate their gain unto the Lord, and their substance unto the Lord of the whole earth.

13. Surge, et tritura filia Sion; quia cornu tuum ponam ferrum, et ungulas tuas ponam chalybem; et conteres populos robustos; et dicabis Jehovae opes ipsorum, et substantiam eorum Dominatori universae terrae.

The Prophet's object here is to give some alleviation to the faithful lest they should succumb under their calamities; for, as we have stated, there were most grievous evils approaching, sufficient to overwhelm the minds of the godly. The Prophet then raises up here, with the moat suitable comfort, those who would have otherwise fainted under their calamities; and the sum of the whole is this, --- that the faithful were not to be confounded on finding the ungodly proudly triumphing, as they are wont to do, when they seem to have gained their wishes. Since, then, the wicked show a petulant spirit beyond all bounds, the Prophet exhorts the faithful to sustain themselves by God's promises, and not to care for such insolence. He then subjoins a promise, --- that God would assemble all the forces of their enemies, as when one gathers many ears of corn into a bundle, that he may thrash them on the floor. I will come now to the words of the Prophet.

Assemble, he says, against thee do nations, or strong nations: for, by saying, {גוים} {רבים}, guim rebim, he intimates one of two things, either that they were strong, or that they were large in number: as to the subject there is no great difference. The Prophet had this in view, --- that though the Church of God may be pressed by a great multitude of enemies, it yet ought not to be broken down in mind: for the ungodly, while they cruelly domineer, do not understand the design of God. Assemble, then, against thee do many nations He sets the thing before them, to heal them of terror: for when we are beyond the reach of harm, we, for the most part, too heedlessly despise all dangers; and then, when we come to a real struggle, we tremble, or even fall and become wholly weak. This is the reason why the Prophet sets before the Jews their prospects, and shows that the time was near when they were to endure a siege, as enemies would, on all sides, surround them. Assemble then do nations, and strong or many nations: he shows here that the Jews had no reason to despond, though their enemies would far exceed them in number, and in

forces, and in courage, for it was enough for them to be under the protection of God.

Who say, condemned now shall be Zion [209] The verb {חנף}, chenaph, means to act wickedly and perversely. It may then be literally rendered, `profane (scelerata) shall be Zion; and on it shall our eye look:' but this word is often taken metaphorically for condemnation. The meaning then is, `Zion is now condemned:' and the Prophet, no doubt, intended to intimate here, that the enemies would so triumph, as though Zion were not under the guardianship of God; as when any one, who has rendered himself hateful by his vices, is left and forsaken by his patrons. So, then, the Prophet here arms the faithful against the arrogance of their enemies, that they might not despair, when they found that they were condemned by the consent of all men, and that this was the opinion of all, --- that they were forsaken by God.

Consolation follows, But they know not the thoughts of Jehovah, nor understand his counsel: for verbs in the past tense have the meaning of the present. Here the Prophet recalls the attention of the godly to a subject the most suitable to them: for when the wicked rise up so cruelly against us, we are apt to think that all things are allowed to them, and then their reproaches and slanders immediately take possession of our minds and thoughts, so that we in a manner measure God's judgment by their words. Hence when the ungodly deride our faith, and boast that we are forsaken by God, we succumb, being as it were filled with amazement: and nothing is easier than to shake off from us faith and the memory of God's promises, whenever the ungodly are thus insolent. The Prophet then does not without cause apply a remedy which ought to be carefully observed by us. Who say, condemned is Zion; but they are like the blind when judging of colors, for they understand not the counsel of Jehovah and his thoughts they know not. We now then see what the Prophet had in view, which was to show, --- that the faithful would be unwise and foolish, if they formed an opinion of God's judgment according to the boasting of the ungodly: for Satan carries them away in a furious manner; and when the Lord gives them liberty to do evil, they think that they shall be conquerors to the end. As then the ungodly are thus inebriated with foolish confidence, and despise not only men, but God himself, the Prophet here holds up and supports the minds of the godly that they might ascend higher, and thus understand that the design of God was not the same as what the wicked thought, who neither belonged to nor approached God. [210]

It is especially needful to know this truth. Some at the first sight may think it frigid, ``O! than, what does the Prophet mean? he says that what these declare is not the design of Jehovah; and this we know.'' But were all to examine the subject, they would then confess with one mouth, that nothing could have been more sea-

[209] Jam damnata erit. Newcome renders the distich thus, — Who say, Let her be defiled, And let our eye see its desire on Zion. Profaned, or defiled, it is no doubt the meaning of the verb. But it is better to retain the future tense here, though it may often, in the third person, be rendered as an imperative. To look on, is a Hebrew idiom, and means often to triumph or exalt over another, or to gain the upper hand. See Psalm 22:17; Psalm 118:7. Several copies have the word for "eyes" in the singular number, as the verb is so: but anomalies of this kind often occur, as it is the case in Greek with respect to plural nouns in the neuter gender, and in Welsh, and when the verb precedes its nominative, almost in all instances. I offer the following version, — Who say, "Defiled shall she be, And look on Zion shall our eyes." — Ed.

[210] The beginning of these two lines is very emphatic: I would give this rendering, — But they — they know not the purposes of Jehovah, And they understand not his counsel. It has been rendered, "But, as for them;" but this is flat, and too prosaic. — Ed.

sonable than this consolation. Now we are wounded by reproaches, and this very often happens to ingenuous men; and then, while the ungodly vomit forth their slanders, we think that God rests indifferently in heaven; and one of their words, like a cloud, obscures the judgment of God. As soon as any one of the wicked derides us, and laughs at our simplicity, threatens ferociously, and spreads forth his terrors, his words, as I have said, are like a cloud intervening between us and God. This is the reason why the Prophet says here, that the thoughts of Jehovah are different, and that his counsel is different: in short, the Prophet's object is to show, that whenever the ungodly thus proudly despise us, and also reproachfully threaten and terrify us, we ought to raise our thoughts to heaven. --- Why so? Because the design of God is another. Their boastings then will vanish, for they arise from nothing, and they shall come to nothing, but the purpose of God shall stand.

But let us now see why the Prophet spoke here of the design and thoughts of God: for if only these two words are brought before us, there is certainly but little solid comfort, and nothing that has much force or power. There is then another principle to be understood, --- that the thoughts of God are known to us, who are taught in his school. The counsel of God then is not hidden, for it is revealed to us in his Word. Consolation therefore depends on a higher and a more recondite doctrine; that is, that the faithful, in their miseries, ought to contemplate the counsel of God as in a mirror. And what is this? that when he afflicts us, he holds a remedy in his hand, and that when he throws us into the grave, he can restore us to life and safety. When, therefore, we understand this design of God, --- that he chastens his Church with temporal evils, and that the issue will ever be most salutary, --- when this is known by us, there is then no reason why the slanders of the ungodly should deject our minds; and when they vomit forth all their reproaches, we ought to adhere firmly to this counsel of God. But that the ungodly are thus proud is no matter of wonder; for if they raise their horns against God, why should they not despise us also, who are so few in number, and of hardly any influence, at least not equal to what they possess? The Church is indeed contemptible in the eyes of the world; and it is no wonder if our enemies thus deride us, and load us with ridicule and contempt, when they dare to act so frowardly towards God. But it is enough for us to know, that they do not understand the counsel of God. We now then see the Prophet's meaning, and an explanation follows, ---

For thou shalt assemble them, he says, as a sheaf [211] to the floor The Prophet adds this clause as an explanation, that we may know what the counsel of God is, which he has mentioned, and that is, that God will collect the enemies as a sheaf. What is a sheaf? It is a small quantity of corn, it may be three hundred or a thousand ears of corn: they are ears of corn, and carried in a man's hand. And then, what is to be done with the sheaf? It is to be thrashed on the floor. It was indeed difficult to believe, that enemies, when thus collected together on every side, would be like a sheaf. If an army assembled against us, not only ten or twenty thousand, but a much larger number, who would think, according to the judgment of the flesh, that

[211] Manipulum, a handful, a bundle of fruit; {,{יח a sheaf,---a poetical singular for the plural --- sheaves. --- Ed.

they would be like a sheaf? They shall be as so many deaths and graves: even the thought of God ought to be to us of more account than the formidable power of men. Whenever, therefore, our enemies exceed us in strength and number, let us learn to arise to that secret counsel of God, of which our Prophet now speaks; and then it will be easy for us to regard a vast multitude to be no more than a handful. And he says, that our enemies are to be gathered to a floor, that they may be thrashed there. They assemble themselves for another purpose; for they think that we shall be presently in their power, that they may swallow us up; but when they thus collect themselves and their forces, the Lord will frustrate their purpose and cause them to be thrashed by us. It follows, ---

Arise and thresh, daughter of Zion; for I have made thy horn [212] iron, and thy hoofs brass. The Prophet here confirms what he had previously said: and he exhorts the daughter of Zion to arise; for it was necessary for her to have been cast down, so as to lie prostrate on the ground. God did not indeed restore at once his Church, but afflicted her for a time, so that she differed nothing from a dead man. As then a dead body lies on the ground without any feeling, so also did the Church of God lie prostrate. This is the reason why the Prophet now says, Arise, daughter of Zion; as though God, by his voice, roused the dead. We hence see, that the word {קומי}, kumi, is emphatical; for the Prophet reminds us, that there is no reason for the faithful wholly to despair, when they find themselves thus cast down, for their restoration is in the hand and power of God, as it is the peculiar office of God to raise the dead. And this same truth ought to be applied for our us, whenever we are so cast down, that no strength, no vigor, remains in us. How then can we rise again? By the power of God, who by his voice alone can restore us to life, which seemed to be wholly extinct.

He afterwards subjoins, Thresh, for I have made thy horn iron, and thy hoofs brass. A mode of thrashing, we know, was in use among the Jews the same with that in Italy and at this day in French Provence. We here thrash the corn with flails; but there by treading. The Prophet speaks here of this custom, and compares the Church of God to oxen; as though he said ``The Jews shall be like oxen with iron horns and brazen hoofs that they may lay prostrate under them the whole strength of the nations. However much then the nations may now excel, I will subject them under the feet of my people, as if sheaves were thrashed by them.''

He then adds, [213] And thou shalt separate or consecrate their wealth to Jehovah, and their substance [214] to the Lord of the whole earth Here the Prophet specifies

[212] Horn, in Scripture, means often elevation, dignity, power, strength. It means evidently in the last here. Zion was made strong to thrash the nations, and supplied with strong hoofs to tread on them. The Paraphrase of Rabbi Jonathan is to the purpose, Fortes sicut ferrum, et robusti sicut aes — "Strong as iron, and robust as brass." And that this is the meaning is proved by what follows, Thou shalt beat in pieces, or beat small, or thrash out, strong nations. — Ed.

[213] It is not often that Calvin passes over a sentence without noticing it, but he does so here; and it is this, and thou shalt tear in pieces strong nations. The verb is {,{הדקות thou shalt beat small, or thrash out; see Isaiah 28:28; perhaps the latter sense is most suitable to the passage. The meaning is, that a complete subjugation will take place. To thrash and to thrash out, is to conquer and to bring thoroughly under subjection. --- Ed.

[214] The Hebrew word for this is {,{חיל and for ``wealth'' .{בצע} The latter means gain, spoil, or what is often unjustly got, or what is scraped together and constitutes the wealth of the covetous; {חיל} is properly substance, including possessions of all kinds, land, cattle, etc. {בצע} serves to include money, silver and gold; and ,{חיל} everything else which makes up wealth.

the end for which God had purposed to subject the heathen nations to his chosen people, --- that he might be glorified. This is the meaning. But they have refined too much in allegories, who have thought that this prophecy ought to be confined to the time of Christ: for the Prophet no doubt meant to extend consolation to the whole kingdom of Christ, from the beginning to the end. Others, not more correctly, say, that this is to be referred to the Babylonian captivity because then Daniel and some others thrashed the people, when heathen kings were induced through their teaching to restore the temple, and also to offer some worship to the God of Israel. But on this point they are both mistaken, because they take the word thrashing in a different sense from the Prophet; for it commonly means that heathen nations are to be subjected to the Church of God: and this takes place, whenever God stretches forth his hand to the faithful, and suffers not the ungodly to exercise their cruelty as they wish; yea, when he makes them humbly to supplicate the faithful. This often happens in the world, as it is written of Christ, `thy enemies shall lick the earth,' (Psalm 72:9.) But this prophecy shall not be fulfilled until the last coming of Christ. We indeed begin to tread on our enemies whenever God by his power destroys them, or at least causes them to tremble and to be cast down, as we find that they dread whenever any change takes place; and then they blandly profess that they desire to serve God. So at this day it has happened both in France and in Italy. How many hypocrites, for the sake of an earthly advantage, have submitted themselves to God? and how many such England produced when the Gospel flourished there? All the courtiers, and others who were unwilling to incur the displeasure of the king, professed themselves to be the very best lovers of religion. (optimos pietatis cultores, --- the best observers of piety) But yet this is ever the case,

`Aliens have been false to thee,' (Psalm 18:44.)

We hence see what the prophet means when he speaks of thrashing: he intimates, that the Lord would often cause that the enemies of the Church should be bruised, though no one crushed them: but, as I have said, we must look forward to the last day, if we wish to see the complete fulfillment of this prophecy.

He afterwards adds, Thou shalt consecrate their wealth to Jehovah, and their substance to the Lord of the whole earth The Prophet shows here, that the dominion is not to be hoped for by the children of God, that they may abound in worldly pleasures, and appropriate every thing to themselves and also abuse their power, as ungodly men are wont to do; but that all is to be applied to the worship and the glory of God. For what purpose, then does God design his Church to become eminent? That he himself may alone shine forth, and that the faithful may rightly enjoy their honor, and not become thereby proud. There is, therefore nothing more alien to the power of the Church than pride, or cruelty, or avarice. This, then that is said ought to be carefully observed, their wealth thou shalt consecrate to Jehovah He had spoken before of power, ``Thou shalt bind strong people, thou shalt thrash them, and thou shalt tread them under thy feet;'' but lest the faithful should turn all this to a purpose

The verb, ``consecrate,'' is in Hebrew in the first person, as it is in our version. There is no different reading; but the Septuagint and the earlier versions put it in the second person, to correspond with the previous verb, ``Thou shalt beat in pieces.'' There will be no difference in the sense, if we render it according to the Hiphil form, in which it is found, --- ``I will cause thee to consecrate.'' Jerome, Theodoret, Marckius, Dathius, Newcome, and Henderson, adopt the second person. --- This construction renders the passage no doubt more uniform. --- Ed.

the Lord had not designed, a most suitable correction is immediately added, and that is, that this power shall not be exercised according to the will of men, but according to the will of God: Thou shalt then consecrate, etc.; and he uses the word {חרם}, cherem, which means to make a thing an anathema or an offering; [215] as though he said ``God will raise his Church that it may rule over its enemies; but let the faithful at the same time take heed, that they rule not tyrannically; for God designs ever to reign alone: therefore the whole excellency, the whole dignity, the whole power of the Church ought to be applied for this end, --- that all things may become subject to God, and every thing among the nations may be altogether sacred to him so that the worship of God may flourish among the conquerors, as well as among the conquered.'' We now perceive the Prophet's object in speaking of consecrating the wealth of the nations. Now follows ---

Chapter 5

[215] The word is very emphatic; it means to devote a thing to a purpose forever, so as to be unchangeably settled. {,{חרם says Parkhurst, ``is anything separated absolutely from its common condition and devoted to Jehovah, so as to be incapable of redemption. See Leviticus 27:21, 28, 29. As a verb in Hiph. To separate or devote thus to Jehovah. Leviticus 27:28, 29; Micah 4:12.'' It is therefore a sacrilege to take merely to our own use what ought to be, or what we have, thus consecrated to the Lord. --- Ed.

Micah 5

Micah 5:1-2

1. Now gather thyself in troops, O daughter of troops: he hath laid siege against us: they shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek.

1. [216] Nunc colligas te (vel, obsidione cingeris, ut alii vertunt) filia congregationis (hoc est, turmae;) obsidionem posuit contra nos; in virga percutient ad maxillam judicem Israel.

2. But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

2. Et tu Beth-lehem Ephrata, parva ad essendum (ut ita loquar) inter millia Jehudah; ex te mihi egredietur ad essendum dominatorem (sic transfero durius, ut sit dominator) in Israel: et egressus ejus ab initio, a diebus seculi.

To encourage the faithful to patience, the Prophet again reminds them that hard and severe time was nigh; for it was needful to put them in mind often of the approaching calamity, lest terror should wholly discourage them. As then there was danger from despair, the Prophet often repeats what he has already said of God's judgment, which was then suspending over the people of Israel. And this mode and order of teaching ought to be observed. When the Prophets threaten us, or denounce the punishment we have deserved, we either become torpid, or grow angry with God, and murmur: but when they set forth any thing of comfort, we then indulge ourselves and become too secure. It is therefore necessary to connect threatening with promises, so that we may be always ready to endure temporal evils, and that our minds, sustained by hope, may, at the same time, depend on the Lord, and recomb on him. It was for this reason that the Prophet again mentions what he had already

[216] Calvin has, in this division, followed the Septuagint, and so have the translators of our version. This verse, in Hebrew, belongs to the last chapter. Marckius, Dathius, and Henderson, follow the Hebrew division; Junius, and Tremelius, and Newcome, that of our version.

several times stated, --- that the Jews would be surrounded by a siege. How do these two things agree, --- that the enemies, assembled together, would be like sheaves which are taken to the floor to be trodden by the feet of animals, --- and that the Jews would be besieged? I answer, that these things harmonize, because the temporary punishment, which God would inflict on his Church, would not prevent him to restore it again whenever it pleased him. Lest, therefore, security should creep over the minds of the godly, the Prophet designed often to remind them of that dreadful calamity which might have entirely upset them, had no support been afforded them, that is, had not God sustained them by his word.

Now then thou shalt assemble thyself, he says, O daughter of a troop The verb {התגדדי}, etgaddi, and the noun {גדוד}, gadud, sound alike; as though he said, Thou shalt he collected, O daughter of collection. The Prophet addresses Jerusalem: but we must see why he calls her the daughter of collection. Some think that by this word is designated the splendid and wealthy state of Jerusalem; as though the Prophet said, --- ``This city has been hitherto populous, but now it shall be reduced to such straits that none shall dare to go forth beyond its gates, for they shall on every side be surrounded.'' But the Prophet calls Jerusalem the daughter of a troop in another sense, --- because they were wont to occasion great troubles: as thieves agree together, and meet in troops for the purpose of committing plunder; so also the Prophet calls Jerusalem the daughter of a troop, for its citizens were wont willfully to do great evils, and like robbers to use violence. Thou then, he says, shalt now be collected; that is, thou shalt not send forth thy troops, but enemies shall assemble thee together by a severe siege, so that thou shalt contract thyself like a bundle.

There are, then, two clauses in this verse, --- that though the Lord resolved to help his Church, he would yet straiten her for a time, --- and then the Prophet shows the reason, lest they complained that they were too severely treated: ``You have been hitherto,'' he says, ``without a cause oppressive to others: the time then is come when the Lord will return to you your recompense.'' As Isaiah says

`Woe to thee, plunderer!
Shalt thou not also be exposed to plunder?'
Isaiah 33:1;

so also in this place, --- ``Ye have assembled in troops, that ye might pillage innocent men; therefore other troops shall now encircle you; nay, ye shall be beset by your own fear.'' The verb is in Hithpael: he says not, ``Thou daughter of a troop shalt be now encircled;'' but he says ``Thou shalt gather thyself.''

He then adds, A siege has he set against thee. This may refer to God; but it must be understood only of enemies: for the Prophet immediately adds, They shall strive with the rod, etc. in the pleural number, --- They shall then strike with the rod the cheek of the judge of Israel. He means that the Jews would be subdued by their enemies that their judges and governors would be exposed to every kind of contumely and dishonor, for to strike on the cheek is to offer the greatest indignity; as indeed it is the greatest contempt, as Demosthenes says, and is so mentioned by the lawyers. We now then perceive, that the Prophet's object was to show, --- that the Jews in vain boasted of their kingdom and civil constitution, for the Lord would

expose the governors of that kingdom to extreme contempt. The enemies then shall strike their judges even on the cheek. [217]

But there follows immediately a consolation: we hence see that the Prophet, at one time, humbles the children of God: and prepares them for enduring the cross; and then he mitigates all sorrow; yea, and makes them to rejoice in the midst of their evils. For this purpose he adds what follows ---

Thou Bethlehem Ephratah, art small, that thou shouldest be among the thousands of Judah As Matthew quotes this passage differently, some think that it ought to be read as a question, And thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, art thou the least among the provinces of Judah? Matthew says ``Thou art by no means the least, thou excellest. [218]'' But what need there is of distorting the words of the Prophet, as it was not the design of the Evangelist to relate the expressions of the Prophet, but only to point out the passage. As to the words, Matthew had regards to the condition of the town Bethlehem, such as it was at the coming of Christ. It then indeed began to be eminent: but the Prophet represents here how ignoble and mean a place Bethlehem then was, Thou, he says, art the least among the thousands of Judah. Some, not very wisely, give this explanation, ``Thou art the least among the thousands of Judah''; that is, ``Though there might be a thousand towns in the tribe of Judah, yet thou couldest hardly have a place among so great a number.'' But this has been said through ignorance of a prevailing custom: for the Jews, we know, were wont to divide their districts into thousands or chiliads. As in the army there are centurions, so also in the divisions of every nation there are hundreds; there are also in an army tribunes, who preside over a thousand men. Thus the Prophet calls them thousands, that is, tribunes; for the districts are so arranged, that the town, which, with its villages, could bring forth three thousand men, had three prefectures; and it had

[217] This verse has been variously interpreted. It is considered by most as connected with the last chapter. Some, as Marckius, consider it as an address to the Roman power; some, to the Babylonian; and others, to Jerusalem. The construction of it is the main point. The first verb, {,{תתגדדי is found in six other places, and rendered in all, except in Jeremiah 5:7, to cut one's self; but its other meaning, as in Jeremiah 5:7, and evidently here is to troop or band together; and the noun ,{גדוד} which follows, commonly means a band or a troop. The participle ,{שם} in the next clause, can refer to nothing in the text but to ``the daughter of a troop.'' The obvious and natural rendering of the verse would be the following, --- Band thyself together, thou daughter of a band, Laying against us a siege: --- With the rod shall they strike on the cheek The judge of Israel. The daughter of a band or a troop means a military power, which collects bands or troops for warlike purposes. It is certainly more obvious to apply this to the Babylonian power than to Jerusalem, especially as the next line, ``Laying against us a siege,'' necessarily refers to the latter. ``The judge'' is, as Calvin seems to take it, a poetical singular for the plural. No particular person is meant, as Newcome and others seem to think, but judges in general. --- Ed.

[218] This does not follow; for to say that it was “not the least,” is not to deny that it was “small.” There is, in fact, no contradiction in the expressions. Matthew quotes literally neither the Hebrew nor the Septuagint version. The latter, in this case, agrees with the former. He gives the sense, but not the words, even in two instances besides this. Instead of “Ephratah,” he has, “in the land of Judah;” and instead of “Ruler,” he has, “Governor that shall rule,” or feed. The meaning in these three instances is the same, though the words are different. The place was, in former times, called Bethlehem-Judah, and also Ephratah. See Genesis 35:19; Judges 17:7; and Ruth 4:11. The attempt by a question to produce similarity of expressions in the second line, according to what is done by Marckius and Newcome, is by no means to be approved. The literal rendering is the following: — And thou, Bethlehem Ephratah! Small to be among the thousands of Judah, — From thee shall one to me come forth, To be a Ruler in Israel: And his going forth has been From of old, from the days of ages. The word for “going forth” is plural, which, as Calvin says, is sometimes used for the singular; but two MSS. Have it in the singular number, {.{מצאתו The last line in the Septuagint is as follows, --- {απ} {αρχης}, {εξ} {ημερων} {αιωνος} ``In every age, from the foundation of the world, there has been some manifestation of the Messiah. He was the hope, as he was the salvation, of the world, from the promise to Adam in paradise, to his manifestation in the flesh four thousand years after.'' --- Adam Clarke. --- Ed.

three tribunes, or four or five, if it was larger. The Prophet then, in order to show that this town was small and hardly of any account, says, Thou, Bethlehem, art hardly sufficient to be one province. And it was a proof of its smallness that hardly a thousand men could be made up from Bethlehem and its neighboring villages. There were not, we know, many towns in the tribe of Judah; and yet a large army could be there collected. Since then the town of Bethlehem was so small, that it could hardly attain the rank of a province, it is hence no doubt evident that it was but a mean town. We now perceive what the Prophet had in view.

Thou, Bethlehem, he says, art small among the cities of Judah; yet arise, or go forth, for me shall one from thee, who is to be a Ruler in Israel. He calls it Bethlehem Ephratah; for they say that there was another Bethlehem in the tribe of Zebulon, and we know that Ephratah in meaning is nearly the same with Bethlehem; for both designate an abundance of fruit or provisions: and there David was born.

I will now proceed to the second clause, From thee shall go forth for me one who is to be a Ruler Here the Prophet introduces God as the speaker, go forth, he says, shall one for me. God declares in this passage that it was not his purpose so to destroy his people, but that he intended, after a season, to restore them again. He therefore recalls the attention of the faithful to himself and to his eternal counsel; as though he said, --- ``I have thus for a time cast you away, that I may yet manifest my care for you.'' For me then shall go forth one who is to be a Ruler in Israel. Now there is no doubt but that the Prophet at the sable time recalls the attention of the faithful to the promise which had been given to David. For whence arises the hope of salvation to the chosen people, except from the perpetuity of that kingdom? The Prophet now says, --- ``There is indeed a reason, according to the perception of the flesh, why the faithful should despond; for whence does their confidence arise, except from the kingdom of David? and from what place is David to arise? Even from Bethlehem; for Bethlehem has been called the city of David; and yet it is an obscure and a small town, and can hardly be considered a common province. Since it is so, the minds of the faithful may be depressed; but this smallness shall be no hindrance to the Lord, that he should not bring forth from thence a new king.''

Even before the time of David Bethlehem was a small town, and one of the most common provinces. Who could have expected that a king would have been chosen from such a hamlet, and then, that he should come from a hut? for David belonged to a pastoral family; his father was a shepherd, and he was the least among his brethren. Who then could have thought that light would have arisen from such a corner, yea, from so mean a cottage? This was done contrary to the expectations of men. Hence the Prophet sets here before the faithful a similar expectation for their comfort; as though he said, --- ``Has not God once formed a most perfect state of things by making David a king, so that the people became in every respect happy and blessed? And whence did David come? It was from Bethlehem. There is then no reason why your present miseries should over-much distress you; for God can again from the same place bring forth a king to you, and he will do so.''

Thou then Bethlehem, small art thou, etc. The prophet doubtless intended here that the faithful should consider of what kind was the beginning of that most perfect

state, when David was chosen king. David was a shepherd, a man in humble life, without reputation, without influence, and even the humblest among his brethren. Since then God had drawn light out of darkness there was no cause for the faithful to despair of a future restoration, considering what had been the beginning of the previous happy condition of the people. We now understand the Prophet's meaning. But the rest I cannot finish today; I must therefore defer it till tomorrow.

Prayer.

Greet, Almighty God, that as we cease not to provoke thy wrath against us, and as it is needful for us to be often chastised by thy hand, that we may be humbled and learn to submit ourselves to thee in true and willing obedience, --- O grant, that we faint not under thy scourges, but ever raise up our minds to the hope of deliverance, which thou givest to us through our Mediator; whom thou hast once for all sent into the world, that thou mightest through him reconcile us to thyself, and through whom also thou bringest help whenever we need it and may we at the same time learn to rely on thy only-begotten Son, so that with courageous minds we may pass through all the miseries of this world, and never at any time grow weary, until having at length obtained the victory, we come to that blessed rest and enjoy the fruit of our victory, through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lecture Ninety-first

We began yesterday to explain the promise by which our Prophet designed to sustain the minds of the faithful, lest they should despair in their heavy trial. He reminds them, as it has been stated, of the commencement of the kingdom: as David had been raised as it were from nothing, and God has given in him an example of his wonderful grace, the Prophet reminds the godly, that the same is now to be expected, that God will again raise up the fallen kingdom. ``Go forth then from Bethlehem, he says, shall one who is to be a Ruler in Israel, though it was but a mean town. He calls him a Ruler in Israel; for he had before declared that there would be such a dreadful judgment, that the enemy would strike with the hand the face of the judge; and this was the same as though the Prophet had said, that no honor would be shown to the people, for the chief himself would be beaten. He therefore now promises a new Ruler, he promises that there would be again some civil order to be found among the people; for a governor could not have been struck on the check, except all authority and honor had departed. We then see what the Prophet intended by mentioning the word, Ruler; it was to show, that God would again cause that a new Prince would arise to govern the people. It was therefore a remedy to their devastation.

But the Prophet subjoins, His going forth is from the beginning, or from far antiquity and from the days of ages, that is from the days of eternity. He intimates here that it would not be a sudden thing, that a prince should arise to govern the people; for it had been already long ago determined by God. This is the plain meaning. Some, I know, pertinaciously maintain, that the Prophet speaks here of the eternal existence of Christ; and as for myself I willingly own that the divinity of Christ is here proved to us; but as this will never be allowed by the Jews, I prefer taking the words simply as they are, --- that Christ will not come forth unexpectedly from Bethlehem, as though God had previously determined nothing respecting him. His goings forth,

then, are from the beginning. But others bring a new refinement, --- that the Prophet uses the plural number, his goings forth, to designate the twofold nature of Christ: but there is in this an absurdity; for the Prophet could not properly nor wisely mention the human nature of Christ with the divine, with reference to eternity. The Word of God, we know, was eternal; and we know, that when the fullness of time came, as Paul says, Christ put on our nature, (Galatians 4:4.) Hence the beginning of Christ as to the flesh was not so old, if his existence be spoken of: to set them together then would have been absurd. It is a common thing in Hebrew to use the plural for the singular number. He says then, that the going forth of Christ is from eternity; for he will not go forth suddenly from Bethlehem, as one who rises unexpectedly to bring help, when things are in a hopeless state, and so rises, when nothing had been foreseen. But the Prophet declares that the going forth of Christ would be different, --- that God had from the beginning determined to give his people an eternal king.

At the same time, we must repudiate that gloss with which the Rabbis are pleased; for they say that the Messiah was created before the creation of the world, and also the throne of eternity, and the Law, and other things; but these are insipid fables. The Prophet shows simply, that even before the world was made Christ was chief, no he is also called the Firstborn of every creature, for by him all things were created, (Colossians 1:15) and the same Word of God, by whom the world was created, is to be the Head of the Church and by him what has been lost is to be recovered. We now then comprehend what the Prophet meant by saying, the goings forth of Christ are from eternity But I would not concede to the Jews, that only by the perpetual appointment of God the going forth of Christ has been from the beginning, or from all ages: but two things must be noticed by us, --- that Christ, who was manifested in the flesh that he might redeem the Church of God, was the eternal Word, by whom the world was created, --- and then, that he was destined by the eternal counsel of God to be the first-born of every creature, and especially to be the Head of the Church, that he might restore a fallen world by his grace and power.

We now then see the reason why the Prophet connects together these two things, --- that there would go forth one from Bethlehem who would rule among Israel, --- and yet that his goings forth have been from eternity: for if he had only said what I explained yesterday, an objection might easily have been made, and this might have come into the mind of some, --- ``Why dost thou say that one will come from Bethlehem who will govern the chosen people, as though God were to contrive a new remedy on seeing that it is all over with respect to the deliverance of his Church?'' The Prophet here anticipates this objection, and reminds us, that his goings forth have been from eternity, that they have been already decreed, even from the beginning; for with God there is nothing new, so that he should stand in need of holding any unlooked for consultation; as is the case with us when any thing happens which we in no degree apprehended; we then find it necessary to devise some new measures. The Prophet shows that nothing of this kind can happen to God: but all this, --- that people are reduced to nothing, --- and that they are again restored by Christ, --- all this is overruled by his secret and incomprehensible providence. His goings forth then are from the beginning, and from the days of eternity. Let us

proceed ---

Micah 5:3

3. Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth: then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel.

3. Propterea [219] dabit eos (hoc est, ponet eos, vel, relinquet) usque ad tempus quo parturiens pariet; et revertentur ad filios Israel residuum fratrum ejus.

The Prophet here again so moderates his words, that the Jews might understand, that they were to endure many evils before God relieved their miseries. He wished then here to prepare the minds of the godly to bear evils, that they might not despair in great troubles, nor be depressed by extreme fear. He then states these two things, --- that the people, as they deserved, would be heavily afflicted, --- and then that God, notwithstanding such severe punishment, would be mindful of his covenant, so as to gather at length some remnants and not to suffer his people to be wholly destroyed. He therefore promises a middle course between a prosperous state and destruction. The people, says the Prophet, shall not continue entire. --- How so? For God will cut off the kingdom and the city; and yet he will afford relief to the miserable: When they shall think that they are given up to entire ruin, he will stretch forth his hand to them. This is the sum of the whole.

He then says that they shall be delivered up, that is, forsaken by God, until she who is in travail bringeth forth [220] There are those who apply this to the blessed virgin; as though Micah had said that the Jews were to look forward to the time when the Virgin would bring forth Christ: but all may easily see that this is a forced interpretation. The Prophet, I have no doubt, in using this similitude, compares the body of the people to a woman with child. The similitude of a woman in travail is variously applied. The wicked, when they promise to themselves impunity, are suddenly and violently laid hold on: thus their destruction is like the travail of a woman with child. But the meaning of this passage is different; for the Prophet says that the Jews would be like pregnant women, for this reason, --- that though they would have to endure the greatest sorrows, there yet would follow a joyful and happy issue. And Christ himself employs this example for the same purpose,

`A woman,' he says, `has sorrow when she brings forth, but immediately rejoices when she sees a man born into the world,' (John 16:21.)

So Micah says in this place, that the chosen people would have a happy deliverance from their miseries, for they would bring forth. There shall indeed be the most grievous sorrows, but their issue will be joy, that is, when they shall know that they and their salvation had been the objects of God's care, when they shall understand that their chastisements had been useful to them. Until then she who is in travail bringeth forth, God, he says, will forsake them

There are then two clauses in this verse; --- the first is, that the Jews were for a time

[219] {,{לכן Grotius renders it certè --- surely: but nevertheless, as proposed by Scott, is the most suitable particle here. Dathius gives this paraphrase --- Verum quidem est --- True indeed it is. --- Ed.

[220] Until the time the begetting shall beget, ({{ילדה}} (ילדה} And the remnant of his brethren shall be converted Together with the children of Israel. Newcome gives this explanation of the verse, --- ``The sense is: God will not fully vindicate and exalt his people, till the Virgin-mother shall have brought forth her Son; and till Judah and Israel, and all the true sons of Abraham among their brethren, the Gentiles, be converted to Christianity.'' --- Ed.

to be forsaken, as though they were no longer under the power and protection of God; --- the other is that God would be always their guardian, for a bringing forth would follow their sorrows. The following passage in Isaiah is of an opposite character;

`We have been in sorrow, we have been in travail,
and we brought forth wind,' (Isaiah 26:18.)

The faithful complain there that they had been oppressed with the severest troubles, and had come to the birth, but that they brought forth nothing but wind, that is, that they had been deceived by vain expectation, for the issue did not prove to be what they had hoped. But the Lord promises here by Micah something better, and that is, that the end of all their evils would be the happy restoration of the people, as when a woman receives a compensation for all her sorrows when she sees that a child is born.

And he confirms this sentence by another, when he says, To the children of Israel shall return, or be converted, the residue of his brethren [221] The Prophet then intimates that it could not be otherwise but that God would not only scatter, but tread under foot his people, so that their calamity would threaten an unavoidable destruction. This is one thing; but in the meantime he promises that there would be some saved. But he speaks of a remnant, as we have observed elsewhere, lest hypocrites should think that they could escape unpunished, while they trifled with God. The Prophet then shows that there would come such a calamity as would nearly extinguish the people, but that some would be preserved through God's mercy and that beyond ordinary expectation. [222] We now perceive the intention of the Prophet. It now follows ---

Micah 5:4

4. And he shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God; and they shall abide: for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth.

4. Et stabit et pascet in virtute Jehovae, in magnificentia nominis Jehovae Dei sui; et habitabunt, quia nunc magnificabitur usque ad fines terrae.

There is no doubt but that the Prophet continues here to speak of Christ; and

[221] By this arrangement of the sentence, Calvin evidently meant, that "his," before "brethren," refers to "Israel." In the original, the latter clause is before the former, but in Hebrew, as well as in other languages, the antecedent sometimes comes after its pronoun. — Ed.

[222] Most commentators differ from Calvin in their view of this verse, regarding it as a distinct prophecy of the Savior's birth. There are difficulties on both sides: but taking the whole context, especially the following verse, we can hardly resist the conclusion, that Christ, born of a Virgin, is the subject. Indeed, the whole of this chapter, notwithstanding the reference to the Assyrian, is not capable of a satisfactory explanation, without applying what is said to Christ and his Church. Some things, no doubt, in the history of the Jews, may be alluded to, or incidentally mentioned; but the full accomplishment must be looked for in the new dispensation. And it is a splendid prophecy, in words often derived from customs and incidents among the Jews, of the birth of the Savior, and the character and extent, and blessedness of his kingdom, and the destruction of his enemies. Newcome and Adam Clarke propose to divide the chapter after the first line in verse 5, thinking that a new subject is there introduced: but evidently the same subject, the Gospel dispensation, is continued to the end of the chapter. The Assyrian, the especial enemy of the ancient Church, designates the enemies of the Christian Church in all ages. "As Sennacherib's invasion," says Scott, "was not repelled by the ruler or chieftains of Israel: nor did the Jews ever invade or waste the Assyrian dominions; it seems evident, that these expressions must be understood as mystically intending other enemies and persecutors of the Church, who should be of the same spirit with Sennacherib and the Assyrians." Henry, who is much more learned critic and much profounder divine than what is commonly thought, agrees with Scott, and many others, in the interpretation of this chapter. — Ed.

though the Jews shamelessly pervert the whole Scripture, they yet cannot deny that Micah calls here the attention of all the godly to the coming of Christ, yea, of all who hope or desire to obtain salvation. This is certain. Let us now see what the Prophet ascribes to Christ.

He shall stand, he says, and feed in the power of Jehovah The word, stand, designates perseverance, as though he had said, that it would not be for a short time that God would gather by Christ the remnant of the people; that it would not be, as it often happens, when some rays of joy shine, and then immediately vanish. The Prophet shows here that the kingdom of Christ would be durable and permanent. It will then proceed; for Christ will not only rule his Church for a few days, but his kingdom will continue to stand through unbroken series of years and of ages. We nor then understand the Prophet's object.

He adds in the second place, He shall feed in the strength of Jehovah, in the greatness of the name of Jehovah his God; by which words he means, that there would be sufficient power in Christ to defend his Church. The Church, we know, is in this world subject to various troubles, for it is never without enemies; for Satan always finds those whom he induces, and whose fury he employs to harass the children of God. As then the Church of God is tossed by many tempests, it has need of a strong and invincible defender. Hence this distinction is now ascribed by our Prophet to Christ, --- that he shall feed in the strength of Jehovah, and in the majesty of his God. As to the word feed, it no doubt expresses what Christ is to his people, to the flock committed to him and to his care. Christ then rules not in his Church as a dreaded tyrant, who distresses his subjects with fear; but he is a Shepherd who gently deals with his flock. Nothing therefore can exceed the kindness and gentleness of Christ towards the faithful, as he performs the office of a Shepherd: and he prefers to be adorned with this, title, rather than to be called and deemed a kings, or to assume authority to himself. But the Prophet, on the other hand, shows, that the power of Christ would be dreadful to the ungodly and wicked. He shall feed, he says, --- with regard to his flock, Christ will put on a character full of gentleness; for nothing, as I have said can imply more kindness than the word shepherd: but as we are on every side surrounded by enemies, the Prophet adds, ---

He shall feed in the power of Jehovah and in the majesty of the name of Jehovah; that is as much power as there is in God, so much protection will there be in Christ, whenever it will be necessary to defend and protect the Church against her enemies. Let us hence learn that no less safety is to be expected from Christ, than there is of power in God. Now, since the power of God, as we confess, is immeasurable, and since his omnipotence far surpasses and swallows up all our conceptions, let us hence learn to extend both high and low all our hopes. --- Why so? Because we have a King sufficiently powerful, who has undertaken to defend us, and to whose protection the Father has committed us. Since then we have been delivered up to Christ's care and defense, there is no cause why we should doubt respecting our safety. He is indeed a Shepherd, and for our sake he thus condescended and refused not so mean a name; for in a shepherd there is no pomp nor grandeur. But though Christ, for our sake, put on the character of a Shepherd, and disowns not the office,

he is yet endued with infinite power. --- How so? Because he governs not the Church after a human manner, but in the majesty of the name of his God [223]

Now, that he subjects Christ to God, he refers to his human nature. Though Christ is God manifested in the flesh, he is yet made subject to God the Father, as our Mediator and the Head of the Church in human nature: he is indeed the middle Person between God and us. This then is the reason why the Prophet now says, that Christ has power, as it were, at the will of another; not that Christ is only man, but as he appears to us in the person of man, he is said to receive power from his Father; and this, as it has been said, with respect to his human nature. There is yet another reason why the Prophet has expressly added this, --- that we may know that Christ, as the protector of the Church, cannot be separated from his Father: as then God is God, so Christ is his minister to preserve the Church. In a word, the Prophet means that God is not to be viewed by the faithful, except through the intervening Mediator; and he means also that the Mediator is not to be viewed, except as one who receives supreme power from God himself and who is armed with omnipotence to preserve his people.

He afterwards adds, They shall dwell; for he shall now be magnified to the extremities of the earth He promises a secure habitation to the faithful; for Christ shall be extolled to the utmost regions of the world. We here see that he is promised to foreign nations: for it would have been enough for Christ to exercise his supreme power within the borders of Judea, had only one nation been committed to his safe keeping. But as God the Father intended that he should be the author of salvation to all nations, we hence learn that it was necessary that he should be extolled to the utmost borders of the earth. But with regard to the word dwell, it is explained more fully in the next verse, when the Prophet says---

Micah 5:5

5. And this man shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land: and when he shall tread in our palaces, then shall we raise against him seven shepherds, and eight principal men.

5. Et erit hic pax: Assur quum venerit in terram nostram, et quum calcaverit in palatiis nostris, tunc constituemus super eum septem pastores et octo principes hominum.

Micah, as I have said, confirms his former statement. By the word dwell, he no doubt meant a quiet and peaceable inhabitation; as though he had said, that the children of God would, under Christ, be safe and secure. Now he adds, And he shall be our peace. It might have been asked, ``Whence will come this secure dwelling? For the land has been very often wasted, and the people have been at length driven to exile. How then can we now venture to hope for what thou promises, that we shall be quiet and secure?'' Because, he says, He shall be our peace; and we ought to be satisfied with the protection of the King whom God the Father has given us. Let his shadow, then, suffice us, and we shall be safe enough from all troubles. We now see

[223] "The Prophets prefaced their messages with, Thus saith the Lord; but Christ spoke not as a servant, but as a Son, Verily, verily, I say unto you: this was feeding in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God; all power was given him in heaven and earth, a power over all flesh, by the virtue of which he still rules in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God." — Henry.

in what sense the Prophet calls Christ the Peace of his people or of his Church; he so calls him because he will drive far away all hurtful things, and will be armed with strength and invincible power to check all the ungodly, that they may not make war on the children of God, or to prevent them in their course, should they excite any disturbances.

We further know, that Christ is in another way our peace; for he has reconciled us to the Father. And what would it avail us to be safe from earthly annoyances, if we were not certain that God is reconciled to us? Except then our minds acquiesce in the paternal benevolence of God, we must necessarily tremble at all times, though no one were to cause us any trouble: nay, were all men our friends, and were all to applaud us, miserable still would be our condition, and we should toil with disquietude, except our consciences were pacified with the sure confidence that God is our Father. Christ then can be our peace in no other way than by reconciling God to us. But at the same time the Prophet speaks generally, --- that we shall lie safely under the shadow of Christ, and that no evil ought to be feared, --- that though Satan should furiously assail us, and the whole worth become mad against us, we ought yet to fear nothing, if Christ keeps and protects us under his wings. This then is the meaning, when it is said here that Christ is our peace.

He afterwards subjoins, When the Assyrian shall come into our land, and when he shall tread in our palaces then we shall raise up against him or on him, seven shepherds and eighty princes of the people [224] The Prophet intimates that the Church of God would not be free from troubles, even after the coming of Christ: for I am disposed to refer this to the intervening time, though interpreters put another construction on the words of the Prophet. But this meaning, is far more suitable, --- that while the help which God promised was expected and yet suspended, the Assyrians would come, who would pass far and wide through the land of Israel. Hence he says, that though Assur should come to our land, and break through, with such force and violence that we could not drive him out, we shall yet set up for ourselves shepherds and princes against him. It must at the same time be observed, that this prophecy is not to be confined to that short time; for the Prophet speaks generally of the preservation of the Church before as well as after the coming of Christ; as though he said, --- ``I have said that the king, who shall be born to you, and shall go forth from Bethlehem, shall be your peace; but before he shall be revealed to the world, God will gather his Church, and there shall emerge as from a dead body Princes as well as Shepherds, who will repel unjust violence, nay, who will subdue the Assyrians.''

We now see what the prophet had in view: After having honored Christ with this remarkable commendation --- that he alone is sufficient to give us a quiet life, he adds that God would be the preserver of his Church, so as to deliver it from its enemies. But there is a circumstance here expressed which ought to be noticed: Micah says,

[224] The order of the words in Hebrew is not strictly observed in this instance. There is here an example, not infrequent in the prophets, of the nominative case absolute, — And he shall be our peace: The Assyrian—when he shall come into our land, And when he shall tread in our palaces, The raise shall we against him Seven shepherds and eight anointed men. {אדם}, נסיכי} literally anointed of men; but it is a phrase signifying men in authority, princes or sovereigns. {נסיכים} is rendered dukes in Joshua 13:21, and princes in Psalm 83:11, and Ezekiel 32:30. It is not necessary to say ``eight princes of men,'' but, ``eight princes,'' or ``eight anointed men.'' --- Ed.

that when the Assyrians shall pass through the land and tread down all the palaces, God would then become the deliverer of his people. It might have been objected, and said, ``Why not sooner? Would it have been better to prevent this? Why! God now looks as it were indifferently on the force of the enemies, and loosens the reins to them, that they plunder the whole land, and break through to the very middle of it. Why then does not God give earlier relief?'' But we see the manner in which God intends to preserve his Church: for as the faithful often need some chastisement, God humbles them when it is expedient, and then delivers them. This is the reason why God allowed such liberty to the Assyrians before he supplied assistance. And we also see that this discourse is so moderated by the Prophet, that he shows, on the one hand, that the Church would not always be free from evils, --- the Assyrians shall come, they shall tread down our palaces, --- this must be endured by God's children, and ought in time to prepare their minds to bear troubles; but, on the other hand, a consolation follows; for when the Assyrians shall thus penetrate into our land, and nothing shall be concealed or hidden from them, then the Lord will cause new shepherds to arise.

The Prophet means that the body of the people would be for some time mutilated and, as it were, mangled; and so it was, until they returned from Exile. For he would have said this to no purpose, We shall set up for ourselves, if there had been an unbroken succession of regular government; he could not have said in that case, After Assur shall come into our land, we shall set up princes; but, There shall be princes when Assur shall come. The word set up denotes then what I have stated, --- that the Church would be for a time without any visible head. Christ indeed has always been the Head of the Church; but as he designed himself to be then seen in the family of David as in an image or picture, so the Prophet shows here, that though the faithful would have to see the head cut off and the Church dead, and like a dead body cast aside, when torn from its head; yea, that though the Church would be in this state dreadfully desolated, there is yet a promise of a new resurrection. We shall then set up, or choose for ourselves shepherds.

If any one raises an objection and says that it was God's office to make shepherds for his people, --- this indeed I allow to be true: but this point has not been unwisely mentioned by the Prophet; for he extols here the favor of God, in granting again their liberty to his people. In this especially consists the best condition of the people, when they can choose, by common consent, their own shepherds: for when any one by force usurps the supreme power, it is tyranny; and when men become kings by hereditary right, it seems not consistent with liberty. [225] We shall then set up for ourselves princes, says the Prophet; that is, the Lord will not only give breathing time to his Church, and will also cause that she may set up a fixed and a well-ordered

[225] It is by no means a safe rule, to draw a conclusion from the spiritual government as to what a temporal government should be. The subjects are guided by very different principles; and the same sort of government will not suit countries under different degrees of civilization. To theorize on this subject, as on many others, leads often to wrong conclusions. An hereditary sovereignty may seem to trench on liberty; but our own country exhibits an example where both exist to an extent unknown in the present or in any former age. Under no democracy has liberty ever been so freely and so fully enjoyed as in this land, which has been so wonderfully favored by a kind and gracious Providence. We owe, perhaps, far more than we are aware to an hereditary sovereignty. — Ed.

government, and that by the common consent of all.

By seven and eight, the Prophet no doubt meant a great number. When he speaks of the calamities of the Church, it is aid, `There shall not be found any to govern, but children shall rule over you.' But the Prophet says here that there would be many leaders to undertake the care of ruling and defending the people. The governors of the people shall therefore be seven shepherds and eight princes; that is, the Lord will endure many by his Spirit, that they shall be suddenly wise men: though before they were in no repute, though they possessed nothing worthy of great men, yet the Lord will enrich them with the spirit of power, that they shall become fit to rule. The Prophet now adds ---

Micah 5:6

6. And they shall waste the land of Assyria with the sword, and the land of Nimrod in the entrances thereof: thus shall he deliver us from the Assyrian, when he cometh into our land, and when he treadeth within our borders.

6. Et pascent terram Assur (hoc est, vastabunt; nam metaphorice hic pascere accipitur pro perdere quemadmodum dicuntur pecora pascere agrum, hoc est quum denudant herba sua; atque ita pastorum ingluviem notat in vorando populo; et alludit ad nomen illud quo usus fuerat: dixerat enim {רועים} septem pastores; nunc dicit {רעה}; Videmus ergo Prophetam alludere ad nomen illud quod posuerat: pascent ergo terram Assur) gladio, et terram Nimrod in gladiis suis: et liberabit ab Assur, ubi venerit in terram nostram, et ubi calcaverit in finibus nostris.

In this verse the Prophet says, that the shepherds, chosen by the Church, after it had been miserably oppressed by the tyranny of its enemies, would have a twofold office. They shall first feed; that is, nourish the Church of God; --- and, secondly, they shall feed; that is, destroy the land of Asshur, so that nothing may remain there whole and entire. God will then arm these shepherds with warlike courage; for they must fight boldly and courageously against their enemies: he says, They shall feed on the land of Nimrod with their swords Nimrod, we know, reigned in Chaldea; and we know also that the ten tribes were led away by Shalmanezer, and that the kingdom of Israel was thus demolished: when the Chaldeans obtained the empire, the kingdom of Judah was also laid waste by them. Now the import of the words is, that these shepherds would be sufficiently strong to oppose all the enemies of the Church, whether they were the Babylonians or the Assyrians. And he names the Assyrians and Babylonians, because they had then a contest with the people of God; and this continued to the coming of Christ, though it is certain that they suffered more troubles from Antiochus than from others: but as he was one of the successors of Alexander, the Prophet here, taking a part for the whole, means, by the Assyrians and Chaldeans, all the enemies of the Church, whoever they might be. Waste, he says, shall these shepherds the land of Asshur by the sword, and the land of Nimrod, and that by their swords [226]

[226] {,{כפתחיה in its openings or entrances: so most render the word. {Εντος} {πολων} {αυτης} --- within its gates. --- Symmachus. Marckius, Newcome, and Henderson, agree with our version. Calvin has, in this instance, followed Kimchi and Aben-Ezra: but the affix {ה} prevents us from adopting this meaning; besides, the word itself is nowhere found in this sense. This verse is connected with the preceding, and ought to be separated from it only be a semicolon, and may be thus rendered: --- And they shall waste the land of the Assyrian by the sword, And the land of Nimrod at its entrances: Thus shall he cause a deliverance from the Assyrian, When he shall come into our land, And when he shall tread on our borders. --- Ed.

But this shall not be until the Chaldeans and the Assyrians shall penetrate into our land, and tread in our borders The Prophet again reminds the faithful, that they stood in need of patience, and that they were to know that God had not made a vain promise. The import of the whole is, that no deliverance was to be expected from God's hand until the faithful yielded their necks to his yoke, and patiently sustained the evils which were then approaching. The Prophet then mentions the intervening time between that state in which the Jews gloried and their deliverance. Why so? Because they were soon after to be smitten heavily by God's hand; but this, as we have seen, they did not think would take place. Hence he says, --- ``Since you cannot yet be made to believe that merited punishment is nigh you, experience shall be your teacher. In the meantime, let the faithful provide themselves with courage and, with a meek heart, patiently to submit to God, the righteous Judge: but, at the same time, let them expect a sure deliverance, when they shall have gone through all their evils; for when the ripened time shall come, the Lord will look on his Church; but she must be first afflicted.''

Prayer.

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast from the beginning so defended thy Church, that thou hast never wholly forsaken her, and though it had nearly rejected thee by its defections, yet it has been thy pleasure to stand firm to thy covenant, and to show to it thy favor through all ages, until at length the everlasting Redeemer of the whole world appeared, --- O grant, that we may experience the same favor at this day, and though we have in various ways provoked thy wrath against us, yet do thou so humble us, that thou mayest sustain us by thy hand; and may we so recumb on those promises which we find in Scripture, that we may at length by our patience overcome our enemies, and in patience possess our souls, until thou raisest up thine hand, and slowest that invincible power which thou hast given to thy only-begotten Son, that he might repress the devil and all the wicked, and preserve us safe and secure from all injuries. Amen.

Lecture Ninety-second

Micah 5:7-8

7. And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the Lord, as the showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men.

7. Et erit residuum Jacobin gentibus, in medio populorum multorum (vel, magnorum,) sicut ros a Jehova, sicut stillae super herbam, quae non expectat hominem, neque sperat in filiis hominum.

8. And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles in the midst of many people as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep: who, if he go through, both treadeth down, and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver.

8. Et erit residuum Jacob in gentibus, in medio populorum multorum (vel, magnorum, ut diximus,) sicut leo inter animalia sylvae, sicut leunculus inter greges ovium, qui si transierit et discerpserit et repuerit, nemo eripiet.

Micah promises here two things as to the future state of the Church, --- that God

shall defend it without the help and aid of men, --- and that he will supply it with strength, so that it will become superior to all enemies. In the first place, to show that the preservation of the Church depends on the mere favor of God, and that there is no need of any earthly aids, he makes use of a most suitable similitude; he says, that the people of God are like a dewy meadow. The Prophet speaks not what is strictly correct; for what he says of the rain and dew is to be applied to the grass or the meadow. [227] The residue of Jacob, he says, shall be as dew from Jehovah, and drops of rain on the grass. This cannot be applied according to the design of the Prophet, except you take the dew, as I have already said, for the dewy meadows or for the grass, which draws moisture and vigor from the rains. The sense indeed is by no means obscure, which is, --- that God will make his people to grow like the grass, which is fed only by celestial dew, without any culture or labor on the part of men: and this is also what the Prophet expressly mentions; for he says, that the grass of which he speaks waits not for men, nor grows through men's care, but grows through the dew of heaven.

But that we may better understand the Prophet's intention, I shall briefly notice the words. There shall be, he says, the residue of Jacob He shows here that the whole people would not he preserved; for he had before spoken of their destruction. We hence see that this promise is to be confined to the seed, which God had wonderfully preserved in the calamitous state of the Church, yea, even in its almost total destruction. Then this promise belongs not to the whole body of the people, but to a small number; and hence he uses as before, the word {שארית}, sharit, a remnant or residue. There shall then be the residue of Jacob; [228] that is, though the people shall nearly all perish, yet there shall be some residue.

He then adds, Among great or many nations There is here a contrast between the remnants and great nations: and the Prophet has not unnecessarily added the expression {בקרב}, bekoreb, in the midst. There are then three things to be observed here, --- that God does not promise deliverance to the whole people, but to a residue only, --- and then, that he promises this deliverance among powerful or many nations, as though he said, --- ``Though the Church of God shall not excel in number, nay, so great may be the number of its enemies, as to be sufficient to overwhelm it, yet God will cause it to grow and to propagate: in a word, its enemies, though many in number, and strong in force and power, shall not yet hinder the Lord, that he should not increase his Church more and more;'' --- and the third particular is what the expression, in the midst, intimates, and that is, that the people of God shall be besieged on every side. When enemies come upon us only from one part, it is not so very distressing, but when they surround us, being in front, and behind, and on both sides, then our condition seems miserable indeed; for when they thus press on us on all sides, they hardly allow us time to draw our breath. But the Prophet

[227] There seems to be no necessity for this supposed inaccuracy in this comparison; it indeed changes the obvious meaning of the passage. The Jews are compared to the dew and rain, through which the grass grows; and then it is said, that the growth of the grass, not the dew or the rain, is not dependent on man, but on the dew or rain. The comparison is thus in every way suitable. — Ed.

[228] We have the residue or remnant of Joseph in Amos 5:15,—the remnant of Israel in Micah 2:12, — and here in the following verse, the remnant of Jacob. — Ed.

declares, that though surrounded on all sides by enemies, yet the Church would be safe.

He now adds, {יהוה} {מאת} {כטל}, cathel meat Ieve, As a dew from Jehovah; that is, it shall be, as I have said, as the grass, which is nourished and grows by means of dew from heaven, and as grass, which flourishes, not through the culture or labor of men, but which God himself makes to grow. He might have merely said, as the dew, but he adds, from Jehovah, that he might make a distinction between God and man, and show that the power of God is alone sufficient to support and sustain the Church, though men brought no assistance. And this is expressed more clearly in the next clause, when he says, As drops of rain on the grass, which waits not for man, nor tarries for the sons of men. We now then see that the faithful have their attention called to God alone, that they may understand that they are to be safe through his favor, that if all helps on earth failed, they ought not to fear, since they can be effectually sustained by the power of God alone: for God makes grass to grow on mountains and in meadows without the help and labor of man; and thus he can defend his Church without any foreign aid, but by his own hidden, and, so to speak, his own intrinsic power.

Then follows this promise, --- that God will arm his people with invincible and irresistible power, that they may be superior to all their enemies. Hence he says, that the residue of Israel shall be like a lion among the beasts of the forests and like a young lion among a flock of sheep As a strong lion then is superior to other beasts, and as a young lion dares ferociously to attack a flock of sheep; so he says, the people of Israel shall be; they shall be like lions, filling their enemies with terror, yea, and plundering and scattering them, so that no one will dare to resist them. The Prophet, by speaking thus, does not mean, that the people of God would be cruel and sanguinary: for we know that when the Prophets use similes of this kind, they express something not strictly suitable; for who would be so foolish as to select every thing that belongs to a lion, and apply it to the Church of God. Then the reason for this similitude must be observed; it was to show, that the faithful shall be endued with a power so superior to that of their enemies, that they shall be a terror to them. It does not hence follow that they shall be cruel.

But we must, at the same time, see what the Lord promises to his Church. Though God then recommends to his children the spirit of meekness, yet the faithful may still be a thread to their enemies; they ought, however, to observe what is just towards them, and to keep themselves within proper bounds. And yet Micah says, that they shall be endued with such power that they shall drive their enemies afar off; yea, that they shall plunder and tear them in pieces, while no one will be able to resist them. [229] But these two things are necessary as to the preservation of the Church, that God may make it grow; for except it be miraculously increased, it can never grow; and then it has need of a strong and powerful defense against her enemies; for we

[229] "They shall be bold as a lion in witnessing against the corruptions of the times and places they live in, and strong as a lion in the strength of the Lord, to resist and overcome their spiritual enemies. The weapons of their warfare are mighty through God, to the pulling down of strongholds, 2 Corinthians 10:4,5. They shall have courage which all their adversaries shall not be able to resist, Luke 21:15." — Henry.

know that there are always wicked men who oppose the Church, yea, who apply all their powers to destroy it: it is therefore necessary that it should be supplied by the Lord with invincible strength, as our Prophet declares here. Let us proceed ---

Micah 5:9

9. Thine hand shall be lifted up upon thine adversaries, and all thine enemies shall be cut off.

9. Exaltabitur manus tua super hostes tuis, et cuncti, adversarii tui excidentur.

He confirms what is said in the last verse, and expresses in other words what he meant, and what we have explained, --- that though the Church must contend with many strong and violent enemies, it will not yet fail, for the Lord will supply it with strength from heaven. Exalted, he says, shall be thy hand, that all thine enemies may be cut off He promises not that the Church shall be in a quiet state, but victorious, and declares also that there will never be wanting enemies. This promise, then, ought to arm us for enduring patiently, as we cannot conquer except by fighting. As then there will be always enemies to oppose the Church of God; yea, to attempt its ruin, the Prophet says here, Exalted shall be thy hand above thine enemies.

But it may be asked, When has this promise been fulfilled? For we know that since the people had been led away into the Babylonian exile, they had always been either tributaries, or kept under cruel tyranny, or at least had been unequal to their enemies. But this principle ought ever to be remembered, --- that the faithful ought to be satisfied with victory, --- that however hard they may be pressed, and however constant may be the contests which they have to carry on, and however wearisome, this one thing ought still to be sufficient for them --- that they shall not wholly perish. And it appears evident, that God's people have always been preserved by his invincible hand, however numerous have been their opposing enemies. We must also keep in mind what we have just heard, --- that the promise here is not made to the whole people, but to a residue only. And it surpasses the expectation of the whole world, that even a small member could have survived so many slaughters, by which they might have been swallowed up a hundred times. Now then we see that it had not been without reason promised to the faithful, that they should be made conquerors over all their enemies. But this has not been really fulfilled, except under the conflict of the cross. It now follows ---

Micah 5:10-15

10. And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord, that I will cut off thy horses out of the midst of thee, and I will destroy thy chariots:

10. Et accidet in die illo, dicit Jehova, excidam equos tuos e medio tui, et perdam quadrigas tuas;

11. And I will cut off the cities of thy land, and throw down all thy strong holds:

11. Et excidam urbes terrae tuae, et evertam cunctas munitiones tuas;

12. And I will cut off witchcrafts out of thine hand; and thou shalt have no more soothsayers:

12. Et excidam angures (vel, divinos) e manu tua; et praestigiatores non erunt tibi (haec lengenda sunt in uno contextu;)

13. Thy graven images also will I cut off, and thy standing images out of the midst

of thee; and thou shalt no more worship the work of thine hands.

13. Et excidam scuptilia tua et statuas tuas e medio tui; et non adorabis amplius opus manuum tuarum;

14. And I will pluck up thy groves out of the midst of thee: so will I destroy thy cities.

14. Et delebo lucos tuos e mediotui, et detraham hostes tuos (vel, urbes tuas; utroque enim verti potest;)

15. And I will execute vengeance in anger and fury upon the heathen, such as they have not heard.

15. Et faciam in ira et furore vindictam in gentibus quae non audierunt (vel, quam non audierunt; dicam de utroque.)

There is introduced here a most necessary admonition, in order that the faithful may know, how they are to be preserved by the hand and favor of God, even when they shall be stripped of all their helps, yea, even when God shall take away all those impediments, which would otherwise close up the way against his favor. The sum of the whole then is, --- that the Church shall not otherwise be saved by God's kindness than by being deprived of all her strength and defenses, and also by having her obstacles removed by God, even those which in a manner prevented his hand from being put forth to save his people. For the Prophet mentions here cities, then fortified places, he mentions horses and chariots. These, we know, are not in themselves to be condemned: but he means, that as the people foolishly placed confidence in earthly things, the salvation of God could not otherwise come to them than by stripping them of all vain and false confidence. This is one thing. Then, on the other hand, he mentions groves, he mentions carved images and statues, he mentions augurs and diviners: these were corruptions, which closed the door against the favor of God; for a people, given to idolatry, could not call upon God nor hope in him as the author of salvation. We now then perceive the Prophet's design. It now remains for me to run over the words.

He says first, It shall be in that day, saith Jehovah, that I will cut off thine horses [230] Here the Prophet enumerates those things which could not in themselves be ascribed to any thing wrong: for as God has created horses for the use of men, so also he allows them to be for our service. Why then does the Prophet say, that the Church could not be delivered, except horses were taken away? It was owing to an accidental fault; for when men abound in forces, they instantly fix their hope on them. As then such an abuse of God's gifts had prevailed among the people of Israel, it was necessary that horses should be taken away. God indeed could have humbled their minds or withdrawn their confidence from their horses and chariots: but it hence appears how deep are the roots of presumption in the hearts of men, that they cannot be otherwise torn up, than by having the things themselves cut off. To have horses and to have chariots is the bounty of God: for how can we have

[230] As a curious instance of ingenuity and extravagance in allegorizing, practiced by some of the Fathers, Jerome's interpretation of this verse may be mentioned: the horses were lascivious lusts; the chariots, sins joined together in which the wicked, as it were, ride and triumph; the cities, such as that built by Cain, not like the heavenly Jerusalem; and the strongholds, were riches and the pomps of the world, the eloquence of orators and the tenterhooks of dialecticians! — Ed.

chariots and horses and other things, except through God's kindness? And yet God cannot find a way by which he can do us good, except by taking away his former gifts. Here then Micah touches the hearts of the people much more sharply than before, when he says, that salvation cannot proceed from the Lord, except their horses were destroyed; as though he said, --- ``Ye see how great is your wickedness; God has hitherto dealt bountifully with you, since he has enriched you, and has also given you horses. Now as he sees that you abuse these gifts, he complains that all ways of access to you are closed up, as ye do not receive his kindness. Inasmuch as your horses and your chariots engross your attention, ye in a manner drive God far away from you. That he may therefore come to you, he will open a way for himself by removing all the obstacles and hindrances.''

We hence learn, that though all God's benefits ought to raise us up to heaven, serving as kinds of vehicles, they are yet turned, through our wickedness, to another purpose, and are made intervening obstacles between us and God. Hereby then is our ingratitude proved; and hence it comes, that God, when he intends to make his salvation known to us is in a manner constrained to take away and remove from us his benefits. We now then understand what the Prophet had in view when he mentioned horses and chariots. For he does not threaten here, as some think, that the people would be merely deprived of all God's gifts that they might see in their destitution and want only signs of a curse; by no means, but it is rather a promise, that is, that God will turn aside all impediments by which he was for a time prevented from bringing help to his people. This doctrine ought at the same time to avail for bringing no ordinary comfort. It is hard and bitter to the flesh to be brought down. Hence the people of Israel were little able at first to bear their lot with submission, when they saw themselves stripped of God's benefits: but the Prophet sets before them a compensations which was capable of soothing all their grief, --- ``This,'' he says, ``shall be for your chief good --- that God will deprive you of horses and chariots; for the way which your horses and chariots now occupy shall be cleared. While ye are replenished with abundant forces, ye drive away God far from you, and there is no way open for him. He will therefore prepare a way for himself; and this will be the case when your land shall be made naked, when nothing will intervene to prevent him from coming to you.''

He afterwards subjoins, I will cut off the cities of thy land, and I will destroy all thy fortresses This verse is to be taken in the same sense. That the people dwelt in fortified cities, and had defenses and fortified places, was not of itself displeasing to God. But as the people habituated themselves to a false confidence, and as it were hardened themselves in it, so that this evil could not be remedied without taking away those things to which it is attached, the Prophet says here, I will cut off the cities of your land, and then, I will cut off your defenses and fortified places. Is it that they may be plundered with impunity by their enemies? By no means, but that the favor of God may be made glorious in their deliverance. For they could not ascribe it to their cities that they kept off enemies, but were constrained to acknowledge the hand of God, and to confess him to have been their only deliverer; for they were exposed to enemies, and there was no aid for them in the land. God then will thus

render more evident his favor, when their cities and fortified places shall be cut off. We hence learn that the faithful at this day have no cause to murmur if they are without great riches, and if they are not formidable for the multitude of their horses, nor for the number and strength of their men. Why so? Because it is the Lord's will that we should be like sheep, that we might depend wholly on his power, and know that we cannot be otherwise safe than under his protection. This reason then ought to comfort us, that it may not be grievous to us, when we find that we are in the midst of wolves, and that we have no equal strength to contend with them; for even this destitution hardly extorts from us a real confession that our safety is in the hand of God. We are always proud. How would it be, were the Church at this day in a flourishing state and all enemies subdued, were there no danger, no fear? Surely earth and heaven could not bear the foolish self-confidence of men. There is therefore no wonder that God thus holds us in, and that while he supports us by his grace, he deprives us of all earthly helps and aids, that we may learn that he alone is the author of our salvation.

This truth ought to be carefully contemplated by us. Whenever we see that the Church of God, though not possessing any great power, is yet diminished daily, yea, and becomes, so to speak, like a naked land, without any defenses, it so happens, in order that the protection of God may be alone sufficient for us, and that he may wholly tear away from our hearts all haughtiness and pride, and dissipate all those vain confidences by which we not only obscure the glory of God, but, as far as we can, entirely cover it over. In short, as there is nothing better for us than to be preserved by the hand of God, we ought to bear patiently the removal of all those impediments which close up the way against God, and, in a manner, keep off his hand from us, when he is ready to extend it for the purpose of delivering us. For when our minds are inflated with foolish self-confidence, we neglect God; and thus a wall intervenes, which prevents him to help us. Who would not wish, seeing himself in extreme danger and help not far distant, that an intercepting wall should immediately fall down? Thus God is near at hand, as he has promised; but there are many walls and many obstacles, from the ruin of which, if we would be safe, we must desire and seek, that God may find an open and free way, in order that he may be able to afford us aid.

The Prophet comes now to the second kind of impediments. We have already said that some things become impediments, as it were, accidentally, when, through our wickedness and misapplication, we turn God's benefits to an end contrary to what he has designed. If, for instance, horses and chariots are given us, to possess them is not in itself an evil, but becomes so through our blindness, that is, when we, blinded by earthly possessions, think ourselves safe, and thus neglect God. But there are other impediments, which are, in their nature, and in themselves, vicious. To these the Prophet now leads us.

I will cut off, he says, the sorcerers, {כשפים}, cashephim [231] Some render the word jugglers, and others, augurs or diviners. We cannot know of a certainty what kind

[231] From {.{כשף ``In Arabic,'' says Parkhurst, ``the verb signifies to discover, disclose, reveal, and is always in the Hebrew Bible applied to some species of conjuring.'' The Septuagint render the word here {φαρμακα}, drugs or charms. They were enchanters or sorcerers, who applied drugs to magical purposes. See 2 Chronicles 33:6. --- Ed.

of superstition it was, nor the other which immediately follows: [232] for the Prophet mentions here two words which mean nearly the same thing. There is no doubt but that some, in that age, were called augurs or diviners, and others called jugglers or astrologers who are now called fortune-tellers. But on this subject there is no necessity of much labor; for the Prophet simply shows here that the people could not be preserved by Gods unless they were cleansed from these defilements. These superstitions, we know, were forbidden and condemned by God's Law: but the Law was not able to restrain the wickedness of that people; for they continually turned aside to these evils. God then here shows, that until they had purged the Church, it could not continue safe. Now, in these words, the Prophet reminds the Jews, and also the Israelites, for their benefit, that it was, and had been, through their own fault, that they labored under constant miseries and were not helped by the hand of God. --- How so? Because there was no room, as God shows here, for the exercise of his favor; for they were full of auguries and divinations, and of other diabolical arts. ``How,'' he says, ``can I help you, for I have no agreement with Satan? As you are wholly given to wicked superstitions, my favor is rejected by you.'' [233]

One thing is, that the Prophet intended to humble the people, so that every one might know that it had been through their fault, that God had not brought them help as they wished: but there is another thing, --- God promises a cleansing, which would open a way for his favor, --- I will take away, he says, all the diviners Let us then know, that it ought to be deemed the greatest benefit when God takes away from us our superstitions and other vices. For since a diminution, however hard and grievous it may be at first, is useful to us, as we see, when we willfully and openly drive away God from us; is it not a singular favor in God when he suffers us not to be thus separated from him, but prepares a way for himself to be connected with us, and has ever his hand extended to bring us help? Thus much as to these two kinds of impediments.

He now adds, I will cut off thy graven images and thy statues from the midst of thee; and thou shalt not hereafter bend down before the works of thine hands This verse is plain and contains nothing new: for the Prophet teaches that God cannot become propitious to his Church, to keep and make her safe, until he purges her from her filth, even from idolatry and other vices, by which the worship of God was corrupted, or even entirely subverted. I will, therefore, cut off thy graven images and statues [234] from the midst of thee We see that God anticipates us by his gratuitous goodness, not only by forgiving us, but also by calling us back, when wandering,

[232] The word here is {,מעוננים from ,{ענן} a cloud. Parkhurst renders it cloudmongers, who looked upwards to the clouds either on the flight of birds, or on the stars, or on meteors, and thereby pretended to foretell future things. {Αποφθεγγομενους} --- oraclers --- Sept. Theodoret renders it {μαντεις} --- soothsayers; and Cyril {ψευδομαντεις} --- false prophets. Some derive it from ,{ענה} to answer; and others from ,{עין} the eye; and hence, eyers or observers, either of times, or dreams, or of stars, or of birds. --- Ed.

[233] "Many of them depended much upon the conduct and advice of their conjurors, diviners, and fortune-tellers, and these God will cut off, not only as weak things, and insufficient to relieve them, but as wicked things, and sufficient to ruin them." — Henry.

[234] {,מצבות rather pillars or columns than statues: {τας} {στηλας} in the Sept. The pillar of stone which Jacob set up is called by this name, Genesis 28:18. They were commemorative pillars at which the Canaanites, and afterwards the Jews, offered idolatrous worship. There was a pillar of this kind in the house of Baal, 2 Kings 10:26, 27. They were not altars, though altars might have been reared by them, for both are mentioned together in Deuteronomy 12:3. The word is derived from ,{יצב} to set, to fix firmly. The noun is rendered by Parkhurst, a standing pillar. --- Ed.

into the right way. Since then we have deviated from the right way, and God thus withdraws his hand that it might appear that he has cast us away it is certain that we ought not only to pray him to have mercy on us, but also to ascribe to him a higher favor, inasmuch as he takes away the very impediments which separate us from him, and suffer him not to come nigh us. We hence see that God is not only inclined to pardon when men repent, but that it is his peculiar office to remove the obstacles.

This ought to be carefully noticed, that we may know that our salvation, from the first beginning, proceeds from the mere favor of God, --- and that we may also learn, that all those things, of which the Papists vainly talk respecting preparations, are mere figments.

He then adds, thou shalt not bend hereafter before the work of thine hands. God expresses here the cause why he so much abominates idols, even because he sees that his honor is transferred to them: this is one thing. He further arraigns the Jews as guilty, while he makes evident their defection: for surely nothing could have been more shameful, than to take away from God his honor and worship, and to transfer them to dead things; and he says here by way of reproach, that they were the work of their hands. What can be more insane, than for men to ascribe divinity to their own inventions, or to believe that it is in the power of men to make a god from wood or stone? This is surely monstrous in the extreme. Then the Prophet by this form of speaking aggravates the sin of the people of Israel, that is, when he says that they bowed the head before the work of their oven hands.

He afterwards subjoins, I will take away thy groves. The groves, we know, formed a part of their idolatry: they are therefore mentioned here as an addition by the Prophet. For he speaks not simply of trees, but refers to the wicked practices of the people: for wherever there were high and lofty trees, they thought that something divine was hid under their shade; hence their superstition. When therefore the Prophet mentions groves, it must be understood of vicious and false modes of worship; for they thought that those places acquired a sort of sanctity from the trees; as they also thought that they were nearer to God when they were on a hill. We hence see that this verse is to be connected with the last; as though the Prophet had said, that the Church could not be in safety and recover her pristine vigor, without being well cleansed from all the filth of idolatry. For we indeed know that some pious kings when they took away idols did not cut down the groves; and this exception to their praise is added, that they worshipped God, but that the high places were suffered to stand. We see that the Holy Spirit does not fully commend those kings who did not destroy the groves. --- Why? Because they were the materials of corruption. And further, had the Jews been really penitent, they would have exterminated those groves by which they had so shamefully abused and profaned the worship of God. The sum of the whole then is, that when God shall have well cleansed his Church and wiped away all its stains, he will then become the unfailing preserver of its safety. [235]

[235] Scott, speaking of the latter part of this chapter, says, "The reformation of the Jews after their return from Babylon might be alluded to; but the purification of the Christian Church from all antichristian corruptions of faith and worship, and all idolatry and superstition, seems

He afterwards subjoins, And I will destroy thy enemies {עריך}, orik, may be rendered, enemies, and many so render it: but others translate it, cities; and the word, cities, would be the most suitable, were it not that the Prophet had previously mentioned cities. I do not therefore see that it would be proper to render it here by this term. The word {עריך}, orik, then, ought doubtless to be rendered, thy enemies. Let us inquire why the prophet says, that the enemies of the Church were to be destroyed. This sentence ought to be thus explained, (I leave the former ones, and take only this the last,) And I will demolish thy groves from the midst of thee, that I may destroy thine enemies: [236] the copulative is then to be considered as a final particle; and this meaning is the most suitable; as though the Prophet had said, as I have already often stated, that the door was closed against God, so that he could bring no aid to his Church, and deliver it from enemies, as long as it held to false confidence, and was attached to the filth of idolatry, which was still worse. ``That I may then destroy thine enemies, it is necessary first that every thing in thee that prevents or hinders my favor should be taken away and removed.''

At last he adds, And I will execute vengeance in wrath and in fury He goes on with what I have just said of enemies; ``I will then execute vengeance in wrath and in fury on the nations''. Here God mentions his wrath and his fury, that the faithful might feel greater confidence, that though now their enemies poured forth grievous threatening, yet this could not prevent God from aiding his people. --- How so? Because if we compare the wrath and fury of God with all the terrors of men, doubtless the threats of men would appear as nothing but smoke. We now perceive the Prophet's meaning in these words. And he says in the last place, I will execute vengeance on the nations who have not heard. Almost all interpreters join the relative, {אשר}, asher with the preceding word, {גוים}, guim, --- I will then take vengeance on the nations who have not heard, that is, who have been rebellious against God: not to hear, as they explain, is obstinately to despise the power of God, and not to be moved by his promises or by his threatenings. But a fitter sense may perhaps be elicited, if we refer {אשר}, asher, to vengeance, --- I will then execute vengeance on the nations which they have not heard, that is, I will take vengeance on all the nations in a manner unheard of and incredible: and by nations, he understands indiscriminately all the enemies of the Church, as we have elsewhere seen.

Prayer.

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou so kindly invites us to thy self, and promises that thy aid should never be wanting to us, provided we do not close the door against thee, --- O grant, that though many earthly benefits may be granted to us, we may not yet trust in them and depart from thee, but, on the contrary, recomb on thy grace only: and then should it happen to us to be deprived of all helps, that our minds may be awakened, and that we may thus learn to hasten to thee, may nothing impede our course, that we may not, with the greatest haste and ardent desire, long to deliver up and devote ourselves wholly to thee, that we may be made safe under the care and

more immediately to be predicted." — Ed.

[236] Newcome renders the word {,עריך thine enemies, and not, thy cities, though he connects the verse differently, --- more with the last than with the former portion of this, --- I will also destroy thine enemies: 15. And I will execute vengeance, in anger and in fury, Upon the nations which have not hearkened unto me.

protection of thy only-begotten Son, whom thou hast appointed to be the guardian of our safety. Amen.

Chapter 6

Lecture Ninety-third

Micah 6

Micah 6:1-2

1. Hear ye now what the Lord saith; Arise, contend thou before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice.

1. Audite nunc (vel, quaeso) quod dicit Jehova, --- Surge, litiga coram montibus, et colles audiant vocem tuam:

2. Hear ye, O mountains, the Lord's controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth: for the Lord hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel.

2. Audite montes disceptationem Jehovae, et fortia undamenta terrae: quia disceptatio Jehovae cum populo suo, et cum Israele contendet.

Here the Prophet avowedly assumes that the people were sufficiently proved guilty; and yet they resisted through a hardiness the most obdurate, and rejected all admonitions without shame, and without any discretion. He is therefore commanded to direct his discourse to the mountains and to the hills; for his labor had now for a long time been useless as to men. The meaning then is that when the Prophet had spent much labor on the people and derived no fruit, he is at length bidden to call the mountains and the hills to bear their testimony to God; and thus before the elements is made known and proved the ungodliness and the obstinacy of the people. But before he relates what had been committed to him, he makes a preface, in order to gain attention.

Hear ye what Jehovah says. The Prophets are wont, on very serious subjects, to make such a preface as is here made by Micah: and it is indeed sufficiently evident from the passage, that he has here no ordinary subject for his teaching, but that, on the contrary, he rebukes their monstrous stupidity; for he had been addressing the deaf without any advantage. As then the Prophet was about to declare no common thing, but to be a witness of a new judgment, --- this is the reason why he bids them to be unusually attentive. Hear, he says, what Jehovah saith. What is it? He might have added, ``Jehovah has very often spoken to you, he has tried all means to bring

you to the right way; but as ye are past recovery, vengeance alone now remains for you: he will no more spend labor in vain on you; for he finds in you neither shame, nor meekness, nor docility.'' The Prophet might have thus spoken to them; but he says that another thing was committed to his charge by the Lord, and that is, to contend or to plead before the mountains. And this reproach ought to have most acutely touched the hearts of the people: for there is here an implied comparison between the mountains and the Jews; as though the Prophet said, --- ``The mountains are void of understanding and reason, and yet the Lord prefers to have them as witness of his cause rather than you, who exceed in stupidity all the mountains and rocks.'' We now then perceive the design of God.

Some take mountains and hills in a metaphorical sense for the chief men who then ruled: and this manner of speaking very frequently occurs in Scripture: but as to the present passage, I have no doubt but that the Prophet mentions mountains and hills without a figure; for, as I have already said, he sets the hardness of the people in opposition to rocks, and intimates, that there would be more attention and docility in the very mountains than what he had hitherto found in the chosen people. And the particle {את}, at, is often taken in the sense of before: it means also with; but in this place I take it for {ל}, lamed, before or near, as many instances might be cited. But that this is the meaning of the Prophet it is easy to gather from the next verse, when he says ---

Hear, ye mountains, the controversy of Jehovah, [237] how? and ye strong foundations of the earth, he says. He speaks here no more of hills, but summons the whole world; as though he said, ``There is not one of the elements which is not to bear witness respecting the obstinacy of this people; for the voice of God will penetrate to the farthest roots of the earth, it will reach the lowest depths: these men will at the same time continue deaf.'' And he says not, the Lord threatens you, or denounces judgment on you; but Jehovah has a contention with his people. We now then see that there is no metaphor in these words; but that the Prophet merely shows how monstrous was the stupor of the people, who profited nothing by the celestial doctrine delivered to them, so that the very mountains and the whole machinery of earth and heaven, though destitute of reason, had more understanding than these men. And it is not unusual with the Prophets, we know, to turn their discourse to mute elements, when there remains no hope of success from men. But our Prophet does not abruptly address mountains and hills as Isaiah does, (Isaiah 1:2,) and as also Moses had done,

`Hear, ye heavens, what I shall say, let the earth hear the words of my mouth,' (Deuteronomy 32:1,)

but he prefaces his discourse by saying, that it had been specially commanded to him to summon the mountains and hills to God's judgment. By saying then, ``Hear ye what Jehovah saith,'' he prepares as I have said, the Jews to hear, that they might know that something uncommon and altogether unusual was to be announced, --- that the Lord, in order more fully to convict them of extreme impiety, intended to

[237] Henry says, "Sin begets a controversy between God and man. The righteous God has an action against every sinner, an action of debt, an action of trespass, an action of slander."

plead his cause before the mountains.

Arise, then, and plead before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice. What sort of voice was this? They who think that the judges are here figuratively pointed out may be easily refuted; for Micah in the next verse mentions the substance of this pleading, namely that the Lord expostulated with his people. We hence see that God had no contention with the mountains, but that, on the contrary, the mountains were summoned, that they might understand God's pleading, not against them, but against the people. Hear then, ye mountains, Jehovah's controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth, that is, the very rocks. There is nothing so hard in the world, he says, that shall not be inane to hear; for this pleading shall reach the lowest depths. Jehovah then has a controversy with his people, and he will plead, or contend, with Israel It follows ---

Micah 6:3

3. O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me.

3. Populе mi, quid feci tibi? Et in quo exhibui tibi molestiam? Testificare contra me.

Here God, in the first place, offers to give a reason, if he was accused of any thing. It seems indeed unbecoming the character of God, that he should be thus ready as one guilty to clear himself: but this is said by way of concession; for the Prophet could not otherwise express, that nothing that deserved blame could be found in God. It is a personification, by which a character; not his own, is ascribed to God. It ought not therefore to appear inconsistent, that the Lord stands forth here, and is prepared to hear any accusation the people might have, that he might give an answer, My people! what have I done? By using this kind expression, my people, he renders double their wickedness; for God here descends from his own elevation, and not only addresses his people, in a paternal manner, but stands as it were on the opposite side, and is prepared, if the people had anything to say, to give answer to it, so that they might mutually discuss the question, as it is usually done by friends. Now the more kindly and indulgently the Lord deals with his people, the more enhanced, as I have said, is their sin.

He says first, What have I done to thee? that is, what hast thou to accuse me with? He adds In what have I caused trouble [238] to thee? or, In what have I been troublesome to thee? Testify, he says, against me. This testifying was to be made to the mountains and hills; as though he said, ``I am ready to plead my cause before heaven and earth; in a word, before all my creatures.'' Some render the passage, ``Answer me:'' and {ענה}, one, is also to answer; but the context requires the former meaning; for God conceded so much liberty to the Jews, that they might bring forward against him any fault they had to allege. Testify, he says, against me; that is, there are witnesses present; make public now thy case by stating particulars, I am ready for the defense. We hence see the truth of what I have before stated, --- that a character, not his own is ascribed to God: but this is done by way of concession.

[238] The verb is {הלאתיך,} I have wearied, or caused thee to be weary. Quo fatigavi te --- In what have I wearied thee? Jun. and Trem. {Τι} {ελυπησα} {σε} --- how have I caused thee to grieve? Sept. Quo labore te pressi --- with what labor have I oppressed thee? Jerome. This last contains the full meaning. --- Ed.

He afterwards adds ---

Micah 6:4

4. For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants; and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.

4. Certe (vel, quia, vel, nempe quod ascendere te feci e terra AEgypti, et ex domo servorum redemi te, et misi coram te Mosen, Aaron, et Mariam.

God, having testified that he had in nothing been troublesome to the people, now states with how great and with how many benefits he had bound them to himself. But we may prefer taking the words as explanatory and somewhat ironical that he records his benefits in the place of trouble or vexation; though, in my judgment, it is better to read the two clauses apart. I have brought thee, he says, from the land of Egypt, from that miserable bondage; and then he says, I have redeemed thee [239] By the word, redeem, he expresses more clearly and more fully illustrates his kindness. Then he adds, I have set over thee as leaders Moses, and Aaron, and Miriam, the sister of them both. Benefits, we know, are often accompanied with injuries; and he who obliges another destroys all his favor, when he turns kindness as it often happens, into reproach. It is hence frequently the case, that he who has been kind to another brings so serious an injury, that the memory of his kindness ought not to continue. God mentions here these two things, --- that he had conferred vast benefits on the people, --- and yet that he had in nothing been burdensome to them; as though he said ``Many are those things which I can, if necessary, on my part bring forward, by which I have more than a hundred times made thee indebted to me; now thou canst not in thy turn bring anything against me; thou canst not say that I have accompanied my benefits with wrongs, or that thou hast been despised, because thou were under obligations to me, as it is often the case with men who proudly domineer, when they think that they have made others bound to them. I have not then thought proper to accompany my great favors with anything troublesome or grievous to thee.'' We now understand why the Prophet expressly mentions these two things, --- that God had in nothing been vexatious to his people, --- and that he had brought them up from the land of Egypt.

That redemption was so great, that the people ought not to have complained, had it been the will of God to lay on their shoulders some very heavy burdens: for this answer might have been ever readily given, --- ``Ye have been delivered by me; ye owe to me your life and your safety. There is therefore no reason why any thing should be now burdensome to you; for the bondage of Egypt must have been bitterer to you than hundred deaths; and I redeemed you from that bondage.'' But, as the Lord had treated his redeemed people so kindly and so humanely, yea, with so much indulgence, how great and how intolerable was their ingratitude in not responding to his great kindness? We now more fully understand the Prophet's meaning in these words.

[239] The complete sentence is, "from the house of servants," or rather, slaves: for they were not properly what we call servants, but slaves, in Egypt. The Septuagint has {εξ} {οικου} {δουλειας} --- from the house of slavery. ``The house of slaves,'' is the version both of Newcome and of Henderson. They are the same words as we find in Exodus 20:2, rendered, ``out of the house of bondage;'' which ought to be translated slavery rather than bondage, if we depart from the literal rendering --- the house of slaves. --- Ed.

I have made thee to ascend, he says, from Egypt; and then, I have redeemed thee. He goes on, as we have said, by degrees. He afterwards adds, I have sent before thy face Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. God means here that it had not been a momentary kindness; for he continued his favor towards the Jews when he set over them Moses and Aaron, and Miriam, which was an evidence of his constant care, until he had completed his work of delivering them. For Moses was a minister of their deliverance in upholding civil order, and Aaron as to the priesthood and spiritual discipline. With regard to Miriam, she also performed her part towards the women; and as we find in Exodus 15, she composed a song of thanksgiving after passing through the Red Sea: and hence arose her base envy with regard to Moses; for being highly praised, she thought herself equal to him in dignity. It is at the same time right to mention, that it was an extraordinary thing, when God gave authority to a woman, as was the case with Deborah that no one may consider this singular precedent as a common rule. It now follows ---

Micah 6:5

5. O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal; that ye may know the righteousness of the Lord.

5. Populе mi, recordare nunc (vel, quaeso, est eadem particula) quid cogitaverit Balak, rex Moab, et quid responderit ei Balaam, filius Beor, a Sittim usque ad Gilgal, ut cognosceres (vel, cognoscas) justitias Jehovae.

God briefly records here what happened in the desert, --- that the people had need of some extraordinary help in addition to the many benefits which he had conferred on them. For though the people lived safely in the desert as to the Egyptians, though they were fed by manna and water from the rock flowed for them, though the cloud by day protected them from the heat of the sun, and the pillar of fire shone on them during the night, yet the stream of God's mercy seemed to have been stopped when Balaam came forth, who was a Prophet, and then, as one armed with celestial weapons, fought against the people and opposed their deliverance. Now, had God permitted Balaam to curse the people, what could have taken place, but that they must have been deprived of all their blessings? This is the reason why the Prophet specifically refers to this history, --- that the cursing of Balaam was miraculously turned into a blessing, even through the secret purpose of God. Micah might indeed have referred to all those particulars by which God could have proved the ingratitude of the people; but he deemed it sufficient to touch on the fact of their redemption, and also to mention by the way this extraordinary instance of God's kindness.

Remember, he says, what Balak devised, that is, how crafty was his counsel: for the verb {יעץ}, iots, is to be taken here in a bad sense, and is very emphatical; as though the Prophet had said, that there was more danger in this fraud than in all the violence of enemies; for Balak could not have done so much harm, had he prepared a great army against the Israelites, as by hiring a Prophet to curse the people. For certain it is, that though Balaam was an impostor and full of deceits, as it is probable that he was a man given to profane superstitions, he was yet endued with the gift of prophecy. This was the case no doubt; and we know that God has often so distributed

the gifts of his Spirit, that he has honored with the prophetic office even the ungodly and unbelieving: for it was a special gift, distinct from the grace of regeneration. Balaam then was a Prophet. Now when Balak saw that he was unequal in power to oppose the people, he thought of this expedient --- to get some Prophet to interpose for the purpose of exciting the wrath of God against the people. This is the reason why it is here said, Remember what Balak consulted against thee; that is, ``Thou were then in the greatest danger, when a Prophet came, hired for the purpose, that he might in God's name pronounce on thee a curse.''

It may be asked, Whether Balaam could really curse the people of Israel? The answer is easy: the question here is not what might have been the effect, without God's permission; but Micah here regards only the office with which Balaam was honored and endued. As then he was God's Prophet, he could have cursed the people, had not God prevented him. And no doubt Balak was wise enough to know, that the Israelites could not be resisted by human power, and that, therefore, nothing remained for him but the interposition of God; and as he could not bring down God from heaven, he sent for a Prophet. God puts his own power in his word, --- as God's word resided in Balaam, and as he was, as it were, its depositary, it was no wonder that Balak thought that he would become the conqueror of the people of Israel, provided they were cursed by Balaam's mouth; for this would have been as it were, the announcement of God's wrath.

He now subjoins, And what Balaam, the son of Beor, answered him. There is here shown, on the one hand, a danger, because Balaam was craftier than all the other enemies of the people, for he could have done more by his artifice than if he had armed against them the whole world: here then was the danger. But, on the other hand, we know what he answered; and it is certain that the answer of Balaam did not proceed from himself, but, on the contrary, from the Spirit of God. As Balaam spoke by the secret influence of the Spirit, contrary to the wish of his own heart, God thus proved that he was present at that very time, when the safety of the people was endangered. Think, then, or remember, what Balaam answered; as though he said, --- ``Balaam was very nigh cursing thee, for his mouth was opened: for he had sold himself to an ungodly king, and nothing could have pleased him more than to have poured forth many anathemas and many curses: but he was constrained to bless your fathers. What did this mean? Did not the wonderful favor of God shine forth in this instance?'' We now perceive the Prophet's design, and what a large meaning there is in these words.

He afterwards adds generally, From Shittim even to Gilgal. This is not connected with the last clause; for Balaam did not follow the people from Shittim to Gilgal; but a verb is to be understood, [240] as though he said, --- ``Thou knowest what things

[240] Various have been the ways to complete this evidently defective sentence; and there is no assistance from any MSS., or from the Septuagint. Shittim was in the land of Moab, and Gilgal was beyond Jordan, in the land of Canaan. Grotius and many others repeat the word "Remember," and supply, "what I have done," or, "what happened." This is a sort of omission, which we can hardly think a writer would have made. It is far more probable that a word or words have been somehow left out: and the Targum, though generally no safe guide, has so given the passage as to countenance this conjecture. "Were not great things done for you," is the supplement of the Targum. "And what I did," seems to be the most natural addition: such words as {{ומה {עשיתי} appear to have been left out by transcribers. I would then render the verse thus: --- My people,

happened to thee from Shittim to Gilgal, from the beginning to the end; at the time when thou didst enter the wilderness, thou hadst begun to provoke the wrath of God.'' And we know that even in Shittim the Israelites fell away into idolatry; and that defection, in a manner, alienated them from God. Hence God shows here that he, in his goodness and mercy, had contended with the ungodly ways of the people even to Gilgal; that is, ``Thou hast never ceased to provoke me.'' We indeed know that the people continually excited against themselves the displeasure of God, and that their defections were many and various. In short, then the Prophet shows that God had so mercifully dealt with the people, that he had, in a most astonishing manner, overcome their wickedness by his goodness.

He at length subjoins, That thou mayest know the righteousnesses of Jehovah. By righteousnesses he means acts of kindness, as the sense of the word is in many other passages: for the righteousness of God is often taken not only for uprightness, but also for the faithfulness and truth which he manifests towards his people. It betokens therefore the relation between God and his Church, whenever the word, righteousness, is to be understood in this sense. That thou mayest then know the righteousnesses of Jehovah; that is, that experience itself may prove to thee how faithful, how beneficent, how merciful has God ever been towards your race. [241] Since then the righteousness of God was conspicuous, the people must surely have been mute, and had nothing for which they could justly expostulate with God: what remained, but that their extreme impiety, fully detected before heaven and earth and all the elements, exposed them to his judgment? It now follows ---

Micah 6:6-8

6. Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old?

6. In quo occurram Jehovae? Incurvabo me coram Deo excelso? Occurramne ei in holocaustis? In vitulis anniculis?

7. Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

7. An complacitum erit Jehovae in millibus arietum? In decem millibus vallium olei (vel, pinguedinis?) An dabo primogenitum peccatum meum (hoc est, piaculum peccati mei? Fructum ventris mei, piaculum sceleris animae mea?

8. He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

8. Indicavit tibi, homo, quid bonum; et quid Jehova quaerit abs te nisi facere judicium et deligere clementiam (vel, bonitatem,) et humiliari ut ambules cum Deo tuo.

The Prophet now inquires, as in the name of the people, what was necessary to be done: and he takes these two principles as granted, --- that the people were without any excuse, and were forced to confess their sin, --- and that God had hitherto

remember, I pray, What did Balak, the king of Moab, consult, And what did Balaam, the son of Beor, answer him, (And what I did) from Shittim even to Gilgal, That ye may know the faithful dealings of Jehovah. --- Ed.

[241] "His justice in destroying the Canaanites, his goodness in giving rest to his people Israel, and his faithfulness to his promises made unto the Fathers." — Henry.

contended with them for no other end and with no other design, but to restore the people to the right way; for if his purpose had only been to condemn the people for their wickedness, there would have been no need of these questions. But the Prophet shows what has been often stated before, --- that whenever God chides his people, he opens to them the door of hope as to their salvation, provided those who have sinned repent. As this then must have been well known to all the Jews, the Prophet here asks, as with their mouth, what was to be done.

He thus introduces them as inquiring, With what shall I approach Jehovah, and bow down before the high God? [242]

Shall I approach him with burnt-offerings, [243] with calves of a year old? But at the same time there is no doubt, but that he indirectly refers to that foolish notion, by which men for the most part deceive themselves; for when they are proved guilty, they indeed know that there is no remedy for them, except they reconcile themselves to God: but yet they pretend by circuitous courses to approach God, while they desire to be ever far away from him. This dissimulation has always prevailed in the world, and it now prevails: they see that they whom God convicts and their own conscience condemns, cannot rest in safety. Hence they wish to discharge their duty towards God as a matter of necessity; but at the same time they seek some fictitious modes of reconciliation, as though it were enough to flatter God, as though he could be pacified like a child with some frivolous trifles. The Prophet therefore detects this wickedness, which had ever been too prevalent among them; as though he said, --- ``I see what ye are about to say; for there is no need of contending longer; as ye have nothing to object to God, and he has things innumerable to allege against you: ye are then more than condemned; but yet ye will perhaps say what has been usually alleged by you and always by hypocrites, even this, --- `We wish to be reconciled to God, and we confess our faults and seek pardon; let God in the meantime show himself ready to be reconciled to us, while we offer to him sacrifices.'" There is then no doubt, but that the Prophet derided this folly, which has ever prevailed in the hearts of men: they ever think that God can be pacified by outward rites and frivolous performances.

He afterwards adds, He has proclaimed to thee what is good. The Prophet reproves the hypocrisy by which the Jews willfully deceived themselves, as though he said, --- ``Ye indeed pretend some concern for religion when ye approach God in prayer; but this your religion is nothing; it is nothing else than shamelessly to dissemble; for ye sin not either through ignorance or misconception, but ye treat God with mockery." --- How so? ``Because the Law teaches you with sufficient clearness what God requires from you; does it not plainly enough show you what is true reconciliation? But ye close your eyes to the teaching of the Law, and in the meantime pretend ignorance. This is extremely childish. God has already proclaimed what is good, even to do judgment, to love kindness and to walk humbly with God." We now perceive the design of the Prophet.

As then he says here, With what shall I appear before God? we must bear in

[242] Literally, "the god of the height," that is, of heaven, {{אלהי. {מרום} See Psalm 68:18

[243] This clause is omitted in my Latin copy; and viewing it as an accidental omission, I have supplied it. — Ed.

mind, that as soon as God condescends to enter into trial with men, the cause is decided; for it is no doubtful contention. When men litigate one with another, there is no cause so good but what an opposite party can darken by sophistries. But the Prophet intimates that men lose all their labor by evasions, when God summons them to a trial. This is one thing. He also shows what deep roots hypocrisy has in the hearts of all, for they ever deceive themselves and try to deceive God. How comes it that men, proved guilty, do not immediately and in the right way retake themselves to God, but that they ever seek windings? How is this? It is not because they have any doubt about what is right except they willfully deceive themselves, but because they dissemble and willfully seek the subterfuges of error. It hence appears that men perversely go astray when ever they repent not as they ought, and bring not to God a real integrity of heart. And hence it also appears that the whole world which continues in its superstitions is without excuse. For if we scrutinize the intentions of men, it will at length come to this, --- that men carefully and anxiously seek various superstitions, because they are unwilling to come before God and to devote themselves to him, without some dissembling and hypocrisy. Since it is so, certain it is, that all who desire to pacify God with their own ceremonies and other trifles cannot by any pretext escape. What is said here is at the same time strictly addressed to the Jews, who had been instructed in the teaching of the Law: and such are the Papists of this day; though they spread forth specious pretenses to excuse their ignorance, they may yet be refuted by this one fact, --- that God has prescribed clearly and distinctly enough what he requires: but they wish to be ignorant of this; hence their error is at all times wilful. We ought especially to notice this in the words of the Prophet; but I cannot proceed farther now.

Prayer.

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast made known to us thy Law, and hast also added thy Gospel, in which thou callest us to thy service, and also invites us with all kindness to partake of thy grace, --- O grant, that we may not be deaf, either to thy command or to the promises of thy mercy, but render ourselves in both instances submissive to thee and so learn to devote all our faculties to thee, that we may in truth avow that a rule of a holy and religious life has been delivered to us in thy law, and that we may also firmly adhere to thy promises, lest through any of the allurements of the world, or through the flatteries and crafts of Satan thou shouldest suffer our minds to be drawn away from that love which thou hast once manifested to us in thine only-begotten Son and in which thou daily confirmest us by the teaching of the Gospel, until we at length shall come to the full enjoyment of this love in that celestial inheritance, which has been purchased for us by the blood of thy only Son. Amen.

Lecture Ninety-fourth

We have seen in the last lecture that hypocrites inquire how God is to be pacified, as though they were very solicitous about the performance of their duty; and that in the meantime these are mere disguises; for by circuitous windings they turn here and there, and never wish to come directly to God. The way might have been easily known by them; but they closed their eyes, and at the same time pretended

that they had some concern for religion. And this is also very commonly the case in our day; and common experience, if any one opens his eyes, clearly proves this, --- that the ungodly, who deal not sincerely with God, profess a very great concern, as though they were wholly intent on serving God, and yet turn aside here and there, and seek many bypaths, (diverticula,) that they may not be constrained to present themselves before God. We have already seen, that this false pretense is fully exposed, inasmuch as God has enough, and more than enough, demonstrated in his Law, what he approves and what he requires from men. Why then do hypocrites, as still uncertain, make the inquiry? It is because they are willfully blind at mid-day; for the doctrine of the Law ought to have been to them as a lamp to direct their steps; but they smother this light, yea, they do what they can wholly to extinguish it: they ask, as though perplexed, how can we pacify God?

But it ought also to be observed, (for the Prophet says, Shall I give my first-born, and the fruit of my loins, as an expiation for my soul? [244]) that hypocrites will withhold nothing, provided they are not to devote themselves to God. We see the same thing under the Papacy at this day; they spare no expense, nor even the greatest toils: provided the ungodly have always a freedom to live in sin, they will easily grant to God all other things. For through a false conceit they make a sort of agreement with God: if they mortify themselves, and toil in ceremonies, and if they pour forth some portion of their money, if they sometimes deprive nature of its support, if with fastings and by other things, they afflict themselves, they think that by these means they have fully performed their duties. But these are frivolous trifles; for in the meantime they consider themselves exempt from the duty of obeying God. Being yet unwilling to be regarded as alienated from God, they, at the same time, obtrude on him their meritorious works, to prevent his judgment, and to exempt themselves from the necessity of doing the principal thing, that which he especially requires --- to bring a sincere heart. Thus then hypocrites wish to divide things with God, that they may remain within such as they are; and they spread forth outwardly many frivolous things for the purpose of pacifying him. And this is the reason why the Prophet says now, Shall I give my first-born? for hypocrites wish to appear as though they were burning with the greatest zeal, --- ``Rather than that God should remain angry with me, I would not spare the life of my first-born; I would rather be the executioner of my own son: in short, nothing is so valuable to me, which I would not be really to part with, that God may be propitious to me.'' This indeed is what they boast with their mouth; but at the same time they will not offer their heart as a sacrifice to God: and as they deal dishonestly with God, we see that all is nothing but dissimulation.

If any one objects, and says, --- that the other rites, of which the Prophet speaks here, had been enjoined by God's Law, the answer is easy; but I shall not now but briefly touch on what I have elsewhere more largely handled: The Prophet denies,

[244] The substance of the two lines is given here, not in their literal version. He evidently gives somewhat a different meaning from our translation; and probably the original admits better of the construction adopted here. If {,{פשע a transgression or trespass, be taken for a trespass-offering, and ,{חטאה} for a sin-offering, as it is often, then the rendering would be this, --- Shall I make my first-born my trespass-offering, The fruit of my loins a sin-offering for my soul? The verb {נתן} is not only to give, to present, to offer, but also to make, to constitute, to appoint. But if the first be rendered transgression, the law of parallelism requires that the second should be rendered sin. --- Ed.

that sacrifices avail any thing for the purpose of propitiating God. This may seem inconsistent with the teaching of the Law, but in fact it altogether agrees with it. God indeed wished sacrifices to be offered to him; and then this promise was always added, Iniquity shall be atoned. But the object must be noticed; for God did not command sacrifices, as though they were of themselves of any worth; but he intended to lead the ancient people by such exercises to repentance and faith. It was therefore his design to remind the Jews that they did no good, except they themselves became sacrifices; and it was also his will that they should look to the only true sacrifice, by which all sins are expiated. But hypocrites, like falsifiers of documents, abused the command of God, and adulterated the sacrifices themselves. It was then a profane sacrilege for them to think that God would be propitious to them, if they offered many oxen and calves and lambs. It was the same thing as if one asked the way, and after having known it, rested quietly and never moved a foot. God had shown the way, by which the Jews might come to repentance and faith: and they ought to have walked in it; but they wickedly trifled with God; for they thought that it would be a satisfaction to his justice, if they only performed outward rites. Whenever then the Prophets in God's name repudiate sacrifices, the abuse, by which God's Law was corrupted, is ever to be considered, that is, when the Jews brought sacrifices, only, and had no respect to the end in view, and did not exercise themselves in repentance and faith. It is for this reason that our Prophet declares, that all sacrifices were of no account before God, but were vain things: they were so, when they were separated from their right end.

He then says that God had shown by his Law what is good; and then he adds what it is, to do justice, to love mercy, or kindness, and to be humbled before God. It is evident that, in the two first particulars, he refers to the second table of the Law; that is to do justice, and to love mercy [245] Nor is it a matter of wonder that the Prophet begins with the duties of love; for though in order the worship of God precedes these duties, and ought rightly to be so regarded, yet justice, which is to be exercised towards men, is the real evidence of true religion. The Prophet, therefore, mentions justice and mercy, not that God casts aside that which is principal --- the worship of his name; but he shows, by evidences or effects, what true religion is. Hypocrites place all holiness in external rites; but God requires what is very different; for his worship is spiritual. But as hypocrites can make a show of great zeal and of great solicitude in the outward worship of God, the Prophets try the conduct of men in another way, by inquiring whether they act justly and kindly towards one another, whether they are free from all fraud and violence, whether they observe justice and show mercy. This is the way our Prophet now follows, when he says, that God's Law prescribes what is good, and that is, to do justice --- to observe what is equitable towards men, and also to perform the duties of mercy.

He afterwards adds what in order is first, and that is, to humble thyself to walk with God: [246] it is thus literally, ``And to be humble in walking with thy God.'' No

[245] The expression is remarkable — to love mercy, or benevolence, beneficence, or kindness; it is not only to show mercy or kindness, but to love it, so as to take pleasure and delight in it. — Ed.

[246] The words are, {והצנע {לכת} .{אלהיך}-{עם} The verb {צנע} occurs nowhere else but as a passive participle in

doubt, as the name of God is more excellent than any thing in the whole world, so the worship of him ought to be regarded as of more importance than all those duties by which we prove our love towards men. But the Prophet, as I have already said, was not so particular in observing order; his main object was to show how men were to prove that they seriously feared God and kept his Law: he afterwards speaks of God's worship. But his manner of speaking, when he says, that men ought to be humble, that they may walk with their God, is worthy of special notice. Condemned, then, is here all pride, and also all the confidence of the flesh: for whosoever arrogates to himself even the least thing, does, in a manner, contend with God as with an opposing party. The true way then of walking with God is, when we thoroughly humble ourselves, yea, when we bring ourselves down to nothing; for it is the very beginning of worshipping and glorifying God when men entertain humble and low opinion of themselves. Let us now proceed ---

Micah 6:9

9. The Lord's voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name: hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it.

9. Vox Jehovae ad civitatem (vel, ad expergefaciendum) clamat (ad verbum, clamabit;) et vir intelligentiae videbit nomen tuum: audite virgam, et quis testificetur eam.

The Prophet complains here that he and other teachers did but little, though their cry resounded and was heard by the whole people. He therefore says, that the voice of God cried; as though he had said that there was no excuse for ignorance, for God had indiscriminately exhorted them all to repentance. Now, since what was taught was common to them all, the Prophet deplores their perverseness, for very few were attentive; and the fable was sung, according to the proverb, to the deaf. We must then notice the word cry; the voice of God, he says, crieth. God did not whisper in the ear of one or two, but he designed his voice to be heard by all from the least to the greatest. The Prophets then did cry loud enough, but there were no ears to hear them.

We may take the word {לעיר}, laoir, in two ways. {עיר}, oir, means a city. But some derive it from {עור}, our, and render it as if it were written {להעיר}, laeoir. If {ה}, he is put in, it must be rendered, To rouse; and the letter {ה}, he, may be concealed under the point chamets; and this sense would be the most suitable, The voice of Jehovah cries to arouse or awaken; that is though the people are torpid, and as it were overpowered with sleep, for they indulged themselves in their sins; yet the voice of God ought to be sufficient to arouse them all: however sleepy they might have been, there was yet power enough in the doctrine of the Law, which the Prophet daily proclaimed. But still this voice, by which the whole people ought to have been awakened, was not heard!

Proverbs 11:2; but its meaning there is evident, for it is opposed to pride, ,{זדון} which means a swelling pride, such as fills one with high notions of one's self. Then the opposite of this is to be humble from a sense of one's own emptiness. As it is here to the infinitive Hiphil, its literal meaning is what Calvin assigns to it --- tohumble one's self. And the best rendering of this line would be --- ``And to humble thyself to walk with God.'' The Septuagint renders it {ετοιμον} {εναι} --- to be ready; Theodotion, {ασφαλιζου}; Vulgate, solicitum But these seem not to have understood the word. The Welsh version is exactly and literally the Hebrew --- Ac ymostwng I rodio gyda 'th Dduw. Gostwng is to humble, and by adding ym, and dropping the g, the verb has exactly the meaning of the Hiphil in Hebrew---to humble one's self. They are, indeed, some verbs in Welsh which admit of all the modifications of the Hebrew verbs, being active, passive, causative, and reflective. --- Ed.

The man of understanding, he says will see thy name The word {תושיה}, tushie, means properly understanding, as it is clear from many other passages; but the Prophet means that there was a very small number who were teachable; and he calls them men of understanding. At the same time, he indirectly reproves the sottishness of the people, though they all boasted that they were wise, and boasted also that they were the learners of the Law. The Prophet shows here by implication, that understanding was a rare thing among that people; for few hearkened to the voice of God. And thus we see what his object was; for he wished to touch the Jews to the quick, that they might acknowledge that they were without mind and understanding, because they had hardened themselves against God, so that his voice did not reach their hearts. He therefore shows that they were all besides themselves; for had they any right understanding, they would have hearkened to God speaking to them, as they were his disciples. What indeed could have been more strange, nay more inhuman, than for men to reject the doctrine of their salvation, and to turn aside from hearing even God himself? Thus the madness of the people was reproved; for though the voice of God sounded in the ears of them all, it was not yet listened to.

If one prefers reading, In the city, then no doubt the Prophet means, that the voice of God was proclaimed through all the cities: for to confine it, as some interpreters do, to Jerusalem, or to Samaria, appears frigid. We must then understand a change of number, and take city for any large concourse of people; as though he had said, that there was no city in which God did not cry and yet that there were ears no where.

It afterwards follows, Shall see thy name. Some render it, Shall fear, [247] as though it was from {ירא}, ira; but it comes on the contrary from {ראה}, rae; and rules of grammar will not allow it to be viewed otherwise. And the Prophet speaks in a striking manner, when he says, that the intelligent man seeth the name of God. For whence proceeded the contempt of wicked men, so that they disregarded the voice of God, except from this --- that his majesty had no effect on them; that is, they did not acknowledge that they had to do with God? For if they really understood what I have said, --- that God spoke to them, his majesty would have immediately come to view, it would have arrested all their thoughts. God then would have constrained even the most heedless to fear him, had it not been, that they imagined the voice which sounded in their ears was that of man. Significantly then does the Prophet say, that it was the act of singular prudence to see the name of God, that is to understand from whom the doctrine proceeded. For as soon as we hearken to God, his majesty, as I have said, must so penetrate all our thoughts, as to humble us before him, and to constrain us to do him homage. The contempt then of spiritual doctrine, and also

[247] And so Newcome renders it, and there are a few copies in favor of this reading, in which {{יראי is found: but a fact of this kind is not sufficient to make a change, except there will be other reasons. And then in the next line there is a change made, without the authority of one MS. Indeed these two lines are rendered as though the Archbishop had another text; and indeed it is another: his version is this, --- And there is a sound wisdom with them that fear his name: Hear, O ye tribes, him that testifieth. This version is partly derived from the Septuagint; which could not have been wholly followed, as it differs so widely from the Hebrew, and hardly presents any meaning. There is far more correspondence in the passage, as it is rendered in our version, and by Calvin, and also by Henderson; and the Hebrew is closely followed. Drusius and others agree with Calvin, that ,{תושיה} which is rendered often ``sound wisdom,'' is to be taken here as concrete, signifying a wise man. {מטה} is evidently the rod of correction, and is used in this sense in Isaiah 10:5, 24; and it is more consistent with the whole passage to consider {יעדה} as a future, construed, as in the present tense, with an affix, from ,{עד} to testify, than from {יעד} to appoint, --- ``Hear ye the rod,'' the chastening rod, ``and who testifies of it.'' Newcome viewed it as being this verb; but he takes no notice of its affix ,{ה} which refers to the rod, by which chastisement is signified. --- Ed.

the perverseness of ungodly men, proceed from this, --- that they see not the name of God, that they understand not that it is his name.

He afterwards adds, Hear ye the rod, and him who proclaims it to you By rod he means threatening; as though he said, --- ``Your arrogance in mocking God shall not go unpunished, as though his voice were an empty sound: there is then no reason for you to deceive yourselves with the hope of impunity; for God will avenge the contempt of his word.'' Now the Prophet's design was, to denounce an approaching vengeance on those who came not willingly to God, and received not his word with genuine docility of mind. Whenever, then, men despise the voice of God, as though it proceeded only from a mortal being, on such Micah denounces an impending vengeance; for the contempt of his word is a thing intolerable to God. This is the reason why he immediately adds, after having complained of the contempt of his word, that vengeance was not afar off; Hear ye then the rod, and who declares or testifies concerning it

This last clause ought to be especially noticed; for the ungodly are not terrified when God declares that he will be an avenger, because they think not that they must give an account of their life, or they look only on mortal man, ``Ah! who speaks? Is he indeed our God? Is he armed with celestial power? Do we not see a mortal man and one like ourselves?'' We daily see that the ungodly do thus cast away every fear, and willfully harden themselves against God's judgments. It is not then without reason that the Prophet bids the Jews seriously to consider who testifies of the rod; as though he said, --- ``I indeed confess that I am a mortal man, but remember who has sent me; for I go not forth as a private individual, nor have I presumptuously intruded into this office; but I am armed with God's command; nay, God himself speaks through my mouth. If then ye despise me, the Lord is present, who will vindicate his own commands for he will not suffer himself to be despised in his servants though they may be contemptible according to the flesh, he will yet have the reverence which it deserves to be paid to his word.'' We now perceive the real meaning of the Prophet. It now follows ---

Micah 6:10-11

10. Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and the scant measure that is abominable?

10. Adhuc an sunt in domo impii thesauri impietatis? Et modius macilentus deterestabilis (vel, provocans iram?)

11. Shall I count them pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights?

11. An justificabo stateras impietatis, et sacculum ponderum doli?

Interpreters differ as to the word {האש}, eash: some think that it ought to be read {האיש}, eaish, with an addition of two letters, and render it, ``Is it yet man?'' But this would render the passage abrupt. Others translate, ``Is there yet fire?'' As though it was {אש}, ash; and they suppose that wealth, wickedly and unjustly got, is so called, because it consumes itself. But as this is against what grammar requires, I am more inclined to take their view, who think that {האש}, eash, is to be taken here for {היש},

eish, [248] , aleph being put for jod: and they rightly consider that the sentence is to be read as a question, Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the ungodly? If this view be approved, then we must consider the Prophet as proposing a question respecting a thing really monstrous, --- How can it be that treasures, gathered by plunder and wickedness, still remain with you, since ye have been so often warned, and since God daily urges you to repentance? How great is your hardness, that no fear of God lays hold on your minds? But the meaning would not be unsuitable were we to regard God as a Judge examining them concerning a matter unknown, Are there still the treasures of impiety in the house of the ungodly? that is, ``I will see whether the ungodly and wicked hide their treasures:'' for God often assumes the character of earthly judges; not that any thing escapes his knowledge, but that we may know that he is not precipitant in deciding a question. This view, then, is by no means inappropriate, that is, that God here assumes the character of an earthly judge, and thus speaks, ``I will see whether there are still treasures concealed by the ungodly; I will search their houses; I will know whether they have as yet repented of their crimes.'' thus, then, may be understood the words of the Prophet, Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the ungodly? For God, as I have already said, shows that he would know respecting the plunders and the various kinds of cruelty which they had exercised.

He then adds, Is there the bare measure, that is, a measure less than it ought to be, which is detestable? [249] Then he says,

Shall I justify? etc. [250] This verse is connected with the last, and is added as an explanation. For God having come forth as a Judge, now shows what sort of Judge he is, even one who is not biased by favor, who does not change his judgment, who shows no respect of persons. But men, for the most part, greatly deceive themselves, when they transform God according to their own will, and promise to themselves that he will be propitious to them, provided they only make false pretensions to him. God then here declares, that he differs widely from earthly judges, who now incline to one side and then to another, who are changeable, and often deviate from the right course: but, on the contrary, he says here, Shall I justify wicked balances? shall I justify weights of fraud, or deceitful? that is, ``Shake off all those delusions by which ye are wont to deceive yourselves; for I do not change either my nature or my purpose; but according to the true teaching of my Law, I will punish all the wicked without any respect of persons: wherever wickedness and iniquity are found, there punishment will be inflicted.''

We now then understand how these two verses harmonize together. God shows that he will be a judge, and then, that he differs from men, who often change, as it has been said, in their decisions.

I will mention another meaning, which will perhaps be preferred by some. The

[248] One MS. Has {,{איש which no doubt is the true reading. The Septuagint has {μηπονηρός}, which seems to have no sense whatever. Many copies have ,{אאיש} and this is the reading followed by Junius and Tremelius, and their version is this, --- Has any one still the house of a dishonest man? The treasures of dishonesty? And the small detestable ephah? --- Ed.

[249] Literally it is, "And the ephah of detestable scantiness?" Marckius renders the words, "Et ephah tenuitatis abominabilis?" Henderson, "And the accursed scanty ephah?"

[250] {.{האזכה It is not true what Henderson says, that the verb {זכה} is not used transitively. See Psalm 73:13; Proverbs 20:9 Jerome renders the phrase, numquid approbabo? Our own version is no doubt correct. --- Ed.

question, after the manner of the Hebrews, may be taken as an affirmation, as though he had said, that within a short time, (for {עוד}, oud, means sometimes a short time,) the treasures of iniquity would not be found, for they would be taken away: then follows a confirmation, for frauds and robberies by false measures and deceitful weights could not escape God's judgment. The meaning then would be, that as God must necessarily, according to his own office, punish thefts, it cannot be that he will suffer men, who cheat by false weights to continue always unpunished. It now follows ---

Micah 6:12

12. For the rich men thereof are full of violence, and the inhabitants thereof have spoken lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth.

12. Quia (sic enim verto; nam qui putant esse relationum, frigide exponunt, cujus divites ejus impleverunt rapinis; potius est, quia [251] nam {אשר} saepe loco causalis particulae accipitur, quia ergo) divites ejus impleverunt (vel seipsos, vel domos suas, subaudiendum est) {חמס}, rapina (vel, violentia;) et incolae ejus locuti sunt fallaciam, et lingua eorum fallax (vel, fraudulenta) in ore ipsorum.

The Prophet means that the people were so given to avarice and plunder, that all the riches they had heaped together had been got by iniquitous robberies or by wicked gain. He now addresses the citizens of Jerusalem: for though iniquity then prevailed through the whole of Judea, there was yet a reason why he should distinctly accuse the inhabitants of Jerusalem; for they must have led the way by their example, and they were also worse in wickedness than the rest of the people: they were at least more obstinate, as they daily heard God's Prophets.

Hence he says, her rich men gather not their wealth except by violence. It is indeed certain, that the rich were not then alone guilty before God; but this evil has too much prevailed, that the more liberty any one possesses, the more he employs it to do wrong. Those indeed who have not the power refrain, not because they are not inclined to do harm, but because they are as it were restrained; for poverty is often a bridle to men. As then the rich could spread their snares, as they had power to oppress the poor, the Prophet addresses his words to them, not that the rest were without fault or guilt, but because iniquity was more conspicuous in the rich, and that, because their wealthy as I have already said, gave them more power.

He afterwards extends his address to all the inhabitants, They all, he says, speak falsehood, that is, they have no sincerity, no uprightness; they are wholly given to frauds and deceits. And their tongue is false in their mouth This mode of speaking seems apparently absurd; for where can the tongue be except in the mouth? It appears then a sort of redundancy, when he says that their tongue was deceitful in their mouth. But it is an emphatical mode of speaking, by which the Hebrews mean, that men have falsehoods in readiness as soon as they open their mouth. It

[251] There is nothing in what goes before for which a reason is given here: hence this {אשר} cannot be rendered as here proposed. It is an instance of a peculiarity in Hebrew, when a double pronoun is used. Literally it is, ``Which the rich men of hers;'' the reference is to the city mentioned in verse 9. Grotius, Newcome, and Henderson, render the words thus, ``Whose rich men,'' etc. The Welsh is very nearly the same, which no more than the Hebrew can with propriety be literally rendered in English or in the learned languages, --- Yr hon y mae ei chyvoethogion yn llawn trais --- The which her rich men are full of violence. But this mode of speaking has a more distinct and fuller reference to what is gone before than the simple relative ``whose:'' the connection is made more evident. --- Ed.

is then the same as though the Prophet had said, that no pure word and free from guile could come from them, for as soon as they opened their mouth, falsehoods instantly came forth; their tongue was fraudulent, so that none could expect from these men any truth or faithfulness. --- How so? Because as soon as they began to speak, they instantly discovered some guile, there was ever in readiness some falsehood to circumvent the simple.

We now then see that not a few men were summoned before God's tribunal, but that all without exception were condemned; as though the Prophet had said, that there was no more any integrity in the city, and that corruptions prevailed everywhere, for all were intent on deceiving one another. It follows ---

Micah 6:13-14

13. Therefore also will I make thee sick in smiting thee, in making thee desolate because of thy sins.

13. Et ego etiam affligam te percutiendo, et te disperdam super peccatis tuis (secundum tua scelera.)

14. Thou shalt eat, but not be satisfied; and thy casting down shall be in the midst of thee; and thou shalt take hold, but shalt not deliver; and that which thou deliverest will I give up to the sword.

14. Tu comedes, et non satiaberis; et dejectio tua in medio tui; et apprehendes, et non servabis; et quod servaveris gladio tradam.

God, after having declared that he would be the Judge of the people, speaks now more clearly of their punishment. He says therefore that he was armed with vengeance: for it often happens, when a judge, even one who hates wickedness, is not able to punish, for he dreads the fierceness of those whom he thinks himself unequal to restrain. Hence God intimates here, that there will not be wanting to him a power to punish the people, I will afflict thee, he says, by striking or wounding thee; for so some render the words. [252] The sum of what is said is, --- that nothing would be an obstacle to prevent God from inflicting punishment on the people, for there would be no want of power in his case. There is therefore no reason for men to promise themselves any escape when God ascends his tribunal; for were they fortified by all possible means they could not ward off the hand of God.

And he points out what sort of punishment it would be; and he mentions even two kinds in this verse. He says first, Thou shalt eat, and shalt not be satisfied. One of God's plagues, we know, is famine: and so the Prophet here declares, that the people would be famished, but not through the sterility of the fields. God indeed brings a famine in two ways: now the land yields no fruit; the corn withers, or, being smitten with hail, gives no fruit; and thus God by the sterility of the fields often

[252] Newcome renders this line differently, — Wherefore I will begin go smite thee. Following a few MSS. And the Septuagint, he takes the verb here to be {,{החלת which means, to begin; but the rendering seems flat, and suits not the passage; and it is not true, for the Lord has often smitten them before. The verb is in the past tense, and this has created a difficulty. The verbs in the following verse, which is connected with this, are all in the future tense, referring to a coming judgment. To remove this difficulty I propose the following version, --- But even I, who have made thee to grieve by striking thee, Will make thee wholly desolate on account of thy sins: Then the threatened desolation is specified. The verb ,{השחם} making desolate, is evidently a participle connected with {אני} I, at the beginning of the verse, the rest being an intervening clause: and when a participle follows a nominative case, which often occurs in Hebrew, the auxiliary verb must be supplied in a translation, which in its tense must be regulated by the context, and here by the verse which follows. Piscator renders it Desolabo, and says, that it is an infinitive put for the future. Grief or sorrow had already been produced, but now entire desolation is threatened. --- Ed.

reduces men to want and famine: then another mode is adopted, by which he can consume men with want, namely, when he breaks the staff of bread, when he takes away from bread its nourishing virtues so that it can no more support men, whatever quantity they may swallow; and this is what experience proves, if only we have eyes to observe the judgments of God. We now see the meaning of this clause, when he says, Thou shalt eat, and shalt not be satisfied; as though he said, ``I can indeed, whenever it pleases me, deprive you of all food; the earth itself will become barren at my command: but that ye may more clearly understand that your life is in my hand, a good supply of fruit shall be produced, but it shall not satisfy you. Ye shall then perceive that bread is not sufficient to support you; for by eating ye shall not be able to derive from bread any nourishment.''

He then adds, And thy dejection [253] shall be in the midst of thee; that is, though no man from without disturb or afflict thee yet thou shalt pine away with intestine evils. This is the real meaning; and interpreters have not sufficiently considered what the Prophet means, through too much negligence. But the passage ought to be noticed: for the Prophet, after having threatened a famine, not from want, but from the secret curse of God, now adds, Thy dejection shall be in the midst of thee; that is ``Though I should rouse against thee no enemies, though evidences of my wrath should not appear, so as to be seen at a distance, yea, though no one should disturb thee, yet thy dejection, thy calamity, shall be in the midst of thee, as though it were cleaving to thy bowels; for thou shalt pine away through a hidden malady, when God shall pronounce his curse on thee.''

He now subjoins another kind of punishment, Thou shalt take hold, [254] but shalt not deliver, and what thou shalt deliver, I will give up to the sword Some read, ``A woman shall lay hold,'' that is, conceive seed, ``and shall not preserve it;'' and then, ``though she may bring forth in due time, I will yet give up what may be born to the sword.'' But this meaning is too strained. Others apply the words to fathers, ``Thou, father, shalt lay hold;'' that is thou shalt endeavor to preserve thy children, ``and thou shalt not preserve them.'' But I wonder that interpreters have thus toiled in vain in a matter so simple and plain. For he addresses here the land, or he addresses the city: as though he said, ``The city shall take hold,'' or embrace, as every one does who wishes to preserve or keep any thing; for what we wish to keep safe, we lay hold on it, and keep it as it were in our arms; ``and what thou shalt preserve, I will give up to the sword: thou wilt try all means to preserve thyself and thy people, but thou shalt not succeed: thou shalt then lose all thy labor, for though thou shouldest preserve some, yet the preserved shall not escape destruction.''

If any one prefers to refer what is said to women, with regard to conception, as the third person of the feminine gender is used, let him have his own opinion; for

[253] Newcome, without the authority of a single MS., but following the Septuagint and Houbigant, has changed {{ישח into ,{יחשך} ``it shall be dark.'' Though the meaning of the passage is not thus materially affected, it is an alteration without sufficient reasons, there being no MS. in its favor, and no necessity arising from the passage itself: indeed, dejection or depression, or casting down, is more suitable to the context, and more emphatical. --- Ed.

[254] The verb is {,{תמן which Henderson considers to be in Hephil, the {ו} being left out, which is sometimes the case: with Drusius and others, he renders it, ``remove,'' that is not goods, as he says, but wives and children; for if any were for a time removed to a place of safety, they were afterwards to be given up to the sword. Several copies have {ש} instead of ,{ס} which makes it to be the verb ,{נשג} and this has the meaning of laying hold or apprehending. But either meaning will suit the context. --- Ed.

this sense may certainly be admitted, that is, that the Lord would render the women barren, and that what they might bring forth would be given up to the slaughter, inasmuch as the Lord would at length destroy with the sword both the parents and their children.

Prayer.

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou canst find in us cause enough to execute not only one kind of vengeance, but innumerable kinds of vengeance, so as to destroy us at length altogether, --- O grant, that we may of our own accord anticipate thy judgment, and with true humility so abhor ourselves, that there may be kindled in us a genuine desire to seek what is just and right, and thus endeavor to devote ourselves wholly to thee, that we may find thee to be propitious to us: and since we in so many ways offend thee, grant, that in true and sincere faith we may raise up all our thoughts and affections to thy only-begotten Son, who is our propitiation, that thou being appeased, we may lay hold on him, and remain united to him by a sacred bond, until thou at length gatherest us all into that celestial kingdom, which he has procured for us by his own blood. Amen.

Lecture Ninety-fifth

Micah 6:15

15. Thou shalt sow, but thou shalt not reap; thou shalt tread the olives, but thou shalt not anoint thee with oil; and sweet wine, but shalt not drink wine.

15. Tu seres, et non metes; tu calcabis (vel, premes) oleum, et non unges te oleo; et mustum, et non bibes vinum.

The Prophet adds another kind of punishment, which was to follow the calamity threatened in the last verse. He had said, that those who escaped would at length be destroyed by the sword; he says now, that the whole land would become a prey to enemies: and he took his words from Moses; for it was usual with the prophets, when they wished to secure greater authority to themselves, to quote literally the curses contained in the Law, as in the present instance: see Deuteronomy 28 and Leviticus 26. Now it is well known, that God denounced this punishment, with others, on the people, --- that when they sowed their fields, another would reap, --- that when they cultivated with great labor their vineyards, others would become the vintagers. The meaning is that whatever fruit the land produced, would come into the hands of enemies, for all things would be exposed to plunder. Now it is a very grievous thing, when we see not only our provisions consumed by enemies, but also the fruit of our labor; which is the same as though they were to drink our blood: for the labor of man is often compared to blood, for labor occasions perspiration. It now follows ---

Micah 6:16

16. For the statutes of Omri are kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab, and ye walk in their counsels; that I should make thee a desolation, and the inhabitants thereof an hissing: therefore ye shall bear the reproach of my people.

16. Et observata sunt edicta Amri, et omne opus domus Ahab; et ambulabitis consiliis eorum, ut tradam te in excidium (vel, vastitatem,) et incolas ejus in sibilum; et opprobrium populi mei portabitis.

Some read the words in the future tense, ``And they will observe the statutes

of Omri,'' etc., and gather this meaning, --- that the Prophet now foresees by the Spirit, that the people would continue so perverse in their sins, as to exclude every hope that they could be reformed by any punishments. The meaning then would be, ``The Lord has indeed determined to punish sharply and severely the wickedness of this people; but they will not repent; they will nevertheless remain stupid in their obstinacy, and go on in their superstitions, which they have learned from the kings of Israel.'' There is however another view, and one more generally approved and that is, --- that the Jews, having forsaken God, and despised his Law, had turned aside to the superstitions of the kingdom of Israel. Hence he says, that observed were the decrees of Omri, and every work of the house of Ahab Omri was the father of Ahab, who was made king by the election of the soldiers, when Zimri, who had slain the king, was rejected. When Omri bought Samaria, he built there a city; and to secure honor to it, he added a temple; and hence idolatry increased. Afterwards his son Ahab abandoned himself to every kind of superstition. Thus matters became continually worse. Hence the Prophet, by mentioning here king Omri and his posterity, (included in the words, ``the house of Ahab'') clearly means, that the Jews who had purely worshipped God, at length degenerated, and were now wholly unlike Israelites, as they had embraced all those abominations which Omri and his son Ahab had devised. True religion as yet prevailed in the tribe of Judah, though the kingdom of Israel was become corrupt, and filthy superstitions had gained the ascendancy: but in course of time the Jews became also implicated in similar superstitions. Of this sin the Prophet now accuses them; that is, that they made themselves associates with the Israelites: Observed [255] then are the edicts of Omri, and the whole work of the house of Ahab: Ye walk, he says, (the future here means a continued act, as often elsewhere,) ye walk in their counsels.

It must be observed, that the Prophet here uses respectable terms, when he says that {חקעת}, chekut, statutes or decrees, were observed; and when he adds, ``the counsels'' of the kings of Israel: but yet this is in no way stated as an excuse for them; for though men may not only be pleased with, but also highly commend, their own devices, yet the Lord abominates them all. The Prophet no doubt designedly adopted these words, in order to show that those pretenses were frivolous and of no account, which superstitious men adduce, either to commend or to excuse their own inventions. They ever refer to public authority, --- ``This has been received by the consent of all; that has been decreed; it is not the mistake of one or two men; but the whole Church has so determined: and kings also thus command; it would be a great sin not to show obedience to them.'' Hence the Prophet, in order to show how puerile are such excuses, says, ``I indeed allow that your superstitions are by you honorably distinguished, for they are approved by the edicts of your kings, and are received by the consent of the many, and they seem not to have been inconsiderately and

[255] The verb, {,ישתמר is in the singular, and is followed by its nominative case, which is in the plural number. Grammarians are at a loss to account for this, and hence propose several modes of construction. But it is evidently an anomalous idiom, somewhat similar to that in Greek, when plural neuters take a verb in the singular number. As it has been already observed, such a construction as we find here, is very common in the Welsh language. The verb is in Hithpael, the reflective mood, the ,{ת} as often the case, changing place with the first letter of the verb. It is not always that this mood is reflective, but is sometimes passive, as we find to be the case with ,{סתר} in Isaiah 29:14, and ,{עבר} in Deuteronomy 3:26. And so here it does not retain its reflective meaning. But it may be, that intensity, diligence, or earnestness, is intended to be conveyed; that is, that the statutes of Omri were diligently and carefully observed. --- Ed.

unadvisedly, but prudently contrived, even by great men, who were become skillful through long experience.'' But how much soever they might have boasted of their statutes and counsels, and however plausibly they might have referred to prudence and power in order to disguise their idolatries, yet all those things were of no account before God. By counsels, the Prophet no doubt meant that false kind of wisdom which always shines forth in the traditions of men; and by statutes, he meant the kingly authority.

We hence see that it is a vain thing to color over what is idolatrous, by alleging power on the one hand in its favor, and wisdom on the other. --- How so? Because God will not allow dishonor to be done to him by such absurd things; but he commands us to worship him according to what is prescribed in his Word.

And now a denunciation of punishment follows, That I should deliver thee to desolation, and its inhabitants, etc. There is a change of person; the Prophet continually addresses the land, and under that name, the people, --- that I should then deliver thee to exile, or desolation, and thine inhabitants to hissing It is a quotation from Moses: and by hissing he means the reproach and mockery to which men in a miserable state are exposed.

At last he adds, Ye shall bear the reproach of my people Some take the word, people, in a good sense, as though the Prophet had said here, that God would punish the wrongs which the rich had done to the distressed common people; but this view, in my judgment, is too confined. Others understand this by the reproach of God's people, --- that nothing would be more reproachful to the Jews, than that they had been the people of God; for it would redound to their dishonor and disgrace, that they, who had been honored by such an honorable name, were afterwards given up to so great miseries. But the passage may be otherwise explained: we may understand by the people of God the Israelites; as though the Prophet said, ``Do ye not perceive how the Israelites have been treated? Were they not a part of my people? They were descendants from the race of Abraham as well as you; nor can you boast of a higher dignity: They were then equal to you in the opinion of all; and yet this privilege did not hinder my judgment, did not prevent me from visiting them as they deserved.'' Such a view harmonizes with the passage: but there is, as I think, something ironical in the expression, ``my people;'' as though he said, ``The confidence, that ye have been hitherto my people, hardens you: but this false and wicked boasting shall increase your punishment; for I will not inflict on you an ordinary punishment, as on heathens and strangers; but I shall punish your wickedness much more severely; for it is necessary, that your punishment should bear proportion to my favor, which has been so shamefully and basely despised by you.'' Hence, by the reproach of God's people, I understand the heavier judgments, which were justly prepared for all the ungodly, whom God had favored with such special honor, as to regard them as his people: for the servant, who knew his master's will, and did it not, was on that account more severely corrected, [256] Luke 12:47. Let us now proceed ---

Chapter 7

[256] There is another view mentioned by Drusius, — that is, the reproach which God had previously denounced on his people, in case they sinned and continued in their perverseness. Reproach in this sense would mean punishment. — Ed.

Micah 7

Micah 7:1-2

1. Woe is me! for I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits, as the grapegleanings of the vintage: there is no cluster to eat: my soul desired the firstripe fruit.

1. Vae mihi (alii deducunt a {ילל}, ululare meum; sed est particula dolentis apud Hebraeos; Vae mihi ergo,) quia fui sicut collectiones aestatis (sic est ad verbum,) et sicuti racemi vindemiae; nullus botrus ad comedendum; maturos fructus (vel, primitias frugum) desideravit anima mea.

2. The good man is perished out of the earth: and there is none upright among men: they all lie in wait for blood; they hunt every man his brother with a net.

2. Periit humanus (vel, mansuetus) e terra, et rectus in hominibus nemo est; et omnes sanguinibus insidiantur, quisque fratrem suum venatur reti (alii, ad perniciem; et {הרם}, etiam Hebraeis interdum est occisio.)

The meaning of the first verse is somewhat doubtful: some refer what the Prophet says to punishment; and others to the wickedness of the people. The first think that the calamity, with which the Lord had visited the sins of the people, is bewailed; as though the Prophet looked on the disordered state of the whole land. But it may be easily gathered from the second verse, that the Prophet speaks here of the wickedness of the people, rather than of the punishment already inflicted. I have therefore put the two verses together, that the full meaning may be more evident to us.

Woe then to me! Why? I am become as gatherings Too free, or rather too licentious is this version, --- ``I am become as one who seeks to gather summer-fruits, and finds none;'' so that being disappointed of his hope, he burns with desire. This cannot possibly be considered as the rendering of the Prophet's words. There is indeed some difficulty in the expressions: their import, however, seems to be this, --- that the land, which the Prophet undertakes here to represent and personify, was like to a field, or a garden, or a vineyard, that was empty. He therefore says, that

the land was stripped of all its fruit, as it is after harvest and the vintage. So by gatherings we must understand the collected fruit. Some understand the gleanings which remain, as when one leaves carelessly a few clusters on the vines: and thus, they say, a few just men remained alive on the land. But the former comparison harmonizes better with the rest of the passage, and that is, that the land was now stripped of all its fruit, as it is after the harvest and the vintage. I am become then as the gatherings of summer, that is, as in the summer, when the fruit has been already gathered; and as the clusters of the vintage, that is when the vintage is over. [257]

There is no cluster, he says to eat. The Prophet refers here to the scarcity of good men; yea, he says that there were no longer any righteous men living. For though God had ever preserved some hidden seed, yet it might have been justly declared with regard to the whole people, that they were like a field after gathering the corn, or a vineyard after the vintage. Some residue, indeed, remains in the field after harvest, but there are no ears of corn; and in the vineyard some bunches remain, but they are empty; nothing remains but leaves. Now this personification is very forcible when the Prophet comes forth as though he represented the land itself; for he speaks in his own name and person, Woe is to me, he says, for I am like summer-gatherings! It was then the same thing, as though he deplored his own nakedness and want, inasmuch as there were not remaining any upright and righteous men.

In the second verse he expresses more clearly his mind, Perished, he says, has the righteous [258] from the land, and there is none upright [259] among men. Here now he does not personify the land. It was indeed a forcible and an emphatic language, when he complained at the beginning, that he groaned as though the land was ashamed of its dearth: but the Prophet now performs the office of a teacher, Perished, he says, has the righteous from the land; there is no one upright among men; all lay in wait for blood; every one hunts his brother as with a net In this verse the Prophet briefly shows, that all were full both of cruelty and perfidy, that there was no care for justice; as though he said, In vain are good men sought among this people; for they are all bloody, they are all fraudulent. When he says, that they all did lay in wait for blood, he no doubt intended to set forth their cruelty, as though he had said, that they were thirsting for blood. But when he adds, that each did lay in wait for their brethren, he alludes to their frauds or to their perfidy.

We now then perceive the meaning of the Prophet: and the manner he adopts is more emphatical than if God, in his own name, had pronounced the words: for,

[257] Newcome renders the verse somewhat different, and makes the comparison more clear, — "Woe is me! For I am become As the gatherers of late figs, As the gleaners of the vintage: There is no cluster to eat; My soul desireth the first ripe fig." Substantially the same is the version of Dathius and of Henderson. "Late figs" is not strictly the meaning of {,{קיץ which is properly summer or summer-fruit; yet, as the early or first ripe fig is mentioned in the last line, which forms a contrast with this, what is meant, no doubt, is the late figs. Then the word for ``gleaners,'' ,{עללת} is properly, gleanings; but here it is evidently to be taken as a concrete, gleaners, to correspond with gatherers, though Newcome considers the women-gleaners to be intended. The four last lines form a parallelism, in which the first and the early fig, --- the vintage and the cluster. --- Ed.

[258] Justus, rendered in the text humanus, vel, mansuetus The Hebrew is {,{חסיד rendered by the Septuagint ``{ευσβης}---godly, pious,''---by Marckius, ``benignus --- kind, benignant,'' --- by Newcome, ``the good man,'' --- and by Henderson, ``the pious.'' It is sometimes rendered holy; but its meaning is, kind, benevolent, merciful, actively good, beneficent. In Psalm 12:1, it is rendered ``godly,'' and in Isaiah 57:1, ``merciful.'' --- Ed.

[259] Rectus, {,{ישר rendered by the Septuagint, ``{κατορθων}---one going straight to an object,''---by Newcome and Henderson, ``upright.'' It is one who proceeds in a straight course according to the rule of the law, without making any windings or turning aside into any devious path. --- Ed.

as men were fixed, and as though drowned, in their own carelessness, the Prophet introduces here the land as speaking, which accuses its own children, and confesses its own guilt; yea, it anticipates God's judgment, and acknowledges itself to be contaminated by its own inhabitants, so that nothing pure remained in it. It follows ---

Micah 7:3

3. That they may do evil with both hands earnestly, the prince asketh, and the judge asketh for a reward; and the great man, he uttereth his mischievous desire: so they wrap it up.

3. Super malitia manuum suarum ad beneficiendum; princeps postulat, et judex in mercede (ego transfero ad verbum,) et magnus loquitur pravitatem animae suae ipse; et complicant (vel, ut alii vertunt, confirmant; sed proprie est complicari; et metaphora apte convenit contextui, ut statim videbimus.)

This verse is properly addressed to the judges and governors of the people, and also to the rich, who oppressed the miserable common people, because they could not redeem themselves by rewards. The Prophet therefore complains, that corruptions so much prevailed in judgments, that the judges readily absolved the most wicked, provided they brought bribes. The sum of what is said then is, that any thing might be done with impunity, for the judges were venal. This is the Prophet's meaning.

But as interpreters differ, something shall be said as to the import of the words. {כפים} {הרע} {על}, ol ero caphim, For the evil of their hands to do good. Some give this explanation, ``Though they are openly wicked, yet they make pretenses, by which they cover their wickedness:'' and the sense would be this, --- that though they had cast aside every care for what was right, they yet had become so hardened in iniquity, that they wished to be deemed good and holy men; for in a disordered state of things the wicked always show an iron front, and would have silence to be observed respecting their shameful deeds. Some interpreters therefore think that the Prophet here complains, that there was now no difference between what was honorable and base, right and wrong; for wicked men dared so to disguise their iniquities, that they did not appear, or, that no one ventured to say any thing against them. Do you, however, examine and consider, whether what the Prophet says may be more fitly connected together in this way, That they may do good for the wickedness of their hands, that is, to excuse themselves for the wickedness of their hands, they agree together; for the prince asks, the judge is ready to receive a bribe. Thus, the rich saw that exemption might have been got by them, for they had the price of redemption in their hands: they indeed knew that the judges and princes could be pacified, when they brought the price of corruption. And this is the meaning which I approve, for it harmonizes best with the words of the Prophet. At the same time, some give a different explanation of the verb {להיטיב}, laeithib, that is that they acted vigorously in their wickedness: but this exposition is frigid. I therefore embrace the one I have just stated, which is, --- that corruptions so prevailed in the administration of justice, that coverings were ready for all crimes; for the governors and judges were lovers of money, and were always ready to absolve the most guilty, but not without a reward.

For the wickedness then of their works, that they may do good, that is, that they may obtain acquittance, the prince only asks; he examines not the case, but only regards the hand; and the judge, he says, judges for reward: the judges also were mercenary. They did not sit to determine what was right and just; but as soon as they were satisfied by bribes, they easily forgave all crimes; and thus they turned vices into virtues; for they made no difference between white and black, but according to the bribe received. [260]

This view is consistent with what the Prophet immediately subjoins, The great, he says, speaks of the wickedness of his soul, even he By the great, he does not mean the chief men, as some incorrectly think, but he means the rich, who had money enough to conciliate the judges. They then who could bring the price of redemption, dared to boast openly of their wickedness: for so I render the word {הות}, eut, as it cannot be suitable to translate it here, corruption. Speak then of the wickedness of his soul does the great; there was then nothing, neither fear nor shame, to restrain the rich from doing wrong. --- How so? For they knew that they had to do with mercenary judges and could easily corrupt them. They hence dared to speak of the wickedness of their soul: they did not cloak their crimes, as it is the case when some fear of the Law prevails, when justice is exercised: but as no difference was made between good and evil, the most guilty boasted openly of his wickedness. And the pronoun {הוא}, eva, he himself, is also emphatical; and this has not been observed by interpreters. He then himself speaks of the wickedness of his soul; he did not wait until others accuse him of doing wrong, but he shamelessly dared to glory in his crimes; for impunity was certain, as he could close the mouth of the judges by bringing a bribe. Speak then of the wickedness of his soul does he himself. [261]

And further, they fold up wickedness; which means, that raging cruelty prevailed, because the governors, and those who wished to purchase liberty to sin, conspired together; as though they made ropes, and thus rendered firm their wickedness. For the great man, that is, the rich and the monied, agreed with the judge, and the judge with him; and so there was a collusion between them. It hence happened, that wickedness possessed, as it were, a tyrannical power; for there was no remedy. We now apprehend the real design of the Prophet, at least as far as I am able to discover. It now follows ---

[260] This clause, though the general sense is allowed by most to be the same, is yet variously rendered. Drusius says, "Locus hic diu me multumque torsit." The original is, — el hre kpyM lhyjyb The most satisfactory rendering is that which is offered by Marckius, which is this, — Propter malefaciendum volae pro benefaciendum, — For doing evil [are their] hands instead of doing good. Rabbi Jonathan, as quoted by Marckius, gives substantially the same rendering, though not literally, — Malum faciunt manibus suis, et non bonum faciunt, — Evil they do with their hands, and they do no good. Our version is that of Junius and Tremelius, and is substantially followed by Newcome; and Henderson's version is, — For evil their hands are well prepared; which is nearly that of the Septuagint,— Epi to kakon tav ceirav autwn etoimazousi But the following would be as literal a translation as that of Marckius, — For doing evil are their hands, to do it thoroughly. The last verb means not only to do good, but also to make a thing good or complete, fully to execute it. — Ed.

[261] The whole verse may be rendered thus,— For doing evil are their hands, to execute it fully: The prince asks, and the judge also, for reward; When the great man speaks of oppression, That it is his desire, then they contrive it together, or, literally, entwine it. To render {{הות {נפשו} ,{הוא} ``the wickedness of the soul,'' as Newcome does, is to leave out wholly the last word; and Henderson does the same. Piscator gives the form of the words, ``aerumnam, quam expetit --- the mischief, which he desires.'' The two last words literally are, ``his desire it is.'' --- Ed.

Micah 7:4

4. The best of them is as a brier: the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge: the day of thy watchmen and thy visitation cometh; now shall be their perplexity.

4. Bonus inter eos quasi paliurus, rectus prae spineto (aliquid subaudiendum est, asperior est spineto;) dies speculatorum tuorum, visitatio tua venit; tunc erit confusio ipsorum (vel, perplexitas, ut alii vertunt.)

The Prophet confirms what he had previously said, --- that the land was so full of every kind of wickedness, that they who were deemed the best were yet thorns and briers, full of bitterness, or very sharp to prick; as though he said, ``The best among them is a thief; the most upright among them is a robber.'' We hence see, that in these words he alludes to their accumulated sins, as though he said, ``The condition of the people cannot be worse; for iniquity has advanced to its extreme point: when any one seeks for a good or an upright man, he only finds thorns and briers; that is, he is instantly pricked.'' But if the best were then like thorns, what must have been the remainder? We have already seen that the judges were so corrupt that they abandoned themselves without feeling any shame to any thing that was base. What then could have been said of them, when the Prophet compares here the upright and the just to thorns; yea, when he says, that they were rougher than briers? Though it is an improper language to say, that the good and the upright [262] among them were like briers; for words are used contrary to their meaning, as it is certain, that those who inhumanely pricked others were neither good nor just: yet the meaning of the Prophet is in no way obscure, --- that there was then such license taken in wickedness, that even those who retained in some measure the credit of being upright were yet nothing better than briers and thorns. There is then in the words what may be deemed a concession.

He then adds, The day of thy watchmen, thy visitation comes He here denounces the near judgment of God, generally on the people, and especially on the rulers. But he begins with the first ranks and says The day of thy watchmen; as though he said, ``Ruin now hangs over thy governors, though they by no means expect it.'' Watchmen he calls the Prophets, who, by their flatteries, deceived the people, as well as their rulers: and he sets the Prophets in the front, because they were the cause of the common ruin. He does not yet exempt the body of the people from punishment; nay, he joins together these two things, --- the visitation of the whole people, and the day of the watchmen.

And justly does he direct his discourse to these watchmen, who, being blind, blinded all the rest; and who, being perverted, led astray the whole people. This is the reason why the Prophet now, in an especial manner, threatens them; but, as I have already said, the people were not on this account to be excused. There may seem indeed to have been here a fair pretense for extenuating their guilt: the common people might have said that they had not been warned as they ought to have

[262] It is better, as it is done here, to take the words simply as they are, and not to make superlatives of them: nor is there any change necessary in the second line as proposed by Dathius, Newcome, and others, by taking the {{נ from one word and attaching it to another. There is no MS. In its favor, and it is done only on the authority of the Targum. The two lines are these, --- Their good man is like a brier, The upright worse than a thorny hedge. The preposition {נ} is often rendered ``rather than;'' but it may, in many places, be rendered ``better than,'' or ``worse than,'' according to the import of the passage. --- Ed.

been; nay, that they had been destroyed through delusive falsehoods. And we see at this day that many make such a pretense as this. But a defense of this kind is of no avail before God; for though the common people are blinded, yet they go astray off their own accord, since they lend a willing ear to impostors. And even the reason why God gave loose reins to Satan as well as to his ministers, and why he gives, as Paul says, (2 Thessalonians 2:11,) power to delusion, is this, --- because the greater part of the world ever seeks to be deceived. The denunciation of the Prophet then is this, --- that as the judges and the Prophets had badly exercised their office, they would be led to the punishment which they deserved, for they had been, as it has been elsewhere observed, the cause of ruin to others: in the meantime, the common people were not excusable. The vengeance of God then would overtake them and from the least to the greatest, without any exemption. Thy visitation then comes.

He afterwards speaks in the third person, Then shall be their confusion, or perplexity, or they shall be ashamed. The Prophet here alludes indirectly to the hardness of the people; for though the Prophets daily threatened them, they yet remained all of them secure; nay, we know that all God's judgments were held in derision by them. As then the faithful teachers could not have moved wicked men either with fear or with shame, the Prophet says, Then confusion shall come to them; as though he said, ``Be hardened now as much as ye wish to be, as I see that you are stupid, yea, senseless, and attend not to the word of the Lord; but the time of visitation will come, and then the Lord will constrain you to be ashamed, for he will really show you to be such as ye are; and he will not then contend with you in words as he does now; but the announced punishment will divest you of all your false pretenses; and he will also remove that waywardness which now hardens you against wholesome doctrine and all admonitions.''

Prayer.

Grant, Almighty God, that seeing that we are born in a most corrupt age, in which such a license is taken to indulge in wickedness, that hardly a spark of virtue appears, --- O grant, that we may yet continue upright in the midst of thorns; and do thou so constantly keep us under the guidance of thy Word, that we may cultivate true piety, and also what is just towards our neighbors: and as there is in us no power to preserve ourselves safe, grant that thy Son may so protect us by the power of the Holy Spirit, that we may continue to advance towards the end of our course, until we be at length gathered into that celestial kingdom, which he has procured for us by his own blood. Amen.

Lecture Ninety-sixth

Micah 7:5-6

5. Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide: keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom.

5. Ne fidatis amico, ne speretis in consiliario (vel, duce;) ab ea quae dormit in sinu tuo custodi aperturas oris tui:

6. For the son dishonoureth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter in law against her mother in law; a man's enemies are the men of his own house.

6. Quia filius contumelia afficit patrem, filia surgit contra matrem suam, nurus contra socrum suam; inimici viri domestici ejus (homines domus ejus, ad verbum.)

The Prophet pursues the subject we discussed yesterday, --- that liberty, in iniquity, bad arrived to its highest point, for no faithfulness remained among men; nay, there was no more any humanity; for the son performed not his duty towards his father, nor the daughter-in-law towards her mother-in-law; in short, there was then no mutual love and concord. He does not here speak of that false confidence, by which many deceive themselves, who rely on mortals, and transfer to them the glory which belongs to God. Those therefore without any reason, philosophize here, who say, that we ought not to trust in men; for this was not the design of the Prophet. But our Prophet complains of his times according to the tenor of Ovid's description of the iron age, who says -

``---A guest is not safe from his host;
Nor a brother-in-law from a son-in-law; and brotherly love is rare:
A husband seeks the death of his wife, and she, of her husband;
Cruel stepmothers mingle the lurid poison;
The son, before the day, inquires into the years of his father.'' [263]

So also our Prophet says, that there was no regard to humanity among men; for the wife was ready to betray her husband, the son treated his father with reproach; in short, they had all forgotten humanity or natural affection. We now then understand what the Prophet means by saying, Trust not a friend; [264] that is, if any one hopes for any thing from a friend, he will be deceived; for nothing can be found among men but perfidy.

Put no faith in a counselor So I render the word {אלוף}, aluph; some translate it, an elder brother; but there is no necessity to constrain us to depart from the proper and true meaning of the word. As then the Prophet had spoken of an associate or a friend, so he now adds a counselor. And it proves what he had in view, when he says in the next clause, that no enemies are worse than domestics. We hence see that the Prophet simply means, that the men of his age were not only avaricious and cruel to one another, but that without any regard to human feelings the son rebelled against his father, and thus subverted the whole order of nature; So that they had none of those affections, which seem at the same time to be incapable of being extinguished in men. Let us now proceed ---

Micah 7:7

7. Therefore I will look unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me.

7. Ego autem ad Jehovam respiciam, expectabo ad Deum salutis meae; exaudiet

[263] See Ov. Met. Lib. I. 144-148.

[264] Ne fidatis amico: it is rather, Believe not in a friend, that is, in what he says, {אל-{תאמינו} ברע.} The next expression is that which signifies reliance, trust or confidence. ,{אלוף} is a leader; {ηγουμενος} in Sept., one who leads the way. Diodati gives its true meaning, --- ``A conductor, the most trusty friend, who is one's usual counselor in every difficulty and perplexity.'' Jerome refers to scriptural instances as to the persons here mentioned: the friend, Ahitophel and Judas, --- the counselor, Abimelek, who was made king by the men of Sichem, and oppressed them, --- domestics, Absalom and the wives of Esau. The word used for ``dishonoring'' is very strong; ,{מנבל} one who counts a thing worthless or abominable; it means not only to dishonor, but to regard with disdain and contempt. ``The contempt and violation of the laws of domestic duties,'' Henry justly observes, ``are a sad symptom of an universal corruption of manners. Those are never likely to come to good who are undutiful to their parents, and study to be provoking to them and cross them.'' --- Ed.

me Deus meus.

The Prophet points out here the only remedy, to preserve the faithful from being led away by bad examples and that is, to fix their eyes on God, and to believe that he will be their deliverer. Nothing is more difficult than to refrain from doing wrong, when the ungodly provoke us; for they seem to afford us a good reason for retaliation. And when no one injures us, yet custom is deemed almost a law: thus it happens that we think that to be lawful which is sanctioned by the manners and customs of the age; and when success attends the wicked, this becomes a very strong incentive. Thus it happens, that the faithful can hardly, and with no small difficulty, keep themselves within proper bounds: when they see that wickedness reigns everywhere, and that with impunity; and still more, when they see the abettors of wickedness increasing in esteem and wealth, immediately the corrupt lust of emulation creeps in. But when the faithful themselves are provoked by injuries, there seems then to be a just reason for doing wrong; for they say that they willfully do harm to no one, but only resist an injury done to them, or retaliate fraud with fraud: this they think is lawful. The Prophet, in order to prevent this temptation, bids the faithful to look to God. The same sentiment we often meet with in Psalm 119: its import is, that the faithful are not to suffer themselves to be led away by bad examples, but to continue ever obedient to God's word, however great and violent the provocations they may receive. Let us now consider the words of the Prophet.

To Jehovah, he says, will I look The verb {צפה}, tsaphe, properly means to look on, to behold; (speculari;) it is sometimes taken in the sense of expecting; but I am inclined to retain its proper meaning, I will look, he says, on God; that is, I will do the same as though the only true God were before my eyes. How indeed does it happen that even the good indulge themselves while living among the wicked and ungodly, except that they are too much occupied with things around them? If then we desire to maintain integrity, while the world presents to us nothing but examples of sin, let us learn to pass by these temptations as with closed eyes. This may be done, if we direct our eyes to God alone. I will look, he says, to Jehovah

He then adds, I will wait for the God of my salvation The Prophet says nothing new here, but only explains more clearly the last clause, defining the manner of the looking of which he had spoken; as though he said, --- ``Patiently will I bear, while God helps me:'' for when the wicked harass us on every side, we shall no doubt soon turn away our eyes from Gods except we be armed with patience. And how comes patience, unless we be fully persuaded that God will be our deliverer, when the suitable time shall come? We now perceive the intention of the Prophet. He shows that the godly cannot otherwise continue constant in their integrity, except they turn their eyes to the only true God. Then he adds, that they cannot be preserved in this contemplation, unless they wait patiently for God, that is, for his help.

And he calls him the God of his salvation; by which he intimates that, relying on his word, he thus perseveres in enduring injuries: for it cannot be but that every one will submit himself to God, and surrender himself to be protected by him, if this truth be first fixed in his mind --- that God will never forsake his own people. This then is the reason why he calls him the God of his salvation. But this title must be referred

to his present circumstances, as though he said, --- ``Though God's hand does not now appear to help or to bring me aid, I yet feel assured of his favor, and I know that my salvation is secured by it.''

He then adds, Hear me will my God He here confirms what we have already said, --- that, being supported by the promises of God, he thus composes his mind to patience; for patience would often vanish or would be shaken off by temptations, unless we were surely persuaded that God provides for our salvation, and that we shall not hope in him in vain. Nor is it to no purpose that he says, that God was his God. He was one of his people; and this seems to have been the common privilege of all the Jews: yet the Prophet no doubt connects God with himself here in a peculiar manner; for men in general had fallen away into ungodliness. They all indeed gloried in the name of God, but absurdly and falsely. Hence the Prophet intimates, that he was under his protection in a manner different from the rest: for when any one allows himself the liberty of doing evil, he, at the same time, renounces God and his protection. Therefore, the Prophet no doubt alludes indirectly to the irreligion of the people. For though the vain boasting, that they had been adopted by God, that they were the holy race of Abraham, was everywhere in the mouth of all, yet hardly one in a hundred had any regard for God. But it is also of importance to notice, that the Prophet, by saying, Hear me will God, gives a testimony, at the same time, respecting his own faith, --- that he would always apply to God for help, and exercise himself in prayer whenever necessity urged him; for God hears not except when he is called upon. The Prophet then recommends here, by his example, an attention to prayer.

Now this verse shows to us in general that there is no excuse for us if we suffer ourselves to be led away, as it is daily the case, by bad examples. And then to look to God is especially needful, when all excesses of wickedness prevail in the world: when the lusts of men become the rule and the law, we ought then to renounce in a manner the society of men, that they may not implicate us in their wickedness. They, therefore, who allege for themselves the examples of others, employ a frivolous excuse, as many do in the present day, who set up the shield of custom: though they are clearly condemned by the word of God, yet they think it a sufficient defense, that they follow others. But we see how frivolous is this confidence; for the Prophet no doubt prescribes here a law for all the children of God as to what they ought to do, when the devil tempts them to sin by the bad examples and shameful deeds of the majority. Let us go on ---

Micah 7:8

8. Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me.

8. Ne gaudeas de me, inimica mea; quia ceciderim, surgam (vel, quamvis ceciderim, surgam;) quum sedebo in tenebris, Jehova erit lux mihi.

Here the Prophet assumes the character of the Church and repels a temptation, which proves very severe to us in adversities; for there is not so much bitterness in the evil itself, as in the mockery of the wicked, when they petulantly insult us and deride our faith. And to noble minds reproach is ever sharper than death itself: and

yet the devil almost always employs this artifice; for when he sees that we stand firm in temptations, he suborns the wicked and sharpens their tongues to speak evil of use and to wound us with slanders. This is the reason why the Prophet directs his discourse now to the enemies of the Church. But as God calls the Church his spouse, and as she is described to us under the character of a woman, so also he compares here the enemies of the holy people to a petulant woman. As, therefore, when there is emulation between two women, she, who sees her enemy pressed down by evils and adverse events, immediately raises up herself and triumphs; so also the Prophet says respecting the enemies of the Church; they sharpened their tongues, and vomited forth their bitterness, as soon as they saw the children of God in trouble or nearly overwhelmed with adversities. We now then understand the design of the Prophet, --- that he wished to arm us, as I have said, against the taunts of the ungodly, lest they should prevail against us when God presses us down with adversities, but that we may stand courageously, and with composed and tranquil minds, swallow down the indignity.

Rejoice not over me, he says, O my enemy Why not? He adds a consolation; for it would not be enough for one to repel with disdain the taunts of his enemy; but the Prophet says here, Rejoice not, for should I fall, I shall rise; or though I fall, I shall rise: and the passage seems to harmonize better when there is a pause after Rejoice not over me; and then to add, Though I fall, I shall rise, though I sit in darkness, Jehovah shall be a light to me [265] The Prophet means, that the state of the Church was not past hope. There would be ample room for our enemies to taunt us, were it not that this promise cannot fail us, --- seven times in the day the just falls, and rises again, (Proverbs 24:16.) --- How so? For God puts under him his own hand. We now perceive the meaning of this passage. For if God deprived us of all hope, enemies might justly deride us, and we must be silent: but since we are surely persuaded that God is ready at hand to restore us again, we can boldly answer our enemies when they annoy with their derisions; though I fall, I shall rise: ``There is now no reason for thee to triumph over me when I fall; for it is God's will that I should fall, but it is for this end --- that I may soon rise again; and though I now lie in darkness, yet the Lord will be my light.''

We hence see that our hope triumphs against all temptations: and this passage shows in a striking manner, how true is that saying of John, --- that our faith gains the victory over the world, (1 John 5:4.) For when sorrow and trouble take possession of our hearts, we shall not fail if this comes to our mind --- that God will be our aid in the time of need. And when men vomit forth their poison against us, we ought to be furnished with the same weapons: then our minds shall never succumb, but boldly repel all the taunts of Satan and of wicked men. This we learn from this passage.

Now, from what the Prophet says, Though I fall, I shall rise again, we see what

[265] This is not exactly the Hebrew. The verb for rising, as well as that for falling, is in the past tense. The verse, literally rendered, is the following: — Rejoice not, my enemy, on my account; Though I have fallen, I have risen; Though I shall sit in darkness, Jehovah will be a light to me. There are no copies which give a different reading as to the verb "I have risen." Newcome follows the Septuagint, and thinks that a conversive {ו is left out. It ought rather perhaps to be considered as the language of faith, realizing the event before it arrived. The fall and ``the darkness'' refer no doubt to the outward calamities of the Church, its troubles and afflictions. --- Ed.

God would have us to expect, even a happy and joyful exit at all times from our miseries; but on this subject I shall have to speak more copiously a little farther on. As to the latter clause, When I sit in darkness, God will be my light, it seems to be a confirmation of the preceding sentence, where the Prophet declares, that the fall of the Church would not be fatal. But yet some think that more is expressed, namely, that in the very darkness some spark of light would still shine. They then distinguish between this clause and the former one, which speaks of the fall and the rise of the faithful, in this manner, --- that while they lie, as it were, sunk in darkness, they shall not even then be without consolation, for God's favor would ever shine on them. And this seems to be a correct view: for it cannot be that any one will expect the deliverance of which the Prophet speaks, except he sees some light even in the thickest darkness, and sustains himself by partaking, in some measure, of God's goodness: and a taste of God's favor in distresses is suitably compared to light; as when one is cast into a deep pit, by raising upward his eyes, he sees at a distance the light of the sun; so also the obscure and thick darkness of tribulations may not so far prevail as to shut out from us every spark of light, and to prevent faith from raising our eyes upwards, that we may have some taste of God's goodness. Let us proceed ---

Micah 7:9

9. I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness.

9. Iram Jehovae feram, quia peccavi ei, donec disceptet causam meam et faciet judicium meum (vel, asserat jus meum;) educet me in lucem, cernam justitiam ejus.

Here the Church of God animates and encourages herself to exercise patience, and does so especially by two arguments. She first sets before herself her sins, and thus humbles herself before God, whom she acknowledges to be a just Judge; and, in the second place, she embraces the hope of the forgiveness of her sins, and from this arises confidence as to her deliverance. By these two supports the Church sustains herself, that she fails not in her troubles, and gathers strength, as I have already said, to endure patiently.

First then he says, The wrath [266] of Jehovah will I bear, for sinned have I against him This passage shows, that when any one is seriously touched with the conviction of God's judgment, he is at the same time prepared to exercise patience; for it cannot be, but that a sinner, conscious of evil, and knowing that he suffers justly will humbly and thankfully submit to the will of God. Hence when men perversely glamour against God, or murmur, it is certain that they have not as yet been made sensible of their sins. I allow indeed that many feel guilty who yet struggle against God, and fiercely resist his hand as much as they can, and also blaspheme his name when he chastises them: but they are not touched hitherto with the true feeling of penitence, so as to abhor themselves. Judas owned indeed that he had sinned, and freely made such confession, (Matthew 27:3.) Cain tried to cover his sin, but the

[266] Iram, {,{ηער which means a stormy anger or displeasure, which agitates and raises tempests, and such were the calamities which came on the Jewish nation.

Lord drew from him an unwilling confession, (Genesis 4:13.) They did not yet repent; nay, they ceased not to contend with God; for Cain complained that his punishment was too heavy to be borne; Judas despaired. And the same thing happens to all the reprobate. They seemed then to have been sufficiently convinced to acknowledge their guilt, and, as it were, to assent to the justice of God's judgment; but they did not really know their sins, so as to abhor themselves, as I have said, on account of their sins. For true penitence is ever connected with the submission of which the Prophet now speaks. Whosoever then is really conscious of his sins, renders himself at the same time obedient to God, and submits himself altogether to his will. Thus repentance does ever of itself lead to the bearing of the cross; so that he who sets himself before God's tribunal allows himself to be at the same time chastised, and bears punishment with a submissive mind: as the ox, that is tamed, always takes the yoke without any resistance, so also is he prepared who is really touched with the sense of his sins, to bear any punishment which God may be pleased to inflict on him. This then is the first thing which we ought to learn from these words of the Prophet, The wrath of Jehovah will I bear, for sinned have I against him.

We also learn from this passage, that all who do not patiently bear his scourges contend with God; for though they do not openly accuse God, and say that they are just, they do not yet ascribe to him his legitimate glory, by confessing that he is a righteous judge. --- How so? Because these two things are united together and joined by an indissoluble knot --- to be sensible of sin --- and to submit patiently to the will of the Judge when he inflicts punishment.

Now follows the other argument, Until he decides my cause, and vindicates my right; he will bring me forth into the light, I shall see his righteousness Here the Church leans on another support; for though the Lord should most heavily afflict her, she would not yet cast aside the hope of deliverance; for she knew, as we have already seen, that she was chastised for her good: and indeed no one could even for a moment continue patient in a state of misery, except he entertained the hope of being delivered, and promised to himself a happy escape. These two things then ought not to be separated, and cannot be, --- the acknowledgment of our sins, which will humble us before God, --- and the knowledge of his goodness, and a firm assurance as to our salvation; for God has testified that he will be ever propitious to us, how much soever he may punish us for our sins, and that he will remember mercy, as Habakkuk says, in the midst of his wrath, (Habakkuk 3:2.) It would not then be sufficient for us to feel our evils, except the consolation, which proceeds from the promises of grace, be added.

The Prophet shows further, that the Church was innocent, with regard to its enemies, though justly suffering punishment. And this ought to be carefully observed; for whenever we have to do with the wicked, we think that there is no blame belonging to us. But these two things ought to be considered, --- that the wicked trouble us without reason, and thus our cause as to them is just, --- and yet that we are justly afflicted by God; for we shall ever find many reasons why the Lord should chastise us. These two things, then, ought to be both considered by us, as the Prophet seems to intimate here: for at the beginning of the verse he says, The wrath of God will I

bear, for sinned have I against him; and now he adds, The Lord will yet vindicate my right, literally, ``will debate my dispute,'' that is, plead my cause. Since the Church is guilty before God, nay, waits not for the sentence of the judge, but anticipates it, and freely confesses herself to be worthy of such punishment, what does this mean, --- that the Lord will decide her quarrel, that he will undertake her cause? These two things seem to militate the one against the other: but they agree well together when viewed in their different bearings. The Church had confessed that she had sinned against God; she now turns her eyes to another quarter; for she knew that she was unjustly oppressed by enemies; she knew that they were led to do wrong by cruelty alone. This then is the reason why the Church entertained hope, and expected that God would become the defender of her innocence, that is, against the wicked: and yet she humbly acknowledged that she had sinned against God. Whenever, then, our enemies do us harm, let us lay hold on this truth, --- that God will become our defender; for he is ever the patron of justice and equity: it cannot then be, that God will abandon us to the violence of the wicked. He will then at length plead our pleading, or undertake our cause, and be its advocate. But, in the meantime, let our sins be remembered by us, that, being truly humbled before God, we may not hope for the salvation which he promises to us, except through gratuitous pardon. Why then are the faithful bidden to be of good comfort in their afflictions? Because God has promised to be their Father; he has received them under his protection, he has testified that his help shall never be wanting to them. But whence is this confidence? Is it because they are worthy? Is it because they have deserved something of this kind? By no means: but they acknowledge themselves to be guilty, when they humbly prostrate themselves before God, and when they willingly condemn themselves before his tribunal, that they may anticipate his judgment. We now see how well the Prophet connects together these two things, which might otherwise seem contradictory.

Now follow the words, He will bring me to the light, I shall see his righteousness![267] The Church still confirms herself in the hope of deliverance: art it is hence also manifest how God is light to the faithful in obscure darkness, because they see that there is prepared for them an escape from their evils; but they see it at a distance, for they extend their hope beyond the boundaries of this life. As then the truth of God diffuses itself through heaven and earth, so the faithful extend their hope far and wide. Thus it is, that they can see light afar off, which seems to be very remote from them. And having this confidence, the Prophet says, The Lord will bring me into the light. They have, in the meantime, as I have already said, some light; they enjoy a taste of God's goodness in the midst of their evils: but the Prophet now refers to that coming forth which we ought to look for even in the worst circumstances.

He then adds, I shall see his righteousness By God's righteousness is to be understood, as it has been elsewhere stated, his favor towards the faithful; not that God returns for their works the salvation which he bestows, as ungodly men foolishly imagine; for they lay hold on the word righteousness, and think that whatever

[267] "I shall see the equity of his proceedings concerning me, and the performance of his promises to me." — Henry.

favors God freely grants us are due to our merits. --- How so? For God in this way shows his own righteousness. But far different is the reason for this mode of speaking. God, in order to show how dear and precious to him is our salvation, does indeed say, that he designs to give an evidence of his justice in delivering us: but there is a reference in this word righteousness to something else; for God has promised that our salvation shall be the object of his care, hence he appears just whenever he delivers us from our troubles. Then the righteousness of God is not to be referred to the merits of works, but, on the contrary, to the promise by which he has bound himself to us; and so also in the same dense God is often said to be faithful. In a word, the righteousness and faithfulness of God mean the same thing. When the Prophet says now in the person of the Church, I shall see his righteousness, he means, that though God concealed his favor for a time, and withdrew his hand, so that no hope of aid remained, it could not yet be, as he is just, but that he would succor us: I shall see then his righteousness, that is, God will at length really show that he is righteous. It now follows ---

Micah 7:10

10. Then she that is mine enemy shall see it, and shame shall cover her which said unto me, Where is the Lord thy God? mine eyes shall behold her: now shall she be trodden down as the mire of the streets.

10. Et videbit inimica mea, et operiet eam pudor, quae dixit mihi (vel, de me,) Ubi Jehova Deus tuus? Oculi mei videbunt, et nunc erit in conculcationem sicuti lutum platearum.

But I cannot finish the subject now.

Prayer.

Grant, Almighty God, that seeing we are at this day surrounded by so many miseries, yea, wherever we turn our eyes, innumerable evils meet us everywhere, which are so many evidences of thy displeasure, --- O grant, that we being truly humbled before thee, may be enabled at the same time to raise up our eyes to the promises of thy free goodness and paternal favor, which thou hast made to us in thine own Son, that we may not doubt, but that thou wilt be propitious to us, inasmuch as thou hast adopted us as thy people: and while our enemies, fully armed, rage and ferociously rise even daily against us, may we not doubt, but that thou wilt be our protection, as thou knowest that we are unjustly troubled by them; and may we thus go on, trusting in thy goodness, seeing that we ever groan under the, burden of our sins, and daily confess that we are worthy of thousand deaths before thee, wert not thou pleased in thine infinite mercy always to receive and restore us to favor, through thy Son our Lord. Amen.

Lecture Ninety-seventh

In the last lecture I repeated the tenth verse of the last chapter, in which the prophet adds, as a cause of the greatest joy, that the enemies of the Church shall see granted, to their great mortification, the wonderful favor of which the Prophet had been speaking. But he describes these enemies, under the character of an envious woman, as the Church of God is also compared to a woman: and this mode of speaking is common in Scripture. He then calls Jerusalem his rival, or Babylon, or

some city of his enemies.

And he says, Covered shall she be with shame We know that the ungodly grow insolent when fortune smiles on them: hence in prosperity they keep within no bounds, for they think that God is under their feet. If prosperity most commonly has the effect of making the godly to forget God and even themselves, it is no wonder that the unbelieving become more and more hardened, when God is indulgent to them. With regard then to such a pride, the Prophet now says, When my enemy shall see, shame shall cover her; that is, she will not continue in her usual manner, to elate herself with her own boastings: nay, she will be compelled for shame to hide herself; for she will see that she had been greatly deceived, in thinking that I should be wholly ruined.

He afterwards adds, Who said to me, Where is Jehovah thy God? The Church of God in her turn triumphs here over the unbelieving, having been delivered by divine power; nor does she do this for her own sake, but because the ungodly expose the holy name of God to reproach, which is very common: for whenever God afflicts his people, the unbelieving immediately raise their crests, and pour forth their blasphemies against God, when yet they ought, on the contrary, to humble themselves under his hand. But since God executes his judgments on the faithful, what can be expected by his ungodly despisers? If God's vengeance be manifested in a dreadful manner with regard to the green tree, what will become of the dry wood? And the ungodly are like the dry wood. But as they are blind as to God's judgments, they petulantly deride his name, whenever they see the Church afflicted, as though adversities were not the evidences of God's displeasure: for he chastises his own children, to show that he is the judge of the world. But, as I have already said, the ungodly so harden themselves in their stupor, that they are wholly thoughtless. The faithful, therefore, after having found God to be their deliverer, do here undertake his cause; they do not regard themselves nor their own character, but defend the righteousness of God. Such is this triumphant language, Who said, Where is now Jehovah thy God? ``I can really show that I worship the true God, who deserts not his people in extreme necessity: after he has assisted me, my enemy, who dared to rise up against God, now seeks hiding-places.''

She shall now, he says, be trodden under foot as the mire of the streets; and my eyes shall see her. What the Prophet declares in the name of the Church, that the unbelieving shall be like mire, is connected with the promise, which we already noticed; for God so appears as the deliverer of his Church, as not to leave its enemies unpunished. God then, while he aids his own people, leads the ungodly to punishment. Hence the Church, while embracing the deliverance offered to her, at the same time sees the near ruin, which impends on all the despisers of God. But what is stated, See shall my eyes, ought not to be so taken, as though the faithful exult with carnal joy, when they see the ungodly suffering the punishment which they have deserved; for the word to see is to be taken metaphorically, as signifying a pleasant and joyful sight, according to what it means in many other places; and as it is a phrase which often occurs, its meaning must be well known. See then shall my eyes, that is, ``I shall enjoy to look on that calamity, which now impends over all the ungodly.'' But,

as I have already said, carnal joy is not what is here intended, which intemperately exults, but that pure joy which the faithful experience on seeing the grace of God displayed and also his judgment. But this joy cannot enter into our hearts until they be cleansed from unruly passions; for we are ever excessive in fear and sorrow, as well as in hope and joy, except the Lord holds us in, as it were, with a bridle. We shall therefore be only then capable of this spiritual joy, of which the Prophet speaks, when we shall put off all disordered feelings, and God shall subdue us by his Spirit: then only shall we be able to retain moderation in our joy. The Prophet proceeds ---

Micah 7:11-12

11. In the day that thy walls are to be built, in that day shall the decree be far removed.

11. Dies ad aedificandum parietes tuos; dies iste procul abiget edictum.

12. In that day also he shall come even to thee from Assyria, and from the fortified cities, and from the fortress even to the river, and from sea to sea, and from mountain to mountain.

12. Die isto etiam ad te veniet ab Assur, et urbibus munitionis, et a munitione etiam ad fluvium, et ad mare a mari, et a monte ad montem.

Micah pursues the subject on which he had previously spoken, --- that though the Church thought itself for a time to be wholly lost, yet God would become its deliverer. He says first, that the day was near, in which they were to build the wall. The word {גדר}, gidar, means either a mound or a wall; so it ought to be distinguished from a wall, that is, a strong fortress. He then intimates that the time would come, when God would gather his Church, and preserve it, as though it were defended on every side by walls. For we know that the scattering of the Church is compared to the pulling down of walls or fences: as when a person pulls down the fence of a field or a vineyard, or breaks down all enclosures; so when the Church is exposed as a prey to all, she is said to be like an open field or a vineyard, which is without any fence. Now, on the other hand, the Prophet says here, that the time would come, when the faithful shall again build walls, by which they may be protected from the assaults and plunder of enemies, A day then to build thy walls

Then he adds, This day shall drive afar off the edict; some render it tribute; but the word properly means an edict, and this best suits the passage; for the Prophet's meaning is, that the people would not, as before, be subject to the tyranny of Babylon. For after the subversion of Jerusalem, the Babylonians, no doubt, triumphed very unfeelingly over the miserable people, and uttered dreadful threatening. The Prophet, therefore, under the name of edict, includes that cruel and tyrannical dominion which the Babylonians for a time exercised. We know what God denounces on the Jews by Ezekiel,

`Ye would not keep my good laws;
I will therefore give you laws which are not good,
which ye shall be constrained to keep;
and yet ye shall not live in them,'
(Ezekiel 20:25.)

Those laws which were not good were the edicts of which the Prophet now speaks.

That day then shall drive far away the edict, that the Jews might not dread the laws of their enemies. For the Babylonians no doubt forbade, under the severest punishment, any one from building even a single house in the place where Jerusalem formerly was; for they wished that place to remain desolate, that the people might know that they had no hope of restoration. That day then shall put afar off; or drive to a distance, the edict; for liberty shall be given to the Jews to build their city; and then they shall not tremblingly expect every hour, until new edicts come forth, denouncing grievous punishments on whomsoever that would dare to encourage his brethren to build the temple of God.

Some draw the Prophet's words to another meaning: they first think that he speaks only of the spiritual kingdom of Christ, and then they take {רחק}, rechek, in the sense of extending or propagating, and consider this to be the Gospel which Christ, by the command of the Father, promulgated through the whole world. It is indeed true that David uses the word decree in Psalm 2, while speaking of the preaching of the Gospel; and it is also true, that the promulgation of that decree is promised in Psalm 110, `The rod of his power will Jehovah send forth from Zion.' But this passage ought not to be thus violently perverted; for the Prophet no doubt means, that the Jews would be freed from all dread of tyranny when God restored them to liberty; and {רחק}, rechek, does not mean to extend or propagate, but to drive far away. That day then shall drive away the decree, so that the faithful shall be no more subject to tyrannical commands. We now perceive the true meaning of the Prophet.

The faithful doubtless prayed in their adversities, and depended on such prophecies as we find in Psalm 102,

`The day is now come to show mercy to Zion, and to build its walls; for thy servants pity her stones.'

Nor did the faithful pray thus presumptuously, but taking confidence, as though God had dictated a form of prayer by his own mouth, they dealt with God according to his promise, ``O Lord, thou hast promised the rebuilding of the city, and the time has been prefixed by Jeremiah and by other Prophets: since then the time is now completed, grant that the temple and the holy city may again be built.''

Some render the words, ``In the day in which thou shalt build (or God shall build) thy walls --- in that day shall be removed afar off the decree.'' But I doubt not but that the Prophet promises here distinctly to the faithful both the restoration of the city and a civil freedom; for the sentence is in two parts: the Prophet intimates first, that the time was now near when the faithful would build their own walls, that they might not be exposed to the will of their enemies, --- and then he adds, that they would be freed from the dread of tyranny; for God, as it is said by Isaiah, would break the yoke of the burden, and the scepter of the oppressor, (Isaiah 9:4;) and it is altogether the same kind of sentence.

He afterwards adds, In that day also to thee shall they come from Asshur. There is some obscurity in the words; hence interpreters have regarded different words as being understood: but to me the meaning of the Prophet appears not doubtful. In that day, he says, to thee shall they come from Asshur, and cities of the fortress

and from the fortress even to the river, and from sea to sea, and from mountain to mountain; but some think {הר}, er, to be a proper name, and render the last clause, ``And from mount Hor:'' and we know that Aaron was buried on this mount. But the Prophet, no doubt, alludes here to some other place; and to render it mount Hor is a strained version. I doubt not, therefore, but that the Prophet repeats a common name, as though he said, ``From mountains to mountains.''

Let us now see what the Prophet means. With regard to the passage, as I have said, there is no ambiguity, provided we bear in mind the main subject. Now the Prophet had this in view, --- That Jerusalem, when restored by God, would be in such honor along all nations that there would be flowing to her from all parts. He then says, that the state of the city would be very splendid, so that people from all quarters would come to it: and therefore the copulative vau is to be taken twice for even for the sake of emphasis, In that day, even to thee, and then, even to the river; for it was not believed that Jerusalem would have any dignity, after it had been entirely destroyed, together with the temple. It is no wonder then that the Prophet so distinctly confirms here what was by no means probable, at least according to the common sentiments of men, --- that Jerusalem would attract to itself all nations, even those far away. Come, then, shall they, (for the verb {יבוא}, ibua, in the singular number must be taken indefinitely as having a plural meaning,) Come, then, shall they from Asshur even to thee. But the Assyrians had previously destroyed every land, overturned the kingdom of Israel, and almost blotted out its name; and they had also laid waste the kingdom of Judah; a small portion only remained. They came afterwards, we know, with the Chaldeans, after the seat of empire was translated to Babylon, and destroyed Nineveh. Therefore, by naming the Assyrians, he no doubt, taking a part for the whole, included the Babylonians. Come, then, shall they from Asshur, and then, from the cities of the fortress, that is, from every fortress. For they who take {צור}, tsur, for Tyre are mistaken; for {מצור}, metsur [268] is mentioned twice, and it means citadels and strongholds. And then, even to the river, that is, to utmost borders of Euphrates; for many take Euphrates, by way of excellence, to be meant by the word river; as it is often the case in Scripture; though it might be not less fitly interpreted of any or every river, as though the Prophet had said, that there would be no obstacle to stop their course who would hasten to Jerusalem. Even to the river then, and from sea to sea, that is, they shall come in troops from remote countries, being led by the celebrity of the holy city; for when it shall be rebuilt by God's command, it shall acquire new and unusual honor, so that all people from every part shall assemble there. And then, from mountain to mountain, that is, from regions far asunder. This is the sum of the whole.

The Prophet then promises what all men deemed as fabulous, --- that the dignity of the city Jerusalem should be so great after the return of the Jews from exile, that

[268] It is somewhat singular that Newcome renders the first "fenced" and the second "Egypt:" but Henderson renders both "Egypt." It is not the common name for Egypt, which is {מצרים}; the places referred to, 2 Kings 19:24, and Isaiah 19:6, do not justify this application. The word ``day'' in three instances is here without a preposition: it may therefore be regarded as the nominative absolute, or the verb, is nigh, or approaches, as Jerome proposes, is understood. I would give this version of the two verses, --- 11. The day for building thy walls! That day! Removed far shall be the decree: 12. That day! Even to thee shall they come, From Assyria and cities of fortress, And from the fortress even to the river, And from sea to sea, and from mountain to mountain, or, word for word, And from the fortress even to the river and the sea, From the sea and the mountain of the mountain. The last expression seems to mean, ``every mountain.'' --- Ed.

it would become, as it were, the metropolis of the world. One thing must be added: They who confine this passage to Christ seem not indeed to be without a plausible reason; for there follows immediately a threatening as to the desolation of the land; and there seems to be some inconsistency, except we consider the Prophet here as comparing the Church collected from all nations with the ancient people. But these things will harmonize well together if we consider, that the Prophet denounces vengeance on the unbelieving who then lived, and that he yet declares that God will be merciful to his chosen people. But the restriction which they maintain is too rigid; for we know that it was usual with the Prophets to extend the favor of God from the return of the ancient people to the coming of Christ. Whenever, then, the Prophets make known God's favor in the deliverance of his people, they make a transition to Christ, but included also the whole intermediate time. And this mode the Prophet now pursues, and it ought to be borne in mind by us. Let us go on ---

Micah 7:13

13. Notwithstanding the land shall be desolate because of them that dwell therein, for the fruit of their doings.

13. Et erit terra in desolationem propter incolas suos, a fructu operorum ipsorum.

The Prophet, as I have already said, seems to be inconsistent with himself: for after having spoken of the restoration of the land, he now abruptly says, that it would be deserted, because God had been extremely provoked by the wickedness of the people. But, as I have stated before, it was almost an ordinary practice with the Prophets, to denounce at one time God's vengeance on all the Jews, and then immediately to turn to the faithful, who were small in number, and to raise up their minds with the hope of deliverance. We indeed know that the Prophets had to do with the profane despisers of God; it was therefore necessary for them to fulminate, when they addressed the whole body of the people: the contagion had pervaded all orders, so that they were all become apostates, from the highest to the lowest, with very few exceptions, and those hidden amidst the great mass, like a few grains in a vast heap of chaff. Then the Prophets did not without reason mingle consolations with threatening; and their threatening they addressed to the whole body of the people; and then they whispered, as it were, in the ear, some consolation to the elect of God, the few remnants, --- ``Yet the Lord will show mercy to you; though he has resolved to destroy his people, ye shall yet remain safe, but this will be through some hidden means.'' Our Prophet then does, on the one hand, as here, denounce God's vengeance on a people past remedy; and, on the others he speaks of the redemption of the Church, that by this support the faithful might be sustained in their adversities.

He now says, The land shall be for desolation [269] But why does he speak in so abrupt a manner? That he might drive hypocrites from that false confidence, with which they were swollen though God addressed not a word to them: but when God pronounced any thing, as they covered themselves with the name of Church, they then especially laid hold of any thing that was said to the faithful, as though it be-

[269] The copulative {,{ı rendered et, and, in the text, is not noticed here. Newcome renders it For, connecting this with the former verse, and applying it to heathen lands. But Dathius and Henderson render it, as an adversative, But, Nevertheless, and consider, with Calvin, that the land of Israel is here meant. --- Ed.

longed to them: ``Has not God promised that he will be the deliverer of his people?'' as though indeed he was to be their deliverer, who had alienated themselves by their perfidy from him; and yet this was a very common thing among them. Hence the Prophet, seeing that hypocrites would greedily lay hold on what he had said, and by taking this handle would become more audacious, says now, The land shall be for desolation, that is, ``Be ye gone; for when God testifies that he will be the deliverer of his Church, he does not address you; for ye are the rotten members; and the land shall be reduced to a waste before God's favor, of which I now speak, shall appear.'' We now then perceive the reason for this passage, why the Prophet so suddenly joined threatenings to promises: it was, to terrify hypocrites.

He says, On account of its inhabitants, from the fruit, or, on account of the fruit of their works Here the Prophet closes the door against the despisers of God, lest they should break forth, according to their custom, and maintain that God was, as it were, bound to them: ``See,'' he says, ``what ye are; for ye have polluted the land with your vices; it must therefore be reduced to desolation.'' And when the land, which is in itself innocent, is visited with judgment, what will become of those despisers whose wickedness it sustains? We hence see how emphatical was this mode of speaking. For the Prophet summons here all the unbelieving to examine their life, and then he sets before them the land, which was to suffer punishment, though it had committed no sin; and why was it to suffer? because it was polluted as I have said by their wickedness. Since this was the case, we see, that hypocrites were very justly driven away from the false confidence with which they were inflated, while they yet proudly despised God and his Word. It now follows ---

Micah 7:14

14. Feed thy people with thy rod, the flock of thine heritage, which dwell solitarily in the wood, in the midst of Carmel: let them feed in Bashan and Gilead, as in the days of old.

14. Pasce populum tuum in virga tua (vel, paedo tuo) gregem haereditatis tuae, habitantes in solitudine (vel, seorsum) in sylva, in medio Carmeli; pascentur in Basan et Gilead, secundum dies antiquos.

Here the Prophet turns to supplications and prayers; by which he manifests more vehemence, than if he had repeated again what he had previously said of the restoration of the Church; for he shows how dreadful that judgment would be, when God would reduce the land into solitude. This prayer no doubt contains what was at the same time prophetic. The Prophet does not indeed simply promise deliverance to the faithful, but at the same time he doubly increases that terror; by which he designed to frighten hypocrites; as though he said, ``Most surely except God will miraculously preserve his own people, it is all over with the Church: there is then no remedy, except through the ineffable power of God.'' In short, the Prophet shows, that he trembled at that vengeance, which he had previously foretold, and which he did foretell, lest hypocrites, in their usual manner, should deride him. We now see why the Prophet had recourse to this kind of comfort, why he so regulates his discourse as not to afford immediate hope to the faithful, but addresses God himself. Feed then thy people; as though he said, --- ``Surely that calamity will be fatal,

except thou, Lord, wilt be mindful of thy covenant, and gather again some remnant from the people whom thou hast been pleased to choose: Feed thy people.''

The reason why he called them the people of God was, because they must all have perished, unless it had been that it was necessary that what God promised to Abraham should be fulfilled, ---

`In thy seed shall all nations be blessed,' (Genesis 12:3.)

It was then the adoption of God alone which prevented the total destruction of the Jews. Hence he says emphatically, --- O Lord, these are yet thy people; as though he said, --- ``By whom wilt thou now form a Church for thyself?'' God might indeed have collected it from the Gentiles, and have made aliens his family; but it was necessary that the root of adoption should remain in the race of Abraham, until Christ came forth. Nor was there then any dispute about God's power, as there is now among fanatics, who ask, Can God do this? But there was reliance on the promise, and from this they learnt with certainty what God had once decreed, and what he would do. Since then this promise, `By thy seed shall all nations be blessed,' was sacred and inviolable, the grace of God must have ever continued in the remnant. It is indeed certain, that hypocrites, as it has been already stated, without any discrimination, abused the promises of God; but this truth must be ever borne in mind, that God punished the ungodly, though relying on their great number, they thought that they would be always preserved. God then destroyed them, as they deserved; and yet it was his purpose, that some remnant should be among that people. But it must be observed, that this distinction ought not to be extended to all the children of Abraham, who derived their origin from him according to the flesh, but to be applied to the faithful, that is, to the remnant, who were preserved according to the gratuitous adoption of God.

Feed then thy people by thy crook [270] He compares God to a shepherd, and this metaphor often occurs. Though {שבט}, shebeth, indeed signifies a scepter when kings are mentioned, it is yet taken also for a pastoral staff, as in Psalm 23 and in many other places. As then he represents God here as a Shepherd, so he assigns a crook to him; as though he said, O Lord, thou performest the office of a Shepherd in ruling this people. How so? He immediately confirms what I have lately said, that there was no hope of a remedy except through the mercy of God, by adding, the flock [271] of thine heritage; for by calling them the flock of his heritage, he does not consider what the people deserved, but fixes his eyes on their gratuitous adoption. Since, then, it had pleased God to choose that people, the Prophet on this account dares to go forth to God's presence, and to plead their gratuitous election, --- ``O Lord, I will not bring before thee the nobility of our race, or any sort of dignity, or our piety, or any merits.'' What then? ``We are thy people, for thou best declared that we are a royal priesthood. We are then thine heritage.'' How so? ``Because it has

[270] "The crook signifies God's peculiar care for his people." — Grotius.

[271] "He compares the elect people," says Marckius, "to a flock of sheep, because they resemble them in weakness, in innocency, in meekness, in usefulness, in fruitfulness, and in close union. See Psalm 95:7; Isaiah 40:11; Ezekiel 34:12; Zechariah 9:16, 10:3; John 10:16, etc." "They are thy sheep, thy peculiar property, who hear thee, who need thy guidance and feeding, for they are weak and helpless, and liable to go astray without the preserving care of their Shepherd." — Cocceius.

been thy pleasure to have one peculiar people sacred to thee.'' We now more clearly see that the Prophet relied on God's favor alone, and opposed the recollection of the covenant to the trials which might have otherwise made every hope to fail.

He afterwards adds, Who dwell apart, or alone. He no doubt refers here to the dispersion of the people, when he says, that they dwelt alone. For though the Jews had been scattered in countries delightful, fertile and populous, yet they were everywhere as in a desert and in solitude, for they were a mutilated body. The whole of Chaldea and of Assyria was then really a desert to the faithful; for there they dwelt not as one people, but as members torn asunder. This is the dispersion intended by the words of the Prophet. He also adds, that dwell in the forest For they had no secure habitation except in their own country; for they lived there under the protection of God; and all other countries, as I have already said, were to them like the desert.

He adds, In the midst of Carmel The preposition {כ}, caph, is to be understood here, As in the midst of Carmel, they shall be fed in Bashan and Gilead, as in ancient days; [272] that is, though they are now thy solitary sheep, yet thou wilt gather them again that they may feed as on Carmel, (which we know was very fruitful,) and then, as in Bashan and Gilead. We know that there are in those places the richest pastures. Since then the Prophet compares the faithful to sheep, he mentions Bashan, he mentions Carmel and Gilead; as though he said, ``Restore, O Lord, thy people, that they may dwell in the heritage once granted them by thee.'' Why he says that they were solitary, I have already explained; and there is a similar passage in Psalm 102:17; though there is there a different word, {ערער}, oror; but the meaning is the same. The faithful are there said to be solitary, because they were not collected into one body; for this was the true happiness of the people, --- that they worshipped God together, that they were under one head, and also that they had one altar as a sacred bond to cherish unity of faith. When therefore the faithful were scattered here and there they were justly said to be solitary, wherever they were.

He afterwards adds, according to ancient days Here he places before God the favors which he formerly showed to his people, and prays that he would, like himself, go on to the end, that is that he would continue to the end his favors to his chosen people. And it availed not a little to confirm their faith, when the faithful called to mind how liberally had God dealt from the beginning with the posterity of Abraham: they were thus made to feel assured, that God would be no less kind to his elect, though there might be, so to speak, a sad separation: for when God had banished the Jews into exile, it was a kind of divorce, as though they were given to utter destruction. Yet now when they recollect that they had descended from the holy fathers, and that a Redeemer had been promised them, they justly entertain a hope

[272] These two lines are better arranged by Newcome, and the necessity of a preposition understood is obviated, while the original is more strictly rendered, — In the midst of Carmel let them feed, In Bashan and Gilead, as in the days of old. It is also better to render "feed" as a prayer than in the future tense, to correspond in tenor with the beginning of the verse. Henderson connects "Carmel" with the former line, and thinks that "dwelling alone in the wood" refers to the condition of the Jews when restored, and quotes the prophecy of Balaam in Numbers 23:9. But this seems to be a far-fetched exposition; and the word "wood," which means generally a dreary place, renders it wholly inadmissible. A state of destitution and misery is evidently intended. "They were now," says Henry, "a desolate people; they were in the land of their captivity as sheep in a forest, in danger of being lost and made a prey to the beasts of the forest." — Ed.

of favor in future from the past benefits of God, because he had formerly kindly treated his people.

Prayer.

Grant, Almighty God, that since we have so provoked thy displeasure by our sins, that a dreadful waste and solitude appear everywhere --- O grant, that a proof of that favor, which thou hast so remarkably exhibited towards thy ancient people, may shine upon us, so that thy Church may be raised up in which true religion may flourish, and thy name be glorified: and may we daily solicit thee in our prayers and never doubt, but that under the government of thy Christ, thou canst again gather together the whole world, though it be miserably dispersed, so that we may persevere in this warfare to the end, until we shall at length know that we have not in vain hoped in thee, and that our prayers have not been in vain, when Christ shall exercise the power given to him for our salvation and for that of the whole world. Amen.

Lecture Ninety-eighth

Micah 7:15

15. According to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt will I shew unto him marvellous things

15. Secundum dies egressus tui e terra AEgypti, ostendam ei mirabilia.

The Prophet here introduces God as the speaker; and he so speaks as to give an answer to his prayer. God then promises that he will be wonderful in his works, and give such evidences of his power, as he exhibited when he brought up his people from the land of Egypt. We now see that there is more force in this passage, than if the Prophet had at first said, that God would become the deliverer of his people: for he interposed entreaty and prayer and God now shows that he will be merciful to his people; and at the same time the faithful are reminded, that they must be instant in prayer, if they desire to be preserved by God.

Now God says that he will show wonderful things, as when the people formerly came out of Egypt. [273] That redemption, we know, was a perpetual monument of God's power in the preservation of his Church; so that whenever he designs to give some hope of deliverances he reminds the faithful of those miracles that they may feel assured that there will be no obstacles to prevent them from continuing in a state of safety, provided God will be pleased to help them, for his power is not diminished.

And this deserves to be noticed; for though we all allow the omnipotence of God, yet when we struggle with trials, we tremble, as though all the avenues to our preservation had been closed up against God. As soon then as any impediment is thrown in our way, we think that there is no hope. Whence is this? It is because we make no account of God's power, which yet we confess to be greater than that of the whole world.

[273] "The Prophet prayed that God would feed them, and do kind things for them; but God answers, that he will show them marvelous things, will outdo their hopes and expectations. — Their deliverance from Babylon shall be a work of wonder and grace, not inferior to their deliverance out of Egypt, nay, it shall eclipse the luster of that, Jeremiah 16:14, 15. — God's former favors to his Church are patterns of future favors, and shall again be copied out as there is occasion." — Henry.

This is the reason why God now refers to the miracles which he wrought at the coming forth of the people. They ought to have known, that God ever continues like himself, and that his power remains as perfect as it was formerly; and there is in him sufficient support to encourage the hope of assistance. We now perceive the object of the Prophet. He indeed changes the persons; for in the beginning he addresses the people, according to the days of thy going forth, and then he adds, {אראנו}, aranu, `I will make him to see;' but this change does not obscure the meaning, for God only means, that his power was sufficiently known formerly to his people, and that there was a memorable proof of it in their redemption, so that the people could not have doubted respecting their safety, without being ungrateful to God, and without burying in oblivion that so memorable a benefit, which God once conferred on their fathers. It follows ---

Micah 7:16-17

16. The nations shall see and be confounded at all their might: they shall lay their hand upon their mouth, their ears shall be deaf.

16. Videbunt gentes et pudefient ab omni fortitudine sua; ponent manum super os, aures eorum surdescent:

17. They shall lick the dust like a serpent, they shall move out of their holes like worms of the earth: they shall be afraid of the Lord our God, and shall fear because of thee.

17. Lingent pulverem quasi serpens, quasi reptilia terrae frement (vel, movebunt) a latibulis suis; ad Jehovam Deum nostrum pavebunt, et metuent sibi abs te.

Here again the Prophet shows, that though the Church should be assailed on every side and surrounded by innumerable enemies, no doubt ought yet to be entertained respecting the promised aid of God; for it is in his power to make all nations ashamed, that is, to cast down all the pride of the world, so as to make the unbelieving to acknowledge at length that they were elated by an empty confidence. Hence he says, that the nations shall see; as though he said, ``I know what makes you anxious, for many enemies are intent on your ruin; and when any help appears, they are immediately prepared fiercely to resist; but their attempts and efforts will not prevent God from delivering you.''

They shall then see and be ashamed of all their strength [274] By these words the Prophet means, that however strongly armed the unbelieving may think themselves to be to destroy the Church, and that how many obstacles soever they may have in their power to restrain the power of God in its behalf, yet the whole will be in vain, for God will, in fact, prove that the strength of men is mere nothing.

He adds, They shall lay their hand on their mouth; that is, they shall not dare to boast hereafter, as they have hitherto done; for this phrase in Hebrew means to be silent. Since then the enemies of the Church made great boastings and exulted with open mouth, as though the people of God were destroyed, the Prophet says, that when God would appear as the Redeemer of his people, they should become, as it

[274] "They shall be ashamed of the strength in which they trusted," — Drusius; or as Grotius says, "of all their strength which had been so suddenly destroyed;" or, as another author says, "of all their strength when found ineffectual for the purpose of destroying the people of God." — Ed.

were, mute. He subjoins, their ears shall become deaf; [275] that is, they shall stand astounded; nay, they shall hardly dare to open their ears, lest the rumor, brought to them, should occasion to them new trembling. Proud men, we know, when matters succeed according to their wishes, not only boast of their good fortune with open mouths, but also greedily catch at all rumors; for as they think they are all so many messages of victories, --- ``What is from this place? or what is from that place?'' They even expect that the whole world will come under their power. The Prophet, on the other hand, says, ``They shall lay the hand on the mouth, and their ears shall become deaf; that is they shall tremblingly shun all rumors, for they shall continually dread new calamities, when they shall see that the God of Israel, against who they have hitherto fought, is armed with so much power.

Some apply this to the preaching of the Gospel; which I readily allow, provided the deliverance be made always to begin with the ancient people: for if any one would have this to be understood exclusively of Christ, such a strained and remote exposition would not be suitable. But if any one will consider the favor of God, as continued from the return of the people to the restoration effected by Christ, he will rightly comprehend the real design of the Prophet. Really fulfilled, then, is what the Prophet says here, when God spreads the doctrine of his Gospel through the whole world: for those who before boasted of their own inventions, begin then to close their mouth, that, being thus silent, they may become his disciples; and they also close their ears, for now they give not up themselves, as before, to foolish and puerile fables, but consecrate their whole hearing to the only true God, that they may attend only to his truth, and no more vacillate between contrary opinions. All this, I allow, is fulfilled under the preaching of the Gospel; but the Prophet, no doubt, connected together the whole time, from the return of the people from the Babylonian exile, to the manifestation of Christ.

He afterwards adds, They shall lick the dust as a serpent He intimates, that however the enemies of the Church may have proudly exalted themselves before, they shall then be cast down, and lie, as it were, on the ground; for to lick the dust is nothing else but to lie prostrate on the earth. They shall then be low and creeping like serpents; and then, They shall move themselves as worms and reptiles of the ground The verb {רגז}, regez, as it has been stated elsewhere, means to raise an uproar, to tumultuate, and it means also to move one's self; and this latter meaning is the most suitable here, namely, that they shall go forth or move themselves from their enclosures; for the word {סגר}, sager, signifies to close up: and by enclosures he means hiding-places, though in the song of David, in Psalm 18:, the word is applied to citadels and other fortified places, ---

`Men,' he says, `trembled from their fortresses;'

though they occupied well-fortified citadels, they yet were afraid, because the very fame of David had broken down their boldness. But as the Prophet speaks here of worms, I prefer this rendering, --- `from their lurkingplaces;' as though he said, ``Though they have hitherto thought themselves safe in their enclosures, they shall yet move and flee away like worms and reptiles; for when the ground is dug, the

[275] "Malice," says Jerome, "not only blinds the eyes, but also deafens the ears." — Ed.

worms immediately leap out, for they think that they are going to be taken; so also, when any one moves the ground, the reptiles come forth, and tremblingly run away in all directions.'' And the Prophet says that, in like manner, the enemies of the Church, when the Lord shall arise for its help, shall be smitten with so much fear, that they shall in every direction run away. And this comparison ought to be carefully noticed, that is, when the Prophet compares powerful nations well exercised in wars, who before were audaciously raging, and were swollen with great pride --- when he compares them to worms and reptiles of the ground, and also to serpents: he did this to show, that there will be nothing to hinder God from laying prostrate every exalted thing in the world, as soon as it shall please him to aid his Church.

And hence the Prophet adds, On account of Jehovah our God they shall treed, and they shall fear because of thee Here the Prophet shows, that the faithful ought not to distrust on account of their own weakness, but, on the contrary, to remember the infinite power of God. It is indeed right that the children of God should begin with diffidence, --- sensible that they are nothing, and that all their strength is nothing; but they ought not to stop at their own weakness, but, on the contrary, to rise up to the contemplation of God's power, that they may not doubt but that, when his power shall appear, their enemies shall be soon scattered. This is the reason why the Prophet here mentions the name of God, and then turns to address God himself. Tremble then shall they at Jehovah our God, that is, on account of Jehovah our God; and then Fear shall they because of thee. [276] It now follows ---

Micah 7:18

18. Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.

18. Quis Deus sicut tu, tollens iniquitatem, et transiens super scelus, erga reliquias haereditatis suae? Non retinebit in perpetuum iram suam (alii vertunt, non roboravit; nam {חזק} hoc interdum significat; sed potius hic vertendum est, non retinebit;) quia placet ei clementia (vel, diligit misericordiam.) [277]

The Prophet here exclaims that God ought to be glorified especially for this --

[276] Dathius renders these two lines differently, "Jovam Deum nostrum timebunt eumque reverebuntur — Jehovah our God they shall fear, and him will they reverence." But this is neither consistent with the passage, nor with the form in which the words appear. {{פחד is not commonly, if ever, a transitive verb, and to dread, or to be afraid, and not to fear, is its usual meaning: and ,{ירא when it means the fear of reverence, is generally construed without a preposition, and with {את before Jehovah. The literal rendering is no doubt that which is given by Calvin. The distich is capable of being rendered in Welsh exactly as in Hebrew, in the same form and with the same prepositions; and, when thus rendered, the meaning is what is give here, --- Oherwydd Jehova ein Duw ur arswydant, --- Ac ovnant rhagddot To fear because of thee, and to fear thee, are two distinct things. You will have the first form in Joshua 10:8; 11:6; and the second in Deuteronomy 31:12. The first refers to the fear of the Canaanites, the dread of their power; the second, to the fear of Jehovah. --- Ed.

[277] Cocceius calls this verse the doxology of the Church. Jerome renders the first words, — Quis Deus similis tui? Which is literally the original, {{כמוך---{אל-{מי} What God like thee? That is, Jehovah, mentioned in the preceding verse. {Τις} {Θεος} {ωσπερ} {συ}; Sept. Thinking that the verse will admit of somewhat different arrangement, and of a more literal rendering, I give the following, --- What God is like thee? Taking away iniquity, and passing over transgression! --- Against the remnant of his heritage, He retaineth not for ever his anger, For a lover of mercy is He. There is a transition after the second line from the second to the third person; hence I make here the division. Besides, the construction of the third with the second has ever been found awkward by all the critics; but its construction with the fourth verse is perfectly natural. {נשא} ``taking away,'' or removing, conveys the idea of a burden being lifted up and removed. ``Passing over'' seems to allude to the angel passing over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt. ``Iniquity,'' ,{עון} is guilt and inward depravity; and ``Transgression,'' ,{פשע} is an overt act of sin, an outward violation of the law. ``A lover,'' ;{חפץ} the Septuagint renders it, {θελητης} {ελεους} --- the wisher of mercy; which is too weak, for the word means delight. It may be rendered, ``For one who delights in mercy is He.'' The Targum reads, Amat enim benefacere --- for he loves to do good. --- Ed.

- that he is merciful to his people. When he says, Who is God as thou art? he does not mean that there are other gods; for this, strictly speaking, is an improper comparison. But he shows that the true and only God may be distinguished from all idols by this circumstance --- that he graciously forgives the sins of his people and bears with their infirmities. It is indeed certain, that all nations entertained the opinion, that their gods were ready to pardon; hence their sacrifices and hence also their various kinds of expiations. Nor has there been any nation so barbarous as not to own themselves guilty in some measure before God; hence all the Gentiles were wont to apply to the mercy of their gods; while yet they had no firm conviction: for though they laid hold on this first principle, --- that the gods would be propitious to sinners, if they humbly sought pardon; yet they prayed, we know, with no sure confidence, for they had no certain promise. We hence see that what the Prophet means is this, --- that the God of Israel could be proved to be the true God from this circumstance --- that having once received into favor the children of Abraham, he continued to show the same favor, and kept his covenant inviolably, though their sins had been a thousand times a hindrance in the way. That God then in his goodness surmounted all the wickedness of the people, and stood firm in his covenant, which had been so often violated by vices of the people --- this fact may be brought as an evidence, that he is the true God: for what can be found of this kind among idols? Let us suppose that there is in them something divine, that they were gods, and endued with some power; yet with regard to the gods of the Gentiles, it could not be known that any one of them was propitious to his own people. Since then this can apply only to the God of Israel, it follows that in this instance his divinity shines conspicuously, and that his sovereignty is hence sufficiently proved. We also learn, that all the gods of heathens are vain; yea, that in the religion of heathens there is nothing but delusions: for no nation can with confidence flee to its god to obtain pardon, when it has sinned. This is the sum of the whole. I shall now come to the words of the Prophet.

Who is a God like thee, taking away iniquity, and passing by wickedness? By these two forms of expression, he sets forth the singular favor of God in freely reconciling himself to sinners. To take away sins is to blot them out; though the verb {נשא}, nusha,often means to raise on high; yet it means also to take, or, to take away. To pass by wickedness, is to connive at it, as though he said, ``God overlooks the wickedness of his people, as if it escaped his view:'' for when God requires an account of our life, our sins immediately appear, and appear before his eyes; but when God does not call our sins before his judgment, but overlooks them, he is then said to pass by them.

This passage teaches us, as I have already reminded you, that the glory of God principally shines in this, --- that he is reconcilable, and that he forgives our sins. God indeed manifests his glory both by his power and his wisdom, and by all the judgments which he daily executes; his glory, at the same time, shines forth chiefly in this, --- that he is propitious to sinners, and suffers himself to be pacified; yea, that he not only allows miserable sinners to be reconciled to him, but that he also of his own will invites and anticipates them. Hence then it is evident, that he is the

true God. That religion then may have firm roots in our hearts, this must be the first thing in our faith, --- that God will ever be reconciled to us; for except we be fully persuaded as to his mercy, no true religion will ever flourish in us, whatever pretensions we may make; for what is said in Psalm 130 is ever true, `With thee is propitiation, that thou mayest be feared.' Hence the fear of God, and the true worship of him, depend on a perception of his goodness and favor; for we cannot from the heart worship God, and there will be, as I have already said, no genuine religion in us, except this persuasion be really and deeply seated in our hearts, --- that he is ever ready to forgive, whenever we flee to him.

It hence also appears what sort of religion is that of the Papacy: for under the Papacy, being perplexed and doubtful, they ever hesitate, and never dare to believe that God will be propitious to them. Though they have some ideas, I know not what, of his grace; yet it is a vain presumption and rashness, as they think, when any one is fully persuaded of God's mercy. They therefore keep consciences in suspense; nay, they leave them doubtful and trembling, when there is no certainty respecting God's favor. It hence follows, that their whole worship is fictitious; in a word, the whole of religion is entirely subverted, when a firm and unhesitating confidence, as to his goodness, is taken away, yea, that confidence by which men are enabled to come to him without doubting, and to receive, whenever they sin and confess their guilt and transgressions, the mercy that is offered to them.

But this confidence is not what rises spontaneously in us; nay, even when we entertain a notion that God is merciful, it is only a mere delusion: for we cannot be fully convinced respecting God's favor, except he anticipates us by his word, and testifies that he will be propitious to us whenever we flee to him. Hence I said at the beginning, that the Prophet here exhibits the difference between the God of Israel and all the idols of the Gentiles, and that is, because he had promised to be propitious to his people. It was not in vain that sacrifices were offered by the chosen people, for there was a promise added, which could not disappoint them: but the Gentiles ever remained doubtful with regard to their sacrifices; though they performed all their expiations, there was yet no certainty; but the case was different with the chosen people. What then the Prophet says here respecting the remission of sins, depends on the testimony which God himself has given.

We must now notice the clause which immediately follows, as to the remnant of his heritage Here again he drives away the hypocrites from their vain confidence: for he says that God will be merciful only to a remnant of his people; and, at the same time, he takes away an offense, which might have grievously disquieted the weak, on seeing the wrath of God raging among the whole people, --- that God would spare neither the common nor the chief men. When therefore the fire of God's vengeance flamed terribly, above and below, this objection might have greatly disturbed weak minds, --- ``How is this? God does indeed declare that he is propitious to sinners, and yet his severity prevails among us. --- How can this be?'' The Prophet meets this objection and says, God is propitious to the remnant of his heritage; which means, that though God would execute terrible vengeance on the greater part, there would yet ever remain some seed, on whom his mercy would shine; and he calls them the

remnant of his heritage, because there was no reason, as it was stated yesterday, why God forgave the few, except that he had chosen the posterity of Abraham.

He also adds, He will not retain his wrath perpetually. By this second consolation he wished to relieve the faithful: for though God chastises them for a time, he yet forgets not his mercy. We may say, that the Prophet mentions here two exceptions. He had spoken of God's mercy; but as this mercy is not indiscriminate or common to all, he restricts what he teaches to the remnant. Now follows another exception, --- that how much soever apparently the wrath of God would rage against his elect people themselves, there would yet be some moderation, so that they would remain safe, and that their calamities would not be to them fatal. Hence he says, God retains not wrath; for though, for a moment, he may be angry with his people, he will yet soon, as it were, repent, and show himself gracious to them, and testify that he is already reconciled to them; --- not that God changes, but that the faithful are made for a short time to feel his wrath; afterwards a taste of his mercy exhilarates them, and thus they feel in their souls that God has in a manner changed. For when dread possesses their minds, they imagine God to be terrible, but when they embrace the promises of his grace, they call on him, and begin to entertain hope of pardon; then God appears to them kind, gentle, and reconcilable; yea, and altogether ready to show mercy. This is the reason why the Prophet says, that God retains not his wrath

Then follows the cause, for he loveth mercy Here the Prophet more clearly shows, that the remission of sins is gratuitous, and that it has no foundation but in the nature of God himself. There is then no reason, since Scripture declares God to be reconcilable, why any one should seek the cause in himself, or even the means by which God reconciles himself to us: for He himself is the cause. As God then by nature loves mercy, hence it is, that he is so ready to forgive sinners. Whosoever then imagines that God is to be propitiated by expiations or any satisfactions, subverts the doctrine of the Prophet; and it is the same thing as to build without a foundation: for the only prop or support that can raise us up to God, when we desire to be reconciled to him, is this, --- that he loves mercy. And this is the reason why God so much commends his mercy, why he says that he is merciful to thousand generations, slow to wrath, and ready to pardon. For though the unbelieving harden themselves against God, yet when they feel his wrath, there is nothing so difficult for them as to believe that God can be pacified. Hence this reason, which is not in vain added by the Prophet, ought to be especially noticed.

Let us now see to whom God is merciful. For as Satan could not have obliterated from the hearts of men a conviction of God's mercy, he has yet confined mercy to the unbelieving, as though God should forgive sinners only once, when they are admitted into the Church. Thus the Pelagians formerly thought, that God grants reconciliation to none but to aliens; for whosoever has been once received into the Church cannot, as they imagined, stand otherwise before God than by being perfect. And this figment led Novatus and his disciples to create disturbances in the Church. And there are at this day not only deluded men, but devils, who, by the same figment, or rather delirious notions, fascinate themselves and others, and hold, that the highest perfection ought to exist in the faithful; and they also slander our doctrine,

as though we were still continuing in the Alphabet or in the first rudiments, because we daily preach free remission of sins. But the Prophet declares expressly that God not only forgives the unbelieving when they sin, but also his heritage and his elect. Let us then know, that as long as we are in the world, pardon is prepared for us, as we could not otherwise but fall every moment from the hope of salvation, were not this remedy provided for us: for those men must be more than mad who arrogate to themselves perfection, or who think that they have arrived at that high degree of attainment, that they can satisfy God by their works. It now follows ---

Micah 7:19

19. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.

19. Reveretur, miserebitur nostri; calcabit iniquitates nostras, et projiciet in profunditates maris cuncta scelera eorum.

The Prophet now prescribes to the faithful a form of glorying, that they may boldly declare that God will be pacified towards them. Since then God loves mercy, he will return, he will have mercy on us The context here ought to be observed by us; for it would avail us but little to understand, I know not what, concerning God's mercy, and to preach in general the free remission of sins, except we come to the application, that is, except each of the faithful believed that God, for his own sake, is merciful, as soon as he is called upon. This conclusion, then, is to be borne in mind, --- ``God forgives the remnant of his heritage, because he is by nature inclined to show mercy: he will therefore be merciful to us, for we are of the number of his people.'' Except we lay hold on this conclusion, ``He will therefore show mercy to us,'' whatever we have heard or said respecting God's goodness will vanish away.

This then is the true logic of religion, that is, when we are persuaded that God is reconcilable and easily pacified, because he is by nature inclined to mercy, and also, when we thus apply this doctrine to ourselves, or to our own peculiar benefit, --- As God is by nature merciful, I shall therefore know and find him to be so. Until then we be thus persuaded, let us know that we have made but little progress in the school of God. And hence it appears very clear from this passage, that the Papacy is a horrible abyss; for no one under that system can have a firm footing, so as to be fully persuaded that God will be merciful to him; for all that they have are mere conjectures. But we see that the Prophet reasons very differently, God loves mercy; he will therefore have mercy on us: and then he adds, He will return; [278] and this is said lest the temporary wrath or severity of God should disquiet us. Though God then may not immediately shine on us with his favor, but, on the contrary, treat us sharply and roughly, yet the Prophet teaches us that we are to entertain good hope. --- How so? He will return, or, as he said shortly before, He will not retain perpetually his wrath: for it is for a moment that he is angry with his Church; and he soon remembers mercy.

[278] Grotius, Dathius, and Henderson, consider that this verb, placed before another, without a conjunction, expresses only a reiteration; and they render it adverbially, "again." But, in this place, it would be better to give it its proper meaning; for as God is said to depart from his people, Hosea 9:12, so he may be said also to return. The Septuagint renders it {επιστρεψει}---He will return. Drusius reads, convertetur, scil. Ab ira sua --- He will turn, that is, from his anger. Newcome's version is, ``He will turn again.'' --- Ed.

The Prophet now specifies what sort of mercy God shows to the faithful, For he will tread down our iniquities; he had said before that he passes by the wickedness of his elect people. He will then tread down our iniquities; and he will cast [279] into the depth of the sea all their sins; that is our sins shall not come in remembrance before him. We hence learn what I have said before --- that God cannot be worshipped sincerely and from the heart until this conviction be fixed and deeply rooted in our hearts, that God is merciful, not in general, but toward us, because we have been once adopted by him and are his heritage. And then were the greater part to fall away, we should not fail in our faith; for God preserves the remnant in a wonderful manner. And lastly, let us know, that whenever we flee to God for mercy, pardon is ever ready for us, not that we may indulge in sin, or take liberty to commit it, but that we may confess our faults and that our guilt may appear before our eyes: let us know, that the door is open to us; for God of his own good will presents himself to us as one ready to be reconciled.

It is also said, He will cast our sins into the depth of the sea. We hence learn that there is a full remission of sins, not half as the Papists imagine, for God, they say, remits the sin, but retains the punishment. How frivolous this is, the thing itself clearly proves. The language of the Prophet does however import this, that our sins are then remitted when the records of them are blotted out before God. It follows --- for I will run over this verse, that I may today finish this Prophet ---

Micah 7:20

20. Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old.

20. Dabis veritatem Jacob, misericordiam Abrahae, quas jurasti patribus nostris a diebus antiquis.

The faithful confirm here the former truth, that God had deposited his covenant with them, which could not be made void: and hence also shines forth more clearly what I have said before, that the faithful do not learn by their own understanding what sort of Being God is, but embrace the mercy which he offers in his own word. Except God then speaks, we cannot form in our own minds any idea of his grace but what is uncertain and vanishing; but when he declares that he will be merciful to us, then every doubt is removed. This is now the course which the Prophet pursues.

He says, Thou wilt give truth to Jacob, mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn

[279] There is a mistake as to this verb; it is the second person, as are all the verbs which follow. The Prophet resumes here his address to God, which he commenced in the two first lines of the last verse. To show the difference between what he speaks to and what he speaks of God, the whole passage shall be here given, — 18. What God is like thee! Taking away iniquity, and passing over transgression! Against the remnant of his heritage He retains not forever his anger; For a lover of mercy is He; 19. He will return, he will pity us, He will subdue our iniquities: — Yea, thou wilt cast into the depths of the sea all their sins; Thou wilt show faithfulness to Jacob, mercy to Abraham, Which thou swarest to our fathers in the days of old. “Pity,” {,רטחמ is tender compassion; the noun in the plural number is used to designate the bowels. ``Subdue,'' or trample under foot, is rendered ``cover'' by Newcome, on the ground of this being the meaning of {כבש} in Chaldee. This wholly destroys the striking character of the passage. Our sins are here represented as our enemies; God subdues them; and then in the next line the simile is continued, they are to be drowned like Pharaoh and his hosts in the depths of the sea. Henderson's remarks on this point are very excellent. ``There is no ground,'' he says, ``for rejecting the radical idea of trampling under foot as enemies. Sin must ever be regarded as hostile to man. It is not only contrary to his interests, but it powerfully opposes and combats the moral principles of his nature, and the higher principles implanted by grace; and but for the counteracting energy of divine influence, must prove victorious. Without the subjugation of evil propensities, pardon would not be a blessing.'' --- Ed.

to our fathers; as though he said, ``We do not presumptuously invent any thing out of our own minds, but receive what thou hast once testified to us; for thy will has been made known to us in thy word: relying then on thy favor, we are persuaded as to thy gratuitous pardon, though we are in many respects guilty before thee.'' We now then understand the design of the Prophet.

As to the words, it is not necessary to dwell on them, for we have elsewhere explained this form of speaking. There are here two expressions by which the Prophet characterizes the covenant of God. Truth is mentioned, and mercy is mentioned. With respect to order, the mercy of God precedes; for he is not induced otherwise to adopt us than through his goodness alone: but as God of his own will has with so great kindness received us, so he is true and faithful in his covenant. If then we desire to know the character of God's covenant, by which he formerly chose the Jews, and at this day adopts us as his people, these two things must be understood, that God freely offers himself to us, and that he is constant and true, he repents not, as Paul says, as to his covenant: The gifts and calling of God, he says, are without repentance, (Romans 11:29;) and he refers to the covenant, by which God adopted the children of Abraham.

He says now, Thou wilt give, that is, show in reality; for this, to give, is, as it were, to exhibit in effect or really. Thou will then give, that is, openly show, that thou hast not been in vain so kind to us and ours, in receiving them into favor. How so? Because the effect of thy goodness and truth appears to us.

Thou hast then sworn to our fathers from the days of old. The faithful take for granted that God had promised to the fathers that his covenant would be perpetual; for he did not only say to Abraham, I will be thy God, but he also added, and of thy seed for ever. Since, then, the faithful knew that the covenant of God was to be perpetual and inviolable, and also knew that it was to be continued from the fathers to their children, and that it was once promulgated for this end, that the fathers might deliver it as by the hand to their children; they therefore doubted not but that it would be perpetual. How so? for thou hast sworn to our fathers; that is, they knew that God not only promised, but that having interposed an oath, by which God designed to confirm that covenant, he greatly honored it, that it might be unhesitatingly received by the chosen people. As then the faithful knew that God in a manner bound himself to them, they confidently solicited him, really to show himself to be such as he had declared he would be to his own elect.

Prayer.

Grant, Almighty God, that as we abound in so many vices, by which we daily provoke thy wrath, and as by the testimony of our consciences, we are justly exposed to everlasting death, yea, and deserve a hundred and even a thousand deaths, --- O grant, that we may strive against the unbelief of our flesh, and so embrace thine infinite mercy, that we may not doubt but that thee wilt be propitious to us, and yet not abuse this privilege by taking liberty to sin, but with fear, and true humility, and care, so walk according to thy word, that we may not hesitate daily to flee to thy mercy, that we may thereby be sustained and kept in safety, until having at length put off all vices, and being freed from all sin, we come to thy celestial kingdom, to

enjoy the fruit of our faith, even that eternal inheritance which has been obtained for us by the blood of thy only-begotten Son. Amen.

End of the Commentaries on Micah.

Commentary on Nahum

Commentary on Nahum

Calvin's Preface to Nahum

The time in which Nahum prophesied cannot with certainty be known. The Hebrews, ever bold in conjectures, say that he discharged his office of teaching under Manasseh, and that the name of that king was suppressed, because he was unworthy of such an honor, or, because his reign was unfortunate, as he had been led into captivity. When any one asks the Jews a reason, they only say, that it appears so to them. As then there is no reason for this conjecture, we must come to what seems probable.

They who think that he prophesied under Jotham are no doubt mistaken, and can easily be disproved; for he here threatens ruin to the city Nineveh because the Assyrians had cruelly laid waste the kingdom of Israel; and it is for these wrongs that he denounces vengeance: but under Jotham the kingdom of Israel had not been laid waste. We indeed know that the Assyrians were suborned by Ahab, when he found himself unequal to resist the attacks of two neighboring kings, the king of Syria, and the king of Israel. It was then that the Assyrians penetrated into the land of Israel, and in course of time, they desolated the whole kingdom. At this period it was that Nahum prophesied; for it was his object to show, that God had a care for that kingdom, on account of his adoption or covenant; though the Israelites had perfidiously separated themselves from the people of God, yet God's covenant remained in force. His design then was to show, that God was the father and protector of that kingdom. As this was the Prophet's object, it is certain that he taught either after the death of Ahab under Hezekiah, or about that time. [280]

[280] "I conclude from Nahum 2:2, that Nahum prophesied after the captivity of the ten tribes. Josephus places him in the reign of Jotham, and says that his predictions came to pass one hundred and fifteen hears afterwards. Ant. IX. 11. 3. According to our best chronologers, this date would bring us to the year in which Samaria was taken. And I agree with those who think Nahum uttered this prophecy in the reign of Hezekiah, and not long after the subversion of the kingdom of Israel by Shalmaneser." — Newcome.

He followed Jonah at some distance, [281] as we may easily learn. Jonah, as we have already seen, pronounced a threatening on the city Nineveh; but the punishment was remitted, because the Ninevites humbled themselves, and suppliantly deprecated the punishment which had been announced. They afterwards returned to their old ways, as it is usually the case. Hence it was, that God became less disposed to spare them. Though indeed they were aliens, yet God was pleased to show them favor by teaching them through the ministry and labors of Jonah: and their repentance was not altogether feigned. Since then they were already endued with some knowledge of the true God, the less excusable was their cruelty, when they sought to oppress the kingdom of Israel. They indeed knew, that that nation was sacred to God: what they did then was in a manner an outrage against God himself.

We now understand at what time it is probable that Nahum performed his office as a teacher; though nothing certain, as I have said at the beginning, can be known: hence it was, that I condemned the Rabbis for rashness on the subject; for they are bold enough to bring any thing forward as a truth, respecting which there is no certainty.

I have already in part stated the design of the Prophet. The sum of the whole is this: When the Assyrians had for some time disturbed the kingdom of Israel, the Prophet arose and exhorted the Israelites to patience, that is, those who continued to be the servants of God; because God had not wholly forsaken them, but would undertake their cause, for they were under his protection. This is the substance of the whole.

With regard to Nineveh, we have already stated that it was the capital of the empire, as long as the Assyrians did bear rule: for Babylon was a province; that is, Chaldea, whose metropolis was Babylon, was one of the provinces of the empire. The kingdom was afterwards taken away from Meroc-baladan. Some think that Nabuchodonosor was the first monarch of Chaldea. But I bestow no great pains on this subject. It may be, that Meroc-baladan had two names, and this was very common; as we know that the kings of Egypt were called Pharaohs; so the Assyrians and Chaldeans, though otherwise called at first, might have taken a common royal name. Now Nineveh was so celebrated, that another kingdom could not have been established by the Babylonians without demolishing that city. We indeed know that it was very large, as we have stated in explaining Jonah. It was, as profane writers have recorded, nearly three days' journey in circumference. Then its walls were one hundred feet high, and so wide, that chariots could pass one another without coming in contact: there were one thousand and five hundred towers. We hence see that it was not without reason that this city was formerly so celebrated.

They say that Ninus was its founder, but this is proved to be a mistake by the testimony of Moses in Genesis 10. They also imagine that emiramis was the first queen of Babylon, and that the city was built by her: but this is a fable. It may have been that she enlarged the city; but it was Babylon many ages before she was born. So also Ninus may have increased and adorned Nineveh; but the city was founded before his birth. Profane authors call it Ninus, not Nineveh; probably the Hebrew

[281] The distance is supposed by chronologers to have been about 150 years. — Ed.

name was corrupted by them, as it is often the case. However this may be, it is evident, that when Meroc-baladan, or his son, who succeeded him, wished to fix the seat of the empire at Babylon, he was under the necessity of destroying Nineveh to prevent rivalry. It thus happened, that the city was entirely demolished. Of this destruction, as we shall see, Nahum prophesied.

Chapter 1

Lecture Ninety-ninth

Nahum 1

Nahum 1:1

1.. The burden of Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite.

1. Onus Nineveh: Liber visionis Nahum Helkosi:

Though a part of what is here delivered belongs to the Israelites and to the Jews, he yet calls his Book by what it principally contains; he calls its the burden of Nineveh Of this word {משא}, mesha, we have spoken elsewhere. Thus the Prophets call their prediction, whenever they denounce any grievous and dreadful vengeance of God: and as they often threatened the Jews, it hence happened, that they called, by way of ridicule, all prophecies by this name {משא}, mesha, a burden. [282] But yet the import of the word is suitable. It is the same thing as though Nahum had said that he was sent by God as a herald, to proclaim war on the Ninevites for the sake of the chosen people. The Israelites may have hence learnt how true and unchangeable God was in his covenant; for he still manifested his care for them, though they had by their vices alienated themselves from him.

He afterwards adds, {חזון} {ספר}, sapher chezun, the book of the vision This clause signifies, that he did not in vain denounce destruction on the Ninevites, because he faithfully delivered what he had received from God. For if he had simply prefaced, that he threatened ruin to the Assyrian,, some doubt might have been entertained as to the event. But here he seeks to gain to himself authority by referring to God's name; for he openly affirms that he brought nothing of his own, but that this burden had been made known to him by a celestial oracle: for {חזה}, cheze, means properly to see, and hence in Hebrew a vision is called {חזון}, chezun,. But the Prophets, when they speak of a vision, do not mean any fantasy or imagination, but that kind of revelation which is mentioned in Numbers 14, where God says,

[282] The word comes from {,{נשא to bear, to carry. Some regard it as the message carried or borne by the Prophets from God to the people, and hence the same as Prophecy. Others consider it to be the judgment to be borne by the people respecting whom it was announced. The latter seems to be its meaning here, where it is said, ``the burden of Nineveh.'' It was the judgment laid on them, and which that city was to bear, endure, and undergo. --- Ed.

that he speaks to his Prophets either by vision or by dream. We hence see why this was added --- that the burden of Nineveh was a vision; it was, that the Israelites might know that this testimony respecting God's vengeance on their enemies was not brought by a mortal man, and that there might be no doubt but that God was the author of this prophecy.

Nahum calls himself an Elkoshite. Some think that it was the name of his family. The Jews, after their manner, say, that it was the name of his father; and then they add this their common gloss, that Elkos himself was a Prophet: for when the name of a Prophet's father is mentioned, they hold that he whose name is given was also a Prophet. But these are mere trifles: and we have often seen how great is their readiness to invent fables. Then the termination of the word leads us to think that it was, on the contrary, the proper name of a place; and Jerome tells us that there was in his time a small village of this name in the tribe of Simon. We must therefore understand, that Nahum arose from that town, and was therefore called ``the Elkoshite.'' [283] Let us now proceed ---

Nahum 1:2

2. God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth; the Lord revengeth, and is furious; the Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies.

2. Deus aemulator (sic vertunt,) et ulciscens Jehova; ulciscens Jehova, et Dominus irae (vel, possidens iram;) ulciscens Jehova hostes suos, et servans (vel, responens) idem (vel, ipse) inimicis suis.

Nahum begins with the nature of God, that what he afterwards subjoins respecting the destruction of Nineveh might be more weighty, and produce a greater impression on the hearers. The preface is general, but the Prophet afterwards applies it to a special purpose. If he had only spoken of what God is, it would have been frigid at least it would have been less efficacious; but when he connects both together, then his doctrine carries its own force and power. We now apprehend the design of the Prophet. He might indeed have spoken of the fall of the city Nineveh: but if he had referred to this abruptly, profane men might have regarded him with disdain; and even the Israelites would have been perhaps less affected. This is the reason why he shows, in a general way, what sort of Being God is. And he takes his words from Moses; and the Prophets are wont to borrow from him their doctrine: [284] and it is from that most memorable vision, when God appeared to Moses after the breaking of the tables. I have therefore no doubt but that Nahum had taken from Exodus 34 what we read here: he does not, indeed, give literally what is found there; but it is sufficiently evident that he paints, as it were, to the life, the image of God, by which his nature may be seen.

He says first, that God is jealous; (amulus --- emulous); for the verb {קנא},

[283] "It has been thought, and not without reason, by some, that Capernaum, Heb. {נחום, כפר} most properly rendered, the village of Nahum, derived its name from our Prophet having resided in it." --- Henderson.

[284] How far this language is right, may be questioned. The Prophets, under the immediate direction of the Divine Spirit, can hardly be said to borrow from a previous writer. They have no doubt announced the same sentiments, and in some instances, used the same words, as those found in the writings of Moses; but they derived them not from those writings, but from Divine inspiration: and, as Calvin has often observed, they adduced nothing but what they received from God. But this language is not peculiar to Calvin: he adopted it from the fathers. — Ed.

kona, means to irritate, and also to emulate, and to envy. When God is said to be {קנוא}, konua, the Greeks render it jealous, {ζηλωτηv}, and the Latins, emulous, (amulatorem) But it properly signifies, that God cannot bear injuries or wrongs. Though God then for a time connives at the wickedness of men? he will yet be the defender of his own glory. He calls him afterwards the avenger, and he repeats this three times, Jehovah avengeth, Jehovah avengeth and possesseth wrath, he will avenge. When he says that God keeps for his enemies, he means that vengeance is reserved for the unbelieving and the despisers of God. There is the same mode of speaking in use among us, Je lui garde, et il la garde a ses ennemis. This phrase, in our language, shows what the Prophet means here by saying, that God keeps for his enemies. And this awful description of God is to be applied to the present case, for he says that he proclaims war against the Ninevites, because they had unjustly distressed the Church of God: it is for this reason that he says, that God is jealous, that God is an avenger; and he confirms this three times, that the Israelites might feel assured that this calamity was seriously announced; for had not this representation been set before them, they might have thus reasoned with themselves, --- ``We are indeed cruelly harassed by our enemies; but who can think that God cares any thing for our miseries, since he allows them so long to be unavenged?'' It was therefore necessary that the Prophet should obviate such thoughts, as he does here. We now more fully understand why he begins in a language so vehement, and calls God a jealous God, and an avenger.

He afterwards adds, that God possesses wrath I do not take {חמה}, cheme, simply for wrath, but the passion or he it of wrath. We ought not indeed to suppose, as it has been often observed, that our passions belong to God; for he remains ever like himself. But yet God is said to be for a time angry, and for ever towards the reprobate, for he is our and their Judge. Here, then, when the Prophet says, that God is the Lord of wrath, or that he possesses wrath, he means that he is armed with vengeance and that, though he connives at the sins of men, he is not yet indifferent, nor even delays because he is without power, or because he is idle and careless, but that he retains wraths as he afterwards repeats the same thing, He keeps for his enemies [285] In short, by these forms of speaking the Prophet intimates that God is not to be rashly judged of on account of his delay, when he does not immediately execute His judgments; for he waits for the seasonable opportunity. But, in the meantime there is no reason for us to think that he forgets his office when he suspends punishment, or for a season spares the ungodly. When, therefore, God does not hasten so very quickly, there is no ground for us to think that he is indifferent, because he delays his wrath, or retains it, as we have already said; for it is the same thing to retain

[285] The following may be proposed as the literal rendering of this verse, — A God jealous and an avenger is Jehovah; Avenger is Jehovah, and one who has indignation: Avenger is Jehovah on his adversaries, And watch does he for his enemies. God is said to be jealous in the second commandment, being one who will not allow his own honor to be given to another. Avenger, {,{נקם is a vindicator of his own rights; and he is said to have indignation, or hot wrath, or great displeasure; {בעל} ,{חמה} possessor, holder, or keeper of indignation. His adversaries, ,{צריו} rather, his oppressors; the oppressors of his people were his own oppressors. {נוטר} means to watch, rather than to keep. Its meaning here is to watch the opportunity to take than to keep. Its meaning here is to watch the opportunity to take vengeance on his enemies. The description here is remarkable, and exactly adapted to the oppressive state of the Jews. The dishonor done to God's people was done to him. He is jealous, a defender of his own rights, full of indignation, and watches and waits for a suitable time to execute vengeance, to vindicate his own honor. --- Ed.

wrath, as to be the Lord of wrath, and to possess it. It follows ---

Nahum 1:3

3. The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked: the Lord hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet.

3. Jehova tardus iris (ad verbum, sed, tardus ad iram) et magnus robore; et purgando non purgabit; Jehova in turbine et tempestate via ejus, et nubes pulvis pedum ejus.

The Prophet goes on with the same subject; and still longer is the preface respecting the nature of God, which however is to be applied, as I have said, to the special objects which hereafter he will state. He says here that God is slow to wrath Though this saying is taken also from Moses yet the Prophet speaks here for the purpose of anticipating an objection; for he obviates the audacity of the ungodly who daringly derided God, when any evil was denounced on them, --- Where is the mercy of God? Can God divest himself of his kindness? He cannot deny himself. Thus profane men, under the pretense of honoring God, cast on him the most atrocious slander, for they deprive him of his own power and office: and there is no doubt but that this was commonly done by many of the ungodly in the age of our Prophet. Hence he anticipates this objection, and concedes that God is slow to wrath. There is then a concession here; but at the same time he says that God is great in strength, and this he says, that the ungodly may not flatter and deceive themselves, when they hear these high attributes given to God, that he is patient, slow to wrath, merciful, full of kindness. ``Let them,'' he says, ``at the same time remember the greatness of God's power, that they may not think that they have to do with a child.''

We now then see the design of the Prophet: for this declaration --- that God hastens not suddenly to wrath, but patiently defers and suspends the punishment which the ungodly deserve. This declaration would not have harmonized with the present argument, had not the Prophet introduced it by way of concession; as though he said, --- ``I see that the world everywhere trifle with God, and that the ungodly delude themselves with such Sophistries, that they reject all threatening. I indeed allow that God is ready to pardon, and that he descends not to wrath, except when he is constrained by extreme necessity: all this is indeed true; but yet know, that God is armed with his own power: escape then shall none of those who allow themselves the liberty of abusing his patience, notwithstanding the insolence they manifest towards him.''

He now adds, By clearing he will not clear. Some translate, ``The innocent, he will not render innocent.'' But the real meaning of this sentence is the same with that in Exodus 34; and what Moses meant was, that God is irreconcilable to the impenitent. It has another meaning at the end of Joel 3, where it is said, `I will cleanse the blood which I have not cleansed.' On that text interpreters differ; because they regard not the change in the tense of the verb; for God means, that he would cleanse the filth and defilements of his Church, which he had not previously cleansed. But Moses means, that God deals strictly with sinners, so as to remit no punishment. By clearing then I will not clear; that is, God will rigidly demand an account of all the actions of

men; and as there is nothing hid from him, so everything done wickedly by men must come forth, when God ascends his tribunal; he will not clear by clearing, but will rigidly execute his judgment.

There seems to be some inconsistency in saying, --- that God is reconcilable and ready to pardon, --- and yet that by clearing he will not clear. But the aspect of things is different. We have already stated what the Prophet had in view: for inasmuch as the ungodly ever promise impunity to themselves, and in this confidence petulantly deride God himself, the Prophet answers them, and declares, that there was no reason why they thus abused God's forbearance, for he says, By clearing he will not clear, that is, the reprobate: for our salvation consists in a free remission of sins; and whence comes our righteousness, but from the imputation of God, and from this --- that our sins are buried in oblivion? yea, our whole clearing depends on the mercy of God. But God then exercises also his judgment, and by clearing he clears, when he remits to the faithful their sins; for the faithful by repentance anticipate his judgment; and he searches their hearts, that he may clear them. For what is repentance but condemnation, which yet turns out to be the means of salvation? As then God absolves none except the condemned, our Prophet here rightly declares, that by clearing he will not clears that is, he will not remit their sins, except he tries them and discharges the office of a judge; in short, that no sin is remitted by God which he does not first condemn. But with regard to the reprobate, who are wholly obstinate in their wickedness, the Prophet justly declares this to them, --- that they have no hope of pardon, as they perversely adhere to their own devices, and think that they can escape the hand of God: the Prophet tells them that they are deceived, for God passes by nothing, and will not blot out one sin, until all be brought to mind.

He afterwards says, that the way of God is in the whirlwind and the tempest; that is, that God, as soon as he shows himself, disturbs the whole atmosphere, and excites storms and tempests: and this must be applied to the subject in hand; for the appearance of God is in other places described as lovely and gracious: nay, what else but the sight of God exhilarated the faithful? As soon as God turns away his face, they must necessarily be immersed in dreadful darkness, and be surrounded with horrible terrors. Why then does the Prophet say here, that the way of God is in the whirlwind and storms? Even because his discourse is addressed to the ungodly, or to the despisers of God himself, as in Psalm 18; where we see him described as being very terrible, --- that clouds and darkness are around him, that he moves the whole earth, that he thunders on every side, that he emits smoke frown his nostrils, and that he fills the whole world with fire and burning. For what purpose was this done? Because David's object was to set forth the judgments of God, which he had executed on the ungodly. So it is in this place; for Nahum speaks of the future vengeance, which was then nigh the Assyrians; hence he says, The way of God is in the whirlwind and tempest; that is, when God goes forth, whirlwinds and tempests are excited by his presence, and the whole world is put in confusion.

He adds, that the clouds are the dust of his feet When any one with his feet only moves the dust within a small space, some dread is produced: but God moves the dust, not only in one place, --- what then? he obscures, and thus covers the whole

heaven, The clouds then are the dust of his feet [286] We now apprehend the whole meaning of the Prophet, and the purpose for which this description is given. Of the same import is what follows ---

Nahum 1:4

4. He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers: Bashan languisheth, and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languisheth.

4. Increpat mare et arefaciet illud (hoc est, simulac mare increpuerit, arefaciet;) et omnia flumina exiccat, infirmatur (vel aboletur) Basan et Carmelus, et germen Libani aboletur (vel, infirmatur, est idem verbum.)

Nahum continues his discourse, --- that God, in giving proof of his displeasure, would disturb the sea or make it dry. There may be here an allusion to the history, described by Moses; for the Prophets, in promising God's assistance to his people, often remind them how God in a miraculous manner brought up their fathers from Egypt. As then the passage through the Red Sea was in high repute among the Jews, it may be that the Prophet alluded to that event, (Exodus 14:22.) But another view seems to me more probable. We indeed know how impetuous an element is that of the sea; and hence in Jeremiah 5, God, intending to set forth his own power, says, that it is in his power to calm the raging of the sea, than which nothing is more impetuous or more violent. In the same manner also is the majesty of God described in Job 28. The meaning of this place, I think, is the same, --- that God by his chiding makes the sea dry, [287] and that he can dry up the rivers That the prophet connects rivers with the sea, confirms what I have just said, --- that the passage through the Red Sea is not here referred to; but that the object is to show in general how great is God's power in governing the whole world.

To the same purpose is what he adds, Bashan shall be weakened, and Carmel, and the branch of Lebanon shall be weakened, or destroyed. By these words he intimates, that there is nothing so magnificent in the world, which God changes not, when he gives proofs of his displeasure; as it is said in Psalm 104,

`Send forth thy Spirit, and they shall be renewed;'

and again, `Take away thy Spirit,' or remove it, `and all things will return to the dust;' yea, into nothing. So also Nahum says in this place, ``As soon as God shows his wrath, the rivers will dry up, the sea itself will become dry, and then the flowers will fade and the grass will wither;'' that is, though the earth be wonderfully ornamented and replenished, yet all things will be reduced to solitude and desolation whenever

[286] I offer the following translation of this verse, — Jehovah is slow to wrath, though great in power; Absolving, Jehovah will not absolve: In the whirlwind and in the storm is his way; And the cloud is the dust of his feet. The second line presents some difficulty. It is evidently an imperfect sentence; most supply the word, guilty; but rather the “enemies” mentioned before are to be understood. The meaning appears to be this, — Jehovah is slow to wrath, that is, to execute his vengeance, though he is great in power, capable of doing so; but though he delays, he will not eventually clear or absolve his enemies. With the Septuagint I connect “Jehovah” with the second and not with the third line, and agreeably with the idiom of the Hebrew; the verb generally precedes its nominative. The order of the words in Welsh would be exactly the same, — Gan ddieuogi ni ddiuoga Jehova. — Ed.

[287] Literally, “chiding the sea, he even made it dry.” The {ı here, though conversive, must be rendered, ``even,'' for the first verb is a participle. By taking the words in their poetical order, the whole verse may be thus rendered, --- Chiding the sea, he even made it dry; And all the rivers he dried up: Wither did Bashan and Carmel, And the bud of Lebanon withered. The verbs in this, and in the following verse, are in the past tense; reference is made to the past works of God, and in some instances to those performed in the wilderness. --- Ed.

God is angry. And he afterwards adds ---

Nahum 1:5

5. The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein.

5. Montes concutientur ab eo (vel, contremiscent, quanquam notat continuum actum; sensus est igitur, montes contremiscere ad nutum ejus,) et colles dissolvent se (hoc est, solvuntur, vel, liquefiunt,) et ardet terra a facie ejus, et orbis et omnes qui habitant in eo.

Nahum continues still on the same subject, --- that when God ascended his tribunal and appeared as the Judge of the world, he would not only shake all the elements, but would also constrain them to change their nature. For what can be less consonant to nature than for mountains to tremble, and for hills to be dissolved or to melt? This is more strange than what we can comprehend. But the Prophet intimates that the mountains cannot continue in their own strength, but as far as they are sustained by the favor of God. As soon, then, as God is angry, the mountains melt like snow, and flow away like water. And all these things are to be applied to this purpose, and are designed for this end, --- that the wicked might not daringly despise the threatening of God, nor think that they could, through his forbearance, escape the punishment which they deserved: for he will be their Judge, however he may spare them; and though God is ready to pardon, whenever men hate themselves on account of their sins, and seriously repent; he will be yet irreconcilable to all the reprobate and the perverse. The mountains, then, before him tremble, and the hills dissolve or melt.

This useful instruction may be gathered from these words, that the world cannot for a moment stand, except as it is sustained by the favor and goodness of God; for we see what would immediately be, as soon as God manifests the signals of his judgment. Since the very solidity of mountains would be as snow or wax, what would become of miserable men, who are like a shadow or an apparition? They would then vanish away as soon as God manifested his wrath against them, as it is so in Psalm 39, that men pass away like a shadow. This comparison ought ever to be remembered by us whenever a forgetfulness of God begins to creep over us, that we may not excite his wrath by self-complacencies, than which there is nothing more pernicious. Burned, [288] then shall be the earth, and the world, and all who dwell on it

Prayer.

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou settest before us here as in a mirror how dreadful thy wrath is, we may be humbled before thee, and of our ownselves cast ourselves down, that we may not be laid prostrate by thy awful power, --- O grant, that we

[288] This sense has been given to the verb by the Rabbins, which is inconsistent with it as found here without any variations, and with the Greek versions. {תשא is either from ,{נשא} to lift up, or from ,{שאה} to be laid waste, or to be confounded, the final {ה} being dropped; and this is what Newcome adopts. Marckius and Henderson take the former meaning in the sense of being raised up or heaving. ``{Ανεσταλη}, was removed,'' Sept.; ``{Εκινηθη}, was moved,'' Symmachus; ``{Εφριξεν}, trembled,'' Aquila. The idea of being confounded or laid waste harmonizes best with all parts of the sentence; for the idea of having does not apply well to the inhabitants. We see here that all the Greek versions have the verb in the past tense; and so are the previous verbs in the verse as given in the Septuagint, and agreeably with the Hebrew. Mountains have shaken through him, And hills have melted away; And confounded has been the earth at his presence, Yea, the world and all its inhabitants.

may by this instruction be really prepared for repentance, and so suppliantly deprecate that punishment which we daily deserve through our transgressions, that in the meantime we may be also transformed into the image of thy Son, and put off all our depraved lusts, and be cleansed from our vices, until we shall at length appear in confidence before thee, and be gathered among thy children, that we may enjoy the eternal inheritance of thy heavenly kingdom, which has been obtained for us by the blood of thy Son. Amen.

Lecture One Hundredth

Nahum 1:6

6. Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him.

6. Coram indignatione ejus quis stabit? Et quis consistet in furore irae ejus? Furor ejus effunditur tanquam ignis, et rupes solvuntur ab eo.

The Prophet shows here why he gave in the part noticed in the last lecture, such an awful description of God; it was that men might know, that when they shall come before his tribunal, no one will be able to stand unless supported by his favor. Of the Prophet's main object we have sufficiently spoken, nor is it necessary to repeat here what has been stated. It is enough to bear this in mind, --- that as the enemies of the Church relied on their power; and daringly and immoderately raged against it, the judgment of God is here set before them, that they might understand that an account was to be rendered to him whose presence they were not able to bear. But the question has more force than if the Prophet had simply said, that the whole world could not stand before God: for he assumes the character of one adjuring. After having shown how terrible God is, he exclaims, Who shall stand before his indignation? and who shall be able to bear his wrath? [289] for his indignation, he says, is poured forth as fire. The Hebrew interpreters have here toiled in vain: as the verb {נתך}, nutae, means to pour forth it seems to them an inconsistent expression, that the wrath of God should be poured forth as fire; for this would be more suitably said of some metal than of fire. But to be poured forth here is nothing else than to be scattered far and wide. Poured forth then is thy wrath as fire; that is, it advances every moment, as when a fire seizes a whole forest; and when it grows strong, we know how great is its violence, and how suddenly it spreads here and there. But if a different meaning be preferred, I do not much object to it, ``His wrath, which is like fire, is poured out.''

Some think that the Prophet alludes to lightnings, which, as it were, melt through the air, at least as they appear to us. But as the meaning of the Prophet is sufficiently evident, there is no need of anxiously inquiring how fire is poured out: for I have already mentioned, that the Prophet means no other thing than the wrath of God

[289] And who shall rise up against his hot anger? — Newcome. And who can subsist in the heat of his anger? — Henderson. Neither of these versions convey the meaning. The verb {קום}, with a {ב} after it, signifies to rise up against or resist. {Τις} {αντιστησεται} --- Who shall resist? --- Sept. So the line should be thus rendered, --- And who can resist the burning of his wrath? This line conveys the same idea as the former, only in stronger terms. For displeasure or anger we have here the burning of his wrath, and for standing we have resisting. Can is better than will; the Hebrew future ought often to be thus rendered. With the view of giving the words here used their distinctive character, I offer the following version of the whole verse, --- Before his anger who can stand? And who can resist the burning of his wrath? His indignation has been poured forth like fire; And rocks have been broken in pieces by him. The two last verbs are in the past tense, and are more expressive when so rendered. --- Ed.

spreads itself, so that it immediately takes hold, not only of one city but also of the widest regions and of the whole world, and is therefore like fire, for it passes through here and there, and that suddenly.

He then says, that rocks are also broken or dissolved before him We must be aware how great our brittleness is. Since there is no hardness which melts not before God, how can men, who flow away of themselves like water, be so daring as to set themselves up against him? We hence see that the madness of men is here rebuked, who, trusting in their own strength, dare to contend even with God, because they forget their own frailty. This is the import of the whole. It now follows ---

Nahum 1:7

7. The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him.

7. Bonus Jehova ad fortitudinem in die angustiae, et cognoscens sperantes in se.

The Prophet expresses more clearly here what we referred to in our last lecture, --- that God is hard and severe toward refractory men, and that he is merciful and kind to the teachable and the obedient, --- not that God changes his nature, or that like Proteus he puts on various forms; but because he treats men according to their disposition. [290] As then the Prophet has hitherto taught us, that God's wrath cannot be sustained by mortals; so now, that no one might complain of extreme rigor, he, on the other hand, shows that God favors what is right and just, that he is gentle and mild to the meek, and therefore ready to bring help to the faithful, and that he leaves none of those who trust in him destitute of his aid.

First, by saying that God is good, he turns aside whatever might be objected on the ground of extreme severity. There is indeed nothing more peculiar to God than goodness. Now when he is so severe, that the very mention of his name terrifies the whole world, he seems to be in a manner different from himself. Hence the Prophet now shows that whatever he had hitherto said of the dreadful judgment of God, is not inconsistent with his goodness. Though God then is armed with vengeance against his enemies he yet ceases not to be like himself, nor does he forget his goodness. But the Prophet does here also more fully confirm the Israelites and the Jews in the belief, that God is not only terrible to the ungodly, but that, as he has promised to be the guardian of his Church, he would also succor the faithful, and in time alleviate their miseries. Good then is Jehovah; and it is added for help The intention of the Prophet may be hence more clearly understood, when he says that he is for strength in the day of distress; as though he said, --- ``God is ever ready to bring help to his people:'' [291] And he adds, in the day of distress, that the faithful may not think that they are rejected, when God tries their patience by adversities. How much soever then God may subject his people to the cross and to troubles, he still succors them

[290] "This glorious description of the Sovereign of the world, like the pillar of cloud and fire, has a bright side towards Israel, and a dark side towards the Egyptians." — Henry.

[291] This is no doubt the right view. The object here is not to assert generally that God is good, but that he is good for aid and help in the day of distress. The versions then both of Newcome and Henderson are faulty; for they divide into two clauses what is one in the original, — Good is Jehovah for protection in the day of distress; And he knoweth them who trust in him. The word {{מעוז is from ,{עז} strength, and having the formative ,{מ} it attains a causative sense, and means that which affords or gives strength, --- a fortress, a stronghold, or protection. --- Ed.

in their distress.

He lastly adds, He knows them who hope in him. This to know, is no other thing than not to neglect them. Hence God is said to know them who hope in him, because he always watches over them, and takes care of their safety: in short, this knowledge is nothing else but the care of God, or his providence in preserving the faithful. The Prophet, at the same time, distinguishes the godly and sincere worshipers of God from hypocrites: when God leaves many destitute who profess to believe in him, he justly withholds from them his favor, for they do not from the heart call on him or seek him.

We now then understand the Prophet's meaning. He shows, on the one hand, that God is armed with power to avenge his enemies; And, on the other, he shows that God, as he has promised, is a faithful guardian of his Church. How is this proved? He sets before us what God is, that he is good; and then adds, that he is prepared to bring help. But he does not in vain mention this particular, --- that he takes care of the faithful, who truly, and from the heart, hope in him; it is done, that they may understand that they are not neglected by God, and also that hypocrites may know that they are not assisted, because their profession is nothing else but dissimulation, for they hope not sincerely in God, however they may falsely boast of his name. It now follows ---

Nahum 1:8

8. But with an overrunning flood he will make an utter end of the place thereof, and darkness shall pursue his enemies.

8. Et cum inundatione (vel, per inundationem) transiens consumptionem faciet locoejus; et inimicos ejus persequentur tenebrae (vel, persequi faciet inimicos suos a tenebris.)

The Prophet goes on with the same subject, --- that God can easily preserve his people, for he is armed with power sufficient to overcome the whole world. But the Prophet now includes the two things which have been mentioned: Having spoken in general of God's wrath, and of his goodness towards the faithful, he now applies his doctrine to the consolation of his chosen people. It is then a special application of his doctrine, when he says, By inundation, he, passing through, will make a consummation in her place There is a twofold interpretation of this verse.

Some make this distinction, --- that God, as it were, in passing through, would consume the land of Israel and Judah, but that perpetual darkness would rest on his enemies. Hence they think, that the distress of the chosen people is distinguished from the overthrow of the kingdom of Asshur, for God would only for a time punish his own people, while he would give up profane and reprobate men to endless destruction. Then, by passing through, must be understood, according to these interpreters, a temporary distress or punishment; and by darkness, eternal ruin, or, so to speak, irreparable calamities. But the Prophet, I doubt not, in one connected sentence, denounces ultimate ruin on the Assyrians. By inundation, then, he, in passing, will make a consummation in her place; that is, God will suddenly overwhelm the Assyrian, as though a deluge should rise to cover the whole earth. He intimates, that God would not punish the Assyrians by degrees, as men sometimes

do, who proceed step by step to avenge themselves, but suddenly. God, he says, will of a sudden thunder against the Assyrians, as when a deluge comes over a land. Hence this passing of God is opposed to long or slow progress; as though he said --- ``As soon as God's wrath shall break forth or come upon the Assyrians, it will be all over, for a consummation will immediately follow: by inundation, he, passing through, will make a consummation in her place.'' [292] By place he means the ground; as though he had said that God would not only destroy the face of the land, but would also destroy the very grounds and utterly demolish it. A feminine pronoun is here added, because he speaks of the kingdom or nation, as it is usual in Hebrew. But it ought especially to be noticed that the Prophet threatens the Assyrians, that God would entirely subvert them, that he would not only demolish the surface, as, when fire or waters destroy houses, but that the Lord would reduce to nothing the land itself, even the very ground.

He adds, And pursue his enemies shall darkness He has designated the Assyrians only by a pronoun, as the Hebrews are wont to do; for they set down a pronoun relative or demonstrative, and it is uncertain of whom they speak; but they afterwards explain themselves. So does the Prophet in this place; for he directs his discourse to the Israelites and the Jews, and he begins by announcing God's vengeance on Nineveh and its monarchy; but now he speaks as of a thing sufficiently known and adds, Pursue shall darkness the enemies of God By this second clause he intimates that the ruin of that kingdom would be perpetual. As then he had said that its destruction would be sudden, as God would, as it were, in a moment destroy the whole land; so now he cuts off from them every hope, that they might not think that they could within a while gather strength and rise again as it is the case with the wicked, who ever contend against God. The Prophet then shows that evil which God would bring on them would be without remedy. Some render the verb {ירדף}, iredaph, transitively in this form, ``He will pursue his enemies by darkness:'' but as to the meaning of the Prophet there is but little or no difference; I therefore leave the point undecided. On the subject itself there is nothing ambiguous; the import of what is said is, --- that God would, by a sudden inundation, destroy his enemies, --- and that he would destroy them without affording any hope of restoration, for perpetual darkness would follow that sudden deluge. He afterwards adds ---

Nahum 1:9

[292] The first words in this line are better rendered in our version, "With an overrunning flood," or, as by Newcome, "With an overflowing torrent," or as by Henderson, "With an overflowing inundation." The remaining part has occasioned a variety. The text as it is, and there are no different readings, is this, "A full end he will make of her place;" or, as Henderson renders it, "He will effect a consummation of her place." The only difficulty is, that "her" has no near antecedent; but it is not unusual with the Prophets to allow the general context to supply this. As the vision is the "burden of Nineveh," that city is no doubt referred to. Newcome, following the Greek versions, excepting that of Symmachus, translates thus, — "He will make a full end of those who rise up against him." But it is better to follow the Hebrew text; for the many evident instances of mistake which are to be found in those versions forbid us to put any great confidence in them. The following may be viewed as a literal version: — And with inundation overflowing A full end he will make her place; And darkness shall his enemies pursue. How completely has this prophecy been fulfilled! Lucian, a Greek heathen author of the second century, has these remarkable words, — {Νινος} {μεν} {απολωλεν} {ηδη}, {και} {ουδεν} {ιχνος} {ετι} {λοιπον} {αυτης}, {ουδ} {αν} {ειπης} {που} {ποτ} {ην} --- ``Nineveh has already been destroyed, and there is no vestige of it remaining, nor can you say where formerly it was.'' Bochart enumerates different conjectures which various authors have made as to its situation, most of them differing from one another. --- Ed.

9. What do ye imagine against the Lord? he will make an utter end: affliction shall not rise up the second time.

9. Quid cogitatis contra Jehovam? Consumptionem ipse facit; non consurget iterum afflictio.

Some interpreters so consider this verse also, as though the Prophet had said, that the calamity of the chosen people would not be a destruction, as God would observe some moderation and keep within certain limits. The unbelieving, we know, immediately exult, whenever the children of God are oppressed by adverse things, as though it were all over with the Church. Hence the Prophet here, according to these interpreters, meets and checks this sort of petulance, What imagine ye against God? He will indeed afflict his Church, but he will not repeat her troubles, for he will be satisfied with one affliction. They also think that the kingdom of Judah is here compared with the kingdom of Israel: for the kingdom of Israel had been twice afflicted: for, first, four tribes had been led away, and then the whole kingdom had been overturned. As then one calamity had been inflicted by Shalmanezar, and another by Tiglathpilezar, they suppose that there is here an implied comparison, as though the Prophet said, ``God will spare the kingdom of Judah, and will not repeat his vengeance, as it happened to the kingdom of Israel.'' But this meaning is forced and too far-fetched. The Prophet then, I doubt not, continues here his discourse, and denounces perpetual ruin on the enemies of the Church. He says first, What imagine ye against Jehovah? He exults over the Assyrians, because they thought that they had to do only with mortals, and also with a mean people, and now worn out by many misfortunes. For we know that the kingdom of Judah had been weakened by many wars before the Assyrians made an irruption into the land: they had suffered two severe and grievous attacks from their neighbors, the king of Israel and the king of Syria; for then it was that they made the Assyrians their confederates. When therefore the Assyrians came against Judea, they thought that they would have no trouble in obtaining victory, as they engaged in war with an insignificant people, and as we have said, worn out by evils. But the Prophet shows here that the war was with the living God, and not with men, as they falsely thought. What then imagine ye against Jehovah? as though he said, ``Know ye not that this people are under the care and protection of God? Ye cannot then attack the kingdom of Judah without having God as your opponent. As it is certain that this people are defended by a divine power, there is no reason for you to think that you will be victorious.'' At the same time, I know not why the Prophet's words should be confined to the tribe of Judah, since the purpose was to comfort the Israelites as well as the Jews.

Now this is a very useful doctrine; for the Prophet teaches us in general, that the ungodly, whenever they harass the Church, not only do wrong to men, but also fight with God himself; for he so connects us with himself, that all who hurt us touch the apple of his eye, as he declares in another place, (Zechariah 2:8.) We may then gather invaluable comfort from these words; for we can fully and boldly set up this shield against our enemies, --- that they devise their counsels, and make efforts against God, and assail him; for he takes us under his protection for this end, that whenever we are injured, he may stand in the middle as our defender. This is one

thing.

Now in the second clause he adds, that he will make a complete end, Rise up again shall not distress; that is, God is able to reduce you to nothing, so that there will be no need to assail you the second time. This passage, we know, has been turned to this meaning, --- that God does not punish men twice nor exceed moderation in his wrath: but this is wholly foreign to the mind of the Prophet. I have also said already that I do not approve of what others have said, who apply this passage to the Church and especially to the kingdom of Judah. For I thus simply interpret the words of the Prophet, --- that God can with one onset, when it seems good to him, so destroy his enemies, that there will be no need of striving with them the second time: Il n'y faudra plus retourner, as we say in our language. God then will make a full end; that is, he will be able in one moment to demolish his enemies and the ruin will be complete, that is, the wasting will be entire. There will be no distress again or the second time; for it will be all over with the enemies of God; not that God observes always the same rule when he punishes his enemies, nor does Nahum here prescribe any general rule; but he simply means, that God, whenever it pleases him, instantly destroys his enemies. He afterwards adds ---

Nahum 1:10

10. For while they be folden together as thorns, and while they are drunken as drunkards, they shall be devoured as stubble fully dry.

10. Qui ad spinas perplexas et tanquam potatione sua ebrios (vel, et ebrios ubi inebriati fuerint; potest enim duplex sensus; postea) devorabuntur tanquam stipulae ariditatis planae (vel, quasi stipula ariditatis in plenitudine, vel, arida in plenitudine.)

He goes on with this same subject, --- that Gods when he pleases to exercise his power, can, with no difficulty, consume his enemies: for the similitude, which is here added, means this, --- that nothing is safe from God's vengeance; for by perplexed thorns he understands things difficult to be handled. When thorns are entangled, we dare not, with the ends of our fingers, to touch their extreme parts; for wherever we put our hands, thorns meet and prick us. As then pricking from entangled thorns make us afraid, so none of us dare to come nigh them. Hence the Prophet says, they who are as entangled thorns; that is ``However thorny ye may be, however full of poison, full of fury, full of wickedness, full of frauds, full of cruelty, ye may be, still the Lord can with one fire consume you, and consume you without any difficulty.'' They were then as entangled thorns.

And then, as drunken by their own drinking. If we read so, the meaning is, --- God or God's wrath will come upon you as on drunker men; who, though they exult in their own intemperance, are yet enervated, and are not fit for fighting, for they have weakened their strength by extreme drinking. There seems indeed to be much vigor in a drunken man, for he swaggers immoderately and foams out much rage; but yet he may be cast down by a finger; and even a child can easily overcome a drunken person. It is therefore an apt similitude, --- that God would manage the Assyrians as the drunken are wont to be managed; for the more audacity there is in drunken men, the easier they are brought under; for as they perceive no danger, and are, as it were, stupefied, so they run headlong with greater impetuosity. ``In like manners''

he says, ``extreme satiety will be the cause of your ruin, when I shall attack you. Ye are indeed very violent; but all this your fury is altogether drunkenness: Come, he says, to you shall the vengeance of God as to those drunken with their own drinking [293]

Some render the last words, ``To the drunken according to their drinking;'' and this sense also is admissible; but as the Prophet's meaning is still the same, I do not contend about words. Others indeed give to the Prophet's words a different sense: but I doubt not but that he derides here that haughtiness by which the Assyrians were swollen, and compares it to drunkenness; as though he said, ``Ye are indeed more than enough inflated and hence all tremble at your strength; but this your excess rather debilitates and weakens your powers. When God then shall undertake to destroy you as drunken men, your insolence will avail you nothing; but, on the contrary, it will be the cause of your ruin as ye offer yourselves of your own accord; and the Lord will easily cast you down, as when one, by pushing a drunken man, immediately throws him on the ground.''

And these comparisons ought to be carefully observed by us: for when there seems to be no probability of our enemies being destroyed, God can with one spark easily consume them. How so? for as fire consumes thorns entangled together, which no man dares to touch, so God can with one spark destroy all the wicked, however united together they may be. And the other comparison affords us also no small consolation; for when our enemies are insolent, and throw out high swelling words, and seem to frighten and to shake the whole world with their threatening, their excess is like drunkenness; there is no strength within; they are frantic but not strong, as is the case with all drunken men.

And he says, They shall be devoured as stubble of full dryness {מלא}, mela, means not only to be full, but also to be perfect or complete. Others render the words, ``As stubble full of dryness,'' but the sense is the same. He therefore intimates, that there would be nothing to prevent God from consuming the enemies of his Church; for he would make dry their whole vigor, so that they would differ nothing from stubble, and that very dry, which is in such a state, that it will easily take fire. It follows ---

Nahum 1:11

11. There is one come out of thee, that imagineth evil against the Lord, a wicked counsellor.

11. Ex te egressus est cogitans (vel, consultans) contra Jehovam malum, consultor Beliiaal (hoc est, impius, vel, perversus; alii vertunt, Nihili.)

The Prophet now shows why God was so exceedingly displeased with the Assyrians, and that was, because he would, as a protector of his Church, defend the distressed against those who unjustly oppressed them. The Prophet then designed here to give the Jews a firm hope, so that they might know that God had a care for their

[293] Newcome, on the sole authority of the Syriac and the Targum, changes “thorns” into “princes,” and thus wholly destroys the propriety of the simile of dry stubble at the end of the verse. Henderson says justly, that this change is on no account to be adopted. Though like thorns, entwined, And as with their drinking drunken, They shall be consumed as stubble fully dry. The particle {,{עד before ``thorns,'' is to be here taken as in 1 Chronicles 4:27, as designating likeness. --- Ed.

safety; for if he had only threatened the Assyrians without expressing the reason, of what avail could this have been to the Jews? It is indeed gratifying and pleasing when we see our enemies destroyed; but this would be a cold and barren comfort, except we were persuaded that it is done by God's judgment, because he loves us, because he would defend us, having embraced us with paternal love; but when we know this, we then triumph even when in extreme evils. We are indeed certain of our salvation, when God testifies, and really proves also, that he is not only propitious to us, but that our salvation is an object of his care. This is the Prophet's design when he thus addresses Nineveh.

From thee has gone forth a devisor of evil against Jehovah, an impious adviser The manner of speaking is much more emphatical, when he says, that the Assyrians consulted against God, than if he had said, that they had consulted against the Jews, or consulted against the chosen people of God.

But though this was said of the Jews, let us yet remember that it belongs also to us. The Prophet confirms the doctrine which I lately alluded to, that whenever the ungodly cause trouble to us, they carry on war with God himself, that whenever they devise any evil against us, they run headlong against him. For God sets up himself as a shield, and declares, that he will protect under the shadow of his wings all those who commit themselves to his protection. If we then lie hid under the guardianship of God, and flee to him in all our adversities, and while patiently enduring all wrongs, implore his protection and help, whosoever then will rise up against us will have God as his enemy. Why so? because he consults against him. And this reason shows, that whatever the Prophet has hitherto said against the Assyrians ought to be extended indiscriminately to all the enemies of the Church. For why did God threaten the Assyrians with a sudden inundation and with perpetual darkness? The reason is here subjoined, --- because they consulted against him and his Church. The same thing then will also happen to our enemies, provided we remain quiet, as it has been said, under the protection of God.

But when he says that he had gone forth from that city who contrived evil against Jehovah, --- this ought not to be confined to Sennacherib, but must rather be viewed as common to all the Assyrians; as though he said, ``Thou produces the fruit which thou shalt eat; for from thee will arise the cause of thy ruin. There is no reason for thee to expostulate with God, as though he cruelly raged against thee; for from thee has gone forth he who devised evil against Jehovah: thou reapest now the reward worthy of thy bringing forth; for where have originated counsels against the Church of God, except in thine own bosom, and in thine own bowels? The evil then which has proceeded from thee shall return on thine own head.''

He then adds, An impious consulter, or counselor, {יועץ} {בליעל}, ivots beliol. Respecting the word {בליעל}, beliol, the Hebrews themselves are not agreed. There are those who suppose it to be a compound word, {יעל} {בל}, It profits not; and they think that it is applied to designate things of nought as well as men of nought. [294] There are others who, like Jerome, render it, Without a yoke, but without rea-

[294] "From {בל not, and ,{יעל} profit: --- As an abstract noun, unprofitableness, worthlessness, wickedness: --- As an adjective, worthless, wicked, good for nothing.'' --- Parkhurst. ``It alludes to Baal, the common idol of the natives bordering upon the Jews, whom the penmen of Scripture changing some letters by way of scorn called Belial: to express a further hatred to this

son. Then Beliol, is properly a vain thing, which is wholly unsubstantial; and so it designates a man in whom there is no integrity. It is also applied to all the wicked, and to their crimes: hence a thing or work of Belial is said to be any heinous sin or a detestable crime; and the man who acts perversely and wickedly is called Belial. And Paul takes Belial simply for the very gravity of Satan, and of all the wicked; for he opposes Belial to Christ, (2 Corinthians 6:15.) We now then understand the meaning of the Prophet to be this, --- that God denounces war on the Assyrians, because they made war unjustly on his people, and consulted not only against the Jews, but also against God, who had taken them, as it has been stated, under his own keeping and protection. It follows ---

Nahum 1:12

12. Thus saith the Lord; Though they be quiet, and likewise many, yet thus shall they be cut down, when he shall pass through. Though I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee no more.

12. Sic dixit Jehovah, Si tranquilli fuerint, utcunque fuerint multi (vel, potentes;) sic etiam tollentur et transibit: et si afflixerim te, non affligam te amplius.

The Prophet pursues here the same subject; but expresses more clearly what might have been doubtful, --- that whatever strength there might be in the Assyrians, it could not resist the coming of God's vengeance. For thus saith Jehovah, Though they be quiet and also strong, etc. I cannot now finish this subject, but will only say this, --- The Prophet intimates that though Nineveh promised to itself a tranquil state, because it was well fortified, and had a wide and large extent of empire, yet this thy peace, he says, or this thy confidence and security, shall not be an impediment, that the hand of God should not be extended to thee. Though, then, they be many or strong etc.; for we can render {רבים}, rebim, strong as well as many; but either would suit this place; for we understand the Prophet's meaning to be, that all God's enemies would be cut off, however secure they might be, while depending on their own strength and fortresses. The rest to-morrow.

Prayer.

Grant, Almighty God, that inasmuch as thou sees thy enemies at this day raging with cruel, yea, with diabolic fury against thy Church, we may find thee to be the same as the faithful in all former ages had found thee, even a defender of the safety of those who truly, and with a sincere heart, called on thee, and sought thee in extreme necessity; and do thou, at this day, stretch forth thine hand, and so restrain the fury which thou sees is against all thy servants and thy children, that the wicked may at length really find, even to their ruin, that they fight not with miserable mortals, disheartened and without defense, but with thine ineffable power, that they may be confounded, though not ashamed, and that, however they may glamour against thee and thine invincible hand, they may yet become an example and a manifest evidence, that thou art not only faithful in thy promises, but also armed with power, by which thou canst execute whatsoever thou hast promised respecting

idol, they applied this name to the devil, 2 Corinthians 6:15; which word is derived either from a root that signifieth not to profit, or not to mount upward, because he seeks the fall of mankind, and to keep those that are fallen into his snares, 2 Timothy 2:26 Jerome fetcheth it from a root, which, with another word, signifieth without a yoke, or, lawless; therefore the Septuagint commonly translate it, {παρανομος}." --- Leigh.

the preservation of thy Church, until thou at length gatherest us into that blessed rest, which has been provided for us by the blood of thy Son. Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and First

We stated yesterday what the Prophet meant by these words, that though the Assyrians were quiet and many, they would yet be suddenly cut off by the Lord. He clearly intimates, that the wicked are never so fortified by their own forces or by the help of others, but that the Lord can, without any difficulty, destroy them.

As to the words, some connect the particle {כן}, can with what he had said, ``Though they be quiet,'' and give this version, ``Though they be quiet and in like manner many, that is, though they be secure, thinking themselves safe from all danger, and so also trust in their own number, yet they shall be removed.'' But the repetition of {כן} in Hebrew is common; and the sentence may be thus explained, Though they be quiet, and how many soever they may be, yet thus shall they be removed. {וכן} {וכן}, ucan ucan, that is, ``As they are many, so also the many shall be destroyed.'' With regard to the verb {גוז} guz, (but some, though not correctly, derive it from {גזז}, gezaz,) I take it in the sense of removing from the middle, of destroying: it properly means in Hebrew to remove to a distance, though almost all interpreters render it, ``They are shorn,'' which ought rather to be, ``They shall be shorn:'' and both the verbs, {גוז}, guz as well as {גזז}, gizaz, mean to clip or shear: but as the other sense suits the form of the Prophet's discourse better, I hesitate not thus to render it, ``They shall be taken away,'' or destroyed. What the Prophet next adds, {ועבר}, uober, and he shall pass, is applied by some to the angel, by whom the army of Sennacherib was destroyed. Others think that a temporary pestilence is meant; as though he had said, that it would only pass through. But the Prophet seems to refer to a former clause, where he said, that God would suddenly destroy the Assyrians as it were with a sudden and unexpected deluge. This, then, is the most suitable meaning, that however much the Assyrians excelled in number of men and in strength, they would yet be suddenly destroyed; for the Lord would pass through, that is, the Lord would by one onset reduce them to nothing. [295]

Then it follows, Though (and, literally) I have afflicted thee, yet afflict thee will I no more. But this sentence must be thus rendered, `Though thee have I afflicted, I will not afflict thee any more.' The Prophet meets a doubt, which might have laid hold on the perplexed minds of the faithful; for they saw that God had been hitherto angry with them. They might then have succumbed under their griefs had it not been added, that they had indeed been afflicted for a time, but that God would now put an end to his severity, for he would no longer afflict them. It is indeed certain, that they were often afflicted afterwards; but this ought to be confined to what the Assyrians had done; for we know that our Prophet directed his predictions chiefly

[295] The best and the most literal version of these two lines, with the exception of the last word, is that of Dr. Wheeler, as given by Newcome, — Though they are at peace, and also mighty, Still shall they be cut off and pass away. The last verb is in the singular number, {,{ועבד ``and he shall pass through'' or away, that is, the wicked counselor mentioned in the preceding verse. Newcome's own version is that of new text, which he has himself formed, from a mere hint derived from the Septuagint. Henderson's version is the following, --- Though they are complete and so very numerous, Yet in this state they shall be cut off, And he shall pass away. The word {שלמים} means, no doubt, entire, complete, perfect, as well as to be at peace, secure, quiet; and may be referred, as the author says, to the complete condition of the Assyrian army: but what seems to be intended is the character of the nation. --- Ed.

against that monarchy: and then the monarchy of Babylon succeeded; but it was necessary that Nineveh should be first subverted, and that the government should be transferred to the Chaldeans, that the Israelites as well as the Jews might know, that that monarchy had been overthrown, because it rebelled against God himself by distressing his own people.

We now then perceive the intention of the Prophet: after having threatened the Assyrians, he now turns his discourse to the Israelites, Though I have afflicted thee, I will no more afflict thee; that is, There is no reason for the faithful to despond, because they have been hitherto severely treated by God; let them on the contrary remembers that these scourges are temporary, and that God's displeasure with his elect people and his Church is such that he observes moderation; for this must ever be fulfilled, ---

`In the moment of mine indignation I smote thee;
but I will show thee perpetual mercies,' (Isaiah 54:8.)

This promise has been once given to the Church; and it is now in force, and will be in force to the end of the world. Thus we see that the Prophet obviated a doubt, lest the faithful should think that there was no hope for them, because they had found God so severe towards them; for he says that God was satisfied with the punishment which he had inflicted and that he would no longer afflict his people. It follows ---

Nahum 1:13

13. For now will I break his yoke from off thee, and will burst thy bonds in sunder.

13. Et nunc conteram (vel, confringam) jugum ejus ab te, et vincula tua disrumpam.

He confirms what the former verse contains, --- that God would now cease from his rigor; for he says, that the deliverance of this chosen people was nigh, when God would break down and reduce to nothing the tyranny of that empire. This verse clearly shows, that a clause in the preceding verse ought not to be so restricted as it is by some interpreters, who regard it as having been said of the slaughter of the army of Sennacherib. But the Prophet addresses here in common both the Israelites and the Jews, as it is evident from the context; and this verse also sufficiently proves, the Prophet does not speak of the Jews only; for they had not been so subdued by the Assyrians as the Israelites had been. I indeed allow that they became tributaries; for when they had broken their covenant, the Assyrian, after having conquered the kingdom of Israel and the kingdom of Syria, extended his arms at length to Judea. It is then certain, that they had been in some measure under the yoke; but it was not so hard a servitude that the words of the Prophet could be applied to it. I therefore take the expression generally, that God would free from the tyranny of Nineveh his own people, both the Israelites and the Jews. If any one objects and says, that the Israelites were never delivered. This indeed is true; but as to Nineveh, they were delivered when the empire was transferred to the Chaldeans, and Babylon became the seat of the empire.

We now then see, that the meaning of our Prophet is simply this, --- that though God by the Assyrians chastised his people, he yet did not forget his covenant, for the Assyrians were punished. It was then sufficient for his purpose to say that the

Jews as well as the Israelites were no longer under the yoke of Nineveh, how much soever they might have afterwards suffered under other tyrants. And what is said about the yoke being broken, belongs also in some measure to the Jews; for when we extend this to both, the Israelites and also the Jews, it would not be unsuitable to say, that they were both under the yoke and bound with chains. For though the servitude of Israel was hard, yet the Jews had also been deprived of their liberty. It is then right that this which is said should be taken generally, I will now break his yoke from thee, and thy bonds will I burst

Now this verse teaches us, that the people were not so subdued by the tyranny of their enemies, but that their deliverance was always in the hand and power of God. For how came it, that the Assyrians prevailed against the Israelites, and then subjugated the Jews, except that they were as a rod in the hand of God? So Isaiah teaches us in the tenth chapter. Though they armed themselves, they were yet but as the weapons and arms of God, for they could not have made any movement, except the Lord had turned their course, wherever he pleased, as when one throws a javelin or a dart with his hand. It follows ---

Nahum 1:14

14. And the LORD hath given a commandment concerning thee, that no more of thy name be sown: out of the house of thy gods will I cut off the graven image and the molten image: I will make thy grave; for thou art vile.

14. Et mandavit super te Jehova, Ne seminetur ex nomine tuo posthac; e domo (vel, e templo) deorum tuorum excidam sculptile et conflatile; ponam sepulchrum tuum, quia execrabilis es (aut, vilis factus es.)

Nahum explains more clearly, and without a figure, what he had previously said of darkness, --- that the kingdom of Nineveh would be so overturned, that it could never recruit its strength and return again to its pristine state. He indeed addresses the king himself, but under his person he includes no doubt the whole kingdom.

Commanded then has Jehovah, he says, respecting thee, let there not be sown of thy name; that is, God has so decreed, that the memory of thy name shall not survive: for to sow from the name of one, is to extend his fame. When, therefore, God entirely exterminates a race from the world, or when he obliterates a nation, he is said to command that there should not be sown of such a name; that is, that there should be no propagation of that name. In short, our Prophet denounces on the Assyrians a ruin, from which they were never to rise again. And when such a command is ascribed to God, it means, that by the sole bidding of God both nations and kingdoms are propagated, and are also abolished and destroyed: for what is said of individuals ought to be extended to all nations, `Seed, or the fruit of the womb,' as it is said in the Psalms, `is the peculiar gift of God,' (Psalm 127.) For how comes it, that many are without children, while others have a large and a numerous family, except that God blesses some, and makes others barren? The same is to be thought of nations; the Lord propagates them and preserves their memory; but when it seems good to him, he reduces them to nothing, so that no seed remains. And when the Prophet testifies, that this is the command of Jehovah, he confirms the faith of the Israelites and of the Jews, that they might not doubt, but that the

Assyrians would perish without any hope of restoration; for it was so decreed by Heaven.

He afterwards adds, From the house, or from the temple, of thy gods will I cut off graven images. It is probable, and it is the commonly received opinion, that the Prophet alludes here to Sennacherib, who was slain in the temple of his idol by his own sons, shortly after his return from Judea, when the siege of the holy city was miraculously raised through the instrumentality of an angel. As then he was slain in the temple, and it was by his murder profaned, I am inclined to receive what almost all others maintain, that there is here a reference to his person: but, at the same time, the Prophet no doubt describes, under the person of one king, the destruction and ruin of the whole kingdom. Gods indeed, did at that time make known what he had determined respecting the empire of Nineveh and all the Assyrians; for from this event followed also the change, that Nebuchodonosor transferred the empire to Babylon, and that the whole race, and every one who assumed power, became detestable. When, therefore, the Assyrians were torn by intestine discords, it was an easy matter for the Chaldeans to conquer them. Hence the Prophet does not here predict respecting one king only; but as his murder was, as it were, a prelude of the common ruin, the Prophet relates this history as being worthy of being remembered, --- that the temple would be profaned by the murder of Sennacherib, and that then the monarchy would be soon transferred to the Chaldeans.

When he says, I will appoint thy sepulcher, he connects this clause with the former; for how was it that idols were cut off from that temple, except that that tragic deed rendered the place detestable? For there is no one who feels not a horror at such a base crime as that of children killing their father with their own hands. We know when a proud woman at Rome ordered her chariot to be drawn over the dead body of her father, the road was counted polluted. So also the temple was no doubt viewed as polluted by the murder of the king. Then these two clauses ought to be read together, that God would cut off idols and graven images from the temple, --- and then, that the sepulcher of Sennacherib would be there.

He adds, For thou art execrable [296] I have rendered {קלות}, kolut, a thing to be abominated. It may indeed be referred to that history; but I take it by itself as meaning, that Sennacherib was to be abominable, and not he alone, but also the whole royal family, and the monarchy of Nineveh. For it is not consistent, as we have said already, to say, that all these things refer to the person of Sennacherib; for the Prophet speaks of the destruction of the city and nation, and that generally; at the same time, this does not prevent him from referring, as it were, in passing, to the person of Sennacherib.

It must, at the same time, be noticed, that the vain confidence, which the Assyrian kings placed in their idols and graven images, is here indirectly reproved; for we know that idolaters not only confide in their own strength, but that a part of their hope is also founded on their superstitions. Hence the Prophet says, that their temple was to be profaned by God, so that no aid would remain to the Assyrians, to the kings

[296] For thou art become vile. — Newcome. Because thou art worthless. — Henderson. Execrable, or accursed, which the word sometimes means, seems more suitable to the context. — Ed.

themselves any more than to the whole people. Let us proceed ---

Nahum 1:15

15. [297] Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace! O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts, perform thy vows: for the wicked shall no more pass through thee; he is utterly cut off.

15. Ecce super montes pedes annunciantis, promulgantis pacem: celebra Jehudah solennitates tuas, redde vota tua; quia non adjiciet posthac ad transeundum in te, impius (Beliiaal) in totum excisus est.

The Prophet again teaches us, that whatever he prophesied respecting the destruction of the city Nineveh, was for this end, --- that God, by this remarkable evidence, might show that he had a care for his people, and that he was not unmindful of the covenant he had made with the children of Abraham. This prophecy would have otherwise produced no salutary effect on the Israelites; they might have thought that it was by chance, or by some fatal revolution, or through some other cause, that Nineveh had been overthrown. Hence the Prophet shows, that the ruin of the city, and of the monarchy of Nineveh, would be a proof of the paternal love of God towards his chosen people, and that such a change was to be made for the sake of one people, because God, though he had for a time punished the Israelites, yet purposed that some seed should remain, for it would have been inconsistent, that the covenant, which was to be inviolate, should be entirely abolished. We now then understand the Prophet's object, and how this verse is to be connected with the rest of the context.

Behold, he says, on the mountains the feet of him who announces peace [298] Some think that the Prophet alludes to the situation of Jerusalem. We indeed know that mountains were around it: but the Prophet speaks more generally, --- that heralds of peace shall ascend to the tops of mountains, that their voice might be more extensively heard: Behold, he says, on the mountains the feet of him who announces peace; for all the roads had been before closed up, and hardly any one dared to whisper. If any one inquired either respecting peace or war, there was immediate danger lest he should fall under suspicion. As then the Assyrians, by their tyrannical rule, had deprived the Israelites of the freedom of speech, the Prophet says now, that the feet of those who should announce peace would be on the mountains; that is, that there would be now free liberty to proclaim peace on the highest places. By feet, he means, as we have explained, coming; and Isaiah speaks a similar language,

`How beautiful are the feet of those who announce peace,
who announce good things!' (Isaiah 52:7.)

Arise, then, he says, shall heralds of peace everywhere: and the repetition in other words seems to express this still more clearly; for he says, of him who announces and

[297] This forms the first verse of the second chapter in Hebrew. Most versions have followed the division of the Septuagint. — Ed.

[298] Calvin gives to {{מבשר only the sense of announcing or declaring. To spread or to bring news or tidings is its meaning; for it is used to designate bad as well as good tidings. See 1 Samuel 4:17; 2 Samuel 1:20; and 2 Samuel 4:10; Isaiah 3:7. It is commonly rendered {ευαγγελιζεσθαι} by the Septuagint. It may be regarded here as a participle in the same predicament with the participle which follows. The same mode of construction we find in Isaiah 52:7; where it evidently appears that the word means strictly to bring or to declare tidings, for good is added to it. That passage is as follows: --- How beautiful on the mountains Are the feet of him who announceth, Who proclaimeth peace, --- Of him who announceth good, {בוט}) ({רשבמ} Who proclaimeth salvation! Saying to Zion, Reign doth thy God. --- Ed.

causes to hear He might have simply said {מבשר}, mebesher, but he adds {משמיע}, meshemio; not only, he says, he will announce peace, but also with a clear and loud voice, so that his preaching may be heard from the remotest places. We now perceive what the Prophet had in view, and what his words import.

Now he adds, Celebrate, Judah, thy festal days. It is indeed a repetition of the same word, as if we were to say in Latin, Festiva festivitates, feast festivities; but this has nothing to do with the meaning of the passage. I am disposed to subscribe to the opinion of those who think, that there is here an intimation of the interruption of festal days; for so disordered were all things at Jerusalem and in the country around, that sacrifices had ceased, and festal days were also intermitted; for sacred history tells us, that the Passover was celebrated anew under Hezekiah, and also under Josiah. This omission no doubt happened, owing to the wars by which the country had been laid waste. Hence the Prophet now intimates, that there would be quietness and peace for the chosen people, so that they might all without any fear ascend to Jerusalem, and celebrate their festal days, and give thanks to the Lord, and rejoice before him, according to the language often used by Moses. At the same time, the Prophet no doubt reminds the Jews for what end the Lord would break off the enemy's yoke, and exempt them from servile fear, and that was, that they might sacrifice to God and worship him, while enjoying their quiet condition. And that he addresses Judah is not done without reason; for though the kingdom of Israel was not as yet so rejected, that God did not regard them as his people, yet there were no legitimate sacrifices among them, and no festal days which God approved: we indeed know that the worship which prevailed there was corrupt and degenerated. Inasmuch then as God repudiated the sacrifices which were offered in Israel, Nahum addresses here his discourse to Judah only; but yet he intimates, that God had been thus bountiful to the Israelites, that they, remembering their deliverance, might give him thanks.

Let us then know, that when the Lord grants us tranquillity and preserves us in a quiet state, this end ought ever to be kept in view, --- that it is his will, that we should truly serve him. But if we abuse the public peace given us, and if pleasures occasion a forgetfulness of God, this ingratitude will by no means be endured. We ought, indeed, in extreme necessities to sacrifice to God, as we have need then especially of fleeing to his mercy; but as we cannot so composedly worship him in a disturbed state of mind, he is pleased to allow us peaceable times. Now, if we misapply this leisure, and indulge in sloth, yea, if we become so heedless as to neglect God, this as I have said will be an intolerable evil. Let us then take notice of the Prophet's words in setting forth the design of God, --- that he would free his people from the power of the Assyrians, that they might celebrate their festal days.

He adds, Pay thy vows He not only speaks here of the ordinary sacrifices and of the worship which had been prescribed; but he also requires a special proof of gratitude for having been then delivered by the hand of God; for we know what paying of vows meant among the Hebrews: they were wont to offer peace-offerings, when they returned victorious from war, or when they were delivered from any danger, or when they were relieved from some calamity. The Prophet therefore now shows,

that it was right to pay vows to God, inasmuch as he had dealt so bountifully with his people; as it is said in Psalm 116, `What shall I return to the Lord for all his benefits which he has bestowed on me? The cup of salvation will I take, and on the name of the Lord will I call.' We also find it thus written in Hosea,

`The calves of thy lips to me shalt thou render,'
(Hosea 14:2.)

We now perceive what Nahum substantially meant, --- that when peace was restored, the people were not to bury so great and so remarkable a kindness of God, but to pay their vows; that is, that the people were to testify that God was the author of their deliverance, and that the redemption which they had obtained was the peculiar work of God.

It follows, ``Add no more to pass through thee shall Belial, for utterly is he cut off.'' This passage must not be explained in a general sense; for we know that the Chaldeans became more grievous to the Jews than the Assyrians had been; but the Prophet here refers especially to the Ninevites, that is, to the Assyrians, whose metropolis, as it has been said, was Nineveh. That wicked one then shall not add any more to pass through thee. --- Why? for he is entirely cut off. This reason given by the Prophet clearly proves, that he speaks not of the wicked generally, but that he especially points out the Assyrians. Now follows ---

Chapter 2

Nahum 2

N

Nahum 2:1-2

1. He that dasheth in pieces is come up before thy face: keep the munition, watch the way, make thy loins strong, fortify thy power mightily

1. Ascendit destructor coram facie tua; custodi munitionem, respice viam, robora lumbos, fortifica vires valde:

2. For the LORD hath turned away the excellency of Jacob, as the excellency of Israel: for the emptiers have emptied them out, and marred their vine branches.

2. Quia abstulit (alii vertunt, recedere fecit; alii, quiescere fecit) Jehova fortitudinem (alii, superbiam) Jacob, sicuti fortitudinem (vel, superbiam, est idem nomen) Israel; quia evacuarunt avacuantes, et palmites eorum succiderunt.

The waster spoken of here by the Prophet, some consider him to have been Sennacherib, and others, Nebuchodonosor. The verb {עלה}, ole, is also variously explained: it is often taken metaphorically in Hebrew for vanishing, as we say in French, Il s'en va en fumee; for smoke ascends, and this is the reason for the metaphor. They then elicit this meaning, --- that a destroyer had ascended before the face of the chosen people, that is, openly; so that it was evidently the work of God, that the Assyrians vanished, who had come to lay waste the whole land: Vanished then has the destroyer; and then before thy face, that is, manifestly, and before thine eyes. {נצור} {מצורה}, nutsur metsure, guard the fortress; that is let every one return to his own city, and keep watch, as it is usually done; for the country shall be left without men; and watch the way, that is, look out which way Sennacherib took in coming to assail the holy city; that way shall be now free from enemies; and then, keep firm or strengthen the loins, for {חזק}, chesek, sometimes means to keep firm, --- keep firm then or strengthen the loins, that thou mayest not relax as before, but stand courageously, for there is no one who can terrify thee; and, lastly, fortify strength greatly, that is, doubt not but thou shalt be hereafter strong enough to retain thy position; for cut off shall be that monarchy, which has been an oppression to thee.

But others take a different view and say, --- that the destroyer had ascended, that is, that Sennacherib had come; and what follows, they think, was intended to strike terror, as though the Prophet said ``Now while ye are besieged keep watch, and be careful to preserve your fortresses and strengthen all your strongholds; but all this will avail nothing. --- Why? Because God has taken away the pride of Jacob as he has the pride of Israel.'' This is the second explanation. Others again think, that the Prophet addresses here the Assyrians, and that Nebuchodonosor is here called a waster, by whom the empire was removed, and Nineveh, as it has often been stated, was destroyed. According to these interpreters, the Prophet here denounces ruin on the Assyrians in this manner, --- ``The destroyer now ascends before thy face.'' The Assyrians might indeed have regarded such threatening with disdain, when they were surrounded by many provinces and had cities well fortified: --- ``It will not be,'' he says, ``according to your expectation; the waster will yet come'' before thy face; and how much soever thou mayest now guard thy fortresses, watch thy ways, and carefully look around to close up every avenue against thy enemies, thou wilt yet effect nothing; strengthen the loins as much as thou pleasest and increase thy power, yet this shall be useless and vain.'' If this view be approved, it will be in confirmation of what has been previously said, --- that God had now determined to destroy the city Nineveh and the empire possessed by the Assyrians. This meaning then is not unsuitable; but if we receive this view, something additional must also be stated, and that is, --- that God now designed to destroy Nineveh and its monarchy, because it had humbled more than necessary his people, the kingdom of Judah, as well as the ten tribes. I cannot proceed farther now.

Prayer.

Grant Almighty God, that since we are daily chastised by thy scourges, we may know that we are justly punished by thee, and so examine our whole life, that with true and sincere confession we may humbly flee to thy mercy, which is offered to us by thy gospel in Christ our Lord; and since thou dost also show us so many favors, may we not be ungrateful, and may no forgetfulness of thy grace creep over us, but may we especially exercise ourselves through our whole life in the worship of thy name and in giving thanks to thee, and so offer to thee, with our tongues, the sacrifices of praise, that our whole life may be consistent, and thus glorify thy name on earth, that at length we may be gathered into thy celestial kingdom through the same Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Second

We said yesterday that some interpreters regard these words of the Prophet, Ascended has the destroyer before it face, guard the fortress, as having a reference to Sennacherib; that is, that God had taken him away and made him like mist to disappear. We also said, that some elicit this meaning, --- that Sennacherib ascended into Judea and filled the whole country with terror, and that he had at length laid it wholly waste. But I am disposed to take their view, who think that this is said of Nebuchodonosor, the waster of Nineveh: as he had been raised up by God to overturn the tyranny of that city, the Prophet ridicules all the efforts and preparations made by the Ninevites (as it is usual when a country is invaded) to oppose him. He there-

fore says, guard the fortress, watch the way, confirm the loins, and strengthen thy courage greatly But these are ironical expressions; as though he said, Whatever the Ninevites may contrive to defend themselves against the assault of their enemies will be all in vain. [299]

What is now subjoined has been added, in my view, in reference to what had already taken place, that is that God had taken away the pride of Jacob, as the pride of Israel Some give this rendering, ``God has made to returns or to rest;'' and they take {גאון}, gaun, in a good sense, as meaning courage or glory. The sense, according to these, would be, --- that God, having routed the army of Sennacherib, or destroyed the Assyrians, would make the ancient glory of his people to return; for both kingdoms had fallen. They then understand this to have been said respecting the restoration of the whole people; and they who translate, ``he will make to rest,'' think that continual peace is here promised to the Israelites, as well as to the Jews. But, on the contrary, it appears to me, that the Prophet shows, that it was the ripened time for the destruction of the city Nineveh, for God had now humbled his people. He had then taken away the pride of Jacob, as the pride of Israel; that is, God, having first corrected the pride of Israel, had also applied the same remedy to Judah: thus the whole people were humbled, and had left off their extreme height; for {גאון}, gaun, for the most part, is taken in a bad sense, for haughtiness or pride. This then is the reason why God now declares, that the ruin of Nineveh was nigh at hand; it was so, because the Jews and the Israelites had been sufficiently brought down. This sense is the most suitable.

And then for the same purpose is the next clause, --- that the emptiers had emptied, that is that robbers had pillaged them, and left nothing to remain for them. There is a passage in Isaiah which corresponds with this, where it is said, --- that when the Lord had completed his work on mount Zion and in Jerusalem, he would then turn his vengeance against the Assyrians, (Isaiah 10:12:) but why were they not sooner destroyed? Because the Lord designed to employ them for the purpose of chastising the Jews. Until then the whole work of God was completed, that is, until he had so corrected their pride, as wholly to cast it down, it was not his purpose to destroy the Ninevites; but they were at length visited with destruction. The same thing does our Prophet now teach us here, --- that Nebuchodonosor would come to demolish Nineveh, when the Lord had taken away the haughtiness of his people. [300]

[299] That the Babylonian power is meant by "the destroyer," or disperser, or scatterer, is the opinion if Jerome, Drusius, Grotius, Marckius, and Newcome. But Kimchi, Dathius, Henderson, and some others, regard the "destroyer" as the king of Assyria. What agrees best with the context is the former opinion. Having in the preceding verse announced the release of the people of Israel from the rule of Assyria, the Prophet now introduces its destroyer, and then proceeds with the main object of his prophecy, and describes the fall of Nineveh. Marckius considers the whole verse as addressed to the Babylonian power under the person of the king, while Calvin regards it, with the exception of the first line or clause, as addressed ironically to Nineveh. The verbs are either participles or preterites indicative; but they are construed by the former as gerunds; most of them imperatives. {{נצור is rendered as a passive participle by the Septuagint, and so it appears to be, and the three which follow, as imperatives. But in two copies it is without the ;{ו then all the verbs in the verse appear to be in the same form, and may be considered to be either preterites indicative or participles; and participles are often used in Hebrew to express the present tense: and the Prophet may be considered as seeing the Babylonian ascending and laying siege to Nineveh, for {מצורה} means a siege as well as a fortress: then the rendering would be as follows, --- Ascend does the waster before thee; He watches the siege, guards the way, Makes firm the loins, exerts strength mightily. But if ``fortress'' be preferred to ``siege,'' it may be adopted consistently with the context. --- Ed.

[300] Drusius confessed that he did not understand this verse. The view given of it by Calvin

What follows, {Ανδ} {τηεψ} {ηαςε} {δεστροψεδ} {τηειρ} {σηοοτσ}, or their branches, I take metaphorically, because the Israelites, as to outward appearances had been pulled up by the roots; for before the eyes of their enemies they were reduced to nothing, and their very roots were torn ups so that they perceived nothing left. The Lord indeed always preserved a hidden remnant; but this was done beyond the perceptions of men. But what the Prophet says metaphorically of the ruined branches, is to be understood of what was apparent.

Nahum 2:3

3. The shield of his mighty men is made red, the valiant men are in scarlet: the chariots shall be with flaming torches in the day of his preparation, and the fir trees shall be terribly shaken.

3. Clypeus fortium ejus rubefactus est, viri potentiae ejus vermiculati (hoc est, rubro etiam colore;) in igne lampadum (vel, taedarum) currus in die expeditionis ejus, et abietes tremefactae sunt.

The Prophet describes here how dreadful the Chaldeans would be when prepared against the Assyrians. He says, The shield of his brave men [301] is made red Some think that their shields were painted red, that blood might not appear; and that the soldiers had on red garments, that they might not be frightened in case they were wounded; and this is what history records of the Lacedemonians. But as the habits of these nations are not much known to us, it is enough for us to know, that their warlike appearance is here described; as though he had said, that the Chaldeans would come against Nineveh with violent and terrible power. Hence he says, that the men of his strength [302] would be clad in scarlet; he refers no doubt to the color of their dress. Some expound this of the Assyrians, and say that their shame is here designated; but this is too strained. The Prophet, I have no doubt, describes here the Chaldeans, and shows that they would be so armed that even their very appearance would put to flight their enemies, that is, the Assyrians.

For the same purpose he afterwards adds, With fire of torches, [303] or lamps, is the chariot in the day of his expedition. The word {פלדות}, peladut, occurs nowhere else; and the Jews think that the letters are inverted, and that it should be {לפידות}, as this word is afterwards used by the Prophet in the next verse, and in the same

seems plain, and Marckius has taken the same view of it: but Newcome, as well as Henderson, differ widely, and give a rendering which seems not to comport with the context. It is like that of Drusius, which no doubt made him to say that he did not understand the passage. For Jehovah restoreth the excellency of Jacob As the excellency of Israel. In this connection, this can have no meaning. The version of Henderson is the same, only he puts the verb in the future tense. The verb {שב has the meaning of turning away, as well as of restoring, and Marckius renders it avertit, he turned away. Then ,{גאון} rising, swelling, elatio, is more commonly taken in a bad than in a good sense, as meaning pride, haughtiness. The latter part of the verse sets before us distinctly the means which had been adopted to take away this pride. The passage is evidently parenthetic. --- Ed.

[301] {,{גבוריהו of his heroes, --- ``heroum.'' --- Dathius.

[302] {,{חיל}-{אנשי men of war, --- ``warriors,'' Henderson; ``the valiant men.'' --- Newcome.

[303] The most satisfactory explanation of this word is what is offered by Parkhurst, and adopted by Henderson. He says that {,{פלד in Arabic, is to cut, or cut in pieces, and that {פלדות} may have been the scythes or cutting instruments with which the chariots were armed. Then in eight or nine MSS. The ,{ב} beth, before ,{אש} is ,{כ} caph. If this reading be adopted, and the poetical singular number be retained as to the word chariot, the clause may be thus translated: --- Like fire are the scythes of the chariot, In the day of his preparation. To which shall be added the line which follows, --- And the fir-trees (spears) tremulously shake. Fir-trees are rendered ``cypresses'' by Henderson; and Newcome, following the Septuagint, changes to the word into what signifies ``horsemen.'' The figure is bold, but it is no unusual thing in poetry to call an instrument by the name of the material of which it is made. --- Ed.

sense. It is certainly evident from the context that either torches or lamps are meant by the Prophet. His chariot then is with the fire of lamps, that is, his chariots drive so impetuously that they appear as flames of fire, when wheels roll with such velocity.

And the fir-trees, he says, are terrible shaken Some translate, ``are inebriated'' or, ``stunned;'' and they apply this to the Assyrians, --- that their great men (whom they think are here compared to fir-trees, or are metaphorically designated by them) were stunned through amazement. Astonished then shall be the principal men among the Assyrians; for the very sight of their enemies would render them, as it were, lifeless; for the verb {רעל}, rol, is taken by some in the sense of infecting with poison, or of stupefying. But their opinion is more correct who think that fir-trees are to be taken for lances, though they do not sufficiently express the meaning of the Prophet; for he means, I have no doubt, that such would be the concussion among the lances, that it would be like that of fir-trees, tossed here and there in the forest. For lances, we know, are made of fir-trees, because it is a light wood and flexible, as when any one says in our language, les lances branslent. The lances then trembled, or shook in the hands of the soldiers, as fir-trees shake. Thus we see that the Prophet here continues to describe the terrible appearance of the Chaldeans. Let us go on ---

Nahum 2:4

4. The chariots shall rage in the streets, they shall justle one against another in the broad ways: they shall seem like torches, they shall run like the lightnings.

4. In compitis insanient per currus (est hic nomen singulare, currus, ideo quidam subaudiunt viros currus, sed possumus aliter intelligere, quod insaninient in suis curribus; diende) properabunt in plateis (alii vertunt, congregabuntur; potest deduci tam a {שקק}, quam in {שוק}, sed hic significat properare;) aspectus eorum quasi lampades (hoc est, lampadum,) quasi fulgura discurrent.

He still goes on with the same subject, --- that they shall be furious in the streets that is, that they shall he so turbulent, as though they were out of their minds: as furious men are wont to be who are impetuously carried away beyond all reason and moderation, so shall they also become mad in their tumult. He then says, They shall hasten. The verb is derived from the hips; for he who hastens shakes the hips, and moves them with a quick motion; and if it be lawful to coin a word, it is, they shall hip; Ils remueront les hanches. This is what the Prophet meant. And then, Their appearance [304] shall be as lamps. He refers here to the chariots. They shall then be like lamps; that is they shall dazzle the eyes of beholders with their brightness. All these things are intended to set forth what is terrific. He says also, as lightning they shall run here and there.

In short, he intimates, that the impetuosity of the Chaldeans would be so violent as to surpass what is commonly witnessed among men, that it would be, as it were, a species of fury and madness sent down from above. Thus, then, they were to be like lightning and flames of fire, that they might exceed every thing human. But these forms of speech, though they are hyperbolical, were not yet used without reason; for we may easily conjecture how great was then the security of the city Nineveh, and how incredible was the event of its ruin. That monarchy was then preeminent

[304] {,{מראיהן three MSS. Have the masculine suffix ---{הם} Ed.

over every other in the whole world, and no one could have thought that it could ever be assailed. Since then it was difficult to persuade the Jews that ruin was nigh the Assyrians, it was necessary for the Prophet to accumulate these various forms of expressions, by which he sets forth the power of God in the destruction of the Assyrians. It afterwards follows ---

Nahum 2:5

5. He shall recount his worthies: they shall stumble in their walk; they shall make haste to the wall thereof, and the defence shall be prepared.

5. Recordabitur fortium suorum, impingent in itinere suo (vel, itineribus suis, si legamus plurali numero;) festinabunt ad murum ejus, parabitur integumentum.

Some interpreters explain this also of the Chaldeans: The king of Babylon then shall remember his mighty men; that is, shall recount his forces and whatever strength he will have under his power; all this he will collect to make war with Nineveh and the Assyrians. Others think that there is here a transposition in the words, (which is too strained,) ``Mighty men shall remember,'' as though it were a change of number. But I take the words of the Prophet simply as they are, --- that he will remember mighty men: but this, as I think, refers to the Assyrians. He then, that is, either the king of Nineveh, or the people, will remember the mighty men; that is, he will gather from every quarter his forces and will omit nothing which may avail for defense; as it is usually done in great danger and in extremities: for they were noted then as warlike men; and every one who had any skill, every one who was endued with courage, every one who was trained up in arms, all these were mustered, that they might give help. So then the Prophet says, that such would be the dread in the land of Assyria, that they would collect together whatever force they had, to defend themselves against their enemies. The king then shall remember his mighty men, that is, he will muster all the subsidies within his reach.

Then he says, They shall stumble in their march; that is, the mighty men, when gathered, shall tremble and stumble like the blind: and this will be occasioned by fear; so that like men astounded, they will move to and fro, and have no certain footing. The Prophet then declares here two things, that the Assyrians would be diligent in gathering forces to repel the assault of their enemies, --- but that yet they would effect nothing, for trembling would seize the minds of all, so that mighty men would stumble in their marches. They shall stumble, and then it is said, they shall hasten to its wall, that is, they shall ascend the wall; and it is added, Prepared shall be the covering, as it is usual in defending cities. Some apply this to the Chaldeans; prepared shall be the covering, that is, when they shall come to the wall. It was indeed usual, as it is well known from histories, for those who approached a wall to defend themselves either with turrets or hurdles. But the Prophet, I doubt not, intimates, that the Assyrians would come with great trembling to meet their enemies, but without any success. However then they might defend themselves, their enemies would

yet prevail. [305] He therefore subjoins ---

Nahum 2:6

6. The gates of the rivers shall be opened, and the palace shall be dissolved.

6. Portae fluviorum apertae sunt, et palatium solutum est.

By the gates of the rivers the Prophet means that part of the city which was most fortified by the river Tigris; for the Tigris flowed close by the city. As then the Tigris was like the strongest defense, (for we know it to have been a most rapid river,) the Prophet ridicules the confidence of the Ninevites, who thought that the access of enemies could be wholly prevented in that part where the Tigris flowed. The gates then of the rivers are opened; that is, your river shall not prevent your enemies from breaking through and penetrating into your city.

We hence see, that the Prophet removes all the hindrances which might have seemed available to keep off enemies; and he did so, not so much for the sake of Nineveh as for the sake of his chosen people, that the Israelites and Jews might know, that that city was no less in the power of God than any other; for God can no less easily pass through rivers than go along the plain, where there is no obstacle. We now see why the Prophet says, that the gates of the rivers were opened: and then he adds, The palace is dissolved; that is, there will be no impediment to prevent the approach of enemies; for all the fortresses will melt away, and that of themselves, as though they were walls of paper, and the stones, as though they were water. He afterwards adds ---

Nahum 2:7

7. And Huzzab shall be led away captive, she shall be brought up, and her maids shall lead her as with the voice of doves, tabering upon their breasts.

7. Et quae stabat solida (vel, firma) ejecta est in exilium (vel, quae stabat occulta, patefacta est, jussa est ascendere;) et ancillae ejus ducentes tanquam in voce columbarum, plangentes super pectora sua.

There is some ambiguity in these words, and many interpreters think that {הצב}, estab, to be the name of the queen. The queen then they say, of the name of {הצב}, estab, is drawn away into exile; she is bidden to ascend, that she might migrate to a hostile land. But this view is too strained; nor was there any reason to suppose the word to be a proper name, except that there was a wish to say something, and that there was no other conjecture more probable. But I regard their opinion more correct, who refer this to the state of the kingdom; and there is here, I have no doubt, a personification, which is evident if we attend to the meaning. If any one prefers to regard the queen as intended, it would yet be better to take {הצב}, estab, in its proper and real meaning, --- that the queen, previously hid in her palace, and hardly able, through being so delicate, to move a step, --- that she was brought forth to the light; for {גלה}, gele, means to uncover, and also to cast out. If we render it, was made manifest, the Prophet alludes to hiding-places, and means that the queen

[305] This verse is applied by Grotius and Newcome to the Babylonian and not to the Assyrian king. The last clause seems to favor this opinion, but the second, the other. To render {יכשלו} as a Hiphil, ``They cast down,'' without an objective case, cannot be approved; but they may have been said to ``stumble,'' as the word means, from their great haste, afterwards mentioned. Piscator, Marckius, and Henderson, agree in the view given here. --- Ed.

did not go forth to the light, but was like delicate women who keep themselves within their chambers: but if we render it, Who is drawn forth into exile, it would be more suitable to one who was previously fixed in her dwelling. The word comes from {יצב}, itsab, to stand; but it is here in Hophal, {הוצב}, eustab,: it then signifies one who was before fixed and firmly settled, that is, in her concealment; she is drawn, he says, into exile. If then any one chooses to refer this to the person of the queen, the most suitable meaning would be, --- that the queen, who before sat in the midst of her pleasures, shall be violently drawn into exile, and carried away to another country. And it is probable that the Prophet speaks of the queen, because it immediately follows, Her handmaids lead her as with the voice of doves, and smite on their breasts; that is, her maids, who before flattered her, shall laments and with sighing and tears, and mourning, shall lead away, as a captive, their own mistress. Thus the context would harmonize.

But, as I have said, their opinion seems right, who think that under the person of a woman the state of the kingdom is here described. She then, who before stood, or remained fixed, shall be drawn into captivity; or she, who before sat at leisure, shall be discovered; that is, she shall no more lie hid as hitherto in her retirement, but shall be forced to come abroad. And then, she shall ascend; that is, vanish away, for the verb is to be here taken metaphorically; she shall then vanish away, or be reduced to nothing. And as the Prophet sets a woman here before us, what follows agrees with this idea, --- Her handmaids shall weep and imitate the doves in their moaning; that is, the whole people shall bewail the fate of the kingdom, when things shall be so changed, as when handmaids lead forth their own mistress, who had been before nourished in the greatest delicacies. [306]

Now this accumulation of words was by no means in vain; for it was necessary to confirm, by many words, the faith of the Israelites and of the Jews respecting the near approach of the destruction of the city Nineveh, which would have been otherwise incredible; and of this we can easily form a judgment by our own experience. If any one at this day were to speak of mighty kings, whose splendor amazes the whole world, --- if any one were to announce the ruin of the kingdom of one of them, it would appear like a fable. This then is the reason why the Prophet, by so many figures, sets forth an event which might have been expressed in few words, and confirms it by so

[306] Various have been the opinions respecting the construction of this verse. The Rabbins have generally considered the first word as the name of the queen of Nineveh: but this opinion has been adopted but by a few. Newcome joins the word with the last verse, and changes it into {,מצב} on no authority but that of conjecture, and renders it ``fortress.'' What Henderson has adopted seems the best: he also joins it to the last verse, but makes no change in it, only he gives the {ו} an adversative meaning, which it often has. The evident gender, as he rightly says, of {הצב} proves its connection with the former verse, it being masculine, while the verbs in this verse are feminines. His version of the two verses is the following, --- 7. The floodgates are opened, And the palace is dissolved, Though firmly established. 8. She is made bare, she is carried up, While her handmaids moan like doves, And smite upon their hearts. With the exception of the word ,{הצב} this version is liable to several objections. The verb {גלה} is often used in Kal intransitively, ``is removed;'' and this meaning enables us better to understand that of the next verb, ``she is made to ascend,'' that is, into captivity, even into Babylon, the seat of empire, being ever considered as the highest place. {מנהמת} is a word which in some form or another often occurs in Hebrew, and has never the meaning here given to it. Here it is a participle in Hophal, and ``carried away'' is its evident meaning, and is rendered {ηγοντο}, led away, by the Septuagint. ``Like,'' or, as ``the voice of doves,'' are literally the words which follow this verb. However connected, they must be considered as elliptical --- ``as with the voice, or, with a voice as that of doves.'' They might then be construed with the next line. The whole verse would then be this, --- She is removed, she is made to ascend; Yea, her handmaids are led away, Who with a voice as that of doves, tabor on their breasts. They were accompanying the tabering with a voice like that of doves. ``Tabor'' is literally the original, and ``on their breasts'' is an English idiom, as ``on their hearts'' is a Hebrew idiom. --- Ed.

many forms of speech, and even by such as are hyperbolical. He at length subjoins ---

Nahum 2:8

8. But Nineveh is of old like a pool of water: yet they shall flee away. Stand, stand, shall they cry; but none shall look back.

8. Atqui Nineveh quasi piscina aquarum a diebus (hoc est, a longo tempore) fuit; ipsi autem fugiunt; state, state; et nemo respicit.

The prophet here anticipates a doubt which might have weakened confidence in his words; for Nineveh not only flourished in power, but it had also confirmed its strength during a long course of time; and antiquity not only adds to the strength of kingdoms, but secures authority to them. As then the imperial power of the city Nineveh was ancient, it might seem to have been perpetual: ``Why! Nineveh has ever ruled and possessed the sovereign power in all the east; can it be now shaken, or can its strength be now suddenly subverted? For where there is no beginning, we cannot believe that there will be any end.'' And a beginning it had not, according to the common opinion; for we know how the Egyptians also fabled respecting their antiquity; they imagined that their kingdom was five thousand years before the world was made; that is, in numbering their ages they went back nearly five thousand years before the creation. The Ninevites, no doubt, boasted that they had ever been; and as they were fixed in this conceit respecting their antiquity, no one thought that they could ever fail. This is the reason why the Prophet expressly declares, that Nineveh had been like a pool of waters from ancient days; [307] that is, Nineveh had been, as it were, separated from the rest of the world; for where there is a pool, it seems well fortified by its own banks, no one comes into it; when one walks on the land he does not enter into the waters. Thus, then, had Nineveh been in a quiet state not only for a short time, but for many ages. This circumstance shall not, however, prevent God from overturning now its dominion. How much soever, then, Nineveh took pride in the notion of its ancientness, it was yet God's purpose to destroy it.

He says then, They flee: by fleeing, he means, that, though not beaten by their enemies, they would yet be overcome by their own fear. He then intimates, that Nineveh would not only be destroyed by slaughter, but that all the Assyrians would flee away, and despair would deliver them up to their enemies. Hence the Chaldeans would not only be victorious through their courage and the sword, but the Assyrians, distrusting their own forces, would flee away.

It afterwards follows, Stand ye, stand ye, and no one regards. Here the Prophet places, as it were, before our eyes, the effect of the dread of which he speaks. He might have given a single narrative, --- that though one called them back they would not dare to look behind; and that, thinking that safety alone was in flight, they would pursue their course. The Prophet might have formed this sort of narrative: this he

[307] The original is in a singular form, {{מימי ,{היא} ``from the days of it,'' or, of her. Henderson says, that ``it is an antiquated mode of expressing the feminine pronominal affix --- the absolute form of the pronoun being retained instead of the fragmental ''.{ה} The verse may be thus rendered: --- Though Nineveh has been like a pool of water during her days, Yet they flee; --- --- ``Stand, stand;'' But none is looking back. Newcome's version of the first line is as follows, --- And the waters of Nineveh are as a pool of water: And he says, that the pronoun sometimes is at the end of a clause: but it cannot be so considered here, because {היא} is in regimine with {מימי} It is to be noticed, that the Prophet throughout represents the whole transaction as an eye-witness, as it had been shown to him in a vision. --- Ed.

has not done; but he assumes the person of one calling back the fugitives, as though he saw them fleeing away, and tried to bring them back: No one, he says, regards We now see what the Prophet meant.

But from this passage we ought to learn that no trust is to be put in the number of men, nor in the defenses and strongholds of cities, nor in ancientness; for when men excel in power, God will hence take occasion to destroy them, inasmuch as pride is almost ever connected with strength. It can hardly be but that men arrogate too much to themselves when they think that they excel in any thing. Thus it happens, that on account of their strength they run headlong into ruin; not that God has any delight, as profane men imagine, when he turns upside down the face of the earth, but because men cannot bear their own success, nor keep themselves within moderate bounds, but many triumph against God: hence it is that human power recoils on the head of those who possess it. The same things must also be said of ancientness: for they who boast of their antiquity, know not for how long a time they have been provoking the wrath of God; for it cannot be otherwise but that abundance of itself generates licentiousness, or that it at least leads to excess; and further, they who are the most powerful are the most daring in corrupting others. Hence the increase at putridity; for men are like the dead when not ruled by the fear of God. A dead body becomes more and more fetid the longer it continues putrifying; and so it is with men. When they have been for a long time sinning, and still continue to sin, the fetidness of their sins increases, and the wrath of God is more and more provoked. There is then no reason why ancientness should deceive us. And if, at any time, we are tempted to think that men are sufficiently fortified by their own strength, or by numerous auxiliaries, or that they are, as it were sacred through their own ancientness, let what is said here come to our minds, --- that Nineveh had been like a pool of waters from the ancient days; but that, when it was given up to destruction, it fled away; and that, when their enemies did not rout them, they yet, being driven by their own fear, ran away and would not stop, though one called them to return.

Prayer.

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou constantly remindest us, in thy word, and teachest us by so many examples, that there is nothing permanent in this world, but that the things which seem the firmest tend to ruin, and instantly fall and of themselves vanish away, when by thy breath thou shakest that strength in which men trust, --- O grant, that we being really subdued and humbled, may not rely on earthly things, but raise up our hearts and our thoughts to heaven, and there fix the anchor of our hope; and may all our thoughts abide there, and at length, when thou hast led us through our course on earth we shall be gathered into that celestial kingdom, which has been obtained for us by the blood of thy only-begotten Son. Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Third

Nahum 2:9

9. Take ye the spoil of silver, take the spoil of gold: for there is none end of the store and glory out of all the pleasant furniture.

9. Diripite argentum, diripite aurum; et non finis (quia non est, copula debet resolvi in causalem particulam; quia nullus finis) praeparationis ejus (sic vertunt,

sed proprie {תכונה} significat locum;) gloria ex omni vase desiderabili.

Here the Prophet, as it were, by the command and authority of God, gives up Nineveh to the will of its enemies, that they might spoil and plunder it. Some think that this address is made in the name of a general encouraging his soldiers; but we know that the Prophets assume the person of God, when they thus command any thing with authority; and it is a very emphatical mode of speaking. It is adopted, that we may know that the Prophets pour not forth an empty sound when they speak, but really testify what God here determined to do, and what he in due time will execute. As then we know, that this manner of speaking is common to the Prophets there is no reason to apply this to the person of Nebuchadnezzar or of any other. God then shows here that Nineveh was given up to ruin; and therefore he delivered it into the hands of enemies.

It is indeed certain, that the Babylonians, in plundering the city, did not obey God's command; but yet it is true, that they punished the Assyrians through the secret influence of God: for it was his purpose to visit the Ninevites for the cruelty and avarice for which they had been long notorious, and especially for having exercised unexampled barbarity toward the Jews. This is the reason why God now gives them up to the Babylonians and exposes them to plunder. But as I have spoken at large elsewhere of the secret judgments of God, I shall only briefly observe here, --- that God does not command the Babylonians and Chaldeans in order to render them excusable, but shows by his Prophet, that Nineveh was to be destroyed by her enemies, not by chance, but that it was his will to avenge the wrongs done to his people. At the same time, we must bear in mind what we have said elsewhere, --- that the Prophets thus speak when the execution is already prepared; for God does not in vain or without reason terrify men, but he afterwards makes it manifest by the effect: as he created the world from nothing by his word, so also by his word he executes and fulfill his judgments. It is then no wonder, that the Prophet does here, as though he ruled the Chaldeans according to his will, thus address them, Take ye away, take ye away But this must be viewed as having a reference to the faithful; for the Babylonians, in plundering the city Nineveh, did not think that they obeyed God, nor did they give to God the praise due for the victory; but the faithful were thus reminded, that all this was done through the secret providence of God, and that it was also a clear, and, as it were, a visible evidence of God's paternal love towards his Church, when he thus deigned to undertake the cause of his distressed people.

It then follows, There is no end of preparations: Some render {תכונה}, techune, treasure, or hidden wealth, and derive it from {כון}, cun, which is to prepare; but {תכונה}, tacune, is almost always taken for a measure. {תכנות}, tacanut, from {תכון}, tacun means a sum, for {תכש}, tacan, is to number or to count; and this meaning suits the passage. [308] But there is no need of laboring much about this word; if we take it simply for place, the meaning would be, that there was no plot of ground in

[308] Buxtorf derives the word from {כון}, to prepare, and Parkhurst from {תכן}, to regulate, to measure. It is rendered ``store'' by Newcome and Henderson. What is meant is evidently the vast treasure amassed by the Assyrians. The next words are more variously rendered. Newcome connects the word {כבד} with ``store,'' and renders the two lines thus, --- And there is no end of the glorious store, Because of all kinds of pleasant vessels. But more consistent with the character of the language, and agreeably to what Dr. Wheeler suggests, is this, --- And there is no end to her store, It is more precious than all desirable vessels. The preposition {מ}, after {כבד}, may be viewed as the comparative degree. --- Ed.

that city which was not as it were a gulf filled up; for it had amassed all the wealth of the nations: and this sense would harmonize well with the subject of the Prophet, --- that the soldiers were to plunder until they were satiated; for the place was, as it were, a deep abyss.

He afterwards adds, There is glory from every desirable vessel. Those who think {מ}, mem, a particle of comparison in this place are much mistaken, and misapply the meaning of the Prophet; their rendering is, In comparison with every desirable vessel; but this, as all must see, is very frigid. The Prophet, I have no doubt, declares that the wealth of Nineveh consisted of every desirable vessel; for they had for a long time heaped together immense wealth, and that of every kind. The Hebrews call what is precious a desirable thing; and their vessels we include under the term furniture. We now then perceive what the Prophet means. Some take {כבד}, cabed, as a participle, and give this version, It is burdened, or adorned, (for it means both,) with every desirable vessel. But the simpler mode of speaking is what we have explained, --- that its glory was from every desirable vessel.

And here the Prophet condemns what the Assyrians had done in heaping together so much wealth from all quarters; for they had committed indiscriminate plunder, and gathered for themselves all the riches of the nations. They had indeed plundered all their neighbors, yea, and wholly stripped them. The Prophet now shows, in order to expose them to ridicule, that other robbers would be made rich, whom the Lord would raise up against them. The same is said by Isaiah,

`O thou plunderer, shalt not thou also be exposed to plunder?' (Isaiah 33.)

So also the Prophet shows in this passage, that men foolishly burn with so much avidity for money, and with so much anxiety heap together great wealth; for God will find out some who in their turn will plunder those who have plundered. It follows---

Nahum 2:10

10. She is empty, and void, and waste: and the heart melteth, and the knees smite together, and much pain is in all loins, and the faces of them all gather blackness.

10. Exinanita etexinanita est, et nudata; et cor liquefactum, et collisio genuum, et terror in omnibus lumbis; et facies omnium contraxerunt nigredinem (vel, splendorem, ut alii vertunt.)

The Prophet here confirms what the last verse contains; for he shows why he had called the Chaldeans to take away the spoil, --- because it was to be so. He did not indeed (as I have already said) command the Chaldeans in such a way as that their obedience to God was praiseworthy: but the Prophet speaks here only of His secret counsel. Though then the Chaldeans knew not that it was God's decree, yet the Prophet reminds the faithful that the Ninevites, when made naked, suffered punishment for their cruelty, especially for having so hostilely conducted themselves towards the Jews: and hence he declares, that Nineveh is emptied, is emptied, and made naked. [309] By repeating the same word, he intimates the certainty of the

[309] The three words in Hebrew form a very striking alliteration; and they present another peculiarity, — they increase in length or in syllables, somewhat similar to what follows, — She is made void, and empty, and desolate: or, She is empty, and emptied, and desolated. bwqh wmbwqh wmblqh Buke, umebuke, umebelake. Some consider the words as nouns, but they are

event: Emptied, emptied, he says, as when one says in our language, videe et revidee We hence see that by this repetition what the Prophet meant is more distinctly expressed that the faithful might not doubt respecting the event: and then for the same purpose he adds, she is made naked.

We now then perceive the Prophet's design. As in the last verse he shows that he had power given him from above to send armies against Nineveh, and to give up the city to them to be spoiled and plundered; so he now shows that he had not so commanded the Chaldeans, as though they were the legitimate servants of God, and could pretend that they rendered service to Him. He therefore points out for what end he had commanded the Chaldeans to plunder Nineveh; and that was, because God had so decreed; and he had so decreed and commanded, because he would not bear the many wrongs done to his people whom he had taken under his protection. As then Nineveh had so cruelly treated God's chosen people, it was necessary that the reward she deserved should be repaid to her. But the repetition, which I have noticed, ought to be especially observed; for it teaches us that God's power is connected with his word, so that he declares nothing inconsiderately or in vain.

He then adds, that knees smite together; and every heart is dissolved, or melted, and also, that all loins tremble We hence learn, that there is in men no courage, except as far as God supplies them with vigor. As soon then as He withdraws his Spirit, those who were before the most valiant become faint-hearted, and those who breathed great ferocity are made soft and effeminate: for by the word heart is meant inward boldness or courage; and by the knees and loins the strength of body is to be understood. There is indeed no doubt but the Assyrians, while they ruled, were a very courageous people, as power ever generates boldness; and it is also probable that they were a warlike people, since all their neighbors had been brought under their power. But the Prophet now shows, that there would be no vigor in their hearts, and no strength in their loins, or in any part of their body. The heart, then, he says, is melted And hence we learn how foolishly men boast of their courage, while they seem to be like lions; for God can in a moment so melt their hearts, that they entirely lose all firmness. Then as to external vigor, we see that it is in God's hand; there will be, he says, a confriction, or the knees will knock one against another, as they do when they tremble. And he says afterwards, And trembling shall be in all loins [310] He at last adds, And the faces of all shall gather blackness The word {פארור}, parur, some derive from {פאר}, par; and so the rendering would be, ``all faces shall draw in or withdraw their beauty,'' and so also they explain Joel 2:6, for the sentence there is the same. But they who disapprove of this meaning say, that {קבץ}, kobets, cannot mean to draw in or to withdraw; and so they render the noun, blackness. But this is a strained explanation. {פארור}, parur, [they say,] does not mean a black color but a pot: when therefore a caldron or a kettle contracts blackness from smoke, it is then called {פארור}, parur: but in this place these interpreters are constrained to take it metaphorically for that color; which is, as I have said, strained and far-fetched. I

evidently participles. — Ed.

[310] These three lines are literally as follows, — And the heart is melted, And there is tottering of the knees, And anguish in all loins. The word {{חלחלה is not trembling, but violent pain, pang, or anguish as that of a woman in travail. --- Ed.

am therefore inclined to adopt their opinion who render the sentence, all faces shall withdraw their beauty, or their brightness: but as to the import of the passage, there is little or no difference; let then every one have his free choice. [311] With regard to the Prophet's design, he evidently means, that the faces of all would be sad, for the Lord would fill their minds and thoughts with dread. The withdrawing then of beauty signifies an outward appearance of sorrow, or paleness, or whatever may appear in the countenance of men, when dejected with grief. In short, the Prophet means, that how much soever the Assyrians might have hitherto raised on high their crests, and breathed great swelling words, and conducted themselves insolently, they would now be dejected; for the Lord would prostrate their courage and melt their strength: he would, by casting down their high spirits, constrain them to undergo shame. This is the import of the whole. It now follows ---

Nahum 2:11-12

11. Where is the dwelling of the lions, and the feeding-place of the young lions, where the lion, even the old lion, walked, and the lion's whelp, and none made them afraid?

11. Ubi domicilium leonum, et locus pascui leonibus, quo veniebant leo, leo, catulus leonis, et nemo exterrens?

12. The lion did tear in pieces enough for his whelps, and strangled for his lionesses, and filled his holes with prey, and his dens with ravin.

12. Leo rapiebat quantum sufficeret catulis suis, et strangulabat leanis suis, et replebat repina speluncas suas et lustra sua praeda.

Here the Prophet triumphs over the Assyrians, because they thought that the city Nineveh was remote from every danger: as lions, who fear nothing, when they are in their dens, draw thither their prey in their claws or in their mouths: so also was the case with the Assyrians; thinking themselves safe, while Nineveh flourished, they took the greater liberty to commit plunders everywhere. For Nineveh was not only the receptacle of robbers but was also like a den of lions. And the Prophet more fully expresses the barbarous cruelty of the Assyrians by comparing them to lions, than if he had simply called them lions. We now then see what he means, when he says, Where is the place of lions? And he designedly speaks thus of the Assyrians: for no one ever thought that they could be touched by even the least injury; the fear of them had indeed so seized all men, that of themselves they submitted to the Assyrians. As then no one dared to oppose them, the Prophet says, Where? as though he had said that though all thought it incredible that Nineveh could be overthrown, it would yet thus happen. But he assumes the character of one expressing his astonishment, in order to intimate, that when the Lord should execute such a judgment, it would be a work of wonder, which would fill almost all with amazement. This question then proves that those are very foolish who form a judgment of God's vengeance, of which

[311] Parkhurst and others agree with Calvin, as to the construction of this line. The idea adopted seems to have been first suggested by Aben-Ezra, as it appears from Marckius, but was strongly opposed by Kimchi, and on apparently a good ground — the meaning of the verb here used. {,קבץ as a verb and as a noun, in all its variations, has invariably the idea of collecting or gathering, and in no instance that of withdrawing, except as it is said, in this sentence, and in Joel. Dathius, Marckius, and Newcome, retain the idea contained in our version; and consistent with this is the paraphrase of the clause given by the Septuagint, ``{και} {το} {προσωπον} ({τα} {προσωπα}, comp.) {παντων} {ως} {προσκαυμα} {χυτρας} --- and the face (or, the faces) of all as the burning on the pot.'' This idea is much more expressive and striking than the other. --- Ed.

the Prophet speaks, according to the appearance of things at the time; for the ruin of Nineveh and of that empire was to be the incomprehensible work of God, and which was to fill all minds with astonishment.

He says first, Where is the place of lions? The feminine gender is indeed here used; but all agree that the Prophet speaks of male lions. [312] He then adds, the place of feeding for lions? {כפרים}, caphrim, mean young lions as we shall hereafter see; and {אריות}, ariut, are old lions. He afterwards adds, Where {אריה}, arie came: and then comes {לביא}, labia, which some render, lioness; but {לביא}, labia, properly means an old lion; the Prophet, no doubt, uses it in the next verse in the feminine gender for lionesses. I therefore do not deny, but that we may fitly render the terms here, lion and lioness; afterwards, and the whelp of lions, and none terrifying. He then adds, Seize did the lion (the word is {אריה}, arie) for his whelps to satiety, that is, sufficiently; and strangle did he for his lionesses, {ללבאתיו}, lalabatiu. Here no doubt the Prophet means lionesses; there would otherwise be no consistency in the passage. He afterwards says,

And filled has he with prey his dens and his recesses with ravin; it is the same word with a different termination, {טרף}, thereph, and {טרפה}, therephe

Now the repetition, made here by the Prophet, of lion, young lion, and lioness, was not without its use; for he meant by this number of words to set forth the extreme ferocity of the Assyrians, while they were dominant. He no doubt compares their kings, their counselors, and their chief men, to lions: and he calls their wives lionesses, and their children he calls young lions or whelps of lions. The sum of the whole is, that Nineveh had so degenerated in its opulence, that all in power were like ferocious wild beasts, destitute of every kind feeling. And I wish that this could have only been said of one city and of one monarchy! But here, as in a mirror, the Prophet represents to us what we at this day observe, and what has always and in all ages been observed in great empires; for here great power exists, there great licentiousness prevails; and when kings and their counselors become once habituated to plunder, there is no end of it; nay, a kind of fury is kindled in their hearts, that they seek nothings else but to devour and to tear in pieces to rend and to strangle. The Prophet indeed wished here to console both the Israelites and the Jews by showing, that the injustice of their enemies would not go unpunished: but at the same time he intended to show how great, even to the end of the world, would be the cruelty of those who would rule tyrannically: and as I have said, experience proves, that there are too many like the Ninevites. It is indeed unquestionable, that the Prophet does not without reason speak so often here of lions and lionesses.

Hence he says, ``Come thither did the lion, the lioness, and the whelp of the lion.'' He means that when justice was sought in that city, it was found to be the

[312] It is better to retain the gender as it is in Hebrew: and this makes the passage more consistent, and corresponds better with the "feeding-place" in the next line. The recesses of the lionesses and the whelps are here mentioned, and in the next verse is stated what the lions did for them: — 11. Where is the haunt of the lionesses, And the feeding-place, even that for the whelps, Where did go the lion, the lioness, the cub of the lion, And none made them afraid? 12. The lion ravined for the supply of his cubs, And strangled for his lionesses, And filled with ravin his dens, And his haunts by ravining. "The allegory," says Newcome, "is beyond measure beautiful. Where are the inhabitants of Nineveh, who were strong and rapacious like lions?" — Ed.

den of cruel beasts; for the king had put off all humanity, as well as his counselors; their wives were also like lionesses, and their children and domestics were as young lions or the whelps of lions. And cruelty creeps in, somewhat in this manner: When a king takes to himself too much liberty, his counselors follow him; and then every one follows the common example, as though every thing received as a custom was lawful. This is the representation which the Prophet in these words sets before us; and we with our own eyes see the same things. Then he adds, 'The lion did tear what sufficed his whelps, and strangled for his lionesses; he filled with prey his dens and his recesses with plunder. He goes on with the same subject, --- that the Assyrians heaped for themselves great wealth by unjust spoils, because they had no regard for what was right. The lion, he says, did tear for his whelps: as lions accustom their whelps to plunder, and when they are not grown enough, so as to be able to attack innocent animals, they provide a prey for them, and also bring some to the lionesses; so also, as the Prophet informs us, was the case at Nineveh; the habits of all men were formed for cruelty by the chief men and the magistrates. By the word {בדי}, bedi, sufficiency, he means not that the Ninevites are satisfied with their prey, for they were insatiable; but it rather refers to the abundance which they had. And he says, that the lion strangled for his lionesses: I wish there were no lionesses to devour at this day; but we see that there are some who surpass their husbands in boldness and cruelty. But the Prophet says here what is natural, --- that the lion strangles the prey and gives it afterwards to his lionesses. He then adds, that the Ninevites were not satisfied with daily rapines, as many robbers live for the day; but he says, that their plunder was laid up in store. Hence they filled their secret places and dens with their booty and spoils. Still further, though the Prophet speaks not here so plainly, as we shall see he does in what follows, it is yet certain, that the reason is here given, why God visited the Ninevites with so severe a vengeance, and that was, because they had ceased to be like men, and had degenerated into savage beasts. It follows ---

Nahum 2:13

13. Behold, I am against thee, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will burn her chariots in the smoke, and the sword shall devour thy young lions: and I will cut off thy prey from the earth, and the voice of thy messengers shall no more be heard.

13. Ecce Ego ad te dicit Jehova exercituum, et comburam in fumo currum ejus, et leunculos tuos comedet gladius, et excidam e terra praedam tuam, et non audietur amplius vox nunciorum tuorum (aut, dentium molarium.)

To give more effect to what he says, the Prophet introduces God here as the speaker. Behold, he says, I am against thee He has been hitherto, as it were, the herald of God, and in this character gave an authoritative command to the Chaldeans to plunder Nineveh: but when God himself comes forward, and uses not the mouth of man, but declares himself his own decrees, it is much more impressive. This then is the reason why God now openly speaks: Behold, I am, he says, against thee. We understand the emphatical import of the demonstrative particle, Behold; for God, as if awakened from sleep, shows that it will be at length his work, to undertake the cause of his people, and also to punish the world for its wickedness, Behold, I am

against thee, he says. We have elsewhere seen a similar mode of speaking; there is therefore no need of dwelling on it here.

I will burn, he says, with smoke her chariots Here by smoke some understand a smoky fire; but the Prophet, I think, meant another thing, --- that at the first onset God would consume all the chariots of Nineveh; as though he had said, that as soon as the flame burst forth, it would be all over with all the forces of Nineveh; for by chariots he no doubt means all their warlike preparations; and we know that they fought then from chariots: as at this day there are employed in wars horsemen in armor, so there were then chariots. But the Prophet, by taking a part for the whole, includes all warlike forces: I will burn then the chariots [313] --- How? By smoke alone, that is as soon as the first flame begins to emerge; for the smoke rises before the fire appears or gathers strength: in short, the Prophet shows that Nineveh would be, as it were, in a moment, reduced to nothing, as soon as it pleased God to avenge its wickedness.

He then adds in the third person, And thy young lions shall the sword devour He indeed changes the person here; but the discourse is more striking, when God manifests his wrath in abrupt sentences. He had said, Behold, I am against thee; then, I will burn her chariots, he now hardly deigns to direct his speech to Nineveh; but afterwards he returns to her, and thy young lions shall the sword devour Then God, by speaking thus in broken sentences, more fully expresses the dreadful vengeance which he had determined to execute on the Ninevites. He then says, And I will exterminate from the earth thy prey; that is, it will not now be allowed thee to go on as usual; for I will put a stop to thy inhuman cruelty. Thus prey may be taken for the act itself; or it may be fitly explained of the spoils taken from the nations, for the Ninevites, by their tyrannical ravening, had everywhere plundered; and thus it may be applied to the pillaging of the city. I will then exterminate from the land, that is from thy country, those riches which have been hitherto heaped together as though a lion had been everywhere gathering a prey.

And heard no more shall be the voice of thy messengers They who understand {מלאכים}, melakim, to be messengers, apply the word to the heralds, by whom the Assyrians were wont to proclaim wars on neighboring nations. As then they sent here and there their heralds to announce war, and as their terrible voice sounded everywhere, the words of the Prophet have this meaning given them, --- that God would at length produce silence, so that they should not hereafter disturb all their neighboring countries with the clamor of war. But as this explanation is strained, I am inclined to adopt what others think, --- that the grinding teeth are here intended. The word is not written, if it be taken for messengers, according to grammar; it is {מלאככה}, melakke; there ought not to have been the {ה}, he at the end, and {י}, jod, ought to have been inserted before the last letter but one: and if it be deemed as meaning the king, it ought then to have been written {מלכך}, melkak. All then confess, that the word is not written according to the rule of grammar; and as the

[313] Jerome renders the clause, "Succendam usque ad fumum — I will burn to smoke" the chariots: and the version of Henderson is the same. But the most natural supposition is, that smoke here is mentioned instead of fire. And so Dathius renders it — "igni — with fire." — Ed.

Persians call the grinders {מלאככה}, melakke, we may give this version, which well suits the context, `No more shall be heard the sound of grinders.' For since lions seize the prey with their teeth, [314] and also break the bones, and thus make a great noise when they tear an animal or a man with their teeth, this rendering seems to be the most suitable, Heard no more shall be the sound of teeth, that is, heard shall not be the noise made by thy teeth; for when thou now tearest thy prey, thy teeth make a noise. No more heard then shall the noise from that breaking, or the clashing or the crashing of the teeth. But as to the chief point, this is no matter of importance.

The Prophet simply teaches us here that it could not be, but that God would at length restrain tyrants; for though he hides himself for a time, he yet never forgets the groans of those whom he sees to be unjustly afflicted: and particularly when tyrants molest the Church, it is proved here by the Prophet that God will at length be a defender; and hence we ought to consider well these words, Behold, I am against thee For though God addresses these words only to the Assyrians, yet as he points out the reasons why he rises up with so much displeasure against them, they ought to be extended to all tyrants, and to all who exercise cruelty towards distressed and innocent men. But this is more clearly expressed in the following verse.

Chapter 3

[314] The context undoubtedly favors this rendering. The Septuagint has "{τα} {εργα} {σοι} --- thy works,'' which cannot consist with the word, ``voice,'' which precedes, though Newcome, following the Septuagint, renders it, ``the fame of thy deeds.'' There is but one different reading, except as to points, and that is, ,{מלאככם} ``their messenger,'' in two copies, and this comes nearest to the received text of any that has been conjectured: and to render ``messenger'' in the singular number comports better with the usual style of the Prophets, than in the plural. Perhaps the {ה} may be deemed redundant at the end of the sentence; and then it would be literally, ``thy messenger,'' taken in a collective sense. --- Ed.

Nahum 3

N

Nahum 3:1

1. Woe to the bloody city! it is all full of lies and robbery; the prey departeth not;

1. O urbs sanguinaria! Tota mendacio (vertunt) rapina plena est; non recedit praeda (vel, non recedet praeda.)

The Prophet, as I have said, more clearly expresses here the reason why the vengeance of God would be so severe on the Ninevites, --- because they had wholly given themselves up to barbarous cruelty; and hence he calls it the bloody city. Bloody city! he says. The exclamation is emphatical. Though {הו}, eu, sometimes means Woe; yet it is put here as though the Prophet would have constrained Nineveh to undergo its punishment, O sanguinary city, then, the whole of it is full of {כחש} cachesh: the word signifies leanness and the Prophet no doubt joins here together two words, which seem to differ widely, and yet they signify the same thing. For {פרק}, perek, means to lay by; and {כחש}, cachesh, is taken for a lie or vanity, when there is nothing solid in what is said: but the Prophet, I doubt not, means by both words the spoils of the city Nineveh. It was then full of leanness for it had consumed all others; it was also full of spoils, for it had filled itself. But the meaning of the Prophet is in no way dubious; for at length he adds, Depart shall not the prey; that is as some think, it shall not be withdrawn from the hands of conquerors; but others more correctly think that a continued liberty in plundering is intended, that the Assyrians were constantly employed in pillaging and kept within no bounds.

We hence see that the Prophet now shows why God says, that he would be an adversary to the Ninevites, because he could not endure its unjust cruelty. He bore with it indeed for a time; for he did not immediately execute his judgment; but yet he never forgot his own people.

As, then, God has once declared by the mouth of his Prophet that he would be the avenger of the cruelty which the Assyrians had exercised, let us know that he retains still his own nature; and whatever liberty he may for a time grant to tyrants

and savage wild beasts, he yet continues to be a just avenger. It is our duty calmly to bear injuries, and to groan to him; and as he promises to be at length our helper, it behaves us to flee to him, and to ask him to succor us, so that seeing his Church oppressed, and tyrants exercising licentiously their power, he may hasten the time to restrain them. If then we were at all times to continue thus resigned under God's protection, there is no doubt but that he would be ready even at this day to execute a similar judgment to that which the city Nineveh and its people had to endure.

Prayer.

Grant, Almighty God. that as we have now heard of punishments so dreadful denounced on all tyrants and plunderers, this warning may keep us within the limits of justice, so that none of us may abuse our power to oppress the innocent, but, on the contrary, strive to benefit one another, and wholly regulate ourselves according to the rule of equity: and may we hence also receive comfort whenever the ungodly molest and trouble us, and doubt not but that we are under thy protection, and that thou art armed with power sufficient to defend us, so that we may patiently bear injuries, until at length the ripened time shall come for thee to help us, and to put forth thy power for our preservation; nor let us cease to bear our evils with patience, as long as it may be thy will to exercise us in our present warfare, until having gone through all one troubles, we come to that blessed rest which has been provided for us in heaven by Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Fourth

Nahum 3:2-3

2. The noise of a whip, and the noise of the rattling of the wheels, and of the pransing horses, and of the jumping chariots.

2. Sonitus flagelli, et sonitus commotionis rotae, et equus concutiens, et quadriga exultans;

3. The horseman lifteth up both the bright sword and the glittering spear: and there is a multitude of slain, and a great number of carcases; and there is none end of their corpses; they stumble upon their corpses:

3. Eques ascendere faciens, et flamma gladii, et fulgur lanceae, et multitudo occisi (est mutatio numeri, occisorum,) et pondus cadaverum (hoc est etiam multitudo,) et nullus finis cadaveribus ejus; impingent in cadavera ejus:

The Prophet represents here as in a lively picture, what was nigh the Assyrians; for he sets forth the Chaldeans their enemies, with all their preparations and in their quick movements. [315] The sound of the whip, he says; the whips, made a noise in

[315] It appears from Marckius that Theodoret and Cyril regarded this verse, with Calvin, as a description of the Chaldean army after having invaded Nineveh, but that Jerome and Cocceius viewed it as a delineation of the state of Nineveh in the Prophet's time; and with the last Newcome agrees, while Henderson coincides with the former. The version given by them is all nearly the same. It seems certainly more consistent with the order of the poem to regard the verse as describing the state of Nineveh at the time, for the sacking of Nineveh had been before very minutely delineated. Having done this, the Prophet may be supposed to give here a reason for the dreadful catastrophe which he had mentioned. Entertaining this view, and differing from others as to the meaning of some of the clauses, I offer the following version of the three verses, — 1. Oh! The city of blood! All of deceit; Of plunder it is full, none can search out the spoil: — 2. The sound of the whip, and the sound of the rattling wheel! And the horse prancing, and the chariot bounding! The horseman mounting, And the flaming of the sword and the glittering of the spear! And a multitude dancing, and a mass inactive! And no end to her people! Who are fallen, with their nations, 3. Through the many fornications of the harlot,

exciting the horses: the sound of the rattling of the wheel; that is, great shall be the haste and celerity, when the horses shall be forced on by the whip; the horse also shaking the earth, and the chariot bounding; the horseman making it to ascend; and then, the flame of the sword and the lightning of the spear He then says, that there would be such a slaughter, that the whole place would be full of dead bodies.

We now then understand what the Prophet means: for as Nineveh might have then appeared impregnable the Prophet confirms at large what he had said of its approaching ruin, and thus sets before the eyes of the Israelites what was then incredible.

As to the words, some interpreters connect what we have rendered, the horseman makes to ascend, with what follows, that is, he makes to ascend the flame of the sword and the lightning of the spear But as a copulative comes between, it seems rather to be an imperfect sentence, meaning, that the horseman makes to ascend or mount, that is, his horses, by urging them on. With regard to the word {להב}, leb, it means I have no doubt, a flame. By this word, I know, is also understood metaphorically the brightness of swords, which appears like a flame: but the Prophet immediately adds lightning As then he says that spears lighten, I doubt not but that for the same reason he meant to say that swords flame. All these things were intended for the purpose of fully convincing the Israelites that Nineveh, however much it was supplied with wealth and power, was yet approaching its ruin, for its enemies would prevail against it: and therefore he adds, that all the roads would be full of dead bodies, that the enemies could not enter without treading on them everywhere. It follows ---

Nahum 3:4

4. Because of the multitude of the whoredoms of the wellfavoured harlot, the mistress of witchcrafts, that selleth nations through her whoredoms, and families through her witchcrafts.

4. Ob multitudinem scortationum meretricis pollentis gratia, magistrae veneficiorum, vendentis gentes in scortationibus suis, et nationes in suis veneficiis.

The Prophet mentions again the cause why God would execute so dreadful a vengeance on that city, which yet procured by its splendor so much glory and respect among all people: and God seems in a manner to have but little regard for the order of the world when he thus overturns great cities. For since he is the Creator of the whole world, it seems to be his proper office to protect its various parts, especially those which excel in beauty, for they seem to deserve a higher regard. When therefore any splendid city is demolished, such thoughts as these occur to us, --- That God is either delighted with the ruin of the world, or is asleep in heaven, and that thus all things revolve by chance and contingency. Therefore the Prophet shows, that God had just reasons for decreeing the ruin of Nineveh, and for deforming that

That exults in beauty, and possesses enchantments; Who sells nations by her fornications, And tribes by her enchantments. {,{ימיש ``search out,'' I derive from ,{מש} which is to feel for the purpose of exploring, and then, to explore or search out; see Genesis 31:34. The second verse contains a simple enumeration of what the city exhibited. {רב ,{חלל} ``a multitude dancing'' or piping, the {ו} being dropped in ,{חלל} as it is in ,{חללים} pipers, 1 Kings 1:40. Then as a contrast comes the dead, heavy, inactive mass, {כבד .{פגד} ``To her people'' or nations, ,{לגויה} {τοις} {εθνεσιν} {αυτης}. --- Sept. In the word ,{בנויתם} I take that {ת} is a mistake for .{ה} If taken for carcasses, it wants a {ו} before ;{ת} see Psalm 110:6. The third verse must be connected with the second, as it has otherwise no grammatical construction. --- Ed.

beauty, that it might not deceive the eyes of men. Hence he compares Nineveh to a harlot. The similitude seems not to be very suitable: but yet if we take a nearer view of things, the Prophet could not have more fitly nor more strikingly set forth the condition of that city. He had before mentioned its barbarous cruelty, and said, that it was the den of lions, and that savage and bloody wild beasts dwelt there. He now begins to speak of the frauds and crafty artifices by which the kings of this world attain for themselves both wealth and power. The Prophet then makes the city Nineveh to be like a harlot for this reason, --- because it had not only brought under its power neighboring nations by threats and terrors, and also by cruelty, but because it had ensnared many by oblique arts and fraudulent means, by captious dealings and allurements. This is the reason why it is now called a harlot by the Prophet.

The Prophets of God seem indeed to speak but with little reverence of great cities and empires: but we know that it rightly belongs to the Spirit of God, that in exercising his own jurisdiction, he should uncover the base deeds of the whole world, which otherwise would lie concealed and even under the appearance of virtues deceive the eyes and senses of the simple: and as men so much flatter themselves, and are inebriated with their own delusions, it is necessary that those who are too self-indulgent and delicate should be roughly handled. As then kings ever set up their own splendor that they may dazzle the eyes of the simple, and seem to have their own greatness as a beautiful covering, the Spirit of God divests them of these masks. This then is the reason why the Prophet speaks here, in no very respectful terms, of that great monarchy which had attracted the admiration of all nations. For when the Spirit of God adopts a humble and common mode of speaking, men, blinded by their vices, will not acknowledge their own baseness; nay, they will even dare to set up in opposition those things which cover their disgraceful deeds: but the Spirit of God breaks through all these things, and dissipates those delusions by which men impose on themselves.

Such is the reason for this similitude; On account of the multitude, he says, of the whoredoms of the harlot, who excels in favor It is said by way of concession that Nineveh was in great favor, that is, that by her beauty she had allured to herself many nations, like a harlot who attains many lovers: and thus the Prophet allows that Nineveh was beautiful. But he adds that she was the mistress of sorceries {כשף}, casheph, means sorcery, and also juggling: we may then render {כשפים}, cashaphim, used here, juggleries, (praestigias --- sleights of hand.) But the Prophet seems to allude to filters or amatory potions, by which harlots dementate youths. As then harlots not only attract notice by their beauty and bland manners and other usual ways; but they also in a manner fascinate unhappy youths, and use various arts and delusions; so the Prophet under this word comprehends all the deceits practiced by harlots; as though he said, ``This harlot was not only beautiful, but also an enchantress, who by her charms deceived unhappy nations like a strumpets who dementates unhappy youths, who do not take care of themselves.''

He afterwards adds, Who sells nations by her whoredoms, and tribes by her sorceries Though Nahum still carries on the same metaphor, he yet shows more clearly what he meant by whoredoms and sorceries, --- even the crafts of princes, by which

they allure their neighbors, and then reduce them to bondage. Then all the counsels of kings (which they call policies) [316] are here, by the Spirit of God, called sorceries or juggleries, and also meretricious arts. This reproof, as I have already said, many deem to have been too severe; for so much majesty shone forth then in the Assyrians, that they ought, as they think, to have been more respectfully treated. But it behaved the Spirit of God to speak in this forcible language: for there is no one who does not applaud such crafty proceedings. Where any one, without mentioning princes, to ask, Is it right to deceive, and then by lies, deceptions, perjuries, cavils, and other arts, to make a cover for things? --- were this question asked, the prompt answer would be, that all these things are as remote as possible from virtue, as nothing becomes men more than ingenuous sincerity. But when princes appear in public, and make this pretense, that the world must be ruled with great prudence, that except secret counsels be taken, all kingdoms would immediately fall into ruin, --- this veil covers all their shameful transactions, so that it becomes lawful for them, and even praiseworthy, to deceive one party, to circumvent another, and a third to oppress by means of deception. Since then princes are praised for their craftiness, this is the reason why the Prophet here takes away, as it were by force, the mask, under which they hide their base proceedings; ``They are,'' he says, ``meretricious arts, and they are sorceries and juggleries.''

It is of one city, it is true, that he speaks here; but the Prophet no doubt describes in this striking representation how kingdoms increase and by what crafty means, --- first, by robberies, --- and then by artful dealings, such as would by no means become honest men in the middle class of life. But princes could never succeed, except they practiced such artifices. We yet see how they are described here by the Spirit of God, --- that they are like strumpets given to juggleries, and to other base and filthy arts, which he calls whoredoms. But I have said, that the meaning of the Prophet can be more clearly elicited from the second clause of the verse, when he says that the Ninevites made a merchandise of the nations. We see indeed even at this day that princes disturb the whole world at their pleasure; for they deliver up innocent people to one another, and shamefully sell them, while each hunts after his own advantage, without any shame; that he may increase his own power, he will deliver others into the hand of an enemy. Since then there are crafty proceedings of this kind carried on too much at this day, there is no need that I should attempt to explain at any length the meaning of the Prophet. I wish that examples were to be sought at a distance. Let us proceed ---

Nahum 3:5-6

5. Behold, I am against thee, saith the Lord of hosts; and I will discover thy skirts upon thy face, and I will shew the nations thy nakedness, and the kingdoms thy shame.

5. Ecce Ego ad te, inquit Jehova exercituum, et retegam fimbrias tuas super faciem tuam, et ostendam gentibus nuditatem tuam, et regnis foeditatem tuam:

[316] Practicas, used here evidently in a sense not classical, meaning the crafty tactics of politicians. The word practic, in English, was, at one time, used in a bad sense, signifying what was sly and artful, or crafty; and practice too was employed to designate a trick, or a stratagem. — Ed.

6. And I will cast abominable filth upon thee, and make thee vile, and will set thee as a gazingstock.

6. Et projiciam super te sordes (vel, inquinamenta) et ignominia afficiam te, et ponam te quasi stercus (alii vertunt; alii autem, quasi exemplum; dicam postea de ipsa voce.)

The Prophet confirms here what he has said of the fall of Nineveh; but, as it was stated yesterday, he introduces God as the speaker, that his address might be more powerful. God then testifies here to the Assyrians, that they should have no strife or contention with any mortal being, but with their own judgment; as though he said, ``There is no reason for thee to compare thy forces with those of the Chaldeans; but think of this --- that I am the punisher of thy crimes. The Chaldeans indeed shall come; chariots shall make a noise and horses shall leap, and horsemen shall shake the earth; they shall brandish the flaming swords, and their spears shall be like lightning; but there is no reason for thee to think that the Chaldeans will, of themselves, break in upon thee: for I guide them by my hidden providence, as it is my purpose to destroy thee; and now the time is come when I shall execute on thee my judgment.''

I am, he says, Jehovah of hosts. The epithet {צבאות} tsabaut, must be referred to the circumstance of this passage; for God declares here his own power, that the Assyrians might not think that they could by any means escape. He then adds, I will disclose thy extremities on thy face He alludes to the similitude which we have lately observed; for harlots appear very fine, and affect neatness and elegance in their dress; they not only put on costly apparel, but also add disguises. Though then this fine dress conceals the baseness of strumpets, yet, were any to take the clothes of a harlot and throw them over her head, all her beauty would disappear, and all men would abhor the sight: to see her concealed parts disclosed would be a base and filthy spectacle. So God declares that he would strip Nineveh of its magnificent dress, that she might be a detestable sight, only exhibiting her own reproach. We now then apprehend the Prophet's meaning; as though he said, ``Nineveh thinks not that she is to perish. --- How so? Because her own splendor blinds her: and she has willfully deceived herself, and, by her deceits, has dazzled the eyes of all nations. As then this splendor seems to be a defense to the city Nineveh, I the Lord, he says, will disclose her hidden parts; I will deprive the Assyrians of all this splendor in which they now glory, and which is in high esteem and admiration among other nations.''

And this passage ought to be especially noticed; for, as I have said, true dignity is not to be found in the highest princes. Princes ought, indeed, to seek respect for themselves by justice, integrity, mercy, and a magnanimous spirit: but they only excel in mean artifices; then they shamelessly deceive, lie, and swear falsely; they also flatter, even meanly, when circumstances require; they insinuate themselves by various crafty means, and by large promises decoy the simple. Since then their true dignity is not commonly regarded by princes, this passage ought to be observed, so that we may know that their elevation, which captivates the minds of men, is an abomination before God; for they do not discern things, but are blind, being dazzled by empty splendor.

Disclose, then, he says, will I thy shame He says first, Disclose will I thy fringes on thy face; and then I will show to the nations thy nakedness And the nakedness of great kings is shown to the nations when the Lord executes his vengeance: for then even the lowest of the low will dare to pass judgment, --- ``He deserved to perish with shame, for he exercised tyranny on his own subjects, and spared not his own neighbors; he never was a good prince; nay, he only employed deceits and perjuries.'' When, therefore princes are cast down, every one, however low, becomes a judge, and ascends as it were, the tribunal to burden and load them with reproaches. And hence the Prophet says, in the person of God, Disclose will I thy fringes on thy face, and will show to the nations thy nakedness, and to kingdoms thy filthiness.

He afterwards adds, I will besprinkle thee with filth, or defilements. The Prophet still alludes to the similitude of a harlot, who is well and sumptuously adorned, and by her charms captivates the eyes of all: but when any one takes mire and filth from the middle of the road, and bespatters her with it, there is then no one who will not turn away his eyes from so filthy an object. But we have already explained the import of this. God is indeed said to besprinkle kingdoms with defilements, when he casts them down; for they all begin freely to express their opinion: and those who before pretended great admiration, now rise up and bring forth many reproachful things. Then it is, that the Lord is said to besprinkle great kingdoms with filth and defilements.

He then adds, I will disgrace thee {נבל}, nubel, is to fall, and it is applied to dead bodies; but it means also to disgrace, as it is to be taken here. I will make thee as the dung Some think {רואי}, ruai, to be dung, or something fetid: but as it comes from {ראה}, rae, to see, and is in many parts of Scripture taken for vision or view, they are more correct, in my judgment, who render it thus, I will make thee an example; so Jerome renders it; as though he said, ``Thou shalt be a spectacle to all nations.'' [317] And Nineveh is said to be made an example, because its ruin was more memorable than that of any other which had previously happened. Thou shalt then be a spectacle; that is, the calamity which I now denounce shall attract the observation of all. It afterwards follows ---

Nahum 3:7

7. And it shall come to pass, that all they that look upon thee shall flee from thee, and say, Nineveh is laid waste: who will bemoan her? whence shall I seek comforters for thee?

7. Et accidet ut quisquis te viderit recedat abs te, et dicat, Vastata est Nineveh: quis condolebit ei? unde quaeram consolatores tibi?

When he says, {כל}-{ראיך}, cal-raik, `whosoever sees thee,' we hence learn again that {רואי}, ruai, at the end of the last verse, is to be taken for example or spectacle; for the Prophet proceeds with the same subject: I will make thee, he says, an example, or a spectacle. --- For what purpose? that whosoever sees thee may depart

[317] The Septuagint favors this meaning, "{εις} {παραδειγμα}---for an example.'' In this sense Grotius and Piscator take the word. Henderson, with less propriety, renders it ``gazingstock,'' the word of our version. Newcome translates it ``dung,'' according to the Rabbins. --- Ed.

from thee [318] And it was an evidence of horror, though some think it to have been a reward for her cruelty, that no one came to Nineveh, but that she was forsaken by all friends in her desolation. And they take in the same sense what follows, Who will condole with her? and whence shall I seek comforters for thee? For they think that the Ninevites are here reproached for their cruelty, because they made themselves so hated by all that they were unworthy of sympathy; for they spared none, they allowed themselves full liberty in injuring others, they had gained the hatred of all the world. Hence some think that what is here intimated is, that the Ninevites were justly detested by and so that no one condoled with them in so great a calamity, inasmuch as they had been injurious to all: ``It shall then happen, that whosoever sees thee shall go far away from thee and shall say, Wasted is Nineveh; who will condole with her? Whence shall I call comforters to her?''

But I know not whether this refined meaning came into the Prophet's mind. We may explain the words more simply, that all would flee far away as a proof of their horrors and that the calamity would be such, that no lamentation would correspond with it. Who will be able to console with her? that is, were the greatness of her calamity duly weighed, though all were to weep and utter their meanings, it would not yet be sufficient: all lamentations would be far unequal to so great a calamity. The Prophet seems rather to mean this. Who then shall condole with her? and whence shall I seek comforters, as though he said, ``The ruin of so splendid a city will not be of an ordinary kind, but what cannot be equaled by any lamentations.'' It then follows ---

Nahum 3:8-10

8. Art thou better than populous No, that was situate among the rivers, that had the waters round about it, whose rampart was the sea, and her wall was from the sea?

8. An melior es quam No (id est, Alexandria,) Amon (vertunt quidam, populosum; alii putant esse nomen Regis; an igitur melior es quam Alexandria populosa,) quae habitabat in fluviis? Mare in circuitu ejus, cujus fossa erat mare, et a mari murus ejus;

9. Ethiopia and Egypt were her strength, and it was infinite; Put and Lubim were thy helpers.

9. Aethiopia fortitudo ejus et Aegyptus; et nullus finis; Aphrica et Libyae fuerunt in auxilium ejus

10. Yet was she carried away, she went into captivity: her young children also were dashed in pieces at the top of all the streets: and they cast lots for her honourable men, and all her great men were bound in chains.

10. Etiam ipsa in transmigrationem abiit ad captivitatem; etiam parvuli ejus allisi sunt in capite omnium platearum; et super proceres ejus (vel, honorabiles, ad verbum) jecerunt sortem, et magnetes ejus vincti sunt compedibus.

The Prophet, in order to gain credit to his prophecy, produces here the ensample of Alexandria. It is indeed certain, from many testimonies of Scripture, that Alexandria is called No, which was a very ancient city, situated on the confines of Africa,

[318] Literally, “Every one of thy seers shall hasten from thee.” — Ed.

and yet in Egypt. It might, at the same time, be, that the Alexandrians formerly had their own government, at least their own kings: and this is probable; for the Prophet says here, that Egypt and Ethiopia, as well as Africa and the Libyan nations, were the confederates of this city. It may hence then be concluded, that Alexandria was not then a part of Egypt, but had its own government, and was in alliance with the Egyptians, as with the other nations. But as Egypt, after the death of our Prophet, was in part overthrown by the Assyrians, and in part by the Chaldeans, some interpreters think, that the Prophet speaks of a ruin which had not yet taken place. [319] But this would not harmonize with his design; for the Prophet shows here, as in a mirror, that the chief empires fall according to the will of God, and that cities, the richest and the best fortified, come to nothing, whenever it pleases God. Unless, then, the destruction of Alexandria was notorious and everywhere known, the Prophet could not have suitably adduced this example: I therefore doubt not but that Alexandria had been then demolished. It is no matter of wonder that it afterwards returned to its former state and became rich; for the situation of the city was most commodious, not so much on account of the fertility of the land, as on account of its traffic; for ships from the Mediterranean sailed up near to it. It had, indeed, on one side, the lake Marcotis, which is not very healthy; and then the sea fortified it; and Pharos was a neighboring island: but yet the city was inhabited by many, and adorned with splendid buildings; for the advantage of traffic drew together inhabitants from all quarters. It was afterwards built again by Alexander of Macedon. But it is evident enough that it had been already an opulent city: for Alexander did not build a new city but enlarged it. [320] Let us now come to the words of the Prophet.

Shall it be better to thee than to Alexandria? The word {אמון}, amun, some render populous; and I am inclined to adopt this meaning, which has been received nearly by the consent of all. Others have supposed it to be the name of a king; but as proof fails them, I leave to themselves their own conjecture. Shall it then be better to thee than to Alexandria? For it stood, he says, between the rivers Alexandria had the Nile, as it were, under its own power; for it was then divided into many parts, so that it intersected the city in various places. So then he says, that Alexandria dwelt between the rivers; for it divided the Nile, as it suited its convenience, into several streams.

Then he says, The sea was around her: for it was surrounded on one side by the sea, and protected by the island Pharos, which had a tower, not only for the sake of defense, but that ships coming in from the Mediterranean, might have a signal, by which they might direct their course straight to the harbor. The sea then was around her; for the sea encircled more than half of the city; and then the lake Mareotis was

[319] So does Newcome, but with no countenance from the passage. The verb in the 10th verse which refers to the captivity of No, is in the past tense. Most commentators regard the event as having passed. — Ed.

[320] Opinions differ as to No. Bochart supposed it to be Diospolis, near Mendes, in Lower Egypt. Henderson says, that later commentators are in favor of Thebes, the ancient capital of Upper Egypt. It is of no consequence to the present purpose which it was. It was some celebrated city in Egypt, whose ruin was well known in the Prophet's time. Both the Rabbins and early Fathers thought that it was what was afterwards called Alexandria. But most probably it was a city which had lost its name and existence from the catastrophe that is here mentioned. — Ed.

on the other side to the south. He afterwards adds, And its wall or moat was the sea The word is written with {י}, iod, {חיל}, chil; but it means a wall or a moat, though Latins render antemurale --- a front-work: for they were wont formerly to fortify their cities with a double wall, as old buildings still show. According to these interpreters {חיל}, chil, is the inner wall, and so they render its front-work: and there was also an outer wall towards the sea. But we may take {חיל}, chil, for a moat or a trench; and it is easy to find from other passages that it was a trench rather than a front-work. It is said that the body of Jezebel was torn by dogs in the trench, and the word there is {חיל}, chil. As to the object of the Prophet, he evidently intended to show, that Alexandria was so well fortified, that Nineveh had no reason to think herself to be in a safer state; for its fortress was from the sea, and also from Ethiopia, on account of the munitions which he has mentioned. Then he speaks of Africa and Egypt, and the Libyan nations, [321] and says in short, that there was no end of her strength; that is, that she could seek the help of many friends and confederates: many were ready to bring aid, even Africa, Ethiopia, and the Lybians.

Yet, he says, she departed into captivity a captive; that is, the inhabitants of Alexandria have been banished, and the city become as it were captive, for its inhabitants were driven here and there. Dashed, he says, have been their little ones at the head of every street The Prophet means, that so great a power as that of Alexandria did not prevent the conquerors to exercise towards her the most barbarous cruelty; for it was a savage act to dash little children against stones, who ought on account of their tender age, to have been spared. There was indeed no reason for raging against them, for they could not have been deemed enemies. But yet the Prophet says that Alexandria had been thus treated; and he said this, that Nineveh might not trust in her strength, and thus perversely despise God's judgment, which he now denounced on it. He adds, They cast lots on her princess and bound were her great men with fetters In saying that lots were cast, he refers to an ancient custom; for when there was any dispute respecting a captive, the lot was cast: as for instance, when two had taken one man, to prevent contention, it was by lot determined who was to be his master. So then he says that lots were cast on their princes. This usually happened to the common people and to the lowest slaves; but the Prophet says that the conquerors spared not even the princes. They were therefore treated as the lowest class; and though they were great princes, they were led into captivity and bound with chains, in the same manner with the meanest and the lowest of the people. They were not treated according to their rank; and there was no differences between the chief men and the most degraded of the humbler classes; for even the very princes were so brought down, that their lot differed not from that of the wretched; for as common people are usually treated with contempt, so were the chiefs of Alexandria treated by their enemies.

Prayer.

Grant, Almighty God, that since by thy awful judgments thou dost show thy displeasure at the pride of this world, we may be ruled by the spirit of meekness, and in

[321] The original names in this verse are {כוש supposed to be Ethiopia, ---, {מצרים} Egypt, here, either Upper or Lower, ---, {פוט} Put, a country to the west of Lower Egypt, its inhabitants the descendants of Ham, Genesis 10:6, ---, {לובים} Lybians, who occupied the region between Put and Numidia. --- Ed.

such a manner humble ourselves willingly under thy hand, that we may not experience thy dreadful power in our destruction, but being, on the contrary, supported by thy strength, we may keep ourselves in our own proper station and in true simplicity, and, at the same time, relying on thy protection, we may never doubt, but thou wilt sustain us against all the assaults of our enemies, however violent they may be, and thus persevere in the warfare of the cross which thou hast appointed for us, until we be at length gathered into that celestial kingdom, where we shall triumph together with thy Son, when his glory shall shine in us, and all the wicked shall be destroyed. Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Fifth

Nahum 3:11

11. Thou also shalt be drunken: thou shalt be hid, thou also shalt seek strength because of the enemy.

11. Etiam tu inebriaberis, tu eris abscondita; etiam tu quaeres robur (vel, suppetias) ab hoste (vel, propter hostem.)

Nahum, after having adduced the example of Alexandria, now shows that nothing would be able to resist God, so that he should not deal with Nineveh in the same manner; and he declares that this would be the case, Thou also, he says, shalt be inebriated. Well known is this metaphor, which often occurs in Scripture: for the Prophets are wont frequently to call punishment a cup, which God administers. But when God executes a heavy punishment, he is said to inebriate the wicked with his cup. The Prophet says now, that the chastisement of Nineveh would make her like a drunken man, who, being overcome with wine, lies down, as it were, stupefied. Hence by this metaphor he intended to set forth a most severe punishment: Thou then shalt be also inebriated The particle {גם}, gam, is here emphatical; it was introduced, that the Ninevites might know, that they could not possibly escape the punishment which they deserved; for God continues ever like himself. Thou then shalt be also inebriated This would not be consistent, were not God the judge of the world to the end. There is then a common reason for this proceeding; hence it necessarily follows, --- since God punished the Alexandrians, the Assyrians cannot escape his hand, and be exempt from punishment.

He adds, Thou shalt be hidden Some refer this to shame, as though the Prophet had said, --- ``Thou indeed showest thyself now to be very proud, but calamity will force thee to seek hiding-places, in which to conceal thyself.'' But I am more inclined to this meaning, --- that Nineveh would vanish away, as though it never had been; for to be hidden is often taken in Hebrew in the sense of being reduced to nothing.

He afterwards says, Thou shalt also seek strength, or supplies, from the enemy. The words {מאויב} {מעוז}, meouz meavib, may admit of two meanings, --- either that she will humbly solicit her enemies, --- or that on account of her enemies she will flee to some foreign aid; for the preposition {מ}, mem, may be taken in both senses. If we adopt the first meaning, then I think that the Prophet speaks not of the Babylonians, but of the other nations who had been before harassed by the Assyrians. Thou shalt now then humbly pray for the aid of those who have been hitherto thine enemies, --- not because they had provoked thee, but because thou hast as an enemy treated

them. Now it is an extreme misery, when we are constrained to seek the help of those by whom we are hated, and hated, because we have by wrongs provoked them. But the other sense is more approved, for it is less strained: Thou shalt also seek aids on account of the enemy; that is, as strength to resist will fail thee, thou wilt seek assistance from thy neighbors. [322] It follows ---

Nahum 3:12

12. All thy strong holds shall be like fig trees with the firstripe figs: if they be shaken, they shall even fall into the mouth of the eater.

12. Omnes munitiones tuae ficus cum maturis (fructibus;) si moveantur, cadunt super os comedentis.

The Prophet here declares that the strongholds of the Assyrians would avail them nothing; whether they trusted in the number of their men, or in their walls, or in other defenses, they would be disappointed; for all things, he says, will of themselves fall, even without being much assailed. And he employs a very apposite similitude, ``Thy fortifications,'' he says, ``which thou thinkest to be very strong, shall be like figs; for when the fruit is ripe, and any comes to the tree, as soon as he touches it or any of the branches, the figs will fall off themselves.'' We indeed know that there is not much firmness in that fruit; when it is ripe, it immediately falls to the ground, or if it hangs on the branches, a very little shaking will bring it down. We now see the design of the Prophet.

And hence an useful doctrine may be deduced: whatever strength men may seek for themselves from different quarters, it will wholly vanish away; for neither forts, nor towers, nor ramparts, nor troops of men, nor any kind of contrivances, will avail any thing; and were there no one to rise against them, they would yet fall of themselves. It afterwards follows ---

Nahum 3:13

13. Behold, thy people in the midst of thee are women: the gates of thy land shall be set wide open unto thine enemies: the fire shall devour thy bars.

13. Ecce populus tuus mulieres in medio tui; inimicis tuis aperiendo aperientur portae terrae tuae; vorabit ignis vectes tuos.

The Prophet declares here, that the hearts of them all would become soft and effeminate when God would proceed to destroy Nineveh. We have said before that the hearts of men are so in the hand of God, that he melts whatever courage there may be in them, whenever he pleases: and God prepares men for ruin, when he debilitates their hearts, that they cannot bear the sight of their enemies. God indeed can leave in men their perverseness, so that they may ever run furiously into ruin, and not be able, with a courageous heart, to repel the attacks of their enemies; but he often softens their hearts and deprives them of power, that he may make more evident his judgment: God does not, however, always work in the same way; for variety in his judgments is calculated to do us good, for thereby our minds are more powerfully awakened. Were his proceedings uniformly the same, we could not so well distinguish the hand of God, as when he acts now in this way, and then in

[322] Thou shalt seek a refuge from the enemy. — Newcome. But {{מעוז is rather a defense, aid, assistance, that which affords strength. --- Ed.

another. But, as I have already said, it is what is well known, that God enervates men and strips them of all courage, when he gives them over to destruction.

So now the Prophet speaks of the Ninevites, Behold, he says, thy people are women [323] The demonstrative particle, Behold, is here emphatical: for the Assyrians, no doubt, ridiculed, as a fable, the prediction of the Prophet; and it was what the Israelites found it difficult to believe. This is the reason why the Prophet pointed out, as by the finger, what surpassed the comprehensions of men. By saying, in the midst of thee, he intimates, that though they should be separated from their enemies and dwell in a fortified city, they should yet be filled with trembling. This amplification deserves to be noticed: for it is nothing wonderful, when an onset frightens us, when enemies join battle with us, and when many things present themselves before our eyes, which are calculated to deprive us of courage; but when we are frightened by report only concerning our enemies, and we become fainthearted, though walls be between us, it then appears evident, that we are smitten by the hand of God; for when we see walls of stone, and yet our hearts become brittle like glass, is it not evident, that we are inwardly terrified by the Lord, as it were, through some hidden influence, rather than through intervening and natural causes? We now then perceive the Prophet's meaning, when he says, that the people would become women, or effeminate, in the midst of the city, in its very bowels; as though he had said, that they would not cease to tremble, even while they were dwelling in a safe place.

By opening, opened shall be thy gates, he says, to thy enemies. He shows again, that though the Assyrians were fortified, every access would be made open to their enemies, as though there was no fortress. By saying, the gates of thy land, it is probable that he speaks not only of the city, but of all their strongholds. The Assyrians, no doubt, fortified many cities, in order to keep afar off the enemy, and to preserve the chief seat of the empire free from danger and fear. I therefore understand the Prophet as referring here to many cities, when he says, By opening, opened shall be the gates of thy land to thine enemies and fire shall consume thy bars He means, that though they had before carefully fortified the whole land around, so that they thought themselves secure from all hostile invasion, yet all this would be useless; for the fire would consume all their bars. By fire, the Prophet understands metaphorically the judgment of God. For as we see that so great is the vehemence of fire, that it melts iron and brass, so the Prophet means, that there would be no strength which could defend Nineveh and its empire against the hand of God. It follows ---

Nahum 3:14-15

14. Draw thee waters for the siege, fortify thy strong holds: go into clay, and tread the morter, make strong the brickkiln.

14. Aquas obsidionis hauri tibi, robora munitiones tuas, ingredere in lutum, calca caementum, fortifica fornacem (vel, laterem; alii vertunt, tene, vel, apprehende.)

15. There shall the fire devour thee; the sword shall cut thee off, it shall eat thee up like the cankerworm: make thyself many as the cankerworm, make thyself many as the locusts.

[323] Both Homer and Virgil have this comparison. "{Αχαιδες} {ουκ} {ετ} {Αχαιοι} --- Grecian women, not Grecians." --- ``O! vere Phrygiae, neque enim Phryges --- O truly Phrygian women, but not Phrygians."

15. Illic vorabit te ignis, exterminabit te gladius, comedet te quasi bruchus (alii vertunt, quasi bruchum;) multiplicari (ad verbum, vel, multiplicando; est {כירק} quasi bruchus,) multiplicare quasi locusta.

The Prophet goes on with the same subject, --- that the Ninevites would labor in vain, while striving anxiously and with every effort to defend themselves against their enemies. The meaning then is, ``That though thou remittest no diligence, yet thou shalt lose all thy labor; for thou wilt not be able to resist the vengeance of God; and thou deceives thyself if thou thinkest that by the usual means thou canst aid thyself; for it is God who attacks thee by the Babylonians. How much soever then thou mayest accumulate of those things which are usually employed to fortify cities, all this will be useless.'' Draw for thyself, he says, waters for the siege; that is, lay up provisions for thyself, as it is usually done, and have water laid up in cisterns; strengthen thy fortresses, that is, renew them; enter into the clay for the sake of treading the mortar: fortify, or cement, or join together; the brick-kiln (for what some think that {חזק}, chezek, means, here is to hold, or to lay hold, is wholly foreign to the Prophet's meaning:) to fortify then the brick- kiln, that is, the bricks which come forth from the kiln, nothing else than to construct and join them together, that there might be a solid building: for we know that buildings often fall, or are overturned, because they are not well joined together: and he refers to the mode of building which historians say was in use among the Assyrians. For as that country had no abundance of stones, they supplied the defect by bricks. We now then understand the intention of the Prophet.

But he adds, There shall the fire consume thee There is much importance in the adverb of place, there, which he uses: there also, he says, shall the fire eat thee up: for he expresses more than before, when he said, that the Assyrians would weary themselves in vain in fortifying their city and their empire; for he says now, that the Lord would turn to their destruction those things in which they trusted as their defenses; There then shall the fire consume thee We now then see what the Prophet means.

We must at the same time observe, that he mentions water; as though he said, However sparingly and frugally thy soldiers may live, being content with water as their drink, (for it is necessary, when we would firmly resist enemies, to undergo all indulgences, and if needs be to endure want, at least the want of delicate meat and drink,) --- though thy soldiers be content with water, and seek not water fresh from the spring or the river, but drink it from cisterns, and though thy fortresses be repaired, and thy walls carefully joined together in a solid structure, by bricks well fitted and fastened, yet there shall the fire consume thee; that is, thy frugality, exertion, and care, not only will avail thee nothing, but will also turn out to thy ruin; for the Lord pronounces accursed the arrogance of men, when they trust in their own resources.

He afterwards adds, Exterminate thee shall the sword; that is, the Lord will find out various means by which he will consume thee. By the fire, then, and by the sword, will he waste and destroy thee. He then says, He will consume thee as the chafer we may read the last word in the nominative as well as in the objective case ---

He as a chafer will consume thee. If we approve of this rendering, then the meaning would be, --- ``As chafers in a short time devour a meadow or standing corn, so thy enemies shall soon devour thee as with one mouthful.'' We indeed know, that these little animals are so hurtful, that they will very soon eat up and consume all the fruit; and there is in these insects an astonishing voracity. But as the Prophet afterwards compares the Assyrians to chafers and locusts, another sense would be more suitable, and that is, --- that God's judgment would consume the Assyrians, as when rain, or a storm, or a change of season, consumes the chafers; for as these insects are very hurtful, so the Lord also exterminates them whenever he pleases. [324] He afterwards adds, to be multiplied; which is, as I have said, a verb in the infinitive mood. But the sentence of the Prophet is this, by multiplying as the chafer, to multiply as the locusts: but why he speaks thus, may be better understood from the context; the two following verses must be therefore added ---

Nahum 3:16-17

16. Thou hast multiplied thy merchants above the stars of heaven: the canker-worm spoileth, and flieth away.

16. Multiplicasti negotiatores tuos quasi stellas coelorum; bruchus praedatus est et avolat.

17. Thy crowned are as the locusts, and thy captains as the great grasshoppers, which camp in the hedges in the cold day, but when the sun ariseth they flee away, and their place is not known where they are

17. Principes tui (vel, coronati; deducitur enim a {כתר} quod significat coronam; sed malo vertere, egregios, vel, praestantissimos quosque; principes ergo tui, vel, eximii tui) quasi locusta, et duces tui quasi locusta locustarum (est quidem aliud nomen, sed non possumus certo distinguere inter illas species, quemadmodum dictum est Jaelis 1 capite,) quae castramentantur (id est, considunt) in maceriis (id est, clausuris) in die frigoris: sol exortus est, et migrarunt; et non cognoscitur locus earum ubi.

From these words we may learn what the Prophet before meant, when he said that the Assyrians were like locusts or chafers; as though he said, --- ``I know that you trust in your great number; for ye are like a swarm of chafers or locusts; ye excel greatly in number; inasmuch as you have assembled your merchants and traders as the stars of heaven.'' Here he shows how numerous they were. But when he says, The chafer has spoiled, and flies away, he points out another reason for the comparison; for it is not enough to lay hold on one clause of the verse, but the two clauses must be connected; and they mean this, --- that the Assyrians, while they were almost innumerable, gloried in their great number, --- and also, that this vast multitude would vanish away. He then makes an admission here and says, by multiplying thy merchants, thou hast multiplied them; but when he says, as chafers and as locusts, he shows that this multitude would not continue, for the Lord would scatter them here and there. As then the scattering was nigh, the Prophet says that they were chafers and locusts.

[324] Grotius agrees in this view, though Newcome takes the former, explaining, “as the locust,” that is, in a manner equally unsparing. — Ed.

We now understand the design of the Prophet: He first ridicules the foolish confidence with which the Assyrians were inflated. They thought, that as they ruled over many nations, they could raise great armies, and set them in any quarter to oppose any one who might attack them: the Prophet concedes this to them, that is, that they were very numerous, by multiplying thou hast multiplied; but what will this avail them? They shall be locusts, they shall be chafers. --- How so? A fuller explanation follows, Thou hast multiplied thy merchants as the stars of heaven: but this shall be temporary; for thou shalt see them vanishing away very soon; they shall be like the chafers, who, being in a moment scattered here and there, quit the naked field or the meadow. But by merchants or traders some understand confederates; and this comparison also, as we have before seen, frequently occurs in the Prophets: and princes at this day differ nothing from traders, for they outbid one another, and excel in similar artifices, as we have elsewhere seen, by which they carry on a system of mutual deception. This comparison then may be suitable, Thou hast multiplied thy traders, --- tes practiciens. But the meaning of the Prophet may be viewed as still wider; we may apply this to the citizens of Nineveh; for the principal men no doubt were merchants: as the Venetian of the present day are all merchants, so were the Syrians, and the Ninevites, and also the Babylonians. It is then nothing strange, that the Prophet, by taking a part for the whole should include under this term all the rich, Thou hast then multiplied thy merchants [325]

He has hitherto allowed them to be very numerous; but he now adds, The chafer has spoiled, and flies away The verb means sometimes to spoil, and it means also to devour: The chafer then has devoured, and flies away; that is, ``Thy princes, (as he afterwards calls them,) or thy principal men, have indeed devoured; they have wasted many regions by their plunders, and consumed all things on every side, like the chafers, who destroy the standing corn and all fruits: thou hast then been as a swarm of chafers.'' For as chafers in great numbers attack a field, so Nineveh was wont to send everywhere her merchants to spoil and to denude the whole land. ``Well,'' he says ``the chafer has devoured, but he flies away, he is scattered; so it shall happen,'' says the Prophet, ``to the citizens of Nineveh.'' And hence he afterwards adds,

And thy princes are as locusts: this refers to the wicked doings, by which they laid waste almost the whole earth. As then the locusts and chafers, wherever they come, consume every kind of food, devour all the fields, leave nothing, and the whole land becomes a waste; so also have been thy princes; they have been as locusts and thy leaders as the locusts of locusts, that is, as very great locusts; for this form, we know, expresses the superlative degree in Hebrew. Their leaders were then like the most voracious locusts for the whole land was made barren by them, as nothing was capable of satisfying their avarice and voracity.

The Prophet then adds, They are locusts, who dwell in the mounds during the

[325] The latter clause of the last verse and this verse and the following are evidently connected. The first, {,התכבד} hath {ו} added to it in ten or more copies, and may be deemed an imperative as well as the other, and in the feminine gender; Calvin takes it an infinitive. This would be literal rendering --- Increase thyself as the chafer, Increase thyself as the locust, 16. Multiply thy merchants more than the stars of heaven: The chafer spoils, and flies away: 17. Thy crowned ones shall be as the locusts, And thy rulers as the gibbous caterpillar; Which lodge in the fences in the cold day; The sun rises and they flit away, And not known is the place where they are. --- Ed.

time of cold; but when the sun rises, not known any more is their place He now shows, that it would not be perpetual, that the Ninevites would thus devour the whole earth, and that all countries would be exposed to their voracity; for as the locusts, he says, hide themselves in caverns, and afterwards fly away, so it shall happen to thy princes. But this passage may be taken to mean, --- that the Ninevites concealed themselves in their hiding-places during the winter, and that when the suitable time for plundering came, they retook themselves in different directions, and took possession of various regions, and brought home plunder from the remotest parts. This meaning may be elicited from the words of the Prophet; and the different clauses would thus fitly coalesce together, that when the Ninevites left their nests, they dispersed and migrated in all directions. I do not at the same time disapprove of the former meaning: they are then like locusts, who lodge in mounds during the time of cold; but when the sun rises, --- that is, when the season invites them, (for he speaks not of the winter sun,) but when the heat of the sun prevails and temperate the air, --- then, he says, the locusts go forth and fly away, and known no more is their place He means, in short, that the Ninevites plundered, and that they did so after the manner of locusts; and that a similar end also was nigh them; for the Lord would destroy them, yea, suddenly consume them, so that no trace of them could be found. It follows ---

Nahum 3:18

18. Thy shepherds slumber, O king of Assyria: thy nobles shall dwell in the dust: thy people is scattered upon the mountains, and no man gathereth them

18. Dormitaverunt pastores tui, rex Assur; jacuerunt fortes tui; dispersus est populus tuus super montes, et nemo congregans.

He confirms the preceding verse, and says that there would be no counsel nor wisdom in the leading men: for the shepherds of the king of Assyria were his counselors, in whose wisdom he trusted, as we know that kings usually depend on their counselors: for they think that there is in them prudence enough, and therefore they commit to them the care of the whole people. But the Prophet ridicules the confidence of the king of Assyria, because the shepherds would not have so much vigilance as to take care of themselves, and of the people, and of the whole kingdom. He speaks in the past tense, either to show the certainty of the prediction, or because the change of tenses is common in Hebrew. Lie still, he says, shall thy mighty men; [326] that is, they shall remain idle; they shall not be able to sally out against their enemies, to stop their progress. They shall then lie still: and then he says, Scattered are thy people {פוש}, push, is not to scatter; hence I doubt not, but that there is a change of letter, that {ש}, schin, is put for {ץ}, tzaddi; and I am surprised that some derive the verb from {פוש}, push, when, on the contrary, it is from {פוץ}, puts, and the change of these two letters is common in Hebrew. Thy people then are dispersed on the mountains and there is no one to assemble them

[326] Fortes tui, {אדיריך} thy eminents, thy nobles. ``The shepherds,'' the governors of the people, {נמו} slumber; and the nobles, the princes, {ישכנו} rest, sit still, without making any effort: then it follows, --- Dispersed are thy people on the mountains, And there is no gatherer. Calvin is mistaken as to the meaning of the verb {פוש}: it means more properly, than the other, a dispersed state. It is applied in Leviticus 13:5, and in other places, to the spreading of leprosy. When so used, it is in Kal. It is here, and here only, in Niphal. --- Ed.

By these words the Prophet means, that such would be the scattering of the whole kingdom, that there would be no hope of restoration; There will then be none to assemble them He had said before that the chiefs or mighty men would be still. Though it would be needful to go forth to check the progress of their enemies; yet he says, They shall idly lie down: He refers here to their sloth. But the people who ought to be quiet at home, as being weak and feeble, shall be dispersed on the mountains, and no one will be there to gather them It follows ---

Nahum 3:19

19. There is no healing of thy bruise; thy wound is grievous: all that hear the bruit of thee shall clap the hands over thee: for upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually?

19. Non est contractio (vel, cicatrix) fracturae tuae; dolore est plena plaga tua; omnes qui audierint famam tuam (id est, de te) percutient manum super te; quia super quem non transiit malitia tua jugiter?

The Prophet shows here more clearly, that when the empire of Nineveh should be scattered, it would be an incurable evil, that every hope of a remedy would be taken away. Though the wicked cannot escape calamity, yet they harbor false expectations, and think that they can in a short time gather new strength. Hence, in order to take from them this hope, the Prophet says, that there would be no contraction of the fracture [327] And this is a striking similitude; for he compares the ruin of Nineveh to a wound which cannot be seamed and healed. There is then no contraction; some render it, a wrinkle, but improperly. There is then no contraction: and he adds, Thy stroke is full of pain; [328] that is, the pain of thy stroke cannot be allayed. This is one thing, --- that the ruin of Nineveh would be irreparable.

Then he says, Whosoever shall hear the report, shall strike the hand on thy account Many give this rendering, They shall clap the hand over thee, or with the hands; and they think that the singular is put for the plural number. But as in Hebrew to strike the hand is a token of consent, it would not be unsuitable to say, that the Prophet means, that wherever the report of this calamity would be heard, all would express their approbation, ``See, God has at length proved himself to be the just avenger of so much wickedness.'' To strike the hand is said to be done by those who make an agreements or when any one pledges himself for another. [329] As then in giving pledges, and in other compacts, men are said to strike the hand; so also all shall thus give their assent to God's judgment in this case, ``O how rightly is this done! O how justly has God punished these tyrants, these plunderers.'' They will then strike the hand on thy account; that is, ``This thy ruin will be approved;'' as though he said, ``Not only before God art thou, Nineveh, accursed, but also according to the consent of all nations.'' And thus he intimates, that Nineveh would perish

[327] {{כהה}-{אין {לשברך} --- No stopping or restraining to thy breach. The word is applied to the restraint put on men's wickedness, 1 Samuel 3:13, and to the checking and restraining of the spread of leprosy, Leviticus 6:28. The breach or breaking was such that there was no stopping of it from becoming entire and complete. The Septuagint gives the meaning---''{ουκ} {εστιν} {εασις} {τη} {συντριβη} {σου} --- there is no healing to thy breach.'' --- Ed.

[328] Rather, "grievous is thy stroke." The verb is {,{נחלה from ,{חלה} to be languid, and sometimes, to make languid, grievous or afflictive, and then in Niphal, as here, to be grievous. See the same clause in Jeremiah 10:19. As a noun it is rendered ``grief'' in Isaiah 17:11. --- Ed.

[329] The phrase here used, {{כף ,תקע} is found in three other places, Psalm 47:1; Proverbs 17:18; 22:26. In the first it is a symptom of joy; and in the two other places, in the sense here mentioned. --- Ed.

in the greatest dishonor and disgrace. It sometimes happens that an empire falls, and all bewail the event: but God here declares, that he would not be satisfied with the simple destruction of the city Nineveh without adding to it a public infamy, so that all might acknowledge that it happened through his righteous judgment.

He afterwards adds, For upon whom has not thy wickedness passed continually? This is a confirmation of the last clause; and this reason will suit both the views which have been given. If we take the striking of the hand for approbation, this reason will be suitable. --- How? For all nations will rejoice at thy destruction, because there is no nation which thou hast not in many ways injured. So also, in token of their joy, all will congratulate themselves, as though they were made free; or they will clap their hands, that is, acknowledge that thou hast been destroyed by the judgment of God, because all had experienced how unjustly and tyrannically thou hast ruled. As then thy wickedness has been like a deluge, and hast nearly consumed all the earth, all will clap or shake their hands at thy ruin.

And he says, continually, to show that God's forbearance had been long exercised. Hence, also, it appears, that the Assyrians were inexcusable, because, when God indulgently spared them, they did not repent, but pursued their wicked ways for a long course of time. As then to their sinful licentiousness they added perverseness, every excuse was removed. But the Prophet does, at the same time, remind the Israelites, that there was no reason for them to be cast down in their minds, because God did not immediately execute punishment; for by the word {תמיד}, tamid, he insinuates, that God would so suspend for a time his judgment as to Nineveh, that his forbearance and delay might be an evidence of his goodness and mercy. We hence see that the Prophet here opposes the ardor of men, for they immediately grow angry or complain when God delays to execute vengeance on their enemies.

He shows that God has a just reason for not visiting the wicked with immediate punishment; but yet the time will come when it shall appear that they are altogether past recovery, --- the time, I say, will come, when the Lord shall at length put forth his hand and execute his judgment.

Prayer.

Grant, Almighty God, that as we are not able to keep a firm footing in the way of justice and uprightness, --- O grant, that, being governed by thy Spirit, we may restrain ourselves from doing any harm, and thus abstain from all evil deeds, and that we may labor to do good to all, so that we may, by experience, find that all are protected by thee, who so conform themselves to the rule of thy Law, that they take no advantage of the simple, either for the purpose of ruining or of injuring them, but who, being content with their own small portion, know that there is nothing better than to be wholly subject to thee, and to thy guidance: and may we thus live in forbearance and justice towards our neighbors, that we may, at the same time, rely on thy mercy, by which alone we can be defended, and made safe against so many assaults of Satan and of the wicked, until, having at length completed the course of our warfare, we shall come into that blessed rest which has been prepared for us in heaven by Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

End of the Commentaries on Nahum.

Historical Scripture Translations

Translation: Joel 1

Chapter 1

1 The word of Jehovah which came to Joel, the son of Pethuel.

2 Hear this, ye the aged; And give ear, al ye inhabitants of the land; Hath this been in your days, Or in the days of your fathers?

3 This to your children declare, And your children to their children, And their children to the next generation, ---

4 ``The residue of the locust hath the chafer eaten, ``The residue of the chafer hath the cankerworm eaten, ``The residue of the cankerworm hath the caterpillar eaten.''

5 Awake ye drunkards, and weep; Howl ye all who drink wine for the new wine; For cut off it is from your mouth.

6 Verily a nation came up over my land, Strong and without number: Its teeth the teeth the teeth of a lion, And its jaw-bones those of a young lion:

7 It exposed my vine to desolation, And my fig-tree to the stripping of the bark; By denuding it denuded it and cast it away, White have been made its branches.---

8 Lament as a young woman, girded with sackcloth, For the husband of her youth.

9 Cut off is offering and libation From the house of Jehovah; Mourn do the priests, the ministers of Jehovah;

10 Wasted is the field, mourn does the land; For laid waste is the corn, Dried up is the wine, destroyed is the oil.

11 Be ashamed, ye husbandmen, howl, ye vinedressers, On account of the wheat and the barley; For perished has the harvest of the field,

12 The vine is dried up, and the fig-tree is destroyed; The pomegranate, the palm also and the apple tree,--- All the trees of the field have dried up: Verily dried up is joy among the children of men!

13 Be girded and lament, ye priests; Howl ye ministers of the altar; Come, spend the night in sackcloth, Ye ministers of my God; For withheld from the house of your

God Is offering and a libation:

14 Sanctify a fast, call an assembly, Gather the elders, all the inhabitants of the land, Into the house of Jehovah your God, And cry ye to Jehovah.---

15 Alas the day! For nigh is the day of Jehovah, And as a desolation from the Almighty it will come.

16 Has not the meat before your eyes been cut off, Joy and gladness from the house of our God?

17 Rotted have the grains under the clods, Desolate are the granaries, Pulled down have been the barns, For dried up has the corn.

18 How has the beast groaned! Confounded are the herds of oxen! For wanting to them are pastures; The flocks of sheep are also desolate.

19 To thee Jehovah will I cry; For the fire hath consumed the pastures of the desert, And the flame hath burnt all the trees of the field:

20 The beasts of the field will also cry to thee; For dried up have the streams of waters, For the fire hath consumed the pastures of the desert.

Translation: Joel 2

Chapter 2

1 Sound ye the trumpet in Zion, And cry aloud on my holy mountain: Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; For coming is the day of Jehovah, for nigh it is,---

2 A day of darkness and thick darkness, A day of cloudiness and of obscurity, Like the dawn expanding over the mountains,--- A people, great and strong, The like of them has not been from the beginning, Nor after them shall be for many generations;

3 Before them, a devouring fire, And after them, a flame, shall burn; Like the garden of Eden the land before them, And after them, a desert of solitude; And so there will be no escape from them:

4 As the appearance of horses, their appearance, And as horsemen they will run;

5 As the sound of chariots on the tops of mountains shall they leap, As the sound of the flame of fire devouring the stubble, As a strong people prepared for battle;

6 Their face will the people dread, All faces will gather blackness;

7 As giants will they run here and there, As men of war will they ascend the wall, And each in his ways will proceed, And they shall not stay their goings;

8 No one will thrust his brother, Every one in his way will march on; On the sword shall they fall, and shall not be wounded;

9 Though the city shall they go, over the wall shall they run, Into houses shall they climb, Into the windows shall they enter like a thief:

10 Before them shall tremble the earth, And in anguish shall be the heavens, The sun and moon shall be darkened, And the stars shall withdraw their brightness;

11 And Jehovah will utter his voice before his army, For very great will be his camp. For strong is he who doeth his word; For great will be the day of Jehovah, And very terrible, and who will endure it?

12 But even now, saith Jehovah, Turn to me with your whole heart, And with fasting, and weeping, and mourning;

13 And rend your heart, and not your garments, And turn to Jehovah your God;

For he is propitious and merciful, Slow to wrath, and abundant in goodness, And will repent of the evil:

14 Who knows, whether he will return and repent, And leave behind him a blessing--- An offering and a libation to Jehovah your God?

15 Sound ye the trumpet in Zion, Sanctify a fast, proclaim a meeting,

16 Gather the people, sanctify the assembly, Bring together the aged, gather the children And those suckling the breasts; And let the bridegroom come forth from his recess, And the bride from her chamber;

17 Between the porch and the altar let the priests, The ministers of Jehovah, weep and say,--- ``Be propitious, Jehovah, to thy people, ``And give not thy heritage to reproach, ``That the nations should rule over them; ``Why should they say among the people, ```Where is their God?''

18 Then jealous will Jehovah be for his land, And he will be propitious to his people;

19 And Jehovah will answer, and say to his people: [330] ``Behold, I will send to you corn, and wine, and oil, ``And ye shall be satisfied with them; ``And I will make you no more a reproach among the nations;

20 ``And the Northlander will I remove far from you, ``And drive him to a desert and dry land, ``With his face to the eastern sea, ``And his rear to the hindmost sea; ``And ascend shall his ill savor, ``And ascend shall his rottenness; ``For high hath he exalted himself to do his purpose.''

21 Fear not, thou land; exult and rejoice; For Jehovah hath high exalted himself to do his purpose:

22 Fear not, ye beasts of the fields; For grow shall the pastures of the desert, For the tree shall bring forth its fruit, The fig-tree and the vine shall yield their substance:

23 And ye children of Zion, exult, And rejoice in Jehovah your God; For he will give you rain in due measure, And make to come down for you the showering rain, And the rain in the first month;

24 And filled shall the floors be with corn, And overflow shall the vats with wine and oil;

25 And I will restore years to you For those which the locust hath eaten, The chafer, and the caterpillar,--- My great army, which I sent to you:

26 And eating, ye shall eat and satisfy yourselves, And shall praise the name of Jehovah your God, Because he hath dealt wondrously with you; And ashamed shall not my people be for ever.

27 And ye shall know that in the midst of Israel I am, And that I Jehovah am your God, and none else; And ashamed shall not my people be forever.

28 And shall it be afterwards, That I will pour my Spirit on all flesh, And prophesy shall your sons and your daughters, And your old men shall dreams dream, And your young men shall visions see;

29 And also on servants and maid-servants Will I in those days pour my spirit:

30 And I will set prodigies in heaven and on earth,--- Blood and fire, and columns of mist;

[330] This line is rendered to the version of Calvin, and not according to his comment. See p. 75.

31 The sun shall be turned into darkness, The moon into blood, Before it comes---the day of Jehovah, great and terrible:

32 Then it shall be, that whosoever shall call On the name of Jehovah, shall be delivered; For in mount Zion and in Jerusalem Shall be deliverance, as Jehovah hath promised, And for the residue whom Jehovah shall call.

Translation: Joel 3

Chapter 3

1 For, behold in those days, and at that time, When I shall restore the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, I will then gather all the nations, and bring them down to the valley of Jehosaphat; And I will there contend with them, For my people and for my heritage Israel; Because they have scattered them among the nations,

2 And divided my land, and on my people cast lots, And have given a boy for a harlot, And have sold a girl for wine, that they may drink.

3 And yet, what have ye to do with me, O Tyre and Sidon, and all the borders of Palestine? Will ye recompense return to me?

4 Now if ye repay me with this, Quickly---suddenly will I return Your recompense on your own head.

5 Because ye have taken away my silver and my gold, And my desirable things have removed to your temples,

6 And have sold the children of Judah and the children of Jerusalem To the children of the Grecians, That ye might drive them far from their own borders;---

7 Behold, I will raise them from the place to which ye have sold them, And will return your recompense on your head;

8 For I will sell your sons and your daughters to the children of Judah, And they shall sell them to the Sabeans, a distant nation; For thus hath Jehovah spoken.

9 Publish this among the nations, Proclaim a war, rouse the strong, Let them come, let them ascend, all the men of war:

10 Beat your plowshares into swords, And your pruning-hooks into spears; Let the weak say, ``I am strong.''

11 Assemble and come all ye nations, Assemble all around; There will Jehovah lay prostrate all thy valiant ones.

12 Awake let the nations, and ascend to the valley of Jehosaphat; For there will I sit to judge all the nations around.

13 Put forth the sickle, for ripened has the harvest; Come, go down, for full is the wine-press, Overflowing are the vats, For multiplied has their wickedness.

14 Nations! Nations! In the valley of the sledge; For nigh is Jehovah's day in the valley of the sledge: The sun and the moon shall be darkened, And the stars shall withdraw their brightness;

15 And Jehovah from Zion shall roar, And from Jerusalem shall utter his voice, And tremble shall the heavens and the earth;

16 But Jehovah will be a hope to his people, And a strength to the children of Israel:

17 Then ye shall know that I Jehovah am your God, Dwelling in Zion, the mount of my holiness; And Jerusalem shall be holiness, And aliens shall pass through it no more.

18 And it shall be in that day, That distill new wine shall the mountains, And the hills shall cause milk to run down, And all the rivers of Judah shall send forth waters; A fountain also from the house of Jehovah shall go forth, And it shall water the valley of Shittim.

19 Egypt shall be a solitude, And Edom shall be a desert of solitude, For the outrage done to the children of Judah, Because they shed innocent blood in their own land:

20 But Judah shall forever safely dwell, And Jerusalem shall be from age to age; And I will cleanse their blood which I have not cleansed, And Jehovah shall dwell in Zion.

Translation: Amos 1

Chapter 1

1 The words of Amos, who was among the shepherds at Tekos, which he saw concerning Israel, in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam, the son of Joash, king of Israel, two years before the earthquake; and he said,---

2 Jehovah from Zion will roar, And from Jerusalem will he utter his voice; And perish shall the habitations of shepherds, And wither shall the top of Carmel.

3 Thus saith Jehovah,--- For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not be propitious to it; (157) Because they have threshed Gilead with iron wains:

4 And I will send fire into the house of Hazael, And it shall devour the palaces of Benhadad;

5 And I will break in pieces the bar of Damascus, And cut off the inhabitant from the plain of Aven, And the holder of the scepter from the house of Eden; And removed shall be the people of Syria to Kir, saith Jehovah.

6 Thus saith Jehovah,--- For three transgressions of Gaza, and for four, I will not be propitious to it; For they carried away a complete captivity, To shut them up in Edom:

7 And I will send a fire on the wall of Gaza, And it shall devour its palaces;

8 And I will cut off the inhabitant from Azotus, And the holder of the scepter from Ascalon; And I will turn my hand against Ekron, And perish shall the remnants of the Philistines, Saith the Lord Jehovah.

9 Thus saith Jehovah,--- For three transgressions of Tyrus, and for four, I will not be propitious to it; For they have shut up a complete captivity in Edom, And have not remembered the covenant of brethren:

10 And I will send a fire on the wall of Tyrus, And it shall devour its palaces.

11 Thus saith Jehovah,--- For three transgressions of Edom, and for four, I will not be propitious to it; For he pursued with the sword his own brother, And destroyed his own compassions; And raged continually has his anger, And his wrath has he kept

perpetually:

12 And I will send a fire on Teman, And it shall devour the palaces of Bozrah.

13 Thus saith Jehovah,--- For three transgressions of the children o Ammon, and for four, I will not be propitious to him; For they have rent the pregnant women of Gilead, That they might extend their own borders:

14 And I will kindle a fire on the wall of Rabbah, And it shall devour its palaces, With clamor in the day of battle, With whirlwind in the day of tempest;

15 And pass shall its king into captivity, He and his princes together, saith Jehovah.

Translation: Amos 2

Chapter 2

1 Thus saith Jehovah,--- For three transgressions of Moab, and for four, I will not be propitious to him; For he burnt the bones of the king of Edom into ashes:

2 And I will send a fire on Moab, And it shall devour the palaces of Kirioth; And die in a tumult shall Moab, With shouting, at the sound of the trumpet;

3 And I will cut off the judge from the midst of him, And with him all his princes will I slay, saith Jehovah.

4 Thus saith Jehovah,--- For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not be propitious to him; For they have despised the law of Jehovah, And his statutes have they not kept; And to go astray have their lies made them, After which their fathers walked:

5 And I will send a fire on Judah, And it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem.

6 Thus saith Jehovah,--- For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not be propitious to him; For they have sold the just for silver, and the poor for shoes;

7 Panting for the dust of the earth on the head of the needy, They turn aside the way of the miserable; The son and his father enter in into the same maid, So that they profane my holy name;

8 And on pledged garments they lie near every altar, And the wine of the condemned they drink In the house of their god.

9 Yet I exterminated the Amorite before their face, Whose tallness was like the tallness of cedars, And who was strong like the oak; And I destroyed his fruit above and his root beneath;

10 And I brought you up from the land of Egypt, And led you in the desert forty years, That you might possess the land of the Amorite;

11 And I raised up Prophets from your sons, And from your youths, Nazarites;--- Have I not done all this, O children of Israel, saith Jehovah:

12 But to the Nazarites have ye quaffed wine; And on my Prophets have ye laid

a command, Saying, ``Ye shall not prophesy.''

13 Behold, I am fast bound under you, (196) As a wagon is bound, which is full of sheaves.---

14 Perish shall flight from the swift, And the valiant shall not confirm his strength, And the strong shall not deliver his life,

15 And the holder of the bow shall not stand, And the swift on foot shall not escape, Nor shall he who mounts a horse save his life;

16 Yea, the strong of heart, among the valiant, Shall flee away naked in that day, saith Jehovah.

Translation: Amos 3

Chapter 3

1 Hear ye this word which Jehovah pronounces Against you, children of Israel---against the whole family, Which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying,---

2 ``Only you have I known of all the families of the earth, ``I will therefore visit on you all your iniquities.''

3 Can two walk together, except they be agreed?

4 Will a lion roar in the forest, when he has no prey? Will a young lion roar in his den, when nothing is taken?

5 Will a bird fall into a snare on the ground without a fowler? Will a fowler take up his snare from the ground before he catches?

6 Shall a trumpet sound in a city, and the people tremble not? Shall there be an evil in a city, which Jehovah hath not done?

7 For nothing will the Lord Jehovah do, Except he has revealed his secret to his servants the Prophets.

8 The lion hath roared, who would not fear? The Lord Jehovah hath spoken, who would not prophesy?

9 Publish in the palaces of Ashdod, And in the palaces of the land of Egypt, and say,--- ``Assemble ye on the mountains of Samaria, ``And see the great tumults within it, ``And the oppressions in the midst of it.''

10 And they know not how to do right, saith Jehovah,--- Treasuring up the fruit of robbery and plunder in their palaces.

11 Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah,--- Lo, an adversary! And one around the land! And he will take from thee thy strength, And plundered shall be thy palaces.

12 Thus saith Jehovah,--- As when a shepherd snatches from the mouth of a lion Two legs and the extreme part of the ear, So shall be rescued the children of Israel, Who dwell in Samaria in the corner of a bed, And in Damascus on a couch.

13 Hear ye and testify to the house of Israel, Saith the Lord Jehovah, the God of

hosts,---

14 That in the day in which I shall visit upon him the sins of Israel, I will also visit the altars of Bethel; And broken shall be the horns of the altar, And they shall fall to the ground;

15 And I will smite the winter-house with the summer-house, And perish shall the houses of ivory, And come to an end shall the great houses, saith Jehovah.

Translation: Amos 4

Chapter 4

1 Hear this word, ye cows of Bashan, Which are on the mountain of Samaria, Which oppress the poor, which crush the needy, Which say to their masters, ``Bring, and we shall drink.''

2 Sworn hath the Lord Jehovah by his sanctuary, That, lo, in the days are coming on you, That he will take you away by a hook, And your residue by a fishing-hook;

3 And through the breaches shall ye go out, Each one over against her; And ye shall cast yourselves down from the palace, saith Jehovah.

4 Go ye to Bethel and transgress, And in Gilgal transgress still more, And bring, in the morning, your sacrifices, In the third year, your tithes,

5 And burn incense with the leaven of thanks-offering. And publish voluntary offerings, proclaim them; For so it hath pleased you, O children of Israel, Saith the Lord Jehovah.

6 But I even gave you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, And want of bread in all your borders; Yet ye turned not to me, saith Jehovah:

7 I also withheld from you the rain, When as yet there were three months to the harvest; And I rained on one city, And on another city I made it not to rain; One part was rained upon, And the part where it rained not dried up;

8 And there came two and three cities to one city, To drink water, and were not satisfied; Yet ye turned not to me, saith Jehovah:

9 I smote you with the east wind and mildew; Your large gardens and your vineyards, (236) And your fig-trees and your olives the chafer devoured; Yet ye turned not to me, saith Jehovah:

10 I sent on to you the plague after the manner of Egypt; I smote with the sword your strong men, And led captive your horses; I made to ascend the stench of your camps even to your nostrils; Yet ye turned not to me, saith Jehovah:

11 I overthrew you as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, And ye were as a

brand snatched from the burning; Yet ye turned not to me, saith Jehovah.

12 Therefore thus will I do to thee, Israel, And because I will do this to thee, Prepare thyself to meet thy God, Israel.

13 For, behold he who formed the mountains, Who created the spirit, Who declares to man what is his thought, Who makes the dawn and the darkness, Who walks on the high places of the earth,--- Jehovah, God of Hosts, is his name.

Translation: Amos 5

Chapter 5

1 Hear ye this word which I raise upon you, Even a lamentation, O house of Israel.

2 Fallen is the virgin of Israel, and she will rise no more; Left is she on her land, none is there to raise her up.

3 For thus saith the Lord Jehovah,--- The city from which went forth a thousand, There will remain in it a hundred; And that from which it went forth a hundred, There will remain ten to the house of Israel.

4 For thus saith Jehovah to the house of Israel,--- Seek ye me, and ye shall live;

5 And seek not Bethel, and to Gilgal go not, And pass not over to Beersheba; [331] For Gilgal by migrating shall migrate, And Bethel shall be as nothing:

6 Seek Jehovah, and ye shall live, Lest he advance as a fire on the house of Joseph, And devour it, and there be none to quench it in Bethel.

7 They turn judgment into wormwood, And righteousness they cast on the ground.---

8 He who made Pleiades and Orion, (261) Who turns darkness into morning, And darkens the day into night, Who calls the waters of the sea, And pours them on the face of the earth,--- Jehovah is his name;

9 Who strengthens a waster against the strong, And against a fortress shall a waster ascend. (263)

10 They hate in the gate a reprover, And the speaker of right they abominate.

11 As ye have trodden the poor under foot, (266) And a burden of corn have taken from him, Houses of hewn stone shall ye build, But ye shall not dwell in them; And pleasant vineyards shall ye plant, But ye shall not drink their wine;

12 For I know your many iniquities, and your mighty sins; Oppressors of the just! And takers of ransom! And the poor in the gate they turn aside.

[331] "And travel not to Beersheba," or "make no pilgrimage to Beersheba." The verb {עבר} expresses going abroad to another country. Beersheba belonged to the kingdom of Judah. --- Bp. Horsley.

13 Therefore the prudent at that time will be silent, For an evil time it is. (270)

14 Seek ye good, and not evil, that ye may live; And so Jehovah, the God of Hosts, Will be with you, as ye have said.

15 Hate evil, and love good, And set up judgment in the gate; It may be, that Jehovah, the God of Hosts, Will show mercy to the remnants of Joseph.

16 Therefore Jehovah, the God of Hosts, the Lord, saith,--- In all the streets of concourse shall be lamentation, And in all the highways shall they say, ``Woe! Woe!'' (279) And they shall call the husbandman to mourning, And lamentation shall be to all skillful in mourning;

17 And in all the vineyards shall be lamentation; For I will pass through the midst of thee, saith Jehovah.

18 Woe to those who desire the day of Jehovah! What will this be to you? The day of Jehovah will be darkness and not light;

19 As when one flees before a lion, and a bear meets him; Or comes to his house, and leans with his hand on a wall, And a serpent bites him.

20 Shall not the day of Jehovah be darkness and not light? And thick darkness and no brightness?

21 I hate, I abhor your festal-days, And I will not smell at your solemnities;

22 Verily, when ye offer me your burnt-offerings and your gifts, I will not count them acceptable; And the peace offering of your fat things I will not regard.

23 Take away from me the number of thy songs, And the harmony of the lyres; I will not hear them:

24 And run down as waters shall judgment, And righteousness as an impetuous torrent. (292)

25 Have ye offered to me sacrifices and an oblation In the desert for forty years, O house of Israel?

26 But ye bore Sicuth, your king, and Chion, Your images, the stars being your gods; Which ye made for yourselves. (295)

27 To migrate therefore I will make you beyond Damascus, Saith Jehovah, the God of Hosts is his name.

Translation: Amos 6

Chapter 6

1 Woe to the secure in Zion, And to the confident on the mount of Samaria; (302) Which have been renowned from the beginning of the nations; And entered in into them has the house of Israel.

2 Pass ye over into Calneh and see, Go hence to Hamath the great, And come down to Gath of the Philistines, Are they better than these kingdom? Is their border larger than your border?

3 Woe to you who drive far off the evil day, And draw nigh the throne of violence;

4 Who lie down on beds of ivory, And extend themselves on their couches; Who eat lambs from the flock, And calves from the midst of the stall;

5 Who sing to the sound of the harp, And like David invent instruments of music;

6 Who drink wine in bowls, And with the chief ointments anoint themselves, And grieve not for the bruising of Joseph.

7 They shall now therefore emigrate at the head of the emigrants, And come shall the mourning of those who extend themselves. (312)

8 Sworn hath the Lord Jehovah by himself, Saith Jehovah, the God of hosts,--- Abhor do I the excellency of Jacob, And his palaces I regard with hatred, And I will deliver up the city and its fullness.

9 And it shall be, that when there shall remain Ten men together in one house, they shall die:

10 And take him shall one's uncle and burn him, In order to take away his bones from the house, And shall say to him who shall be at the sides of the house, ``Is there yet any one with thee?'' And he will say, ``There is an end;'' Then he shall say, ``Be silent, For it is not for us to remember the name of Jehovah.''

11 For, behold, Jehovah commands, And he will smite the great house with confusions, And the small house with fissures.

12 Will horses run on a rock? Will it be ploughed by oxen? For to gall have ye

turned judgment, And the fruit of righteousness to hemlock;

13 Ye rejoice in a thing of nought, ye say,--- Have we not in our own strength Raised up for ourselves horns?

14 Behold, I will surely raise against you a nation, O house of Israel, saith Jehovah, the God of hosts: And they shall straighten you from the entrance of Hamath to the river of the plain.

Translation: Amos 7

Chapter 7

1 Thus hath the Lord Jehovah showed me,--- Even lo, he formed locusts when grass began to grow, And, lo, it was the grass after the cuttings of the king:

2 And it was, after they had finished to eat, That I then said, ``Lord Jehovah, spare, I pray; Who will restore Israel, for he is small?''

3 Jehovah repented of this; ``It shall not be,'' said Jehovah.

4 Thus hath the Lord Jehovah showed me,--- Even lo, the Lord Jehovah called to contend by fire; And it devoured the great deep and their portion:

5 And I said, ``Lord Jehovah, cease, I pray; Who will restore Israel, for he is small?

6 Jehovah repented of this; ``This also shall not be,'' said the Lord Jehovah.

7 Thus hath he showed me,--- Even lo, the Lord stood on a plumbline wall, And in his hand a plumbline,

8 And Jehovah said to me, ``What seest thou, Amos?'' And I said, ``A plumbline:'' Then said the Lord, ``Behold, I shall set A plumbline in the midst of my people Israel; I will no longer pass by them:

9 And destroyed shall be the high places of Isaac, And overthrown shall be the sanctuaries of Israel, And I shall rise up against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.''

10 Then sent Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, To Jeroboam, king of Israel, saying,--- ``Conspired against thee has Amos In the midst of the house of Israel; The land cannot bear all his words:

11 For thus saith Amos,--- `By the sword shall Jeroboam die, And Israel, by migrating, shall migrate from their own land.'''

12 Amaziah said also to Amos,--- ``Seer, go, flee into the land of Judah, And there eat bread, and there prophesy:

13 But in Bethel, prophesy no more; For it is the king's sanctuary, and the house of the kingdom.''

14 Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah,--- ``No Prophet was I, nor was I a Prophet's son, For a shepherd I was, and a gatherer of sycamores:

15 But Jehovah took me from after the sheep, And Jehovah said to me,--- `Go, prophesy to my people Israel.'

16 And now hear the word of Jehovah, thou who sayest,--- `Prophesy not concerning Israel, And speak not concerning the house of Isaac:'

17 Therefore thus saith Jehovah,--- Thy wife in the city shall be prostituted, And thy sons and thy daughters shall by the sword fall, And thy land shall by a line be divided, And thou in a polluted land shalt die, And Israel, by migrating, shall migrate from their own land.''

Translation: Amos 8

Chapter 8

1 Thus hath the Lord Jehovah showed me,--- Even lo, a basket of summer-fruit;

2 And he said, ``What seest thou, Amos?'' And I said, ``A basket of summer-fruit.'' Then Jehovah said to me,--- ``Come has the end of my people Israel, I will no more pass by them.''

3 And howlings shall be the songs of the temple In that day, saith the Lord Jehovah; Many a dead body, in every place, Shall be cast down in silence. (362)

4 Hear this, ye who swallow up the poor, And exterminate the needy of the land, saying,---

5 ``When will pass the new moon, that we may sell corn? And the Sabbath, that we may bring out wheat, And lesson the ephah, and increase the shekel, And turn one side the deceitful balances?

6 That we may buy with silver the poor, And the needy for shoes, And sell the refuse of corn.''

7 Sworn hath Jehovah by the excellency of Jacob, ``I shall not forget any of their works.''

8 Shall not the land be for this in a tumult, And every one who dwells in it mourn? Yea, heave up as a river shall the whole of it, (371) And it shall be driven and sunk as by the river of Egypt.

9 And it shall be in that day, saith the Lord Jehovah, That I will cause the sun to set at noon, And will darken the land in a clear day;

10 I will also turn your festal-days to mourning, And all your songs to lamentation; And to come up on all loins will I make sackcloth, And upon every head, baldness; And I will set her as in mourning for an only son, And her posterity as in the day of bitterness. (375)

11 Behold, the days are coming, saith Jehovah, When I shall send a famine on the land, Not the famine of bread, nor thirst for waters, But for hearing the words of

Jehovah;

12 And they shall wander from sea to sea, And from the south to the east shall they run, To seek the word of Jehovah, and shall not find it:

13 And in that day shall faint, The fair virgins and young men, for thirst;

14 Who swear by the sin of Samaria, and who say,--- ``Live does thy God, O Dan, And live does the way of Beersheba;'' And they shall fall and rise again no more.

Translation: Amos 9

Chapter 9

1 I saw the Lord standing on the altar, and he said,--- ``Smite the lintel, and moved shall be the pillars, And strike the head of them all; And the rest of them with the sword shall I slay: Flee from them shall not he who fleeth, And escape from them shall not he who escapeth: (385)

2 If they dig to hell, thence my hand shall bring them out; And if they ascend to heaven, I will thence draw them down;

3 And if they hide themselves on the top of Carmel, There will I search for and draw them forth; And if they be hid from my eyes in the bottom of the sea, I will there command the serpent to bite them;

4 And if they go to captivity before their enemies, I will there command the sword to slay them; Yea, I will set my eyes on them For evil, and not for good.''

5 And the Lord, Jehovah of Hosts, will smite the land, And it will tremble, and mourn shall all who dwell in it; And heave up like a river shall the whole of it, And it shall be sunk as by the river of Egypt.---

6 He who builds his ascendings in the heavens, And founds his jointings on the earth, Who calls the waters of the sea, And pours them on the face of the earth,--- Jehovah is his name. (392-3)

7 Are ye not as the children of the Ethiopians to me? O house of Israel, saith Jehovah; Did I not make Israel to ascend from Egypt, And the Philistines from Cappadocia, And the Syrians from Kir?

8 Behold, the eyes of Jehovah are on every wicked kingdom; And I will destroy it from the face of the earth; Except that by destroying I shall not destroy The house of Jacob! Saith Jehovah.

9 For, behold, I will command, And I shall shake the house of Israel among all nations, As wheat is shaken in a sieve, And fall shall not a grain on the ground:

10 By the sword shall die all the wicked of my people, Who say, ``Draw near and

overtake us Shall not, for our sake, the evil.''

11 In that day I will raise up the tent of David, That is fallen, and I will fence in its breaches, And its ruins will I raise up; And I will build it as in ancient days;

12 That possess they may the remnants of Edom, And all the nations on whom my name shall be called, Saith Jehovah, the doer of this.

13 Behold, the days are coming, saith Jehovah, That meet shall the plowman the reaper, And the treader of grapes the bearer of seed; And distill shall the mountains sweet wine, And all the hills shall flow down with milk

14 And I will restore the captivity of my people Israel; And they shall build wasted cities, and dwell in them; They shall plant vineyards, and drink their wine; They shall make gardens, and eat their fruit:

15 And I will plant them in their own land, And they shall be plucked up no more From their own land, which I have given to them, Saith Jehovah, thy God.

Translation: Obadiah 1

CHAPTER 1.

1 The vision of Obadiah: Thus saith the Lord Jehovah against Edom,--- A rumor have we heard from Jehovah, And a messenger to the nations has been sent,---(423) ``Arise ye, and we shall arise against her to battle.''

2 Lo, small have I set thee among the nations, Despised greatly wert thou: (425)

3 The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, Who dwellest in the clefts of the rock: ``Who shall draw me down to the ground?''

4 If thou shouldst rise high as the eagle, And if among the clouds thou shouldest set thy nest, Thence shall I draw thee down, saith Jehovah.

5 Have thieves come to thee, or night-robbers? How hast thou been reduced to silence? Have they not stolen what sufficed them? Have vintagers come to thee? Have they not left some clusters?---

6 How much sought out have been the things of Esau, And thoroughly searched his hidden places!

7 To the border have they driven thee, All the men of thy confederacy; Deceived thee, prevailed against thee, have they, The men who were at peace with thee; The men who did eat thy bread Have set a wound under thee:--- There is in him no understanding!

8 Shall I not in that day, saith Jehovah, Destroy the wise from Edom, And understanding from the mount of Esau? Yea, broken down shall be thy valiant ones, O Teman,

9 So that cut off shall be every man, From the mount of Esau by slaughter.

10 For the oppression of thy brother Jacob, Cover thee shall reproach, And thou shalt be cut off forever.

11 In the day when thou didst stand on the other side, In the day when aliens took away his substance, And foreigners entered his gates, And on Jerusalem did cast lots, Even thou wert as one of them.

12 But thou shouldest not look on the day of thy brother, In the day of his alienation; Nor shouldest rejoice over the children of Judah, In the day of their destruction; Nor speak with thy mouth proud things, In the day of distress;

13 Nor shouldest thou enter the gate of my people, In the day of their destruction; Nor look on him, especially thou, in his distress, In the day of his destruction; Nor stretch thy hand to his substance, In the day of his destruction:

14 Nor shouldest thou stand on the outlets, To destroy those who were escaping; Nor deliver up his remnants in the day of distress.

15 Seeing that near is the day of Jehovah on all nations, As thou hast done, it shall be done to thee, Thy reward shall be returned on thine own head;

16 For as ye have drunk on my holy mountain, Drink shall all nations continually; They shall drink and drink up; And they shall be as though they never had been.

17 But in mount Zion shall be deliverance, And Zion shall be holiness; And possess shall the house of Jacob their own possessions:

18 The house of Jacob shall be also a fire, And the house of Joseph a flame, And the house of Esau shall be chaff; And kindled they shall be among them, and consume them; And no remnant shall be to the house of Esau; For thus hath Jehovah spoken.

19 They shall also possess the south of the mount of Esau, And the plain, even that of the Philistines; And they shall possess the fields of Ephraim And the fields of Samaria, And Benjamin shall possess Gilead:

20 And the emigrants of this host of the children of Israel Shall possess the land of the Canaanites to Zarephath; And the emigrants of Jerusalem, what is in Sepharad, Even the southern cities: (451)

21 And ascend shall saviors to mount Zion, To judge the mount of Esau; And Jehovah's shall be the kingdom.

Translation: Jonah 1

Chapter 1

1 And the word of Jehovah came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,

2 ``Arise, go to Nineveh, to that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness has ascended before my face.''

3 But Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of Jehovah, and went down to Joppa, and found a ship, which was going to Tarshish; and he paid the fare, and went down into it,, that he might go with them to Tarshish from the presence of Jehovah.

4 And Jehovah sent a strong wind on the sea, and a great tempset arose in the sea, and the ship was thought to be breaking:

5 And the mariners feared, and cried every one to his god, and cast out the wares, which were in the ship, into the sea, that it might be lightened of them; but Jonah had gone down to the sides of the ship; and he lay down and slept.

6 And the pilot came to him, and he said to him, --- ``What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise, call on thy God, if so be that God will show himself propitious to us, that we may not perish.''

7 And they said each to his friend, --- ``Come and let us cast lots, that we may know for what cause is this evil come upon us.'' And they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah.

8 And they said to him, --- ``Tell us now why has this evil happened to us, what is thy work, and whence comest thou, what is thy country, and from what people art thou?''

9 And he said to them, --- ``I am an Hebrew, and I fear Jehovah, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.''

10 And the men feared with great fear, and said to him, --- ``Why hast thou done this?'' (**52**) For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of Jehovah, because he had told them.

11 And they said to him, ``What shall we do to thee, that the sea may be still to us?'' for the sea was going and was tempestuous.

12 And he said to them, --- ``Take me and cast me into the sea, and the sea will be still to you; for I know that on my account is this great tempest come upon you.''

13 But the men toiled to bring back the ship, (**59**) and they could not; for the sea was going and was tempestuous against them.

14 And they cried to Jehovah, and said, --- ``We beseech, Jehovah, we pray, that we perish not for the life of this man, and lay not on us innocent blood; for thou, Jehovah, hast done as it has seemed good to thee.'' (**62**)

15 Then they took Jonah, and cast him into the sea; and the sea stopped from its raging.

16 And with great fear, the men feared Jehovah, and sacrificed a sacrifice to Jehovah, and vowed vows.

17 And Jehovah provided a great fish to swallow up Jonah; and Jonah was in the bowels of the fish three days and three nights.

Translation: Jonah 2

CHAPTER 2

1 And Jonah prayed to Jehovah his God from the belly of the fish,

2 And said, --- I cried in my distress to Jehovah, and he heard me; (**75**) From the belly of the grave I cried, thou didst hear my voice.

3 But cast me hadst thou into the deep, Into the midst of the seas, and the flood surrounded me; All thy billows and waves over me passed:

4 Then I said, --- ``I am driven from the sight of thine eyes; But I would again see the temple of thy holiness.''

5 Beset me did the waters even to the soul, The deep on every side surrounded me, The sedge was wrapped around my head:

6 To the roots of the mountains I descended, The earth with its bars was around me forever: But to ascend hast thou made my life from the grave, O Jehovah my God.

7 When fail did my soul within me, Jehovah did I remember, And enter did my prayer into the temple of thy holiness.

8 They who observe lying vanities, Their own mercy forsake: (**87**)

9 But I, with the voice of praise, will sacrifice to thee; What I have vowed will I pay: To Jehovah belongs salvation.

10 And Jehovah commanded the fish, and it cast forth Jonah on the dry land.

Translation: Jonah 3

CHAPTER 3

1 And the word of Jehovah came to Jonah the second time, saying, ---

2 ``Arise, go to Nineveh, to that great city, and proclaim to it the proclamation which I command thee.'' (**92**)

3 And Jonah arose, and went to Nineveh, according to the command of Jehovah.

4 Now Nineveh was a very great city, a journey of three days. And Jonah began to enter a journey of one day, and cried and said, ``Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.''

5 And the men of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them:

6 For word had come to the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and cast aside his splendid robe from him, and put on sackcloth and sat on ashes;

7 And it was proclaimed and published through Nineveh, by the counsel of the king and his nobles, saying, --- ``Man and beast! Ox and sheep! Let them taste nothing, let them not be fed, and let them not drink water;

8 And let man and beast put on sackcloth, and cry to God mightily; (**107**) and return let every one from his evil way, and from the plunder that is in their hands.

9 Who knows, whether God will change and repent, and turn away from the fury of his wrath, that we perish not?''

10 And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil which he had declared that he would do to them, and did it not.

Translation: Jonah 4

CHAPTER 4

1 And Jonah was grievously displeased, and he was very angry; (**116**) and he prayed to Jehovah, and said, ---

2 ``I pray thee, Jehovah, was not this my word, when I was yet in my own land? I therefore hastened to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that thou are a God full of grace, and merciful, slow to wrath, great in kindness, and who repentest of evil.

3 And thou, Jehovah, take, I pray, my life from me; for better it is for me to die than to live.''

4 And Jehovah said to him, --- ``Doest thou well in being angry?'' (**129**)

5 And Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east over against the city, and made there for himself a tent, and sat under it in the shade, until he saw what might be in the city.

6 And Jehovah God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up for Jonah, that it might be a shade over his head, and free him from his distress; and Jonah rejoiced for the gourd with great joy.

7 God also prepared a worm, when the morning rose the next day, which smote the gourd, and it withered:

8 And it was, when the sun arose, that God prepared an impetuous wind, and the sun smote the head of Jonah, and he fainted, and wished for himself that he might die, and said, ``Better is my death than my life.''

9 And God said to Jonah, --- ``Doest thou well in being angry for the gourd?'' and he said, --- ``I do well in being angry even unto death.''

10 And Jehovah said, --- ``Thou wouldest have spared the gourd, for which thou hast not labored, and which thou has not raised up; the daughter of a night it was, [332] and as the daughter of a night it has passed away;

[332] It is literally, "the son of a night," but as cucurbita, gourd, is feminine, Calvin adopted filia instead of filius — Ed.

11 And should I not spare Nineveh, this great city, in which there are twelve times ten thousand men, every one of whom knows not his right hand from his left, and also many animals?''

Translation: Micah 1

CHAPTER 1

1 The word of Jehovah, which came to Micah, the Morasthite, in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem:

2 Hear, all ye people, Give ear, O earth, and its fullness; (**155**) And the Lord Jehovah shall be against you a witness, Even the Lord from the temple of his holiness:

3 For, behold, Jehovah goeth forth from his place, And will descend and tread on the heights of the earth;

4 And melt shall the mountains under him, And rent shall be the valleys; As wax before the fire, As waters rolling into a lower place. (**160**)

5 For the wickedness of Jacob is all this, And for the transgressions of the house of Israel: What is the wickedness of Jacob? Is it not Samaria? And what are the high places of Judah? Are they not those of Jerusalem? (**162**)

6 I will therefore make Samaria A heap of the field, a plantation for vineyards; And I will roll into the valley its stones, And its foundations will I discover;

7 And all her graven images shall be broken down, And all her rewards shall be burnt in the fire, And all her idols will I lay desolate; For from the reward of a harlot hath she gathered, And to the reward of a harlot shall they return.

8 For this will I wail and howl, I will go spoiled and naked; I will make wailing as the dragons, And mourning as the daughters of the ostrich: (**170**)

9 For grievous is her stroke, For it has come to Judah, It has reached the gate of my people---even Jerusalem.

10 In Gath tell ye it not; weeping, weep not; In the house of Ophrah, roll thyself in the dust.

11 Pass over also, thou inhabitant of Saphir, Naked and in shame; Go forth shall not the inhabitant of Zaanan, In the mourning of Beth-ezel; She will take from you her station. (**176**)

12 Verily, grieved for good has the inhabitant of Maroth; For come down has evil from Jehovah To the gate of Jerusalem.

13 Tie the chariot to the dromedary, Thou inhabitant of Lachish; The beginning of sin has she been to the daughter of Zion; For in thee have been found the transgressions of Israel.

14 Thou shalt therefore send presents, For Moresheth-gath, to the sons of Achzib, (**180**) Who have been a deception to the kings of Israel.

15 Yet a possessor will I send to thee, inhabitant of Mareshah; Even to Adullam, the glory of Israel, shall he come.

16 Make bald, and poll thyself, For the children of thy delicacies; Enlarge thy baldness as the eagle, Inasmuch as they have migrated from thee.

Translation: Micah 2

CHAPTER 2

1 Woe to those who devise iniquity, And contrive wickedness on their beds! When the morning shines, they execute it; For to do it their hand is ready.

2 And they covet fields, and forcibly take them; And houses, and they take them away; And they oppress a man and his house, A man and his heritage. (**187**)

3 Therefore, thus saith Jehovah, --- Behold, I am devising against this family an evil, From which ye shall not remove your necks; And ye shall not walk in your height, For an evil time will it be.

4 In that day shall they take up against thee a proverb, And bewail with a lamentable lament, And say, ``Wasted, we are laid waste; The portion of my people has he changed; How he takes away from me instead of restoring! Our fields he divides.'' (**191**)

5 There shall not therefore be for thee One to cast a line for lot in the assembly of Jehovah.

6 ``Prophecy not, ye who prophesy;'' --- They shall not prophesy for them; --- He will not take reproaches. (**195**)

7 O thou who art called the house of Jacob! Is the Spirit of Jehovah straightened? Are these his works? Are not my words good to him Who walks uprightly? (**201**)

8 And they who were heretofore my people, Have risen up as an enemy against me; The robe of beauty they plunder From those who pass by securely, As those who return from war. (**203**)

9 The women of my people have ye expelled From the house of their delights; From their children have ye taken away My ornament forever. (**204**)

10 Arise, depart, for this is not your rest; Because it has been polluted: (**206**) He will scatter you with a violent scattering.

11 If a man, walking in the spirit, and lying deceitfully, says, ``I will prophesy to thee of wine and of strong drink,'' He shall be the prophet of this people. (**208**)

12 Gathering, I will gather the whole of thee Jacob, Assembling, I will assemble the residue of Israel; I will set them together as the sheep of Bozrah, As a flock in the midst of its fold; They shall make a noise on account of the number of men.

13 Ascend shall a breaker before them, They shall break through and pass the gate; Yea, they shall go out through it; And pass shall their king before them, And Jehovah at their head. (**215**)

Translation: Micah 3

CHAPTER 3

1 And I said, ``Hear, I pray, ye princes of Jacob; And ye rulers of the house of Israel: Is it not for you to know judgment?''

2 But they hate good and love evil; They pull off the skin from them, And the flesh from their bones:

3 Yea, they devour the flesh of my people, And their skin they strip from them, And their bones they break, And make them small as for the pot, And their flesh for the cauldron.

4 They shall then cry to Jehovah, And he will not answer them, But he will hide his face from them at that time, As they have acted perversely in their doings.

5 Thus saith Jehovah to the Prophets, Who deceive my people, And bite with their teeth, and cry, ``Peace;'' And when any one putteth not in their mouth, Against him they declare war;

6 Night shall therefore be to you instead of a vision, And darkness shall be to you instead of divination;' And set shall the sun on the Prophets, And darkened over them shall be the day: (**227**)

7 And ashamed shall be the seers, And confounded shall be the diviners; And they shall all cover their lips, For there will be no answer from God.

8 But I indeed am filled with power, By the Spirit of Jehovah, yea, with judgment and courage, To declare to Jacob his wickedness, And to Israel his sin.

9 Hear this, I pray, ye princes of the house of Jacob, And ye rulers of the house of Israel, Who abominate judgment, And all rectitude pervert; (**237**)

10 Who build Zion by blood, And Jerusalem by iniquity.

11 Its princes judge for reward, And its priests for wages teach, And its prophets for money divine; And on Jehovah they lean, saying, ``Is not Jehovah in the midst of us? Come upon us shall no evil.''

12 Therefore for you Zion as a field shall be plowed, And Jerusalem shall be a

heap, And the mount of the house as the heights of a forest.

Translation: Micah 4

CHAPTER 4

1 But it shall be in the last days, That the mount of the house of Jehovah Shall be set in order on the top of the mountains, And elevated shall it be above the hills; And assemble there shall nations; (**252**)

2 And go shall many nations and say, --- ``Come and let us ascend to the mount of Jehovah, And to the house of the God of Jacob; And he will teach us of his ways, And we will walk in his paths:'' For from Zion shall go forth a law, And the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem;

3 And he will rule among many people, And convince strong nations afar off; (**260**) And beat their swords shall they into plowshares, And their spears into pruninghooks; And lift up shall not a nation against a nation a sword, And they shall learn war no more;

4 And they shall sit everyone under his own vine, And under his own fig-tree; And none will there be to terrify them; For thus hath the mouth of Jehovah of hosts spoken.

5 For all people shall walk, Every one in the name of his god; (**271**) But we will walk In the name of Jehovah our God forever.

6 In that day, saith Jehovah, I will assemble the lame, And the driven out will I gather, And her whom I have afflicted:

7 And I will make the lame a remnant, And the driven out a strong nation; Reign over them shall Jehovah on mount Zion, From henceforth, even forever.

8 And thou tower of the flock, The fortress of the daughter of Zion, To thee it shall come; Yea, come shall the former dominion; The kingdom, to the daughter of Jerusalem.

9 Why dost thou now cry with a loud crying? Is there no king in thee? Has thy counselor perished? For seized thee has pain as one in travail.

10 Be in pain, and groan, O daughter of Zion, As a woman in travail; For go forth

shalt thou from the city, And thou shalt dwell in the field, Yea, thou shalt go as far as Babylon; There shalt thou be delivered, There shall Jehovah redeem thee From the hand of thy enemies.

11 And now gathered against thee are many nations, Who say, ``Let her be condemned, And look shall our eye on Zion.'' (**284**)

12 But they know not the thoughts of Jehovah, And understand not his counsel; For he shall gather them as a handful to the floor.

13 Arise, and thrash, thou daughter of Zion; For thy horn will I make iron, And thy hoofs will I make brass; And thou shalt tear in pieces strong nations; And consecrate to Jehovah their wealth, And their substance to the Lord of the whole earth.

Translation: Micah 5

CHAPTER 5

1 Assemble now thyself, thou daughter of a troop; A siege has he set against us: (**294**) With a rod shall they smite on the cheek the judge of Israel.

2 And thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, Art small to be among the thousands of Judah! From thee shall to me come forth One to be a ruler in Israel; And his goings forth are from the beginning, From the days of ages.

3 He will therefore give them up till the time, When she who travails shall bring forth, And return to the children of Israel Shall the residue of his brethren:

4 And he shall stand and feed in the power of Jehovah, In the majesty of the name of Jehovah his God; And they shall quietly dwell, For he shall now be magnified to the ends of the earth.

5 And he shall be our peace; When the Assyrian shall come into our land, And when he shall tread in our palaces, Then we shall set up against him seven shepherds, And eight princes of men;

6 And they shall lay waste The land of the Assyrian by the sword, And the land of Nimrod by their swords; (**311**) And he will deliver us from the Assyrian, When he shall come into our land, And when he shall tread in our borders.

7 And the residue of Jacob shall be, Among the nations, in the midst of many people, As a dew from Jehovah, as drops of rain on the grass; Which tarries not for man, nor waits for the sons of men.

8 The residue of Jacob shall also be, Among the nations, in the midst of many people, As a lion among the beasts of the forest, As a young lion among a flock of sheep, Who, when he passes through, tears and carries away, And no one can deliver.

9 Exalted shall be thy hand above thine enemies, And all thine adversaries shall be cut off.

10 And it shall be in that day, saith Jehovah, That I will cut off thy horses from the

midst of thee, And I will destroy thy chariots;

11 And cut off will I the cities of thy land, And will overthrow all thy fortresses;

12 And I will cut off diviners from thine hand, And soothsayers shall not be to thee;

13 And cut off will I thy graven images, And thy stature from the midst of thee, And thou shalt no more bow down Before the work of thy hands;

14 And I will demolish thy groves from the midst of thee, That I man destroy thine enemies;

15 And in anger and fury will I execute on the nations A vengeance, which they have not heard.

Translation: Micah 6

CHAPTER 6

1 Hear ye now what Jehovah saith, --- ``Arise, contend before the mountains, And let the hills hear thy voice.''

2 Hear, ye mountains, the controversy of Jehovah, And ye strong foundations of the earth; For Jehovah has a controversy with his people, And with Israel he will contend: ---

3 ``My people! What have I done to thee? And in what have I molested thee? Testify against me.

4 I have indeed made thee to ascend from Egypt, And from the house of servants I redeemed thee; I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.

5 My people! Remember now What Balak, the king of Moab, consulted, And what Balaam, the son of Bosor, answered him, And what happened from Shittim even to Gilgal, That thou mayest know the righteousness of Jehovah.'' (**336**)

6 ``Wherewith shall I approach Jehovah? And bow down myself before the high God? Shall I approach him with burnt-sacrifices? With calves a year old?

7 Will Jehovah be pleased with thousands of rams? With ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born as my sin-offering? The fruit of my loins as an expiation For the wickedness of my soul?'' ---

8 He hath declared to thee, O man, what is good: And what does Jehovah require from thee, But to do justice, and to love mercy, And to humble thyself to walk with thy God?

9 The voice of Jehovah crieth to arouse; And the man of understanding will see his name: Hear ye the rod, and who testifies of it.

10 Are there still in the house of the wicked The treasures of iniquity, And the scanty detestable measure?

11 Shall I justify balances of wickedness, And the bag of deceitful weights?

12 For her rich men have filled themselves by violence, And her inhabitants have

spoken falsehood, And their tongue is deceitful in their mouth.

13 And I also by smiting will afflict thee, And thee will I destroy for thy sins: (**352**)

14 Thou shalt eat and not be satisfied, And thy casting down shall be in the midst of thee; And thou shalt lay hold, and not deliver, And what thou deliverest will I give up to the sword:

15 Thou shalt sow and not reap, Thou shalt press the oil, and not anoint thyself with oil, And the new wine, and not drink wine.

16 For observed are the statues of Omri, And every work of the house of Ahab; And ye walk in their counsels, That I should make thee a desolation, And her inhabitants an hissing; And the reproach of my people ye shall bear.

Translation: Micah 7

CHAPTER 7

1 Woe is me! For I am as the ingatherings of summer, And as the bunches of the vintage: There is no cluster to eat; The ripe fruits my soul hath desired. (**360**)

2 Perished has the meek from the land, And upright among men there is none; For all lie in wait for blood, Every one hunts his brother with a net.

3 To effect the wickedness of their hands, The prince asketh, and the judge also, for reward. And the great man speaks himself Of the mischief of his soul; and they wrap it up. (**365**)

4 The good among them is like a brier, The upright is worse than a thorn-hedge: The day of thy watchmen, thy visitation, is coming; They shall be their confusion.

5 Trust not a friend, put no faith in a counselor; From her who sleepeth in thy bosom, Guard the openings of thy mouth:

6 For the son dishonors his father, The daughter rises up against her mother, The daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; Enemies to man are his own domestics.

7 But I to Jehovah will look, I will wait for the God of my salvation; Hear me will my God.

8 Rejoice not thou over me, my enemy; (**374**) Though I have fallen, I shall rise again; When I sit in darkness, Jehovah will be my light.

9 The wrath of Jehovah will I bear, (For I have sinned against him,) Until he plead my cause, And execute judgment for me; He will bring me to light, I shall see his righteousness:

10 And see shall my enemy, And cover her shall shame, who said to me, --- ``Where is Jehovah thy God?'' Mine eyes shall see her; And now trodden shall she be as the mire of the street.

11 The day to build thy walls! That day shall remove far the decree:

12 And in that day to thee shall they come From Assyria and the cities of the fortress, From the fortress also to the river, (**386**) And from sea to sea, and from

mountain to mountain, ---

13 But the land shall become a desolation, On account of its inhabitants, For the fruit of their works.

14 Feed thy people by thy crook, Thy flock of thy heritage, Who dwell in solitude, in the wood, As in the midst of Carmel; They shall be fed in Bashan and Gilead, As in the days of old. (**392**)

15 As in the days of thy going forth from the land of Egypt, I will show to him wonderful things.

16 Shall see the nations, And be ashamed of all their might; They shall lay their hand on their mouth, Their ears shall become deaf;

17 They shall lick the dust as a serpent, As reptiles of the earth shall they move from their holes; Jehovah our God shall they dread, And they shall be afraid of thee.

18 What God is like thee, Taking away iniquity, And passing over transgression, As to the remnant of his heritage? He will not retain forever his anger, For he loveth mercy:

19 He will return, he will have mercy on us; He will tread down our iniquities, And cast into the depths of the sea all their sins:

20 Thou wilt grant truth to Jacob, Mercy to Abraham; Which thou hast sworn to our fathers In the days of old.

Translation: Nahum 1

CHAPTER 1

1 The burden of Nineveh, --- the book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite:

2 A God jealous, and an avenger is Jehovah; Avenger is Jehovah, and a retainer of wrath; Take vengeance does Jehovah on his enemies, And keep it for his adversaries: (**421**)

3 Jehovah is slow to wrath, and great in power, And by clearing he will not clear: Jehovah! In the whirlwind and tempest is his way, And the cloud is the dust of his feet: (**424**)

4 He chides the sea, and it becomes dry; And all the rivers he dried up; Languish do Bashan and Carmel, And the flower of Lebanon languishes:

5 Mountains tremble at him, and hills melt; And burn does the earth before his face, Yea, the world, and all who dwell in it. (**427**)

6 Before his indignation who can stand? And who can bear the fierceness of his wrath? (**429**) His fury is poured out like fire, And rocks dissolve before him.

7 Good is Jehovah for strength in the day of distress; And he knoweth them who hope in him.

8 But with an inundation, he, passing through, Will make a consummation in her place; (**433**) And pursue shall darkness his enemies.

9 What do ye imagine against Jehovah? A consummation he makes! Not rise again shall affliction.

10 They who are like entangled thorns, And drunken as with their own drinking --- Devoured shall they be as stubble fully dry. (**437**)

11 From thee has gone forth a contriver of evil Against Jehovah, a wicked counselor.

12 Thus saith Jehovah, --- Though they are secure, and though they are many, They shall yet be cut off, and he shall pass through: (**443**) And through I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee no more;

13 For now will I break off from thee his yoke, And his bonds will I burst asunder.

14 And a command respecting thee hath Jehovah given, --- ``Let none be sown hereafter of thy name;'' From the house of thy gods will I cut off The graven and the molten image; I will make thy grave, for thou art execrable.

15 Behold on the mountains the feet of him Who announceth, who publisheth peace! Celebrate thou, Judah, thy solemnities, Perform thy vows; for pass through thee Shall the wicked one no more, --- he is wholly cut off.

Translation: Nahum 2

CHAPTER 2

1 Come up is the destroyer before thy face; Watch the fortress, guard the way, (**455**) Make strong the loins, fortify mightily thy strength:

2 (For taken away hath Jehovah the pride of Jacob, As he had done as to the pride of Israel; As he had done as to the pride of Israel; For emptied them the emptiers, And their branches have they cut down:)

3 The shield of his mighty ones are made red, The men of his strength are clad in scarlet; With the fire of torches is the chariot, In the day of his expedition; And the fir-trees tremulously shake:

4 In the wide places they madden with their chariots, The hurry away through the streets, The appearance of them is that of lamps, As lightnings they run here and there.

5 He will remember his valiant men, They shall stumble in their march, They shall hasten to her wall, And prepared will be the defense.

6 The gates of the rivers are opened, And the palace is dissolved;

7 And she which stood firm is cast into exile, And her maids lead her as with the voice of doves, Beating on their breasts. (**463**)

8 And yet Nineveh had been As a pool of waters from ancient days; But now they flee --- ``Stand ye, stand;'' And no one regards.

9 Take ye away the silver, take away the gold; For there is no end of her preparations; Her glory is from every desirable vessel. (**468**)

10 Emptied and emptied is she, and denuded; And the heart is melted; And there is a knocking of the knees, And trembling in all loins, And the faces of all withdraw their brightness. (**472**)

11 Where is the abode of lions? Where came the lion, the lioness, the cub of the lion; And none terrified them. (**474**)

12 The lion tare what sufficed his whelps, And strangled for his lionesses, And

filled with raving his caves, And his dens with prey.

13 Behold, I am against thee, saith Jehovah of hosts, And I will burn with smoke her chariot, And thy young lions shall the sword devour, And I will cut off from the land thy prey, And the sound of thy teeth shall no more be heard.

Translation: Nahum 3

CHAPTER 3

1 Oh blood city! The whole is full of deceit, and of ravin; From it the prey departs not.

2 The sound of the whip! The sound of the rattling of the wheel! And the horse prancing, and the chariot bounding!

3 The horseman urging onward! And the flame of the sword, and the lightning of the spear! And the number of the slain, and the mass of carcasses! And there is no end to her dead bodies, They stumble on their carcasses!

4 This is for the multitude of the fornications Of the harlot who excels in beauty, The mistress of sorceries, Who sells nations by her fornications, And tribes by her sorceries. (**481**)

5 Behold, I am against thee, saith Jehovah of hosts: And I will throw thy skirts over thy face, And show to the nations thy nakedness, And to kingdoms thy filthiness;

6 And I will cast on thee filth, and disgrace thee, And I will make thee an example:

7 And it shall be, that whosoever seeth thee Shall flee away from thee, and say, --- ``Wasted is Nineveh! Who will condole with her? Whence shall I seek comforters for thee?

8 Are thou better than populous No, Which dwelt among the rivers? The sea was around her; Whose mound was the sea, and the sea was her wall;

9 From Ethiopia was her strength, and from Egypt, And there was no end to it; Africa and Lybia were her auxiliaries:

10 Even she migrated, she went into captivity; And her infants were bound in chains.

11 Thou also shalt be inebriated, thou shalt be hid; And thou shat seek strength from the enemy.

12 All thy fortresses shall be like fig-trees with ripe fruit; If they be shaken, they fall into the mouth of the eater.

13 Behold, thy people shall be women in the midst of thee; To thine enemies shall be opened in the gates of thy land, Devour shall the fire thy bars.

14 Waters for the siege draw for thyself, Strengthen thy fortresses, Enter into the clay, tread the mortar, Make strong the brick-kiln:

15 There shall the fire devour you, Exterminate thee shall the sword, It shall devour thee as the chafer. Increase as the chafer, increase as the locust;

16 Thou hast multiplied thy merchants More than the stars of heaven; --- The chafer has spoiled, and flies away.

17 Thy princes are as locusts, And thy captains are as the largest locusts; Which encamp in the fences in the cold day; The sun rises, and they fly away, And not known is the place where they are. (**502**)

18 Slept have thy shepherds, king of Assyria; Lie down did thy mighty men: Dispersed is thy people on the mountains, And no one gathers them.

19 There is no binding for thy fracture, Altogether grievous is thy wound; All who shall hear a report of thee, Shall, on thy account, strike the hand; For upon whom hath not passed Thy wickedness continually?

Addenda to Joel

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Joel 1:4, The residue of the locusts, etc. ``A comparison,'' says Dr. Henderson, ``of the different passages in which these names occur, renders it more than probable that they are here employed by the Prophet, not with any reference to the species into which the locusts may be scientifically divided, but to designate four successive swarms, according to certain destructive qualities, by which, as a genus of insects, they are distinguished, and thereby to heighten the terror which this description was intended to produce.''

Mercerius, as quoted in Poli Syn., tells us, that almost all divines, both ancient and modern, understood this narrative of the locusts allegorically; and it appears that, according to some, they designate the four incursions of the Chaldeans into the land, that is, by Tiglathpileser, Shalmanezer, Sennacherib, and Nebuchadnezzar; or, according to Cyril, by Shalmanezer, Nebuchadnezzar, Antiochus, and the Romans; or, according to Jerome, the four empires which successively ruled over the Jews, the first locust representing the Chaldeans, --- the second, the Medes and Persians, --- the third, the Macedonians, --- and the fourth, the Romans. But these are hallucinations and not expositions. Much more appropriate is the opinion stated and approved by Henderson, that in this chapter Joel describes a devastation of the country by natural locusts; and that in the second he predicts a devastation by the Assyrians in a language highly metaphorical, borrowed in some measure from the scene described here; and this is exactly the view of Calvin.

Joel 2:12, But even now, etc. Our version, ``Therefor also now,'' is not so emphatical as that of Calvin. The full meaning has been perceived by Newcome, ``Yet even now,'' though omitted by Henderson, whose rendering is, ``Now therefore,'' which comes short of our common version.

Joel 2:13, For he is propitious, etc. It is of great importance that this declaration of what God is should be correctly rendered. Newcome's version is the same with

our common translation. Henderson's is different; it is this, ---

``For he is pitiful and compassionate,
Long-suffering and of great mercy,
And repenteth of the evil.''

The first, {חנון}, is not ``pitiful,'' but gracious, benevolent, propitious, gratuitously kind, favorable to the undeserving; it comes from {חן}, to show favor or kindness; and the last letter being doubled, it may be rendered, very kind, or very gracious. The second is {רחום}, which more properly means pitiful, but rightly rendered, ``compassionate,'' rather than ``merciful,'' as in our version. The third, {אפים} {ארך}, is better expressed by ``slow to anger,'' or to wrath, than by ``long-suffering.'' The fourth is, {חסד}-{רב}, much, or abundant in goodness: the word {חסד} is sometimes rendered mercy, but not properly; it means overflowing goodness, or exuberant benevolence. Adam Clarke has given an accurate description of these terms: --- *``gracious --- good and benevolent in his own nature, --- merciful* --- pitying and forgiving, --- slow to anger --- not easily provoked to punish, --- of great kindness --- exuberant goodness to all them who return to him.''

Joel 2:14, who knows, etc. Henderson has been very felicitous in his version of this line, ---

``Who knoweth? He may turn and repent.''

It is an instance of the potential or subjunctive meaning of the future tense in Hebrew; which is the case probably much oftener than what is generally thought. But not so felicitous is the rendering of {חוסה}, in verse 17, by ``Have pity.'' The meaning of the verb is, no doubt to spare, as it is rendered, I believe, uniformly in our version. It may be seen in connection with two other verbs, which include the ideas of pity and sympathy, in Jeremiah 13:14; 21:7

Joel 2:20, For high hath he exalted himself to do his purpose. Both Newcome and Henderson retain the common version, only the former reads, ``Though,'' instead of ``because he hath done great things.'' {לעשות} {הגדיל} {כי}, ``For he made himself great in (or, by) doing,'' or, ``Became great in doing.'' It is the greatness of the doer that is set forth, rather than of the things done. Henderson very justly observes, that those words ``convey the idea of moral agency, and can with no propriety be interpreted of the locusts.'' Exactly the same words are adopted in the next verse in reference to God.

Joel 2:25, My great army, etc. Newcome says, ``We have here a key to the grand and beautiful description which runs through these two chapters.'' He considered that the Prophet is to be understood throughout ``as foretelling a plague of locusts.'' But this can be no key to such an interpretation, for what is said in this verse coalesces much better with the other view. On the supposition that there had been locusts, as related in the first chapter, and that the Prophet threatens a heavier judgment in this, which could only be prevented by repentance, to which he exhorts them, it appears most appropriate for him to say, that not only ``the Northlander,'' of whose invasion he had spoken, would be driven away and destroyed, but that also the devastations already produced by the locusts would be repaired. So far then is this verse from being a key to the proposed interpretation, that it is much more

suitable to the other.

Joel 2:30, And I will set prodigies, etc. Calvin extends the range of these prodigies beyond what most commentators do. They are viewed by most as those prodigies, recorded even by the historian Josephus, which preceded the overthrow of the city and the temple by the Romans, when the whole kingdom, in a civil and ecclesiastical sense, was completely abolished. The day of the Lord, as mentioned here, has therefore been regarded as the day or time when this awful calamity happened to the Jews: but Calvin regards it as the day of final judgment. There is no doubt much truth in what he says about prodigies or awful judgments ever accompanying the gospel, not as its effects, but as visitations for unbelief, and willful and malicious opposition to it. There is much in the history of the world in confirmation of what he advances. The determinate suppression of the gospel by those who had opportunity of knowing it, or the evident depravation of it either by the influence of infidelity or of superstition, have often been visited in this world with awful judgments, such as wars and political disturbances.

Addenda to Amos

Addenda to AMOS

Amos 2:7, Who pant, etc. Our common version is the literal one, which is followed by Henderson, but altered for the worse by Newcome, who was led astray by Hobigant and the Septuagint. Not only are the words inverted, but a change is made in the verb, without the authority of any MS. It is a strong mode of expression to set forth the extreme cruelty and avariciousness of the persons referred to. ``They even begrudged them,'' as Henderson observes, ``the small quantity of dust they had cast on their heads in token of mourning:'' or, as Parkhurst says, They ``longed to see the poor and miserable still more wretched: a most diabolical character surely!'' To cast dust on the head was then customary in seasons of great distress. See Job 2:12; Ezekiel 27:30; and 2 Samuel 13:19

Amos 3:5, Will a bird fall into a snare on the earth without a fowler? etc. Newcome, with whom Henderson materially agrees, renders this verse differently, ---

``Can a bird fall into a snare upon the earth,
Where no gin is set for him?
Will a snare spring from the ground,
When it hath not taken anything?''

The comparison is more appropriate according to the version of Calvin; and the probability is that it is the right one. The word {מוקש}, rendered, ``gin'' by Newcome, as it is in our version, is considered by Henderson as redundant; and this very circumstance creates a suspicion that the passage is not rightly understood. This word is often rendered in our version ``snare,'' but it means more properly the act, ensnaring, than the instrument, snare: and it may be considered here a Hiphil participle --- ``he who ensnares,'' or, ``the ensnarer.'' It is rendered {ἰξευτης}, a bird catcher by the Septuagint. Then the two following lines will admit naturally of Calvin's rendering, and there will be no need of having recourse to Henderson's ``elastic snare,'' or to Adam Clarke's ``spring-trap,'' neither of which is, I believe,

intended by the word {פח}, which signifies a snare spread out, or an expanded net. See Job 18:9; Psalm 140:5; 142:3

Amos 4:3, And ye shall cast yourselves down from the palace. This difficult line is variously rendered. Dathius renders it, ``To Amenia shall ye be led away;'' Newcome, following Houbigant, who always mends the text, ``And I will cast it forth, and will utterly destroy it;'' Henderson, ``Ye shall be even thrown out of the palace;'' and Horsley, following Parkhurst, ``And ye shall be thrown into the shambles.'' The whole difficulty lies in the word {ההרמונה}, found only here. The idea of shambles agrees well with the context, in which cows are mentioned. Parkhurst, after Schultens, derives it from {הרם}, not found in Hebrew as a verb, but it means in Arabic, ``to cut into small pieces.'' Hence as a noun, {הרמון} seems to denote the place in which meat is thus cut. The {ה}, as Parkhurst observes, is evidently radical, as it is preceded by {ה} servile. This appears to be the best solution of the difficulty.

Amos 4:5, And burn incense, etc. The word for incense is not in the form of a verb. Both Houbigant and Horsley take it here not a verb but a noun: but their transpositions are by no means necessary. The latter part of the fourth verse, and the whole of this, I would render thus, ---

And bring, in the morning, your sacrifices,
In the third year, your tithes,

5. And incense with the leaven of thank-offering,
Yea, publish vows, proclaim them; *
For thus ye love* to do, O children of Israel,
Saith the Lord Jehovah.

Amos 5:24, And run down, etc.,

``But judgment shall come rolling on like waters,
And justice like a resistless torrent.

``That is, the irresistible judgment and justice of God shall come upon those hypocrites like an inundation, and sweep them away like a torrent.'' --- Horsley.

Amos 6:1, which have been renowned, etc. Various are the expositions of this and the following line. Newcome's version overleaps the rule of grammar, ---

``That are named after the chief of the nations,
And to them the house of Israel resort.''

The explanation is this, --- ``They call themselves, not after their religious ancestors, but after the chief of the idolatrous nations, with whom they intermarry contrary to their law.'' How foreign to everything in the context is this! Henderson's rendering is more like a version of the original, ---

``The distinguished men of the first of nations,
To whom the house of Israel come.''

He considers that the chief persons of the Hebrew nation are here spoken of, to whom the house of Israel, the community, came for judgment: and this has little to do with the context. Horsley seems to have given the most literal version, and the most suitable to this place, ---

``Marking out the first of the nations,
Go unto them, O house of Israel.

And then the Prophet mentions in the next who these nations were, ``Pass over,'' he says, ``into Calneh,'' etc. So that this distich is connected with the following verses. For {נקבי}, one copy of Kennicott has {נקבו}, ``Mark ye out,'' or, notice; this would make the line complete. Though the Septuagint here goes much astray, yet it gives the verb used here in the third person plural: and that person in Hebrew is the same as the second person plural of the imperative.

Amos 9:12, That possess they may, etc. Both this and the preceding verse are quoted, in Acts 15:16, 17, not literally, but mainly from the Septuagint, which differs considerably in words, but not in sense, from the Hebrew. Newcome, with the view of producing a verbal agreement, has changed and altered the Hebrew text without the authority of a single MS. This is rightly disapproved both by Adam Clarke and Henderson. The former says, ``We must dismiss all these conjectural emendations, and take the Hebrew text as we find it. That it speaks of the conversion of the Jews in gospel times, we have the authority of the New Testament; and if we cannot make the words, as they stand there, entirely to agree with the words here, the subject is not affected by it.''

Index of Scripture References

Genesis
10:10 15:9
16:1 16:1
18:26 19:14 27:40
27:41
36:15 48:9
49:10 50:17
Exodus
10:23 11
12:22
14:14
16:29
22:26 23:21 25:22 30:36
Leviticus
11:44
11:44 25:29
26:5
Numbers
6:1-8
12:6
12:6 14:19
23:21 25:1
Deuteronomy
4:14 14:28
14:28 18:3
26:12 28:25
Joshua

2:1 24:19
Judges
17:10
1 Samuel
2:21 14:9
15:22
15:22
2 Samuel
2:25
13:19
1 Kings
19:18
2 Kings
2:20 4:13 5:15 8:9
8:15 13:3
14:25-26
15:8-10 15:29
2 Chronicles
28
Job
2:12
9:9 9:9
9:9 9:9
18:9
38:31 38:31
38:31 38:31
Psalms
5:3 15
23:4
24 25:1 25:18
41:9
47:4 55:2 86:4 99:8 119:108
121:4
130:4
132:11
132:11-12
137:7
139:7-9
140:5
142:3
Proverbs
25:13 30:25
Isaiah
1:14

2:4 2:9
2:10
4
9:13
10:3 10:24
13:17
22:13
23:12 26
26:1
28:15
28:15
29:6
33:1
45:7
48:10
49:8
49:23
53:1
Jeremiah
2:31 4:1
4:14
5:24
7:10
7:12
11
13:14
21:7
30:11
43:2
49:7-22
49:12
49:15-16 49:16
Lamentations
1:7 3:19 4:17
Ezekiel
18:32
20:18
20:39
27:30
Hosea
1:1 1:2 1:6 2:11 3:4 4:8
4:18 5:1 6:5 6:9 6:11 9:8 10:4 10:9 10:15 11:7
11:10-11 11:12 12:8 12:11 13:2 13:14
13:16 14:2

Joel

1:1-4

1:4

1:4

1:5

1:6-7

1:8

1:9

1:10

1:11

1:12

1:13-15

1:16-17

1:18

1:19-20

2:1

2:1-11

2:12

2:12-13

2:13

2:14

2:14

2:15-17

2:18-19

2:20

2:20

2:21

2:22

2:23

2:24

2:25

2:25

2:26

2:27

2:28

2:29

2:30

2:30-31

2:32

3:1-3

3:4-6

3:7

3:8

3:9-11

3:12
3:13
3:14
3:15
3:16
3:17
3:18-19
3:20
3:21

Amos

1:1
1:2
1:3-5
1:6-8
1:9-10
1:11-12
1:13-15
2:1-3
2:4-5
2:6
2:7
2:7
2:8
2:9-12
2:13
2:14-16
3:1-2
3:3-8
3:5
3:9
3:10
3:11-12
3:13-14
3:15
4:1
4:2
4:3
4:3
4:4-6
4:5
4:7
4:8
4:9
4:10

4:11
4:12-13
5:1
5:2
5:3
5:4-6 5:6
5:7
5:8
5:9
5:10
5:11
5:12
5:13
5:14
5:15
5:16
5:17
5:18
5:19
5:21-23
5:24
5:24
5:25-26
5:27
6:1
6:1
6:2
6:3
6:4
6:5
6:6-7
6:8
6:9
6:10
6:11
6:12 6:12
6:13
6:14
7:1-3
7:4-6
7:7-9
7:10-13
7:14
7:14-15

7:16
8:1-2
8:3-4
8:5
8:6
8:7
8:8
8:9
8:10
8:11-12
8:13-14
9:1
9:2-4
9:5
9:6
9:7
9:8-9
9:10
9:11
9:12
9:12
9:13
9:14
9:15
Obadiah
1:1
1:2-4
1:5
1:6
1:7-8
1:9
1:10-11
1:12-14
1:15
1:16
1:17
1:18
1:19-20
1:21
Micah
4:3
Habakkuk
3:16
Haggai

2:3-9
Zechariah
12:10-11
14:5
Malachi
1:2
2:7
Matthew
6:33
7:2
7:7
21:13
24:3-25:46
24:38
26:7
Luke
7:38
12:47
12:47-48
John
4:20
4:22
11:48
Acts
2:16-21
7:42
7:42-43
7:43 7:51
8:26
15:16-17
Romans
2:3-4
2:12-16
10:11-13
11 11:29
1 Corinthians
1:26-2:5
4:7
8:8
9:6
2 Corinthians
1:20
4:7
4:7

5:20
11:14
Galatians
1:8 3:28
Ephesians
2:6
Colossians
3:11
1 Timothy
4:8
Titus
1:3
Hebrews
4:12
4:12-13
6:13
James
5:7
Revelation
6:16
Genesis
4 4:13
6:6 8:3
9:6
10
10:6 10:9
10:11
12:1 12:3
15:6 28:18
31:29 31:34
35:19 35:21
Exodus
4:1-8 14:22
14:31 15
18:2 20:2
32:14
33:1
34 34
Leviticus
6:28 13:5
13:45 18:25
26
26:6 27:21
27:28 27:28

27:29 27:29
Numbers
11:31
14 20:12
23:9 23:19
Deuteronomy
3:26 7:25
9:23 12:3
13
28
28 28:32
31:12
32:1 32:21
Joshua
1:8 9:13
10:8 10:11
10:24 11:6
13:21 15:44
19:13
Judges
1:31 4:21
9:24 11:20
17:7
Ruth
4:11
1 Samuel
3:13 4:17
6:4 15:11
15:29 18:11
24:14
2 Samuel
1:20 4:10
1 Kings
1:40 2:8
9:16 10:7
16:13 16:26
2 Kings
5:15
10:26 10:27
14:1
14:23-25
17:14
17:32
17:33

19:24
1 Chronicles
4:21 4:27
2 Chronicles
9:8 14:10
20:20 28:19
33:6
Nehemiah
5:5 11
Esther
9:4
Job
6:25 12:5
14:6
17:10 24:16
28
28:28
38:41 41:1
Psalms
1:1
1:1
1:2 2
3:8 12:1
17:4 18
18
18
18:44
22:17 23
31:6 31:22
39
39:9 42:7
42:7 47:1
68:18 69:1
72
72:9
73:13 76:6
80:10 83:11
95:7
95:11
102
102:1
102:17
104 104:21
106:24

110
110
110
110:6 116
118:7 119
119:1
119:174 120:1
127
130 142:3
144:2 146:4
147:20
Proverbs
3 3:27
11:2
16:33
17:18 20:9
22:26
24:16
26:25
Song of Solomon
5:14
Isaiah
1:2 2:2
2:4 3:7
9:4
9:7 10:5
10:12
10:24 17:11
19:6 22:3
22:19 26
26:18
28:28 29:14
30:22 30:33
33
33:1
34 40:3
40:11 43:10
52:7 52:7
54:8 57:1
Jeremiah
2:13
5 5:5
5:7 5:7
5:22 5:28

6:13 7:32
10:19 12:6
16:13 16:14
16:15 18:7
18:8 23:20
26 26:3
26:18 26:19
30:24 40:14
48:5 51:44
Lamentations
4:20
Ezekiel
3:8
3:9 12:7
18:10
20:25
24:17 24:22
27:19 32:30
34:12 38:8
Daniel
6:3 10:14
11:14
Hosea
3:5 7:12
9:7 9:12
14:2
Joel
2
2
2:6 2:13
3
Amos
5:7 5:15
6:12
Jonah
1:1-2
1:3
1:4
1:5
1:6
1:7
1:8-10
1:11-12
1:13-14

1:15
1:16
1:17
2:1-2
2:3
2:4
2:5-6
2:7
2:8-9
2:10
3:1-2
3:3
3:4
3:5
3:6-8
3:9
3:10
4:1
4:2
4:3
4:4
4:5
4:6-8
4:9
4:10-11

Micah

1:1
1:2
1:2
1:3
1:3-4
1:4 1:5
1:5
1:6
1:6
1:7
1:8
1:8-9
1:10
1:11
1:12
1:13
1:14
1:15

1:16
1:16
2:1
2:2
2:3
2:3
2:4
2:4
2:5
2:6
2:7
2:7
2:8
2:9
2:10
2:10
2:11
2:12 2:12
2:12
2:12-13
2:13 2:13
3:1-3
3:2 3:3
3:4
3:5
3:6
3:6-7
3:8
3:9-10
3:11-12
3:12 3:12
3:12 4:1
4:1-2
4:1-4 4:2
4:3
4:3
4:4
4:5
4:6-7
4:8 4:9
4:9-10
4:10
4:11-13
4:12 4:12

5:1-2
5:2 5:3
5:3
5:4 5:4
5:5
5:6
5:7-8
5:8
5:9
5:10-15
6:1
6:1-2
6:3
6:4
6:5
6:6-8
6:9
6:9-16
6:10-11
6:12
6:13
6:13-14
6:15
6:16
7:1
7:1-2
7:2
7:3
7:4
7:4
7:5-6
7:7
7:8
7:8-10
7:9
7:10
7:11-12
7:13
7:14
7:15
7:16
7:16-17
7:17
7:18

7:18-20
7:19
7:20
Nahum
1:1
1:2
1:3
1:4
1:5
1:6
1:7
1:8
1:9
1:10
1:11
1:12
1:13
1:14 1:14
1:15
2:1-2
2:2
2:3
2:4
2:5
2:6
2:7
2:8
2:9
2:10
2:11-12
2:13
3:1
3:2-3
3:4
3:5-6
3:7
3:8-10
3:11
3:12
3:13
3:14-15
3:16-17
3:18
3:19

Habakkuk
3:2
Zechariah
2:8 9:16
10:3 13:5
Malachi
2:7
Matthew
6:34
10:29
11:12
12:39-41
12:39-41
12:40
12:41
16:4
24:2
27:3 27:24
Luke
8:23
12:47
21:15
John
2:18
7:18-37 10:16
16:8
16:8 16:21
Acts
1:26
10:17
Romans
4:3 4:5
7:24
9:3
11:29
1 Corinthians
10:11
2 Corinthians
6:15 6:15
10:4 10:5
Galatians
3:6 4:4
Ephesians
4:28

Philippians
1:22
Colossians
1:15
2 Thessalonians
2:11
1 Timothy
4:8
6:10
2 Timothy
2:26 3:1
Hebrews
1:2
11:7
James
2:11
1 John
5:4
5:4
Sirach
20:29

Index of Scripture Commentary

Joel
1 1:1 1:2 1:3 1:4 1:5 1:6 1:7 1:8 1:9 1:10 1:11
1:12 1:13 1:14 1:15 1:16 1:17 1:18 1:19 1:20 2 2:1
2:2 2:3 2:4 2:5 2:6 2:8 2:9 2:10 2:11 2:12 2:13
2:14 2:15 2:16 2:17 2:18 2:19 2:20 2:21 2:22 2:23
2:24 2:25 2:26 2:27 2:28 2:29 2:30 2:31 2:32 3 3:1
3:2 3:3 3:4 3:5 3:6 3:7 3:8 3:9 3:10 3:11 3:12
3:13 3:14 3:15 3:16 3:17 3:18 3:19 3:20 3:21
Amos
1 1:1 1:2 1:3 1:4 1:5 1:6 1:7 1:8 1:9 1:10 1:11
1:12 1:13 1:14 1:15 2:1 2:2 2:3 2:4 2:5 2:6 2:7
2:8 2:9 2:10 2:11 2:12 2:13 2:14 3 3:1 3:2 3:3
3:4 3:5 3:6 3:7 3:8 3:9 3:10 3:11 3:12 3:14 3:15
4 4:1 4:2 4:3 4:4 4:5 4:6 4:7 4:8 4:9 4:10 4:11
4:12 4:13 5 5:1 5:2 5:3 5:4 5:5 5:6 5:7 5:8 5:9
5:10 5:11 5:12 5:13 5:14 5:15 5:16 5:17 5:18 5:19
5:20 5:21 5:22 5:23 5:24 5:25 5:26 5:27 6 6:1 6:2
6:3 6:4 6:5 6:6 6:7 6:8 6:9 6:10 6:11 6:12 6:13
6:14 7 7:1 7:2 7:4 7:6 7:7 7:8 7:9 7:10 7:11
7:12 7:13 7:14 7:16 7:17 8 8:1 8:2 8:3 8:4 8:5
8:6 8:7 8:8 8:9 8:10 8:11 8:12 8:13 8:14 9 9:1
9:2 9:3 9:4 9:5 9:6 9:7 9:8 9:9 9:10 9:11 9:12
9:13 9:14 9:15
Obadiah
1:1 1:1 1:2 1:3 1:5 1:6 1:7 1:8 1:9 1:10 1:11
1:12 1:13 1:14 1:15 1:16 1:17 1:18 1:19 1:20 1:21
Jonah

1 1:1 1:2 1:3 1:4 1:5 1:6 1:7 1:8 1:9 1:10 1:11
1:12 1:13 1:14 1:15 1:16 1:17 2 2:1 2:2 2:3 2:4
2:5 2:6 2:7 2:8 2:9 2:10 3 3:1 3:2 3:3 3:4 3:5
3:6 3:7 3:8 3:9 3:10 4 4:1 4:2 4:3 4:4 4:5 4:6
4:7 4:8 4:9 4:10 4:11
Micah
1 1:1 1:2 1:3 1:4 1:5 1:6 1:7 1:8 1:9 1:10 1:11
1:12 1:13 1:14 1:15 1:16 2 2 2:1 2:2 2:3 2:4 2:5
2:6 2:7 2:8 2:9 2:10 2:11 2:12 2:13 3:1 3:2 3:3
3:4 3:5 3:6 3:7 3:8 3:9 3:10 3:11 3:12 4 4:1 4:2
4:3 4:4 4:5 4:6 4:7 4:8 4:9 4:10 4:11 4:12 4:13
5 5:1 5:2 5:3 5:4 5:5 5:6 5:7 5:8 5:9 5:10 5:11
5:12 5:13 5:14 5:15 6 6:1 6:2 6:3 6:4 6:5 6:6
6:7 6:8 6:9 6:10 6:11 6:12 6:13 6:14 6:15 6:16 7
7:1 7:2 7:3 7:4 7:5 7:7 7:8 7:9 7:10 7:11 7:12
7:13 7:14 7:15 7:16 7:17 7:18 7:19 7:20
Nahum
1 1:1 1:2 1:3 1:4 1:5 1:6 1:7 1:8 1:9 1:10 1:11
1:12 1:13 1:14 1:15 2 2:1 2:2 2:3 2:4 2:5 2:6
2:7 2:8 2:9 2:10 2:11 2:12 2:13 3 3:1 3:2 3:3
3:4 3:5 3:6 3:7 3:8 3:10 3:11 3:12 3:13 3:14 3:15
3:16 3:17 3:18 3:19

Greek Words and Phrases

- {ἑταιρεία} {τρυφητων}: Amos 6, note 57
- {ἔσπερος}: Amos 5, note 46
- {ἔσπερος}, : Amos 5, note 46
- {ἰξευτης}: Addenda to Amos
- {ὁ} {ποιων}: Amos 9, note 78
- {ὑιοι} {θαλασσης}: 1
- {Αρκτουρος}: Amos 5, note 46
- {Ταδε} {λεγει} {κυριος} {ὁ} {Θεὸς} {τη} {Ιδουμαία}: Obadiah 1, note 81
- {Ωρίωνος}: Amos 5, note 46
- {ακτωρηκους}: Amos 1
- {αναὶσθησὶα}: Joel 1
- {αναστήσει}: Amos 7, note 62
- {απο} {του} {κοινου}: Joel 2
- {γ}: Amos 1
- {εθελοθρησκείας}: Amos 5
- {εκστησονται}: 1
- {κακοζηλία}: Amos 5
- {λογος}: Amos 1, note 30
- {λψσ᾽}: Joel 1, note 16
- {μηδεν} {ὑστερηκεναι} {των} {ὑπερ} {λιαν} {προφητων}: Translator's Preface to Joel, Amos, and Obadiah, note 1
- {οψιμον}, : Joel 2
- {πλειας}: Amos 5, note 46 2
- {πρωιμον} : Joel 2
- {σαρκασμος}: Amos 5
- {σκήνην}: Amos 5
- {τεκνα} {ὑδατων}: 1

- {τξωιμον}, {προιμον}: Joel 2
- {χασμα}: Amos 1
- {ἡ} {πληγη} {ἀυτης}: Micah 1, note 146
- {ὀλιγόπίστοι}: Jonah 4
- {ὅτι} {η} {θαλασσα} {επορευετο} {και} {εξηγειρε} {μαλλον} {κλυδωνα} : Jonah 1, note 108
- {ὕστερον} {προτερον}: Jonah 1
- {Ακχω}: Micah 1, note 147
- {Ανεσταλη}: Nahum 1, note 288
- {Απο} {της} {αδικιας}: Jonah 3, note 131
- {Αποφθεγγομενους} : Micah 5, note 234
- {Αχαιδες} {ουκ} {ετ} {Αχαιοι} : Nahum 3, note 323
- {Εκινηθη}: Nahum 1, note 288
- {Εκτεςῶς} : Jonah 3, note 129
- {Εντος} {πολων} {αυτης} : Micah 5, note 228
- {Εφριξεν}: Nahum 1, note 288
- {Εως} {Οδαλαμ} {ἤξει} {την} {δοξην} {Ισραηλ}: Micah 1, note 154
- {Ιωνα} {του} {προφητου}: Translator's Preface to Jonah, Micah, and Nahum
- {Καί} {παρεβιαζοντο} {οι} {ανδρες} {του} {επιστρεψαι} {προς} {την} {γην}: Jonah 1, note 109
- {Και} {εκηρυχθη} {και} {ερρεθη} {εν} {τη} {Νινευὴ}: Jonah 3, note 128
- {Και} {κηρυξον} {εν} {αυτη} {κατα} {το} {κηρυγμα} {το} {εμπροσθεν} {ο}: Jonah 3, note 122
- {Μιχαιας}: Commentary on Micah, note 12
- {Νινος} {μεν} {απολωλεν} {ηδη}, {και} {ουδεν} {ιχνος} {ετι} {λοιπον} {αυτης}, {ουδ} {αν} {ειπης} {οπου} {ποτ} {ην} : Nahum 1, note 292
- {Ον} {τη} {νηστεια} {προσεσχεν}: Jonah 3, note 127
- {Τι} {ελυπησα} {σε} : Micah 6, note 240
- {Τις} {Θεος} {ωσπερ} {συ}: Micah 7, note 279
- {Τις} {αντιστησεται} : Nahum 1, note 289
- {αλλα} {τη} {αποχη} {των} {κακων}: Jonah 3, note 127
- {ανομια} : Micah 3, note 184
- {απ} {αρχης}: Micah 5, note 220
- {αποφθεγματα}: Micah 2
- {ασφαλιζου}: Micah 6, note 248
- {γνωμων}: Micah 2, note 160
- {δεικτικως}: Micah 3
- {δυναμις}: Micah 3, note 182
- {εις} {παραδειγμα}: Nahum 3, note 317
- {εις} {την} {κοίλην} {του} {πλοίου}: Jonah 1, note 96
- {ελεγχειν}: Micah 4, note 201
- {ελεημων}: Jonah 4, note 133
- {εν} {ακείμ}: Micah 1, note 147
- {εξ} {ημερων} {αιωνος}: Micah 5, note 220

- {εξ} {οικου} {δουλειας} : Micah 6, note 241
- {επ} {εσχατων} {των} {ημερων}: Micah 4, note 192
- {επίστευσαν} {τω} {θεω}: Jonah 3, note 124
- {επιστρεψει}: Micah 7, note 280
- {ετοιμον} {εναι} : Micah 6, note 248
- {ευαγγελιζεσθαι}: Nahum 1, note 298
- {ευσβης}: Micah 7, note 260
- {ζηλωτην}: Nahum 1
- {ηγοντο}: Nahum 2, note 306
- {ηγουμενος}: Micah 7, note 266
- {θελητης} {ελεους} : Micah 7, note 279
- {θυγατερων} {σειρηνων} : Micah 1, note 145
- {και} {το} {προσωπον}: Nahum 2, note 311
- {καταβασις}: Micah 1, note 141
- {καταχρηστικῶς}: Micah 3
- {κατορθων}: Micah 7, note 261
- {κηρυξ}: Jonah 3, note 122
- {κητος}: Jonah 1, note 114 2
- {κοψεται}: Micah 1, note 145
- {μακροθυμος}: Jonah 4, note 133
- {μαντεις}: Micah 3, note 180
- {μαντεις} : Micah 5, note 234
- {ματαια} {και} {Ψευδη}: Jonah 2, note 120
- {μετα} {αργυριου} : Micah 3, note 189
- {μετα} {δωρων} : Micah 3, note 189
- {μετα} {μισθου} : Micah 3, note 189
- {μετανοων} {επὶ} {ταις} {κακιαις}: Jonah 4, note 133
- {μηπυρ}: Micah 6, note 250
- {μιμητικῶς}: Micah 1
- {ναυς}: Jonah 1, note 95
- {ναυται}: Jonah 1, note 95
- {οἱοικοδομουντες}: Micah 3, note 185
- {οικτίρμων}: Jonah 4, note 133
- {ουκ} {εστιν} {εασις} {τη} {συντριβη} {σου} : Nahum 3, note 327
- {παντα} {ταυτα}: Micah 1, note 142
- {παντων} {ως} {προσκαυμα} {χυτρας} : Nahum 2, note 311
- {παραλογισμῶ}: Jonah 1
- {παρανομος}: Nahum 1, note 294
- {πιστευοντι} {επι} {τον}: Jonah 3, note 124
- {πολυελεος}: Jonah 4, note 133
- {προληψις}: Jonah 1
- {σαλευθησεται} {τα} {ορη}: Micah 1, note 141
- {σπευσουσι} : Micah 4, note 195
- {στρουθοκαμηλων} : Micah 1, note 145

- {σχισμας}: Jonah 2, note 117
- {τί} {τουτο} {εποίησας} : Jonah 1, note 106
- {τα} {εργα} {σοι}: Nahum 2, note 314
- {τα} {προσωπα}: Nahum 2, note 311
- {τα} {τεκνα} {τα} {τρυφερα} {σου} : Micah 1, note 155
- {τακησονται}: Micah 1, note 141
- {τας} {στηλας}: Micah 5, note 236
- {το} {σημειον}: Translator's Preface to Jonah, Micah, and Nahum
- {τοις} {εθνεσιν} {αυτης}: Nahum 3, note 315
- {φαρμακα}: Micah 5, note 233
- {ψευδομαντεις}: Micah 5, note 234
- Epi to kakon tav ceirav autwn etoimazousi: Micah 7, note 262

Hebrew Words and Phrases

- {הזנה} :{הזנו} 1
- {היה} :Joel 1
- {לאדום} :Obadiah 1, note 81
- {כימה} :, Amos 5, note 46
- {אבל} :Amos 1 2
- {אהבו} {הבו} {קלזן} :{מגניה} 1
- {אולי} :Amos 5
- {אחל} :{מוער} 1
- {אחרית} :Amos 9 2
- {אחריתם} :Amos 9
- {איתן} :Amos 5
- {אכר} :Amos 5
- {אל} :1
- {אלהי} :Joel 1
- {אלי} :1
- {אמל} :Joel 1
- {אנדתו} :Amos 9, note 77
- {אף} :Amos 2
- {אפיקים} :Joel 1
- {ארבה} :Joel 1, note 16
- {ארך} :{אפים} Addenda to Joel
- {ארף} :Amos 8, note 72
- {אשמות} :Amos 8
- {אשר} :Amos 5 2 3 4
- {באותי} :1
- {באתי} :1
- {בוש} :Joel 1

- :{בושם} Amos 5, note 48
- :{בושסכם} Amos 5, note 48
- :{בחורים} Joel 2
- :{בחרים} Amos 2
- {בין} :{כוכבים} Obadiah 1, note 86
- {בית} :{ממלכה} Amos 7, note 66
- :{בס} Amos 5, note 48
- :{בסס} Amos 5, note 48
- :{בעל} Joel 1
- :{בעלים} Joel 1
- :{בר} Amos 5
- :{בש} Amos 1
- :{גאון} Amos 6 2
- :{גזם} Joel 1, note 16
- :{גל} Amos 5 2
- :{גם} Joel 2
- {גם} :{אתה} Obadiah 1
- :{גמל} Joel 3
- :{גשם} Joel 2 2
- :{דום} Obadiah 1
- :{דמה} Obadiah 1 2 3
- :{דרך} Amos 4 2 3
- :{ה} Amos 8 2 3 4
- :{הדברה} Amos 8, note 72
- :{ההרמונה} Addenda to Amos
- :{הו} Amos 5, note 50 2
- {הזבח} :{זבחי} 1
- :{החל} Obadiah 1, note 88
- {חזה}-{החל} {לבכי} :{ישראל} Obadiah 1, note 88
- :{המון} Amos 5, note 51
- :{המורה} Joel 2
- {המורה} :{לצדקה} Joel 2
- :{הפורטים} Amos 6
- :{הקדים} Amos 9
- :{הראני} Amos 7, note 61
- {הרבות} :{גנותיכם} Amos 4, note 41
- :{הרות} Amos 1 2
- :{הרים} Amos 1
- :{הרם} Addenda to Amos
- :{הרמון} Addenda to Amos
- :{הרמונה} Amos 4
- {השיא} :{אותך} Obadiah 1
- :{השיאך} Obadiah 1
- :{התימני} Joel 2, note 23

- :{ו} Amos 4, note 44 2 3 4 5 6 7
- :{וגם} Joel 2 2 3
- :{והיה} Joel 2
- :{וזם} Joel 1, note 17
- {וכ} {שפטתי} {עמם} :{שם} Joel 3
- {תשא}-{ולא} :{להם} 1
- {וסר} {מרזה} :{סרוחים} Amos 6, note 57
- :{וקח}-{טוב} 1
- :{זאת} Amos 9, note 78
- :{זמה} 1
- :{חג} Amos 5
- :{חגג} Amos 5
- :{חגרו} Joel 1
- :{חדש} Amos 8
- :{חוסה} Addenda to Joel
- :{חוצות} Amos 5, note 50
- :{חזה} Amos 1 2
- :{חזון} Obadiah 1
- :{חלק} Amos 7 2
- :{חמל} Joel 2
- :{חמס} Obadiah 1
- :{חן} Addenda to Joel
- :{חנון} Addenda to Joel
- :{חסד} Addenda to Joel
- :{חסיל} Joel 2
- :{חצה} Amos 5, note 50
- :{חרד} 1
- :{חרוף} Joel 3 2
- :{טוב} Amos 5
- :{י} Joel 2, note 23
- :{יבש} Joel 1
- :{יגל} Amos 5
- :{יהושפט} Joel 3
- :{יוצר} Amos 7 2 3
- :{ילק} Joel 1, note 16
- :{ימים} Amos 4, note 40
- :{יקום} Amos 7
- :{יקים} Amos 7, note 62
- :{יקרא} 1
- :{ירש} Obadiah 1, note 88
- :{כאבל} Amos 8, note 72
- :{כאר} Amos 8
- :{כה} Amos 4
- :{כוה} Amos 5

- :{כי} Joel 1 2
- {כי} {הגדיל} :{לעשות} Addenda to Joel
- :{כיאור} Amos 8
- :{כיון} Amos 5
- :{כימה} Amos 5 2 3 4 5
- :{כן} Amos 5
- :{כסיל} Amos 5, note 46 2 3 4 5
- :{כפר} Amos 5 2
- :{כפתוד} Amos 9
- :{כפתור} Amos 9 2
- :{כפתורים} Amos 9
- :{כרת} Amos 2
- {כשד} {משדי} :{יבוא} Joel 1
- :{ל} Obadiah 1, note 81 2
- {לא} :{אריח} Amos 5
- {לא} :{ארצה} Amos 5
- {לא} :{אשיבנו} Amos 1, note 32
- {לא} :{אשמע} Amos 5 2
- {לבני} :{היונים} Joel 3, note 28
- :{לכן} Amos 7
- :{למען} Obadiah 1
- :{לצדקה} Joel 2
- :{לקש} Amos 7
- {לשלשת} :{ימים} Amos 4, note 40
- :{מ} Amos 2
- :{מהומת} Amos 3
- :{מהרה} Joel 3
- :{מוכ} 1
- {מוער} :{יטי} 1
- :{מוקש} Addenda to Amos
- :{מורה} Joel 2 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
- :{מזרות} Amos 5, note 46
- :{מי} Amos 7, note 62 2
- :{מכר} Amos 2
- :{מלכם} Amos 1
- {מלכם} {הוא} :{ושריו} Amos 1
- :{מלקום} Joel 2
- :{מלקוש} Joel 2 2
- :{מנחה} Joel 1 2 3
- {מנחה} {ונסך} {ליהוה} :{אלהיכם} Joel 2
- :{מעדנות} Amos 5, note 46
- :{מעלות} Amos 9, note 76
- :{מרבק} Amos 6 2
- :{מרזה} Amos 6, note 57

- :{מרכבות} Joel 2 2
- :{משא} Amos 5
- :{משפט} Joel 2
- :{משפטים} 1
- :{נאות} Joel 1
- :{נבל} Amos 5
- :{נדבות} Amos 4
- :{נדמיתה} Obadiah 1
- :{נוי} Joel 1, note 17
- :{נחש} Amos 9
- :{נכר} Amos 5
- :{נפה} Joel 1, note 18
- {נפשי} {אשא} {אליך} :{יהוה} 1
- :{נפשם} 1
- :{נקבו} Addenda to Amos
- :{נקבי} Addenda to Amos
- :{נקד} Amos 1
- :{נקדים} Amos 1
- :{נקה} Joel 3
- :{נשא} Amos 5 2 3 4
- {נשא} :{נפש} 1
- :{ס} Amos 5, note 48 2 3 4
- :{סוך} Amos 5
- :{סלע} Obadiah 1 2
- :{סר} Amos 6, note 57 2 3
- {סר} :{סבאם} 1
- :{סרוחים} Amos 6
- :{סרח} Amos 6 2
- :{ע} Amos 1 2 3
- :{עבר} Translation: Amos 5, note 331
- :{עיק} Amos 2
- :{עכב} Amos 4
- :{על} 1 2
- :{עליה} Joel 1
- :{עם} 1 2
- :{עם}-{יהוה} 1
- :{עץ}-{אלהי} 1
- :{עסיס} Joel 1 2
- :{עסס} Joel 1
- :{עצר} Amos 5
- :{עצרה} Joel 2 2
- :{עצרת} Amos 5
- :{ערג} Joel 1
- :{עש} Amos 5, note 46 2

- :{עשה} Amos 9, note 78
- {עשה}: {זאת} Amos 9, note 78
- :{פח} Addenda to Amos
- :{פן} Amos 5
- :{פרדות} Joel 1
- :{פרט} Amos 6
- :{פרק} Obadiah 1 2 3
- :{ץ} Amos 7 2
- :{צדקה} Joel 2
- :{צוה} Amos 2
- :{צזפה} 1
- :{צלח} Amos 5
- :{צנה} Amos 4
- :{צנות} Amos 4
- :{צפון} Joel 2, note 23
- :{צר} Amos 3
- :{צרור} Amos 9
- :{צרר} Amos 9
- :{קדש} Joel 1 2
- {קח} {נא}: {ברכה} 1
- {נא}-{קחם}: {אלי} 1
- :{קיץ} Amos 8
- :{קיר} Amos 9
- :{קץ} Amos 8 2
- :{קריות} Amos 2 2
- :{קשר} Amos 7
- :{קתל} Obadiah 1
- :{ראש} Amos 6
- :{רבה} Amos 1 2
- :{רבים} Amos 5
- :{חסד}-{רב} Addenda to Joel
- :{רד} 1
- :{רוב} Amos 7
- :{רוח} Amos 4
- :{רוחה} Amos 5
- :{רחב} Amos 5, note 50
- :{רחבות} Amos 5, note 50
- :{רחום} Addenda to Joel
- :{רמון} Joel 1 2
- :{רסס} Amos 6
- :{רע} Amos 5
- :{רעה} Amos 3
- :{רק} Amos 3
- :{ש} Amos 5, note 48 2 3 4 5 6

- :{שאול} Amos 9
- :{שאף} Amos 2
- :{שדד} Joel 1
- :{שדי} Joel 1 2 3 4 5
- :{שכמה} 1
- :{שלח} Obadiah 1
- :{שמועה} Obadiah 1
- {שמועה} :{שמעתו} Obadiah 1
- :{שמענו} Obadiah 1
- :{שפט} Joel 3
- :{שפך} Joel 2
- :{שקל} Amos 8
- :{שקע} Amos 8
- :{שרף} Amos 6
- :{תחת} Amos 2, note 35
- :{תחתיכם} Amos 2 2 3
- :{תמר} Joel 1, note 18
- :{תפוח} Joel 1, note 18
- :{תפלצתך} Obadiah 1
- :{גוז} Nahum 1
- :{הם} Nahum 2, note 304
- {והוכיחלעמים} :{רבים} Micah 4, note 195
- {כמוך} :{אל}-{מי} Micah 7, note 279
- :{נכזן} Micah 4, note 193
- whwkyx lgwyM eumyM ed rxwq wspj byN emyM rbyM: Micah 4, note 195
- :{א} Micah 1, note 152
- :{אבי} Micah 1, note 152
- :{אביא} Micah 1, note 152
- :{אדירך} Nahum 3, note 326
- :{אדר} Micah 2
- :{אויב} Micah 2
- :{אולם} Micah 3
- :{אז} Micah 3 2 3
- {כהה}-{אין} :{לשברך} Nahum 3, note 327
- :{איש} Micah 2, note 158
- {איש} {בשם} :{אלהיו} Micah 4
- :{אך} Jonah 2
- :{אכזיב} Micah 1 2
- :{אל} Micah 2 2 3
- {אלהי} :{מרום} Micah 6, note 244
- :{אלוף} Micah 7, note 266 2
- :{אליה} Jonah 3, note 122
- {תאמינו}-{אל} :{ברע} Micah 7, note 266
- :{אמון} Nahum 3

- :{אמן} Jonah 3, note 124
- :{אמר} Micah 2, note 161 2
- :{אנאלאה} Micah 4
- :{אנה} Jonah 1, note 110
- {אנה} :{יהוה} Jonah 1
- :{אנושה} Micah 1 2 3
- :{אני} Micah 6, note 254
- :{אנכי} Micah 3
- :{אנשי}-{חיל} Nahum 2, note 302
- :{אראני} Micah 7
- :{ארזי}-{אל} Jonah 3, note 123
- :{אריה} Nahum 2 2
- :{אריות} Nahum 2
- {ארך} :{אפים} Jonah 4, note 133
- :{אש} Micah 6 2
- :{אשר} Jonah 1, note 102 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
- {אשר} {אנכי} {דבר} :{אליד} Jonah 3, note 122
- :{את} Jonah 3, note 124 2 3 4 5
- :{אתה} Jonah 4 2
- :{אתמול} Micah 2
- :{אתמיל} Micah 2
- :{אתנן} Micah 1
- :{ב} Jonah 3, note 124 2 3 4 5
- {באחרית} :{הימים} Micah 4, note 192
- {באשר} :{למי} Jonah 1, note 102
- :{בדי} Nahum 2
- :{בחזקח} Jonah 3, note 129
- :{בכי} Micah 1, note 147
- {בכית} :{יענה} Micah 1, note 145
- :{בל} Nahum 1, note 294
- {בל} :{יעל} Nahum 1
- :{בליעל} Nahum 1
- {בליעל} :{יועף} Nahum 1
- :{במצותיך} Jonah 3, note 124
- :{בנה} Micah 3, note 185
- :{בנויתם} Nahum 3, note 315
- :{בעדי} Jonah 2, note 117
- :{בעכו} Micah 1, note 147
- {בעל} :{חמה} Nahum 1, note 285
- {בעת} :{ההיא} Micah 3, note 174
- :{בצע} Micah 4, note 216 2
- :{בקע} Micah 1, note 141
- :{בקרב} Micah 5
- {ברח} :{לך} Micah 1, note 148

- :{בשלמי} Jonah 1, note 102
- :{בתי} Micah 1, note 151
- :{גאון} Nahum 2 2 3
- :{גבורה} Micah 3, note 182 2
- :{גבוריהו} Nahum 2, note 301
- :{גבר} Micah 2, note 158
- :{גדוד} Micah 5 2
- :{גדר} Micah 7
- :{גוז} Nahum 1
- :{גוים} Micah 4, note 195 2 3
- {גוים} :{רבים} Micah 4
- :{גזז} Nahum 1 2
- :{גחי} Micah 4, note 210
- :{גלה} Nahum 2 2
- :{גם} Nahum 3
- :{גסג} Micah 2, note 162
- :{דבר} Jonah 3, note 122 2
- :{ה} Jonah 4, note 134 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13
- :{האזכה} Micah 6, note 252
- :{האיש} Micah 6 2
- :{האמור} Micah 2, note 163
- {האמינו} {ביהוה} :{אלהיכם} Jonah 3, note 124
- {האמינו} :{בנביאיו} Jonah 3, note 124
- :{האמר} Micah 2, note 163
- :{האש} Micah 6 2
- :{הבל} Jonah 2, note 120
- :{שוא}-{הבלי} Jonah 2, note 120
- :{הדקות} Micah 4, note 215
- :{הדר} Micah 2, note 166
- {ההיטב} {חרה} :{לך} Jonah 4, note 134
- :{הו} Nahum 3
- :{הוא} Micah 4, note 195 2
- :{הוכיח} Micah 4, note 201
- :{הולך} Jonah 1, note 108
- :{הוצב} Nahum 2
- :{הורש} Micah 1
- :{הות} Micah 7
- {הות} {נפשו} :{הוא} Micah 7, note 263
- :{החלתי} Micah 6, note 254
- :{היא} Nahum 2, note 307
- :{היש} Micah 6 2
- :{הלא} Micah 4, note 206
- :{הלאתיך} Micah 6, note 240
- :{הנדחה} Micah 4, note 206

- {הנשכים} {בשניהם} {וקראו} {שלום}: Micah 3
- {הפרף}: Micah 2, note 169
- {הצב}: Nahum 2 2 3 4 5
- {הקעת}: Micah 6
- {הר}: Micah 7
- {הרם}: Micah 7
- {השמם}: Micah 6, note 254
- {התגדדי}: Micah 5
- {התכבד}: Nahum 3, note 325
- {ו}: Jonah 1, note 89 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17
- {והצנע} {לכת}: {אלהיך}-{עם} Micah 6, note 248
- {ויאמינו} {באלהים}: Jonah 3, note 124
- {ויגע}: Jonah 3
- {ויחר} {לקין}: {מאד} Jonah 4, note 132
- {וכן}: {וכן} Nahum 1
- {ומה} {עשיתי}: Micah 6, note 242
- {ונהרו}: Micah 4, note 195
- {ועבד}: Nahum 1, note 295
- {ועבר}: Nahum 1
- {ועטו} {שפם}: {על}-{על} Micah 3
- {ושפט} {בין}: {הגוים} Micah 4, note 195
- {זאת}: Micah 1, note 142
- {זדון}: Micah 6, note 248
- {זכה}: Micah 6, note 252
- {זעף}: Micah 7, note 268
- {חבל}: Micah 2, note 167
- {חול}: Micah 1
- {חזה}: Nahum 1
- {חזון}: Nahum 1
- {חזים}: Micah 3, note 180
- {חזק}: Micah 7 2 3
- {חטאה}: Micah 3, note 184 2 3
- {חטאות}: Micah 1, note 142
- {חטאת}: Micah 1, note 142
- {חיל}: Micah 4, note 216 2 3 4 5 6 7
- {חלה}: Nahum 3, note 328
- {חלחלה}: Nahum 2, note 310
- {חלל}: Nahum 3, note 315
- {חללים}: Nahum 3, note 315
- {חמה}: Nahum 1
- {חמס}: Micah 6
- {חנון}: Jonah 4 2
- {חנם}: Micah 1, note 140
- {חנף}: Micah 4

- :{חסד} Jonah 2
- :{חסדי} Jonah 2, note 121
- {חסדם} :{יעזבו} Jonah 2, note 121
- :{חסיר} Micah 7, note 260
- :{חפף} Micah 7, note 279
- :{חרה} Jonah 4, note 132 2
- :{חרם} Micah 4 2
- :{חרש} Jonah 4
- :{חתר} Jonah 1 2
- :{טוב} Micah 3, note 172
- :{טול} Jonah 1
- :{טמאה} Micah 2, note 167
- :{טעם} Jonah 3 2
- :{טרף} Nahum 2
- :{טרפה} Nahum 2
- :{י} Micah 6, note 256 2 3 4
- :{יבוא} Micah 7
- {יולדה} :{ילדה} Micah 5, note 222
- :{יועף} Micah 4
- :{יחשך} Micah 6, note 255
- :{יכח} Micah 4
- :{יכשלו} Nahum 2, note 305
- :{ילל} Micah 7
- :{ימיש} Nahum 3, note 315
- :{יסג} Micah 2, note 162
- :{יעד} Micah 6, note 249
- :{יעדה} Micah 6, note 249
- :{יעל} Nahum 1, note 294
- :{יעף} Micah 6
- :{יצב} Micah 5, note 236 2
- :{ירא} Micah 6 2
- :{יראי} Micah 6, note 249
- :{ירה} Micah 4, note 199
- :{ירכתי} Jonah 1, note 96
- :{יררף} Nahum 1
- :{ירש} Micah 1
- :{ישא} Micah 2
- :{ישאו} Micah 4, note 195
- :{ישחך} Micah 6, note 255
- :{ישכנו} Nahum 3, note 326
- :{ישר} Micah 7, note 261
- :{ישתמר} Micah 6, note 257
- :{כ} Micah 7 2
- :{כבד} Nahum 2, note 308 2 3

- {כבד} :{פגד} Nahum 3, note 315
- :{כבוד} Micah 1
- :{כבש} Micah 7, note 281
- :{כון} Micah 4, note 193 2 3
- :{כוש} Nahum 3, note 321
- :{כח} Micah 3, note 182 2
- :{כחש} Nahum 3 2
- {כטל} {מאת} :{יהוה} Micah 5
- :{כי} Micah 2, note 157 2 3
- {כי} {הים} {הולך} :{ומער} Jonah 1, note 108
- {כי} {טוב} {מותי} :{מחיי} Jonah 4, note 134
- {כי} {לאל} {יש}-:{ידם} Micah 2, note 157
- :{כירק} Nahum 3
- :{כל} Micah 4, note 195 2
- {כל} :{חגוים} Micah 4, note 195
- :{כלכם} Micah 1, note 140 2
- :{כלם} Micah 1, note 140
- :{כלן} Micah 1, note 140
- :{זאת}-{כל} Micah 1, note 142
- :{ראיך}-{כל} Nahum 3
- :{כן} Nahum 1 2
- :{כסף} Micah 3, note 189
- {כפד} :{נחום} Nahum 1, note 283
- :{כפרים} Nahum 2
- :{כפתחיה} Micah 5, note 228
- :{כשף} Micah 5, note 233 2
- :{כשפים} Micah 5 2
- :{ל} Jonah 2 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
- {לא} {יג} :{כלמות} Micah 2, note 162
- :{לאכזב} Micah 1
- {לאלהים} :{גדולה}-{עיר} Jonah 3, note 123
- :{לביא} Nahum 2 2
- :{לגויה} Nahum 3, note 315
- :{להב} Nahum 3
- :{להיטיב} Micah 7
- :{להעיר} Micah 6
- :{להשיב} Jonah 1, note 109
- {לו} :{ויחר} Jonah 4, note 132
- :{לובים} Nahum 3, note 321
- :{לטוב} Micah 1, note 150
- :{לך} Jonah 4 2 3
- :{לכם} Micah 1, note 148
- :{לכן} Micah 5, note 221
- :{לכס} Micah 1, note 148

- :{ללבאתיו} Nahum 2
- :{למד} Micah 4
- {למה} {חרה} :{לד} Jonah 4, note 132
- :{למות} Micah 1, note 150
- :{לעולם} Micah 2 2
- {לעולם} :{ועד} Micah 4, note 204
- :{לעיר} Micah 6
- :{לפני} Jonah 3, note 123
- :{לפידות} Nahum 2
- :{לקח} Micah 1
- :{מ} Micah 3 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
- :{מבשר} Nahum 1, note 298 2
- {זאת}-{מה} :{עשית} Jonah 1, note 106
- :{מול} Micah 2
- :{מורד} Micah 1, note 141
- :{מז}-{החמס} Jonah 3, note 131
- :{מחיר} Micah 3, note 189
- :{מטה} Micah 6, note 249
- :{מיכה} Commentary on Micah, note 12
- :{מיכיה} Commentary on Micah, note 12
- :{מימי} Nahum 2, note 307
- {מימי} :{היא} Nahum 2, note 307
- :{מיר} Micah 4, note 213
- :{מכתה} Micah 1, note 146
- :{מלא} Nahum 1
- :{מלאכים} Nahum 2
- :{מלאככה} Nahum 2 2
- :{מלאככם} Nahum 2, note 314
- :{מלה} Jonah 1, note 95
- :{מלחים} Jonah 1, note 95
- :{מלכך} Nahum 2
- :{ממול} Micah 2
- :{מנבל} Micah 7, note 266
- :{מנה} Jonah 1, note 114
- :{מנהגות} Nahum 2, note 306
- :{מעוז} Nahum 3, note 322
- {מעוז} :{מאויב} Nahum 3
- :{מעוננים} Micah 5, note 234
- :{מעיז} Nahum 1, note 291
- :{מעלינו} Jonah 1, note 107
- :{מעמד} Micah 1, note 149
- :{מצאתו} Micah 5, note 220
- :{מצב} Nahum 2, note 306
- :{מצבות} Micah 5, note 236

- :{מצור} Micah 7
- :{מצורה} Nahum 2, note 299
- {מצורה} :{נצור} Nahum 2
- :{מצרים} Micah 7, note 270 2
- :{מראיהן} Nahum 2, note 304
- :{מש} Nahum 3, note 315
- :{משא} Nahum 1 2
- :{משל} Micah 2 2
- :{משמיע} Nahum 1
- :{משפחה} Micah 2, note 159
- :{משפט} Micah 3, note 182
- :{ן} Micah 4, note 195
- :{נא} Jonah 1, note 110
- :{נבל} Nahum 3
- :{נהה} Micah 2
- :{נוטר} Nahum 1, note 285
- :{נחלה} Nahum 3, note 328
- {נחם} {על} :{הרעת} Jonah 4, note 133
- :{נטל} Jonah 1
- :{נינוה} Jonah 1
- :{נכון} Micah 4, note 195
- :{נמו} Nahum 3, note 326
- :{נמרף} Micah 2
- {נסיכי} :{אדם} Micah 5, note 226
- :{נסיכים} Micah 5, note 226
- :{נצור} Nahum 2, note 299
- :{נקם} Nahum 1, note 285
- :{נשא} Micah 4, note 195 2 3 4 5
- :{נשג} Micah 6, note 256
- :{נתך} Nahum 1
- :{נתן} Micah 6, note 246
- :{ס} Micah 6, note 256
- :{סגר} Micah 7
- :{סוג} Micah 2, note 162
- :{סוף} Jonah 2 2
- {ספר} :{חזון} Nahum 1
- :{סתר} Micah 6, note 257
- :{עבר} Micah 6, note 257
- {עברי} :{לכם} Micah 1, note 148
- :{עד} Micah 4, note 204 2 3 4
- {עד} :{רחוק} Micah 4, note 195
- {עד} :{רחיק} Micah 4
- :{עדר} Micah 4, note 207
- :{עוד} Micah 6

- {עוד} {התפח} :{יאמר}-{ולא} Micah 2, note 163
- :{עולם} Micah 4, note 204
- :{עון} Micah 7, note 279
- :{עור} Micah 6
- :{עז} Nahum 1, note 291
- :{עטף} Jonah 2
- :{עין} Micah 5, note 234
- :{עיר} Micah 6
- :{על} Micah 1, note 138
- {על} {הרע} :{כפים} Micah 7
- :{עלה} Nahum 2
- :{עליה} Jonah 3, note 122
- :{עללת} Micah 7, note 259
- :{עם} Micah 1, note 140 2
- :{עמד} Micah 1 2 3
- :{עמדתו} Micah 1, note 149
- :{עמוד} Micah 1, note 149
- :{עמי} Micah 2
- :{עמים} Micah 1, note 140 2 3 4
- :{ענה} Micah 5, note 234 2
- :{ענן} Micah 5, note 234
- :{עפל} Micah 4
- :{עפר} Micah 1
- :{עפרה} Micah 1
- :{עריך} Micah 5 2 3
- :{ערער} Micah 7
- :{עשת} Jonah 1
- :{עתה} Micah 4, note 209
- :{פאר} Nahum 2
- :{פארור} Nahum 2 2 3
- :{פוט} Nahum 3, note 321
- :{פוף} Nahum 3
- :{פוש} Nahum 3, note 326 2 3
- :{פחד} Micah 7, note 278
- :{פלד} Nahum 2, note 303
- :{פלדות} Nahum 2, note 303 2
- :{פסילים} Micah 1, note 143
- :{פסל} Micah 1, note 143
- :{פעל} Micah 2, note 156
- :{פרק} Nahum 3
- :{פשע} Micah 1, note 142 2 3 4 5
- :{ץ} Nahum 3
- :{צבאות} Nahum 3
- :{צור} Micah 7

- :{צלעה} Micah 4
- :{צנע} Micah 6, note 248
- :{צעה} Micah 1
- :{צען} Micah 1
- :{צפה} Micah 7
- :{צריו} Nahum 1, note 285
- :{קבף} Nahum 2 2
- :{קום} Nahum 1, note 289
- :{קומי} Micah 4
- :{קומם} Micah 2
- :{קורא} Jonah 3, note 122
- :{קיף} Micah 7, note 259
- :{קיקיון} Jonah 4 2 3 4
- :{קלות} Nahum 1
- :{קנא} Nahum 1
- :{קנוא} Nahum 1
- :{קצב} Jonah 2
- :{קצה} Micah 3, note 170
- :{קצינים} Micah 3, note 170
- :{קצר} Micah 2
- :{קרחי} Micah 1
- :{ראה} Micah 6 2
- {רב} :{החבל} Jonah 1, note 98
- {רב} :{חלל} Nahum 3, note 315
- :{רבים} Nahum 1
- :{חסד}-{רב} Jonah 4, note 133
- :{רגז} Micah 7
- :{רגזי} Micah 1
- :{רואי} Nahum 3 2
- :{רוח} Micah 2, note 168
- :{רועים} Micah 5
- :{רחום} Jonah 4 2
- {רחוק} :{עד} Micah 4
- :{רחק} Micah 7 2
- :{רטחם} Micah 7, note 281
- :{ריקם} Micah 1, note 140
- :{רכש} Micah 1
- :{רסמים} Micah 3, note 180
- :{רעה} Micah 3, note 172 2
- :{רעל} Nahum 2
- :{ש} Jonah 1, note 102 2 3
- :{שאה} Nahum 1, note 288
- :{שאול} Jonah 2 2 3
- :{שאל} Jonah 4

- :{שארית} Micah 2 2
- :{שב} Nahum 2, note 300
- :{שבב} Micah 2
- :{שבט} Micah 7
- :{שבי} Micah 2, note 165
- :{שהת} Jonah 2
- :{שוא} Jonah 2, note 120
- :{שוב} Micah 2
- {שובי} :{מלחמה} Micah 2, note 165
- :{שוק} Nahum 2
- :{שחד} Micah 3, note 189
- :{שחר} Jonah 2
- :{שלוחים} Micah 1, note 151
- :{שלמים} Nahum 1, note 295
- :{שם} Micah 4 2
- {שמעו} {עמים} :{כלם} Micah 1, note 140
- :{שפט} Micah 4, note 201
- :{שפיר} Micah 1
- :{שקק} Nahum 2
- :{ת} Micah 3, note 185 2 3 4
- :{תגים} Micah 1, note 145
- :{תהימנה} Micah 2, note 169
- :{תורה} Micah 4, note 199 2 3
- :{תושיה} Micah 6 2
- {תחבל} {וחבל} :{נמרף} Micah 2, note 167
- :{תכון} Nahum 2
- :{תכונה} Nahum 2 2 3
- :{תכן} Nahum 2, note 308
- :{תכנות} Nahum 2
- :{תכש} Nahum 2
- :{תמיד} Nahum 3
- :{תסנ} Micah 6, note 256
- {תקע} :{כף} Nahum 3, note 329
- :{תשא} Nahum 1, note 288
- :{תתגדדי} Micah 5, note 219
- bwqh wmbwqh wmblqh: Nahum 2, note 309
- el hre kpyM lhyjyb: Micah 7, note 262

Latin Words and Phrases

- An in Gilhade iniquitas: 1
- Caenacula: Amos 9, note 76
- Coagmentationes suas: Amos 9, note 77
- Eam non restituam: Amos 1, note 32
- Effata: Amos 1, note 30
- Eheu: Amos 5, note 50
- Eosque diffinde : Amos 9, note 74
- Et divide ipsos in capite ipsorum omnium, Quod autem post ipsos est gladio interrficam: Amos 9, note 74
- Judicium hic accipio pro impia gubernatione principum Israelis, maximè in jure dicendo: quae judicia, cum deberent esse salutaria et grata, acerba et amara fiunt et hominibus perniciosa: 1
- Jugum autem impontur eis simul, quod non auferetur: 1
- Jurisdicto: Amos 6, note 60
- Medium opus: Joel 2, note 19
- Pastoreum nostrum: Translator's Preface to Joel, Amos, and Obadiah, note 1
- Quando Jehudah adhuc dominabatur cum : 1
- Scortando scortati sunt, amant date (O dedecus) protedctores ejus: 1
- Sedes imperii: Amos 7, note 66
- Sensus est, q.d. Ego vos in eas angustas adducam, unde vos ipsos mimime expedire valeatis: Amos 2, note 35
- Si in Galaade idolum fuit: 1
- Tu etiam: Obadiah 1
- adminiculis: Joel 3
- ascensiones: Amos 9, note 76 2
- asserendum: Amos 7
- clientes: Obadiah 1

- compotationes eos seduxerunt: 1
- conferre, ut loquuntur Latine: Joel 3
- depositarii: Joel 1
- erant blasphemi: Amos 7
- haereditario jure possidebunt: Obadiah 1, note 88
- ignobilitias: Amos 1
- instinctus: Amos 4
- mediatores: Amos 5
- mixtionibus: Amos 6
- non avertam illud: Amos 1, note 32
- non quadrat: Translator's Preface to Joel, Amos, and Obadiah
- nutricios: Amos 7
- piacula: Amos 8
- pompae: Amos 1
- qui faciunt illos nimis spirituales: Amos 7
- rudis: Joel 3
- steterunt: 1
- stultan sedulitatem: Amos 5
- ut sensuum elatione et magnificentia spiritus prope summis parem, ita etiam dictionis splendore et composititonis elegantia vix quoquam inferioreum: Translator's Preface to Joel, Amos, and Obadiah, note 1
- à se immittendum aut immissum homini, ad hujus resipiscentiam facilé arcens vel auferens, adeoque placabilis,: Jonah 4, note 133
- A rapacite: Jonah 3, note 131
- Amat enim benefacere: Micah 7, note 279
- Boni pastoris esse tondere pectus, non deglubere: Micah 3, note 172
- Cum intensione valida: Jonah 3, note 129
- Deo eam augente: Jonah 3, note 123
- Desolabo: Micah 6, note 254
- Dictio elegans, non admodum dissimilis isti Iesaiae: Translator's Preface to Jonah, Micah, and Nahum, note 4
- Dispositus: Micah 4, note 193
- Dolebit: Micah 1, note 150
- Ea potissimum peccata significat, quae vel errore, vel per ignorantiam, vel per infirmitatem carnis, committuntur; item peccata omissionis: Micah 3, note 184
- Et ephah tenuitatis abominabilis: Micah 6, note 251
- Et promulgavit ac dixit: Jonah 3, note 128
- Extra Scripturam autem audacter hic sapiat nemo: Jonah 1, note 90
- Fortes sicut ferrum, et robusti sicut aes: Micah 4, note 214
- Fortes tui: Nahum 3, note 326
- Hoc est, ne nobis imputes caedem viri justi: Jonah 1, note 111
- Ingemisce: Micah 4, note 210
- Ipse est: Jonah 4, note 133
- Jam damnata erit: Micah 4, note 211

- Jovam Deum nostrum timebunt eumque reverebuntur: Micah 7, note 278
- Locus hic diu me multumque torsit: Micah 7, note 262
- Malum faciunt manibus suis, et non bonum faciunt: Micah 7, note 262
- Manipulum: Micah 4, note 213
- Michas plerumque brevis est, pressns, concisus, acutus; nonnunquam ad Hoseae obscuritatem prope accedens; in multis elatus et fervidus, valdeque poeticus: Translator's Preface to Jonah, Micah, and Nahum, note 3
- Nam omnes populi, qui ambulabant quisque in nomine dei sui, et now ambulabimus in nomine Jehovae Dei nostri: Micah 4, note 203
- Nautae: Jonah 1, note 95
- Ne fidatis amico: Micah 7, note 266
- Non Deos quos invocatis, et qui salvare non possunt, sed Deum coeli qui mare fecit et aridam, mare in quo fugio, aridam de qua fugio: Jonah 1, note 105
- O! vere Phrygiae, neque enim Phryges: Nahum 3, note 323
- Pagininus: Jonah 1, note 100
- Palma Christi: Jonah 4, note 136
- Parturit: Micah 1, note 150
- Practicas: Nahum 3, note 316
- Propter malefaciendum volae pro benefaciendum: Micah 7, note 262
- Putavit, cessante horologio, se ante tempus finire: Jonah 4, note 135
- Quando quidem impuritas corrumpet, Et corruptio acris: Micah 2, note 167
- Qui vana idola colunt, Felicitatis suae auctorem deserunt: Jonah 2, note 121
- Quia mare ibat et intumescebat: Jonah 1, note 108
- Quid (i.e.: Jonah 1, note 106
- Quid dormis: Jonah 1, note 99
- Quid tu sopore deprimeris: Jonah 1, note 99
- Quis Deus similis tui: Micah 7, note 279
- Quo fatigavi te: Micah 6, note 240
- Quo labore te pressi: Micah 6, note 240
- Quomodo subtraxit mihi! Avertenti agros nostros distribuit: Micah 2, note 161
- Quu enim pervenisset: Jonah 3, note 125
- Quum est in potestate manus ipsoram: Micah 2, note 157
- Rectus: Micah 7, note 261
- Ricinus: Jonah 4, note 136
- Sententiosum, figuratum, et sublime docendi genus: Micah 2, note 160
- Succendam usque ad fumum: Nahum 2, note 313
- Totis viribus: Jonah 3, note 129
- Tu enim Jehovah sicut vis facis: Jonah 1, note 112
- Tu enim, O Jova, pro arbitratu tuo agis: Jonah 1, note 112
- Tu vis ut in mare dejeciatur: fiat igitur quod vis; nam voluntati tuae quis resistat: Jonah 1, note 112
- Vanitates inanitatis: Jonah 2, note 120
- Vanitates mendaces: Jonah 2, note 120
- Vehementer: Jonah 3, note 129

- Verum ex omnibus minoribus Prophetis nemo videtur aequare sublimitatem, ardorem et audaces spiritus Nahumi: adde quod vaticinium integrum et justum est poema; exordium magnificum est et plane angus-tum; apparatus ad excidium Ninivae, ejusque excidii descriptio et amplificatio, ardentissimis coloribus exprimatur, et admirabilem habet evidentiam et pondus: Translator's Preface to Jonah, Micah, and Nahum, note 7
- Verum quidem est: Micah 5, note 221
- Visio vestra mutabitur in noctem: Micah 3, note 179
- ad interiora navis: Jonah 1, note 96
- aerumnam, quam expetit: Micah 7, note 263
- affluentiam cum celeritate: Micah 4, note 195
- alias respectu decreti longissimi ab eo arcenda: Jonah 4, note 133
- ambulabant: Micah 4, note 203
- ambulant: Micah 4, note 203
- amplus benignitate,: Jonah 4, note 133
- an: Jonah 4, note 134
- apud Hieronymum, praestabilis super malitia, : Jonah 4, note 133
- aversi belli, : Micah 2, note 165
- avertit: Nahum 2, note 300
- benignus: Jonah 4, note 133 2
- carne: Jonah 4, note 132
- certè: Micah 5, note 221
- constitus: Micah 4, note 193
- constitutio: Micah 1, note 149
- contra: Micah 1, note 138
- convertetur,: Micah 7, note 280
- corde, ore, et opere: Micah 4, note 196
- crediderunt Deo: Jonah 3, note 124
- cucurbita: Translation: Jonah 4, note 332
- cum privilegia singulorum non possint legem : Jonah 1, note 103
- currere ad beneplacitum, hoc est, ad id quod cupias: Micah 4, note 195
- defectio: Micah 1, note 142
- defectio à Deo seu rebellio, ac praevaricatio in Deum: Micah 3, note 184
- defunctorie: Jonah 1
- depulsa: Micah 4, note 206
- duce ac magistra natura: Jonah 1
- dum illis datur quod edunt: Micah 3, note 177
- elatio: Nahum 2, note 300
- est quoevis sententia sive axioma scite graviterque dictum, paucis concinnatum, et ad: Micah 2, note 160
- et: Micah 7, note 271
- et finem judicii omnis, qui est, malum peccati dedocere. Quomodo poenitentia Deo, respectu mutati operis sui, et verbi sui absque explicita conditione antea propositi, saepe tribuitur: Jonah 4, note 133

- exactor: Jonah 1
- fatidici: Micah 3, note 180
- filia: Translation: Jonah 4, note 332
- filius: Translation: Jonah 4, note 332
- firmam compositum: Micah 2, note 160
- firmatus: Micah 4, note 193
- fortitudine: Micah 3
- gratiosus, : Jonah 4, note 133
- h.e. tenerrimo amore motus in miseros ad illus succurrendum et indulgendum; tum: Jonah 4, note 133
- heroum: Nahum 2, note 301
- humanus, : Micah 7, note 260
- igni: Nahum 2, note 313
- irreprehensibilia: Jonah 4, note 132
- longanumis, : Jonah 4, note 133
- mare: Jonah 1, note 95
- mercede: Micah 3, note 189
- misericors,: Jonah 4, note 133
- moliri: Jonah 1
- multae misericordiae,: Jonah 4, note 133
- navis: Jonah 1, note 95
- non certae speciei, sed generis nomen est, et piscem quemvis magnum significat: Jonah 1, note 114
- non consolabilis,: Jonah 4, note 133
- notante dudum Theodoreto,: Jonah 4, note 133
- nugas: Jonah 1
- numquid approbabo: Micah 6, note 252
- patiens,: Jonah 4, note 133
- praeparatus: Micah 4, note 193
- procul disjecta: Micah 4, note 206
- pulchras vestes quas Deus illis donavit: Micah 2, note 166
- quia ingenium hominis officina est omnium errorum: Jonah 1
- reventia: Jonah 1
- reverentia: Jonah 1
- ritus histrionicos: Micah 3
- sacrificos: Jonah 1
- scelus: Micah 1, note 142
- se nobis clementem exhibeat: Jonah 1, note 100
- solicitum: Micah 6, note 248
- sortilegi: Jonah 1
- super: Micah 1, note 138
- transgressiones: Micah 1, note 142
- verè: Micah 3, note 183

French Words and Phrases

- Fai du pis que to pouvras: Amos 4
- Il n'y faudra plus retourner: Amos 8
- Qu'avons-nous a desmeller: Joel 3
- Qui fonde son batiment sur la terre: Amos 9, note 77
- Vae! Vae: Amos 5, note 50
- Vous faites cela pour votre plaisir et bien mettez le sur vos comptes: Amos 4